

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 18, Number 4, November 2007

The Voice of the Lord

(Psalm 29)

David in his palace in Jerusalem observes and vividly describes a severe thunderstorm as it sweeps across the entire land of Palestine from Lebanon in the north to the south of Israel. Floods from such storms cause considerable damage in the Biblical lands. Sometimes it may not rain for two or three years, but when it does, it turns into a deluge, destroying the fields, washing away the soil, drowning both man and beast unfortunate enough to be in the path of the violent storms.

Although a literal storm is described, our interest is in the symbolic meaning of this picture prophesying the great time of trouble with which this age will end. Other prophets and apostles describe the same event, each from a unique viewpoint, presenting us with a panoramic picture; some stressing how this trouble begins, still others the glorious results after the storm ends.

We first hear a low, distant murmur of an approaching thunderstorm. It breaks its full fury upon Mt. Lebanon in the northernmost part of the land, then continues over to Mt. Hermon. The famed cedars sway to and fro before the wild fury of the storm. Each stroke of lightning is accompanied by a loud clap of thunder. The storm passes southward over the heavily populated area of Galilee and Samaria. It passes over the capital city Jerusalem, then moves further south to the desert of Kadesh, finally expending itself in the rock-hewn cities of Petra. The wild beasts are stricken with terror. The forests are stripped of their leafy dress. Rain water drenches the land filling the low places and filling the usually empty creek beds to overflowing.

GIVE UNTO THE LORD GLORY

“Give unto the LORD O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength” (Psalm 29:1). “Mighty ones” would be better rendered “sons of the mighty,” or “sons of God.” Rotherham in his translation says “ye sons of the Mighty God.” As the storm forms, it is these mighty ones, these sons of God who give unto the Lord or ascribe unto the Lord the glory and the strength.

The day of Pentecost began the new creation, depicted by the Psalmist in our verse as the “sons of God.” This most distinguished day in the history of the Gospel Age church, focuses on those events that occurred in that upper room. These events were as a result of the redeemer appearing in the presence of God as the high priest offering to the father the merit of his sacrifice that had been finished at Calvary 50 days previous. This offering was accepted fully.

As a result, the apostles and disciples who were waiting were now recognized as “sons,” being sealed by the holy Spirit of adoption¹ (Romans 8:15). It was appropriate that such an important matter be clearly demonstrated by an outward sign as we see in Acts 2:3, 4: “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The same was true later when the gospel went to the Gentiles. We find a similar manifestation of God's acceptance shown by an outward sign. Again, this was so that there could be no mistake that the word now had gone to the Gentiles and they likewise would be accepted in the Beloved (Acts 10:44-47).

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the 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, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Richard Suraci. Online, www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org

The liberty to become sons of God did not extend to anyone who lived before the redeemer came into the world to die for them and it has extended to relatively few during this Gospel Age. Even under the enlightenment of present day conditions, the great mass of mankind know nothing about the Lord Jesus and could not believe on him whom they have not heard (Romans 10:14).

Of those that have heard, a small percentage believe in him and have the privilege of becoming sons of God, for only the consecrated are the “sons of God.” “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14). This, then, is the class which ascribes this storm to the Lord, a class which grows smaller and smaller as the impending storm approaches.

THE COMING STORM

“Give (ascribe) unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2).

All the consecrated need ask: Have we given God all of the glory due Him? Or, in our successes and accomplishments have we neglected this important injunction and given ourselves the credit instead? As we scrutinize our lives, we will find that perhaps here and there we have given ourselves some of the glory when we should have been giving all of it to God. We know that we have deserved none of it. In “ascribing” the glory to God, we realize that excepting those in the days of the Lord and the Apostles, we have received more than others during the age. We should be thankful for this.

The phrase, “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” should better be “in holy adornment” or “in holy attire.” This expression reminds us of the dress of the high priest in the Tabernacle after he had put on the garments of glory and beauty. This “beauty of holiness” is a present condition, referring to the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit that we gradually attain as they are developed in our Christian walk. Additionally, these holy garments refer to the robe of Christ’s righteousness which is given to each of the saints. Worship means to bow self down and anyone in such a prostrate position is in a humble, submissive spirit, waiting on the Lord for his leadings.

Now we have the setting. And now the storm is about to break.

SEVEN THUNDERS

Of particular note, in this Psalm the expression “voice of the LORD” is mentioned seven times. Strong’s Concordance (S.6963) defines this as “to call aloud, a voice or sound.” Other concordances carry more forceful definitions such as “tumult,” “thunder,” or “roll of thunder.” To the children of Israel it was the only descriptive force of nature that would adequately describe the utterances of the Lord and all of their experiences when he led them in the wilderness. In Job 37:1-5 we have a vivid description associating the voice of the Lord with thunder: “At this also my heart trembleth,

and is moved out of his place. Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvelously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.”

Thunder, throughout the scriptures, is an expression of the wrath of God against a transgressing people. It is a voice of divine indignation about to be launched upon a guilty world.

The mention of seven thunders links us to the seven thunders of Revelation 10:1-4. The seven denotes completeness; the seven thunders are the complete and final judgment thunders. So terrible were the judgment thunders that John was commanded, “Seal up those thing which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.” The lesson here is that the John class is to escape the full effect of the judgment thunders by being taken away before the severe phase begins. This is why it says, “write not” the effect of these thunders. It is a promise that the church will not hear them, so there would be no purpose in writing them.²

FIRST THUNDER — UPON THE WATERS

“The voice of the LORD is upon the waters, the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters” (Psalm 29:3).

As the literal storm begins to sweep the land of Palestine, it first comes over the Mediterranean. The expression “many waters” or “great waters” has reference to the Mediterranean Sea. It provides the main ingredients for the storm, the water, the moisture. The sea is turbulent as the winds sweep over it. Here we have two symbols — water and thunder. Restless waters or turbulent waters are figurative of troubles or unstableness. Note Genesis 49:4, “Unstable as water.” Regarding thunder, our Pastor in an early Reprint article suggested thunder could represent controversy.

So putting these two ingredients together — controversy and troubles — we have a picture of what would precipitate the great time of trouble. Surely in our day we have seen the results of the restless masses and the ceaseless controversy.

At the same time, “the many waters” aptly describes the various groupings of these restless masses all combining together in the common bond of dissatisfaction.

There appears to be another picture intertwined here, a third ingredient. Waters, as we know, are also symbolic of truth, truths along every line, but especially along religious lines. When truth is added to these systems, it causes controversies. As an example, Luther bringing forth the doctrine of justification by faith caused a controversy in the Papal system which spurred on the Reformation. Now we have the combination of restlessness, of instability among the religious and social elements setting off the great time of trouble.



The Cedars of Lebanon

SECOND & THIRD THUNDERS — POWER & MAJESTY

“The voice of the LORD is powerful, the voice of the LORD is full of majesty” (Psalm 29:4).

A proper consideration of God’s power and majesty in the thunder and the lightning is enough to both appall, and to fill each heart with devotion and humility. For who cannot appreciate this simple expression of the greatness of God in these natural exhibitions of His forces?

FOURTH THUNDER — BREAKING THE CEDARS

“The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars: yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon” (Psalm 29:5).

In David’s prayer of thanksgiving after he assembled all the materials for the building of the temple at Jerusalem, he spoke about the Lord’s power and majesty (1 Chronicles 29:11, 12). The account is an expression of David’s love for the house of God, the temple, which was left to his son, Solomon, to build. And we can see from the record that David put every fiber of his being into the assembling of the various materials that were required for the construction of the temple. At the same time, he had raised the worship of Jehovah which had reached a low ebb during the reign of Saul — he raised it to a greater level of zeal and devotion to the worship of the true God.

Our devotion and zeal likewise should be to help and to complete the antitypical temple of God. As David proceeded at an accelerated pace, we must proceed in haste in this respect to complete the antitypical temple before the trouble, the great storm of Psalm 29, overtakes the sower of seed.

Now that this moisture had driven across the land of Palestine, it begins to rise and comes over the mountain ranges

on the east. The storm precipitates. “The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars, yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.” The first area to receive the fury of the storm is the cedar forest of Lebanon.

The cedars of Lebanon were huge and magnificent trees standing tall and erect. This is symbolic of the great ones of the earth, especially the great ones of ecclesiasticism, the leaders of Churchianity. They stand erect, unwilling to bend to the influx of truth that has come in to the world since the second advent of our Lord. They remain steadfast in their beliefs of the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of eternal torment, the trinity, the con-

cept of the single salvation and so forth. And they are the first object of the Lord’s wrath. “He breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.” He will break them from their office of outward dignity and worldly esteem.

The same scenes occur on a slightly smaller mountain, Mt. Hermon. Although Mt. Hermon from the distance appears as one peak, when one reaches the top, he finds three peaks. Mt. Hermon could aptly picture Protestantism, since they also adhere to the doctrine of the trinity. Its force is similar to Mt. Lebanon being covered with magnificent cedar forests.

SKIPPING LIKE A CALF

“He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn” (Psalm 29:6).

The waiting of the mountain forest before the storm is expressed by the figures of skipping or leaping. Heavy winds sweeping across a forested area has this effect. The two mountains mentioned are Lebanon and Sirion. Sirion here is Mt. Hermon as in the previous verse — the Sidonian [Deuteronomy 3:9] name for that mountain. Geographically, it is located in the southernmost range of the Lebanon range. This skipping, or leaping of the calf is on Mt. Lebanon, while the “young unicorn” is on Mt. Hermon, or Sirion.

A unicorn is a young, wild ox. So herein is contained another picture of the same event pertaining to ecclesiasticism as described in the previous verse respecting the cedars. As the gust of winds sweep across these two forested areas, the trees sway in unison resembling a young calf leaping on Mt. Lebanon and a young wild ox on Mt. Hermon.

Why the two different animals? A calf is a domesticated animal, easy to control, and would aptly picture Catholicism and their settled, orderly ways of the past centuries. We find in the past few years, that the church has started to come apart at the seams, coming apart from within.

On the other hand, a young wild ox is free to roam as it pleases. And this pictures Protestantism with her coarser and unsettled ways constantly dividing and splitting until today we have thousands of Protestant religious groups. The calf is associated with Lebanon, the wild ox with Mt. Hermon. This picture impresses the dual nature of the destruction of the two systems in the great time of trouble, they are the Lord's first target.

And the scriptures abound with various illustrations and pictures and symbols and types of Babylon, so-called Christianity. Perhaps the most vivid description is portrayed in Revelation 18:21: "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, 'Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.' "

Notice the decisive finality of this destruction. No more will Babylon grind out the creeds of error that have deceived the nations and people these long centuries. Babylon shall be found no more at all. There would be no vestige of the systems left. It will be complete, everlasting destruction; the millstone will never be recovered. And this destruction will come suddenly, in one hour (Revelation 18:17).

FIFTH THUNDER — DIVIDING THE LIGHTNING

"The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire" (Psalms 29:7).

The fifth voice of the Lord is spoken of as "dividing" the flames of fire. This is a reference to the forks of lightning as they zig-zag across the sky. This language is similar to Psalm 77:18: "The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook." Together these two scriptures present a very convincing figure.

In the midst of the perplexity and gloom of the great time of trouble, men on occasion catch a glimpse of certain principles of truth. This truth is in marked contrast to the darkness of error about. A flash here reveals the truth along one line of human thought or endeavor. Another flash reveals the error and corruption in the various governments at all levels and the dishonesty in high places. The flashes of lightning are continually calling attention to the word of God, to the concept of equal rights and privileges among men. We see now the deepening cloud of trouble; we hear the rising tones of the judgment all about us. We see the lightning flashes of truth and righteousness as they criss-cross the skies and observe how the entire world is in the shaking process, which eventually will overthrow all the existing institutions, systems and governments.

Our task in all of this is to watch and pray, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews

4:1). Our course of conduct should be so marked in contrast to the world's conduct in this difficult period ahead as these judgments approach. How we must exercise the greatest of caution that we can make our calling and election sure, not becoming involved in any of the clamor. The lightning and thick darkness in this Psalm reminds us of the time when the Law Covenant was inaugurated. Thus in a similar way the New Covenant will be inaugurated as a result of this symbolic storm.

SIXTH THUNDER — SHAKING KADESH

"The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh" (Psalm 29:8).

In the Fourth Volume, Bro. Russell suggests the thought of the trouble and distress coming upon three distinct groupings. First upon Christendom, next upon the nations of the world in general, and as a final blast upon the peoples of Israel regathered in Palestine, that we generally refer to as "Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). The storm sweeps over three distinct geographical groupings. First, it sweeps over the mountainous regions of Mt. Lebanon and of Mt. Hermon, which we believe symbolizes ecclesiasticism. Second, in the central area of Palestine which contains the bulk of the country's population, it would represent the civil and social orders of mankind. Lastly, Kadesh to the south would represent the nation of Israel. The wilderness of Kadesh was located at the south of the Promised Land; it would be identified today with the Negev [meaning, South]. It was in this land that the Israelites encamped twice with the intention of entering the promised land, but they were turned back both times by the Lord. It was in Kadesh that the spies were sent out to spy out the land.

The place-name "Kadesh" (S.6946), or "Sanctuary," in the earliest times was called the "Fountain of Judgment," as noted in McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia. Note the harmony, for the climactic phase of "Jacob's Trouble" will be the last judgment of the "Fountain of Judgment" before the troubles are over and the kingdom proper begins.

The word "shaketh" (S.2342) in this verse means to "whirl," or "twist." As the gigantic storm sweeps into the hills of chalk and drifting sand on the western edge of the great Arabian desert, it sets off a whirlwind, the type of fierce storm that smote Job's sons and daughters. Looking at this same end-time period, Jeremiah describes a whirlwind, a fitting picture of anarchy in "Jacob's Trouble," this way: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth" (Jeremiah 25:32, see also Jeremiah 30:23-24).

SEVENTH THUNDER — MAKING THE HINDS TO CALVE

"The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory" (Psalm 29:9).

Animals have a particularly rough time in severe thunderstorms. They are terrified. As a result, we see an



The voice of the LORD upon the waters

animal born in our description here in this Psalm. Symbolically this would be the last thunder that will cause the birth of the new order and will usher in the New Covenant.

Together with the birth of an animal, the seventh voice “discovereth the forests.” This expression “discovereth the forests” means the storm’s severity strips the forest bare. Young’s translation says the

storm not only strips away the leaves and the foliage from the trees but also removes the bark; this would cause the death of the tree. In symbolism, trees frequently are symbolic of nations. The Lord is telling us that near the conclusion of this symbolic storm, the destruction of the nations will occur in order to make way for the new kingdom, the new animal that is born.

The storm is over. The time of trouble has ended and now we read, “and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.”

THE BLESSING OF PEACE

“The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace” (Psalm 29:10-11).

The passing away of the present symbolic heavens, or ecclesiastical powers, will give place to the spiritual control of the new heaven — the Church in Glory. The passing away of the present social order will give way to the “New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13), when “times of refreshing shall come from the presence [face] of the Lord” (Acts 3:19), bringing in, “the desire of all nations” (Haggai 2:7).

As the Psalm began with praises to Jehovah, of His glory, so it ends with everyone speaking of His glory. He is still in control, just as He was during the great flood when the first world passed away. As the voice of the Lord sounds at first and the thunder of the Psalm causes all things to shake, at the end it vanishes softly away in quickening drops of the words, as He blesses His people with peace.

— Bro. John Trzyna

The Tribes of Israel — Asher

Asher springs from the pitiless infighting and the destructive rivalry bred of the deception Laban played on Jacob. Originally, Jacob had not planned on his polygamous union with both Rachel and her older sister Leah. The less-loved wife Leah adopted the stratagem of escalating her importance in the eyes of the community and Jacob by adding sons through surrogate motherhood.

By the end of Leah’s life her own six sons through Jacob and two additional sons of Jacob by her maidservant Zilpah meant that Leah was accountable for eight of Jacob’s twelve sons.

Error propagates error and the natural arrangement was set aside yet further. The Bible explicitly records that it was not the father and mother who named their child, for Leah’s maidservant Zilpah. Her name “Zilpah” means “Trickling,” *cf.* Strong’s, but Zilpah named neither of the sons Jacob fathered through her. It was Leah who named Zilpah’s second son “Asher” (meaning “Happy”) thus establishing her “claims” to him: “And Zilpah Leah’s maid bare Jacob a second son. And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name ‘Asher’ ” (Genesis 30:12-13).

Sadly, we learn from studies of the customs of the near east during this historical period of the middle bronze age that an infertile wife such as Rachel or Sarah were contractually obligated to supply a surrogate mother if they proved barren.¹ However, even trying to find some justification for Leah’s behavior within the framework of flawed custom does not supply a satisfactory answer here. Clearly, there was no contractual obligation to supply a surrogate mother for the fecund Leah.

We observe that it is the opinion of “daughters,” that is the other women of her peer group, which was of special concern to Leah. Following Asher in birth order were Leah’s last two sons, Issachar and Zebulun, and then Rachel’s two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Asher as the last-born son of a concubine wife was relegated to a lower status along with the other concubine sons: Dan, Napthali and Gad.

Dan, Gad, Asher and Napthai are treated in order by Jacob in his final blessing (Genesis 49:16-21), although here Asher receives an unusually bright promise: “Out of Asher his bread [shall be] fat, and he shall yield royal dainties” (Genesis 49:20).

Later, at the time of the entrance of Jacob and his children, the twelve tribes, into Egypt at Joseph’s invitation, Asher is mentioned last in the listing (Exodus 1:1-4). The tribe grew during the sojourn in Egypt and was fifth largest in population at the time of the Exodus as the census of Numbers 26 reveals. Population growth aside, Asher’s low status changed little and Asher is mentioned tenth in Numbers 1:1-16, eleventh in Numbers 26:44-47. No judges were ever to emerge from Asher.

(1) Galatians 4:2-5 uses “adoption” to mean the installation of a son into the position of family responsibility.

(2) Editor’s note: Some brethren consider the seven last plagues to harmonize with these thunders and believe that the church does indeed hear them.

ASHER — INHERITOR OF TYRE AND SIDON

During the division of the land of Canaan under Joshua, the fifth lot fell to Asher (Joshua 19:24-31). This lot secured the divine promise for inheriting the extreme Northwest districts. These districts allotted to Asher included some of the most fertile farmland in Canaan.

Thus was the promise to Abraham to be fulfilled. Asher's inheritance formed part of the northern-eastern boundary of Israel — the invasion route — and ideally should have included the Mediterranean coastal towns with their fine ports. The district allotted to Asher included the Phoenician cities called in Joshua's day "great" Sidon and the "strong city" of Tyre (Joshua 19:28, 29). Thus far, the curse on Canaan's oldest son had not seen its fulfillment.

This pairing of a relatively weak tribe against one of the most powerful trade centers in the ancient world with military might to match, might seem unpromising from a fleshly perspective. Apparently, that is how the Asherites themselves viewed the situation. Yet so the lots were cast and providentially overruled.² 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: "Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho [Acre], nor the inhabitants of Zidon [Sidon], nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out."

The wording, "Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites" suggests that Asher did not even form a majority population in their allotted lands. Clearly this was a circumstance that seemed to forebode their assimilation.

The general lesson that the Lord's people may draw here is that it is important that they should work with all members of the "body" in the conquest of spiritual Canaan. 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. To follow the scriptural testimony in this regard, we find that Dan was the least successful tribe in conquest, and the Danites were forced to marginal settlements in the hill country of their inheritance. Consider the enigmatic reference of verse 17 during the judgeship of Deborah, the "mother in Israel" Judges 5:6-17: "Why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode by 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.³

WARRIORS FOR THEIR BRETHREN

The incomplete conquest of Canaan by the twelve tribes testifies to the failure of the loose confederacy to maintain cooperation. Initially, this common solidarity of purpose was



Asher in the Northwest part of the Promised Land

shown when all the tribes first crossed the dried up Jordan and set up a memorial of twelve stones collected from the bed of the river, representing each tribe (Joshua 4:1-9). It would appear that within a short time each of the tribes rapidly became self-absorbed and concerned only for their own inheritance. Each tribe was content to let the others go their own way. Indeed, this lack of concern where each man was more or less content to let the others go their own way led to the observation: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

In this there is a lesson. All twelve tribes should have recognized their covenant obligations to the Lord also brought a responsibility to each other that usually would be a natural instinct for brothers. Had the twelve tribes collectively maintained the camaraderie and common purpose, had they collectively laid siege to each stronghold throughout the land, then the account of Judges might have ended differently. How much better it would be for all of Israel if Ephraim and Manasseh, the two tribes from Joseph, in confederation with Judah and Benjamin, had stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Asher to conquer and secure Sidon.

There is a lesson for spiritual Israel here as well. We are our brother's keeper.

In Revelation 7, it is noteworthy that the concubine-son tribes directly follow the lead tribes of Judah and Reuben. The lesson of the advancement of these tribes in Revelation may be that those who are disesteemed among men and lacking in strength may none the less be highly esteemed in the sight of God.

— Richard Doctor

(1) Bright, J., *A History of Israel*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky (2000) p. 79, relating studies of the Nuzi texts.

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

(3) Please see, Skein, D., "The Miracle at Shiloh," *Beauties of the Truth*, 16:3 (August 2005).

The World to Come

(Continued from previous issue, and its longer title, "Of the Day of Judgment and World to Come." At the beginning of this segment we reproduce part of the paragraph closing the last issue, to connect the thought. This article is of historic importance, but the reader is cautioned to weigh specific interpretations.)

This city [new Jerusalem] must be understood to comprehend as well Christ and the children of the resurrection, as the race of mortal Jews on earth. It signifies not a material city but the (spiritual) body politic of all those who have dominion over the nations, whether they be the saints in heaven or their mortal vice-regents on earth. Therefore the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 11 understands it of the saints in heaven and in Galatians 4:26 calls it, "Jerusalem which is above."

DIMENSIONS

Hence, this city is not only long and broad as other cities are but rises high from the earth into heaven. Hence also the dimensions of the sides thereof are double to those of the terrestrial Jerusalem described by Ezekiel: for understanding which, you are to know that the Prophets have written of superficial and solid measure as well as of linear. Ezekiel tells us that the oblation, which was 25,000 cubits in length and as much in breadth, shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand, and calls it foursquare.

So John tells us that the wall of this city was 144 cubits according to the art of measuring used by men, that is 12 cubits high and 12 cubits broad and so in square measure 144 cubits. For he had told us a little before that this wall was great (that is broad) and high, and now he gives the measures of it according to those dimensions. Ezekiel had put the wall of his Temple six cubits high and six cubits broad (Ezekiel 40:5), and John puts the measure of his wall double. And as the Angel in the Apocalypse measured the wall by superficial measure so he measured the city by solid measure, for John saith that he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs, the length the breadth and the height of it are equal. The last words shew that the measure of 12,000 furlongs respects all the three dimensions and so is a solid measure. Whence the cubic root of 12,000 furlongs will be the side of the city and this side repeated four times will be the compass thereof below, which by my computation is 91 and $\frac{4}{7}$ furlongs or in round numbers ninety furlongs, that is thirty six thousand cubits reckoning four hundred Jewish cubits to a Jewish furlong as authors teach.

And the half of this compass being eighteen thousand cubits is the compass of Ezekiel's city. (Ezekiel 48:35), that is 22,894 furlongs of 9,157 cubits (reckoning 400 Jewish cubits to a Jewish furlong) will be the side of this City, and this side, if you take the round number of 9,000 cubits, is double to the side of Ezekiel's city, which was only 4,500 cubits (Ezekiel 48:16,32). As the linear dimensions



A vision of New Jerusalem (Revelation 21)

of the Temple under the Kings were double to those of the Tabernacle under the Judges, so those of the City under the King of Kings are double to those of the City under the Kings.

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE

But whilst this doubled City is the inheritance of the saints both mortal and immortal, we are not to conceive that Christ and the Children of the resurrection shall reign over the nations after the manner of mortal Kings or converse with mortals as mortals do with one another; but rather as Christ after his resurrection continued for some time on earth invisible to mortals unless upon certain occasions when he thought fit to appear to his disciples: so it is to be conceived that at his second coming he and the children of the resurrection shall reign invisibly unless when they shall think fit upon any extraordinary occasions to appear. And as Christ after some stay in or near the regions of this earth ascended into heaven, so after the resurrection of the dead it may be in their power also to leave this earth at pleasure and accompany him into any part of the heavens, that no region in the whole Universe may want its inhabitants.

For Christ at his second coming must rule the nations with a rod of iron and reign till he hath put down all rule and all authority and power and when he hath put all enemies under his feet — the last whereof is death, to be conquered in these regions — he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24), that is he shall withdraw himself from it and depart into the heavens. For when the Martyrs and Prophets live again they may reign here with Christ a thousand years till all the nations Gog and Magog

be subdued and the dominion of the new Jerusalem be established and death be vanquished by raising the rest of the dead and all this time they may be in the same state of happiness in or near these regions as afterwards when they retire into the highest heavens.

— Isaac Newton

Paul's Striving for Laodicea

“For I wish you to know [that is, to understand] how greatly I agonize [or strive in every way] for you and for them at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen my face in the flesh” (Colossians 2:1).

Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are very much alike. In these three epistles of the Apostle Paul we find many of the same thoughts and expressions almost word for word and in these epistles we find some of the most spiritual and wonderful expressions that there are in the New Testament. Colossians 2 begins, “For,” and the thought linked by that conjunction refers to something previously stated. This would be the last two verses of the preceding chapter.

Paul has just finished speaking there of the riches of the glory of a “mystery” among the gentiles which is, “Christ in you the hope of glory.” This “mystery” is the development of a Christ-like nature, disposition, and new creature in you as a member of the body of Christ. Our Lord is the head, and we have the hope of sharing his glory, the glory of the divine nature and all that is associated with it. When we admonish every “man” (Colossians 1:28) and teach every “man” in all “wisdom” — that is, very carefully, very prayerfully — our aim is that we may present every “man” perfected in Christ.

We can see from Paul’s life and works, from the suffering he endured, from the things he accomplished, and from the messages he wrote, that the Lord was working through him with a great deal of power. Paul was given more visions and revelations than all the other apostles up to that point. Some of these visions and revelations were things that were not lawful to be uttered. What assurance this gives to us that Paul is relating the message from the Lord.

What an encouragement when Paul writes, “For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you.” To me this seems not nearly as wonderful or as beautiful as the text itself from the Greek-English Diaglott rendering. The first word in the Greek text is the word “wish” and it was put first because it is the most important word in the sentence. The thought is that his “wish” is a deep, strong one. We might fittingly render this, “I wish you to know how greatly I strive for you.”

But he wants them to “know,” and the word for “know” is not the usual word we might expect, but rather it is a

word that means, “to see” or “perceive.” That is, to perceive or understand with the mind. And this position of emphasis in the sentence means that Paul has a very strong desire that the brethren might enjoy and realize how important the calling of each member is, how great its cost is, and also the depth of his love for them. This word for “strive” is the same root from which we get the word “agony.” The thought was a desperate, a very intense struggle of the mind and the heart in prayer, and wish and every effort to help them to make their calling and election sure.

The apostle himself realized by the visions and revelations that were given him what experiences were yet before the church. How great a glory! How wonderful a blessing! How certain the help the Lord would have for us along every step of the way! Jesus understood it. He had passed through it, and being the head, he understood it all. Both Jesus and Paul suffered and agonized in order that you and I might be sufficiently convinced that we would hold on faithfully until the end of the way.

They agonized in order that we would never give up. As Paul says in Hebrews, “Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath grave recompense and reward.” Also he said that we are made “partakers,” that is sharers with Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. And the holding “steadfast” in the Greek has the thought of putting your foot down upon it — you are determined not to let it get away from you. Though many had not seen him personally, such as those of Laodicea, he nevertheless was praying, hoping, struggling, and writing for them and for the others that they all might be strengthened, encouraged, lifted up, and that their hearts might be comforted.

— adapted from a discourse by Bro. John A. Meggison

Jacob's Speckled Sheep

Professor Yehuda Felix of Jerusalem, who devoted his life to research of the world of botany and zoology in the Bible, passed away on December 2, 2005 at the age of 83. He was among the founders of the Land of Israel Studies Department at Bar Ilan University, and headed it for many years. He authored some 20 books and dozens of articles; his last work was a new edition of Tractate Maasrot of the Jerusalem Talmud, published this year. Among his works was the classic, *Flora and Fauna in the Mishna*.

His papers and writings combined research in Torah and science. A representative paper of his dealt with a puzzling incident in the [past week’s Torah portion], in which the Patriarch Jacob mysteriously arranged for the birth of a surprisingly large number of speckled sheep. Professor Felix explained Jacob’s success based on the Mendelian genetics principles of dominant and recessive genes. His theory is that Jacob treated the early-mating sheep and the late-maters differently [see Genesis 30, 41-42, and Rashi], in accordance with the discovery some decades ago of the fact that such behavior reveals the sheep’s white/speckled genotype.