

Beauties of the Truth

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From Our Readers
Articles for Beauties

BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their consideration and appreciation of the boundless riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 10034 SW 52nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97219. Editorial Board: Bros. Jerry Leslie (Editor-in-Chief), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Stephen Suraci.

Five Smooth Stones (1 Samuel 17:40)

One of the most notorious, heroic events of the Old Testament is the courage and faith of David in the slaying of Goliath. David was a humble lad and the youngest among eight brothers. The Philistines were an ominous foe and it took the strongest and bravest to stand against the enemy. There has been much written about this conquest. There are also two fine articles found on Reprint pages 3230 and 5662. We highly recommend these.

It is interesting to note that the terror which the Philistines were able to inflict was due to their use of some imposing statures in their army. The foremost of these was Goliath of Gath. It is assumed that he was descended from Anak among the Canaanites. But in the Hebrew mind the Anakim became associated with the giants (Nephilim) that were destroyed in the flood of Noah's day. Not believing the record that these were all destroyed, ten of the spies sent by Moses returned with the false report that the large inhabitants of the land were descendants of the Nephilim and could not be conquered (Numbers 13:28-33, Dent. 9:2, E104). This fear and lack of faith lingered with Israel even after they entered the land. So this Philistine was able to defy the an-nies of Israel evening and morning for forty days.

In the spirit of Joshua and Caleb, young David championed the cause of faith amidst a world of doubt and fear. David went onto the field of battle only with the tools of his shepherd trade: his staff and shepherd's bag. The shepherd's crook was for the aid of sheep, but in close quarters and in

the hands of a skilled shepherd it could be used as both a defensive and offensive device. Nevertheless, this was the mark of his trade and he would not go into battle without it. The small bag usually draped over a shoulder carried daily provisions and probably his sling. He had not been equipped with anything more when he defended his flock against a lion and a bear (vs. 34). David carried only these now into the battle.

FIVE STONES FROM THE BROOK

As David advanced toward the field he stopped at a brook and gathered five smooth stones and put them into the shepherd's bag. When he approached within voice distance, Goliath mocked David (vs. 44). It is noteworthy that David did not simply launch his artillery, but first delivered a message and then a stone (vs. 44-49). The first part of the message states his confidence in the God of the armies of Israel and a stronger weapon than that of sword and spear. David then delivered a prophecy that Goliath would be slain that day and his carcass would be given to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth. Finally he declared this would be so that the nations may learn that God does not suffer himself to be mocked, but will espouse the cause of his covenant people. The battle is the Lord's. He will deliver them not with sword and spear.

After the message, David drew out but one of the stones. A sling and stone in the hands of a skillful shepherd is a lethal weapon. Many in the tribe of Benjamin could throw such sling stones to a hair's breadth (judges 20:16). This stone hit its mark and Goliath fell to the earth. At this point, David not having a sword ran to the Philistine, drew Goliath's own sword and severed his head from his body.

We have pondered the detail of the record concerning "five smooth stones out of the brook" We understand why they were "smooth" This facilitated their use as dependable bullets as they passed through the air at high velocity. They would have been naturally polished by the working of the water in the brook. But does the "five" have any significance?

Why "five" instead of four or six or twelve? If it is incidental, why record it? After all, one did the job, what were the others for?

We will suggest two thoughts in this connection. The first is that they may represent the five books of Moses (the *Pentateuch*). Today these are known as the Torah. In David's time they were the bread of life and word of God. Certainly David delivered his message with the confidence based on the records of these five books. Some notable examples and promises where God gave deliverance to his people are: Gen. 14:20, Exod. 14:14, Exod. 23:27, Deut. 1:30, Deut. 3:22. So it is a stone (a word) from the brook (of truth) that can smite the enemies of the Lord. While we are armed with the whole counsel of God, the right message at the right time will silence the oppressor.

GOLIATH'S FOUR BROTHERS

The second suggestion is that Goliath had four brothers. According to Israel's own laws, blood vengeance was allowed by the family of the murdered. This is mentioned several places but detailed in Numbers 35:9-34. The act of revenge was likely practiced also by the Philistines. If they were to descend on David upon Goliath's death, he had a single stone for each of them also.

To establish that there were four next-of-kin takes a little analysis of two texts. The first is 2 Samuel 21:15-22. The second is 1 Chronicles 20:4-8. In the 2 Samuel context there are four persons listed as “born to the giant of Gath” “ We can deduce this was Goliath's father, for one of them is assumed to be the brother of Goliath. The persons listed are: (1) Ishbibenob, (2) Saph, (3) “the brother of (supplied) Goliath, and (4) another unnamed son who had six fingers and toes on each extremity.

There appears to be a copyist problem in verse 9. For if it is read that Elhanan slew Goliath the Gittite, then there were two giants named Goliath, or a mistake in saying he was slain by Elhanan instead of David. To accord with I Chronicles the translators supplied the added words: “the brother of Goliath” I Chronicles 20:5 clearly says that Elhanan “slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite” Here the author gives the brother's name. He then also records the death of another unnamed giant with the six fingers and toes, apparently the same one recorded in Samuel. So now we know three of the four brother’s names. One of them is Lahmi, who is clearly identified as a brother of Goliath. Goliath must have been the fifth brother, but having died first was not listed among the four slain later.

It is a reasonable deduction that David picked up just five stones to account for Goliath and each of his brothers should they seek to avenge his mission. The beauty of this proposition is that by faith David did not overstock his arsenal. He had but one stone for each of the enemies of God. He knew each would be guided to its mark if necessary. But in the record of 1 Samuel 17 we find that with the first stroke the enemies of God were scattered and the Israelites prevailed.

The first lesson is that David drew stones of truth from the five books of the word of God to face his enemy. The second lesson is that his faith was sufficient that each would be directed by God, that he did not have to prepare anything extra. We see in David a picture of the

antitypical David, Christ at his second advent. There is also evidence for the stone being a representation of the church empowered with the message of truth. We note that “five” was chosen for the number of the wise virgins. In Daniel 2 there were four parts to Nebuchadnezzar's dream of universal powers. The fifth symbolizes Christ and those saints which are beyond the veil. They are



David Victorious Over Goliath

shown by a stone growing into an everlasting kingdom which, like David's stone, smites, breaks and destroys the oppressor.

The word of truth is the weapon of our returned Lord. Hebrews 4:12: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" Revelation 19:21: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations ... and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.' This last phrase is just what David prophesied of Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:46. So we see in David the vindication and victory over the godless forces of our day that Christ brings to Israel, natural and spiritual.

- Jerry Leslie

Seven Kings and Eight Princes

*"And this shall be our Protection from Assyria:
When he comes into our land,
And treads upon our soil,
Then we will mise up against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men,-
And the land of Nimrod with the drawn sword,-
And they shall rescue us from Assyria
When he comes into our land,
And treads upon our border."
(Micah 5.-5, 6, Smith-Goodspeed, called verses 4, 5 in other versions)*

Thus does the prophet cryptically express the Lord's deliverance of Israel in their hour of peril. Some very good translations (NASB, Rotherham, ASV) modify the opening clause of this passage to attach it to the preceding context rather than the succeeding. For example, "... And this One will be our peace. [hard break, begin new thought] When the Assyrian invades our land, ..." etc. (NASB). However, either way this passage stipulates the manner of Israel's deliverance from the oppressive onslaught of Assyria.

The prophet Micah lived at a time when Assyria was the dominant threat and dread foe of the nations of the Middle East. Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (Micah 1:1). The record of their reigns in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles reveals the overpowering influence of Assyria at that time. During this period of history Assyria reduced the 10 tribe kingdom of Israel to a vassal state, and subsequently put an end to that kingdom. A few years later the Assyrian king Sennacherib marched against Judah, took many of the fortified cities, and sieged Jerusalem. But the Lord miraculously spared the city and preserved the Kingdom of David. It is this episode which evidently provided the backdrop for Micah's prophecy cited above. It has become customary for brethren to see in Micah's prophecy an intimation of how God will deliver Israel from the calamity impending in our day: Gog's invasion from the north (Ezekiel 38-39). There are two good reasons for this application. (1) The succeeding verse in Micah is easy to apply to Israel's blessed influence outward to mankind in the Kingdom, which follows Israel's deliverance. (2) A contemporary of Micah, the prophet Joel, speaks of the same historical episode (Joel 2:1-27), and his account also applies it to Israel's deliverance at the outset of the kingdom. In

Joel's account Israel repents, pleads for the Lord's mercy, and God intervenes to spare them from the northern army. Then God affirms "afterward, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (verse 28). Notice that the conflict in Joel 3 also results in the Kingdom.

In this article we will examine both the prophecy itself (Micah 5:4, 5) and the historical episode it is based on (the deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib), as they relate to the crisis in Israel soon approaching, and the resulting establishment of the Kingdom of God in the earth.

SEVEN SHEPHERDS, EIGHT PRINCES

In the title we used "kings" for the more precise "shepherds" to make the point that the shepherds of this prophecy are not inferior to, but superior to, the princes. There is a word for king (Hebrew *melek*), and it is not used here. But the word shepherd (Hebrew *raah*) in this context means a ruler, one in authority. The scriptures use the analogy of shepherd in two quite different senses. The one we most often think of is the kindly, nourishing, cherishing care of a shepherd for his flock, just as our Lord is the "good shepherd" who "giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Another instance of this is Isaiah 40:11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

However, this lovely, tender usage is not the one intended in Micah. As a shepherd has autocratic rule of his sheep, directing them at his wish and fully in control, so it is sometimes used of a king with autocratic authority, exercising power over his subjects. This second usage was common in ancient Semitic languages. For example, Tiglath-pileser I, mighty ruler of Assyria, claimed to be "the rightful ruler (true shepherd) who has been proclaimed over all princes; the exalted leader whom Assur has caused to brandish his weapons, in order that he should be the shepherd of the four quarters (of the world)" (*Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Daniel David Luckenbill, Volume 3, page 73). Ezekiel 20:33 uses a similar meaning, "with fury poured out, will I rule (shepherd) you:" and this sense is even thrice used in the Greek of the New Testament, Revelation 2:27, 12:5, 19:15, where "rule" (Greek *poimaino*, shepherd) describes kingly authority.

Likewise the seven shepherds of Micah 5:5 are really seven rulers, and these are easy to identify as the glorified church, who with Christ will be the rulers of earth. At the crucial moment these will intervene, as the agent of the Heavenly Father, to rescue Israel from the calamity of the northern invasion. The eight princes are easy to identify with the ancient worthies, who will be made "princes in all the earth" (Psalms 45:16).

WHY SEVEN AND EIGHT?

As the number seven is frequently used to signify a whole or complete amount, this probably appealed to Micah as a good representation of the several kings who would ultimately overwhelm and consume the powerful Assyrian empire. Incrementing this number by one heightened and accentuated the thought, and thus the companion reference is to "eight princes." A similar method was used by Amos, who repetitively describes "three transgressions, yea four" of various nations (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, margin).

But these numbers are specially fitting when applied to the church and ancient worthies. In the tabernacle the church is represented as the seven branches in the candlestick, in Revelation as seven lampstands, and seven churches. Why not, therefore, **seven** rulers, or shepherds? In a related picture the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread shows the gospel age in seven divisions. The last or seventh day was one of special festival and celebration (Leviticus 23:8), just as the deliverance of the saints - a time of special joy - comes during the seventh stage of the church. What follows, naturally, is the eighth day, which in this sequence is the time the earthly salvation will open to the world. Thus it is on the eighth day that mankind will bring their offerings to the Lord (Ezekiel 43:27), and the eighth day will be the time of special joy and thanks for mankind (Leviticus 23:39). It is fitting therefore that the leaders of mankind, the ancient worthies, are represented by **eight** princes.

HEZEKIAH'S CRISIS

The episode is narrated in Isaiah chapters 36 to 38. Assyria was in its glory, and descended on Judah to overwhelm and conquer it. A generation earlier Isaiah had predicted this invasion. "The king of Assyria, and all his glory ... shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks, And he shall pass through Judah, he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land" (Isaiah 8:7, 8). Now the dreaded time had come. "Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them" (Isaiah 36:1), and now he began his advance against Jerusalem itself. He ordered Hezekiah to surrender. Isaiah 36:8 may even be a summons to supply mercenary forces to add to Assyria's army; or else merely a taunting disparagement of the - weakness of Judah.

Hezekiah had no thought of surrender. But he could not dispute the strength of Sennacherib's boasts. He went to the house of the Lord, and spread out the letter from his foe before the Lord. He humbly pleaded his case before the Almighty, and prayed earnestly.

"O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cher-ubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only." (Isaiah 37:16-20)

Hezekiah's eloquent entreaty will be matched by Israel's entreaty in the approaching crisis. Joel says of this time:

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly ... let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? (Joel 2:15-17)

Then the Lord will hear, he will be entreated, he will rescue and deliver his people. “Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people ... I will remove far off from you the northern army” (Joel 2:18-20). “It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zechariah 12:9). “Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zechariah 14:3). “And it shall come to pass at the same time when God shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 38:18, 19).



God's Angel Defends Jerusalem

By what means the Lord will spare Israel in their final crisis we cannot know. In Hezekiah's day the invading host was smitten during the night. “Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000: and when they (apparently the Israelites) arose early in the morning, behold, they (the slain Assyrians) were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh” (Isaiah 37:36, 37). Possibly an outbreak of plague carried by field mice or other animals was the literal cause of their demise. But by whatever means, Jerusalem was spared by a providence of the Lord. It has been ever since a striking testimony of God's care for his people. The mighty empire of Assyria failed to conquer the feeble folk at Jerusalem, and the sacred throne of the Lord ruled by the line of David was not then overturned.

HEZEKIAH'S OTHER PROBLEM

But Hezekiah had another crisis coincident with the invasion, an illness which threatened his life. “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death, and Isaiah sal'd ... thou shalt die” (Isaiah 38--1). This burden also Hezekiah took to the Lord in prayer, recalling his upright walk and godly labors for the worship of Jehovah (verse 3). The Lord responded with mercy: “I have heard thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy life fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city” (verses 4-6).

Israel today is also afflicted by a disease which threatens their life, the disease of sin which as an incurable infection will bring them into death. Hezekiah's cure is mentioned in verse 21. “Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.” A fig tree represents Israel as a nation, and individual figs individual Israelites. The particular individuals who will effect a cure for Israel are the ancient worthies. They will be raised in the midst of the crisis to lead Israel's deliverance, and point them to the Messiah who died long ago for their sin. This poultice will draw out the infectious sin from Israel, and heal them.

It would make a nice picture of Israel's cure for Hezekiah to have lived forever - since this pictures Israel's recovery in the kingdom - but obviously that was impossible in the type. Perhaps as good a picture would have been to simply mention that Hezekiah was healed from his disease, without

specifying the number of years added to his life. But the text is specific, 15 years were added. Why so specific? Fifteen is not a number which brethren have attached a special significance to. But does it not remind us of the 7 rulers and 8 princes - 15 in all - who Micah says deliver Israel?

THE SUN DIAL

God gave a sign to Hezekiah to assure him of the coming deliverance, the peculiar sign of the sun dial. "This shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken, Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down."

This was a remarkable event. What may account for such a phenomena? God, of course, can do anything, but it is unlikely He intruded on the course of the earth to spin it briefly backward. Yet the text specifically mentions the "sun returned ten degrees," indicating the sunlight itself was involved in this aberration. Two plausible causes have been advanced to explain this. (1) During a solar eclipse shadows from the sunlight, it is said, may wobble or shift contrary to normal expectations. As it happens there was a solar eclipse in the middle east in 702 bc, March 5, according to *Oppolzer's Canon of Eclipses*. The eclipse passed through Egypt and what is now Saudi Arabia. However the date generally ascribed to Sennacherib's Judean invasion is 701 bc, and having reviewed the evidence I am satisfied with the integrity of that date.

(2) The other possibility is a condition caused by rare atmospheric circumstances which allow a mock sun to appear some degrees apart from the image of the actual sun. If a cloud interposed to block the actual image, the shadow from the mock sun would be cast at a different angle. I have once encountered a witness of the phenomena, and once seen it referred to in a publication unrelated to the scriptural incident.

But the symbolic meaning of this sign is even more interesting. The shadow probably represents God's judgment, which darkened Israel's prospects for the 2520 years they have been subjected to the four world empires. The last of these was the Roman Empire, which in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was divided into the 10 toes of the image, the church-state powers of Europe which were the longest-enduring part of the whole image. This may explain the shadow of *ten* degrees. But since 1914 we have seen the rolling back of that shadow of judgment, and the Jews have returned from that bondage. The rolling back of this judgment is a sure sign to us that God will not leave Israel defenseless in her approaching crisis. He will assist her, He will protect her, when in her hour of desperation she implores God for her very life.

In reply to her prayer God will raise seven rulers and eight princes to defend and sanctify his pleading people. Then "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass." (Micah 5:7)

- *David Rice*

The Sea of Glass

“Also before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.” (Revelation 4:6, RSV)

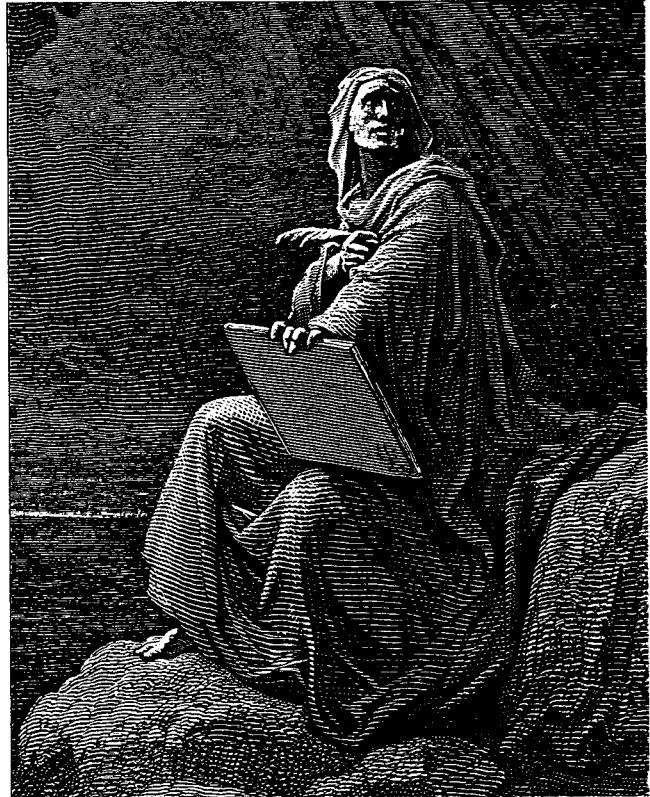
In the Holy Scriptures the sea often symbolizes the asses, peoples, multitudes and nations. The Bible says that the sea is the gathering of waters (Genesis 1:10). The signification of the waters is given to us in Revelation in this way: “The waters you saw ... are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages” (Rev. 17:15). The sea, and the waters in plural, have similar meanings.

The sea in our text was not a real one, but an appearance of sea. The sea of glass was like crystal in its clearness. It was before the throne, consequently under its sway. The vision of the sea must refer to a period of time before the establishment of the Kingdom, because when the new heaven and the new earth are established the sea will be no more (Rev. 21:1).

Contrary to the sea of glass mentioned in Revelation 15:2, this sea is not mingled with fire but is clear as crystal, nevertheless both appeared to be a sea of glass. They are therefore symbolic. Also, though the sea of glass of our text is clear as crystal, it is different from the river of the water of life, bright as crystal (Rev. 22:1), because it is a sea, not a river.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

The sea was before the throne, said John. Has God been exercising His rule on men since the beginning? The prophet Daniel gives us the answer: “The Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will” (Dan. 4:32, RSV). Although He allowed Lucifer to become the god of this world, God did not entirely forsake His sway on the earth. God has full control over the human affairs and allows Lucifer or Satan to act only to some extent. Therefore, God who created all things and is the owner of everything rules over the sea - over peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men.



The Apostle John at Patmos

We remember what the prophet Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: “The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all” (2:36). Paul said in Romans 13:1: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those

that exist have been instituted by God” (RSV). God permits the kingdoms to act according to their wishes, but He has set limits on them. He does not permit them to counteract His purposes or plan.

Nevertheless, these kingdoms are not kingdoms of God. They are kingdoms of this world (Rev. 11:15), more or less under the power or dominion of the prince of this world, Satan (John 12:31; Matthew 4:8). However Satan is not a king, but a prince, and he rules over these kingdoms illegally. He has usurped power.

God instituted the governing authorities in the sense that He permits them to exist. He also gave them a lease of power. But these governing authorities are destined to destruction. “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44, RSV). Now the lease of power has expired and the process of destruction has begun. The Kingdom of God will replace these kingdoms and the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

MESSIAH’S REIGN OVER THE NATIONS

The throne seen by John represented, secondarily, the throne of Christ during the second presence. Thus we may expect the Lord to reign on the sea of glass in some way. We are not going to examine the reign of Christ in detail now. For the time being we recall what brother Russell wrote in his foreword to Volume III: “Messiah’s Kingdom has various stages of inauguration” (page iii [Ciii]). We will merely examine the general aspects of Messiah’s reign.

Before proceeding to this examination, we would like to call attention to the fact that the reign of Christ does not begin after the time of trouble, after the destruction of the present order of things. We find a great number of texts in the Bible which say to us that the reign of Christ begins before the time of trouble. We are going to quote several of them.

- “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Revelation 20: 11, ASV)
- “See I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” (Jeremiah 1:10, RSV)
- “The Lord reigns ... fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth.” (Psalms 97:1, 3-5, NIV)
- “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever.” (Daniel 2:44, NIV)
- “I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.” (Haggai 2:21, 22, ASV)

- “This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour.” (Isaiah 45:1, NIV).

See also Revelation 2:27, 19:11-16, 11:17,18, Daniel 12:1, Psalms 45:4, 6, 149:8, 9. Christ reigns before the establishment of his Kingdom, because the overthrow of the earthly kingdoms is the result of his reign. Treating of the reign of Christ, brother Russell wrote: “We are told, prophetically, that the reign begins before the time of trouble” (Vol. IV, page 622 [D622]).

THE FIRST PROCLAMATION

The first proclamation of the reign of Christ after his return seems to be found in Revelation 11:15. “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he will reign for ever and ever” Previously the kingdoms of the world were under the princeship of Satan. This text seems to signify that Satan has been deposed of his princeship. He has been “cast out” (John 12:31). He is no more recognized as “the prince of this world,” although he continued influencing the world. The binding of Satan has begun and is the result of deposition (Revelation 20:1, 2). The Lord Jesus was already “the prince of the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5) at his resurrection, and when He came down from heaven He came therefore as a legitimate king of the earth. He came to take his great power and simultaneously to take away the power from Satan. This transfer is gradual and is shown figuratively in Exodus 4:3, 4, when Moses, who typified Christ, caught the serpent which became a rod in his hand. The rod symbolizes power or authority.

When He raised up his Church in 1878, Christ became King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). He was set King upon the holy hill of Zion (Psalm 2:6). The last members of Christ's body, who bring good news and proclaim salvation, say now to Zion: “Your God reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7).

When the lease of power given to the Gentiles expired in 1914, the Lord Jesus deposed the kings of the earth of their kingship. He dethroned several kings during the first World War and many others later on. Today very few are left and most of them have no authority.

The Bible says: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs” (Genesis 49:10, RSV). This verse seems to mean that the scepter or right to rule was never taken away from Judah and when Christ came He received the scepter because He was descended from Judah and had a right to it. The scepter or right to rule was given to Christ at his resurrection, when He said “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18. See Vol. II, pg. 86.) Nevertheless, He used this power at his second coming. He used it to bind Satan and to raise up the sleeping saints. He also used this power to “overthrow the throne of kingdoms” (Haggai 2:21) at the expiration of the Gentile Times - that is to say, at the end of the interregnum.

The interregnum being finished, the crown taken away from Zedekiah was given to Christ. We read in the prophecy of Ezekiel: “Remove the diadem, and take off the crown ... I will overturn, overturn, overturn it [the kingdom]: and it [the kingdom] shall be no more, until he come whose right it is [to reign], and I will give it [the crown] him” (21:26, 27, KJV).

We think that the crown was given to Christ at the expiration of the Gentile Times because the scepter or right to rule was given to Him at his resurrection. (See Vol. II, page 86.) It follows that Christ is King of Israel and has begun reigning over this nation. We differentiate between the reign and the kingdom. The reign of Christ over Israel begins before the time of Jacob's trouble. We read in Ezekiel 20:33: "As I live, says the Lord God, I will reign over you with a strong hand, with arm outstretched and wrath outpoured" (NEB).

Incidentally, we point out that the Lord Jesus is not hindered in his activity because the Church is not yet complete. (See R5632, section 1.)

In view of these facts, "the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God when set up will be Israelitish" (Vol. IV, page 624 [D624]).

The Kingdom of God will begin with the nation of Israel. "To the Jew first" (Romans 2:10). All the peoples will have to become converted to the God of Jacob. The prophecy of Isaiah 2:2, 3 explains this conversion. In Volume IV, page 628, this prophecy is quoted and paraphrased as follows:

"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains [as a Kingdom overtopping or overruling all kingdoms], and shall be exalted above the hills [the highest peaks]; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain [Kingdom] of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

On page 642 we read: "The Kingdom of God will spread or increase, in its various parts or divisions, as do earthly governments, until it shall become 'a great mountain [kingdom] and fill the whole earth' (Daniel 2:35)." [D642]

The sea of glass, which represents peoples, multitudes, nations and languages, would concern the period of time when Christ reigns before the establishment of his Kingdom and when lightnings, thunderings and, voices were proceeding out of the throne (Revelation 4:5). But in the first place the sea of glass would represent the peoples under the sway of God Himself, as we explained earlier.

God said: "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool" (Isaiah 66:1), and respecting the nations David said: "For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations (Psalm 22:28). See also 2 Chronicles 20:6, Psalms 95:3, Daniel 4:32, 1 Timothy 1:17. For God, the sea is like glass, as clear as crystal. God sees everything and nothing can escape His sight. "Before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

- *Antoine Papajak, entered into rest September 14, 1995*

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

THE PROBLEM

It has bothered many, justifiably, that Bible student interpretations of Revelation tend to ignore the above phrase of 1:1 when these interpretations explain the message to Ephesus (2:1-7) with Paul's being its "angel." Since Revelation was written at the very end of the first century, by that time the Ephesus stage of the church was almost all history, and the Apostle Paul was long dead. How then could this be something "which must shortly come to pass?" Clearly this is a legitimate and pertinent question.

A POSSIBLE ANSWER

1. Perhaps the most valuable part of an answer is given internally. When Jesus instructs John to "write"(1:19), he very carefully specifies that three things be written:

- (a) "The things which you have seen" (things already having occurred - history).
- (b) "The things which are (things going on all around John - contemporary to him).
- (c) "The things which shall take place after these things" (the remainder of the age in prophecy).

2. Not only does this qualify verse 1 because it adds to its meaning, but it gives a very good reason for verse 19. Verse 19 becomes the answer to a question that would be legitimately asked - the question we are now asking. Verse 19 actually says that Revelation would contain things which happened prior to its writing - things John had seen. 5:6, 7 is an example of this, proving that Revelation covers a period prior to its writing. Thus 1:19 and 5:7 by themselves should be sufficient proof that explanations of Revelation which interpret part of it as having happened before its writing are not only correct in doing so, but that such interpretation is sanctioned.

Still, questions remain. If Revelation 2:1-7 was already history when it was written, how can it be said "Write to the angel in Ephesus?" Clearly Paul derived no benefit from this passage. Paul did, however, if we examine the matter carefully, treat all of the parts of this message as he served the early church. He got this message some other way. Is it a coincidence that Paul actually used the same word as the title of the Bible's last book? Look at 2 Corinthians 12:1 and 7. Paul had "visions and revelations of the Lord" These were so grand as to transcend his infirmity of impaired eyesight. Paul got the message (and more) early - before John ever wrote it down. Thus we need not worry that the message to Ephesus and its angel came too late. But why then record it? The answer is implied in 1:10. John's perspective is ours - standing in the Millennium (on the Lord's Day) and looking back. The Lord wished all of the church to learn from the experience of the various parts of the church. He wanted us to look back and, hence, had to record the entire history. How else could he admonish, "Hear what the spirit says to the churches"?

We would all feel an imbalance if the first church, seal and trumpet were left unrecorded - if Revelation simply said there were seven churches, seven seals and seven trumpets, and then proceeded to begin with the second of each series and told us nothing of the first. Not only would we miss this information from which to learn, but we would miss it because we would fail to see how each step built to the next. Revelation is an exquisitely constructed work besides being an amazing prophecy and a spiritual treasure. It would have been a strangely constructed work with many missing lessons without the histories of the Ephesus Church.

Thus we should feel comfortable with interpreting Revelation as a chronicle of the entire age since Jesus' death. We must interpret "things which must shortly come to pass" as a statement of comfort and warning to the saints that, whenever they consider this book, it will contain things "shortly to come to pass" - things of vital interest to the character growth and safety of the saints. It was written for that purpose. It was written to show his bond-servants (all of them, not just those in John's day) what would next occur. To this day we use it for that purpose, among others. Verse one is there to show us not specifically that the fulfillment of Revelation would begin just after John wrote it down, but that it will always show us the things which are shortly to come to pass. This is a distinction with a vast difference.

- *David Doran (part of a larger collection of Revelation notes)*

From our Readers

On reading the article "The Parable of the Vineyard Laborers" in the August issue, I was reminded of Pastor Russell's explanation of this parable given in 1914, R5473. Pastor Russell pointed out the "penny" wage for vineyard labor could hardly signify "the prize of eternal association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of the kingdom" as the previous article suggests - but rather "the special privilege of knowledge and opportunity ... greater knowledge of present truth now coming as a reward to all who labor at all in the vineyard of the Lord." There will be no murmuring on the part of those who receive the great prize of the high calling, but there has been a tendency to murmur against later comers into the truth, e.g. at one time a classifying of such as "modern worthies" only. Interestingly, the Lord through His steward (a wise and faithful servant?) awarded the vineyard laborers their penny, but He said: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" "May you be blessed in your labor of love in His service,

- *VHP BC Canada*

Dear Brethren, we appreciate the magazine *Beauties of the Truth*. All the issues are good. The August 95 issue was extra special. "Cloak, Books and Parchments" moved me deeply. The dear brother who wrote it did an excellent job in presenting the human needs of the dear apostle. What an example for all of us. I read it several times with the same results. In His name,

- *VP California*

Beauties of the Truth has articles to inspire, exhort and lift up the spirit in all ways; may it long continue to serve us. In Him,

- *OM, Oregon*

Articles for Beauties

Articles for this journal are reviewed by each of the editors for clarity and value according to the mission printed with the banner of each issue. We look for helpful critique from each author and substantive recommendations for change are reviewed with the author. We also look for approval of at least four of the six editors before using an article in these pages. With this understanding, we want to solicit from brethren in our readership concise elucidations of the word of truth we have come to love.