

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

A Real Reflection (p.3)

Mysteries and Myths (p.5)

Axe Heads and Chariots (p.7)

A monthly magazine written and published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God’s inspired message to mankind; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God’s world-wide Kingdom.

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A Real Reflection

LAST week, I knocked a picture off our living room wall. Thankfully it wasn't broken, and I was able simply to put it back up. However, at first I had some difficulty – the picture was of a reflection which was so clear that I couldn't work out which way up it should go.

Whether we think about a reflection in nature, or when we speak about one thing being a reflection of another, the concept is the same. The original is the benchmark, the standard, and the reflection will be an image of the same – maybe very clear, maybe not, depending on the material doing the reflecting.

Reflecting God

Throughout the Bible, we are directed to this idea. God has always existed, and He is the standard for what is right and good. He wants men and women to develop characters that reflect His own – and this is what pleases Him.

Interestingly, the physical creation of man and woman is described in this way:

God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27).

Now God used the angels to do His work of creation, which is why when angels appear in the Bible, they simply look like people,



until they do something abnormal by the power of God. We can see the principle from the beginning.

When Israel had been rescued by God from slavery in Egypt, at Sinai God (through Moses) gave them a set of laws to follow. These governed all aspects of their civil and especially religious life. The following explanation is given several times to explain the driving force behind the various laws:

*Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: **You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy** (Leviticus 19:2).*

The underlying reason for the laws was to help Israel to become more like God, more holy and more pleasing to Him. This is also seen when we compare how God described Himself, with what He wants from us.

Moses asked for God to show him what He is like, and this is what he experienced:

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

The prophet Micah summarised what God wants from men and women like this:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

In both cases the key characteristics are justice, truth, goodness and mercy.

The Most Perfect Reflection

We need examples to follow if we are going to reflect God's character. Thankfully, we have the best possible reflection in the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him (John 1:18).

Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3).

This means that we can read about the way Jesus lived and the things he taught, to understand what God is like. Jesus is not the same person as God, and he could have disobeyed God, but he did not. His

is the perfect example of what it is for a person to reflect God.

Future Reflections

Men and women often struggle with this. We are imperfect, and all too often fail to be even a 'blurred' reflection of the character of God. The good news is that God does not expect us to be perfect; He wants us to do our best. When we get it wrong, He will forgive us if we really are trying to reflect Him in our own lives.

The Bible promises that when Jesus returns to raise the dead and set up God's Kingdom, then those who have faithfully tried to reflect God will be blessed. They will share Jesus' immortal nature, and will be relieved of imperfect characters, meaning they can reflect God perfectly, as Jesus does.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3).

The end of this quotation reminds us that, to reflect God properly, we need to be purifying ourselves. A dirty mirror will not give a good reflection – any more than a dirty river or a troubled sea. Pleasing God involves getting rid of things which prevent us from becoming that clear reflection. Thankfully, we have the Word of God to help us direct and 'wash' our lives – let's read it!

Mysteries and Myths

IT WAS a blisteringly hot day as the two friends finished their walk.

“I’m going to buy a Coca Cola.”

“Oh dear! I don’t like that stuff. I have no idea what it’s made of but did you know that if you leave a tooth in it overnight the tooth will be dissolved by morning?”

Coca Cola or ‘Coke’ is drunk worldwide and is massively popular. It was invented in 1886 and its formula has always been a closely guarded trade secret, one which is now worth billions of dollars. The formula was not even written down until 1919, and is now safely locked away in a vault in a museum.

The belief about the tooth is one of many false but commonly quoted myths about this drink. So, there are mysteries and myths about Coke.

Bible Mysteries

Mysteries are described in the Bible, and they are very significant. However, unlike the mystery about the Coke formula, a Bible mystery is not something that is unknown but something very important that has been explained by God. It is something that was not previously understood but has now been divinely revealed.

The word ‘mystery’ is used 27 times in the New Testament. Most times it relates to some aspect of the saving work of Jesus,



the Son of God, and how because of him we can be saved from destruction. For example, the apostle Paul wrote:

He made known to me the mystery... which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel (Ephesians 3:3–6).

Throughout the Bible, from the very first book of Genesis, a saviour was promised who would save people irrespective of their nationality or place of birth: i.e. Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). The apostles state categorically that this saviour is Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16, 26–29, see Genesis 22:18).

While some of Jesus’ fellow countrymen acknowledged that he was their promised



Messiah, they expected him to save them from the Romans there and then. Very few understood that he had even more important saving work to do. He was to be offered as a sacrifice so that they and we could be saved from death and offered everlasting life (see Romans 5:6–10).

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

In fact, Jesus said many times that he would die, but even the twelve disciples did not fully understand (Luke 18:31–34).

The Power of a Revealed Truth

However, once they had seen the resurrected Jesus, the disciples were changed men. They preached fearlessly

and fervently, telling all who would hear that they needed to believe, to repent and to be baptised so that they could be forgiven and saved (Acts 2:38–39, 3:19).

This message runs right throughout the New Testament. There is no mystery or secret about it. It is totally clear. And it is the only hope of salvation that they and we can have, whether Jews or not (Acts 4:10–12).

The disciples were insistent that they were not telling ‘cleverly devised myths’ when they preached the Gospel message. They and hundreds of others were eyewitnesses who had seen the risen Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). Many had also seen the miracles and signs during his ministry.

For we have not followed cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:16, Modern English Version).

The accounts of the life of Jesus and of his teachings have not been lost in time. They were written down not long after they happened and they have been preserved for us. Their impact on the world and their potential impact on us personally far outweigh the benefits of food, drink, technology, medicine or anything else.

Most of us can easily obtain a Bible, maybe even free on the internet. These accounts are not mysteries and they are not myths. We need to take note of them.

Anna Hart

Axe Heads and Chariots

THERE was a group of faithful men, known as the ‘Sons of the Prophets’, who appear throughout the work of Elijah and Elisha. They seem to have tried to be a positive influence, encouraging people into godly ways, when times were often difficult and sometimes dangerous for those who remained faithful to God.

One group had outgrown the place where they had been living and decided to move to Jordan, there to build a suitable place for them all to live. They were going to build the place themselves, and explained their plans to Elisha, and received his blessing. They also persuaded him to go with them, and they reached the place and began to fell trees for their building.

One of their number was cutting down a tree when the head came off his axe and it fell into the water. It would have been a problem at any time, as tools were highly prized and valuable, especially to people who seem to have had a simple lifestyle. It was made worse by the fact that the axe was borrowed: it could not now be returned.

The man who had lost the axe told Elisha about it. Elisha asked where the axe head had fallen. When the place was pointed out, Elisha cut a stick and threw it to the place. The Bible records simply but amazingly that he “made the iron float”.



The man who had lost the axe head was able to pick it up and restore it to the handle, and presumably continue the work of building the new home for the sons of the prophets.

Elisha – the ‘Spy’

Later, at a time when again there was war between Syria and Israel, the king of Syria was consulting his counsellors, planning where he would camp for the battle. However Elisha was able to relay this to the king of Israel, so that Israel were able to avoid the place and ensure they could pass safely.

Not surprisingly, this troubled the king of Syria: he suspected that one of his servants

was the traitor, and sought to find the offender:

Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? (2 Kings 6:11).

His servants were able to reply that it was not any of them, but the real source of the information was something he would find more difficult to deal with:

None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom (v12).

This was long before modern espionage techniques, and Elisha's knowledge was inexplicable to normal people. The king of Syria was most unhappy about this. Obviously Elisha had to be removed in some way, so where was he? His servants knew that he was in Dothan. This was only a few miles from Samaria, the capital of Israel, so a great army was sent to surround Dothan and bring Elisha back to Syria.

Besieged!

They arrived by night, and surrounded Dothan so that no one would be able to get in or out. When Elisha's servant awoke in the morning, Dothan was under siege. A vast number of horses and chariots were set out all around the city. He asked Elisha:

Alas, my master! What shall we do? (v15).

The answer he was to receive should be a great encouragement for all people who put their trust in God. Elisha remained calm and confident:

Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them (v16).

The Lord Jesus told a parable about kings going to battle, making careful calculations about whether they would be able to win.

What king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace (Luke 14:31–32).

Elisha was about to demonstrate the truth of that principle.

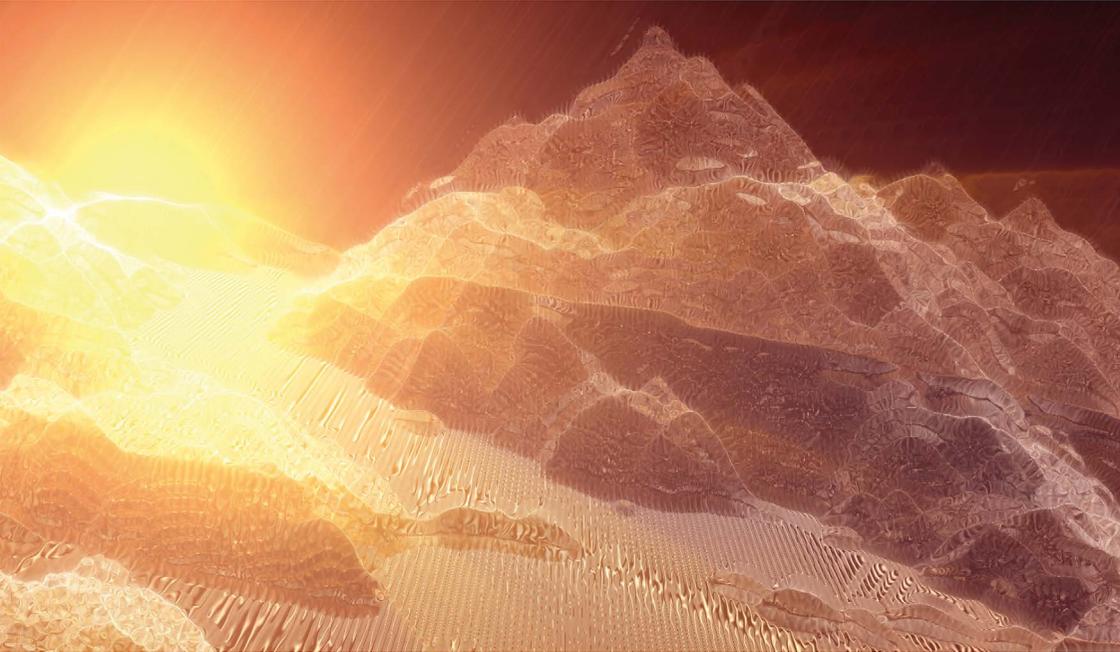
Fiery Chariots

Elisha began his day in prayer, asking the Lord God to help his servant, so that he could see the forces of God, which were ready to save His prophet.

Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (v17).

Presumably the servant was not in this case Gehazi, who we met previously, as he is not named. The miraculous intervention of the Lord God continued, and Elisha was able to escape safely.

The Syrians came into Dothan against Elisha, determined to silence this leak of information to the king of Israel. Elisha asked God to strike them with blindness, which happened, meaning that they were



not able to find their way. Elisha met the blind soldiers and told them that this was not the way to the man they wanted:

Now Elisha said to them, “This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” But he led them to Samaria (v19).

Instead of leading them into Dothan he took them to Samaria – so this Syrian army were right in the middle of Israel’s capital!

Elisha then asked the Lord God to reverse the blindness, to open the eyes of the Syrians. When they were able to see, they saw that they were in the middle of Samaria and they must have been frightened out of their minds!

All Are Saved

The king of Israel wanted to kill them, but Elisha did not allow him to. The king of

Israel would not have killed captives taken in war, so these certainly should be spared. They were to be fed and sent on their way home.

We are not told, but presumably their armour and weapons were removed before they were sent home. It seemed to be an effective course of action, because it stopped further Syrian raids into Israel, at least for the time being.

So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel (v23).

The Syrians had got the message, loud and clear, that “those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Those who have the Lord God on their side are always stronger than those who do not. This was a graphic demonstration of an eternal principle.

Mark Sheppard

The Priestly Blessing

EXCAVATION of ancient tombs can be frustrating, because it's usually the case that they have already been looted. However, occasionally a tomb is found which has escaped the notice of the grave-robbers.

In 1979, archaeologists were investigating a series of caves on the edge of the old city of Jerusalem. They had been used as a communal tomb and had held around a couple of dozen bodies. They had been stripped by grave-robbers long ago, but the archaeologists discovered a corner which had been protected by a section of fallen roof. In this forgotten corner they found a large number of pots and other artefacts, and most exciting of all, two tiny silver scrolls, the largest measuring less than 10cm long.

They were badly corroded and fragile. It took three years to decide how best to open them, but when they were finally unrolled the scientists found, to their huge excitement, that they were inscribed with exquisite ancient Hebrew script.

On the inside of one of the scrolls is a passage from the Bible, identical almost word-for-word to the Bible text:

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

The passage is Numbers 6:24–26. These were the words with which the priests used to bless the people, and Jews know it as the 'priestly blessing'.

Lucky Charms

Analysis of the metal and high-resolution photographs of the script led researchers to the conclusion that the scrolls date from around 600 BC. They were placed in the tomb just a few years before the city was destroyed and its population killed and captured by the Babylonian army. This makes them the oldest known written Bible text.

The question arises – what were they for? Why inscribe the text on silver, so small that it can barely be read by the naked eye, and then roll it so tightly that it can't be read? The answer, archaeologists believe, is that they were not meant to be read – they were amulets or charms to confer on their owner God's protection in life (and it seems, from the fact that they were buried with their dead owner, in the afterlife).

But that is no way to treat the Bible.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).

When we open our hearts to God's word and let it work in our lives it is transforming and energising and "able to make us wise for

The smaller of the two amulets, known as Ketef Hinnom II



--הברו (כ)
 -אניהו-
 -ר יה (ו)
 --לעה-
 -שיברכ
 יהוה ו
 (י)שמרכ
 יה אר יה
 (וה) פניו
 (אל) יכ וי
 שמ לך ש
 לו (מ) --

 -- --
 --כמ--

 --ר-נ-

salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). It is not a lucky charm.

The Day of God's Wrath

At the time these scrolls were made the Jewish nation had all but turned its back on God. He sent prophets to urge them to mend their ways. One of these prophets was Zephaniah. He foretold the punishment that God was going to bring on his people in graphic terms:

I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured

out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land (Zephaniah 1:17-18).

Shortly afterwards the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. These beautiful little scrolls survive as a testimony to the futility of superstition.

The scrolls are on display in the Israel Museum.

Chris Parkin

The Upper Room

ON the day before he died the Lord Jesus shared a last meal with his disciples. He had already started making preparations for it:

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare, that you may eat the Passover?" And he sent out two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us" (Mark 14:12-15).

When all was ready and they were seated Jesus said, *"With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15).*

Jesus knew that his end was near, but having spent three years with his disciples, why did he treat this occasion with such urgency? The language he used is strong. One translator puts it this way: *"How I have longed to eat this Passover with you."*

The Son of God desired, longed for, was passionate not only to eat the Passover meal, but to do so with his disciples, notwithstanding the fact that he knew one of them would betray him and another deny him and they would all abandon him.

I believe that by engaging in this feast the Lord wanted to impress upon the disciples the main part of his teaching over the past three years, and if we look at the Gospels we shall see how he demonstrated this.

Forgiveness

Jesus told them that one of them would betray him and Matthew tells us that they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to him, *"Lord, is it I?" (26:22).* Jesus did not announce to the group, but he quietly told John:

"It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon (John 13:26).

Commentators suggest that it was customary for the host of a meal to give the first piece of bread to someone of importance who would be sitting next to them. If Judas was sitting next to the Lord and partook of the bread first, could it be a sign that Jesus would forgive Judas of this forthcoming betrayal – thereby practising what he had preached to his disciples and followers, that we have to forgive?

Going on a little further to when the Lord was crucified, scripture records that he cried to his Father:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do (Luke 23:34).

During his ministry Jesus had demonstrated on many occasions the need for forgiveness, for instance:

Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven (Luke 6:37).

Humility

Returning to Christ's desire to meet with his disciples in this way, he wanted as far as it was possible to strengthen them for what lay ahead. He had been their guide for three years, and shortly they would be on their own.

In John 13 we have the record of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Peter protested (verse 8). But on an occasion like this it was necessary for Jesus to do it. He explained:

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you (v14-15).

Jesus was demonstrating humility through which he showed his love for them, thus fulfilling the words of scripture:

What does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

Love

Jesus continued:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you



also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35).

He was to demonstrate his love by the great sacrifice that he made.

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends (John 15:13).

So at this feast Jesus stressed the importance of forgiveness, humility and love. And he told them to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

In obedience to this command, down through the centuries his followers have regularly shared bread and wine in memory of their Lord.

This simple feast reminds them of the power and the true wealth of Jesus, their host. They have been graciously invited to his house and offered peace and fellowship with him. It is an honour and privilege to be at the table of the Lord.

Roy Soffe

Ezra

THE BOOK of Ezra recounts the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, led first by Zerubbabel and Joshua and later by Ezra the Scribe. The temple was rebuilt in spite of opposition from adversaries living in the land.

The Cylinder of Cyrus

The Persian monarch, Cyrus I, recorded his exploits on a clay cylinder (shown below), now in the British Museum. The inscriptions on it include his decree made in 536 BC, which allowed the Jews who were in exile in Babylonia and Persia to return to Israel.

This fulfilled God's promise, made through the prophet Jeremiah, that the Jews would

be able to come back from Babylon after 70 years of captivity (see Jeremiah 29:10).

Enemies of Israel

A small number of Jews returned under the initial decree of Cyrus (Ezra chapter 2). These were led by Zerubbabel (a prince of the royal tribe of Judah) and Joshua (the High Priest).

Their first priority was the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of worship, the sacrifices, and the work of the musicians and singers.

However, then as now, the Jews had adversaries around them. These members of local tribes interfered with the rebuilding



of the temple (chapter 4). Later attempts to build a protective wall around the city were prevented, as their adversaries wrote to a new Persian king, Artaxerxes (chapter 4:7), to prevent that happening.

But the temple building got under way when God’s prophets – Haggai and Zechariah – encouraged the Jews to resume the work, and the Persian king Darius I supported that activity.

Ezra the Scribe

Ezra, a priest and scribe of the Law, led a second company of Jews, about 70 years after the initial return.

From chapter 7 onwards, we learn of this and of Ezra’s efforts to reform the

nation. He taught them the word of God and showed them their need for total separation from the false worship and ways of the nations round about them.

In chapter 9 is recorded his moving prayer of repentance on behalf of the people:

And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments... You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve (Ezra 9:10–13).

Norman Owen

By kind permission of ‘The Christadelphian’

Kings of the Medes and Persians		
BC 540		
	Cyrus (1:1)	Zerubbabel and Joshua
530	Cambyses (4:6) Smerdis (4:7)	
520	Darius I (4:24)	Haggai and Zechariah
510		
500		
490		
480	Xerxes I (Esther 1:1)	
470		
460	Artaxerxes I (7:1)	Ezra
450		
440		Nehemiah

Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Ezra 5:1,2 – see Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1.
- ◆ Ezra 5:5 – see Psalm 33:18; 34:15; 1 Peter 3:12.
- ◆ Ezra 9:14 – see 2 Corinthians 6:17; Revelation 18:4.



Three Times in a Nation's History (part 2)

Continued from Glad Tidings edition 1621.

IN PART ONE of this article, we considered how the nation of Israel, in its history and its very survival, is living proof that God is in control of world events. Choosing three events from three different periods (the 'Three Times') we find a consistent picture of Israel suffering at the hands of the superpowers of the time, being defeated and exiled, but being preserved just as God's prophets had foretold.

Last time we considered the Babylonian invasion of 598 BC and the Roman siege of 70 AD. In this concluding part, we think about the Third Time – an attack which is yet to come.

Israel Regathered

In the establishment of Israel, we have witnessed one of the most remarkable

examples of the fulfilment of Bible prophecy in the whole realm of human experience. The Old Testament of the Bible abounds with prophecies of the restoration of Israel in the last days. Let me give you two examples:

I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers (Ezekiel 20:41–42).

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely (Jeremiah 32:37).

Jerusalem today





Masada, scene of the final defeat by Rome in 74 AD

The Lord Jesus Christ himself prophesied the 70 AD attack by Rome upon the Jewish people and what he said is recorded in the 21st chapter of the Gospel of Luke – this is part of it:

They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

‘Gentiles’ means people who are not Jews. Within 40 years of those words being uttered they were fulfilled by the Roman assault upon Israel. Jerusalem was trampled on by Gentiles.

But there is one little word of great significance in the prophecy – it is the word *until*. It reveals that there was a divine limitation upon the period of trampling of the nation. It was to have an end and the end of the exile was to be when the times of the Gentiles ended: “*Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*”

That ending of Gentile times we have seen; it has been demonstrated in the regathering of the dispersed people of Israel

to their own land and the establishment of Jerusalem as its capital.

The proposal I now present is that they have been re-established in readiness for the final assault. As it was for Babylon, as it was for Rome, so it is now.

A Prophecy Still to Happen

This is no speculation. The Bible tells of it in many places.

For example, Zechariah 14 is a highly detailed account of what the future holds for Jerusalem:

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of

the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south (Zechariah 14:1–4).

This has not yet been fulfilled. It could not have been fulfilled by the Nebuchadnezzar invasion and enslavement because the prophecy was given after that event. It was not fulfilled by the Roman captivity because the prophecy and the events do not agree. For example, in AD 70 the Roman army was gathered against the city, not ‘all nations’; in AD 70 there was no earthquake.

The prophecy says that through the invasion and war Israel will be saved, Jerusalem preserved and peace established permanently. But in AD 70 Israel was not saved but instead expelled and exiled for 2,000 years, Jerusalem was not preserved but destroyed almost completely, and peace was not established but war continued and intensified for centuries in the Holy Land.

Nobody, being fair and reasonable, can say that the prophecy outlined in Zechariah

14 has been fulfilled and that means it is still future. In other words, this is about a third time that Jerusalem will be overthrown.

What is written there we have yet to see – and the fact of the restoration of Israel to their own land and their re-constitution as a nation in the family of nations after nearly 2,000 years is a very telling sign that the third overthrow is yet to be enacted.

The Final Conflict and Resolution

Just think what this prophecy foretells. That in this third time a great confederacy of nations is going to invade Israel, attack Jerusalem and capture it. Atrocities are going to be committed. A great many Jews are to be captured and taken captive.

But then God Himself will intervene on the side of Israel.

To Bible readers the little phrase *“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives”* is of great significance. Their minds go at once to the account of Jesus ascending to

The Mount of Olives today



heaven 40 days after his resurrection. His disciples witnessed the event:

While they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10–11).

It speaks for itself – nothing could be plainer – and it corresponds exactly with Zechariah 14.

So, the one who comes to save the nation of Israel is the very same one who ascended into heaven – Jesus the Messiah. Acts 1 describes Ascension Day and Zechariah 14 describes 'Descension Day'.

It means that Christ is coming on God's behalf, the Messiah sent to save the Hebrew nation and to establish the government of God in the earth.

It is the fulfilment of the master purpose of God which is all through the Bible – the Kingdom of God on earth. It means that the Kingdom of God is about to displace and replace the kingdoms of men.

The existence of Israel as a sovereign nation after 2,000 years of exile is the most impressive sign today that the final events are near, and the final time is at hand.

Three times in a nation's history, and the third will bring the salvation of Israel and the world.

Our Time?

The vital question is a deeply personal one. Am I – are you – properly related to the Lord Jesus Christ, who will stand upon the Mount of Olives to save Israel and to be King of the World? Are you a sceptic – an atheist, an agnostic, a doubter, or just indifferent? Or do we wait for him as our coming king?

Jesus gave clear direction as to how we should relate to him.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another... Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me' (Matthew 25:31–36).

As the world moves on towards the hour of destiny it is vital that we are on the side of the Messiah. For with him is the hope of salvation, of living for ever in the Kingdom of God.

Dennis Gillett

Concluded

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