

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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Tyre and Sidon

The history of these twin cities of Tyre and Sidon illustrate the evils of abominable idolatry linked to a commerce-driven life without the restraints of God's spirit. Their primacy as economic powers of the ancient world presented a continual reproach to the children of Israel. And yet, this should not have happened.

It happened because Israel never fully entered upon the blessings tendered to Abraham, reaffirmed by Jacob and Joshua. As promised, Israel was a land of hills and valleys (Deuteronomy 11:9-11). Israel did possess the arable plains of Jezreel, the bountiful waters of the Sea of Galilee, and the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea. Although Joppa sufficed for a port, in a practical sense, what the nation of Israel's failure meant was that even in Solomon's balmy days the Promised Land never controlled a world class harbor on the Mediterranean. Neither did they ever control the one resource of world-class interest that lay within their geographic promised territory. This resource was the unsurpassed prodigious "Cedars of Lebanon." So impressive were these trees that from the most ancient times no less than five generations after the flood of Noah, these cedars were considered an exotic quest destination for epic adventurers from 700 miles away in distant "Erech," the city of Genesis 10:10.¹ Down to our day, there is no more stately building material than cedar. Only in visiting the magnificent forests of Central California can one find the match of climate and conditions of Lebanon in these ancient times. Here it is possible to get a sense of the glory that Lebanon once had.

PROMISES TO THE FATHERS

Before reviewing the history, we give a quick overview of the promises that Israel would receive the territory that we today call Lebanon, along with Sidon. (The name "Sidon" also appears in the Bible as "Zidon.") Over the course of centuries, Sidon became closely associated with the nearby city of Tyre. Tyre was founded later than Sidon, but was prominent at the time of the division of the land Canaan among the Israelites, and grew to be more powerful than Sidon.

Promised to Abraham, Genesis 15:18-21: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the River of Egypt unto the great river, even the River Euphrates ... and the Canaanites."

Reaffirmed by Jacob, Genesis 49:13: "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be a haven for ships; and his border shall be unto Sidon."

Reaffirmed to Moses, Deuteronomy 11:24, 1:7: "Lebanon ... unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

Reaffirmed by Joshua, Joshua 1:4: "Lebanon ... unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Subsequently, from Joshua 19:24-31: "And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher." We then learn that their inheritance was to include "great Sidon" and the "strong city of Tyre."

THE TERRITORY PROMISED

The Promised Land was miraculously entered when the nation crossed the Jordan on foot (Joshua 3:15-17). The Jordan river, starting from Mt. Hermon, has always formed a natural eastern barrier even though the Lord permitted Rueben, Gad, and part of Manasseh to settle east of the Jordan.

Genesis 49:13 might mean that their border was up to the districts of Sidon but not including Sidon. However, this would mean that Israel would control the flow of goods from

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Mesopotamia through Sidon and there is no evidence this ever happened. The border was intended to extend as far north as the "River Euphrates" which should be understood to mean the northern border near Carchemish where the Euphrates today flows from Turkey into Syria. Carchemish is the natural invasion route to the Levant and it has served as a frequent battleground since Egyptian records have been kept (2 Chronicles 35:20). The ability to control the territory at this strategic juncture thus has always been critical to stopping the invasion of the Promised Land. This territory thus includes all of Lebanon and a small portion of Syria.

We learn from the history of Solomon's relations with Hiram, King of Tyre, that Israel never extended as far north as the Euphrates. It seems that the dominion of Hiram extended over the western slopes of Lebanon; and when David built himself a palace, Hiram materially assisted the work by sending cedar-wood from Lebanon, and able workmen to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:11, 1 Chronicles 14:1). During the reign of Solomon, the king of Tyre agreed to supply from Lebanon the timber required for the Temple, to float it along the coast, and deliver it at Joppa, which was the port of Jerusalem (1 Kings 5:1, 9:10, 11, 2 Chronicles 2:16). The vast commerce of Tyre made gold very plentiful there and Hiram supplied no less than 500 talents to Solomon for the ornamental works of the Temple. He received in return twenty towns in Galilee, which, when he came to inspect them, pleased him so little that he applied to them a name of contempt, and restored them to the Jewish king (2 Chronicles 8:2).

Boundaries of the lands that were inhabited by Israelites, or under *direct* central royal administration during the United Monarchy period, excluded states such as Damascus, Geshur, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistine city-states. Sometimes they acknowledged a degree of Israelite suzerainty or overlordship, but they were never integral or directly-administered parts of the unified Israelite kingdom of David or Solomon.

The land directly administered by Israel was referred to by the Biblical phrase, "from Dan to Beersheba," which occurs nine times in the Old Testament (Judges 20:1, 1 Samuel 3:20, 2 Samuel 3:10, 2 Samuel 17:11, 2 Samuel 24:2, 2 Samuel 24:15, 1 Kings 4:25, 1 Chronicles 21:2, and 2 Chronicles 30:5). Solomon's larger empire is described with the phrase "from Tiphseh to Gaza" (1 Kings 4:24-25, or 5:4-5 in Jewish verse numbers). This phrase uses the northeastern-most and southwestern-most cities of note that recognized allegiance to Solomon. Tiphseh was in northern Syria at the bend in the Upper Euphrates.

SIDON

What do we know about these cities of Tyre and Sidon?

Let us begin by considering their historical development. We know that Ham was involved in some unknown way in his father Noah's drunken excess and that he "saw" something; that when "Noah awoke from his wine and came to know what his younger son had done to him" (Genesis 9:21-24), the weight of Noah's curse for this humiliation fell

upon Canaan, one of Ham's four sons. Possibly Canaan was the youngest, judging by his being placed last in order in Genesis 9:25. Already, at the very dawn of that new dispensation, strife and division entered the experience of mankind. Noah prophesied that Canaan would be a "servant of servants."²

In the scriptural record, Canaan was the most prolific of Ham's sons, fathering eleven male heirs. As

the nations moved apart, Canaan's eldest son "Sidon," or "Zidon" (Genesis 10:15), would establish a major seaport for the ancient world on what is generally considered the northern boundary of the "land of Canaan." Today the port of Sidon is in modern Lebanon, on the coast 16 miles south of Beirut and nearly due east of Damascus, Syria. The record shows that after abandoning the patriarchal worship of the "Almighty God," the descendants of Canaan rapidly promoted the most heinous idolatry. Sidon also became exceptionally wealthy.

The Sidonians were eager to meet everyone's needs and willingly served all sides in a conflict. To illustrate Sidon's position we may look at the record of the Bronze Age war waged by the Greeks against Troy recorded in Homer's *Iliad*. Inside the walls of besieged Troy, the most beautiful garment that could be found and then offered in sacrificial worship was a "... brocaded beautiful robe, the work of Sidonian women" (*Iliad* 6:343). At the same time, we find the Greeks offering "... the finest mixing bowl in the world, nothing could match its beauty, a masterpiece that skilled Sidonian craftsman had wrought to perfection" (*Iliad* 23:823). Everyone esteemed Sidonian luxury goods.

TYRE

After moving 20 miles southward from Sidon along the coast, one reaches the port of Tyre. Here, the origins of this imposing city are much more controversial, but some find it reasonable to assign it to the descendants of Japheth's youngest son Tiras. Hence, with Sidon representing the farthest Northern reach of Canaan, Tyre represented the farthest southern reach of Tiras' descendants, most of whom were concentrated in Thrace, but also controlled other major ports on the coast including famed Troy. Sidon and Tyre managed to coexist, with the prominence of each over the other ebbing and flowing over the centuries. Eventually, Tyre would prove more significant than Sidon as the center of commerce. With this prominence, Tyre would proudly pro-



Father Abraham, heir of the promises.

claim on her coins that she was the “mother of Sidon.” This must be understood as Tyre boasting to be the “metropolis,” or “mother city” to the less significant Sidon. This unwarranted boast is the reason why, in her judgment, Tyre is designated the “daughter of Sidon” (Isaiah 23:12), indicating the reversal of fortunes.

Though full of abominations and under a death sentence by the Lord, the influence of Tyre and Sidon were far-reaching in ways that still impact us today. The term “alphabet” is Canaanite in origin. “Alphabet” means nothing in Greek or Latin, however in the Semitic language family to which both Canaanite tongue and Hebrew belong, an “aleph” or “ox” still shows an upside-down head with two horns on the “A” followed by “Beth” or “house,” which originally depicted a tent. Throughout the Mediterranean world of this period they already were experimenting with using several alphabets. All of these experiments were swept aside by the force of commerce from Tyre and Sidon. Through their trade connections in the ancient world they disseminated a Semitic-language based alphabet from which the very letters on this page take their forms.

ISRAEL AND SIDON

In general, it appears as though the Israelites collectively referred to the inhabitants of the region as “Sidonians” or “Zidonians” (1 Kings 5:6, Ezekiel 32:30). They were also called “Canaanites” (Judges 1:31-33). The inhabitants themselves referred to their land as “Canaan,” and themselves as “Canaanites.” The districts of Sidon and Tyre become familiar and highly regarded throughout the Greek-speaking Mediterranean under the name “Phoenicia,” a Greek name

that refers to the fruitful date palm trees.³ Of great fame in trade was the blood-red dye from Tyre, sometimes mistakenly called “purple.” The cloth of Tyre was widely admired and was to play an important role in the commerce of the city from ancient times.⁴ These two cities were prosperous and powerful when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan to take the land of Canaan from its sinful possessors.

ASHER AND DAN — THE OPPONENTS OF TYRE

Though Jacob assigned the riches of Sidon to his son Zebulun, later providence during the division of the land of Canaan under Joshua re-assigned it. For the fifth lot fell to Asher (Joshua 19:24-31) and this was providentially overruled.⁵ This lot secured the divine promise for inheriting the extreme Northwest districts of Lebanon up to the river Euphrates. These districts allotted to Asher also included some of the most fertile farmland in Canaan.

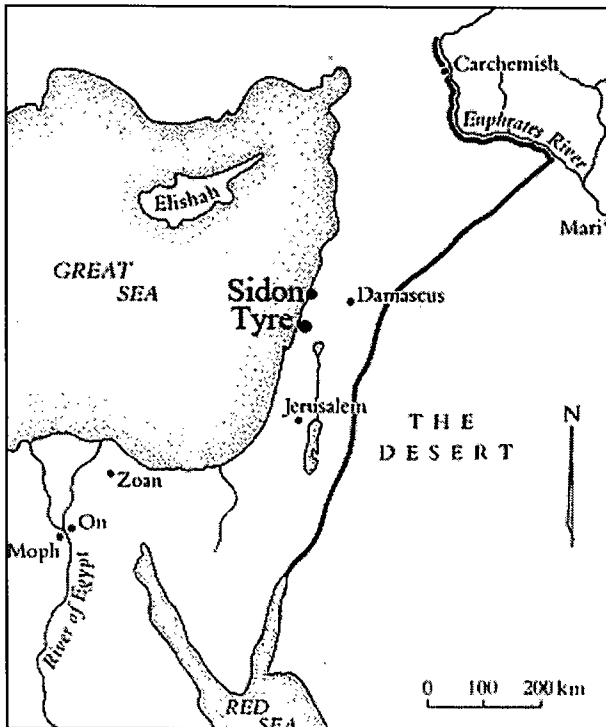
In conquest of the land of promise, Asher proved to be unsuccessful, as were the northern border tribes in general. We read the telling report of Asher’s failure in the account of Judges 1:31-32, where the very wording, the “Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites,” suggests that Asher did not even form a majority population in their allotted lands. If there was ever a need for concerted effort, it was to conquer Tyre and Sidon. The districts under the control of Tyre and Sidon apparently could depend on a rapid deployment of troops at the first threat to their safety. Hence, to dwell safely was the “manner of the Sidonians.” The economic hold of Tyre and Sidon assured compliance as can be seen when we consider the enigmatic reference during the judgeship of Deborah, the “mother in Israel,” in Judges 5:6-17: “Why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his creeks.”

A reasonable suggestion has emerged that this reproach is a reference to both Dan and Asher serving as seasonal workers for the bustling shipping industries of Sidon and Tyre. Hence, their allegiance was divided as a consequence of their economic interests.⁶

Within several generations, Dan felt strong enough, or desperate enough, for conquest, and the book of Judges picks up the narrative in Chapter 18. The Danites send forth five spies who “... came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Sidonians, and had no business with any man” (Judges 18:1, 7).

BAAL AND ASHTORETH WORSHIP — TYRE’S SIN

There is no difficulty in determining the meaning of the name Baal, since the word is in the Syro-Arabian family of language to which Hebrew belongs. It means “Lord,” not in the sense of “ruler,” but rather in the sense of “master, owner, possessor.” The name of the god “Baal,” whether singular or plural, is always distinguished from the common noun by the presence of the article. The Israelites avoided



Map showing ancient Tyre and Sidon.

ever generally calling Jehovah by the name “Baal,” though in Hosea 2:16 the word “baal” without the definite article appears as the sterner, less affectionate term for “husband.” It is spoken of the master and owner of a house (Exodus 22:7, Judges 19:22); of a landholder (Job 31:39); of an owner of cattle (Exodus 21:28, Isaiah 1:3); of a creditor (Deuteronomy 15:2); of the head of a family (Leviticus 21:4); and even of the Assyrians as conquerors of nations (Isaiah 16:8). When the deity is referred to, this name of Baal is distinguished by the use of the definite article (hab-Ba’al).

The Baal was the chief male divinity of the Canaanites (Judges 2:13), to whom the sun in its strength pertained. Speaking through Jeremiah, the Lord declares his abhorrence of this worship: “They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for a burnt offering unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind” (Jeremiah 19:5).

Baal had a female consort “Ashtoreth” who was recognized as their supreme female divinity, and to whom the worship of the moon pertained. Tyre’s warships boasted twelve rows of oarsmen who rowed their vessels under the protection of the goddess Ashtoreth and her crescent moon sign. The Christian “New Rome” of Constantinople preserved this ancient pagan symbol for their city from the original settlement of Byzantium up until the Islamic conquest. Curiously, in a departure from strict Islamic orthodoxy, the crescent moon sign of Ashtoreth was adopted throughout Islam to celebrate the conquest of “Rome” (Constantinople) after 800 years of warfare.

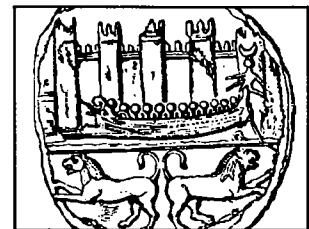
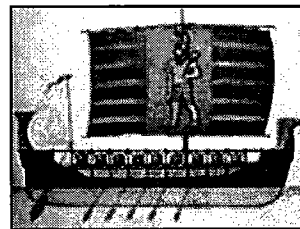
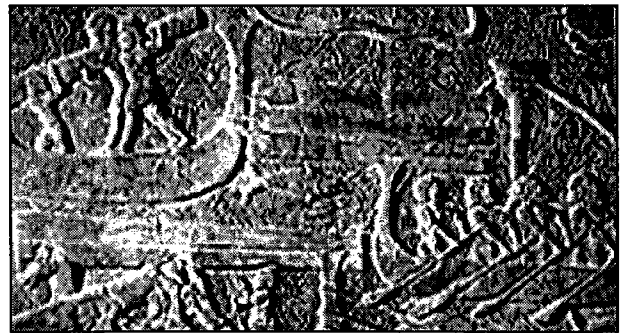
Both names have the peculiarity of being used in the plural, much as the royal “we” was arrogantly used by monarchs throughout history. It seems that these plurals designate either their status as divinities, or different manifestations of the divinities themselves. The plural Baalim is found frequently (e.g. Judges 2:11, 10:10, 1 Kings 18:18, Jeremiah 9:14, and Hosea 2:17). It is also found in connection with Ashtoreth (Judges 10:6, 1 Samuel 7:4). What is most condemning of Tyre and Sidon is that they are the origins of this abominable system of worship, for the principal and most ancient seat of Baal worship was at Tyre.

TYRE-SIDON AND BABYLON

If the districts of Tyre and Sidon could dwell in security, Tyre itself was no unarmed camp. The city was on the coast, but it had a citadel slightly over one mile offshore with 150-foot high walls of equal thickness. The impressive heights of these walls were attested to both by eyewitnesses and by depictions on the coins issued from Tyre and circulated throughout the known world. These were built from large blocks and mortared. A major engineering accomplishment was the construction of a hidden underground and underwater aqueduct that permitted the island to withstand a siege and yet have an assured supply of fresh water. The navy of Tyre was without equal in the ancient world, and was more than capable of smashing any blockade that might threaten the city. Hence, during war, the entire Mediterranean trade system could be called upon for re-supply.

If hapless Asher met with no success against Tyre, nearly one thousand years later, the most powerful force ever seen in the world, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, was also to leave the prize of Tyre unclaimed after a nearly unprecedented 14 years of siege. This caused the Lord to say to Nebuchadnezzar, “Take Egypt in payment for your ‘Great Service’ against Tyre!” (Ezekiel 29:18-20). Though they could not conquer it, the Babylonians embargoed Tyre for their entire reign. Hence for seventy years she was in eclipse. To consistently interpret any antitypes we need to recognize that the “seventy years” of Babylonian domination of Tyre (Isaiah 23:15-17), and Judah’s seventy years, are one and the same historical period of Babylon’s dominion.

Surely, had the Lord intended the fall of Tyre to Nebuchadnezzar, it would have taken place. How then are we to understand the text of Ezekiel 29? It seems reasonable that had Nebuchadnezzar been successful he would have kept pushing eastward on to Greece as the Persians later attempted to do. However, Greece was not ready to withstand the assault of the most powerful kingdom on earth in the sixth century before Christ. The Lord had a special purpose in mind for Greece and for the time being the home-



Ancient Tyrian transport of cedar logs, ship, and coin.

land to a future universal dominion needed protection. Babylonian domination would have interfered with something the Lord intended to see develop.

TYRE-SIDON AND PERSIA

With Babylon’s fall, the Medes and Persians formed the second universal dominion. Their logic was, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Hence the “seventy years” of Isaiah 23 ended and Tyre and Sidon prospered more than ever. The Persians then launched not one, but two invasions of Greece from Tyre. Both failed, but this failure became the defining moment for the young civilization emerging from Greece. It is unnecessary to give an account of the well-known

expedition against Greece, which ended so disastrously for the invaders. Persia was taught by the defeats of Salamis and Platsea the danger of encountering the Greeks on their side of the Aegean, while she learned at Mycale the retaliation which she had to expect on her own shores at the hands of her infuriated enemies. For the first time in history, a civilization from Europe was about to dominate world affairs. The Greeks decided that they not only had Persia as an enemy, but that Tyre and Sidon were a mortal threat.

THE FALL OF TYRE TO ALEXANDER

An historian named Arrian (not the later bishop of that name) in his *Anabasis* (2.17), describes the final successful siege by Alexander the Great in detail. When Alexander decided to attack Tyre, "The siege of Tyre was manifestly a large task." The city was an island, and had been fortified all around with high walls, and at that time the advantage by sea apparently lay with Tyre, as the Persians were still supreme at sea and the Tyrians still had many ships available. Alexander decided both to attack by sea and to build a road out to sea from the mainland to the island. For seven months Tyre withstood one of the most remarkable sieges in history. But its time had finally come and for the first time since its settlement, it fell, to the Greeks in 332 BC. The city was destroyed and most of its inhabitants sold into slavery. This was unusually heavy-handed treatment of a conquered territory by Alexander.

THE REBUILDING OF TYRE

As a world economic power, the new port city of Alexandria, Egypt, now dominated the Mediterranean. However, Tyre was permitted to rebuild. What is horrifying is that while most of the pagan world was suppressing and eliminating human sacrifice, the worship of Baal with human sacrifice was permitted during the inter-testamental period when the land of Israel was under the control of the successor Greek rulers who took over the fragments of Alexander the Great's empire.

The record of this period is found in the two books of the Maccabees that have been wisely excluded from the canon, but nevertheless preserve critical history. In the Apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees 4:19 we learn some of the details of the inter-testamental period of Jewish history. Among the abominable actions that would soon lead to full rebellion under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus (140 BC), the author of Maccabees records that the Jewish high-priest Jason sent a religious embassy with an offering of silver to an athletic competition and sacrifices that were held every five years by Tyre.

In an effort to not directly support the human sacrifice that would be part of the ceremonies which even at this low religious ebb were recognized as "not proper," the sum of 300 drachmae of silver were to be used for the construction of trireme galleys.

Tyre's legacy and Baal legend has come over into Western mythology subtly and unrecognized under the legends associated with "Hercules" in Latin, or "Heracles" in Greek.

That this Tyrian Hercules (Herodotus, *The Histories* 2:44) is the same as the Tyrian Baal is evident from a bilingual Phoenician inscription found at Malta described by Gesenius, in which the Phoenician words, "To our Lord, to Melkarth, the Baal of Tyre," are represented by the Greek *Heraklei Archeegete*. Almost all that we know of the worship of this Tyrian Hercules is preserved by the classical writers, and relates chiefly to the Phoenician colonies, and not to the mother state. Pliny expressly testifies that human sacrifices were offered up every year to the Carthaginian Hercules (Pliny, *Natural History* 36:5:12).

TYRE-SIDON AND ROME

During the first millennium before Christ, population pressure and the advantages of having permanent trade settlements eventually led Tyre to establish colonies. Her most famous colony (whose salted ruins are in present day Tunisia) was "New town" or in the language of Canaan, "Carthage." In the accounts of the Punic Wars, history records a desperate struggle in which Carthage was to rival the might of the emerging Roman state itself. All of this history speaks to the high intelligence, careful management, military might, but above all, economic power, of Tyre and Sidon.

The pagan Roman Empire was both horrified and intolerant of human sacrifice in religious worship. Wherever the Roman Eagle was carried in victory, public observance of such practices ceased. In particular, Romans were horrified by the offering of children in sacrifice to Baal on the walls of Carthage during the Punic wars. In the same way that victorious Abimelech "beat down the city [of Shechem] and sowed it with salt" (Judges 9:45), the same form of curse was employed by victorious Rome when they sowed the city of Carthage with salt after victory in the Punic wars (146 BC). This victory put an end to the worship of Baal there, at least in the most outwardly abominable form. Since Tyre was not yet under Roman control at the time Carthage fell, the abominations continued until the collapse of the vestiges of the Greek dominion nearly a century later to Rome.

JESUS IN SYRO-PHOENICIA

One time in our Lord's ministry, he and the apostles resorted to Tyre and Sidon (Mark 7:24-31, Matthew 15:21-28). It has been suggested that this placed them safely out of the reach of Herod Antipas. We might be puzzled by the Lord's dismissive words to the earnest Syro-Phoenician woman in verse 27, where she is classed with the unclean "dogs." In her response, "Yes, Lord: Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs," this woman showed the quick wit that once had made Tyre and Sidon the economic powerhouse of the world.

Divine providence can arrange to forcefully convey lessons. When a powerful illustration is needed respecting moral conduct and its consequences, God can overrule so that men acting with complete moral free-will have their words and actions preserved in the Bible. History by its very nature relates general lessons, but people of special importance, such as people of Tyre and Sidon, become a

special focus in “types,” where they serve as heroes or enemies of righteousness conveying lessons of importance in an “antitype.” Our Heavenly Father’s promises are sure, and the treasures of Jehovah’s grace are hidden in His deep counsels.

Thus there may be another possibility to consider in Christ’s visit to Syro-Phoenicia. It may indicate an unstated claim to the promises made to the fathers, that have never yet been fulfilled.

— Richard Doctor

(1) Please see, “The Deluge and the Epic of Gilgamesh,” *Beauties of the Truth*, 9:2 (May 1998).

(2) Some think the conquest of Canaan, and particularly those who became slaves, or the drawers of water and woodcutters (Joshua 9:23), was the fulfillment of Noah’s curse. Here Sidon would be an exception.

(3) The date palm’s scientific classification, *Phoenix dactylifera*, preserves the Greek that led to the name “Phoenicia.” One possible reason for this was that the prolific fruit-bearing date palms were prominent in the iconography of the area on the coins and seals of Tyre. The date palm usually carries with it the idea of fruitfulness, moral integrity and uprightness, hence, the female Hebrew name “Tamar” (Strong’s number 8558, Genesis 33:6, 2 Samuel 13:1).

(4) “Phoenicia,” *McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, Baker, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1981) page 149.

(5) Katzenstein, H. Jacob, *The History of Tyre*, Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Israel (1997) page 67.

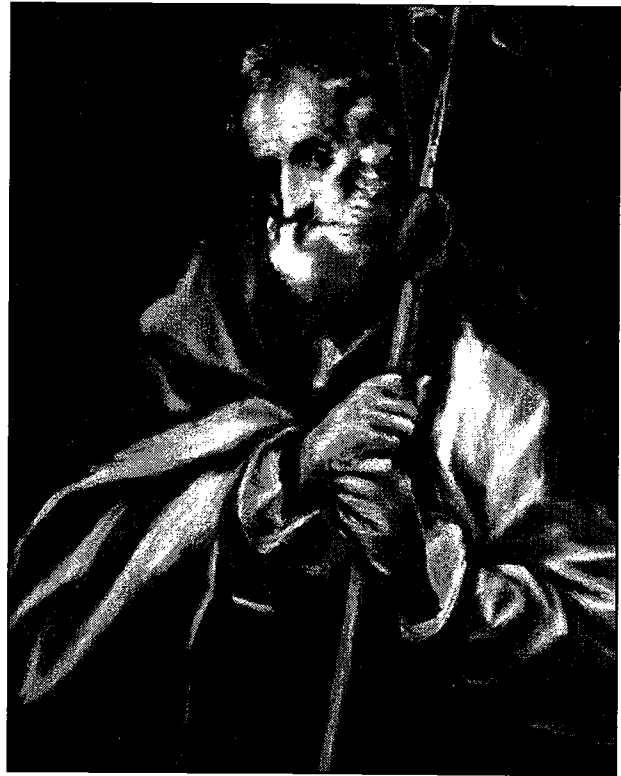
(6) Please see, “The Miracle at Shiloh,” *Beauties of the Truth*, 16:3 (August 2005).

The Testimony of Hegesippus

The Gospel accounts describe the reaction to Jesus’ ministry in his hometown of Nazareth and lays out the natural family of our Lord in detail:

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” (Matthew 13:55-56, New American Standard).

Joseph presumably was deceased at this point. Thus out of respect, Joseph is not referred to directly except as “the carpenter.” Jesus’ mother and his four brothers are mentioned. The most famous of these was the eldest brother “James.” He name actually is “Jacob”; by convention it is always rendered “James” in English. Then three more brothers are named; Joseph, Simon, and Judas along with “sisters.” The family’s subsequent history within the earliest stages of the church is a subject in its own right. Happily, despite their early doubts (John 7:5) we find our Lord’s family supportive of his ministry and part of the fellowship of believers after his resurrection. From that time forward they are with the core of believers listed in Acts 1:14. Passing over other family such as a wife and children in these pass-



Artist image of Judas, “brother of our Lord,” by El Greco, 1610-1614, Museo de El Greco, Toledo. This Judas is the grandfather of the two men mentioned in the report of Hegesippus.

ages would not have happened had there indeed been a wider family. Again, in the Gospel of Matthew 19:12, we have our Lord’s own words on the subject of his voluntary abstinence from earthly marriage — his marriage would be one in heaven.

Eusebius, the Church historian writing in the 320’s AD in his *Ecclesiastical Histories*, Chapter 20, records that the Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD) tried to locate the family of Jesus; that is, the descendents of his four brothers and at least two sisters. Rome had just finished a long, brutal, expensive, and nearly unsuccessful war against the Jews (66-73 AD). As prophesied by our Lord, this war left Herod’s once proud temple in Jerusalem destroyed without a stone-upon-stone. Jerusalem had been salted out of spite. For Rome the issue of interest might have been to learn whether these relatives of our Lord might emerge as possible claimants to the throne of David and Messianic promises. Hence, they could potentially become the rallying point for yet one more costly war. Domitian’s investigators found two direct male descendents who were “the grandchildren of Judas, called the brother of the Lord, according to the flesh.” This would be the youngest brother. These two were living in Israel employed as farmers. They showed the Romans their heavily calloused hands and the Romans surveyed their 39-acre farm on less than prime land. As these two descendents clearly posed no threat to Rome, they were left in peace. Eusebius takes this record from the now lost earlier account by a writer named Hegesippus.

God's "Only," His "Darling"

Many years ago, God asked of Abraham a heavy thing. "And he [God] said [to Abraham], Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee, into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2). "And he [the Angel of the Lord] said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad ... for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*, from me" (verse 12). "[God said to Abraham through the Angel], because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven" (verses 16, 17).

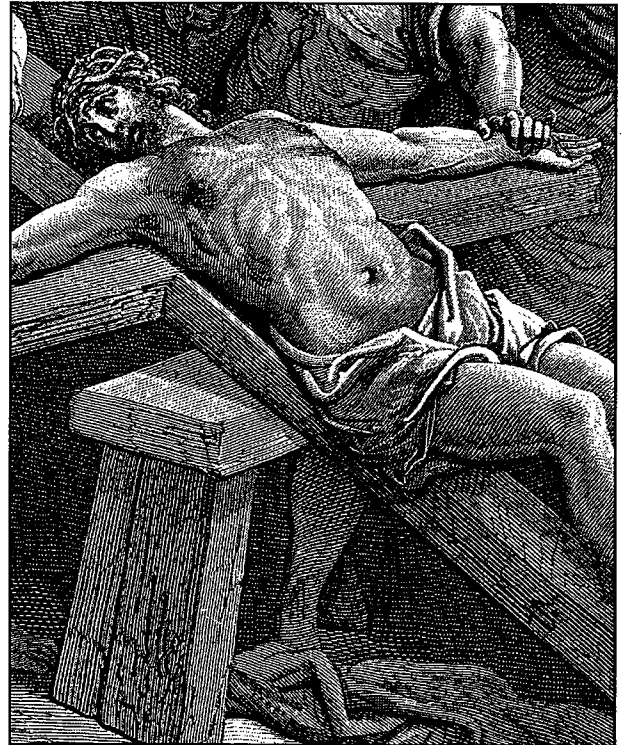
Verses 2, 12, and 16 all contain the continuing phrase "thine only son," yet we know that Abraham had another son, an older son, at the time, whose name was Ishmael. Therefore, in our minds we modify the statement "thine only son." Though this particular point has been puzzling, and even troubling, for many years, we notice that in each instance in the King James Version, the word "son" in the phrase "thine only son" is in italics, which indicates it was supplied. The phrase in the original Hebrew text is simply "thine only." Aware of this omission, the translators apparently felt compelled to proffer some kind of response to the existence of the short phrase "thine only;" that is, they felt compelled to add a word in order to explain the meaning of the expression "thine only" — "thine only ... what?" Believing that the word "son" was implied and, therefore, appropriate, they added that word as an answer to the dilemma. However, instead of clarifying the situation, the addition of the word "son" further complicates it, for Christians familiar with Scripture realize at once that at the time of this incident Isaac was not Abraham's only son. Ishmael, another son, preceded the birth of Isaac.

YACHID

Though the root meaning of the Hebrew word *yachid* (pronounced "yaw-kheed") basically signifies "only," "single," and/or "solitary," yet the word can have three or more varieties of application, especially when it is considered in the idiomatic sense. We have at hand six eminent Hebrew authorities to demonstrate the different varieties of application of this word.

In the case of Abraham's son, *yachid* is an adjectival noun expressing quality and not procreation, generation, or derivation of personal being. Here *yachid* denotes uniqueness in the sense of concentrated affection or of being tenderly beloved.

It is intriguing to note that in two instances in the Psalms the scholars of the Authorized Version were forced to render this same Hebrew word *yachid* in a different fashion in order to provide some degree of sense — even though the



Jesus, God's "Darling," praying for strength for the ordeal.

rendering "my darling" would be only partially understood. How much more appropriate and exquisite would the sense be if the rendering of "darling" had been given to the text concerning Abraham in Genesis 22:2! "Take now thy son, thy darling Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah." The same insertions should be made in verses 12 and 16 of Genesis 22.

Incidentally, the rendering "thy darling" still does not fully express the thought of the Hebrew word *yachid*, but it certainly brings the Genesis 22 account into better focus and gives it a more understandable application, for Isaac was Abraham's special darling son and not his only son.

Let us now turn to the King James account of Psalm 22:20. "Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling [*yachid*] from the power of the dog [that is, from the power of the uncircumcised Gentile and the uncircumcised-in-heart, unregenerate Jew]." And in Psalm 35:17 the Hebrew *yachid* is again used. "Lord [*Adonai*, an affectionate term referring to Jehovah], how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling [*yachid*] from the lions."

The context of these two verses in the Psalms concerns the crucifixion scene on Golgotha Hill. Here the holy Spirit, through the exercise of Jehovah's omniscient power and precursory skills, documents for the sake of future posterity His foreknowledge of the most intimate innermost thoughts of Jesus while nailed to the Cross of Calvary — a thousand years in advance of the reality. Upon first examination, the expression "my darling," "my *yachid*," seems disingenuous, indeed somewhat odd. But this conclusion is far from the fact of the matter.

JESUS' PRAYER

We pause now to digress for a moment. It seems almost necessary to engage in or resort to a purely imaginary and speculative characterization as to what transpired on that most momentous occasion, the crucifixion, when the fate of history hung in the balance. The thoughts of Jesus appear to be in the nature of a heartfelt and soul-wrenching prayer, somewhat as follows:

“Father in heaven, of this crucifixion thou hast previously fully informed me, and for this very purpose am I come into the world to give my life a ransom for many. But I did not fully realize the utter depth of human depravity that would surround me, nor even the full significance of the expression in the Psalms concerning me. I am a worm, being completely bereft of clothing and beset about by men of such bestial vulgarity who gaze upon me with roaring open mouths and devouring looks. I am at this moment confused and feel so, so alone! Did thou not say when I was baptized at Jordan in the presence of John the Baptist, ‘This is my darling, this is my beloved Son?’ Also, on the Mount of Transfiguration, did thou not voice the same opinion of me and thy pleasure and love for me? Do thou be near and stay close to me lest I weaken in my resolve in the presence of my enemies. Thou art my only hope and stay. Rescue me, hasten my death and departure, from which state thou has promised a subsequent resurrection. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

We have resorted to this stratagem in order to give some feeling or background as to the reason why Jesus said, “my darling.” In both the New Testament and the Old Testament he was referring to the wording of the Heavenly Father concerning him. The above explanation, we believe, is not only the meaning and use of the expression “my darling” in Psalms 22 and 35, but also the contextual or true meaning of the Hebrew word *yachid* in the Old Testament instances quoted thus far.

MONOGENES

We now turn our attention to the New Testament. The translators of the Authorized Version are again at fault. In converting into English the Greek account of the same incident concerning Abraham offering his son on the hill of Moriah, they used similar wording, but instead of saying, as in Genesis 22, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac,” they rendered Hebrews 11:17, “Abraham ... offered up his only begotten son.” This wording in the New Testament must be rejected for the same reason — Isaac was not Abraham’s only begotten son. Did not he also beget Ishmael?

One can be sure, therefore, that the Apostle Paul did not consider the Greek word *monogenes* (pronounced mon-odje’-en-ace) to mean “only begotten” as the translators rendered it. Rather, the word should be considered as a Greek idiom of one being singularly begotten or singularly born (the latter is preferred), that is, someone remarkable and extraordinary. Hence the suggestion is here made that the Greek word *monogenes* should be translated in its New Testament usage as follows:

- “We beheld his glory, a glory as of [one most] singularly begotten of the Father” (John 1:14).
- “No man hath seen God at any time; the [most] singularly begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath made [him] known” (John 1:18).
- “For God so loved the world, that he gave the Son of himself, the [most] singularly begotten one” (John 3:16).
- “In the name of the [most] singularly begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).
- “God sent the Son of himself, the one [most] singularly begotten into the world” (1 John 4:9).

It may be of interest to some that one of the definitions given in Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon for the word *monogenes* is “unique,” and in Young’s Analytical Concordance under the English word “begotten” is “chief.”

In any event, we hope that sufficient grounds have been presented thus far to demonstrate that though Jesus in a special sense is styled “The Son of God,” yet there exists no bona fide proof that he was and is the only Son of God. The allegory that prefaces the Book of Job (1:6) states, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.” Job 38:7 informs us, “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” All of these sons of God were originally perfect. Only after some fell were those angels called demons. Thus there existed in the spirit realm other “sons of God.”

— Frank Shallieu, 1997 (extracted)

Soles of The Feet of the Priests

As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests ... shall rest in the waters, the waters ... shall be cut off (Joshua 3:13).

The people were not to wait in their camps until the way was opened; they were to walk by faith. They were to break camp, pack up their goods, form in line to march, and move down to the very banks before the river would be opened. If they had come down to the edge of the river and then had stopped for the stream to divide before they stepped into it, they would have waited in vain. They must take one step into the water before the river would be cut off.

We must learn to take God at His Word, and go straight on in duty, although we see no way in which we can go forward. The reason we are so often balked by difficulties is that we expect to see them removed before we try to pass through them. If we would move straight on in faith, the path would be opened for us. We stand still, waiting for the obstacle to be removed, when we ought to go forward as if there were no obstacles.

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