



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 fullness 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)

Special Report.

2002 United Kingdom Speaking Tour.

Well, I'm back home again after seven weeks of speaking engagements throughout England and Northern Ireland. And what a time of real blessing it was, even despite the strenuous nature of such trips. In total, I spoke at sixteen meetings, including two major Identity conventions.

I left Sydney on June 29, via Japan. The trip over was broken by a one night stop-over at Osaka, with the trip to London continuing the following day. This was an excellent arrangement, as it gave a much-needed break to the continuous flying. The hotel accommodation - which was included in the price of the airfare - was absolutely first class. And of course, travelling "Business Class" - or "Executive Class" as Japan Airlines calls it, made the entire journey much more comfortable.

The first shock one received when clearing immigration and customs at Heathrow Airport is that despite being a born and bred Anglo-Saxon, Australians have to queue for at least an hour as aliens, whilst people of all shades and origins who hold a British Passport go straight through without any appreciable waiting. One can't help feeling quite insulted. But that's the way things are these days.

So with the aid of Roger Edmonds from the Orange Street Congregational Church, I ultimately arrived at the Foreign Mission Club where I was to stay for the first week. I spoke at the Wednesday Evening Bible Study at Orange Street on the subject of prophecy for today, and then at the Sunday morning Holy Communion service, I gave a short address on the subject of Melchizedec, and His relationship to the Communion service.

Next morning I met with Margaret, a U.K. subscriber to our Covenant Vision, and we travelled together by rail and taxi to the centre where the High Leigh Convention was to be held. This is a very beautiful Old English type manor, with several modern extensions to cater for an ever increasing clientele. The convention was hosted by the Covenant People's Fellowship, under the ministry of Rev. Ken Whittaker, together with his wife Ena. It was a great time of fellowship, with a very noticeable spirit of harmony and blessing prevailing throughout. The numbers in attendance at any one meeting rarely got above 20-22, which was quite a drop on the 150 which was usual some years previous. But I found that this was the trend wherever I went. The "Falling away" has certainly become manifest even among the Identity meetings. I spoke four times, and was also on a "question and answer" panel. Prior to going overseas, I had determined not to restrict myself to normal 'everyday' Identity subjects, but to concentrate rather on more of the "meat" of the Word. My main theme at this convention was the identity and activity today of "Gog and Magog". After I concluded my final address, two ladies approached me, with the comment that this had been "absolutely awesome"! The general impression I received was that these

messages had been very much appreciated. I extend my grateful thanks and appreciation to both Ken and Ena for their loving devotion and fellowship whilst I was so privileged to minister with them at High Leigh. As my next appointment was not until Wednesday evening at Newbury, Ken arranged, at their own expense, for me to stay on at High Leigh for an extra four days. So I had a wonderful chance for a rest. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out that way, as on the Sunday morning I woke up hardly able to breath. This died down during the day, but the next morning, the condition had returned. The assistant Manager made an appointment for me to see a local doctor, and drove me down, waited for me, took me to the Chemist for the prescription, and drove me back to the Centre. The diagnosis was that I had accumulated fluid in the lungs. The medication soon rectified this situation, thankfully, but that was not to be the end of the matter, as we shall see later. On the Monday, a contingent of about 60 Nuns, belonging to the Order of the Sisters of Mercy, booked in for a conference. As I went to breakfast that morning, I was standing next to one of these Nuns. She pointed out to me that I was the only man present among them in the entire room, and when I acknowledged this, with some surprise, she said, "Blessed art thou among women". She obviously had quite a sense of humour, but I resisted the temptation of replying with a "Hail Mary".

On the Wednesday morning I returned to Liverpool Street Station in London, on my way to Newbury. To do this, I had to transfer by taxi to Paddington Station, right across the other side of London. The traffic was unbelievable. But eventually I arrived at Newbury Station, just prior to lunch, where I was met by Mrs. Somerset. As I was alighting from the train, struggling, as usual with the luggage, I overbalanced and fell down the two steps from the carriage to land rather heavily on the concrete platform. Several people hurried to my aid, and unloaded my luggage and picked me up to my feet. I was very fortunate not to have broken anything, but within 24 hours had developed a "king-sized" bruise on my upper thigh about the size of two hands. I had a very sore side for several days. But eventually we arrived at the Somerset home, which turned out to be a delightful cottage with a genuine thatched roof. I was welcomed there by Mr. Somerset, and later we had tea on the lawns at the rear of the home. That evening I was driven to the meeting, where the attendance of about 20 people was the largest they had had for a long time. The reception I received was very good, and we had a very enjoyable time of fellowship together.

But, as they say, time and tide wait for no man, and the next morning I was back on the train to London, where I had to once again change to another main station, this time, Kings Cross, for my journey to Durham. But we had struck a snag. That day, of all days, there was a general strike of rail workers which closed down the entire underground rail system for the whole of London. As you can imagine, getting through the wall-to-wall taxis across London was quite a nightmare, but somehow we made it, with a prompt from me for an extra 5 pounds to the driver if he got me there on time. But such is luck as the train I was to catch was a half hour late.

I had purchased a Brit-Rail Pass before leaving Sydney, and that entitled me to 8 country rail trips, travelling First Class. So the 3 1/2 hour trip to Durham was very comfortable. The countryside was absolutely beautiful - quite a change from suburban London, I assure you. I was met at the station by Colin Farquhar, who conducted the meetings in Durham, and driven to his new home where I met his wife Eileen. They treated me like royalty the entire time I was there. The first evening I accompanied them on a hospital visitation to one of their members, and got the surprise of my life to be taken to another ward and introduced to a friend of many years, Mrs. Joy Gaunt. When I was introduced to her, she nearly jumped out of bed. We had never met before, so this was a real occasion for both of us. I sat with her for some time whilst we had a great old Bible study. She was not seriously ill, but was having a check-up. So that was a very good start to my visit to Durham. The following day, Friday, I was taken for a day long visit to Durham Cathedral. This is an absolutely enormous building, one of the largest in the world. The following day, Saturday, I spoke at the two meetings at different venues for which I was scheduled, the attendances again being in the order of 15-20. The messages were very well received, and it was a real time of blessing. On Sunday I attended the local Presbyterian Church with Colin, and then joined his folk at home for evening devotions.

Monday saw me on the move again, this time a two hour rail trip to Derby, and thence by bus to the Conference Centre for the Swanwick Convention. Whilst this also lasted for six days, it was quite different from the High Leigh Convention in that each speaker only spoke once, with the programme interspersed with other activities. I spoke of "The Manner of Floods", concentrating on their devastating effect upon our foundations, especially in the area of morals as evidenced by the genes of sodomy and incest passed on to us through intermarriage with the seed of Moab, Ammon, and Canaan. I was a bit dubious as to how such a talk would be accepted, but pleasantly surprised to find that it was exceptionally well received, even by a Bishop of the New Church of England who was a firm believer in our Identity. On a sight-seeing trip, we were taken to the cotton mills originally built and operated by Sir Richard Arkright. And it was then that I discovered the meaning of the words of "Blake's Jerusalem" where he wrote "And did that countenance Divine shine forth among those clouded hills, and was Jerusalem builded here, among these dark Satanic Mills." Blake had lived in this area, where the hills were shrouded in cloud. The "Dark Satanic Mills" was a direct reference to the cotton mills which were very dark in colour, and quite threatening in a way, because of their lack of windows, size, and historically poor working conditions. So we learn something every day. The hosts of the Swanwick Convention, the B.I.W.F. London, expressed the view that this was the best Convention they had had for several years. The average attendance at the meetings was about 90 persons.

But all good things come to an end, so they say, and my next move was back to London by train with my friend of many years who had attended THE COVENANT VISION.

both conventions, Mr. Vic Proposch, the President of the Victorian branch of the B.I.W.F. in Australia. Vic is a member of the Victory Services Club in London, and was kind enough to invite me to stay at this club as his guest. It was a very good place to stay, with excellent meals, so Vic and I enjoyed the next four days together, our main visit being to the British Museum, where we put in quite a few hours, attending the Orange Street Congregational Church as visitors for the Sundays we were there.

So on the Wednesday, July 31, I was off again, this time by plane, to Belfast, where I had five meetings arranged. I was met at the airport by my friend Eric Briggs and his wife Faith, who drove me to their home in Armagh. We had an early dinner, and then drove back to Belfast where I spoke for the first time at Alan Campbell's meeting. I was quite overwhelmed by my welcome. I was fairly well known because of my books which they handle. Glyn Jones's children were jumping up and down as if I was their grandfather. Billy Mc.Gibbon, the singer on Alan's tapes, rushed up to me and gave me a great hug, and then came Glyn, Alan's chief assistant. I spoke on the subject of "Watchmen in Israel", and the 40 odd people present were most enthusiastic. So then it was back to Armagh for five days. And what a five days they were. Eric and Faith had decided that I was not going back home without seeing as much as possible of Ulster, and during my stay with them, we drove about 700 miles. On the first day we went sight-seeing through Armagh, visiting the Cathedral, and the many places where there had been fights with the IRA. After lunch we visited Portadown and the actual place where only a few months previously the Catholics and the Protestants had engaged in quite an unpleasant fight as the Catholics tried to stop the Protestants from passing down a particular road on the way to their Church Service. On the Friday I was taken on an all-day trip to Newcastle, and saw the actual "mountains of Mourne which sweep down to the sea." It was a lovely day out, and a very welcome break. On Saturday, they took me to see "The Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh. As luck would have it, on this particular day they staged a display of a mock attack by Red Indians on a new American homestead, complete with British Red-Coats. It was an excellent day. Sunday found me speaking at both the morning and evening services of the "Maranatha Church", where Eric had been full time pastor for over 30 years. It was a wonderful time of fellowship which everyone appreciated. The next day, Monday, I was taken on a car and ferry tour to Devenish Island, which is claimed to be the site where the prophet Jeremiah was buried. It is now occupied by the ruins of an ancient Catholic monastery dating back to the 12th century. Tuesday morning I said farewell to Eric and Faith, and their loving devotion which they had extended to me, and was picked up by Alan Campbell and taken to Belfast where he had booked me in to what can only be described as a five star hotel. That night I spoke at Alan's meeting at Newtonabbey, with about 40 present, and the following night at his main meeting at Cregagh. Both meetings went exceptionally well. Billy sang a special version of "Waltzing Matilda" with Christian words for me, and then presented me with

a special Queen Elizabeth 50th Jubilee Edition of the Bible as a gift from the folk there. Glyn also presented a copy to Alan, as it was his 53rd birthday. The day times were occupied with sight seeing around Belfast, including many of the former IRA trouble spots. But despite this, it is still a very beautiful country. Thursday evening I was taken to a special dinner with some close friends, which capped off a very blessed stay and fellowship. So on Friday morning, it was in the plane and back to London, where I stayed for another six days, speaking at the Orange Street Congregational church's Wednesday Bible Study as my final engagement of the entire trip. During that time I walked along the Embankment with Vic Proposch, from the statue of Queen Boadacea to Cleopatra's Needle, and on my last day paid a visit with him to the National Library. It was at about this time that I started to develop the symptoms I had experienced at High Leigh, and went back on my medication again. It was becoming quite a concern to me. However I made the return trip home at last, after a period of 32 hours from leaving my hotel in London, to walking through our front door at home. The very first thing I did was to see my doctor, who increased my medication, and sent me for an X-Ray on the Monday. It was first thought that I had mild cardiac failure, causing the fluid on the lungs. But an Echo Ultra sound on the Thursday proved that this was not the case, but showed that some of my heart muscles were loosing their strength. So by the time you read this I will have had further stress tests, which hopefully will not reveal anything too serious. I will inform you all of the results in our next issue. All this has been one of the main reasons this issue is so late, but we hope to catch up with our next 100th Anniversary issue in December. Because of the time factor, we have also omitted the Covenant Watch from this issue, and instead will sent a copy of the Covenant Watch Extra to all our readers when it is published in another few weeks. Finally, we wish to pass on our very grateful thanks to all those folk who have so very graciously and generously supported us in this speaking tour. It has been a real inspiration to us. Together with donations we received from overseas, we have been able not only to cover most of our entire costs, but have also been able to pay for our new photocopier. The Lord has richly blessed our ministry, and we pray that He will continue to reap the glory from whatever we have been able to achieve.

Now a quick word about Betty. Whilst I was away, she went to stay with our daughter Liz and her husband Peter, on their property down the south coast. They spoilt her rotten, as we expected they would, and did everything possible to make her stay comfortable. She returned two days after I arrived back, and although she has been suffering from a very bad cold since returning, the rest did her the world of good. So we thank the Lord for His wonderful mercy and provision for her whilst I was away. Our special thanks also go to Gordon for his faithfulness in looking after the Mission affairs so well, together with Sid who looked after the odd jobs and our animal pets, and those who did everything they could to help, such as Bruce and Mark who preached on several occasions. We offer you all a very sincere "God Bless You".

The Heritage of Israel.

By Frank W. Dowsett.

Part Twenty One.

The Covenant & The Promises. Part 16.

The New Covenant.

[In order to fully appreciate and understand this Covenant, the reader is advised, before proceeding any further, to read chapters 8, 9, and 10 of the Book of Hebrews.]

1. ITS ORIGIN

To understand the full implications of the NEW covenant, we must have a knowledge of the OLD covenant which it replaced. This is recorded in Exodus 24:3-8, and Hebrews 9:19-22.

“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.

And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and bulded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord.

And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the People. And they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

(Exodus 24:3-8)

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying,

This is the blood of the testament (covenant) which God hath enjoined unto you.

Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

(Hebrews 9:19-22)

A study of this OLD covenant reveals FIVE important factors:-

1. It was made ONLY with Israel, and its blessings were specifically directed to, and applicable to Israel. We read Hebrews 8:8-10.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

2. It was a LAW covenant. The 'words of the Lord' which Moses told the people in Exodus 24:3 were the terms of God's Laws, part of which are recorded in Exodus 23:20-33.

20 Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.

22 But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

23 For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

24 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

25 And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

26 There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

27 I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

29 I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

30 By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

32 Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

3. It was written on stone. Being written in stone, rather than in the hearts of the people, it had no resilience or emotion attached to it.

4. It was a conditional covenant. That is, the implementation and extent of the blessings under it depended entirely on the actions and the extent of obedience of Israel, with whom the covenant was made.

5. It operated by means of religious ordinances as set out in Hebrews 9:1-10.

“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.

And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with

gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

It is first referred to in Jeremiah 31:31, and repeated in Hebrews 8:8. And in this fact we find a most interesting feature. The numerical value of the Name of God in the Hebrew, EL, is 31. The numerical value of the Greek word for “Jesus” is 888. Considering the fact that there are no chapters and verses in the original Hebrew or Greek text, is it just a coincidence that the first reference to this New Covenant in the Old Testament begins with the 31st verse of Jeremiah's 31st chapter, and the first reference to it in the New Testament begins with the 8th verse of the 8th chapter of Hebrews? I think not. I am personally certain that just as the Holy Spirit inspired both the writers of these two books to write what they did, so He led the translators to arrange the numbering of the chapters and verses of these two books in such an order that our attention should be drawn to the importance of this New Covenant.

Thus we see that this NEW COVENANT is NOT just a New Testament teaching, but is obviously part of God's original plan and purpose.

2. ITS PURPOSE AND NATURE

What, we may ask, was the purpose of introducing a NEW covenant in the first place? Why was it required? What was wrong with the OLD, or original one?

Well actually, the OLD Covenant was not in any way wrong. God would never have given it to His people in the first place if it had been wrong. What was different about it was that it was NOT COMPLETE, in that it was deliberately lacking in some very important aspects which God had not yet introduced or revealed.

At this stage of our study, let us read the full account of the promise of the New Covenant, as recorded in Hebrews 8:1-13, noting especially the progression from the Old to the New.

8:1 "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

The first aspect which we note is in verse 1, where we are told that our Lord Jesus Christ is now our High Priest, but sitting on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, rather than on earth as were Israel's High Priests. This is the fundamental difference between the two Covenants. At the time that the Old Covenant was made with Israel, there was no High Priest in the heavens. Jesus Christ had not as at that time paid the necessary price to become our Heavenly High Priest. He only took on that exalted position when He shed His own blood, in lieu of the shedding of the blood of animals, for the remission of our sins. That is why Moses, as we find in verse five, was admonished to construct the tabernacle according to the pattern of that in the heavens. The sacrificial ordinances which were then carried out in this tabernacle, were mere examples and shadows of the heavenly things which had at that time not been revealed by God.

We see in verse two that Christ was just as much a minister of the sanctuary in the true tabernacle, as were the earthly priests in the earthly tabernacle.

Verse three informs us that just as the earthly High Priest had gifts to offer, so must also the Heavenly High Priest.

Verse four then shows us that if our Lord were still on earth after He had become our High Priest, He wouldn't be a

priest, because there would still have been the earthly High Priests there to offer the required gifts according to the Law.

Verse six then explains that having obtained a more excellent ministry than the earthly High Priests, Christ became the mediator of a much better covenant than that under which the earthly High Priests operated, simply because the New Covenant was based upon better promises.

This was the area in which the Old Covenant was deficient. It relied on a substitute blood offering, whereas the New Covenant relied on the reality of Christ's suffering and shedding of His own precious blood.

Thus the situation was rectified by the implementation of the NEW COVENANT.

At this point in our study I am going to quote the entire 10th chapter of Hebrews from the NIV translation, as it sets forth and clarifies the entire situation. Read it carefully and prayerfully;

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'"

First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).

Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.

And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under

foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

A study of this NEW Covenant reveals SEVEN important factors:-

1. It was an UNCONDITIONAL covenant. This means that its fulfilment and operation had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the party with whom it was made. It depends entirely on God's Promise, which we can't change even if we wanted to.

2. It was based on better promises. These are listed in Hebrews 8:10-12, as the expression of God's Will:-

- (a) I WILL put my law into their minds.
- (b) I WILL write my law in their hearts.
- (c) I WILL be their God.
- (d) I WILL be merciful to their unrighteousness.
- (e) I WILL completely forget their sins and iniquities.

3. It was based on a better sacrifice. Under the Old Covenant, the sacrifice was dead both before and after it was offered. The NEW covenant was based on a LIVING sacrifice. The lamb of the Old covenant stayed dead, and could only atone once. The Lamb of God of the NEW Covenant rose from the dead, and remains alive as a continuous and everlasting atonement.

No wonder God calls it a BETTER covenant. This is clearly expressed in Hebrews 9:11-28. (NIV).

"When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.

When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."

In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

4. Like the OLD covenant, it was made specifically with “The House of Israel and the House of Judah”. This specifies the entire nation of Israel, and cannot in any way be changed to apply to what is called “the church”. It is a purely NATIONAL COVENANT, applicable to a specific NATION, and under no circumstances can, or should it, be used simply in a personal manner.

5. It is to be written on our ‘hearts of flesh’, and the ‘stony heart’ is to be taken away. Ezekiel 11:19-20 tells us;

“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.”

This is what the ordinance of circumcision represents.

6. It is a Law Covenant, just the same as the Old Covenant. This feature has not changed. (Read Exodus 24:3-8; Ezekiel 11:20; Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16.) It did not abolish God’s Laws of commandments, statutes, and judgments. They are still in operation. What it abolished was the ‘laws contained in ordinances’, or the rituals, and these laws ONLY. We read in Ephesians 2:15; and Colossians 2:14;

“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” . . .

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

between the land which God refers to as His land, and the land which the present occupants refer to as “my” land. We read of the take-over of “God’s land” by the usurpers in Ezekiel 11:15;

“Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.”

It was the whole House of Israel that was thrown out by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are quite deliberately NOT identified in any way as belonging to the genuine House of Israel! They even gave away the fact of their false identity by bringing into use the name “Israeli”. Just as the “i” on the end of the name of the priest Eli means “My God”, so the “i” added on the end of the word “Israel” by the usurpers indicates “my (or their) Israel”. This differentiation should be kept in mind at all times. Some few years ago I remember reading a statement by one of the world’s leading evangelists to the effect that Moses led the Israeli’s across the Red Sea. No wonder people are confused.

The “Land of Israel” is the land where God’s True Israel people dwells. That there is such a land is abundantly clear by the statements in Deut. 32:8-9, and II Samuel 7:10;

“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

“Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.”

These are the “mountains of Israel” to which Ezekiel continually refers throughout his prophesies.

The present so-called “land of Israel” will not escape, because the present usurping inhabitants have convinced the

entire world that they are the one and only true Israel. What a shock they about to received!

There is not one statement in God's Word that would lead us to believe that these people are to be "rehabilitated". The following references are quite clear in their pronunciation that God fully intends to absolutely destroy these usurpers whom He designates as His enemies, and "The Synagogue of Satan".

Exodus 17:16; "Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Numbers 24:20; "And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever."

Deuteronomy 25:17-19; "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.

Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it."

Isaiah 34:1-5. (NASB); "Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.

For the LORD'S indignation is against all the nations, And His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. So their slain will be thrown out, And their corpses will give off their stench, And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.

And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also

wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.

For My sword is satiated in heaven, Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom, And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction."

(emphasis added).

How can people possibly expect Almighty God to champion and prosper and protect His sworn enemy who has persistently and deliberately, over thousands of years, done everything possible to destroy the very nations who have been the sole upholders, guardians, and teachers, of His Holy Word??

When He sees His enemies' final assault on His people, why shouldn't He get well and truly mad?

They have sown the wind, and they shall just as surely reap the whirlwind.

Nobody opposes God with impunity! As we read in Ezekiel 38:18-19;

"And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken."

The following scriptures give full support to the above.

Joel 2:1-11; **"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;**

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

Joel 2:30-31; "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."

Joel 3:14-16; "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

Revelation 16:13-14; "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out

of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

In verses 19 and 20 of Ezekiel's 38th chapter, we read of “a great shaking”.

“For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.”

The word “shaking”, as defined in Strong's #7494, means; “Vibrating, uproar, commotion, confused noise, earthquake, fierceness, quaking, rushing.” Now one doesn't need a University degree to observe that our present world is in exactly this position, currently experiencing every one of the above characteristics. I would dare to say that there has never been a time in history when there has been more confusion and uproar as now. And this is particularly applicable to God's Anglo-Israel nations who are experiencing unprecedented breakdowns in every sphere of our lives - morally, spiritually, economically, and politically. The power of the holy people has well and truly been scattered as prophesied by the prophet Daniel;

“And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an

half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?

And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

We observe also that these are mostly the signs described in the following statements from God's Word.

Luke 21:25-26; "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

Exodus 19:16; "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled."

Judges 5:4; "LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water."

I Samuel 14:15; "And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling."

Psalms 77:18; "The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook."

Habakkuk 3:10; "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high."

Even nature itself is exploding under the forces of ever increasing earthquake activity, which will culminate in the great earthquake spoken of by the prophet in Zechariah 14:4;

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

A time of dramatic “shaking” is foretold in Isaiah 2:10-21;

“Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the

glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.”

Haggai 2:6-7 reinforces this condition;

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

It is more than interesting to note that in just about every one of these references, what happened was because of “the presence of the Lord.” We also note that in many of these, the statement is allied to the return of our Lord.

Ezekiel 38:21-22 sets out quite graphically the culmination of all these events as far as Gog and his agencies and allies are concerned.

“And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother.

And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.”

As a result of the fury which has come up upon the face of the Lord because of what the enemy has been, and is doing against His Chosen Israel people, we find that it is the Lord Who calls for the sword to be used. The phrase “every man's sword shall be against his brother” is of special interest here. Does this indicate internal revolt within the forces of Gog? I think not. They won't have time to organise such a scenario. This phrase, I believe, is a direct reference to the statement of Esau made several thousand years ago, as recorded in Genesis 27:41;

“And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.”

In verse 22 which we quoted above, we find that God first of all pleads with the enemy through the use of pestilence and blood. They are given one final chance to repent. Cannot we recognise the fulfilment of this in what is now happening in the present ill-conceived State of Israel. The pestilence of suicide bombings, with the resultant shedding of blood, exactly fits this warning. But these people are by now too far entrenched in their anti-God plans to take any warning from this, and so the full force of God's fury is now to be unleashed. God now reveals these instruments of destruction to be an overflowing rain of "great hailstones", "fire" and "brimstone."

The phrase "great hailstones" appears only three times in the entire Scriptures. The first two instances are found in Ezekiel 13:10-16;

"Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:

Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.

So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;

To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD."

It would do well for modern theologians to carefully re-examine this statement, as they appear to be in dire trouble.

The third occurrence of this phase is in the verse we are studying, Ezek. 38:22.

The word "hailstones" on its own is only mentioned twice in the Bible, in Joshua 10:8-11, and Isaiah 30:29-30;

"And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

"Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel.

And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones."

The phrase "fire and brimstone" is found only 7 times.

Psalm 11:6; "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

Ezekiel 38:22; "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him,

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and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

Luke 17:29; “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”

Rev. 14:9-11; “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

Rev. 20:10; “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Rev. 21:8; “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Rev. 19:20-21; “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

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It will be noted that in EVERY instance, the phrases "great hailstones", "hailstones", and "fire and brimstone" are used in the context of death and destruction!

Thus we see that when God acts in the full fury of His wrath against those who have conspired to eliminate both the Lord and His anointed people Israel, He uses the weapons of nature against which the enemy has absolutely no defence.

The evidence of God's power and majesty shocked even the great prophet Elijah as we read in I Kings 19:9-13;

"And Elijah came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

We are on the very verge of witnessing this same power and majesty again. And only then will we, as a nation, turn to our God, and listen to the "still small voice" telling us,

This is the way. Walk ye in it!

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III am now following Dr Bullinger by placing the story of the raising of Lazerus at this point. It is a story dear to each one of us, and I am using most of the thoughts of F.F.Bruce.

Lazerus falls ill (John 11: 1-5)

John 11: 1-2 FFB. *There was a man who was ill, Lazarus by name, of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with myrrh and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill).*

The signal for Jesus to leave His retreat in Transjordan and return to the main scene of action in Judaea was not long in coming. It took the form of a message from Bethany, letting him know that Lazarus, a friend of his, was ill.

This is the first time that the family of Bethany finds mention in this Gospel, but the Evangelist knows that some of his readers have heard of at least one member of the family. Mary, one of the two sisters of Lazerus, on a memorable occasion poured myrrh over Jesus's feet and wiped them with her hair. This was such an extraordinary thing to do that those who heard of it were never likely to forget it. The Evangelist, who records the incident later (John 12: 3), had presumably told the story already (no doubt with other stories to be written down eventually in his Gospel) in the companies of Christians among whom he moved. So, on mentioning Lazarus for the first time, he says, in effect, 'You will know whom I mean if I tell you that he was the brother of that Mary who anointed the Lord.'

Bethany near Jerusalem, on the other side of Olivet, less than two miles along the road to Jericho, has not been mentioned in John's record before this.

John 11: 3-5. So Lazarus's sisters sent a message to Jesus: 'You should know, Lord, that the one whom you love is ill.' When Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness is not mortal; it has come for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.' (Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.)

This family in Bethany, though unmentioned earlier in this Gospel, was evidently well known to Jesus and well loved by him. It was natural, then, that when Lazarus fell ill, his sisters should get in touch with Jesus at once.

The vocative *kyrie* ('Lord') was so widely current as a courteous mode of address that it is doubtful if it should be translated here by any stronger term than 'sir'. If, (as is probable) the sisters spoke in Aramaic, then the natural mode of address would have been *Rabbi*.

Jesus reaction to the news must strike the reader as strange, but the explanation of it can be read, if at all, only between the lines of John's record. This is the last of the signs preceding the passion of Jesus in which the divine glory was manifested through him, and it this aspect of the incident that is uppermost in the Evangelist's account throughout. To say that the illness was not mortal (literally, 'not unto death'), when in fact Lazarus must have died shortly after the message was despatched, and Jesus knew that he had died, makes the reader pause and think. The disciples at first could take the words only as written in the letter, but the reader is better informed. One might take the meaning to be: This illness is not so much one that will terminate in death as one that will demonstrate the glory of God. There is ample evidence that the biblical idiom in which 'not ... but' means 'not only ... but also'. But the words mean more than that: the glory of God was to be demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus from death, so that while the illness resulted in temporary death, it resulted more impressively in resurrection and life.

The parenthetic statement that Jesus loved all three members of the family was intended to show that it was not lack of love or concern for them that made him react to the news as

he did. (The verb rendered 'love' in **verse 5** is *agapao*, whereas in **verse 3** it is *phileo* – sufficient evidence that, once more, John makes no distinction between the two verbs.)

It is an interesting coincidence, though no more than a coincidence that the three names (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus) were found in 1873 in ossuary inscriptions in one tomb near Bethany.

Going back to Judaea John 11: 6-16

John 11: 6, 7. *So when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed for two days in the place where he was. Then, after that, he said to the disciples, 'Let us go back to Judaea.'*

Jesus remaining where he was for two days after receiving the news of Lazarus's illness presents another problem. The problem was felt by both the sisters, whose first words on meeting Jesus, one after the other, were, *'If you had been here, my brother would not have died.'*

It may be said that the record of this delay brought reassurance to Christians of a later generation, who were disappointed because they and their friends had to pass through death before experiencing the expected entrance into resurrection life. But this does not account for the delay in the historical situation. If the problem were put to the Evangelist, he might well have replied (in words which he uses elsewhere), *"He himself knew what he was going to do."* (**John 6: 6**). When the two days were past, then Jesus proposed to the disciples' astonishment that they should go back to Judaea.

John 11: 8. *The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, only the other day the Judaeans were trying to stone you. Are you going back there?'*

The reference to the attempt to stone him is to the incident at the festival of Dedication, recorded in **John 10: 31**, when Jesus' claim, *"I and the Father are one"* provoked this hostile reaction on the part of 'the Jews'. (But the mention of Judaea in **verse 7** suggests the translation 'the Judaeans' here, as in **7: 1**). Why, the disciples asked, should he venture into the lions' den again? Could he not cure Lazarus from a distance?

John 11: 9-10. Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If one walks about in daytime, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. If one walks about by night, he stumbles, because he has no light.'

Jesus' answer is remarkably similar to his words in John 9: 4, in relation to the blind man and his impending cure: 'We must work when no one can work.' The blindness then and the illness now were means for the display of God's glory. The present words have an obvious surface meaning: those who walk in the daytime do not stumble against obstacles because the light of the sun shows them where they are going: people who go out in the dark are liable to stumble because they cannot see obstacles in their path. But there is a deeper meaning, where the true light of the world and not the light of this world is involved; one who shuts his eyes to the true light not only 'has no light' but 'the light is not in him'. The light of the sun shines from the sky; the true light shines within (cf. 1 John 2: 8). In the present context, Jesus must follow the path of the Father's will while life lasts; it may be the eleventh hour of daylight, but that is no reason for staying in retirement.

John 11: 11-13. *These were his words, and then he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep: but I am going to wake him up.' The disciples said to him, 'If he has fallen asleep, Lord, he will recover. (Jesus had spoken of his death, but they supposed that he was speaking about resting in sleep.)*

The use of sleep as a metaphor for death became, and remains, a common Christian figure of speech, so common, indeed, that we may think that the disciples were unusually obtuse not to grasp what Jesus meant. But perhaps the figure of speech was not so familiar to them; we may recall the bystanders' incredulous scorn when Jesus said that Jairus's daughter was 'not dead, but asleep' (Mark 5: 39; F.F.Bruce comments that a different word for 'asleep' is used there from that found here is immaterial). That the man who was ill should have fallen asleep seemed to the disciples to be a promising sign.

John 11: 14-16. *Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus has died; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'*

Jesus implies that, if he had been present in Bethany, Lazarus would not have died. As it is, however, the disciples will see such a manifestation of the glory of God as will kindle their faith, and for that he is glad. So, he said, '*Let us go to him*'. Thomas's permission and loyalty are both expressed in his words to the others. Thomas (*t'oma*) is the Aramaic word for 'twin'; *didymos* is the Greek word (cf. 20: 24; 21: 2). The wording here and elsewhere suggests that in Greek-speaking circles Thomas was called Didymos (Didymus), just as Cephas was called Petros (Peter). Judaea is the place where the final manifestation of the divine glory in the incarnate Word is to be given; by the same token it is the place of Jesus death. From the place of withdrawal from the world Jesus goes back to manifest himself to the world, and to do so more fully than when he went up to Jerusalem for the festival of Tabernacles (John 7: 4). Thomas betrays some inkling of this truth, but if his master is to die, he has no wish to survive him.

Arrival at Bethany (John 11: 17-27)

John 11: 17-19. *So Jesus came and found that he had already been four days in the tomb. (Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs distant.) Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them over their brother.*

Perhaps on this occasion too Jesus had waited until his 'hour' had come (cf. John 2: 4; 7:6) – in this case the 'hour' when one of those in the tombs would hear his voice and come forth (John 5: 28 f.).

The belief is attributed to rabbis of a later date that the dead person's soul revisited the tomb during the first three days but left it permanently from the fourth day onwards; death was then irreversible. It is possible that such a belief is implied in the further reference to Lazarus's four days entombment in verse 39.

A 'furlong' (Greek *stadion*) was about 202 yards 9 inches in length; 15 'furlongs' would thus be equivalent to rather less than a mile and three-quarters. This is the exact distance between Jerusalem and Bethany. If Jesus came up the Jericho road from his Transjordan retreat, he would arrive at Bethany shortly before the road reached its terminus in Jerusalem.

The 'Jews' who had come to visit Lazarus's sisters and condole with them were their Judaean friends and neighbours: the word is used here with no theological overtones.

John 11: 20. *So, when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat still at home.*

The portrayal of the two sisters' character and temperament in this Gospel agrees in general with that in Luke's record, where Mary sits at Jesus' feet while Martha is busily engaged with housework (Luke 10: 38-42).

John 11: 21-22. *So Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that, whatever you ask from God, God will give it to you.'*

Martha uses the language of faith. If Jesus had been there at the time, Lazarus would not have died: this is not a complaint; it is an expression of her faith in Jesus' power. It is the same faith that finds voice in her assurance that God will grant Jesus whatever request he makes. She does not say, 'If you ask God to restore my brother to life, he will grant your request'; but it is implied that she had this in her mind. Her assurance in this respect has been compared to the assurance underlying the order given to the servants at Cana by Jesus' mother: 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2: 5).

John 11: 23-26. *Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' 'I know', said Martha to him, 'that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even if he dies, and no one who lives and believes in me will ever die. Do you believe this?'*

Martha takes Jesus' assurance, 'Your brother will rise again', to be a conventional word of comfort and hope such as was current among Jews who believed in the resurrection of the dead. Thanks to the influence of the Pharisees and those who followed their line, this was now the general belief among Jews, in spite of the Sadducean resistance to it; and it has remained an article of Jewish orthodoxy to this day. Jesus, of course, fully shared and proclaimed the belief in resurrection as is shown by

the Synoptic account of his encounter with the Sadducees in the temple precincts (Mark 12: 18-27). Martha, as is seen from her answer shared the resurrection hope; *'I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.'* The resurrection on the last day has been mentioned repeatedly by Jesus in earlier discourses in this Gospel, with this addition: he himself is the one who will raise the dead then, for the Father has authorised him to do so (John 5: 21, 25-29, 6: 39 f.). Martha's answer was one of intelligence and faith, and it called forth from Jesus a further assurance, which went beyond the accepted belief in the resurrection of the dead.

The death of Lazarus, with its impending sequel of resurrection, is to be a paradigm of the grant of eternal life to all believers in Jesus. In the discourse following the healing of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus claimed the authority, given to him by the Father, to recall to resurrection on a coming day those who lie in their tombs. Not only that, but here and now to give life to the dead who *'hear the voice of the Son of God'* (John 5: 25). So here there is a further reference to the twofold aspect of the raising of the dead. But now Jesus is not only the one who effects the resurrection and bestows life; he is himself the resurrection and the life. Just as in the Capernaum discourse following the feeding of the multitude he not only gives the bread from heaven; he is himself that living bread (John 6: 27, 35).

It seems that the two statements made by Jesus after his claim to be the resurrection and the life, while parallel, are not synonymous. Moreover, C.H.Dodd has made the attractive suggestion that the former of the two elucidates the claim *'I am the resurrection'*, while the latter elucidates the claim *'I am the life'*, thus: I am the resurrection: he, who has faith in me, even if he dies, will live again. I am the life: he who is alive and has faith in me will never die.' The believer in Jesus who undergoes physical death will nevertheless live. This is more than an announcement of the general resurrection on the last day; this looks forward to Jesus' own rising from the dead and affirms that believers in him, being united to him by faith, will share his risen life even though they experience bodily death. More than that, so far as sharing his risen life, this possession of eternal life, is concerned, it is a life which knows no death. As Jesus has already said, *'any one who keeps my word will never see death'* (John 8: 51). Mortal life must come to an end; the life

that is life indeed endures forever. Here is an anticipation of the promise to be given in the upper room: '*because I live, you will live also*' (John 14: 19).

John 11: 27. '*Yes, Lord*', she said to him, '*I assuredly believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who was to come into the world.*'

Did Martha believe what he told her? She could accept it by faith, but she could not understand it, any more than any other disciple of his could understand it before he rose from the dead. But, asked about her faith, she confessed her faith in the person who was speaking to her. Like Andrew, she confessed him as the Messiah (John 1: 41); like Nathanael, she confessed him as the Son of God (John 1: 49). He was the one whose coming Moses and the prophets foretold (John 1: 45); now he had come.

On the way to the tomb (John 11: 28-37)

John 11: 28-31 *With these words she went off and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, 'The Teacher has come; he is calling for you.' When Mary heard this she rose up quickly and made her way to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. So the Jews who were with Mary in the house, consoling her, seeing that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her; they supposed that she was going to the tomb to weep there.*

Evidently Jesus' arrival was not yet generally known, and Martha did not want the crowd of sympathising visitors to know that he had come. Hence the secrecy with which she had told Mary that he had arrived and wanted to see her. ('The Teacher', ie, 'the Rabbi', was the way in which they normally spoke of him and addressed him). But Martha's attempt to keep his arrival secret was frustrated, for the visitors thought that Mary was setting out for the tomb and went after her, no doubt with the intention of continuing their consolation there.

John 11: 32. *So, when Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, 'If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died.'*

Mary uses the same words as Martha had used not long before. It is likely that they had said this to each other several times since Lazarus died: 'If the Teacher had been here, our brother would not have died.' Martha had gone on to make an even more positive declaration of faith; Mary says nothing more, but it would be precarious to draw conclusions about the two sisters' varying state of mind. On each occasion where Mary of Bethany appears in the Gospels, she is at Jesus' feet (cf. Luke 10: 39; John 12: 3).

11: 33-37. *So, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became deeply agitated in spirit and shook with emotion. 'Where have you laid him?' he said. 'Lord, come and see', they said to him. Jesus burst into tears. So the Jews said, 'Look, how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not this man, who opened the blind man's eyes, have prevented him from dying?'*

The verb *embrimaomai*, translated here 'became deeply agitated', means literally 'snort (with indignation)' and regularly indicates displeasure of some kind. (In Mark 14: 4 it expresses the spectators' indignation at the 'waste' of the precious ointment in Simon the Leper's house in Bethany.) Here it points to Jesus' inward reaction ('in spirit'); but what was the cause of his displeasure? Most probably it was the presence of sickness and death, and the havoc they wrought in human life. On this occasion, no doubt, their effect was to be overruled by God for his glory (see verses 4, 40); but their effect was plainly to be seen in the grief of Mary and her friends. So powerful was Jesus' emotional reaction to the spectacle that he 'shook' (literally 'troubled himself') under the force of it. Not only did he shake, but when he was shown (in response to his question) where the body of Lazarus was, he burst into tears (this seems to be the 'ingressive' sense of the aorist).

Some commentators have found it difficult to suppose that he, who is presented in this Gospel as the incarnate Word, knowing what he was going to do, should be genuinely moved by sorrow and sympathy (as others might at the graveside). They have put his tears down to some other cause – anger and frustration, perhaps, at the blindness and lack of faith that he saw in those who were around at the time. But the friends and neighbours who were there had no doubt about the cause of his

tears: he was weeping for a dearly loved friend. 'Look, how he loved him!' they said. Some indeed thought, and not unnaturally, that such a healer as he already had shown himself to be might have done something to prevent his friend from dying. In truth, the reader may feel some surprise that Jesus, who was so completely in command of the situation, and knew that the glory of God was about to be manifested in a signal manner, should nevertheless shed tears of grief for a departed friend and his mourning relatives, as anyone else might do. But in him the eternal Word became truly *incarnate* and shared the common lot of mankind. Our Evangelist would have agreed completely with the writer to the Hebrews that Jesus is well able to sympathise with his people's weaknesses, having been tested himself in the school of suffering. It was in sympathy with those who wept that he also wept. Here is no automaton, but a real human being.

John 11: 38. So Jesus, again deeply agitated within himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone had been placed over it.

The tomb was a hollow in the rock, the entrance to which was blocked by a stone of suitable size and shape, which fitted into it more or less like a cork. The description is quite like that of the tomb in which the body of Jesus himself was later laid. In the fourth century a church was built over the crypt which was believed to be the tomb of Lazerus; it was called the Lazareion (from which is derived the Muslim name of the village, El-Azariyeh). The opening in the hillside which is shown to visitors today as the tomb may or may not be authentic, but if it is, its present condition tells us little about its appearance or arrangement in AD 30.

John 11: 39-42. 'Take away the stone said Jesus. 'Lord', said Martha (sister of the dead man), 'by this time there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that, if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. For my part, I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have spoken because of the crowd standing around, so that they may believe that thou hast sent me.'

Martha, practical as ever, points out that the effect of removing the stone, as Jesus had directed, would be unpleasant. Jesus reminds her of his promise. The actual words he uses now are more reminiscent of what he had said to the disciples earlier (verse 4), but they sum up the substance of the assurance he had given to Martha (verses 23-26). Evidently Martha now gives her consent to the removal of the stone, and it is removed.

Jesus does not pray that Lazarus may be raised from death at his word; it is implied that he has already prayed for this, and that he is assured of the granting of his prayer. He has no need to pray aloud to God: he does so now for the benefit of the bystanders, '*so that they may believe that thou hast sent me*' (cf. John 17: 21). The raising of the dead is a divine prerogative which the Father shares with the Son (cf. John 5: 21; 25-29), and it is important that the bystanders should understand this. So, in their hearing, he thanks God for having heard him.

John 11: 43, 44. *Saying this, he called with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out here!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound in winding sheets and his face wrapped round in a napkin. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go free.'*

The shout that calls Lazarus back to life is a parable of that coming day when all who are in the tombs will hear the same quickening shout and come out. It is only a parable, because Lazarus is called out to a renewal and continuation of mortal life, whereas those who hear the shout on the last day are called out to resurrection life. But before resurrection life could be imparted to others, Jesus himself must be raised from the dead. The difference may be indicated by the fact that, when Jesus was raised, the graveclothes were left behind in the tomb (John 20: 5-7). The body of Lazarus, like the body of Jesus later, had been swathed in winding sheets (Greek *keiriai*, not used elsewhere in the NT), and a napkin (*soudarion*, a loanword from Latin *sudarium*, 'sweatrag') had been wrapped round his head. He was still impeded by these as he made his way blindly out of the cave in the direction of the voice that had called him. Much need, then, that helping hands should unwind the cloths and the napkin, so that Lazarus could see and walk about freely.

The spectators' reaction (John 11: 45-46)

John 11: 45-46. So many of the Jews who had come to Mary and had seen what he did believed in him. But some of them went off to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

The account of the raising of Lazarus raises a number of questions to which no answer is given. The raising of Lazarus is the climax of the series of 'signs' that characterise John's record of Jesus' public ministry, serving as manifestations of the divine glory that is resident in the incarnate Word. I looked up the word 'incarnate', and it means simply to cause to become a bodily shape, to become flesh, and so the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. The ultimate Man. At the same time it precipitates the series of events which culminate in the passion narrative.

At such a revelation of the glory of God (cf. Verses 4, 40), it was not surprising that many believed in Jesus: Whatever doubts they might have had before, it was now plain that he was the Sent One of God. '*The Jews who had come to Mary*' are presumably those who had left the house and followed her, '*supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there*' (verse 31).

Even if we read, as other authorities have it, '*the Jews who had come with Mary*', it is the same persons that are meant. But some went off and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done: it is implied that they did so with no friendly intention (the more so as they are set in contrast with the many who believed).



Most people want to serve God,

but only in an advisory capacity.



→ THE DAY OF THE LORD. ←

Part Seven.

The Olivet Discourse. Part 4.

by Frank W. Dowsett.

Previously we studied the subject of "The Abomination of Desolation", followed by "the shortening of the days" as recorded in Matthew 24:22.

The balance of our Lord's discourse can be divided into five sections, but in studying them, it is imperative that we understand what is said in the light of the questions which were asked by the disciples. We cannot restrict what is said to the immediate days of that time, as do those who hold what is referred to as the "praetorist" theory of prophecy. Prophecy is still being fulfilled in accordance with the pattern laid down, even as we write and read these words. In fact, present world events cannot be properly understood without a reasonable knowledge and understanding of all that our Lord said in His Olivet discourse. So we move on to the first of these five sections or signs.

1. The sign of the False prophets.

We read of this in Matthew 24:23-28;

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

One of the very first principles which we must accept in the study of prophecy is to be very careful and discerning in what we accept in the way of doctrine and teaching from others. Error will always be presented as truth, and truth shall be attacked as being error. One of Satan's attributes is that of being "the deceiver of the brethren". Never forget it. Always keep in mind the knowledge of the skills necessary to be a deceiver.

"To tell the truth in such a way that people will believe that it is a lie, and to tell a lie in such a way that people will believe it is the truth."

Always bare in mind the oath which is required to be sworn on a court of law. We do not swear just to tell the truth, or to make a statement which in itself is true. We are required to tell the "whole truth", that is, everything that has any bearing on the subject, together with "nothing but the truth". We are, in other words, not allowed to add anything to, or subtract anything from, our testimony. How often do we see in courtroom dramas on the TV the lawyer questioning the witness and insisting on a simple "yes" or "no" answer. And when the witness tries to add anything to his "yes" or "no" in order to put his answer into the correct context, he is immediately cut off and prevented from doing so. Thus, the real truth is perverted, and in fact, he has been forced to break his original oath. I wonder if this would constitute coercion to commit perjury? I well remember an occasion when I was about 17 years of age when I was listening to a minister speaking at a beach open air meeting. I can't remember what it was that he said, but I remember going up to him after the meeting was concluded and asking him about his particular statement. His immediate answer to me was "Do you mean to tell me that you believe everything that is written on the Bible?" I was somewhat taken aback, but said "yes". His reply was that I must then accept that the Bible taught that there was no God, on the grounds that this statement was in the Bible. Now is this true? Is there such a statement in the Bible which says "there is no God"? Yes, there is. So that statement is true. But is it the truth? He was trying to be real clever, with the clear

intent of fooling me. The full statement is found in Psalm 14:1; "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." When I remonstrated with him about this he looked down his nose at me and said, "I wouldn't even have communion with you". Well, lucky me.

I related this personal incident to illustrate just how cunning and perverted some teachers of God's Word can be when it suits them. Something is not true just on the basis that some minister, or self-styled prophet says so. Our Lord Jesus Christ specifically warns us of this danger, and of the necessity of always being alert to the words of false prophets. He pays particular attention to those who blasphemously present people of their own choice as being Christ, as stated in verse 23 quotes above. He also includes in His warning those who themselves falsely claim to be Christ. But at this stage we need to recognise a very important fact. The Greek word which is translated as "Christ" is "*christos*." It literally means "anointed." Let us go back to verse 5 where we read;

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

This literally reads; "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am anointed; and shall deceive many." The same sense applies to our Lord's statement in verses 23 and 24. Whilst there have been a few people over the years who have claimed to actually be "Christ", the main thrust of His statement was concerning those who claimed to be "anointed". Remember, He is speaking here in the context of "false prophets", not of Himself. Now think for a moment. How many people have you, the reader, heard have claimed to be physically Christ? Not many. But how many people have you heard who have claimed to be "anointed", by their expressions of "Thus saith the Lord" and the like. There are thousands of them. They all have the same feature. They all claim to be "anointed" of God in everything they say, irrespective of the fact that another "anointed" person says exactly the opposite.

Verse 24 warns us about these false prophets. The ultimate result of their false teachings, whether they intent it to be or not, is that even God's Elect are deceived, and end up believing a lie. The question should be asked at this stage as to

why the Lord directed His concern at “the very elect.” Why not everybody? Why select a particular group of people?

The word “elect” means, “chosen out, preferred, selected.” (Bullinger’s Critical Lexicon and Concordance of the English and Greek New Testament.). It is so used in every reference in the entire New Testament!! It refers not just to individuals, but to the nation of Israel whom God chose out and preferred from among all the nations of the earth. This is clearly demonstrated by Paul’s statement in II Timothy 2:10;

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

If the “elect” means all Christians, then why is Paul so concerned that the ‘elect’ should also experience the same salvation, if we have to possess salvation to be the ‘elect’ in the first place?

From our present time on history we readily recognise just how successful Satan’s plan has been to deceive God’s true Israel people, His “elect”.

These false prophets are almost always showing the people great signs and wonders. They instinctively know that without them they would never attract people to their meetings. Even our Lord Jesus Christ upbraided the people of His day because all they wanted to see were the signs and wonders and miracles. These took precedence over even the Lord Himself.

The warning concerning these false prophets is not just a New Testament teaching. For instance, read the following;

Deut. 13:1-5; “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee."

My goodness. Wouldn't we have a lot of empty pulpits today! But never allow us to be fooled by so-called miracle workers. Read for yourself the 7th to 9th chapters of Exodus as to the manner in which the magicians of Egypt copied the miracles performed by Moses. There was only one thing that stopped them, and that was when Moses caused the dust to turn into living creatures. The false prophets could not create life. Only God, through His selected and ordained prophets, can lead us to Life. Therein lies the great test of a true prophet.

In verse 25, the greatest of all prophets, our Lord Jesus Christ, tells us that He has already given us fore-warning of this very condition. Thus there is absolutely no excuse for ignorance in these matters. If you allow a false prophet to fool you, then it is simply because you want to be fooled into believing what you want to believe.

Verses 26-27, as re-quoted above, directly relate to our Lord's Second Advent.

"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

What is the main thrust of this statement? He is not going to appear in some out-of-the-way place, such as a desert, where no one will see Him. He is not going to appear in some secret place, such as in a little box above an altar in the local church. His coming will be in the manner of lightning. It will be seen and recognised throughout the entire earth, not just from the north to the south, but from the east to the west. North to south can be a finite distance. But east to west continues

endlessly. As well as this, His coming will "shine". It will be brilliant. If, as we are told in Matthew 13:43;

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

then how much more brilliant will be the appearing of the Lord of Righteousness!!

If these two verses tell us anything, it is most certainly that His coming will not in any way be secret. There is no such teaching as "The Secret Rapture" in the entire Scriptures. This teaching is nothing more than the vain imagination of "false prophets" of which the Lord had just been warning His people!

Now I ask you a question. Why did the Holy Spirit inspire Matthew to add the statement contained in the next verse 28, right at this juncture? Let's read it;

"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

What, we may well ask, has this got to do with the subject? A carcase is a dead body, which is in the process of corruption. This is a process which automatically follows death, whether it be of a human being, or any other living organism. The only exception to this rule is found in respect of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom it was recorded in Psalm 16:10;

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

But what of the "eagles"? Dr. Bullinger says that eagles only feed on living flesh or prey. Thus, as suggested by W.E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary, the vulture is probably intended, as they, rather than an actual eagle, would indeed gather to a decomposing dead body. So what do we conclude regarding the insertion of this verse at this point of the discussion. I suggest that it points to the corruption of Biblical teaching, especially in regard to the circumstances of our Lord's return, where the Word would be corrupted, providing ample food for the vultures who were only too ready to feed upon it.

Here indeed is a glaring example of the work of the “false prophets”. The prophet Ezekiel had no qualms about their position in the mind of God. We read in Ezek. 22:25, and 34:18-19;

“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.”

“Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?

And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.”

So we realise that this unusual verse refers directly and specifically to our Lord’s return, the second question asked by the disciples.

2. The Signs in the Heavens.

We read Matthew 24:29-31;

29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Here is a direct answer to the disciples question as to “what shall be the sign of Thy coming”.

These signs begin AFTER - *meaning immediately following, directly, at once*, - NOT prior to some future time generally referred to as "The Great Tribulation."

a). Firstly, we should carefully note that there is no such phrase in the entire Bible as "The Great Tribulation"! The word "tribulation" appears 22 times throughout the Bible. It means "*to be oppressed with evils, to be distressed.*" It first appears in Deut. 4:30-31;

"When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them."

Here we find Moses referring to conditions in "the latter days". I repeat a rule which I always advocate. If you wish to understand anything in the Bible, refer to the place where it is first recorded. It is "The law of first mention". Clearly, this first reference is of a condition, not an incident. Both in the above passage in Matthew, and the parallel passage in Mark 13:24, the Lord is speaking of a condition which would exist immediately prior to His return, or coming.

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken."

It is the same condition to which the apostle John referred in John 16:33;

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Luke contributes the following in His gospel, as recorded in Luke 21:25-26;

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

(emphasis added in the last few verses.)

Thus we see that this condition of distress and oppression of evil would be a major sign as to the near return of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, this distress would reach such proportions that mankind would be worried sick for fear of the potential for disaster that would exist at that time. The potential for the destruction of the human race is no longer hypothetical. It has became a very real possibility. We already live in an age of terror, and wars, and rumours of wars, with all the horror and uncertainty associated with these conditions. And this very condition is being used of God to achieve His firmly stated intent to destroy the entire Babylonian system under which we now groan. The world’s economy has suffered what could be called a death blow by recent events, despite the “happy-happy” plaudits of our so-called economic experts.

b). The Signs in the Sun, Moon, and Heavens.

These signs are quoted in Matthew 24:29, which we quote again below, and repeated in Mark 13:24-25 and Luke 21:25;

29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:”

It is a matter of history that literal events regarding the sun, moon, and stars occurred as described above in relatively recent times. But there is a more important and meaningful application of these statements when understood from a symbolic point of view. Once again we go back to where this type of statement was first made. It involved Joseph and his family, as recorded in Genesis 37:9-11;

“And he (Joseph) dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.”

From this ‘first mention’ we see that “the sun and moon and stars” symbolised “leadership and authority.” When applied to our present day, we see how prophetic this statement was as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. One could search for a long time to find a period of history which was so marked by the lack of “light” emanating from our national leaders, both civil and religious. The confusion of darkness is a most fitting epitaph for their treason and corruption. The fall of so many leaders, or ‘stars’ from their exalted position has reached the stage of monotony.

But we have recorded there a further statement regarding “the powers of the heavens being shaken”. The key word in the context of what we are studying is “Powers”. This word comes from the Greek “*dunamis*”, from which we derive our English word “dynamo”. We know from modern science that the entire creation is based on the atom. From this we have the word “atomic”. This word takes in the entire subject of nuclear science. Those who died before the end of WW2 would not have understood the implications of this to our present world. But we do. The fear of nuclear warfare is becoming more real every day. As I write this, (May 27, 2002), two of the world’s biggest nuclear powers are on the very brink of warfare. The result of this stand-off will be known by the time this is read. Two of the strongest nations in the world, Russia and America, have just signed a “Nuclear Treaty”, by which they will both reduce dramatically their stores of nuclear weapons. Of course, what we are not informed is that the weapons that will be disposed of will be those which are out of date. So the very real threat remains. No wonder the hearts of man are shaking with fear as we look at the possibilities ahead.

c). The Sign of the Son of Man.

We read of this in Matthew 24:30;

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

There are three distinctly separate events mentioned here. Firstly, there is “the sign of the Son of Man”. Secondly, “all the tribes of the earth mourning”, and thirdly, the actual visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ in great power and glory. The third factor is the only one of the three recorded by the three writers. The first two are recorded only by Matthew. In fact, this phrase, “sign of the son of man” is the only reference to this sign in the entire Bible. So what can this possibly mean? It must have some significance, else it would not be there. And in case some would argue as to the authenticity of the passage’s inclusion on the grounds of having no second or third witness, let me assure you that I have checked the original Greek text, and at least 30 different translation of the New Testament which I have in my library , and ALL of them record this statement as being a part of the original text, and not added for some explanatory purpose, in which case the words involved are printed in italics. It is interesting to note that the NEB translation reads “**Then will appear in the heaven the sign that heralds the Son of Man**”. This rendering probably gives us the best introduction to the subject.

So what are the alternatives here? I know that many well-meaning people have come up with such ‘revelations’ as a great big shining cross, and a company of angels, and many other possibilities. But is there any actual event spoken of in the Bible that would satisfy this situation? Could an understanding of what happened at our Lord’s first advent throw any light on the subject?

We turn to Isaiah 40:1-3;

**“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her,
that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is**

pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD."

That this mission was fulfilled by John the Baptist cannot be disputed. As we read in Matthew 3:1-3;

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Here we have a human being proclaiming the pending arrival of the Son of God in human form. In other words, the human John the Baptist heralded the coming of the human son of man, Jesus Christ. Let's turn for a moment to Eccl. 1:9-10;

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us."

If we would only stick to the principles set forth in God's Word, there wouldn't be so much confusion in understanding it.

If our Lord was heralded by a messenger at His first advent, then why do we not at least consider the real possibility of Him being heralded at His second advent in exactly the same manner? Isn't that exactly the same principle set forth by King Solomon in the above quotation?

But we must settle another question? Where is this heralding to be done? The verse in question explicitly states that the "sign of the son of man" would appear in "heaven" NOT in the "heavens". So what could be meant by "heaven"? I suggest that the clue to this lies in the understanding of some of our THE COVENANT VISION.

Lord's parables. Matthew is the only one of the apostles who uses the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" as distinct from "the kingdom of God", and he uses it 32 times in 31 verses. From a study of these parables, it becomes very obvious that a few of them refer to conditions that could not possibly apply to the perfected Kingdom of God, as do most of the parables. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" applies just as much to the same kingdom as does the phrase "Kingdom of God", but to a different stage in the life of that kingdom. For instance, how do we get "Tares" in the perfected Kingdom of God? See Matthew 13:26-30. How do we get the "bad fish" in that Kingdom? See Matthew 13:47-48. These parables clearly refer to the kingdom in its earthly aspect, prior to it being restored to perfection. On these grounds, I suggest that the heralding of our Lord's second coming is to be earth oriented. That is, it is to originate from some event, or events, which occur on the earth, not something that is visible only in the heavens.

There are only two events of which I can recall which would satisfy this requirement. The first is the call to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, being the first stage, I believe, of what we refer to as "The First Resurrection". The second event, I believe, is the arrival, in person, of the Prophet Elijah, as prophesied to occur by God through His prophet Malachi.

So let us deal briefly with the first of these two events. It is abundantly clear from the reading of Revelation 20:4-6, that the First Resurrection concerns only those who have given their all to and for Christ, and have qualified to become Priests and Kings, reigning with Christ over His Kingdom here on earth;

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

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.” *(Emphasis added).*

It worries me to realise that the great majority of Christians today have no idea of what happens regarding this First Resurrection. The general idea is that every Christian goes to heaven and reigns with Christ. Well, if that is the case, over whom will they be reigning? The Word is very clear as to the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ will be seated on the Throne of David when He returns, and will rule over the whole House of Jacob, or Israel, Israel being His Kingdom here on earth. We have to recognise that this Kingdom will be based on the very same principles as was Israel when they were first formed to be God's Kingdom here on earth. They had a King - God. They had elders - the rulers, and they had people - the citizens. Nothing will, in principle, be changed. How on earth will all these Christians be able to rule over the citizens of the kingdom if they are all rulers in the first place? There'll be no citizens left to rule over. A study of the conditions of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will quickly make this clear. The only ones to gain access will be those who are especially invited. The fact that there will be many outside knocking on the door to get in, each claiming all the works they have done in Christ's name, and being told by the Lord that He never ever had a personal relationship with them, is ample proof of what I have said. We had better wake up to the fact that just because we claim to have a real good relationship with Christ does not in any way guarantee that He had a real good relationship with us. As the reader will conclude, this is a much deeper study than is usually recognised, and I leave it to the reader to use the above as a basis for future private study.

The second of the two events which was mentioned is the return of Elijah. Quite frankly, I am at a complete loss to understand how few Christians, comparatively, accept this fact. God said quite clearly in Amos 3:7 that He would do nothing without revealing His intentions through His servants the prophets.

When we turn to Malachi 4:5-6, we read in unmistakable terms, this statement;

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Now if He intends to send back the prophet Elijah, then how much more clearly could He have revealed it through the mouth of His prophet? Surely the fact that He clearly expressed this intention through the mouth of the prophet Malachi unarguably reveals that this is exactly what He intends to do. Why all the confusion? Just because we may not understand the 'why' and the 'wherefore' doesn't give us an excuse to disregard what God has so clearly stated, surely. This is not the place for a lengthy discourse on this subject, as I have already dealt with the subject in full detail in previous writings, and I only raise it here as it impacts on our study and understanding of the sign of Christ's return.

As stated previously, John the Baptist was used by God as a human herald of the coming of Jehovah/Jesus in the flesh as a human being. We have already pointed out the principle of what Solomon recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes, so why don't we apply that principle here? At His second advent, our Lord Jesus Christ will appear, not as a human man, but as a glorified King, in all His power and majesty. What wonder then if on this occasion He uses a glorified messenger to herald His coming again? It would be exactly the same principle as on the former occasion, only on a much grander scale. Elijah's ministry, as stated by Malachi, would then be to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is to reveal what was in the hearts of the fathers of Israel relative to their utmost faith in God to perform all the covenants and promises that He had made with them, which would in turn result in turning the hearts of the children to an understanding and acceptance of these great and unconditional promises. Could I respectfully suggest that this would bring about the great revival of which so many speak today, and precipitate the statement made in Ezekiel 36:37;

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;"

May that great day come very quickly!

(To be continued).

July/September, 2002.

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With our Christian love,

Frank and Betty Dowsett.

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Then they that feared the LORD
spake often one to another:
and the LORD hearkened, and heard it,
and a book of remembrance was written
before him for them that feared the LORD,
and that thought upon his name.

And they shall be mine,
saith the LORD of hosts,
in that day when I make up my jewels;
and I will spare them,
as a man spareth his own son
that serveth him.

Malachi 3:16-17.

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