

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Feeding the Multitudes

"You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:9-12).

Can you name the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels? It is the feeding of the 5000. This repetition means we should pay close attention to the details. First came the feeding of the 5000 followed by just a few recorded events, and then a feeding of the 4000. There are tremendous similarities between the two feedings. These were startling miracles — even for Jesus — for never had he affected so many at one time, and he did it twice!

Jesus draws the two events together after the fact in Matthew 16:5-12. Then the disciples understood that he did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. We know that the lessons were given for a much bigger reason than filling peoples' bellies.

We suggest the 5000 represents the Gospel applied to Jewish Christians — the call and feeding of the church when it was exclusively to Israel, taught by Jesus and the 12 Apostles. In contrast, the 4000 represents the Gospel applied to Gentile Christians — the balance of the call and feeding of the Church — from the conversion of Cornelius all the way through the Gospel age.

FEEDING OF THE 5000

Matthew 14:13-15, Mark 6:32-36, Luke 9:12: (NASB) "Now when Jesus heard about John, he withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed him on foot from the cities."

This event happened near the time of Passover. John the Baptist had just been beheaded and the age of the prophets had just ended. It is as if the opportunity for the

Gospel now was opened. Jesus arrived and the crowd was waiting to be healed and eventually to be fed. They were like sheep without a shepherd; and in Matthew 10:6 Jesus had said, "but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The crowd might have gone into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy food for themselves and find lodging. They might also have left Jesus to find other spiritual food, but it would be food from the Pharisees that was not good for them. They could lodge within the community of the Law that surrounded them.

The Gospel was now beginning!

BETWEEN THE FEEDINGS

Let us examine the events between these two miracles.

(1) Walking on water (Mark 6:48, Matthew 14:25, John 6:19). That Jesus walked on the water after the first feeding, perhaps indicates that the later feeding of the 4000 represents something that occurred after Jesus attained his glorified state. He "walks" over the tumult of mankind and rescues his followers in their struggle with this tumult.

(2) Healing many (Mark 6:53; Matthew 14:34).

(3) Bread of life (John 6). Jesus taught an in-depth lesson, perhaps setting the stage for the spiritualized lesson of both feedings.

(4) Healing the daughter of the Syro-phoenician woman, a Gentile (Matthew 15:22, Mark 7:26). Jesus cast out her

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demons, perhaps picturing that Jesus would soon cast out the Satanic and pagan influence of the Gentiles.

(5) Healing a deaf mute (Mark 7:31-37). Jesus healed him in private, physically separating him from the people and verbally commanding his ears to open. Usually Jesus did this in front of a crowd. Perhaps this shows us that when it came time for the enlightenment of the Gentiles, there would be a private opening up of their ability to hear and understand the gospel.

There seems to be a connection in what happened to the feeding of the 5000, the interim activities, and then the feeding of the 4000.

FEEDING THE 4000

Mark 8:1-3 (NASB). “In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples and said to them, I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with me now three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.”

Again there was a large crowd, to whom Jesus also showed compassion. But although he cared for their physical well being, they had been with him three days before he would feed them. They must have had just enough of their own provisions to get them to this point. This reminds us of Cornelius in Acts 10:4 (NASB): “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.” This tells us that while Cornelius was worshipping the God of heaven, his prayers and dedication rose before God as a dedication and a memorial. It sustained Cornelius until the point where he could be fed spiritually.

The crowd of 4000 was too far from their homes to make it back without fainting, and Jesus, having compassion on them, knew they needed sustenance. What greater distance to have traveled than from Paganism, and how appropriate that the further from Christ they would travel, the more likely they would faint.

(Mark 6:37-38, Matthew 14:16, John 6:5-7 NASB). “But he said to Philip, Where are we to buy bread? They do not need to go away; give them something to eat! This he was saying to test him, for he himself knew what he was intending to do. Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little. And he said to them, How many loaves do you have? Go look!”

Jesus opened up the feeding with a question: “Where are we to buy bread?.” Jesus included the Apostles in the question. Philip’s response seems a natural reaction: they cannot afford it! One denarius was likely about a day’s wage and we assume their treasury had 200 denarii.

But Jesus was not interested in money. His follow up question was, “How many loaves do you have?” There was a lesson for the twelve that the spreading the Gospel does not require our ability to shoulder the expense, but



Jesus at the Feeding of the 5000

instead a willingness to pass on that which nourishes us — the bread of life. Jesus taught them to walk away from the money and towards the preparedness of the bread.

“GO LOOK!”

The novelty of the Gospel made it difficult to know what to expect and what would be important, for this was a new way. How could they have known they were not supposed to focus on the money? Jesus was showing them step by step how to clear their minds of what had been and accept what was now to be.

“The disciples said to him, ‘Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?’ And Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have?” (Matthew 15:33-34 NASB).

The Apostles had learned! They did not mention money. They are already focused on the bread, the bread of life! They saw what Jesus was able to do with the feeding of the 5000 and are now grasping the import of the Gospel.

Interestingly, the disciples labeled their location a desolate place. The word here means a literal waste, and is not that appropriate for where the Gentiles would be to receive the bread of life? They would have come from a spiritual wasteland. Compare this to the place of the feeding of the 5000 earlier. There a completely different word is used for desolate. It means uninhabited and solitary, a place having the ability to be cultivated, or at least be as pasture land, as was the nation of Israel. The feeding of the 5000 was also remote, but it was different in that it had potential.

What Jesus was really asking, “What feeds you that you have to feed them?” The apostles would have to give the Gentiles what the apostles themselves had been given — not what was based on the Law, not based on the money, not based on what had been, but on what was to come.

They would be prepared now for this question and would have understood what Jesus was asking. The potential for feeding the multitude was already counted and in their hands, even though it seemed like too small a provision. So, for comparison:

Feeding of the 5000

- Gospel as applied to Jewish Christians
- Solitary place with green grass growing
- Apostles did not understand the preparation
- Apostles did not understand what Jesus meant

Feeding of the 4000

- Gospel as applied to Gentile Christians
- Desolate place, a wasteland
- Apostles understood how to prepare
- Apostles ready to move forward, even though they could not do it without Jesus.

There were differences in the approach, what happens, and the timing, but the end results were ultimately the same.

THE 5000 — FIVE BARLEY LOAVES AND TWO FISH

John 6:9 (NASB). “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?”

Who had the bread of life in the form of five loaves? It was a young man. Perhaps it is a picture of Jesus himself in his innocence being prepared, a young man being about his Father’s business.¹ Two fish — perhaps the Old and New Testaments? What are these for so many? How could Israel be given spiritual food from such humble and insignificant beginnings? By the grace of God and by the miracles of God through Jesus.

THE 4000 — SEVEN LOAVES AND A FEW SMALL FISH

In Matthew 15:34, for the feeding of the 4000 there are seven loaves. Seven is a number of spiritual perfection — there would be ample provision for the entire Gospel Age. In contrast with the 5000, where the bread was supplied elsewhere, the disciples this time had these provisions on hand. They had been given the ability to understand that what they had been given, they were now to be giving others. For a “few small fish,” we find in the Sinaitic manuscript (Matthew 15:36) that this may have been two fish. It may be observed that: 5 loaves + 7 loaves + 2 fish + 2 fish = 16 units of food provided x 9000 fed = 144,000. The provisions are small; they are different yet similar, because they are placed at two different parts of the age of gospel development.

PEOPLE ARE PREPARED

For the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:10, Luke 9:14, Mark 6:39-40), we find organized groups “of hundreds and of fifties.” The people were numerically organized, like the Law, implemented with precision. Israel was always recognized by tribe. For the feeding of the 4000 (Matthew

15:35), all were commanded to sit, but with no pattern expressed. In both accounts Jesus blessed and gave thanks. So with the both the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000, we find the same consecration of the bread and the fish and the feeding on the true bread of life. These are two different parts of the same calling.

WHEN THEY WERE FILLED

For the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:12, Mark 6:43, Matthew 14:21), after the crowd had eaten to satisfaction, the apostles were charged with gathering up the fragments. This showed the framework of the immediate future of the Gospel — there were twelve baskets not only satisfying, but abundant, so it can be carried further and shared with others who might be hungry. These baskets were the Apostles themselves, there were twelve and all twelve were filled, giving us a clear picture of the responsibility that those twelve had going forward. They personally were to carry the Gospel and spread it. They had here observed and participated in the miracle. Now Jesus would assign them to go forward and feed others.

For the feeding of the 4000 (Mark 8:8, Matthew 15:38), after eating until they were satisfied, the apostles picked up seven baskets. From the use of the word in Acts 9:25, the size of the basket was big enough to fit a man! This is very different from what the Apostles would have had to carry around with them. The seven are for the seven messengers — the size of these baskets tells us that what was left would have to last a long time — 2000 years of systematic distribution to the church.

So we see both miraculous feedings of the 2 separate multitudes give us a complete picture: The call of the whole church (5000) would begin with Israel, as presented by Jesus and carried forward on the shoulders of the Apostles. The trial and development of the whole church (4000) would expand to the Gentiles and throughout the world and continue on the shoulders of 7 messengers, each providing the meat due at their time, through the entire Gospel age and through the return of Jesus.

The lesson for us is simple. As we look at Jesus giving the Gospel, we know that of necessity it had to go first to Israel. They had to be given a true, full, and complete opportunity. They would reject him. But the Gospel by the plan of God must have its work done and the call must



Jesus walked over the water to his disciples, after the first feeding.

be completed. So the call went to the Gentiles. Putting together the feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the 4000 shows us the two different parts — the chronologically short period of time with Jesus and the Apostles until the time of Cornelius; and then the feeding of the 4000 — what would happen afterwards.

Brethren, we out of everyone have the advantage to see all of this history that has gone before us. We have the advantage of present truth, and the Lord is still in the boat with us. Our work is not yet complete. Let us be fed with the bread of life, but do not stop there. Let it nourish us so that we can feed others.

— Summarized from a discourse by Bro. Rick Suraci, Jr.

(1) Editor's note: if the seven loaves picture the experience of the Gospel Age gentile church, might not the five loaves picture the experience of Israel up to the advent of our Lord? (Luke 16:28)

Prophetic Events Closing Zechariah

The closing three chapters of Zechariah narrate the sequence of prophetic events that take Israel and mankind from blindness into Kingdom blessings. In 12:1-9 we find the deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem and the judgment of the nations; 12:10-14 links this future deliverance to recognizing the Messiah by a faithful portion of the Jewish people; 13:1 speaks of opening the wonderful fountain of grace and supplication; 13:2-6 gives us an insight into the very personal struggle to cut-off the many modern forms of idolatry that separate man from God; 13:7-9 speaks of the judgment that begins with the house of God and continues through the uplift of the willing and obedient who come into the New Covenant. Finally, chapter 14 casts an eye back and gives a rich description of the battle in which the Lord of Host's power will be revealed.

There will be two phases to this kingdom — heavenly and earthly — north and south (D650-655). The stream of blessing will flow from Jerusalem and obedience will be demanded from the Gentiles when every impulse shall be “Holiness unto the Lord.”

However, the time sequence in these passages also refers to past events that show part of the divine program already accomplished. For example; Zechariah 13:7 says, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.”

This is cited by three Gospels writers as fulfilled at the death of our Lord (See Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27, John 16:32).



The tomb of Zechariah

SYMBOLIC AND LITERAL LESSONS

This prophecy has both literal and spiritual applications, but the symbolic sense should be our focus. To quote directly from Pastor Russell (D650): “The establishment of the New Jerusalem ... as the new government in the earth, will mean the beginning of the restoration of divine favor to Jehovah’s footstool, [as] is clearly set forth through the Prophet Zechariah 14:4,5. Jehovah’s Feet on the Mount of Olives ... [are] the feet of our Lord Jesus, at his second advent: and indeed, those who ... assert that it will be the feet of flesh, pierced with the nails of Calvary ... [are] not realizing that our Lord gave his human nature, complete and forever ... And if the placing and resting of Jehovah’s “feet” is symbolic ... so, we may be sure, other features connected in the same prophecy are symbolic: the Mount of Olives, its peculiar division, its valley, the flight of the people, the waters of life from Jerusalem (Ezekiel 47:1-9) are all symbolic — pictures of grand spiritual truths.”

And yet, this prophecy refers especially to the literal nation of Israel. The proof is in its words — Zechariah 12:6: “Jerusalem will remain intact in her place” (NIV). Although it is true that we can interpret Jerusalem as the symbol of the city of peace, or, based on Revelation 21:2 as New Jerusalem, this description of Jerusalem being “intact in her place” leaves no doubt that it points to the physical location of Jerusalem where it has existed continually for 3000 years. Parts of this prophecy which refer to great distress also refer to other nations, based on the rule from Romans 2:9-10, “Tribulation and anguish, on the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; glory, honour, and peace to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

JERUSALEM AS A BURDENSOME STONE

“And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it” (Zechariah 12:3).

If we say this prophecy is about literal Israel, we note that for the past century Jerusalem has truly become a burdensome stone to all the nations. One proof is the number of resolutions by the United Nations Security Council regarding this tiny portion of our planet. As Prime Minister Netanyahu said reproachfully to the United Nations Secretary, “The Human Rights Council has issued more resolutions condemning Israel, than against all other countries combined.” Since the very beginning, Jerusalem’s status has remained the focal point of the conflict, precluding any peace agreements.

Natural Jerusalem has now become Israel’s capital. The sequence of events as set forth by Pastor Russell in 1879 still works and we are between point 3 and 4 (R26). Here are the events he describes:

(1) The “Time of trouble” such as was not since there was a nation.

(2) The Jews return to Israel and the Jewish nation is reorganized.

(3) The gathering of great wealth to Jerusalem which tempts the hordes of Gog, Togarmah [Turkic peoples] and many peoples to go up “to take a spoil.”

(4) ‘The battle of the great day of God Almighty’ fought at Jerusalem.

(5) The partial success of the invaders and in the hour of darkness to the Jew the power of Messiah is manifested effecting their deliverance.

(6) Their recognition of the long waited for Messiah and the cry “Lo this is our God, we have waited for Him and He will save us.”

(7) Their recognition of him as the one “whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12).

(8) God will “pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication” and they shall mourn and be accepted again into fellowship with God.

PRINCES OF JUDAH

“And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God’ ” (Zechariah 12:5).

The word “governors” of Judah in this verse is better translated “chieftains” (H441). It is a term used for the leaders of many of Israel’s foes and is translated “dukes” in King James. These may refer to Israel’s leaders of today who are confident of victory. They rely on the cooperation of Israel’s and Jerusalem’s citizens, believing that they can count on the Israeli Defense Force’s religious zeal to preserve Israel’s safety (Isaiah 37:35, 2 Chronicles 13:18).

THE TENTS OF JUDAH FIRST

“The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah” (Zechariah 12:7).

Usually the open countryside and small towns of Judah were the first to be taken by the enemy (Jeremiah 34:7, 2 Chronicles 32:1-8). The citizens of Jerusalem of that day were prone to look down on the rural population, exhibiting a state of mind not altogether uncommon also in our day.

Tradition says that Messiah first arrives by the Eastern gate of Jerusalem. Both pious Jews and Moslems have sought to have their tombs close to the Eastern gate, expecting the resurrection and last judgment to begin there. Zechariah 12:7, speaking of “the tents of Judah,” does not support this tradition. The Eastern Gate was destroyed during the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, and the subsequent destruction of the Temple in AD 70, thus fulfilling Christ’s prophecy that “not one stone will



The sealed Eastern Gate of Jerusalem

be left on top of another” (Matthew 24:2). Prior to this, the Eastern Gate had never been sealed. Sometime in the sixth or seventh century, the Byzantines rebuilt the Eastern Gate. However, the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I sealed the Eastern Gate in 1541 AD. Though Jerusalem is strongly fortified, the Royal City, the City of God’s Temple and the location of King David’s palace, yet Judah, the Holy Land outside the city’s limits, is delivered first.

This is supported by Ezekiel 20:33-37 as it speaks of deliverance outside the city. “And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.” As in the 40 years wilderness wandering, the rebels will be purged out of the people. Applying both the tents and city on a natural level, possibly, the strikingly different outlooks on life can be expected when comparing city versus tents. Haves vs. have-nots may be the symbolic meaning. Despite the unprecedented miracle of Israel’s technological and economic success, the immigration to Israel has disproportionately drawn from poor Jews. The tents of the have-nots will be the first delivered. [Editor’s note: Or, the “tents of Judah” — the faithful church — will be resurrected first; so that fleshly Israel will not exalt themselves above the Christ/Anointed class. JBP]

Relationships of these groups. The political leaders of the current state of Israel (Princes of Judah) will find their office taken by the Ancient Worthies (Micah 5:5). These are assisted by the House of David, the Tents of Judah, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, all who share in joyful service. Zechariah 12:9 speaks of Israel’s enemies, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM AND THE HOUSE OF DAVID

“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them” (Zechariah 12:8).

The inhabitants of Jerusalem and the house of David are warned of pride in verse 7 and will then (D627) mourn for the one pierced (Zechariah 12:10-12). Clearly, these must both be earthly classes.

Inhabitants of Jerusalem. After the return from Babylon, Jerusalem was inhabited by a portion of all those who came back. Nehemiah 11:1 states: “And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities.”

The inhabitants of Jerusalem symbolize those who in our day — mindful of the promises — returned and now live in the Holy Land, just as they did in Nehemiah’s time. What distinguishes this class may be that they are the educated, cultured, and wealthy Jews who have returned, possibly even dwelling in Jerusalem (OV81:3). The inhabitants of Jerusalem now comprise about 10 percent of Israel’s entire Jewish population.

The House of David signifies King David’s descendants. It would be hard to identify the literal offspring of King David among today’s Jews. Zechariah 12:10 speaks about outpouring of the spirit of grace and supplications upon the house of David. This may point to a group described today as Messianic Jews. The House of David then may include these Messianic Jews and will come into the New Covenant and directly assist the Ancient Worthies.

THE SPIRIT OF GRACE AND SUPPLICATIONS

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

The outpouring of the holy Spirit follows Israel’s deliverance and is also elaborated on in Joel 2:28,29 (R2504:5, R376:5). Israel’s eyes will be opened to recognize Him whom they rejected. Part of this work of grace is the message that the land of Israel is theirs, that their period of chastisement is at an end, and that Israel’s prayers and supplications will bring the blessings of the New Covenant. This will come to them as newly converted Messianic Jews, believing in Jesus (Yeshua HaMashiach, i.e. Jesus the Messiah) (R3970:3, R4735:6, Q94:1).

The word “grace” here is better understood as “pardon.” The people are going to pray and beg forgiveness. It will be a special moment, with the return of Yeshua HaMashiach, the son of David, the one they rejected. It will be a moment of “grace and pleading,” a great cry of repentance of the people. (Isaiah 11:2-5, Ezekiel 11:19-21, Jeremiah 32:39-41, Jeremiah 31: 31-33, Ezekiel 36:26-27).

EVERY FAMILY SHALL MOURN

“The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves;



A symbolic fountain will be opened for cleansing sin.

and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves” (Zechariah 12:12-14).

The interpretation of the individual mourning groups depends on the identification of the families. The house of David and that of Levi are self-evident, but Nathan and Shimei are more difficult. Some commentators say Nathan is the prophet Nathan from 2 Samuel 7:2,4,14; others claim he is the son of David from 2 Samuel 5:14. From Luke 3:31 we see that Mary descended through the line of king David by this son Nathan. (See *Beauties of the Truth*, November 2015, “Mary, the Mother of Jesus.”)

Shimei poses an even bigger problem. Rashi comments that it is David’s first son by Bathshua (1 Chronicles 3:5); others point to Levi’s grandson (Exodus 6:17) or to Shimei from the house of Saul, who cursed David in 2 Samuel 16:5.

Weeping in separate groups may mean weeping for different reasons and in different ways — just like there are tears of joy and tears caused by sadness.

Some, like the house of David (Messianic Jews), and the house of Nathan (prophets) cry for joy, seeing the long-awaited Messiah. Others — the house of Levi — are the spiritual leaders. The house of Shimei from the line of Saul and the tribe of Benjamin would represent those who persecuted Jesus and His followers. Their bitter weeping and heart condition will resemble those of another Benjamite, the Apostle Paul, who long ago saw the Messiah on the way to Damascus and repented of his maltreatment of the early church.

In Matthew 24:30 Jesus described the time when “all the tribes of the earth will mourn.” Revelation 1:7 has a similar description. These passages speak of the world of mankind coming into the kingdom, all in grievous error. All mankind will have much cause to mourn, but their reasons for mourning differ from those of the Jews in Zechariah 12.

The expression in verse 12:14, “all other families,” probably does not refer to the remaining 10 tribes, scattered during the Assyrian captivity. Each Jewish family weeping by itself indicates that the recognition of Messiah will be very, very personal. Each family will reflect on the mishneh (double) of pain and suffering that their nation has experienced.

THE FOUNTAIN OPENED

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1).

The willing inhabitants of Jerusalem and of the house of David will be permitted to wash their sins at the open fountain. By faith in the blood of Christ they will be made every whit whole. They will be blessed with restitution to all the privileges and qualities and powers of mind and body lost by Adam’s disobedience (R1710). The purification process will affect not only their bodies, but will cleanse the world of any idol worshiping. Every false prophet will be exposed. The practical steps in this process are listed in Isaiah 58:6-14. Note especially the word *arukah* (H724), “health,” in Isaiah 58:8. This suggests a direct health benefit to one’s heart repentance.

As mentioned before, the cleansing from sins will apply first to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Pastor Russell explains it well: “While Israelites in various stages of unbelief will be gathered back to Palestine under divine favor, according to promise, yet none shall be in any degree reckoned as a part, or even as supporters of, or associated with the earthly phase of the Kingdom, except as they shall first recognize Christ Jesus as the Son of God, the only Redeemer and Deliverer for Israel and the world” (D625).

REMOVAL OF FALSE IDEOLOGIES

“And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth” (Zechariah 13:3).

We see from this passage that some false worship, sinful ways and wrong ideologies will continue into the Kingdom. It could not be otherwise. However, most will



Israel, and all, will come to repentance at the cross of Christ.

be ashamed of their former ways (Zechariah 13:4-6) and reform. Perhaps the recovery of these erring ones will employ something similar to the “truth commissions” operating in over 41 countries today.

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, ‘It is my people:’ and they shall say, ‘The LORD is my God’” (Zechariah 13:8,9).

These verses speak of the division of the land into three parts. This is reminiscent of what transpired at the First Advent. There, two groups united were against our Lord. The first group consisted of those with worldly ambition like Caiaphas, a Sadducee, who spoke lofty words about serving “the nation,” while, in reality, they were worried about losing their position (John 11:50). The second group were the religious conservatives, Pharisees, who were offended by Jesus for setting aside their unwise rules (see Mark 3:5).

Verse 9 appears to directly reference Isaiah 1:21-26 where the “two parts” are identified as the “dross” and “tin.” The “dross” suggests this first secular, worldly, ambitious element of Israel’s society, like Caiaphas of old. The “tin” suggests the multitude of unscriptural traditions. Tin appears as “silver,” i.e. “truth,” but it is not. These are the forces that crucified Jesus.

The three parts appear to be speaking of conflicting ideologies that still live on today. One part, like Caiaphas, includes the views held by atheists, secular Jews, liberals etc. There will be no place for these ideologies in the Kingdom. On the other end of the spectrum, one third of the regathered Jewish people are comprised of “ultra-orthodox” Jews and other far-right nationalists, whose ideology is much different from that of the Messiah’s Kingdom.

These extreme views, today popularly called left-wing and right-wing, will then become totally disgraced in the eyes of all people, and thus slain. We can expect, however, that the third part — the center — to carry ideas that after cleansing and trying like silver and gold will be developed in the Kingdom. Among these ideas may be the need for Israel to continue being an example for the world, assisting other nations. Israel’s present ability to reclaim desert places and other similar programs will grow and prosper under the kingdom arrangement.

REVIEW OF THE BATTLE FOR JERUSALEM

Many prophecies mention the gathering of all nations both to tear down the old order and to oppose Israel (Joel 2:1-11, Ezekiel 38:2-8, Micah 5:4). Joel 2:12-18 suggests that those who pray for deliverance will survive. Perhaps the desolation and destruction are meant for those who will not trust in God, but — just as we see today —

they will attempt to defend themselves with their own weapons. In Zechariah 14:1-3 we find that things will go against Israel at the start of this battle. Joel 2:12-18 speaks of a solemn fast that is called by the faithful Jews. Micah 5:5 suggests that the Ancient Worthies (eight princes of men) will be resurrected. Hence, we would likely expect that the church and Great Company will be off the scene by that time.

As the situation becomes extreme, the Lord fights as “in the day of battle” against the nations who are oppressing His chosen people. He will fight as only He, the Man of War, the One God, can fight. (Exodus 15:3). God will fight on behalf of His own people, the people of Israel. It is so amazing. On this day God’s justice and judgment, as well as His grace and mercy, will be manifested in a manner far surpassing human understanding and thought. This certainly means a combination of many elements; including unnatural phenomenon (Joshua 10:14,42,25); confusing Israel’s enemies so they turn their own weapons on each other (Judges 7:21-22, 2 Chronicles 20); confusing Israel’s enemies so that Israel has a strategic advantage (2 Kings 3:9-27); severe weather (Joshua 10:11, 1 Samuel 7:10), and plague (Isaiah 37:36). Giving special strength to Israel (Judges 4:15, 1 Chronicles 14:9) will come, but not until late in the battle. Zechariah 14:12 also mentions the plague element.

JERUSALEM, THE WORLD CAPITAL

The city of Jerusalem will serve as the world capital and all nations of earth will send their ambassadors to Jerusalem (Isaiah 33:20; OV69:1). The earthly representatives of Jesus and the church will be the Ancient Worthies, for Jesus and the church will not be visible to man.

Zechariah closes with a joyful description of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, or Succoth, in the Kingdom (Zechariah 14:19). Tisha B’Av,¹ and three additional fasts, will now be feasts of joy (Zechariah 8:18,19). According to Ezekiel, the Passover will also be celebrated in the future (Ezekiel 45:21). Although both prophets describe offering sacrifices, these may not consist of actual animals or food; rather — as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:5 — they may be spiritual sacrifices. As we read in the Psalms, “Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:16,17). But whether the sacrifices be actual animals as part of the education process for the world and in remembrance of the night of sin, or whether they are not, their spiritual lesson will be of the utmost importance.

— Condensed from an “after-hours” panel at the 2016 International Convention, Szczyrk, Poland.

(1) “Tisha B’Av” is Israel’s mid-summer period of mourning during which Jews remember the events that led to the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the first temple.

Hezekiah’s Seal

“And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and ... seal unto it” (Nehemiah 9:38).

Israeli archaeologists have discovered a mark from the seal of biblical King Hezekiah, who helped build Jerusalem into an ancient metropolis.

The circular inscription, on a piece of clay less than a centimeter (0.4 inches) long, may very well have been made by the king himself, said Eilat Mazar of Jerusalem’s Hebrew University who directed the excavation where it was uncovered.

Hezekiah ruled around 700 BC and was described in the Bible as a daring monarch — “There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him” (2 Kings 18:5) — who was dedicated to eliminating idolatry in his kingdom. “This is the first time that a seal impression of an Israelite or Judean king has ever come to light in a scientific archaeological excavation,” Mazar said.



Hezekiah’s Seal, about 1 cm across.

The clay imprint, known as a bulla, was found at a dig at the foot of the southern part of the wall that surrounds Jerusalem’s Old City, an area rich in relics from the period of the first of two ancient Jewish temples. It had been buried in a refuse dump dated to the time of Hezekiah and was probably tossed from an adjacent royal building, Mazar said. It contains ancient Hebrew script and the symbol of a two-winged sun.

The bulla was initially cataloged and put in a closet, along with 33 others, after a first inspection that failed to establish its true identity. Only five years later, when a team member scrutinized it under a magnifying glass and discerned dots in between some of the letters, did the meaning become clear. The dots help separate the words: “Belonging to Hezekiah (son of) Ahaz king of Judah.”

Mazar said the back side of the clay imprint of the seal had markings of thin cords that were used to tie a papyrus document. “It’s always a question, what are the real facts behind the biblical stories,” Mazar said. “Here we have a chance to get as close as possible to the person himself, to the king himself.”

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