

# Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages  
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## Psalm 48, Mount Zion

*“Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north” (Psalms 48:2).*

King Hezekiah was surrounded “like a bird in a cage.”<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem was besieged by the armies of Assyria led by king Sennacherib in the 7th century BC as recorded in Isaiah chapters 36, 37. To bolster morale within the city, the sons of Korah were directed to compose Psalms of praise and encouragement (Psalms 48:1). The trilogy of Psalms associated with this invasion is Psalms 46, 47, and 48. These were not to be sung in the temple, but as songs “upon Alamo.” That is, songs for the voice of the adolescent girls in the city to sing in the streets after the fashion in which triumphal songs would normally be sung. (See “Psalm 46, A Song upon Alamo,” *Beauties of the Truth*, November 2009; “Psalm 47, Celebrating Victory in the Face of Enemies,” *Beauties of the Truth*, February 2010.)

The reference to public participation in the city with singing, shouting and clapping in portions of these psalms (e.g. Psalms 47:1, 7 invites the whole earth to sing with intelligence; Psalms 48:2 “highly to be praised in the city, note, not just in the temple) clearly alludes to their use by a public chorus that were not the assigned temple singers. This singing was to take place even as the threat of destruction from the siege lay just out of bowshot beyond the city walls. However, Psalm 48 is so direct in its reference to the defeat of the enemy and the details that is very challenging to not see it as a Psalm of celebration following the clear providential deliverance of Jerusalem by the angel of the Lord (Isaiah 37:36).

*“Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised. In the city of our God, in his holy mountain” (Psalms 48:1).*

When we think of God's attributes of Love, Wisdom, Power and Justice it is only natural that all of these should be praised. In this Psalm, all four of these attributes are celebrated. There is a lesson here for God's people. When we meditate upon God's holiness and his character, we should consider all four of his attributes, as did the Psalms' authors. This will give us a balanced picture of God's character and train our renewed minds to approach life's issues as God would approach them.

Power (verse one) is the first attribute that opens the psalm — “Great is Jehovah.” God's power and greatness were first in the minds of all the people who recognized that Jehovah's help alone would keep them preserved against the Assyrian army.

The Wisdom of Jehovah is indirectly referred to in verse five. God's attribute of Love is praised in verse nine. Justice, as set forth in the God's righteousness and judgment, is praised in verses 10 and 11. The “city of God” refers to Jerusalem. The holy mountain refers to the temple mount, mount Moriah, as contrasted with the political and defense citadel of mount Zion which is the ancient city of David at the highest natural elevation of Jerusalem in the southwest corner. For the church, “Jerusalem which is above” (Galatians 4:26) is the city for which we long, and the heavenly kingdom is the “holy mountain.”

*“Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north. The city of the great King” (Psalms 48:2).*

The site of the holy city is indeed beautiful. The city is over 800 feet above sea-level; hence the Biblical phrase to “go up” to Jerusalem. Its elevation is remarkable; occasioned not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous

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hills of Judea, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest tablelands of the country. As the “Joy of the whole earth,” it shall be the center from which radiates the true knowledge of God. This is a source of blessing today to all who accept it.

In Psalms 50:2, Zion is described as the perfection of beauty, and both descriptions are recalled in Lamentations 2:15. Like the ancient singers, we long for that time when Jerusalem will be “the joy of the whole earth.” We know that the promises to the earthly city will be fulfilled. The heavenly Mt. Zion, in the spiritual realm, “the sides of the north,” shall someday be recognized by all earth’s peoples.

Literal Jerusalem was the principal city of Judah as well as its capital. It lay on the extreme northern border of Judah’s territory, thus “on the sides of the north.” Mount Zion was within Judah’s territory, but the city extended beyond Judah’s borders into the territory of Benjamin, where Mt. Moriah served as the site of the temple.

(For the special promise that the Temple would be in Benjamin, and a map showing the division of Jerusalem between Judah and Benjamin, please see, “Between the Shoulders,” *Beauties of the Truth*, November 2009).

The Psalms celebrate the power of Jehovah, and the word “great” is the Hebrew word *gaol* (Strong 1419) in verse one. This is not the same word as “great” in verse two. That is the word *rab* (Strong 7227). Both these words appear often in the Psalms, but there may be an additional reason for bringing in *rab* in this Psalm. *Rab* appears in the titles of Assyrian officials such as the military leader “Rabshakeh” and “Rabsaris” (2 Kings 18:17, Isaiah 36:2). But Jehovah, not any Assyrian leader, is the true *rab*.

The image behind “great” in verse one is interesting because it links back to the word Hebrew word “twisted” (Strong 1434), *ghed-eel*. The poetic thought is clear. Alone, a single strand of wool, flax, or hemp has limited strength. Alone, it is not “great.” But when combined with other strands and “twisted,” the strands together acquire great strength. So it is with the greatness of Jehovah. He brings together multiple strands in his plans, spun or twisted together into a rope of great strength, a cord upon which we can depend for our very lives. This manner of reflecting on God’s greatness also recalls the special covenant with him that required the “twisted” blue fringe on the garments of the Jews (Numbers 15:38).

**“God hath made himself known in her palaces for a refuge” (Psalms 48:3).**

What blessed assurance this verse gives, for here we find not an invitation to seek for the subtle guidance of providence, but a clear discernment by sight showing the power of God. The “Palaces” again mentioned in verse 14 go beyond the temple. These are the noble buildings which would have been plundered and burnt by the invaders, had God’s presence not been within them. The knowledge and reverence of God should not just be reserved for Sabbath, or Sunday worship “in the temple.” Rather, each home having the fear, or reverence of God is a “palace” and a place of

“refuge” (Strong 4869). These are like high ground, or a towering cliff, that proves inaccessible to our adversaries. This is the same word used in Psalms 46:7, 11.

**“The kings assembled ... They passed by together. They saw it, then were they amazed; they were dismayed, they hastened away. Trembling took hold of them there, pain, as of a woman in travail” (Psalms 48:4-6).**

Sennacherib and the vassals he boasted of, “Are not my princes all of them kings?” (Isaiah 10:8), “passed over” the frontier hasting back to their homeland. The proud boast uttered by Julius Caesar, *Veni, vidi, vici* (“I came, I saw, I conquered”), was completely reversed! Instead of boasting, the pangs of travail took hold of them. The Assyrians who planned an extended siege were confident that Jerusalem would fall. They were sure that the water supply was not sufficient for the population taking refuge behind their walls. But in the end, the Assyrians retreated and were “amazed.” They had not counted on the wisdom of Jerusalem’s defender, the Lord of Hosts. God has wisdom that is hidden from ages and generations. This wisdom even now is revealed only to God’s children. The enemies of Israel not only retreated, they retreated with trembling.

**“With the east wind Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish” (Psalms 48:7).**

In Moses’ time, deliverance came by an east wind parting the Red Sea, saving Israel from the Egyptians (Exodus 14: 21). But the east wind is also a symbol of destructive power, as in Isaiah 27:8, Jeremiah 18:17 and Job 27:21.

Verse seven contains an important detail not mentioned elsewhere. As in Isaiah 2:16, Tarshish is a symbol of size and strength, famed as a port with ships renowned as the largest of that age. Jonah hoped to flee there from God (Jonah 1:3). Tarshish was clearly on the Mediterranean Sea and is usually identified with the powerful Phoenician trading colony at the end of the known earth. It seems to be “Tartessus” in southwest Spain near modern Cadiz.

Solomon traded in the Indian Ocean, departing from “Eziongeber, and to Elath, at the sea side in the land of Edom,” on the Gulf of Aqaba (2 Chronicles 8:17). Yet he also used vessels of Tarshish (2 Chronicles 9:21). For piloting Solomon’s ships, King Hiram of Tyre on the Mediterranean sent skilled seamen (1 Kings 9:27). They did not intend to circumnavigate Africa from the Gulf of Aqaba to Spain; these ships were probably ocean-class merchant vessels modeled on Tarshish construction (Ezekiel 38:13). The ships of Tarshish were larger than the Ships of Kittim, the Mediterranean class ships.

The Assyrians evidently intended such ships to resupply their invasion. God destroyed this fleet, creating a supply problem for the Assyrian invaders who were certain that there would not be food and water sufficient for the defenders (2 Kings 18:27).

Whether the resupply was intended at the Gulf of Aqaba, or on the Mediterranean at Joppa, the breaking of the Assyrian resupply via the ships of Tarshish was a critical blow to the invaders, noted in scripture only here.



Assyrians in siege mode

In Psalms 46:9, the “chariots” actually refer to “supply wagons,” suggesting that supply problems may have weakened the army and set them up for the devastating plague sent from Jehovah. Likely, this was the bubonic plague.<sup>2</sup>

**“As we have heard, so have we seen. In the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. (Selah)” (Psalms 48:8).**

The wondrous acts of God first come to us in stories that we hear as children. We pass these stories on to our own children. When the power and intercession of God spoken of in these accounts actually are witnessed, we see with our own eyes. Faith becomes sight and we are filled with confidence. Jerusalem is the special place that God will establish forever. The use of “Selah,” which has the sense of “pause and consider,” marks a transition. The last six verses of this psalm are the meditation on the event.

**“We have thought on thy lovingkindness, O God, In the midst of thy temple” (Psalms 48:9).**

The Hebrew verb for “thought” (Strong 1819) suggests brooding contemplation which studies all the aspects of a subject and prepares the way for resolute action. If God has shown such lovingkindness, what but lovingkindness in our own hearts is the appropriate response? The sanctuary is the place for such pondering, because a public display of Thanksgiving was in order.

**“As is thy name, O God, So is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: Thy right hand is full of righteousness” (Psalms 48:10).**

A simile that calls for reflection upon the name of God is the focus of this verse. The name of Jehovah appears in verse one and verse nine that leads into the Selah, yet not here. God’s proper name, Yahweh, or “He who becomes, the self-existing one,” which is nearly always translated “LORD” in our common versions, is likened to praise to the ends of the earth. “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Psalms 22:3).

However, here the expectancy is much larger. The hope is that this praise would go forward and renew itself and be ceaseless long after our lips are sealed forever. This verse lifts the struggle from the immediate deliverance of the holy city to praise universal. So far, this verse stands unfulfilled. But during the Kingdom it will be the desire of all nations to praise Jehovah. The “right hand” of favor and power exercised righteous judgment against the Assyrian invaders. They had no just cause for their war against Judah, and they received a righteous recompense.

**“Let mount Zion be glad, Let the daughters of Judah rejoice, Because of thy judgments” (Psalms 48:11).**

Every segment of society from the political and military leadership headquartered in Mount Zion to the defenseless “daughters,” that is the young women, “the daughters of Judah,” the Alamothe singing this praise, would rejoice in Jehovah’s judgments.

**“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: number the towers thereof” (Psalms 48:12).**

The thought behind “count the towers thereof” is an allusion to the incident in Isaiah 33:18, 36:4, when the Assyrian generals made such a survey and laughed at the weakness of the city’s defenses. Now the inhabitants gaze at them and learn how invincible those defenses are. For Zion is fortified by the presence of God.

**“Mark ye well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces ... tell it to the generation following” (Psalms 48:13).**

“Mark ye well,” literally, “set your heart to,” take good notice of the fact that the outer walls and buildings are undamaged, despite the assault by the Assyrian war engines depicted in the bas-reliefs from this period. “Tell it to the generation following,” for the lessons of history may soon be forgotten despite our best attempts to convey them. Hence, the wisdom of God in permitting the direct experience with the consequences of the fall of mankind into sin, rather than just learning about them by instruction.

After the successful resistance against the Assyrians, the very king Hezekiah who so faithfully saw the city safely through this grave threat would soon invite in a delegation from Babylon. This delegation’s report about the riches in the kingdom would set a course that in a little over a century resulted in the unfaithful Jerusalem of Zedekiah’s day coming under the yoke of Babylon (Isaiah 39).

**“This God is our God for ever and ever” (Psalms 48:14).**

The Hebrew is emphatic. It is God and none other and he will be God eternally.<sup>3</sup>

— Br. Richard Doctor

(1) Pritchard, James B., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd Edition with Supplement, Princeton (1969), Text 287- 288.

(2) Editor’s note: Consider Herodotus II.141 (Henry Cary translation). When the Egyptians “arrived there, a number of field mice, pouring in upon their enemies, devoured their quivers and their bows, and moreover, the handles of their shields; so that on the next day, when they fled bereft of their arms, many of them fell. And to this day, a stone statue of this king stands in the temple of Vulcan, with a mouse in his hand.” In fuller text, see RVIC 2 Kings 19:35, footnote 155. Mice suggests also that bubonic plague may have been a major factor.

(3) “Eternally.” Hebrew, *al-muth*, literally “upon death,” hence King James and RV “even unto death,” which, however, requires *el* for *al*. The Septuagint read it as one word, probably as *olamoth*, “worlds, eternity.” Rahlfs’ Septuagint reads “for the ages, even for the ages of the ages.” Modern expositors hold that it is not part of the text, the verse reading: “For such is God, our God; forever and ever he will guide us.” *Al-muth* would then be a musical direction, comparable with *al muth-labben*, the heading of Psalm 9, or the references to Alamothe.

# Keener Vigilance

*“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Hebrews 2:1).*

The letter to the Hebrews contains the longest sustained argument of any book in the Bible. With a careful and closely knit discussion, the author moves with confidence step by step through an elaborate proof of Christianity’s pre-eminence over Judaism. The recipients of the letter were on the point of giving up their Christian faith and returning to the Jewish beliefs and practices of their ancestors because of the pressure of outward trial and opposition. At frequent and appropriate places within the theological discussion, the author inserted earnest admonitions based on the argument in the immediately preceding section. (Hebrews 2:1-4, 3:7, 4:13, 5:11, 6:20, 10:19-39, 12:23-29)

From Chapter 2 we learn that the Hebrew Christians were wavering, and “for this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Hebrews 2:1, NAS). The theme throughout the letter is that Christ, in every way, is superior and sufficient:

- He is better than the prophets (Hebrews 1:1)
- He is better than angels (Hebrews 1-2)
- He is better than Moses (Hebrews 3)
- He is better than Joshua, better than the Sabbath, and better than all other priests (Hebrews 4)

The high point of the argument is reached in Hebrews 4:14-16. The thought is that since he is better than all these, we need not drift. We can turn to the high priest who understands the pressures, trials, opposition, perplexities, and suffering. One of the key words in the epistle is “therefore,” which occurs 15 times, depending on the translation. It is listed five times in Hebrews chapter four, where we come face to face with certain earnest admonitions and solemn resolves, to which the Apostle would strenuously bind us.

“Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short or it” (Hebrews 4:1).

The word “therefore” refers to an evil example which had occurred centuries before (Numbers 13:30, 14:10, 23-31, Hebrews 3:17-19). The writer will not allow history to be wasted upon us. In effect he says, “See what befell your fathers in the wilderness. Observe what unbelief did for them.” Unbelief blinds the eyes, dulls the imagination, and stupefies the conscience. Unbelief is not always necessarily defiance or open hostility to divine revelation or requirement.

There is always something about which to “fear,” to be reverently anxious. We are not to be anxious in the sense that turns anxiety itself into unbelief, we are to be anxious in an intelligent, devout, expectant sense. We are to guard against some possible weakness in character lest some little thing should spoil or limit our inheritance in Christ Jesus.



*The Apostle Paul*

The reason given for this exhortation is historical and experimental. If other men have failed through unbelief, why may not we also fail? Failure of belief is failure of the New Creature.

There is a condition of mind that is neither hostile nor loyal. That condition may be described as largely neutral, mainly indifferent, lukewarm, and complacent, with a simple negation of attitude as to conviction and duty. This concern is

specially timely for the Laodicean Church — the church of the nominal Christian who is neither wholeheartedly nor really committed to the Lord, and where the spirit of the world has not been kept out of the church.

At first the result is buying peace by compromise, being self-absorbed, self-satisfied, prosperous, wealthy, and physically at ease. Later this results in indifference, complacency, and lukewarmness, which compromises one’s perspective, motivation, witness, and availability. Indifference is antagonistic to the spirit of consecration, of self-sacrifice, and enthusiasm.

Unbelief has no rest. Unbelief shuts out all its victims from the joy and peace of heaven.

We must have a positive, definite, all-conquering faith. Yet with respect to this faith we are always to be anxious, always remembering that it is just possible that for want of a keener vigilance we may miss great opportunities of entering into the wealth, joy and haven of rest beyond the veil.

— Adapted from the discourse “Earnest Admonitions and Solemn Resolves” by Br. David Skein

## Translating No-Verb Sentences

Many languages do not require every complete sentence to have a verb, among them Hebrew and Greek, although English is not such a language.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of a verb, the tense is usually unimportant or irrelevant. Therefore it is important that italics (or brackets) be used to indicate that a verb in English has been added in the translation.

Grammatically, the tense of the translated English verb may be past, present, or future, or all three (or any combination of two out of the three). Context may rule out some possible translations. Where context does not fix the tense, related scriptures may help. But one must be careful not to allow theology to dictate a desired “translation.”

Paul's epistle to the Romans (ASV) furnishes examples of no-verb sentences or clauses which should be translated into English with different tenses (where supplied words are indicated by italics):

**5:18.** "as through one trespass *the judgment came* unto all men to condemnation"

**8:31.** "If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?" [or, both could be rendered by a future tense]

**2:8.** "unto them that are factious ... *shall be* wrath and indignation."

A particularly good example of multiple no-verb clauses may be found in 1 Timothy 2:1-6, where five verbs are omitted in just four verses, comprising just two sentences:

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications ... be made for all men ... (3) This *was/is/will be* good and acceptable before God our Savior, (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of truth. (5) For *there was/is/will be* one God; *there was/is/will be* also one mediator between God and men, *himself having been/being/will be* a man Christ Jesus, (6) the one having given himself a ransom for all, the testimony *to be borne* in its own seasons."

The exhortation in verse one suggests that the emphasis in verse three is on what the believers should do from now on, although nothing suggests that it should not have been so in the past — hence, *was/is/will be*.<sup>2</sup> Towards simplifying translation, one may use "is," provided it is understood not to exclude other tenses.

"From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:2) suggests for verse 5a that all three tenses are allowable — hence, *was, is and will be*. In verse 5b, the theological question comes to the fore as to when Jesus Christ is active as a mediator. While few would desire to exclude all but the past tense, the choice between *is and will be* (or both) may derive only from one's theology. In verse 5c, few would desire to specify a future tense. Guidance might be suggested by a present tense back in verse four or by the past participle (technically, Second-Aorist participle) in the succeeding clause.<sup>3</sup>

In verse 6, while few would think that having been borne would well fit a context of verse four, the plural "seasons" would still leave the question of whether the first season is in the present age or whether both (or all) seasons are yet future. The *was/is/will be* question may be largely avoided by using *to be borne*.<sup>4</sup>

Returning to verse 5c, Jesus Christ at his resurrection became "so much mightier *than* the angels," and is now "*the* effulgence of *his* glory, and *the* very image of his substance" (Hebrews 1:4,3),<sup>5</sup> that is, Jesus Christ is now of the same nature as God. So if Jesus Christ were himself still a man, then he would at present be a God-man. On the other hand, most would agree that Jesus had been a man when he was here on earth. Therefore, "*himself having been* a man Christ Jesus" appears preferable.

Here one may suggest a better English translation of these verses (especially 1 Timothy 2:3-6): "I exhort therefore, first

of all, that supplications ... be made for all men ... (3) This is good and acceptable before God our Savior, (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of truth. (5) For *there was, is and will be* one God; also one mediator between God and men, *himself having been* a man Christ Jesus, (6) the one having given himself a ransom for all, the testimony *to be borne* in its own seasons."

The above selections of preferred tenses points to Jesus Christ as supremely qualified to be a mediator between God and man. Jesus now has the nature of God and had previously had the nature of man. Nobody else — not even Adam or Moses — had been on both sides of the fence. Thus was Jesus uniquely qualified to mediate between the two parties, who to this day remain at odds.

— Br. James Parkinson

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(1) Today our Hebrew and Greek grammars make no mention of omitted verbs. It occurs very early in scripture, already in Genesis 1:2 and 1:4, "and darkness was upon the face of the deep" [ocean], and "God saw the light that it was good." These both are the literal in the Hebrew Students Manual, this part by S.P. Tregelles. There is a note in the lexicon section, page 67, on the verb *hayah*, "I. came to pass ... II. was, i.e., existed; never used as the logical copula, is, was ..." That is, the use of the Hebrew word commonly translated "is" never is used to mean this is identically that (like an equal sign). The identity, the equality, is what is implied by omitting the verb in an otherwise complete sentence.

(2) Editor's note — The non-appearance of a verb does not necessarily mean we can pick and choose what tense we wish to use. Perhaps it indicates the matter is true presently, without mitigating against the past or future.

For example, "for one God" evidently is the statement in the Greek translated into English words. If Paul had wished to say "God was, is, and will be," presumably he could have said that, as for example Revelation 1:4 effectively does say. Presumably the statement by Paul, "for one God," means there is one God, without limiting that state to only the present.

(3) Actually, the two nearest antecedents are the infinitives in verse four which are translated, "to be saved" and "to come;" in the Greek both are in past (Aorist) tense, being passive and active respectively. So technically, the implied verb in verse 5c is surrounded by explicit verbs in past tenses.

(4) Editor's note — Paul refers to the fact that in the due time God sent his son who bore witness to the Truth, died for us, and thereafter was preached through the disciples to all men. That testimony will continue in a fuller way during the Millennium, but it will not only commence in the future, it will continue in the future in an enhanced way.

For example, in Romans 5:6 Paul says "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." There the "due time" refers to Christ's ministry and service. That testimony in "due time" we appreciate now and have for 2000 years.

Titus 1:3, also from Paul, says something similar. Presuming 1 Timothy and Titus were written about the same time, probably Paul had the same thought in mind. "But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching" — something ongoing in Paul's day. "The testimony in its own time" in Timothy was thus a present activity at the beginning of the Gospel Age. 1 Peter 1:20 is not much different, but from another writer — "But was manifest in these last times for you."

As for the "one mediator between God and men," the then present sense seems appropriate. Romans 5:10 tells us that when we were enemies, we were reconciled. We are not now enemies, but we were. The one standing between as *mesites* to do this work is our Lord Jesus.

Perhaps one purpose of this article is to explore how “the man Jesus Christ” can be re-expressed since of course Jesus is not now a man. The motive for this is understandable. But inserting verbs with past perfect tenses may not be the answer. If Paul had wished to express it that way he could have — and he did not.

May it be that Paul meant that Jesus interposed between the two parties to heal the breach through his ministry and death, and thus served as a *mesites* even while he was a man? To render the expression “one mediator between God and men, the [one having been a] man, Christ Jesus,” would remove that dimension of the subject.

Perhaps it is better to explain that the reason Paul referred to the *mesites* as a “man” is because Jesus as a “man” died to effect a reconciliation between God and men (at least in the words of Romans 5:10).

(5) “Effulgence” means “shining.” “The very image of his substance” might be translated, “the impress of his substance.”

## When Jesus became God

(Addendum to the article “Development of the Trinity,” November 2010 issue)

*When Jesus Became God: the Struggle to Define Christianity in the Last Days of Rome.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999; Harvest paperback, 2000. Paris: Editions Decouverte, 2001.

The account of our Lord’s life and the developments in the church during apostolic times are well known, as is the story of Christian persecutions during the Roman Empire. The history of fervent debate, civil strife, and bloody riots within the Christian community as it was coming into being, however, is a side of ancient history rarely described. Prof. Richard E. Rubenstein takes the reader to the streets of the Roman Empire during the fourth century, when a fateful debate over the divinity of Jesus Christ was being fought. Ruled by a Christian emperor, followers of Jesus no longer feared for the survival of their monotheistic faith but broke into two camps regarding the direction of their worship. Is Jesus the son of God and therefore not the same as God? Or is Jesus precisely God on earth and therefore equal to Him? The vicious debate was led by two charismatic presbyters. Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter and poet, preached that Jesus, though holy, is less than God. Athanasius, a brilliant and violent bishop, saw any diminution of Jesus’ godhead as the work of the devil.

We first read of Arius pleading for a restoration of primitive purity in an Alexandrian church gone worldly in 313 AD. Five years later Athanasius accused Arius of heresy to draw attention away from his behavior and that of his followers. Between them stood Alexander, the powerful Bishop of Alexandria, who must find a resolution that will keep the empire united and the Christian faith alive. With thorough historical, religious, and social research, Rubenstein vividly recreates one of the most critical moments in the history of the Christian faith. When the Athanasians fatally poisoned Arius it institutionalized immorality in the professing Christian church, under the guise of orthodox thinking.

— Br. Richard Doctor

## Why Waldo?

(Continued and concluded from February, 2011)

Peter Waldo lived during the period of Thyatira, during the depths of Papal authority. The Catholic Church partnered with governments to rule with a heavy hand. This partnership is referred to in Revelation 2:20-23.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

Jezebel, the Baal worshiping Queen, and her husband wicked King Ahab, are types. It was she who protected the priests of Baal and persecuted Elijah using the secular power of her husband, so that Elijah had to flee to the wilderness for 3½ years. Similarly, during the fourth stage of the church, the Roman Catholic Church, abetted by the kings of Europe, persecuted the true church, which was compelled to dwell in the wilderness. The Waldenses did their witnessing in secret as they fled from place to place to avoid persecution.

In Jesus’ message to this period of the church in Revelation, Jesus commended the brethren for their love, faith, service and patient endurance. However, he also warned, “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate” (Revelation 2:14). But even in this criticism, Jesus showed compassion and understanding, for the brethren of this period were up against an evil and powerful system.

For example, to the first stage, Ephesus, Jesus said “I have somewhat against thee,” and then said they must repent in order to remain faithful, “or else I will come unto thee and will remove thy candlestick out of his place” (Revelation 2:4, 5). He says something similar to the third stage, Pergamos (Revelation 2:14-16). But to Thyatira he is gentler. “I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already, hold fast, till I come” (Revelation 2:24, 25). Jesus did not command the brethren to face certain death by openly challenging Papacy and the governments of Christendom. Like Elijah, they were allowed to flee to the wilderness where they were cared for by the Lord’s providence.

In 1227, when the Inquisition officially began under Papal control, there were some 150 heretical sects in the western portion of the Empire. Many of these were considered harm-



Monument at Chanforan — Waldensian ministers met with reformers in Switzerland and Germany, and after careful deliberation, joined the Reformation. In 1532, thousands of ministers and laymen met with prominent reformers at Chanforan, the Waldensian Church embraced the Reformation, and secrecy was abandoned.

less, but some others who had begun as a protest against the rich, and in particular the rich clergy, posed a real threat to the church's authority to maintain unity in Christendom. Thus the purpose of the Papal Inquisition in Western Europe was to stamp out heresy and restore orthodoxy.

Unfortunately, it pretty much succeeded. Other than a few scattered zealots, heretical sects were all but wiped out. Of all the many medieval sects that existed in the Middle Ages, only the Waldenses survived to today as an organized religious body. Their church is headquartered mainly in Italy, where they are about 20,000 strong right under the nose of the Papacy.

## TO PAPACY

In Revelation 2:21 Jesus said of Jezebel, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not." The word translated "space" in verse 21 is from the Greek word *chronos*, which means "a time." In scripture, a symbolic time represents a 360-day year with each day representing a year. Thus the symbolic time Jezebel was given to repent was 360 years long.

This raises two questions: First, because she had so many faults, what specifically was Papacy supposed to repent from? Second, was the 360 year period in the past or the future relative to the time opening the fourth period of the Church?

The answer to the first question is found in the name Jezebel. This antitypical Jezebel had committed spiritual fornication with the state and used its power to persecute the saints, suppress the truth, and to teach abominable error. She needed to repent of this harlotry.

Regarding the second question, there are two ways we can apply the time to repent of this illicit church-state union. First, a past application. If the fourth stage of the church started in the year 1160, then 360 years prior to this, in the year 800, the Pope crowned Charlemagne, King of France. This "marriage" of church and state was the formal step in

the forming of the Holy Roman Empire. According to this reckoning, the Lord allowed Jezebel 360 years, from 800 to 1160, to change and repent of her fornication. But she obviously had no intention of repenting, so Peter Waldo was sent to France, to the very land where this unholy alliance had its official beginning.

Next, a future application: If we add 360 years to 1160, it brings us to 1520, the year Martin Luther's trial took place when 41 of his 95 proposals nailed to the church doors at Wittenburg were condemned as heretical. Luther himself was pronounced a heretic. This action ended all hope that she would repent or reform, and the Reformation began in earnest. There is merit in both applications.

Something similar may apply to the punishments warned of in Revelation 2:22, 23. "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death." This great tribulation might be the 100 years war between France and England that exhausted them all, weakening church and state. Killing her children with death could be the Black Plague, perhaps the most widespread epidemic known to man. It began in Constantinople in 1334, and carried by the returning crusaders, spread to Europe and Asia. In less than 20 years it killed from one-third to as much as three-quarters of the population.

Or we might look at verses 22-23 as a long-range prophecy of the conclusion of the age and the great time of trouble and judgment upon Papacy. After her destruction, her children of the tare class will become dead to her and alive to the true king and the kingdom. Perhaps both applications are true, the prophetic primary and the literal secondary.

## TO THE TRUE CHURCH

"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:24-28).

Here Jesus addresses the true church, and in particular the Waldenses. For this faithful remnant who did not bow the knee to Baal, or Jezebel's spiritual fornication with the political powers, it was burden enough that they were driven literally and symbolically into the wilderness and suffered as heretics during the heart of the inquisition. If they would remain faithful in this test of endurance under such trying circumstances, no other burden would be necessary to prove their love and loyalty.

During the Thyatira stage, Papacy was at the height of her power and glory. She claimed that Christ's Kingdom reign had begun through his vicegerent the pope. This Jezebel literally did have authority over nations, and she ruled with a rod of iron, dashing whoever opposed her.





Waldensian Church at Bobbio Pellice (from "The Waldenses," William Beattie, 1838). "1848 ... Waldenses in Italy had 18 ministers and 15 congregations ... the number ... about 13,000" (New Schaff-Herzog Enc. of Religious Knowledge, "Italy, the Reformation in," page 66).

How comforting, then, the promise that overcomers during this period reign with Christ as the true judges and kings in the coming kingdom.

Verse 28: "And I will give him the morning star." Jesus is himself the morning star, the sun of righteousness who will arise with healing in his wings to bless all the families of the earth. (Malachi 4:2). To those brethren dwelling in the midst of the Dark Ages, Jesus offering himself as the morning star, as a symbol of hope and of good things to come, would have such special meaning. The reward for enduring under such persecution would be to share Jesus' personal fellowship and glory.

Verse 29: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The promises to the church of Thyatira are not confined to them only, for the spirit saith it to all the churches. God has given us the sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed — so that we watch and learn from the experiences of all the churches and hold fast that which we have till the end.

— Br. Jerry Monette

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The previous engaging article on Waldo draws to mind some thoughts about the Pergamos and Thyatira periods of the Church. Doctrinal corruption was formalized at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, a date which some consider began the Pergamos period. Political corruption in the Papal system was formalized in 539 AD, when Papacy entered upon their 1260 years of political influence.

Peter Waldo, and later John Wycliffe, bear an interesting connection to these two dates, inasmuch as Waldo's work began as many years after 325 AD, as Wycliffe's work followed 539 AD.

As expressed in the first part of the Waldo article (February, 2011), Peter Waldo and his followers wished to preach the simple principles of Christianity to their countrymen. Waldo's work was about Christian doctrine, in the scriptural sense of that word — the teaching of how to live a Christian life (see 2 Timothy 3:10, 11).

John Wycliffe came to the public arena because of a political dispute between England and Papacy regarding property and taxes. He thereafter became a powerful writer against Papal practices and spawned the Lollard movement in England, popular among the common people. Both Waldo and Wycliffe distributed scripture passages in the common language of their day.

It is hard to fix precise dates for the beginning of the work of these two leaders, Waldo and Wycliffe. Bro. Frank Shallieu used the date 1157 for Waldo, 360 years before the Reformation in 1517. He treats this in his book *The Keys of Revelation*, page 53 (with footnote).

For John Wycliffe, the *New Albany Ecclesia Revelation Notes* use a date of 1371 (page 17). This date for the emergence of Wycliffe into the public eye is supported by the following two sources. "By 1371 [Wycliffe] was recognized as the leading theologian and philosopher of the age at Oxford, thus second to none in Europe, for Oxford had, for a brief time, eclipsed Paris in academic leadership."<sup>1</sup> "In 1371 Wycliffe began to advise the Crown."<sup>2</sup>

Using these dates produces the following results. The period from 325 to 1157 is **832** years — and the period from 539 to 1371 is also **832** years. These periods began during the Pergamos stage, when the Church was going into a spiritual "Babylonian captivity." It is engaging to observe that the number twice indicated here, **832**, is found in the scriptures in Jeremiah 52:29, which speaks of natural Israel going into literal Babylonian captivity. "In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons [832]."

This may suggest the length of the Pergamos period, which we tentatively assign to the span between 325 and 1157. It also highlights the prominence of these two leaders, Waldo and Wycliffe, who helped lead the Church in the dark days prior to the Reformation.

John Wycliffe is referred to historically as the "morning star" of the Reformation, and the mention of the morning star in the message to Thyatira may have an indirect reference to him. Of course the primary "morning star" is Jesus (Revelation 22:16). Jesus is the "morning star" in one sense because his second advent, initiating the harvest period, is a light to us that portends the coming rise of the "sun of righteousness."

Jesus returned as the morning star in 1874. Wycliffe's ministry as a secondary morning star closed with his death in 1384. The span between these two times is 490 years — or as Daniel 9:24 expresses it, seventy weeks. The prophecy in Daniel takes us to the first advent of Christ. The 490 years from the passing of John Wycliffe take us to the second advent of Christ.

— Br. David Rice

(1) www.biblosfoundation.org, which cites for this quotation, Donald Roberts, "John Wycliffe and the Dawn of the Reformation," in *Christian History* 2, no. 2 (July 1983), page 11.

(2) *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Volume 5, by Erwin Fahlbusch, page 815.