

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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“Towards God” (John 1:1)

The efforts of the outstanding scholar and Christian John Wycliffe in the 1370's produced the first English Bible translation still somewhat readable. Written by hand on costly parchment, these precious texts were concealed and carried throughout England by preachers willing to risk their lives so that God's work could be made intelligible to the common people. With his characteristic intellectual boldness, Wycliffe in this earliest translation of John 1:1-2 broke with 900 years of tradition and the two times the Greek phrase “προς τον Θεων” [*pros ton theon*, or “towards the God”] appears, he renders this phrase “at God.”

Yet, despite this enlightened guidance, subsequent English translators for the last six hundred years have fallen back in step with the Latin Vulgate's affirmation that the correct thought to correctly render the beloved apostle's subtle praise of the pre-human Logos is “with God.”

Both King James translators and the Wilson Diaglott follow St. Jerome's Vulgate, for it is easy to see how the preposition “with” conforms to Trinitarian thought. Any other preposition creates difficulties. Following St. Jerome, John 1:1-2 has undeservedly become a Trinitarian proof text. Other usage of this phrase will show that the correct thought is to be “towards” as in the sense of being ready for service. It does not suggest “with God.”

Quoting Strong, “προς,” (S4314) — “a preposition of direction; forward to, i.e. toward.” After this, special rules are then introduced by Strong to justify the translator consensus for John's Gospel. The correct sense of this phrase is revealed by looking at other uses. Outside of John 1 the phrase appears only one other time in the New Testament when we read of our Lord in Hebrews 2:17 (Rotherham) “that he might become a merciful and faithful high-priest, in the things pertaining unto God.” This follows the King James very closely here.

Examination of the Greek will show that the phrase *pros ton theon* is here rendered, “in [the things] pertaining unto God.” This casts a much different light on John 1:1. Clearly “with God” does not work here. Yet even highly accurate translators like Rotherham have been forced to an interpretive, though correct reading, of “towards the God.”

Rotherham is consistent with the identical use of this phrase in the writings of New Testament contemporary historian Flavius Josephus. In his “Antiquities” (9:236), Josephus writes that righteous King Jotham was to be pious “in the things pertaining to God.” (Translation cited from Steven Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, Brill Academic Publishers (2001), page 87.) Somewhat earlier (7:384), writing about the death of King David and his special charge to his son Solomon, Solomon is, “to be just towards your subjects and pious towards God.” Here the phrase appearing as “[pious] towards God” is once again *pros ton theon*.

Finally, appealing directly to his countrymen, Josephus asks them to act “towards others — righteous, and towards God — pious” (*pros ton theon eusebia*). Mason adds, “we frequently find the qualifier *pros ton theon* appended to *eusebia* [pious]” and he cites eighteen examples in his footnotes. The thought “with God” cannot be correct in John 1:1-2 and should be literally “towards God” with the interpretive understanding that the high priest called from among men had this same service towards God as the Logos had from before the foundation of the world.

— Richard Doctor

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Our Glorious Crown

“Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest’ ” (Zechariah 6:9-11, NAS).

No cross, no crown. This spiritual axiom is clearly expressed in Scripture. “It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:11, 12). “If [we are] children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).

This truth also finds expression in various types. For example, the consecration of the Levitical priesthood in Leviticus chapter eight illustrates that, even if atonement would not have to be made (and of course, it had to), the antitypical priesthood would still have to experience sufferings to be developed and qualified for their eventual office — living and reigning with Christ as a royal priesthood.

The Royal Priesthood is also typified in the person of Melchizedek. It is intriguing that Paul, speaking of Melchizedek, says, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered” (Hebrews 5:11). Melchizedek is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament; once in Genesis 14 and again in Psalm 110. What was Paul’s source for the many things he had to say? Why were they hard to be uttered?

The Scriptures are full of hidden treasures, hard to be uttered, and we find such buried gems in the lives of two stalwart Jews — Zerubbabel and Joshua. As the prince and the high priest of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, they were charged with the task of rebuilding the temple. As their work intertwined in this regard, their offices combined to provide us yet another type of the priestly king or kingly priest — Melchizedek.

The Prophet Zechariah was their contemporary. His visions, along with those of Haggai, served to strengthen Zerubbabel and Joshua to persevere in completing the work of building God’s temple. In the sixth chapter of Zechariah we see four men selected from among those who had returned from Babylon — Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Josiah son of Zephaniah. They were charged with preparing a four-part crown which was to grace the head of Joshua the high priest.

“The word of the LORD also came to me, saying, ‘Take an offering from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon. Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest’ ” (Zechariah 6:9-11, NAS).

How strange! The lineage of Israel’s crowned heads came through Judah, not Levi. The progression of the vision is interrupted before Joshua may ascend to the throne.

“Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD’ ” (Zechariah 6:12, NAS).

The Scriptures are marvelously consistent. We are confident that they are the inspired Word of God. Just as no one from the tribe of Judah could be a priest, so

no Levite would rule as king. The Kingly Priest would be from the new order of priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood. On this account, before Joshua could ascend to the throne, he was given a vision of the Branch, the one who would possess the throne. The Branch out of Babylon was Zerubbabel; but he was only a type of the greater Branch — our Lord Jesus Christ. (See Jeremiah 33:15.)

“Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices” (Zechariah 6:13, NAS).

We understand from Hebrews chapters five and seven that Jesus is already entered into his Melchizedek priesthood. However, the priestly sacrificing of his body members (typified in the Levitical priesthood) must be completed before they are glorified and sit upon the throne. Then, when the sanctification of the body members is finished, “the counsel of peace will be between the two offices” — King and Priest — ministering peace, righteousness, life and blessing to mankind.

“Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah” (Zechariah 6:14, NAS).

Zechariah’s four-part crown will become a memorial to remind all intelligent creatures of the sacrificial work of The Christ. By their love and willing sufferings they develop the character required for their office as Kingly Priests — the Divine Character. Our Lord Jesus was the forerunner of this calling, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And [thus] being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8, 9). It is significant that this statement is made in the context of Jesus having attained to his office of Melchizedek Priest.

The four parts of the crown in Zechariah’s vision represent the four aspects of God’s glorious character — Power, Love, Wisdom and Justice. “The crowns shall be to Helem,



Illustration of a High Priest

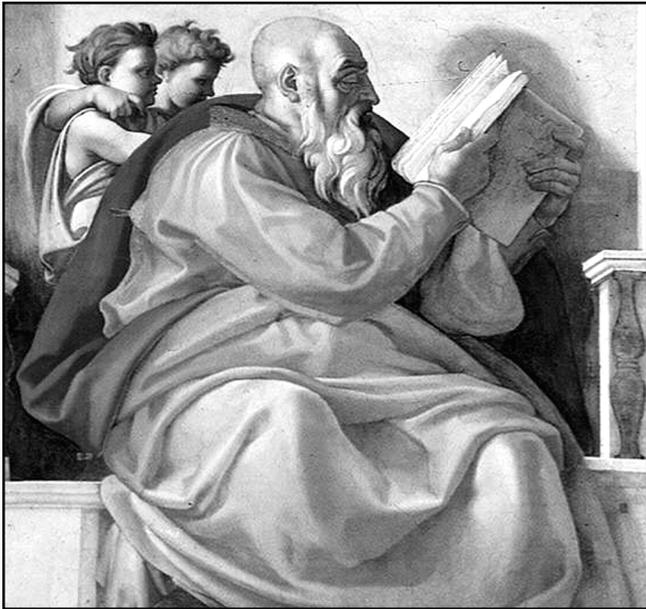
Tobiah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah.” The Hebrew meanings of the names seem to coincide with the four aspects of God’s character.

(1) **Helem** — Hebrew, “a dream,” representing Divine Power which enables our God to plan His dreams for His creatures throughout ages of glory and surely bring His vision to fruition.

(2) **Tobiah** — Hebrew, “the goodness of Jehovah,” relates to God’s Love, the superlative encapsulation of Jehovah, “God is love.”

(3) **Jedaiah** — Hebrew, “Jehovah has known,” represents the infinite Wisdom of our great God.

(4) **Hen the son of Zephaniah** — Hebrew, “grace” the son of “Jehovah has secreted,” beautifully refers to Divine Justice. The mystery of God’s grace, His Christ who would suffer and die for mankind and thus satisfy justice, was secreted from ages and generations and remains so to the present save for a few to whom God has revealed it.



Zechariah the Prophet (Michelangelo)

The lesson — that Jesus and his Church will ultimately obtain the crowning glory of Divine Character only by engaging in the sufferings typified in the Levitical priesthood. No cross, no crown.

“Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD.” Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God’ ” (Zechariah 6:15, NAS).

These are beautiful gems of truth. In the present time we are privileged to grow into the character likeness of our Heavenly Father! In the future we shall reign and share the glory with Jesus in blessing all those who are afar off — the remainder of mankind. The reality and grand fulfillment of this prophecy will take place in God’s Kingdom; if we completely obey the LORD our God!

— Bro. O. B. Elbert

“The Lord is Near to All who Call on Him.”

(Psalm 145:18)

I work in a large university, and much of my time is spent helping students solve academic and personal problems. While my work is rewarding, it is sometimes overwhelming, even though I know that God uses me to help people who are facing difficulties. Toward the end of the academic year, I was exhausted from helping other people find solutions.

One morning when a member of my staff asked if she could talk with me, my first thought was, I hope it’s not a problem because I just can’t face another problem right now.

As I contemplated the situation, I thought, What would happen if God responded as I did? It stunned me to think of what our lives would be like. How much we take God’s love for granted! In response to our endless pleas for mercy, God never fails to provide love and support. God is never too tired to help us. God’s strength allows me to help even when I’m feeling tired and empty. I find comfort in the knowledge that God will listen to me any time. While human beings may weary of one another, God is always there for us.

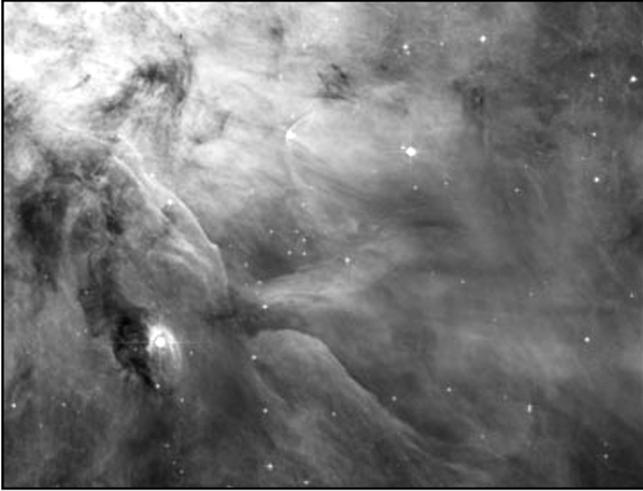
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The Heavens Declare the Glory of God

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof” (Psalms 19:1-6).

As a shepherd in the fields, the Psalmist David frequently observed the heavens at night. The heavens are universally appreciated. They are an international language, something like music. All nations, in spite of different tongues, can understand the meaning of nature to some extent. However, the apostle Paul, in the New Testament, gives us the appreciation of a higher meaning to Psalm 19.

“For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him



Orion Nebula

in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? [begin quotation of Psalm 19] Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Romans 10:11-18).

The apostle is telling us that just as the natural heavens have been a silent and yet forceful testimony of the existence of an intelligent and wise Creator, just as they help us to discern the invisible God by his works, and just as the things that are visible betray the things that are invisible, so the gospel of God is written in nature’s handiwork, and all mankind stand condemned if they reject the Word of God, for nature testifies to His existence. If we recognize that nature has a God, then we should look for His book of instruction, which is the Bible, His Word. The apostle draws an analogy between the testimony of the heavens, by day and by night, and the preaching of the gospel message during the present or Christian age. However, while Paul applies the analogy to the present age, there are certain indications in Psalm 19 that its full fulfilment will take place in the next or Kingdom age and that whatever is occurring now is a preview or foreview of that which is to come.

Returning again to Psalm 19, we notice that verses 4 and 5 are better worded in the Leeser translation: “There is no speech [in the heavens, day or night], there are no words, their voice is not heard. (But) their melody extendeth through all the earth, and to the end of the world their words.” The details of Leeser’s description help us to discern certain facts when we read verse 4 in the King James translation: “Their **line** is gone out through all the earth”; that is, there is a **rule** or **direction** to the heavens. In the marginal references of many Bibles, the word “line” is given

the thought of a **governing influence**, an order to the universe. In other words, the manifestation of the heavens indicates a God of **order**.

In his statement “one star differeth from another star in glory,” the apostle Paul informs us that there will be various degrees of honor in the Church in glory, that is, when they are raised to Kingdom honors in the next age (1 Corinthians. 15:41). He also indicates that the stars in the heavens represent the resurrected Church in Kingdom power and glory. Just as the literal stars exercise their influence and can be observed by all people throughout the earth, so in the Kingdom age, the rulership and control of Christ and his Church, prefigured by that which we see in nature at night, will be realized by all.

At that time, language will no longer be a barrier. Much of the difficulty and frustration in trying to establish an international or universal order or government has been the confusion of tongues. The Book of Genesis tells that early in man’s history, all of the people spoke one language. The spirit of confusion, which was poured upon mankind following the erection of the Tower of Babel, had the effect of breaking-up mankind’s unity and scattering the people — a condition that prevails to the present day (Genesis 11:1, 4-9). Much misunderstanding among the nations and peoples has occurred because of differences in living customs and in habits of thought and expression. However, this problem will cease in the next age, when all will again speak the same language.

TABERNACLE FOR THE SUN

In Psalm 19, the end of verse 4 states, “In them [the heavens] hath he [God] set a tabernacle for the sun.” In observing the heavens in the daytime, we see another phenomenon: the resurrection of the sun on earth’s horizon. The sun comes forth from the east and shines unto the west; it goes on a daily journey across the vault of the heavens. The prophetic message of Psalm 19 is that “the sun” represents “**the Son**” of God. In the Kingdom age, in the dawn of the new era soon to come, in which Christ is to be Messiah from one end of the earth to the other, the sun beautifully pictures the work and influence of his reign. As the sun comes up over the horizon, so Jesus will arise “out of his chamber” and begin to exert his authority and influence in the earth (Psalm 19:5). He will come forth “as a strong man” who rejoices “to run a race.” A healthy individual in the prime of youth, even though an imperfect being, often loves to expend his energy in strenuous exercise. Here we find that our Lord Jesus has been patiently waiting for his Kingdom rule, but he wants to bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 22:18). The resurrection of the dead is the desire of his heart, but the Kingdom has been delayed. One reason the beneficent effects of this promised universal government have not yet been manifested on behalf of the world is that the fellow members of the body of Christ have not all been developed. Even God Himself has had long patience in awaiting the development of, particularly, this Gospel age fruit (James 5:7).

Therefore, the “bridegroom coming [forth] out of his chamber” signifies that the blessings of the Kingdom Millennial reign of Christ cannot occur until, first, the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb takes place (Revelation 19:7, 21:2, 9, 22:17). After the marriage, Jesus will come forth to bless all the families of the earth. This joyous occasion is likened to a beautiful clear day with the sun appearing on the horizon and birds singing and rejoicing. The happy, glorifying influence will immediately be discernible as the sun comes over the horizon. During the Millennial day, the sun will go over the vault of the heavens, and its heat, rays, light, healing, and corrective influences will dispel all of the noxious vapors and miasma of sin below.

This healing influence is pictured in Malachi 4:2, a prophecy of the next age: “Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings [or beams]; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

Verse 7 is a confirmation of the interpretation already given, namely, that the primary application or intent of Psalm 19 is to teach a spiritual lesson. Verses 1-6 mention the glory of the heavens and their message and liken the sun to a bridegroom (Christ) coming forth at dawn and running a race to the desired objective of redemption and victory for man here below, for the opportunity of salvation for all. Then verse 7, which is a break in thought, explains the deeper signification of why the heavens should be considered in a spiritual sense.

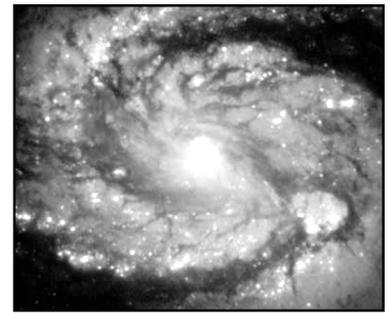
The “law of the LORD” is being likened to the Sun of righteousness. There is perfection in the physical organization of the heavens and the earth. This law and order have the effect of reviving or healing us, of giving us confidence that God is capable not only of sustaining us but also of bringing order out of chaos. When the power manifested in the heavens is directed to correct mankind and the ordered arrangement on earth, it will bring into alignment with God the influences that now exist, so that all things will become obedient and subservient to the rule of Messiah.

“The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” The Lord’s people are made wise in their understanding of His Word concerning future intents and purposes of the divine will. They are made knowledgeable in regard to the Kingdom arrangements that have been prophesied. And they realize, also, that as surely as God is Lord, so surely will these prophecies be fulfilled.

“The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:8).

How do the right statutes of God rejoice the heart? When a Christian meditates upon the works of God — whether in nature or pertaining to the principles of divine government as manifested in His Word and character — he sees a beauty of justice, of arrangement, of harmony, that creates joy in his heart.

Furthermore, God’s pure commandments enlighten the eyes. At the present time, conditions of sin and confusion prevail on the earth. The beauty of God’s handiwork is both marred and distorted; for example, disorderly buildings, unsightly billboards, and advertisements have a disruptive influence. But when we lift our eyes up to heaven, we behold an atmosphere of purity and nobility. Exaltation comes with a meditation of the heavens. Even those who do not study the Bible usually have some appreciation of the beauty of nature, and their lives are bettered somewhat by observing the God of nature and His laws. However, the deeper significance is that when we see the same Being operating in the Word of God, the beauty and harmony there are far more wholesome than the revelation displayed in nature.



Spiral Galaxy

“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:9, 10).

The orderliness manifested in the heavens — the fixity and precision of the orbits of the various suns and planets, as well as the mathematical certainty of eclipses, of the length of days, and of the travel of the celestial bodies — makes us realize the orderliness of God. We can depend on Him and know with surety that all things will work together for good if we put our trust in Him (Romans 8:28). The commandments or ordinances that God has designed are manifested in the laws of creation, so that once the planets are placed in their orbits, they continue on because of certain fixed arrangements.

HIS COMMANDMENTS

And so it is with the commandments in His Word and the principles of His government. When they are properly discerned, the fixity and harmony and beauty of God’s Word can so influence the life of an individual that it can be said God’s judgments are “true and righteous altogether” and “more to be desired ... than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey.”

The celestial bodies stay in their orbits and are under the beneficent control of the Creator. They are obedient and submissive to the divine will as displayed in the laws of gravity, etc., and only the wandering stars or comets go to doom and destruction. In Scripture, those individuals who go into “second death” or oblivion because of departing from the way of the Lord and sinning willfully after having received a knowledge of the truth, after having tasted of the heavenly gift (Jesus), and after having been made partakers of the holy spirit, are likened to wandering stars (Hebrews 6:4, 5,

10:26, 27, Jude 12, 13, Revelation 2:11, 20:6). The destiny of those in this wandering condition is ultimate destruction. Conversely, those Christians who keep themselves in the center of God's will, those who are suppliant in the hands of their Creator, as manifest in the gospel of Christ, secure their eternal future. A personal lesson, therefore, becomes apparent in Psalm 19:13, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ... from the great transgression."

In spite of our faults and failures, we pray for God's overruling that we may be kept in His orbit, in the circle of His love, and in His will, and that we will fix our hearts on doing His arrangements and being compliant therewith (Jude 21). What powerful lessons we can learn by observing and gathering information from the physical heavens!

"Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:11-14).

SPIRITUAL ASPECT

Thus in reading Psalm 19, starting with verse 1, we see that the spiritual aspect is the most desired interpretation or understanding. If the glory of the natural is awesome, how much more is the spiritual application! The magnificent pageantry of the heavens day and night should elicit our praise and adoration and should inspire in our hearts a holy and reverent devotion to the Almighty God.

May we let the noiseless activity, the perfect obedience to divine law, and the blessed shining of the heavenly hosts impress their wholesome lessons upon us of zealous activity without commotion or ostentation, of perfect obedience to the will of Him who doeth all things well and who is too wise to err and too good to be unkind, and of letting the glory of the Lord, which has illuminated us, shine from us, in turn, on every beholder. No wonder David exults in Psalm 8, as follows:

"O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

David realized that this prophecy will come true, that it will have its fulfillment in the Kingdom soon to come: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Thank God!

— Bro. Frank Shallieu

The Wedding

"She is all glorious within" (Psalms 45:13).

For upward of twenty centuries the door has stood open for the completion of the Church; but the time must come when she will stand before the Son of God, adorned as a bride for her husband (Revelation 21:2, R6024).

All eyes in the celestial realm are on the bridal pair. The bride's beauty of form, her radiance of face, the loveliness of her attire arrests the attention of the heavenly host. She "is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psalm 45:13, C193).

"She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee" (Psalm 45:14, C193, R1494, F128, 121, C192, R4655).

"With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace" (Psalm 45:15, see Comment Book, page 94).

As yet her face is veiled. The Bridegroom lifts away the shrouding veil, the crown is placed upon her head ... and the Bride and Bridegroom are face to face for the first time with no veil, no distance, no agency between ... "Face to face with Christ my Savior. Face to face, what will it be?"

The Bridegroom, looking deeply into his Beloved, overwhelmed and ravished by her beauty, might joyously exclaim, "Oh, I do love you!" ... and the Bride, looking deeply into her Beloved might joyously exclaim in the fullest sense, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine!" (Song of Solomon 6:3).

Yet with humility and wonder she might breathlessly exclaim, Out of all the world, you have chosen me!

Could anything surpass that first long look of love as the Bride and Bridegroom look deeply into each other knowing that they two shall be forever one?

Now the titles become the right of him who is the King of Kings.



The Bride of Christ

“The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6, R5136, also F121, 142).

The time has come to take his great power and reign. He will not reign alone, but he will reign forever. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and forever” (Isaiah 9:7, R5136).

He is the “heir of all things — upholding all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:1-3, see “Comments,” page 416, Gems from the Mine, page 571-2).

His reign is not confined to earth. The vast universe is his domain. He is the great heir of God the Father, the Lord of Worlds, the Potentate of Time ... and there beside him stands his beloved Bride, chosen out of all the earth, the greatest miracle of all, the Divine creation of love, formed to share these honors and companionship for all eternity.

The singing of the heavenly chorus obliterates all memories of the toilsome past, the long night, the suffering and weary waiting. It is the morning of joy, soon to overflow to a sin-sick world with healing, love, and life (Revelation 22:17).

Do we long to be with our beloved Lord Jesus; is this our sincere desire? How can we make this a reality?

— Bro. David Skein

Kohen-Levi Conference

“The Gathering of the Tribe,” Jerusalem, July 2007

As a follow-up to the article, “The Sons of Aaron and Levi,” *Beauties of the Truth*, 19, 1 (February 2008), a reader from Germany noticed mention of a conference for Levites in Jerusalem July 15-19, 2007. These dates commemorate the traditional remembrance of the death of Aaron.

“Just days before the holiday commemorating the destruction of the Holy Temples, Tisha B’Av, a group of Jewish priests and Levites hurried across the centuries-worn cobblestones of this holy city to prepare to bless the people of Israel. They gathered at the foot of the Holy Temple’s last remaining wall, the priests removing their shoes and extending their hands for the Levites to wash in preparation for the holy service ... among the opening ceremonies of the first international Kohen-Levi conference, ‘The Gathering of the Tribe,’ held this week in Jerusalem.

“The Kohanim are a family of the Tribe of Levi that was designated for the holy service. The Levites were charged with ministering to the Kohanim — descendants of Aaron — and keeping watch over the Tabernacle, the place of Divine dwelling in the temple.

“This week’s conference, sponsored by the Jerusalem-based Center for Kohanim, was billed as the first reunion of the priestly family since the days of the Holy Temple 2,000 years ago. More than 100 people participated.

“Experts talked about recent DNA testing that validates the belief that today’s Kohanim descend from one man who lived at the time of the Exodus — Aaron. Most Ashkenazi and Sephardi Kohanim around the world have a common set of genetic markers indicating their common origin.

“Professor Karl Skorecki of the Rambam Medical Center, who discovered the ‘Kohen genetic signature,’ once compared the findings to discovering a piece of clothing used in Aaron’s ritual anointment ceremony.

“‘This is really the longest male dynasty that’s still continuing in the world — longer than the Chinese, Indian or any African groups,’ said Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman, director of the Center for Kohanim and author of *DNA & Tradition: The Genetic Link to the Ancient Hebrews*. ‘Now it can be solidified by genetics; I think that’s pretty powerful.’”

Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech

Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech were the last patriarchs before Noah, in the genealogy of Genesis chapter five. Enoch is mentioned by the Apostle Jude as “Enoch ... the seventh from Adam,” who prophesied of the judgment coming (Jude 1:14). That judgment was the flood, but Jude’s mention of it shows that the judgment then also applies to something future from Jude’s day. Also, Jesus in Matthew 24 uses the flood judgment to represent the judgments yet coming — first upon Judaism, a generation from the prophecy of our Lord, and second upon Christendom, during the Gospel Age harvest much later. It is that application which takes us to our day, and the judgments which close this age and introduce the Kingdom.

Enoch is famous for the ending of his life, for he did not die in a normal way. “Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). When Paul refers to Enoch in the book of Hebrews, he says “by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death [in the normal way]; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

Enoch’s life even appears to have gained special notice also in the ancient records of Sumer, one of the early civilizations after the flood (the “Shinar” of Genesis 14:9). In one version of what is referred to as the Sumerian King list, there are 10 pre-flood patriarchs. In that list, the seventh one appears as “divine Dumuzi, a shepherd.” Notice the description “divine” — the only instance of this in the list, as though to mark his godliness in a special way. (Jacobsen, T., *Sumerian King List*, University of Chicago (1939), page 73).

ENOCH AS A PICTURE

The special taking of Enoch reminds us of Elijah, who was also taken in a special way. Elijah is often seen to picture the Church which continues to the end of the harvest,

and is taken midst the fiery and tumultuous closing experiences of the age. The comparison of these two suggests Enoch may also be a picture of the Church class. That he is noted as the “seventh from Adam” suggests to us that Enoch has special meaning at the time of the seventh stage of the Church, the “seventh” from our heavenly Adam — that is, the seventh period of the Gospel Age — counting from Jesus who introduced the age with his life and ministry and death (compare 1 Corinthians 15:45).



Noah, son of Lamech

But there was a difference between Enoch and Elijah. Enoch was taken quietly, secretly, unobserved — whereas the taking of Elijah was widely anticipated, and occurred in dramatic fashion as Elisha witnessed a remarkable spectacle. We suggest that the difference in the pictures is that Enoch represents those of the Church who died in past ages, and were taken quietly, secretly, unobserved, in the first resurrection, at the return of Christ. Whereas Elijah represents those who are taken at the close of the harvest — by which time there is a general anticipation that the Church will be taken, with great events surrounding it, as the harvest comes to a climactic closure.

Even Enoch’s life span — long by our standards, but so much shorter than others of his time — blends into the picture of Enoch representing the Church. Enoch lived for 365 years, which all readily recognize as a number which defines the sun — the solar year being 365 days in duration. The sun was used by our Lord Jesus in Matthew 13:43 to represent the saints in glory. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

METHUSELAH

Methuselah, the son of Enoch, contrasts sharply with his father — Enoch the shortest living of the patriarchs on record, Methuselah the longest living. Methuselah lived 969 years, still short of 1000, which seemed to be an upper limit suggested in Genesis 2:17 (comparing Psalms 90:4).

The name Methuselah incorporates two main parts — “Meth,” and “Selah.” The first refers to death, and the second means to pause. Why would a father introduce the thought of “death” in the name of a son? Recall that Enoch prophesied of the judgment to come, which at last fell at the time of the flood. “The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all ... their ungodly deeds ... their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 1:15). When Enoch at age 65 had a young child, Methuselah, his thought naturally may have been, “Oh, that it might come after he is gone.” This may be the point of the name Methuselah — may the judgment pause, or wait, until he has died.

Three hundred years passed, and Enoch was taken.

Meanwhile, when Methuselah was 187 years old he had a son Lamech (Genesis 5:25). He would live another 782 years. Meanwhile Lamech had a son, Noah, at the age of 182 (Genesis 5:28) — so Methuselah had 600 years to live after that. But the 600th year of Noah’s life was when the flood arrived — which means that the last year of Methuselah, was the same as the year in which the flood began. Presumably Methuselah was a man of faith like his father Enoch, and his son Lamech, and grandson Noah — so he would not have died in the flood. Yet he was not on the ark. Therefore we conclude that he died naturally, shortly before the flood. In this way he fulfilled the prophetic name given him by Enoch, for the judgment of the flood was deferred until after the passing of Methuselah.

Spiritually, we suggest that Methuselah represents the saints who, like Elijah, continue to the end of the harvest. This class is also represented during the 10th plague upon Egypt — for the firstborn were passed over, or delivered, as the death angel was passing over Egypt and claiming the next generation of leaders to be. So just as Enoch and Elijah are distinguished as the saints taken at the outset of the harvest, from those who live to the close of the harvest, the same contrast appears in Enoch and Methuselah.

LAMECH

If the ages of Enoch and Methuselah were meaningful, notice the striking age of the next patriarch in the sequence — Lamech. He lived 777 years. If there is a picture here as in his predecessors, he also would represent a godly class — presumably the Church class yet again. In the years of his life, 777, there is a clear contrast with the false church depicted in Revelation by the number 666.

Lamech lived well past Enoch, of course, but died a few years before the flood. By contrast with Enoch and Methuselah, Lamech may represent those saints who live into the harvest, but not to its close. Thus we have depicted all three classes of the saints — Enoch those who die before the Lord’s return and are raised quietly, unseen, in the opening of the harvest — Lamech those who live into this period but not to its close — Methuselah those who, like Elijah, are taken in the tumults closing the harvest.

There may be a further evidence also that Lamech represents those who finish their course during the harvest. Noah was born when Lamech was 182 years old, as mentioned above. That means he had 595 years left to live, of his total 777 years. But the flood was in the 600th year of Noah’s life — which means Lamech died five years shy of that time.

If we take into account these two numbers — 777 years of life, and 5 years before the flood — there may be a meaning which accords with Lamech representing those who live into the harvest. The product of those two numbers is 3885. If we now consider the time prophecies in Daniel which lead to the harvest — the 1260, 1290, and 1335 years which take us to 1874 — we find the sum of these years is the same number, namely 3885.

— Bro. David Rice