

Beauties of the Truth

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Walls, Bars and Gates
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Walls, Bars and Gates

"I will go up to the land of unwalled villages ... having neither bars nor gates."(Ezekiel 38:15)

There is evidence that WALLS, BARS and GATES symbolically relate more to faith than natural defenses. They are the essential emblems of a city. The building of cities grew out of the desire for conveniences, safety, trade, concentration of wealth as well as the expression of human pride. The first city was named Enoch after the name of Cain's son (Genesis 4:17). The earliest cities were located on the trade routes as in Canaan: Megiddo, Shechem and Jericho. Before these were Ur, Sumer, Nineveh, Nippur, Kish, Lagash and Hazor.

After the flood, cities became a special expression of pride and ambition of human endeavors. Genesis 10:5-12 details some of the early ambitions. The city was a central place of worship as Babylon and Nineveh. In the case of Jerusalem, the object was to give glory to Jehovah with the central site of the temple. Yet here too human pride hindered the noble cause.

The city had all the potential for concentrated vice and evil. Man became more separated from the labor in the God given field and more cumbered with commerce, wealth and vain imaginations. So it was with Sodom and Gomorrah. The city had a way of asserting man's ownership in buildings

and possessions and lost sight of God's ownership of all the land. Man is only a tenant and caretaker of God's possession. This is ordained in Leviticus under the law of redemption as part of the Sabbath and Jubilee ordinances (Leviticus 25:23). "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants" (NIV). The land is God's heritage! Within the confines of a city, man glorified the work of his own hands. He decorated the walls of Babylon with magnificent gardens and the streets of Athens with the gods of their imagination. A city built on a high platform or hill as Megiddo or Masada or built with a high wall as Hazor, had the "high ground" and defensive advantage against an enemy. The wall became a shelter to those within and a barrier to the enemy without.

Of necessity a city had gates as avenues for transport, commerce, sojourners, etc., else the city would be a prison. In time of peace the gates were places of commerce, and trade and a place for public forums, and reading of laws.

Here judges sat and verdicts were read. The poor and lame sat in gates for alms and aid. In the book of Esther, it was in the king's gate that the confrontation with Mordecai and Haman occurred. Towns are a natural result of the aggressive principle in human nature. In the time of the Patriarchs we find towns surrounded with fortifications, so as to make them "fenced cities." The walls of fortified cities were formed in part, at least, of combustible materials (Amos 1:7, 10, 14). The gates were covered with thick plates of iron or brass (Psalms 107:16; Isaiah 45:2). Within the city were citadels or towers which served as observation points and to which the inhabitants might flee when the city could not be defended (Judges 9:46-52). Watch towers on the walls were used to watch for the enemy and to provide an early warning system.

In time of war the gates were subject to siege by an enemy. The gates were secured with bars and the walls manned for defense. This might be successful as in Hezekiah's defense against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, or result in a defeat as in the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. But cities did not always carry a corrupt connotation. God provided Levitical "cities of refuge" in the case of involuntary homicide until the offender was released from banishment by the death of the high priest (Numbers 35:6, 13, 15; Joshua 20:2, 7, 9). God provided separate jubilee laws affecting the walled cities (Leviticus 25:29-31). Isaiah uses the symbol of a city with walls and bulwarks as a most positive prospect of Israel's refuge in the bonds of the covenant in millennial kingdom conditions.

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; **salvation will God appoint for walls** and bulwarks. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but **thou shall call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise**" (Isaiah 26:1, 11, 18).

Here God provides walls of salvation for Israel's faith secured by his word. Psalms 61:3 and Proverbs 18:10 also speak of the Lord as a strong tower of defense against the enemy for the righteous.

Upon Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem, one of his first works was to restore the GATES. In Nehemiah 13:19-22 this is said to be for the purpose of preserving the sacredness of the Sabbath,

ie., to secure against the flow of commerce on this holy day. Building the gates related directly to preserving the faith of a recovering nation.

This brings us to Ezekiel 38:11 where Israel is invaded by the forces of Gog. They ponder the prospect of invading “the land of unwalled villages ... them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.” This chapter is dealt with somewhat in Volume 4, pages 553-556. Some have suggested that dwelling safely in unwalled villages may indicate the vulnerability of the Kibbutz movement in Israel. Surely this frontier is being invaded by Palestinian demands. Another suggestion is that the lack of walls, bars and gates shows a lack of military preparedness. But Israel is not without military might.

We would like to follow another suggestion that “safely” indicates over-confidence. In the light of the Isaiah texts cited above, this would be self confidence and not faith in the true “walls of salvation.” In fact Israel may have a strong military arsenal and international agreements. But these are not the walls that would give them true courage against the enemy. Being without faith and praise secured in the word of promise is truly being without walls, bars or gates. Ezekiel seems to draw on the language of Deuteronomy 28:50-52, a portion of which reads:

“A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young ... shall besiege **thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst**, throughout all thy land; and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.”

They are without walls when first regathered because they have not full faith in the Lord who will be that wall in their hour of trial. His showing himself as their wall will awaken faith when the God of Israel is seen as the wall of salvation. Self-made walls are no defense at all.

An enemy sees this wavering faith as a breach through which to invade. A nation or army without a moral and spiritual cause are seen as vulnerable and capable of being demoralized despite technological resources. In the struggle of Gentiles to declare the superiority of their gods over the God of Israel, they will dare to invade when Israel's faith is at a low ebb.

The outcome of this final trial is found in Ezekiel 39:25-29. “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now I will bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.”

Zechariah prophesied in 2:4-5: “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein [those things normally considered security]: **For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about**, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”

The result of this conflict will be that God will be sanctified in the eyes of the Gentile nations as the God of Israel. Israel will have her walls of faith and salvation restored.

If we are faithful watchmen, let us consider the privilege and responsibility indicated in Isaiah 62:6-7. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

- *Jerry Leslie*

“Ye Shall Find a Colt Tied”

Knowing that the Passover season was approaching, Jesus turned his steps toward Jerusalem. As he neared the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples into a nearby village to procure for him the colt upon which he would ride for his presentation to Israel as its king (Zechariah 9:9).

In this connection, it is interesting to note that this colt was one “whereon yet never man sat” (Luke 19:30). This fact is quite significant! Such an animal would require a “beaking-in” period ere anyone could ride upon it. It would quite naturally resist being ridden upon, and the restraint of its freedom. Bearing in mind that an ass is an unclean animal, yet one that could be redeemed (Exodus 13:13; 34:20; Numbers 18:15), it might well represent the whole world of mankind as it appears in the end of the Gospel age - wild, lawless, unclean, and anarchistic - the kingdoms of this world which are to become “the kingdoms of our Lord” (Revelation 11:15). Yes, they are to become, as did that colt of the ass under Jesus, no longer restive, but docile, peaceable, willingly subject to the King.

- *Anton Frey, “Notes on the Passover and the Memorial”*

Our Lord's Resurrection Appearances

Ten is the Sum of Seven and Three

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.” 1 John 1:1, NIV

TEN POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

The Bible records ten¹ post-resurrection appearances of Jesus during the forty days following that most blessed Sunday.² This is significant because in Biblical numerology ten is associated with completeness, perfection, and fullness in human affairs. Hence, we have ten fingers, ten toes, ten commandments, ten virgins, and ten horns on the fearsome beast. Ten is the sacred number of the tabernacle.³ While this lesson of completeness holds here, at the same time, the scriptures speak of two additional appearances following the ascension. Saul of Tarsus unexpectedly witnessed an eleventh appearance (an imperfect number) “as of one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). This left him with impaired vision. Mankind shall witness a yet future twelfth “appearance” of our Lord (a perfect number) to I every eye” of understanding as they discern Jesus through the clouds of trouble (Revelation 1:7).⁴

At each of the first ten appearances only disciples were privileged witnesses: “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; *Not to all people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us ...*” (Acts 10:40-41). Realistically, the total elapsed time of these appearances was around 2% of the forty days.

When considered collectively, we find a definite 7::3 structure in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (see the accompanying chart). Ten as the sum of seven and three is a lesson we first find in the record of Job's children. While the natural attention of a patriarchal society is towards the seven sons as Job's natural strength and legacy (Job 42:13-15), it is the beauty (and we trust, character) of his three daughters that created special demands on his and our attention. Like their brothers, they received a full portion of the ten-fold inheritance. Unlike their brothers, the names of Jemima, Kezia, and Keren-hapuch (the counterbalancing three-fold) are the only ones scripture preserves. If we regard the “sevenness” as the major lesson, and the “threeness” as the counterbalancing lesson with a special purpose and beauty, what is our Lord intending for us to learn?

APOSTLES - THE PRIVILEGED WITNESSES

The apostles, or “sent forth ones,” were specially privileged witnesses, being present at seven occasions where Jesus appeared. They are indeed the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem. On the other hand, three times the Lord showed that he also is pleased to use as witnesses other believers who were not these specially “sent forth” ones. As Jesus showed on these occasions, each of our lives may be touched with his fellowship in a personal and intimate way.

MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH AND THE “GREAT COMMISSION”

On seven occasions the purpose of Jesus' appearing was to strengthen his disciples. This stands as the great work of the gospel age which will see Christ-likeness developed in the sons of God. By way of counterbalance, on three occasions the Lord gave a “Great Commission” empowering his brethren to direct their energies outward in ministering and witnessing to the world. “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in my name” (Matthew 28:18, 19, corrected reading).

A CHRIST IN COMMUNION WITH THE ECCLESIA

On seven occasions the Lord appeared to a company of his people, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). The Lord has blessed the ecclesia arrangement, and since we all are creatures formed to be in relation with others, we also are joyful and encouraged in the company of our beloved brethren.

At the same time, on three occasions single witnesses, Mary Magdalene and the apostles Peter and James, could combine their witness to testify that the Lord will indeed also manifest himself one-on-one to his disciples both female and male (John 8:17).⁵ For each of us, the personal presence of Jesus has special import in this Laodicean season when he comes knocking at the door of our individual hearts (Revelation 3:20). Peter and James were unusually close to the Lord, hence his personal visit to them was not surprising. However, it might seem surprising that beloved John was omitted. It may be that he was not the recipient of a one-on-one appearance because it was important to show that sisters were also capable of receiving this special privilege. Had Mary Magdalene and all three of the closest apostles received a solo visit, the 7::3 structure of the ten appearances would be lost. In later years while on Patmos, John did have a personal vision of Jesus in a far more powerful way.

FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM

During seven appearances, Jesus manifested himself in a manner not alarming to the senses.⁶ Yet at the same time, on three occasions he showed he has the power to materialize or dematerialize. Clearly, Jesus is no longer confined to a body of flesh.

THE FAMILIAR JESUS NOT REINCARNATED

Seven times, Jesus was recognized on sight when he appeared with his familiar facial features and body of flesh. It was crucial that Jesus be recognized with his familiar features so that there would be a certain witness to his resurrection. However, for three appearances, he showed that he is no longer constrained to that form, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50).

Why is this so? What if Jesus were to show the power of his new nature by appearing in a different form on each occasion?

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION APPEARANCES											
		Magdalene	Other women	Emmas	Cephas	10 Apostles	With Thomas	Sea of Galilee	500 Brethren	James	Ascension
* These numbers are section references for the 10 post-resurrection appearances of Jesus taken from; Robertson, A.T., "A harmony of the Gospels," Harper & Rowe, New York, 1950.	Sum	John 20:11-18	Matthew 28:9-10	Luke 24:13-32	Luke 24:33-35; 1 Cor. 15:5	Luke 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-25	John 20:26-31; 1 Cor 15:5	John 21 (see v. 12)	Matt 28:16-20; 1 Cor 15:6	1 Cor. 15:7	Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-12
CIRCUMSTANCE		173*	174*	176*	177*	178*	179*	180*	181*	182*	183/4
Appearance to disciples - "Shown... not to all people" Acts 10:40-41	10	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Appearance to non-disciples	0										
Witnesses - multiple John 8:17	7		†	†		†	†	†	†		†
Witnesses - single	3	†			†					†	
Apostle(s) present	7				†	†	†	†	†	†	†
No Apostles present	3	†	†	†							
Presence/Departure without Materialization/Dematerialization	7	†	†		†			†	†	†	†
Presence/Departure with Materialization/Dematerialization	3			†		†	†				
HEARING PERCEPTION	10	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
VISUAL PERCEPTION											
Resurrected Lord recognized by facial features	7		†		†	†	†		†	†	†
Resurrected Lord not-recognized by facial features	3	†		†				†			
TOUCH PERCEPTION											
No witness to touching Jesus	7	†		†	†			†	†	†	†
Multiple witnesses to touching Jesus	3		†			†	†				
EATING PERCEPTION											
No witnesses to Jesus eating	7	†	†		†		†		†	†	†
Multiple witnesses to Jesus eating	3			†		†		†			

Among the Greeks, reincarnation was one of the speculative ideas of metaphysics that formed part of the standard curriculum in the academies.⁷ No doubt appearances in a different form on each occasion would have led the believers to accept some murky and confused doctrine of reincarnation and transmigration of the soul. Furthermore, believers would expect manifestations of the reincarnated Jesus spirit in different forms leading to even more mischief. Hence, it was crucial that the familiar Jesus manifest himself, yet at the same time that he also show evidence of no longer being constrained to that body.

“THE WORD OF LIFE ... OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED” (I JOHN 1:1)

On seven occasions there is no specific testimony of Jesus being touched. The intimacy of fellowship between Jesus and the disciples would no longer be the same until that day when these witnesses would also undergo the resurrection change. Yet on three occasions Jesus specifically invited multiple witnesses to touch him, and again, both female and male.⁸

THE PROMISE OF A RETURN - A RESURRECTED CHRIST WHO EATS

A divine being has no need of drink or food to sustain life. In all ten appearances, there is no witness to drinking,⁹ thus fulfilling the promise that Jesus would not drink thenceforth with his beloved saints until their deliverance (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). On seven of the ten appearances there also is no testimony to eating. Nevertheless, there is a joy in sharing food and drink which makes supping a satisfying picture of communion with our Lord both individually and as a joyful company of reunited saints. Supping is an important element of the celebration of the Lamb's wedding where a blessing is promised even to those who are not a part of the bride class (Revelation 19:9).

On three occasions we find a direct testimony - again by multiple witnesses - to Jesus eating. The disciples needed to be able to testify that Jesus was not merely a visibly manifested spirit, or in technical terms, a “phantom.” Three other observations may prove to be a blessing:

First, when the Lord does come to us to sup (Revelation 3:20) these appearances suggest that the symbolic equivalent of bread and grilled fish should be on the menu (Luke 24:30; Luke 24:42; John 21:9). Both bread and fish are used as images of the church, suggesting that our Lord wishes for an intimacy of communion, where he is in us, and we are in him (John 6:55).

Next, in view of the careful choreography of our resurrected Lord's visits, the wife of Cleopas is a strongly appealing candidate for the unnamed second disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). This would give the sisters in the church the privilege of participating in bearing testimony to a Jesus who eats, and a Jesus who dematerializes. If this were not the case, the sisters representatively have not received the privilege of this witness, although they still enjoy the spiritual promise of Revelation 3:20.

Third, for gentile converts familiar with classical mythology, this supping would provide a powerful testimony that Jesus would return to earth. To the Greeks and Romans, the dying of the fields in fall and winter, followed by their rebirth in spring, were considered to be the consequence

of maiden goddess Persephone returning to the underworld of Hades six months out of the year during the fall and winter as a consequence of eating a mere seven pomegranate seeds while in Hades.¹⁰ There was a belief going back to the Age of the Patriarchs that the moral code of the cosmos bound you to hospitality and to a return to your host if food was shared.

SUNDAY - THE RESURRECTED LORD'S DAY

Observance of the Sabbath day is the fourth commandment, and so as not to let one jot or tittle of the law fail, the church is enjoined to observe the greater antitype of this Sabbath each and every day of their lives.¹¹ However, the final lesson to draw from the Lord's appearances is that it establishes Sunday, by our common Roman reckoning of midnight to midnight, as the Resurrected Lord's day.

Five, or fully half of these appearances, took place within the first eighteen hours of discovering the empty tomb on the Resurrection Sunday. For the seven times we can establish the day of the week on which an appearance occurred, six of those times are on Sunday. It was necessary that the ascension take place on a Friday, both completing another scripturally significant period of "forty" as well as serving as a counterbalance to death and disgrace on a Friday.

It is likely that in the case of the other three appearances for which we are unable to establish the weekday, some or all were Sundays by our common reckoning. Irrespective of this, the combined result of these six Sunday appearances closely followed by the experience of Pentecost Sunday fixed this day permanently in the collective consciousness of the church. Henceforth, the church looked beyond the rest at the end of the week - Saturday by Jewish reckoning - to the beginning of the new week on Sunday as the Resurrected Lord's day. These appearances so firmly fixed the Lord's will in the matter of gathering of his people that from this time onward the church properly has looked to Sunday as their day of worship.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

For the ten resurrection appearances of Jesus, the primary lessons are the importance of apostleship, nurturing the church, ecclesia communion, and witness to the resurrection of the Jesus the disciples knew in the flesh.

These are counterbalanced by lessons of care for the individual members of the body, commissions to preach to the world, and our Lord's new nature in a resurrected body capable of dematerializing and taking other forms while still being capable of taste and touch. In these as in all his workings, the Lord's hand shows purpose, structure and balance.

- *Richard Doctor*

¹ It is noticed that on R2809 Br. Russell separates Matthew 28:16-20 and I Corinthians 15:6 into the 8th and 9th appearances, making a total of 11 appearances (Editor).

² Robertson, AT., *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Harper & Rowe, N.Y. (1950).

³ Frey, A., *The Tabernacle of God*, Chicago Bible Students Book Republishing, PO. Box 6016, Chicago, IL 60680 (1996), p. 266

⁴ Russell, CT., *The Time is at Hand*, Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 2 (1916), p. 138.

⁵ In Luke 24:33-35 we learn that when Cleopas and the second disciple returned from Emmaus, they found “the eleven” and other disciples (actually, only ten apostles since Thomas was missing, John 20:24) already engaged (verse 34) in an excited ongoing discussion (λεγουταζ ”saying”) about the appearance of Jesus to Simon Peter. *Then* both the disciples hastily expounded on (εξηγουοιυντο, “related,” in the aorist to indicate the haste) what had happened on the road (verse 35).

⁶ The final departure of Jesus, where “a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9), was not a dematerialization.

⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, Chapter 11. “The Immortality of the Soul and the Rewards of Goodness,” Section 3, “The Myth of En”

⁸ I have always been puzzled by our Lord's command to Mary Magdalene: “Touch me not” (John 20:17). It seemed satisfactory that this was to direct Mary to rapidly spread the news to the other disciples. But in fact, the explanation Jesus gave was neither the need for haste, nor that touching him was improper, but rather a third explanation - that he was not yet ascended to the father. Could it be that if Mary had touched Jesus it would have confused the 7::3 structure of these appearances - and then with the touching only in the presence of multiple witnesses?

⁹ Acts 10:41 should be noted in this respect (Editor).

¹⁰ Persephone, the lovely daughter of Demeter (goddess of grain) and Zeus was abducted by Pluto (god of death), taken to the underworld, and forced to be his wife and queen. She was not permitted a full release from this forced marriage because “The girl shall rise to heaven on one condition - that is if no food touched her lips in Hades, for this is the law ... but [Persephone] guileless ... plucked a dark pomegranate ... and swallowed seven of its blood-purple seeds ... [hence] for half the year [she is] on earth, and the other half a queen with her husband.” Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, Book V (trans. by Horace Gregory), Mentor Books, New York (1958), p. 155-156.

¹¹ Russell, CT., “I Will Have Mercy, Not Sacrifice” (original in *Zion's Watchtower*, April 15, 1910), R4599.

The Dew and the Lion

“And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.” (Micah 5:7, 8)

Micah, like so many other Old Testament prophets, delivered a message which has meaning to his own day and a far larger application down the stream of time at the end of the age. Prophesying in the apostate days of Ahaz and the reform of Hezekiah, he is keenly aware of the threat of Assyrian domination and the larger specter of Babylonian conquest down the stream of time.

The book has three major divisions: the predictions of judgment in chapters one to three; prophecies of restoration in chapters four and five; and a plea for national repentance in chapters six and seven. The chapter under consideration in this study is the second of the restoration chapters.

THE DELIVERER, VERSES 1 TO 4

“Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops.- he hath laid siege against us.- they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel,- whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God , - and they shall abide.- for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”



The Prophet Micah

The first verse is open to two interpretations. Probably both are true, the one foreshadowing the other. In Micah's day the gatherer of troops was undoubtedly Assyria (with Babylon looming in the near future, see 4:10). These captivities, however, were to be of short term when compared with the siege of the Roman troops in AD 68-73, introducing the Jewish Diaspora of nearly 2000 years.

Although it is tempting to lay the greater emphasis on the Roman siege because of its direct connection with the “smiting” of the “judge of Israel,” the Messiah, on the cheek (Matthew 26:67; 27:30), the invasion of Assyria seems more likely when we consider verse two.

In the second verse the word “but” establishes a contrast between the judges of the first two verses. In fact, even the Hebrew words for “judge” in the first verse and “ruler” in the

second verse are different. The former indicates one with judicial authority, while the latter describes a member of the executive branch of government.

There is no question as to the identity of the “ruler” of verse two. This is a prophecy of Jesus of Nazareth and is so applied in Matthew 2:5, 6.

The selection of Bethlehem Ephratah as the birthplace appears to be no mere coincidence. First, it was known as “the city of David.” The angels' song to the shepherds refers to this in Luke 2:11. Second, as a “little” city, it highlighted the humble nature of the work of Messiah at his first advent. Third, the combined name means “fertile house of bread,” a fitting name for the one who was to be called “the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48). Fourth, the mother of Hur and grandmother of Bezaleel was called by the same name (1 Chronicles 2:19; 4:4). The connection between Bezaleel and the

Messiah can be quickly seen by a comparison of Exodus 31:2, 3 with Isaiah 11:1, 2. Finally, the exact location is connected with that of the Great Pyramid of Egypt by a line drawn from the pyramid at the exact angle of the ascending passage and extended northeastward into Canaan, passing directly through Bethlehem.

Of this Messiah it was written, “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,” for, as he himself claims, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Verse three spans a period of nearly 2000 years. If the first verse refers to the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the “therefore” of verse three calls attention to the smiting of the judge of Israel on the cheek. If the opening verse is an allusion to the Assyrian invasion, the “therefore” implies another smiting, this one of the Messiah. In either case the causative action that brings on the giving up of Israel is the instigation of the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jewish people at the first advent. The “travail” is a reference to the deliverance of the church (Isaiah 66:5). The casting off of Israel was not forever, but until another work was accomplished, that of the selection of the bride of Christ, the church. “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:25, 26).

It is at this juncture that Israel will return to their homeland. It will not be “all” of Israel but a “remnant” that shall return for “they are not all Israel who are of Israel” (Romans 9:6). Bypassing the final troublous experiences which will wean from Israel this faithful “remnant,” the prophet paints with a broad brush the work of their returned Messiah. He will be their shepherd, feeding them as David fed his flocks on the hillsides of Bethlehem, and “they shall abide.” As he says in another place, “I will plant them, and not pluck them up.” (Jeremiah 24:6; 42:10).

The reception of the Messiah will be in sharp contrast to that of his first advent. Then he was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3). “Now,” the prophet Micah states, “shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”

THE DELIVERANCE (VERSES 5, 6)

“And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.”

The words “this man” appear in italics in the King James Bible and should be omitted, as in the Revised Standard version. Using the figure of the Assyrian invasion, he describes the deliverance of Israel in a battle that is led by seven shepherds and eight princes (as in most translations) of men.

Many students of the Bible foresee two more prophetic conflicts in Israel before they assume their important position in God's kingdom. The earlier of these conflicts is described in the eighty-third Psalm and the latter in the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. While it is customary to ascribe the

deliverance of the Micah verse to the latter battle, it is noteworthy that Assyria (“Assur”) is a leader of the combatants in the Psalms text.

Israel has a number of divine “shepherds.” “Jehovah is our shepherd,” states the psalmist (23:1). Jesus described himself as the “good shepherd” in the tenth chapter of John. He is, as it were, a chief “under-shepherd,” with his church filling the roles of additional under-shepherds. The number “seven” in our verse does not seem to refer to a literal number, but to a figure of completion. This then harmonizes with verse three where the church is first brought forth before this deliverance commences. This is also the thought of Romans 11:25, 26, quoted above. “Princes,” as appears to be the correct translation of “principal men,” is a term used in the Bible of the ancient prophets and leaders of Israel (Psalms 45:16). This is in harmony with the testimony of Isaiah 1:26, “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning.” To this agree the words of Zechariah 14:3 which describe this same deliverance: “Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.” In “the day of battle” during past times God would first raise up a judge, or deliverer, and use this individual to lead Israel's troops to victory (Judges 2:16, 18).

As the number seven is symbolic, so is the number eight. It signifies a new beginning, as in the term “the eighth day,” the start of a new week. So it will be through a new beginning, a resurrection from the dead, that these ancient patriarchs will be raised to Israel's defense and salvation.

It is also worthy of note that he says of the remnant of Israel, “then shall we raise against him” this delivering force. If a direct cause were sought for the resurrection of these ancients it would have to be the application of the blood of Christ. Returned Israel has no direct part in this work. Yet they do have an indirect part, for the Scriptures indicate that all resurrection may be through the medium of prayer. In Zechariah 12:9, 10 we are informed that this final battle will be accompanied with Israel receiving the “spirit of grace, and of **supplications.**”

THE DELIVERED (VERSES 7 TO 9)

“And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep.- who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.”

The remnant that experience this miraculous deliverance will have their work cut out for them. Two very different activities are described for them. They will be both “as a dew” and “as a lion.”

It is the refreshing aspect of their work that is described as being “as the dew.” This refers in particular to the teachings of the Lord which will emanate from the land of Israel. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass” (Deuteronomy 32:2). Many scriptures refer to all peoples of the

earth coming to receive the blessings of the Lord through restored Israel (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:23).

These blessings shall not tarry for man. Neither will there be the interminable processes of parliaments and councils to decide what to teach nor will there be a long delay after Israel assumes their kingdom position before these blessings of “the knowledge of the Lord” shall begin to flow out to the waiting world.

The role of a lion, however, is far different. In this figure of speech we see described the judgmental role of Israel in earth's affairs. The contrast between these two offices is aptly described in Proverbs 19:12, “The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favor is as dew upon the grass.”

As the lion is “the king of beasts,” so Israel shall be the dominant nation on earth. Although the legal powers of that kingdom will be in the heavens - “the Law shall go forth from Zion” - the spreading of that law will be from Israel “the word of the Lord shall go from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

What a role reversal this will be! Israel has been for the past two thousand years a pariah among the nations. They have been persecuted and driven from land to land. Now their fortunes turn and they become the most prominent of nations. We read of this in Zechariah 8:13, “And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.” Then it will be Jehovah's hand that will be lifted against their adversaries, cutting off all their enemies.

FIVE DIVINE JUDGMENTS (VERSES 10 TO 14)

“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots: And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds.- And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand: and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.- Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.”

Although this deliverance of Israel will be dramatic and its impact universal, it is only the “remnant” that will be brought through (verse 3). For the others of Israel the trouble will be judgmental, removing all forms of rival worship from the people God chooses to use to bless all mankind with the refreshment of his kingdom.

There will be no more horses or chariots - no more forms of militarism. There will be no more cities or strongholds from which a self-exalted aristocracy rules over their fellow. There will be no more witchcrafts or soothsayers or any other source of alternate communication with God. There will be no more images or worship of other gods, whether they be the gods of Christendom or the gods of heathendom. There will be no more groves or any other place for the worship of others than Jehovah. In the past “they sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not” (Deuteronomy 32:17). Now the past

will be over and there will be a new beginning for a “new earth” will be established on this planet under the “new heavens” of the exalted church of Christ (Revelation 21:1).

JUDGMENT ON THE HEATHEN (VERSE 15)

“And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.”

God's judgments are not limited to Israel. The heathen, or gentile nations, that come against Israel, though used of God to chastise his people Israel, are not guiltless. Time and time again God has used gentile nations to chastise Israel, but each time they themselves have been punished for the troubles they brought upon God's chosen people.

The principle behind this is well described in Zechariah 1:15, “And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.” It is for this reason also, and not only for the deliverance of Israel, that God will face the forces that invade Israel and “will fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”

Thus will God establish his kingdom upon planet earth through Israel under their restored “princes,” their faithful leaders of old. How we await that time and, in the meanwhile, “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” that will spread forth from that restored city of God (Psalms 122:6).

“Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem” (Zechariah 1:16).
- *Carl Hagensick*