“IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED...”

Faith in the Word of God Confirmed
"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17

WRITTEN OVER 100 YEARS AGO

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An Outline of the Kingdom of God

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Jeremiah 51:15: "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding."
"Science" is all very well in its place, if it be true science, and not babbling about science. Truth natural and revealed, all originates from Deity. No sane man disputes this. Natural truth discovered and systematized by human observation and reason, is called science; and truth that cannot be discovered experimentally and inductively, but comes to us by the will of God through "holy men" specially moved to speak and write it by his spirit, is divine science, or system of knowledge, and called revelation. This is always the same. Time changes neither its facts, purposes, testimonies, principles, nor reasonings. But not so with human science. What passes for science in one age, is repudiated in another. Hence the science of Paul’s age is an old wife’s fable in ours; and much of what now passes for first rate science, will be exploded in less than fifty years as the vain babbling of mere pretenders to knowledge.

The natural sciences cannot expound “the things of the spirit of God.” The profoundest knowledge of chemistry, astronomy, or physiology, cannot answer the question “What has God prepared for them that love him?” The answer to this question cannot be read “in trees, and stones, and running brooks.” All nature is dumb and silent as the grave upon it. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, Galen, Celsus, Bacon, Leibnitz, Davy, Faraday, Gall, Morse, and a host of others devoted exclusively to science and philosophy, with all their principles and facts, could not thence approach within the shadow of a shade of “the things prepared.” This is the testimony of Scripture; and therefore whatever speculators in science may say to the answers to this question cannot be read “in trees, and stones, and running brooks.” All nature is dumb and silent as the grave upon it. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, Galen, Celsus, Bacon, Leibnitz, Davy, Faraday, Gall, Morse, and a host of others devoted exclusively to science and philosophy, with all their principles and facts, could not thence approach within the shadow of a shade of “the things prepared.” This is the testimony of Scripture; and therefore whatever speculators in science may say to the contrary, we believe it.

A person, then, may be as ignorant of what passes for science, as Balaam’s most learned of all donkeys, and yet be able most intelligently and demonstrably to answer the question before us. All the prophets and apostles could do this, and have done it, but were nevertheless ignorant of what is called science in out time; but with all their ignorance of this they were better physiologists than any now extant; for none of these can demonstrate the motive power of the animal machinery called MAN; and he that is ignorant of this, is a mere quack in “physiology and the laws of health.”

In conclusion we would respectfully invite attention to the words of Paul, “the teacher of the Gentiles,” whether scientifics or barbarians. “Avoid,” said he, “profane, vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so-called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:20). Paul’s interpretations were independent of science, which he pronounced “false,” when all the world protested it was the true wisdom. Paul declared that it was folly; and his judgment has been endorsed as true and altogether right by all the real lights of the science of today. His interpretations were true, and only true together; yet he knew nothing of modern science. We argue, then, that the truths of revelation are perfectly intelligible to all unsophisticated, unspoiled, childlike inquirers after them without any aid that “science” or the sciolists can afford; who prophesy only in the words of their masters, whose “science” is a hash of facts, principles, and arguments plagiarized from the works of the thinkers and discoverers of the age, and unverified by their own experiment and observation. The mere man of science is a fool in “the deep things of God,” in which the unscientific man of an intelligent faith is as the sun in the mid-heaven to a lightning bug compared to him. Give us the fools whose science is the word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Nov. 5, 1860

AN OUTLINE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A kingdom requires a monarch, a territory, subjects, laws, religion and a government for its orderly function as a national entity. The Bible reveals this outline of God’s kingdom. By John Thomas

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF THE KINGDOM

Though the kingdom belonged to Jehovah, “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath deathlessness, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see,” (1 Tim. 6:15) though He is Israel’s eternal, incorruptible, and invisible King, (1 Tim. 1:17) yet he had predetermined that his kingdom should be ruled by a visible representative of his majesty. He resolved, however, that the occasion developing his purposes, testimonies, principles, nor reasonings. But not so with human science. What passes for science in one age, is repudiated in another. Hence the science of Paul’s age is an old wife’s fable in ours; and much of what now passes for first rate science, will be exploded in less than fifty years as the vain babbling of mere pretenders to knowledge.

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Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother” (Deut. 17:14). Hence, the law contemplated the establishment of the kingly office, which was at some future period to be inherited by the Seed of Abraham, who is to possess the gate of his enemies; and in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 22:17-18). But neither the covenant promulgated through Moses, defined the tribe and family whence the person should be manifested as the progenitor or father of the Seed; though it was understood in Israel from the prophecy of Jacob, that he should come of the tribe of Judah, and that there should be “unto him the obedience of the peoples,” or tribes—ve-lo yiquhath ammim.

To determine the things, then, which were undefined in the covenant with Abraham, and the superadded covenant of Moses, Jehovah availed himself of the rejection of himself by the nation, to choose for it a king
from whom Shiloh should descend to rule the tribes when established under the New Constitution of the kingdom. He gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath (Hosea 13:11). He gave them Saul, son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin; but as he did not do all his will upon the idolatrous tribes around Israel, Jehovah set him aside, and chose a better man. This was David, son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah. He was born in the 29th year of Eli’s judgship, and was 11 years and 5 months old at the capture of the ark by the Philistines at the battle of Ebenezer. In the 18 years and 7 months, which succeeded, he killed the lion and the bear, smote Goliath, was anointed Jehovah’s king elect to rule his people Israel, and passed through much tribulation that he might inherit the kingdom, if approved. Saul was killed in battle; and David succeeded him, first as king of Judah, and two years afterwards as sole king in Israel. He had long wars with the surrounding nations, which at length ended in their conquest and an enduring peace. In his career as a king raised up to execute Jehovah’s vengeance upon the heathen, he acquired himself as “a man after God’s own heart;” and with all his faults, as one “of whom the world was not worthy;” because he honoured God by devout and earnest faith in “his word, which he has magnified above all his name” (Heb. 11:32, 38; Psa. 138:2; Acts 13:22).

David being approved as a suitable progenitor of “the seed,” Jehovah made an everlasting covenant with him, which he confirmed with an oath. By this he established the sovereignty of his family over Israel for ever. Henceforth, the House of David was the royal house of the kingdom of God; and to rebel against David, or a descendant of his, lawfully occupying his throne, was to rebel against Jehovah himself to whom the throne and kingdom as certainly belonged as if he had no visible representative in Jerusalem. Hear what the Strength of Israel proclaims—“I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, saying, Thy Seed (zarecha, singular) will I establish for ever (ad olam) and build up thy throne for all generations (le-dor-vahdor)... I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand (power) shall be established: mine arm shall also strengthen him... In my Name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his power (who bears Jehovah’s name) also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my First-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His Seed also (zaro, David’s Seed, singular,) will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven... My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His Seed (zaro) shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven (Psa. 89).

Hear again the word Jehovah sent to David by Nathan concerning his Seed who was to bear Jehovah’s name—“It shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy Seed after thee, who shall be of thy sons: and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a temple, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son. I will set him in my house (temple) and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore” (1 Chron. 17:11, 14).

From this covenant, it is clear as a sunbeam, that David was to have a Seed who should be both Son of David and Son of God; that this Seed should be a king, and heir to all David’s prerogatives; that the throne and kingdom of Israel should be everlasting in David’s family; that his Seed should be raised up from the dead to sit upon his throne; that he should then build a temple; and that he should be settled in that temple forever, that is, should be a priest continually there.

Paul makes it absolutely certain, that “the Seed after David of his Sons” is the Lord Jesus, and not Solomon, by applying the saying in the covenant, “I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son,” to Christ (Heb. 1:5). And that David himself so understood it, is obvious from innumerable passages in his writings. David believed the Son here spoken of was to be raised from the dead to sit upon his throne; and that when he sat upon it, he was to be an immortal king, and an undying priest after the order of Melchizedek. Peter declares this; for in reasoning upon what David wrote in the sixteenth psalm, he said, “David being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his dead body was not left in the tomb, neither did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up” (Acts 2:30). Being raised from the dead, and therefore, Son of God according to a holy spiritual nature which he should possess in common with the angels, than whom he was then no longer “lower,” he saw him in possession of his dominion as Jehovah’s king on Zion, the hill of his holiness, with the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession (Psa. 2:6-8). He discerned also what would be his own character and that of his government; for, says he, concerning him, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is of singular,) will I make to endure for ever (ad olam) and build up thy throne for all generations (le-dor-vahdor)... I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand (power) shall be established: mine arm shall also strengthen him... In my Name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his power (who bears Jehovah’s name) also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my First-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His Seed also (zaro, David’s Seed, singular,) will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven... My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His Seed (zaro) shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven (Psa. 89).

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By Robert Roberts

That which was from the beginning,” says this authorised messenger of Christ, “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

John puts his testimony on this point in the very foreground. He says, “We have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled” that manifestation of divine life and love which he preached, for the faith of men to lay hold of. It is the same with Peter; he says, “We have not followed cunningly-devised fables.” As he said before the tribunal of the Jews, “We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

That they had seen and heard them is evident from the fact that they submitted to persecution, and ultimately surrendered their lives for declaring that they had so seen and heard Jesus of Nazareth for forty days after he had been put to death. That fact is evidence to us that what they said was true. Men never go in the face of disadvantage and opposition, without a motive. The motive in this case was a conviction that certain facts were true. It was not, as in the case of the persecuted Puritans, a persuasion of certain doctrines.

The boldness of the apostles, on the one hand, and the antagonism of the Jewish rulers on the other, turned upon a question of fact, viz., whether the crucified Jesus had risen. Upon the fact, doubtless, the apostles founded a doctrine, but it was the fact and not the doctrine, that was the cause of the dispute that cost them their lives. Hence their firmness is evidence of the fact, which they asserted, and the basis of our faith. Their subsequent proceedings and writings show too much sanity and discrimination to admit the suggestion that though sincere, they were hallucinated. It is as John puts it here; we have seen, and heard, and handled. It is no myth, but a reality.

This Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and is a real living man, and commanded his apostles, and also asks us to tell people about him, that we may gather out a sect for him. People use the term “sect” in a reproachful sense; those who know the truth will see that instead of being a reproach, it is a necessary expression of the position to which those are called who believe the truth. There can be no people of Christ without a sect. The brethren of Christ created by the truth—are a sect of the most distinct and tenacious order, a peculiar people, a sworn people, a warm and enthusiastic people, if you will, a narrow-minded people, in the sense that their minds are narrowed down to a distinct apprehension of and an uncompromising contention for the things that are true about Jesus Christ.

We realise and recognise the object which John here asserts to have been the very object of their declaring all these things.

For we must ever remember their proceedings had an object. They did not go abroad to declare the resurrection of Christ simply because they privately knew it to be a fact, and wanted other people to know it as an interesting fact. They had a palpable and intelligible and very definite object in view, and it is upon that object that we must concentrate our attention, for our belief of their testimony, apart from the object they had in delivering the testimony, is altogether vain. We had better never know what they taught if we fail to realize the object they had in view in teaching what they taught. Here John declares that object: “That ye may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Now what does this mean? It means something very much more than the technical fellowship known to the language by which we define our ecclesiastical relations in this present imperfect state. To have fellowship with, is to be a fellow of, in the sense of being identical in mind, faith, disposition, principle, practice, taste and intention, and also in nature and relation. To have fellowship with the apostles, is to stand in their position, and their position John defines to be one of fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. To call men into this position is the object of the truth, but there are two stages in the attainment of it. The first relates to state of mind now, and the second to order of being at the full manifestation of the divine purpose.

The first is the one we have more especially to concern ourselves with. John here says that a man has no fellowship with God if he walks in darkness. “If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” John is here addressing himself to those who believe the truth. He gives us to understand that a person who merely knows the truth intellectually—who merely believes there was such man as Jesus Christ, and that he rose from the dead, and is theoretically offered as the salvation of God, but walks in unrighteousness, is none the better for his knowledge, and deceives himself, if he imagine he is a son of God. The mere knowledge of the truth will never secure for any one an entrance into the Kingdom.

The truth is but an agency; the Gospel is but a means. And unless the end is realised, the means are a failure. Now the end proposed in the first instance is to give us fellowship with the Father. To do this, it must cause us to walk in the light John speaks of:— “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” This is certainly true in every sense. God dwelleth in light in which no man can approach. He is the very source and focus of all the power we see abroad, and as such, He doubtless is light.

But the sense in which we are to realise it now, and walk in the light, is the intellectual and moral sense. God is wise, and holy, and righteous, and merciful in the method of His procedure. Of course, it is difficult for us to comprehend the operations of the divine mind. His thoughts are higher than ours. We can only see them in their effects, the mental attributes of Universal Power are manifest in His works, as well as declared in His word. We can see but a little, but we see enough to fill us with awe and adoration. We see the perfection of His works, the wisdom of His operations, the beneficence of His designs.

Everything has a good purpose. The very winds that blow and cause so much devastation, are, in existing circumstances, a
necessary purification of this planet as a habitation; the very thunder-storms that crash, and roar, and destroy, and frighten man and beast, are the means of that equilibril rectification of mundane forces, which is essential to our existence: the evils to which we are subject—the pains we feel—are but the obverse of beneficent law; for if we were incapable of pain, we should be incapable of enjoyment, and exposed to many destructions. A child looks at the fire, and his little imagination is charmed by the dancing flames; and but for the sensation which God has associated with their action upon our organisation, the little thing would put his hand into the fire, and feeling no pain, would proceed in his folly till destroyed. So with everything; if you go round the whole circle of nature, you will find beneficence the ultimate law of wisdom.

Yet the rules of wisdom are never slackened to give beneficence a longer rope. Justice and righteousness hold the reins with unflinching hand. Their end is good, but they are never sacrificed or compromised for a presumed good. There is no clash in God’s work. The noiseless machinery of eternal and unvarying law, is perfect in all its parts. In this is disclosed the character of the Father. Righteousness, wisdom and goodness, are His supreme attributes. The practical use of this to us is simply this. Jesus says that we are to be holy as the Father is holy—and “Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” “Without holiness no man shall see God.” These are the words of Paul, and show us the high standard to which we are amenable. Now, although it is true that we have an inferior nature, and one which, if left to itself, will inevitably gravitate to the earth; yet this is the case also—and it is of the utmost importance we should recognise it; because the recognition of it is a part of the means which will lead to our elevation to the divine nature—namely, that we are capable of being made different; that we are capable of becoming new men, and of approximating to divine things: that it is possible for us to be drawn up as well as drawn down.

We have no impulse within ourselves to go up; it must come from without; but obtaining a lodgment from without, it becomes a power within. This power is the truth; this is the means of our elevation. They are placed in our hands, and we are responsible for the use or disuse of them. This, in fact, is the basis of our responsibility. If we are wise, we will appreciate and use them. We can only become the children of the light by dwelling in the light; we can only become holy by breathing the holy atmosphere of the scriptures; we can only become righteous by subjecting ourselves to those intellectual and moral impulses that induce righteousness; and these come from the scriptures. We have to walk in the counsel of God. If we walk in this counsel, and eschew the counsel of the world, we shall be blessed. “Blessed is the man,” says David, “that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord.”

Here in this book, God shines upon us; His mind is brought to bear upon us; all His ways of looking at things are disclosed to us, and if we are ignorant of them, it is because we have not used the means He has given us of knowing them. There is scarcely a thing that God could say to us, but what He has said. Certainly, so far as principles are concerned, He could say no more. He could acquaint us with the political programme that lies between us and the coming of Christ; He could tell us the exact date of Christ’s return, and such little things as these—mere facts; but so far as the great principles, that regulate our relation to God, are concerned, He has certainly told us everything he could possibly communicate; and in the telling of it He has—as always—acted upon the wisest principles. His definition of what He has done, is that He has given “here a little, and there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept.” In this He indicates the highest knowledge of our nature.

We are so constituted that we could not take the truth in all at once. We could not effectually receive it in the form of a synopsis. A statement of our faith may be very useful for some purposes; but for a thorough acquaintance with the whole matter, it is necessary that it should be spread over a large area.
their minds fashioned after His, and His principles incorporated with their mental being. We have not only to know the things of the kingdom and the name, but we have to grow up into Christ, our living head in all things. We have to become like him.

Was he a cold man? “Nay, verily,” he says, “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” He was continually at work. Even when a boy, 12 years of age, he had to say to misunderstanding relatives, “Wist ye not that I must be about my father’s business?” Was he a placid, indifferent man—indifferent to God, unexcited by deep principles—unconcerned at the wickedness of the world? Many a man may fancy himself a very legitimate and respectable and Christian sort of a person, because he goes through the world without doing any harm, and does pretty well in business, and gets on pretty comfortably. He perhaps has managed to provide himself with a snug house, a nice garden, a thriving family, and is rather respected by his neighbours; and he thinks upon the whole the world is in a tolerably fair condition. He feels comfortable and enjoys himself, and cannot make anything of this great outcry about the world being wicked and miserably off, and badly governed. He thinks he is a good sort of man himself, and that the world on the whole is not so bad; and that the man who is always croaking about evil times, and preaching about judgment to come, and a millennium of righteousness, must be cracked. This gentleman we must leave alone. His complaisance shows whereabouts he is in the scale. Christ is our standard. What would his opinion of the existing order of things be? this is the way to look at it. The sleek well-to-do man of the flesh, with a comfortable balance at the banker’s, and some good investments, is naturally contented. This only proves where he is in the scale of moral beings. Satisfaction depends upon capacity. Poor puss is very comfortable as she sits purring by the fire, and would laugh, if she could, at society, with its scientific exhibitions and social ceremonies, and wonder what pleasure in the world these two-legged creatures could find in such occupations. Go a little further down, and we see another animal grunting and snoring in the mire; and Jesus gives us to understand that there are human pigs. He says, “Cast not your pearls before swine,” that is, human swine.

Now the gentleman I have been describing is one of them, though rather of a well-conditioned and harmless order. It just comes to this, if we want to realise the standard to which God wishes His children to ascend, we must contemplate Jesus Christ, and not take anybody’s opinion or sentiments apart from Him. We shall hear people say that we are extreme, that we are fanatic, that we carry things too far, because we try to be like him; but listen not to the voice of the serpent—listen continually, and all your lives, to the voice of wisdom, and there is some chance, at least, of our entering the state in which all will be “holiness unto the Lord.”

**Food For Thought**

“Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.”

*Isaiah 40:21, 22*

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth… Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast…”

*Psalm 33:6-9*

“But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded.”

*Ezekiel 36:8-10*

“And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

*Job 28:28*
Those who read the Bible will be struck by the fact that Jesus Christ is the very centre of both the Old and New Testaments. No matter where we look we find Jesus Christ mentioned or alluded to in one form or another. A man called Philip recognized this early in the ministry of Jesus and, finding a friend said, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Jesus Christ is a fact of history, acknowledged by numerous ancient historians such as Tacitus and Josephus, however the greatest testimony is found in the Bible. The Old Testament documents all kinds of details about Jesus Christ; where he was born, his life, his death and his resurrection. Taken in isolation, one might be tempted to say that the similarities between the prophecy and its fulfilment are purely coincidental. Yet when considered all together these prophecies present a considerable testimony to God’s divine control.

Jesus Christ—His First Advent

When the wise men came looking for the newly born Jesus, believing him to be of royal descent, they enquired of Herod the king where he would be born. Herod gathered together the Jewish authorities who, upon examining the Hebrew scriptures, concluded that the place was in Bethlehem:

“And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus is it written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel” (Matt 2:5-6).

The Jewish leaders were quoting from the prophet Micah (chapter 5:2) who ministered about 700 years before the birth of Christ. In order for this prophecy to be fulfilled Mary, Jesus’ mother, had to be in Bethlehem at that precise time. But she lived in Nazareth, one hundred and fifty kilometres away. Under God’s providential hand we read:

“There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed...and all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child” (Luke 2:1-5).

Now consider the implications behind this event taking place. It involved a Roman Emperor making a decree at the precise time that a woman was ready to give birth to a child, who was married to a man who came from the city of Bethlehem. What a remarkable coincidence! Or is it?

There are numerous prophecies about the birth of Jesus all of which require precise circumstances in order to be fulfilled. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) and Matthew’s gospel records the event fulfilling this (Matthew 1:23). Matthew describes the death of the children at Bethlehem; an attempt by Herod to destroy the child that had been born “king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2, 16). Again the record notes that this was in fulfilment of the prophet Jeremiah’s words in Jeremiah 31:15. Another prophecy was also fulfilled at this time because of the circumstances created by Herod’s actions. The gospel of Matthew records the family of Jesus fleeing into Egypt for fear of Herod (Matthew 2:13, 14), and after the death of Herod they returned to Israel “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet (Hosea 11:1), saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.”

His Life and Death

The last week of Jesus life began with his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Unlike Alexander the Great, who two centuries earlier had entered triumphantly into the city riding a white horse, Jesus rode upon a young donkey (Matthew 21:5). This event was foretold by the prophet Zechariah five hundred years earlier, he wrote:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zech 9:9).

The most remarkable prophecies are centred around the crucifixion of Jesus. No amount of human collaboration could have orchestrated the precision that the prophets had described. The death and resurrection of Jesus was in accordance with the will and purpose of God...
For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:27-28).

Consider the prophecies (boxed) below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference to what happened to his clothes</th>
<th>Psalm 22:18; (Matthew 27:35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>His disciples forsaking him:</td>
<td>Zechariah 13:7; (Mark 14:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crucified with thieves</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:12; (Mark 15:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His death by crucifixion</td>
<td>Psalm 22:16; (Luke 23:33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zechariah 12:10; (John 19:37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psalm 69:23; (John 19:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His bones were not broken</td>
<td>Psalm 34:20; John 19:36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again in order for these prophecies to be fulfilled they required a Roman governor; Roman soldiers; two thieves; twelve disciples; death by crucifixion and a thirsty man on a cross. Again one might be tempted to view one of the events in isolation as purely coincidental, but for all to occur at the same time to one individual is nothing short of a miracle.

The Time is Fulfilled

Returning for a moment to the incident involving the wise men at Jesus’ birth; we need to ask the question, what prompted those men to look for Messiah at that particular time? Not only that but at the time of Jesus’ birth the gospel records inform us that there were people looking for the Messiah. A man called Simeon “waited for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25), and a very old woman by the name of Anna upon seeing the child Jesus “spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Israel” (Luke 2:38).

What prompted this air of expectancy? It was very real and the atmosphere was still in evidence thirty years later when John Baptist preached—“and as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of him, whether he were the Christ or not” (Luke 3:15).

The 70 week Prophecy

The answer is found in the Hebrew prophets. We read of a most remarkable prophecy dealing with the coming of Messiah, in Daniel chapter 9:24-27:

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice of the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

A number of points need highlighting:

1. The prophecy covers a definite period of “seventy weeks.”
2. It concerns the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.
3. The seventy weeks are divided into three groups of time.
4. At the centre of the prophecy is Messiah the Prince.
5. The setting for the prophecy is Daniel the prophet, not Jesus the Messiah.
6. The prophecy is fulfilled when Jesus was crucified and rose again after three days.
7. The historical period covered by this prophecy is from the year 406 BC to the year 30 AD.
8. The prophecy is fulfilled in one group of seventy weeks and another group of two and a half weeks.
9. The prophecy includes the prediction of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
10. The prophecy includes the prediction of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.

The Setting of the Prophecy

The setting for the 70 week prophecy is right at the end of Babylon’s dominion over the nation of Israel. It had lasted for 70 years (Daniel 9:2, cf. Jeremiah 25:11) and Babylon had recently been defeated by the armies of the Medes and Persians.

Daniel prays to God for Israel’s restoration (Daniel 9:16), an event which began to take place in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia. However, Israel’s ultimate liberation from the bondage of sin and death would take a further period of “seventy weeks” (verse 24).

A Day for a Year

The first detail to consider is whether or not the seventy weeks is a literal period of time. The answer to this is fairly obvious; if it was a literal period then the Messiah would have appeared a little over a year after the prophecy’s start date. This didn’t happen.

The Bible sometimes uses a day to represent a period of one year. We might describe this as a day for a year principle:

We can give two examples:

1. The period that the spies spent spying out the land of promise was 40 days. Because Israel refused to enter the land, God condemned them to spend 40 years in the wilderness—one year for each day. “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise” (Numbers 14:34).

2. The prophet was required to lay on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days. Both periods represented the period that the nation would bear their iniquity—God said “I have appointed thee each day for a year” (Ezekiel 4:5-6).

On this well established principle, the “seventy weeks” time span, comprising four hundred and ninety days, corresponds to 490 years of actual time. Some sceptics may consider this tampering with the record to make the circumstances fit. Be that as it may, a man called Jesus, claiming to be the long expected Messiah of the Jews appeared in Israel a little over 490 years after Daniel spoke the prophecy. Once again, consider the evidence.

The Division of the 70 Weeks

The 70 weeks or 490 years, according to the prophet Daniel, were to begin with the commandment to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This overall period is divided into 3 periods of 49 years (7 weeks), 434 years (62 weeks) and 7 years (1 week) respectively (verses 25-27). It is not completely clear from verse 25 what separates the 49 years from the 434 years. However, verse 25 does say that “the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” This took place in the days of Ezra, at the conclusion of the 70 years captivity under the Babylonians. There are four decrees recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, these are listed below with the conventional historical dates below.

1. Ezra 1:1-4

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was there a reference to a male lamb, it was always a female. However, John had not made a mistake, he was, in actual fact, referring to the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12.

The Jewish Passover was instituted at the time of the Exodus and God was very specific in the details He provided Moses. The events surrounding the Passover Lamb were a prophecy of the work of Jesus as a covering for sin. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, that “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (verse 7). We have already seen that details in prophecy are important and how accurate God’s word is in their fulfilment. The same accuracy is found in the details of the Passover.

Christ our Passover

Examples like this one could be multiplied, but this will serve to illustrate the wonder of the word of God and the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASSOVER LAMB (Exodus 12)</th>
<th>LORD JESUS CHRIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Lamb (verse 5)</td>
<td>Male Lamb (John 1:29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without blemish (verse 5)</td>
<td>Without blemish (1 Peter 1:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken from Flock (verse 5)</td>
<td>Taken from Flock (Hebrews 7:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed by whole Congregation (verse 6)</td>
<td>Killed by whole congregation (Mark 15:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesh eaten (verse 8)</td>
<td>Flesh eaten (John 6:51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bones not to be broken (verse 46)</td>
<td>Bones not to be broken (John 19:33-36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Second Coming of Jesus

Many people scoff at the idea of Jesus returning to the earth, yet let us reflect upon God’s word for a moment. The Bible detailed accurately the first coming of Jesus, and all the events surrounding his manifestation were accomplished. This gives us confidence when reviewing the scriptures which speak of his second coming. If it happened before, it will certainly happen again.

Prophecies throughout the New Testament emphasize time and again the return of Jesus. **Jesus said he would return:**

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

The angels said he would return:

“Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

The apostle Paul said he would return:

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

The apostle Peter said he would return:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

There are over three hundred references to the return of Jesus throughout the Bible. Why is he coming back? What will he do when he returns? How will his return affect the world? These questions, and many more, need answers because Jesus said, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Revelation 16:15). Some of these questions will be addressed in subsequent articles.

The return of Jesus Christ will fulfill the Old Testament prophecies that have not yet been realized. At the birth of Jesus the angel Gabriel said this about him:

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:31-33).

This promise was firmly based upon a number of Old Testament prophecies but it has never been fulfilled. God told Abraham that his seed would inherit the land of Israel for ever (Genesis 17:8) and the apostle Paul informs us that the seed referred to is the Lord Jesus Christ, (Galatians 3:16). King David was told that his seed would sit upon his throne for ever (2 Samuel 7:12-16); Jesus was the seed of David (Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3).

The words of the angel Gabriel necessitates the return of Jesus Christ in order to be fulfilled.

The same precise detail which we saw associated with Jesus’ first advent is provided with respect to his second. Zechariah describes Messiah as revealing himself to Israel and the world on the mount of Olives. This is a significant detail and one which might be overlooked by a casual reading of the Bible. Jesus ascended into heaven from the mount of Olives, at which time the angels, who were standing by, told the disciples that Jesus would return in the same manner in which he went away (Acts 1:11). What a remarkable coincidence! Or is it?

Reference is made to Jesus Christ in “The complete works of Tacitus” Annals 15:43-45, published by The Modern Library, New York, 1942 Ed. Tacitus lived between AD51 to AD117.

Josephus, a Jew living at the time of Jesus comments about Jesus in his “Antiquities of the Jews” Book XVIII, chapter III, section 3.
...the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

Luke 17:29, 30

When the Lord warned his followers about the coming judgment on the world, he drew upon two cataclysmic events, the flood, in which all flesh perished (apart from the family of Noah), and the more localised holocaust of Sodom and Gomorrah. Both events were monumental and their effects are still seen in pits of fossils and frozen mammoths (such as in Russia), and in the Jordan depression around the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth.

We first hear of Sodom when Abraham and Lot occupied the promised land. They settled in the hill country around Bethel with their herds and flocks, dwelling in tents which marked the pilgrim status of their existence. Trouble between the herdsmen sparked contention that led Abraham and Lot to separate. Genesis 13:7 inserts a seemingly irrelevant comment: “The Canaanite and Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” This had already been stated in the previous chapter. Why restated? Was it because the strife had some connection with the spirit of Abraham which was more important than brethren working together? It is remarkable that the final chapter of Zechariah which deals with the establishment of the King in Zion, records “there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.” Thus the influence that adversely affects the people of God will no longer be permitted a presence.

The increase of the herds caused difficulty between the herdsmen of Abraham with the herdsmen of Lot. The contention was quite sharp, so Abraham intervened before the problem involved himself and his nephew. There is a lesson in this for us. Don’t let disputes get out of hand. Raise them with the people concerned who are responsible for the decision making. Be pro-active. Seek the peace of others (Matt 5:9). It would have been so easy for Abraham to have taken up the criticism of his own servants and make an accusation against the servants of Lot or even against Lot himself. Abraham however, was aware that there are matters more important than our material advancement.

By offering Lot the choice of land, Abraham exhibited a gracious spirit. There is no hint here of personal possession, or consciousness of self. He could have easily said, “God called me out of Ur you know. The promise wasn’t directly to you.” God appreciated the spirit of Abraham which was one of the reasons He had chosen him—“for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment…” (Genesis 18:19).

The Sight of the Eyes

From the heights of the Judean hills, Lot “looked down on the plain of Jordan...” How often our eyes lead us into trouble! Eve “saw” the fruit with new understanding after the advice of the serpent (Gen 3:6). Job made a “covenant with his eyes” (31:1) because he was aware of the ease with which the sight of the eyes led to sin. Jesus said that after looking, lust too easily developed (Matthew 5:28). The advertisers of this world know that they just have to place pictures in front of us and we are so easily ‘hooked.’ We would have never even considered doing this or buying that if we had not first seen!

Lot thought the well watered plain was a very acceptable choice and would certainly solve the problem of continually moving to find new pasture. In fact, it may have reminded Lot of their recent time in Egypt where he had seen the fertile gardens by the Nile (Genesis 12:14, 20). The lush pasture of the plain would prevent the herd spreading out and so avoid confusion with other herds. But wise decisions are only made when the entire spectrum is considered. It is not wise to relocate only on the basis of better employment opportunities and material advancement. By moving to Sodom, Lot deprived himself of the daily fellowship with his uncle Abraham.

We next read of Sodom when the affluent cities of the plain were targeted by a northern confederacy of nations. In the ensuing battle, many of the army of Sodom and its allies were lost in the slime or bituminous pits of the plain. By the time of this invasion, Lot had further relocated, leaving rural life in the plain to live in Sodom. He was no longer a tent dweller.

As a result of the military success of the northern armies, Lot and his family are carted off as slave labour (Genesis 14:12). On hearing the news, Abraham acts promptly, pursues the army and not only routs them, but rescues Lot and the other captives. The king of Sodom goes out to greet Abraham on his return. King Bera has to acknowledge that Abraham has been successful with a small band of men while he suffered a military defeat! Abraham will not accept any reward from the king of Sodom because he does not wish to be beholden to him, nor cause others to think he has any connection to the king of the licentious city. Abraham knows that he cannot give allegiance to the powerful of this world, because he has covenanted himself to God who...
is “the possessor of heaven and earth,” a far superior power to that of the crowned head of Sodom! (Genesis 14:22). He takes an inflexible position—he will not become a friend of the world (1 John 2:15-17).

It is this clear sighted view of where true power is vested which enables Abraham to believe the amazing promise of God, thereby exhibiting the faith that God so greatly prized (Galatians 15:6; Romans 4:3). When God reassured Abraham concerning the gift of the land to him, He did not mention the Sodomites (Genesis 15:19-21), because their days were numbered. In fact God graciously permits the indigenous people to retain their occupation of the land for the moment, in order to give them full opportunity to respond to Him, perhaps through the teaching and example of Abraham (some were already confederate with Abraham; Genesis 14:13). In His wisdom and all pervading omniscience, God will not judge any people before ‘full-term’ (Genesis 15:16).

But it would not be long before judgment fell upon Sodom.

The Divine Visitors

After visiting Abraham and Sarah concerning the planned birth of Isaac, the visitors prepared to leave the home near Hebron, and Abraham, anxious to retain their company for a little longer, accompanied them part way on their journey (Genesis 18:16). The leader of the little group made the decision to acquaint Abraham with the secondary purpose of their visit. Realising that ultimately all the earth would be blessed in Abraham, and that he had the capacity to exercise the justice of God, the bearer of the Divine Name informs Abraham that they intend to ‘inspect’ the situation in Sodom, because of the faithful entertainments of one of its occupants (Genesis 18:21). Abraham was instantly on the alert—Sodom was where Lot now lived. He watched as two of the angelic visitors made their way. Previously the manifestation of God had always been in connection with the purpose of God as it was in Abraham. There had never been a hint of judgment, although the response to the Abrahamic hope was defined in those who numbered. In fact God graciously permits the number only accounted for the males! Abraham’s concern drove him to press the divine presence to the limit: “I will not destroy it for ten’s sake” (v. 32). But directly after saying this, “the Lord went his way” to Sodom.

The visitors had left Abraham and Sarah in the heat of the day, and arrived in Sodom at evening where they encountered the object of their search “in the gate of Sodom.” The gate was the centre of civil, business and legal activities of the community. Sitting in the gate, indicated that Lot had achieved the position of either a city councillor or a judge. In view of the comments in Genesis 19:9, it seems likely that Lot was now a judge. Perhaps this role gave rise to his earnest prayers because of what he saw and heard (2 Peter 2:8).

At evening, the light quickly fades in this part of the world, and once the sun dips its golden orb behind the Judean hills, darkness quickly envelops the earth. Lot did not particularly recognise the visitors, but since they were arriving late in the day, he assessed that they had been travelling some distance and would need lodgings, before proceeding on their journey next day, so he offered them the customary hospitality. One of the great trading routes from Damascus passed nearby. The men were not initially willing to accept the offer (as they did so readily with Abraham), but Lot who knew the city, pressed his invitation upon them. Perhaps at some point during the meal in his house Lot raised his concerns about the city and the reason for urging his invitation upon them. Maybe he also observed that these were no ordinary travellers or traders.

They had not retired for the night before there was a disturbance. Despite the darkness of the night, there was a planned attempt to violate the sanctity of Lot’s home and to accost the visitors. Men choose the cover of darkness to fulfil their evil deeds (John 3:19). “People from every quarter” of the city arrived to encircle Lot’s house. They demanded that Lot hand over his visitors. The word “know” here is used in the sense of sexual knowledge—the Hebrew word “yada” indicating “to know by experience” (as in Genesis 4:1).

Lot Confronts the Citizens

Lot is not a timid man. Despite the mob baying at his door, their abominable lusts aroused, he left the security of his house, shut the door firmly behind him and confronted them. This was to be his final act in “dwelling among them, seeing and hearing and vexing his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds” (2 Peter 2:8). Why was Lot still in Sodom? Why didn’t he leave? It seems that he was trapped by the love of his family and his hope to influence them in the way of God. The ecclesia of some fifty that Abraham had in mind was no more, won over to the ways of the world, and there is only “righteous Lot.” It is remarkable that Lot was able to maintain his personal integrity in the face of such wickedness. That he was successful in this, is recorded by Peter. Lot was in a daily state of anxiety because of the sin of the city. How do we measure up to this? Or have we become ‘accepting’ that this is the way things are done now? We may object to the depravity and immorality in the world, but we have become desensitised by it. It is placarded before us on suggestive billboards, explicit newspaper and radio reports of various ‘cases’, and obscene public entertainment. The daily viewing of television programmes which portray unfaithfulness, immorality and violence wears away the ethics of its audience. ‘Soft porn’ is marginally acceptable and the most depraved pornography has escalated with modern technology, but also because of the weakness of censorship. A report released in New Zealand in 2005, showed that a study on paedophiles demonstrated that in every case the perpetrators had first been consumers of pornography.

Lot however never lost his sensitivity to the things of God. But Lot is now faced with a dilemma. He makes an offer to the mob outside which is repugnant to us, and surely must have been to him as a father. But he is desperate, and he makes a decision between ‘what is the lesser of two evils.’ Thwarted ambitions in men inflamed with lust leads to violence. As a result, the spirit of Lamech threatened righteous Enoch and so climaxed in the flood (Genesis 4:23, 24; 6:5, 12; Jude 14, 15). Like Lamech, these men are of no disposition to be chided and they threaten Lot personally.

Lot was kept from violence only by the angelic presence. The cries of the howling mob soon turned to despair as they groped around in the darkness with sightless eyes. Their spiritual insight had died long before. Amazingly they weren’t easily diverted from their filthy purpose—they continued to grope for the door! Pulled inside by the hands of the angels, Lot now knew for sure the identity of his guests. His daily prayers had been answered.

The Escape Plan

The decision to destroy Sodom is now confirmed. There is nothing else to do but to get out. “Whatsoever you have in the city, bring them out of this place, for we will destroy this place...the Lord has sent us to destroy it” (v. 13). Lot “went out,” that is, he left his house (doubtless under angelic protection) and went to talk to his sons-in-law and daughters (no sons are mentioned, so it seems Lot had at least four daughters). But his sons-in-law “mocked.” This word is widely used in the sense of laughter, making fun of or even in the case of Samson, making public fun (entertainment). In fact they
sight is made plain. "The Lord is Merciful"

The Lord is Merciful

In the context of the angel's action, the purpose of their visit is made plain. "The Lord being merciful to him..." (v. 16) The mercy of God had waited during the night for him to gather his family, but now He must act swiftly so that perhaps a particular mountain was in mind. Certainly the advice to make for the mountain indicated the angel knew the details of the nature of the destruction. The danger as the angel saw it was that the cataclysm might consume them. But the graciousness of God is infinite. The angel acceded to the request of Lot, who despite being mindful of the grace of God, was so emotionally drained and distraught that he could not travel more than a few kilometres, and permitted him to find refuge in Zoar, at the south eastern end of the Dead Sea.

Run for your Life!

Once out of the city, there was no respite. The voice of the angel urged on the little band, "escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain lest thou be consumed." (v. 17) "Escape to the mountain" and it seems that perhaps a particular mountain was in mind. Certainly the advice to make for the mountain indicated the angel knew the details of the nature of the destruction. The danger as the angel saw it was that the cataclysm might consume them. But the graciousness of God is infinite. The angel acceded to the request of Lot, who despite being mindful of the grace of God, was so emotionally drained and distraught that he could not travel more than a few kilometres, and permitted him to find refuge in Zoar, at the south eastern end of the Dead Sea.

The angels had to act—they "laid hands upon his hand and upon the hand of his wife and upon the hand of his two daughters" (v. 16) and the family were dragged out of Sodom. The rest of his family remained behind because they were enveloped in Sodom's way of life, and therefore were included among those who "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" so "God gave them over." They may not have "done" the evil deeds of Sodom, but they conformed to those that engaged in such activity (Romans 1:28, 32).

Our Escape

God has offered escape from His judgments upon the world for those who place their trust in Him. "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers... hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity..." (Isaiah 26:20,21). Like Lot's family we will also leave behind more than mere possessions; we will leave behind a past way of life, a status, a standing perhaps in the work place, a recognition among neighbours. Our calling away will be like the scene when the angels pressed Lot and his family to leave immediately or else!! As a reminder of the future cataclysmic event of the earthquake to be triggered at the return of the Lord (Zechariah 14:4), Israeli geologists are monitoring the increase in activity of the great fault line of the Jordan Valley Depression. This is the western edge to the Arabian tectonic plate.

Are we prepared to greet the heavenly visitor who will one day appear at our door?

Perhaps we could be better prepared if we packed our little bag now in readiness. It could stay in the hall of our comfortable home, in a prominent place, to remind us of how little we really need in life. The present global financial instability is another sign that all about us is ripe for the harvest. When the focus of our life is set upon the things of God we will have "treasure in heaven" which our Lord will bring with him "to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12). Lot's belongings went up in smoke in the holocaust, the effects of which are foreseen in the judgement of Sodom's destruction. Lot's family was spared, but his wife and his two daughters were not. Lot's wife was not captivated by the promise of God, but she was truly enslaved by the city life of Sodom.

Hillside by the Dead Sea; "...the very earth looks scorched and has lost is fertility."— Tacitus Histories

Such was God's mercy, that the judgments were minimised to save Lot, "I will not overthor this city for the whom thou hast spoken" (Genesis 19:21). This took some fine tuning on the part of the divine Judge, for Zoar was only some fifteen kilometres or so from the main cities of the plain which were annihilated. Though Zoar was kept intact, it would have experienced the tremendous earth movements when the plain was dramatically lowered after the explosion and combustion of the subterranean oil deposits. When the dense smoke dissipated, Zoar would probably have found itself a couple of kilometres from the new shore of the extended Dead Sea.

But the grace of God did not stop with this concession. God would not act until Lot was safe! "I cannot do anything until thou be come thither." The prayer of Abraham would be answered, as well as the prayer of faithful Lot (2 Peter 2:7-9; Genesis 18:20-23), "for the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations..."

Remember Lot's Wife!

But Lot lost his wife. She lingered, broke free of the angel's urging hand, and "looked back." This is not a curios, cursory glance. The meaning of this word in the Hebrew indicates a more intent, implying a regarding with pleasure, favour or care. It is translated "consider" in Psalm 13:3, "look" in many places (such as Isaiah 51:12) where a searching enquiry is implied, and "behold" (such as in Lamentations 1:12 regarding the suffering servant). It is notable that the first time the word is used is in connection with God instructing Abraham to "Look now toward heaven..." (Genesis 15:5). His consequent acceptance of God's promise ratified Abraham's absolute faith. The last time the word is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, is in Zechariah 12:10, where Israel finally recognises their Lord and will "look upon me whom they have pierced." Lot's wife was not captivated by the promise of God, but she was truly enslaved by the city life of Sodom.
what comforting words of God through the pen of the prophet Ezekiel:

“For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen (Ezekiel 20:40, 41).

We see Israel regathered out of many countries, but the prophets make it clear that there is to be one last defeat by their enemies, and it will be the returned Lord Jesus with his immortalised followers who will come to save Israel in their hour of great trouble. The Jews who are still in the land of Israel at that time will turn to their Messiah in great repentance of their past blindness. With Jesus as their King and Guide, then the words we have quoted will have their final fulfilment. The long task of returning all the Jews from around the world will commence and end when all nations submit to the reign of Israel’s King.

The eyes of the world have been on Israel once more as the new American President, Barack Obama, tries to bring the Palestinians and Israelis together for peace talks. Like many of his expectations, they have proved unobtainable in the grim reality of politics. He ran in opposition to the policies of George Bush, but now finds that he has had to re-think his plans when faced with the stubborn realities on the ground.

Obama’s foreign policy is how consistent it is with the policies of former President George W. Bush. This is not surprising. Presidents operate in the world of constraints; their options are limited. All presidents run on a platform that will win. If they are good presidents, they will leave behind these promises to govern as they must. This is what Obama has done. He ran for president as the antithesis of Bush. He has conducted his foreign policy as if he were Bush. This is because Bush’s foreign policy was shaped by necessity, and Obama’s foreign policy is shaped by the same necessity. Presidents who believe they can govern independent of reality are failures. Obama doesn’t intend to fail.”

So although it appeared that Obama was not going to play the traditional role of Israel’s great friend, events may well overtake his initial policies and cause him to change his position. Obama had hoped that he could persuade Israel to stop all building work on the West Bank in return for Israel’s Arab neighbours making concessions to Israel.

This was something that Israel is not willing to commit to, especially as they are highly sceptical of the Palestinian’s intentions to actually recognise Israel’s right to exist. This whole policy backfired when the Palestinian and Arab response was that they could sit back and do nothing until America had succeeded in actually stopping all building expansion, not only in the West Bank, but in Jerusalem too.

So the American shuttle diplomacy seems to have got nowhere. The hoped for break-through tripartite talks between Obama, Netanyahu and Abbas at the UN Assembly in New York on Sept 22nd turned out to be not much more than an empty photo opportunity, although there is talk that both sides are prepared to start talks in October without preconditions. We shall see!

However, there has been progress on the ground. Netanyahu has been taking active steps to reward the Palestinians in the West Bank by lifting obstacles to economic growth, in contrast to the heavy sanctions imposed on the Palestinians in Gaza. He is hoping that the citizens of Gaza will rise against their Hamas leaders in realisation that militancy only brings hardship and deprivation.

Significant improvement in Israel-PA Security Relations

That was the headline from a BICOM article (4-9-09).

“Israeli officials are currently very encouraged by the level and depth of security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank. A report in Haaretz described a ‘silent revolution’ which has taken place in this area over the last year. Officials note that West Bank cities remained calm last week despite the death of a Palestinian boy who was throwing firebombs at Israeli forces. “PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, according to Israeli sources, have lowered levels of incitement against Israel in official media and tightened control over their security forces. The PA attitude derives, ultimately, from a recognition that unless a determined stance against Hamas was taken, the PA was in real danger of being eclipsed by the Palestinian Islamists. The presence of around 2,100 US-trained Palestinian security officers in Palestinian cities has played a crucial role in the PA’s successful campaign to contain and roll back Hamas in the West Bank Israeli “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s plan for ‘economic peace’ with the Palestinians continues to develop amid reports of economic growth in the West Bank as a result of the removal of roadblocks and the improved performance of Palestinian Authority security forces, which has finally brought law and order to the “wild” West Bank. Many Israeli Arabs have travelled to the West Bank to visit relatives and shop, and physical and bureaucratic barriers to Israeli Arab investments in Palestinian businesses and the movement of goods have come down. “All these goods come from China, through Israeli ports in Haifa and Ashdod,” says Ahmed Hani, a shop owner in Nablus. ’Lately it has been much easier to get the cargoes through.’ President Shimon Peres recently told a visiting delegation of US Congressman that the West Bank ‘is growing economically, enjoying greater freedom than ever before, and it is all happening even before we have signed a peace agreement.’”
The Palestinians are Flourishing Economically. Unless they live in Gaza

Imagine an annual economic growth rate of 7%, declining unemployment, a thriving tourism industry, and a 24% hike in the average daily wage. Where in today’s gloomy global market could one find such gleaming forecasts? Singapore? Brazil? Guess again. The West Bank.

“According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the West Bank economy is flourishing. Devastated by the violence and corruption fomented by its former leadership, the West Bank has rebounded and today represents a most promising success story. Among the improvements of the last year cited by the IMF and other financial observers are an 18% increase in the local stock exchange, a 94% growth in tourism to Bethlehem—generating 6,000 new jobs—and an 82% rise in trade with Israel.

“Since 2008, more than 2,000 new companies have been registered with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Where heavy fighting once raged, there are now state-of-the-art shopping malls” (Wall Street Journal 13-8-09).

Here are some other recent headlines: Israel-PA relations have never been so good (Haaretz 6-9-09); Palestinian women knit Jewish skullcaps (Reuters 23-8-09); As Violence Subsidies, Concrete Pours in West Bank (VOA 30-6-09). This last was an account by an American reporter in Jenin—which a few years ago was a hot-bed of terrorism. Now the peace dividend has brought its rewards as posh shopping malls enable local Palestinians to get what they want instead of having to travel to Jordan. Here is a brief extract of the writer’s watching of a Palestinian lady in traditional garb doing her shopping:

“She browses through a glitzy showroom boasting European and American brands in a scene that might appear to be a shopping mall in Dubai, Qatar, or New York. In fact, it is Jenin, in the West Bank.”

One irony about the Palestinian demand for a freeze on Israeli building on the West Bank is that this building work gives employment to many Palestinians!

“PA officials have estimated that as many as 12,000 Palestinians are employed by Arab and Jewish contractors building homes and businesses in Jewish settlements in the West Bank (ICEJ 26-06).

The Security Barrier

One outcome following the dramatic fall in terrorist attacks from the West Bank is that Israel has virtually ceased construction work on this project for the past eighteen months. They had concentrated building in the most troublesome areas and its effectiveness soon became apparent. Although the pictures one will see in the press will inevitably show a section of towering concrete, it is good to be reminded that less than 5% of the barrier is a concrete wall, the vast majority is fencing. The only reason for the concrete was to stop the ability to fire on passing motorists on the other side of the barrier. So far 490km has been constructed out of a total planned of 805km. This year many of the earth road blocks and some 140 security check points have been removed, lowering tensions and easing travel. The Allenby Bridge—one of the main crossing points to Jordan—is now operating 24 hours a day to ease congestion. Israel has handed over to Palestinian control four main Palestinian towns.

“As of today, Palestinian security forces will be able to operate freely in the cities of Kalkiliya, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jericho,’ an Israeli military official said yesterday, while adding that Israeli troops would be able to operate in those cities ‘in cases of urgent security need.’ PA forces loyal to Abbas are expected to move in to assume security duties in the four PA-ruled cities” (ICEJ 26-09).

Israel ‘Super Gas’ Field is World’s Largest

In the Spring issue we reported on a massive gas find in Israeli territorial waters in the Mediterranean. Since then the estimated reserves have steadily increased.

“The Tamar gas field, 50 miles off the Haifa coast, keeps getting bigger with every report, and the gas discovery now is estimated to be the world’s largest. The Scotland-based Wood Mackenzie research and consulting firm assessed the value of the field at $8 billion, approximately double that of local analysts. Changing gas prices could make the gas worth anywhere between $3.5-$17 billion in the future, and partners in the offshore project are preparing for the first deliveries of gas in 2012. An era in which Israel will be more self-sufficient in energy needs also will help make the shekel more attractive. Cheaper foreign currencies will help lower the price of imports for consumers but could cause further problems for the exporters, whose profits are dented after income in dollars and euros is exchanged for shekels” (A7 News 26-8-09).

Can we not see the seeds for the situation described in Ezekiel chapter 38 for Israel to be rich and a desirable spoil to Russia? Russia is striving to keep as much of the world’s energy under her control. If Israel has huge reserves of gas and maybe oil, as this next report hints, then Russia will be itching to get her hands on it when the time comes right.

Gas Bonanza Investors Ready to Dive in Dead Sea for Black Gold

“An oil drilling consortium which includes companies that found billions of dollars in natural gas off the Haifa coast will begin in October to look for black gold in an area along the Dead Sea, according to Delek Group chief executive officer Yitzchak Tshuva. “Investors’ hopes of finding oil in Israel are based on seismic surveys that estimate that Dead Sea oil reserves are worth nearly half a billion dollars” (A7 News 10-Sept-09).

Growth in Israel this year Expected to Exceed all other Developed Countries

Israel has not been unaffected by the financial crisis. Exports are down and many Israelis have lost their jobs. However the prospects are good as this headline from the MidEast News Line (3-9-09) indicates.

“According to statistics released by the Bank of Israel, the projected growth for the Israeli economy is expected to be about 0% in 2009 and 2.5% in 2010. This projection puts Israel as the only country in the developed world not to have had negative growth in 2009. Reportedly, Israel ranks sixth in global economic growth among the world’s top 45 countries. The concern now is that the growth will spark increased interest rates; with some saying it could reach 3% by next summer. Last week, Israel became the first Western nation to raise its interest rates from 0.25% to 0.75%.”

Zero growth does not seem much to boast about until one considers everyone else is in negative growth, some countries markedly so! An earlier headline also pointed to Israel’s sound position.

Israel Leads the World Coming Out of Recession

“The Israeli economy grew by one percent annually in the second quarter, making the Jewish State one of the first countries in the world to come out of the global recession. Analysts were surprised by the statistics, which were released Sunday. They had expected the economy to show no growth until the next quarter, following negative growth in the fourth quarter of last year and the first three months of this year” (A7 News 17-8-09).

Three recent, related, articles were relevant:. The first was the annual publishing of the population figures at the Jewish Year end.

Israel on eve of Rosh Hoshanah: Population Hits 7.5m, 75.4% Jewish

“There are now 7,465,000 people living in Israel, the central bureau of statistics reported on Wednesday.
“The study, released ahead of the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, find that 75.4 percent of the population is Jewish, 20.6 percent are Arab, and the rest are identified as others” (Haaretz 16/09/2009).

The next was the remarkable story of the numerous offspring of a Jewess who had just died aged 99. It showed just how quickly the earth could have been populated before the Flood and also the rapid expansion of the Israelites into a nation from Jacob’s twelve sons.

Jerusalem Woman leaves behind 1,400 Descendants

“Rachel Krishevsky lived most of her life near Jerusalem’s Mahane Yehudah open air market. She and her husband, who were married in 1929, took seriously the biblical commandment to ‘be fruitful and multiply,’ and had 11 children.

“Krishevsky instilled in her own children that same duty to lovingly raise as many children as possible, and each of them were blessed with large families, totaling more than 150 grandchildren for the couple.

“Those grandchildren went on to have some 1,000 offspring, who in turn have provided at least several hundred great-great-grandchildren.

“Family members said they were not sure exactly how many direct descendants Rachel had, but noted with pride that she had remained close to all of them up until the end of her life” (Israel Today 21-9-09).

The third item indicated that genetic testing had found that many Palestinian Arabs were of Jewish descent!

Arabs of Jewish Descent in Israel

“‘It turns out that a large part of the Arabs of the Land of Israel are actually descendants of forced converts to Islam over the years,’ says Rabbi Dov Stein of the nascent Sanhedrin rabbinical council. ‘There are some studies that say that 85 percent of the Arabs in Israel are descended from Jews; others say there are fewer.’” (A7 News 10-8-09).

Obviously true Arabs will be descended from Abraham, and therefore will have a close genetic link. This research linked these Arabs to a descent from those Jews who escaped the AD 70 and AD 150 destructions of Jerusalem, but who had been forcibly converted to Islam. The researcher found many interesting links in certain Jewish customs being practiced by these families.

We turn to matters in Europe and Russia

A question which has been of interest to Bible students is of who will be Gog, the leader of the great confederation that will sweep down against Israel as detailed in Ezekiel chapter 38? It is not a question we can positively identify before hand, especially bearing in mind that the Lord Jesus will have returned to his household before this time of trouble for Israel. Whoever Gog is he is linked to the land of Magog, as well as prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.

Son of Man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophecy against him…” (Ezek. 38:2 NKJ).

Milestones readers will know we have traced the rise of one of the contenders as an heir to the Romanov throne, whose father was a German prince (i.e. a link to Magog) and his Russian mother a descendant of the Romanov’s. Recently there was news of the interest still in Russia in the restoration of the monarchy.

Unlikely union of views of Russian Government and Opposition—“Monarchy May be what we Need”

“One of the prominent Russian politicians recently disclosed that the Kremlin Administration is considering reinstatement of Monarchy (constitutional Monarchy) in Russia, akin to the British model. The Russian Government believes that the Monarch could be the person who would be able to unify the country and serve as an important symbol in troublesome times.

“Now, it appears that the Opposition has much the same views.

“It can now be revealed that during the recent conference of the Russian opposition (named ‘Russia after Putin’), leaders of the opposition were discussing the possibility of a Monarchy in Russia. The conference, which took place in July, was attended by all prominent opposition leaders, among them Garry Kasparov, Boris Nemtsov and Vladimir Milov” (Theroyalforums.com 3-8-09).

2013 is the 400th anniversary of the start of the Romanov dynasty, which would be a suitable occasion for such restitution. George Mikhailovich would then be 31. His claim to the throne is disputed by other Romanov’s but it would appear the Russian Orthodox Church recognises this claim, which gives it strength. Other Russian news which is very significant is of the progress that the new Russian Orthodox Patriarch is making. Kyrill was elected on Jan 27 and enthroned in a glittering ceremony on Feb 1st 2009, attended by Putin and Medvedev. He had been very active in promoting the church not only in Russia but in Europe where many of the newer EU countries have an Orthodox population. In Russia, church and state work happily together, unlike Europe where since the French revolution they have been kept apart, though this is now shifting. His fist overseas trip was to Constantinople in July.

Kyrill in Constantinople, a Turning Point Important also for the Dialogue with Rome

“For his first foreign trip since his election Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow, picked Constantinople. His visit was dominated by a desire among Orthodox to consolidate the spirit of a new journey together, a process which began back in October at the pan-Orthodox meeting in Geneva. Only a united Church can meet the challenges of today’s world” (Asia News 7-7-09).

Then came two headlines—the second quite startling—during a visit to Rome in September of Archbishop Hilarion who has taken over Kyrill’s previous job as chairman of the External Church Relations Department.

Orthodox visit to Rome showcases Improving Relations

“The Russian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches have improved relations under Pope Benedict XVI, and in a sign of a growing closeness, the Vatican announced today that Archbishop Hilarion, the Russian Orthodox head of External Church Affairs, is paying his first visit to Rome.

“Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk is visiting Rome at the invitation of Cardinal Walter Kasper, the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. His trip began today and will last until September 20.

“’In the wake of the many meetings and conversations with the Patriarch in the past,’ says a statement issued by the Council for Christian Unity, ’this visit will confirm the ties of friendship between the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, on the solid basis of mutual understanding and respect, with a view to closer collaboration and to favor the presence of the Church in the lives of the peoples of Europe and the world’” (Catholic News Agency 15-9-09).

Is Catholic-Orthodox Unity in Sight?

“The Catholic Archbishop of Moscow has given a remarkably upbeat assessment of relations with the Orthodox Church, saying unity between Catholics and Orthodox could be achieved ‘within a few months.’

“In an interview today in Italy’s Corriere della Sera newspaper, Archbishop Paolo Pezzi said the miracle of reunification ‘is possible, indeed it has never been so close.’

“The archbishop added that Catholic-Orthodox reunification, the end of the historic schism that has divided them for a millennium, and spiritual communion between the two churches ‘could happen soon, also within a
few months.

“Prospects for union with the Orthodox have increased markedly in recent years with the election of Pope Benedict XVI, whose work as a theologian is greatly admired in Orthodox circles. Benedict is also without the burden of the difficult political history between Poland and Russia, which hindered Polish Pope John Paul II from making as much progress as he would have liked regarding Catholic-Orthodox unity.

“Relations have also been greatly helped by the election of Patriarch Kyrill I earlier this year as leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, which is by far the largest of the national churches in the Orthodox Church. As the former head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s department for external relations, Kyrill met Benedict on several occasions before and after he became Pope, and the Russian Orthodox Patriarch is well acquainted with the Roman Curia and with Catholicism” (National Catholic Register 14-9-09).

We await developments. To be realistic it is unlikely to happen that quickly, but we rejoice to see such indications that this is a growing trend. We have long looked for the 1000 year division to be healed and, under a Vatican headship, for the churches to work with their political leaders to eventually bring about the standing up of Nebuchadnezzar’s image with its religious eyes and mouth in the golden head that will lead the Kingdom of men to its destruction on the mountains of Israel. Here will commence the long process of grinding it to powder and dispersing it as chaff to the winds of heaven (Daniel 2:31-35).

We have seen the other side of this in the growing rapprochement of Germany and Russia. How fascinating that both the binding of the churches and of the political powers is taking place before our eyes! Two significant events will take place before this issue is in most reader’s hands. The German elections commence on September 27th. Will Merkel hang on to her lead or will Steinmeier emerge the winner? German elections usually need a period of seeing who can form a partnership with other parties to form a majority government. Either result will lead to closer ties to Russia. The other event is the re-run of the “failed” Irish referendum on Oct 2nd. The Irish rejected accepting the Lisbon Treaty last year, which caused consternation amongst the EU as it has to be agreed by all 27 members. Undaunted the EU insisted that they should hold another referendum in order to get it approved! The Vatican has thrown its weight behind a Yes vote as this enlightening article shows.

Catholic Register

Under this headline was an article written by the former Taoiseach John Bruton for the Irish Catholic (3-9-09).

“I would like to look at the Treaty from a Catholic point of view—from the point of view of values and the institutional position of the Church.

“The best place to start is with what the Catholic Church said it wanted before the drafting of the Treaty started. On May 22, 2002, the Catholic Bishops of the European Union made six recommendations for inclusion in the Treaty. These were:

A Treaty guarantee of respect for the status of Churches
A recognition of the religious heritage of Europe
A recognition of the principle of subsidiarity
That the pursuit of the common good be one of the core principles of the Union
The recognition of fundamental rights, including religious freedom in its individual, collective institutional dimensions, and
An invocation of God in the Treaty

“Five of the six recommendations of the bishops were accepted and are now incorporated in the Lisbon Treaty. The sixth, an explicit invocation of God, for which I worked hard myself in the Convention, has not been accepted. But, in any negotiation, winning five of the six points one seeks, is a reasonable record.

“I know from discussions I participated in the Praesidium of the Convention that the Vatican lobbied very strongly indeed to get this language into an EU Treaty, and regarded it as of paramount importance. If the Lisbon Treaty fails, that goal will be lost” (My emphasis DFP).

The Bishop of Ireland has thrown his weight behind a yes vote. If they do accept then all eyes will look to the Czech’s Republic.

Czech Republic ‘Planning to delay Signing Lisbon Treaty’

They still have to formally adopt it and the above headline from The Times (21-9-09) was that they were planning to delay signing, much to the fury of French President Sarkozy and his fellow leaders. What they greatly fear is the Treaty not being ratified by all members before the UK elections which are expected in May 2010. Should the Conservatives come to power and if the Treaty matter is not settled, then they have promised a British referendum on the matter, which few expect to result in a Yes vote.

Are the wheels about to come off the EU bus? Time will tell. Plan B is for an inner core of countries—mainly the earlier EU (EEC) members such as Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands etc to press ahead with political union.

It is significant that America seems to be withdrawing slowly from Europe. Obama had followed up Bush’s plans to site missile defences in Poland and their radar systems in the Czech Republic, much to Russia’s fury. She regards these countries as still part of her back-yard and the thought of American forces operating such defences which could so easily be used against a future threat from Russia was a step too far for Putin and Medvedev.

Obama plans to Replace E. European Missile Shield with a New System in Israel, Azerbaijan

Obama suddenly announced on September 16th that these plans were not being pursued, and defences would be placed in Turkey, Israel, and Azerbaijan and on her naval ships in the Mediterranean and the Indian Oceans. Poland and the Czechs were not happy at this news; they had seen this as a means of having assured American support if Russia ever again threatened their territory. But why this change of plan on Obama’s part?

There are possible links to two strange incidents that took place shortly before this unexpected announcement.

One was the mysterious “hijacking” of a Russian ship, the Arctic Sea, whilst carrying a cargo of timber destined for Algeria, as it passed the coast of Sweden on 24th July. Allegedly no one knew where the ship was after this “hijacking” until the Russians intercepted the ship off the coast of Africa two weeks later and arrested the “hijackers” and “released” the crew. The other incident was the mysterious disappearance of Mr Netanyahu for about 14 hours on September 7th.

Israel’s Mossad is reported to have organised the hijacking of the ship in order to prevent it reaching its destination, giving the Russians a face-saving way out by getting them to mount a “rescue” mission. Whatever the true facts turn out to be, Israel is fearful of such weapons falling into the hands of the Iranians. It would make their task of destroying any Iranian nuclear sites much harder. President Peres immediately following the “arrest” of the ship went to Moscow. This was followed up by Mr Netanyahu—he had disappeared to Moscow for urgent talks with Putin and Medvedev. Israel needs Russia’s cooperation to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear power. Time will tell.

We bring our survey to a close with a further picture from Ezekiel, who was shown that the wicked king Zedekiah who was on the throne at the time, would be removed, laying vacant the office of a king to sit on David’s throne

“Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him” (Ezek. 21:26, 27).

How we pray for the coming of the right occupant of David’s throne, to bring peace and righteousness to this troubled world. What a wonderfully sure hope we have!
arly in the morning of September 14th, Jews in Israel assembled at the Western wall in order to celebrate the Creation, which they say occurred in 3,761 B.C. On that day—the 25th of the Hebrew month Elul—“the creation of existence, time, matter, darkness and light” took place, said a report on the celebration. According to these Jews, all this was 5,769 years ago. The first man (Adam) and the first woman (Eve) were created on the sixth day—celebrated by the Jews as Rosh HaShanah (the New Year).

The Irish Bishop Ussher (1581-1656) who was contemporary with the publication of the King James Authorized Bible in 1611, calculated that the creation took place in October, 4004 B.C. That is now about 6,012 years ago.

John Thomas, whose name will be well known to Bible Magazine readers, published his Chronikon Hebraikon in 1865, and arrived at a creation date of B.C. 4089.

Now if the complicated task of deciphering Biblical chronology produces a difference of some 325 years or so—and a rather smug smile from sceptics—perhaps the Biblical chronologist may be permitted a look of amazement on his face when geological experts offer results that vary by many billions of years! Whereas the Bible provides a chronology and gives us the ages of people—some facts to work with—the evolutionist offers only a wild guess!

John Joly in 1899 concluded that the earth was 100 million years old. In 1905-1910 it was said to be 6 to 700 million years old. Today it is being claimed that the earth is 4-6 billion years old.

As Ian Taylor has pointed out In the Minds of Men (1987): “Engel, writing in 1969, showed that the textbook age of the earth has increased by a factor of almost one hundred since 1900, the accepted “age” then being 50 million years, while today it is claimed to be 4.6 billion, that is, 4.6 thousand, million years.”

It has to be said that whichever chronology is accepted, it is accepted as a principle of belief—whether in the Bible as the revealed word of God, or in scientific theory as produced by the human mind. As Professor E.T.Hall, Director of the Research Laboratory for archaeology in Oxford explained in 1974, “...the pronouncements of science backed up by incomprehensible tables of data, tend to acquire a spurious infallibility for the layman or for quasiscientists like archaeologists. They believe because they want to believe.”

The position taken in this present article is one in which the Bible is the authority. The key word is power—the power of the word of God. The Bible is quite able to defend itself against the claims of so-called evolution. Scripture is a rock (not a fossil), and study will show that science has no answer to what the Bible teaches us.

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The Bible or Science

The position taken in this present article is one in which the Bible is the authority. The key word is power—the power of the word of God. The Bible is quite able to defend itself against the claims of so-called evolution. Scripture is a rock (not a fossil), and study will show that science has no answer to what the Bible teaches us.

Human beings are fallible, and as Biblical chronologists have shown us, even the most capable and the most sincere are bound to make errors. But we are as fallible as the chronologists themselves, and cannot experimentally prove which were wrong or whether any were right. The actual date of
creation is something that must yet be shown. As the Lord said to Job:
“Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38:3-4).

Science involves the search for truth, and that search is not easy. Methods include investigation, comparisons, analysis and discovery. A project may begin with a theory (an educated guess) but goes on to collect facts. In the search for the truth, all the facts must be brought together. There has to be honesty and integrity in the work—all the facts must be taken into account, and not only those that favour the theory that a scientist may have published, and upon which he thinks his professional reputation depends. He cannot choose those facts which lead to a popular conclusion, and ignore those that may be producing a distasteful result.

Honesty has not always been the priority that it should be in the field of archaeology. The so-called Piltdown Man “discovered” by Charles Dawson between 1908 and 1912 is a classic case of fraud. That hoax deceived the world for some 40 years (until it was exposed in the 1950’s), and had been given a credibility boost by the Jesuit priest and paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin.

Other facts are largely ignored or played down when they do not give support to the popular theories of uniformitarian geology. The eruption of the Isle of Surtsey on November 13th 1963 is a case in point.

“...a whole island had been created, and an extensive area of land had been formed from the primary rock. From the depths of the ocean there had been built up a broad base, on the top of which was an island with mountains and...
craters, lava flows, cliffs, gentle slopes, flat sandy beaches and withered coastal strips with worn, rounded pebbles and boulder rims that gave the landscape an ancient appearance” (Sturla Fridriksson, Surtsey 1975).

The appearance of Surtsey did not give rise to a thorough revision of geological theories as it should have done—and neither did the absence of dust on the moon when Apollo’s lunar module landed in July 1969 cause a re-think on the estimates that had been postulated earlier, as to the amounts of dust that would have been accumulated over billions of years. Where was it?

Science can be perverted sometimes in order to hide the Truth. The Bible on the other hand is an open book.

**Six Days Creation**

There is no doubt as to what the Bible teaches. And it does so in plain language that anyone can understand:

“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:11).

There are three possible positions. First, if all things (life) evolved by chance from nothing over millions or billions of years, then Exodus 20:11 is false.

The second possible position is so-called Theistic evolution: the belief in a Creator guiding a process of gradual development over long periods of time, as is now widely believe in the Christian world. In this case, Genesis chapters 1 and 2 must be seen as a vision or as an allegory.

The third position is that of true creation: that is an immediate, instant act of God. This is what we might compare to a miracle, such as feeding 5,000 people. In this case both Genesis 1 and 2, as well as Exodus 20:11 have to be understood literally.

The first position—everything evolving from nothing—is pure foolishness and need not take our time and space here. “Shall the work say of him that made it He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He hath no understanding?... Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?” (Isaiah 29:16; 45:9). If “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14:1) what shall be said of the man who declares it out loud?

So this brings us to the second position: Evolution, guided and controlled by God; Theistic evolution with its allegorical interpretation of Genesis. The basic idea has been known to Christendom for many centuries. In describing the early development of the Church, Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall* comments on the beliefs of the Gnostics: “The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man was treated with profane derision by the Gnostics, who would not listen with patience to the repose of the Deity after six days’ labour, to the rib of Adam, the garden of Eden, the trees of life and of knowledge, the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the condemnation pronounced against human kind for the venial offence of their first progenitors ... Acknowledging that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reaon, they deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the Mosaic dispensation.”

It was hardly a surprise then when the late pope John-Paul announced that evolution “is more than just a theory” (October 1996). That position must logically and inevitably lead to an interpretation of Genesis which suggests some form of allegory. Benedict XVI in his book *Creation and Evolution* (2007) covered the issue by a smokescreen, saying that scientific and philosophical reason must work together. Benedict, while saying that the theory of evolution cannot be finally proven, stopped short of endorsing intelligent design, such as is taught in the book by the Catholic author Michael Behe, entitled *Darwin’s Black Box*. But all this is a very long way off from Exodus 20:11 and six days

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**THE BIBLE MAGAZINE Vol. 22 ISSUE No.4**
How Long is One Day?

A note in The Companion Bible in explaining the word “day” in Genesis 1, has this to say: “The word “day”, when used without any limiting words, may refer to a long or prolonged period; as the “day of grace”, the “day of visitation”, the “day of judgment”, the “day of the Lord”, “man’s day”, &c. But when the word “day” is used with a numeral (cardinal or ordinal), as one, two, three, &c., or first, second, third, &c., “evening and morning” (Gen. 1), or the “seventh day” (Ex. 20:9, 11, &c.), it is defined, limited, and restricted to an ordinary day of twenty-four hours.”

The “days” of Genesis chapter 1 naturally read as literal days and are defined each time as evening-morning days. The very repetition of this definition conveys the sense in which it is to be understood.

At least one day was literal—the seventh day, Adam was alive all day! It was a day in human terms—and so the others were like it. The context of Exodus 20:8-11 makes this clear:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy maidservant, nor thy male-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

The only possible reason to explain these days as figurative in some way, is so that the Bible may be compromised with the science (falsely so called) of the world.

We are asked to believe these things which God has caused to be written, for as Jesus said: “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (John 5:46-47).

It was in his book Elpis Israel that John Thomas made this point in referring to the duration of the creation days:

“The six creation-days were each as long as the seventh, whose duration is defined by the Mosaic law; and consequently the geological notion of their being six several periods of many centuries each, falls to the ground as a mere conceit of infidel philosophy.”

The Fourth Day

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faleth” (Isa. 45:12).

The word “created” in this quotation from Isaiah 40:26, is the same Hebrew word as appears in Genesis 1:1 and carries the meaning “To cut, to carve out, to form by cutting” (Gesenius). It means to create, to produce, to fashion something. In Genesis 1:16 a different word is used—asah, translated “made”—and carries a similar but broader meaning. The idea is “to labour, to work about any thing... to make, produce, labour, appoint,” says Gesenius.

The sense of Genesis 1:14-19 is that this was the work of the fourth day. The existence of light was however introduced on the first day (verse 3), so we may conclude that an order of appearance is being described from a viewpoint on earth. That be as it may, the power in this act of creation is impressed upon us:

“I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded” (Isa. 45:12).

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 9).

The Sixth Day

The work of the sixth day, as described in Genesis (1:24-28 and chapter 2:7 and verse 19) is a direct contradiction of any evolutionary development. We are told that the animals were formed (Yatsar: moulded into a form, as a potter—Strong) “out of the ground.” This is a plain and clear statement that we can all understand. Elements were taken out of the ground (Adamah: soil, earth) and formed into the various beasts and birds (Genesis 2:19). It is difficult to see how you could have a more obvious refutation of the evolutionary theory than this!

Man was formed in exactly the same way (chapter 2:7). Ecclesiastes 3:18-20 confirms the record:

“I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men...”
again?”

Adam was formed directly out of the ground, whereas we are born of a woman. Yet the elements which make up our mortal bodies are all derived from the ground. As the saying goes “You are what you eat.” Such is our physical constitution; and this is in harmony with the Genesis account of the origin of species, and of man, who came into being as the result of creative acts on the sixth day.

Why invent some other story? Why make the sixth day into something else? Why deny the work of God who says:

“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me” (Jer. 27:5).

Not a Scientific Text-Book

The Bible, written and compiled in the ancient world—and obviously intended for people living thousands of years ago, just as much as for us today—cannot be expected to provide us with information that even a modern scientific genius would not be able to comprehend. The Bible was provided for ordinary simple people in order to make them wise unto salvation through “faith.”

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Cor. 1:26-27).

It was in a prayer of thanksgiving that Jesus said: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matt. 11:25-26). See also Luke 10:21. It must be clear to us surely, that the Scripture must be taken as read; exceptions are clear and obvious. This was explained by Robert Roberts many years ago in his book Christendom Astray. The following are a few extracts from his first chapter.

“It ought to be easy to maintain that, with certain qualifications, the Bible means what it says. And it is so. This emphasis of a very simple and obvious truth may seem superfluous, but it is rendered necessary by the prevalence of a theory which practically neutralizes this truth as applied to the Bible. By this theory, it is supposed and assumed that the Bible is not to be understood by the ordinary rules of speech, but is couched in language used in a non-natural sense, which has to be construed, and rendered, and interpreted in a skilled manner…”

“Now with regard to the Bible, it will be found that in the main, this is the character of its composition. As a revelation to human beings, it is a revelation in human language. It is not a revelation of words but of ideas, and hence everything in its language is subordinated to the purpose of imparting the ideas. The peculiarities of human speech are conformed to in the various particulars already mentioned. “Metaphors, for example…”

“The literal is the basis; the elementary principles of divine truth are communicated literally; its recondite aspects are elaborated and illustrated metaphorically and symbolically. The one is the step to the other. No one is able to understand the symbolical who is unacquainted with the literal; and no one can understand the literal who goes to the Scriptures with his eyes blinded by the veil which the “spiritualizing” process has cast over the eyes of the people.”

If we want the Truth, as this has been revealed in the word of God, we cannot allegorize, spiritualize or dismiss as poetic, those literal passages that we find (like the Gnostics) “repugnant.”

Basis for Character Formation

Those people who cannot believe in the creation record, or in the Genesis Flood when “the mountains were covered” (7:19-20), so that “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Peter 3:5-6); and cannot believe that “the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day” (Joshua 10:13), or in the reversing shadow on the dial of Ahaz (2 Kings 20:11 and Isaiah 38)—will certainly have difficulty in believing that animals talked to humans!

The serpent of Genesis 3:1 was a “beast of the field which the LORD God had made,” and was therefore designed by God of His overall purpose. This beast provided a means whereby faith might be tried, and the man and woman put to the test as part of their character development. God, who knows the end from the beginning, knew that there would be failure of course—just as He knew that Israel would fail to keep His laws. But He spared them so that they might learn by experience, and be spared the punishment. But there is a hidden value in the experience of failure, and it is helpful to understand that.

If we read Genesis chapter one carefully, it will be seen that the man and woman that God had made were “very good” in the same sense as God, and this provides a basis for character formation. Man realizes his need and utter dependence upon God, and this provides a basis for character formation. Man realizes his need and utter dependence upon God, and this provides a basis for character formation. He is saved by faith. This is the value in failure.

It brings confession and humility before God, and this provides a basis for character formation. If we read Genesis chapter one carefully, it will be seen that the man and woman that God had made were “very good” in the same sense as
EDITORIAL

The Rise of Islam & a Future “Day of Midian”

Within five to seven years, says a recent report, Islam will be the dominant religion in the world. Today there is said to be over 50 million Moslems in Europe, and it is estimated that in 20 years time this will have increased to 104 million.

In the United Kingdom there were 82,000 Moslems living there 30 years ago (1980), today there are said to be 2.5 million. In the United States there were 100,000 there in 1970, now there are over 9 million.

The Catholic newspaper L’Osservatore Romano reported in March of 2008 that Islam has now surpassed Roman Catholicism as the world’s largest religion.

On the basis of such figures (supplied to the United Nations by Islamic sources) it is predicted that the world’s cultural character will have irreversibly changed within the decade or so.

There is no reason to doubt that the published data is more or less correct, but what does it mean when placed alongside Bible prophecy? Some have been tempted to re-interpret prophecy—and some have done so, rejecting the conclusions that were reached over 150 years ago.

According to the tried and tested interpretations of the prophetic word, Europe is to become a Catholic/socialist confederation of nations—not an Islamic Republic. The Vatican with its papal head is to be the spiritual leader of the Babylonian system detailed in Revelation chapters 17 and 18, as has been explained in this magazine over several years.

The experience of past history shows that the Vatican will try to absorb Islam through a process of dialogue (which is what she did with the Communist ideology), and if that fails, she will look for protection from a champion—historically Charles Martel and then Charlemagne, establishing the Holy Roman Empire and pushing back Islam. Today, we know from prophecy that the new champion will arise from “the land of Magog” (a Russo-German alliance dominating all Europe). We can look for the day when a “Christian” Russia becomes a Catholic/socialist confederacy of nations such as Britain and the United States?

The Biblical Protestantism of the Anglo-American world has been so weakened, that the religions of Rome and Islam have been able to fill the vacuum created. The recently announced papal visit to Britain should be seen in this context, as the two religions (Roman and Islamic) compete with each other for dominion.

The need (greed) for oil has caused the Anglo-Americans to adopt a policy of appeasement toward the Arab world. That is partly why Britain turned her back on the Jewish national home envisioned in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. We must remember that the concept of a national home for the Jews was opposed by Rome first, and then by the Arabs. The same forces are pushing the current U.S. Administration along the same path. But this is having the effect of bringing together the alliance of Ezekiel 38:13. “Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof…” Scripture would indicate that we are justified in expecting this alliance to become much stronger in the near future.

As was foreseen from prophecy, and explained by John Thomas in Eureka Vol. 3 (written 1869), this will eventually lead events to another “Day of Midian” (see Isaiah 9:4).

The Land of Midian lies in the north-west of modern Saudi Arabia, and on the shore of the Red Sea. This area will very soon witness the birth of a new and unheard-of religious power that will be favourable to the Jews and conquer the region, thus subduing the Anglo-Arabsians before moving northwards to deliver Judah and Jerusalem from the grasp of Gog.

This is the direction of events—events that are in harmony with the well-established understanding of prophecy. The rise of Islam today is but another factor—another force, impelling the nations to adopt that course which will eventually bring them in to judgment at the hands of Christ and his saints, when they come to conquer the world (Psalm 149:5-9).

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“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

1 Timothy 2:9,10

Modesty in the Modern World

By Timothy Billington  BRANTFORD ON.

In the second epistle of Peter, the apostle outlines steps for spiritual growth and therefore entry into the kingdom. He wrote:

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:3-8).

It is not within the scope of this article to consider all these, however we will look at some. The first thing we find is faith. Hebrews says that “without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.” It is therefore a logical start, that faith is the first building block on the path of spiritual growth. Truly, if we are to convert an atheist or a pagan, it is clear that he must first believe that the God of the Bible is the one true God. Once that fundamental belief is achieved as the hearing of the word of God increases, so will faith.

The very next thing that the apostle recommends that a believer should develop is virtue. In the original Greek, the word is given the meaning of:

1) A virtuous course of thought, feeling and action (virtue, moral goodness).
2) Any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity.

Thayer’s suggests that for II Peter 1:5 the word should be taken in the sense of moral vigour. In this case then virtue is the enthusiasm and drive behind moral behaviour. Morality would include modesty and purity.

The third thing that Peter brings to our attention in this chapter is knowledge. Knowledge is very important, as God says through his prophet, “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” God has given us the information that we need, and it is up to us to give the time to assimilate it into our hearts and minds.

Then we come to temperance, this is the last on the list that we will consider. Temperance is defined by Strong’s in this way: “self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, esp. his sensual appetites).”

This, then, is a virtue that needs special attention. In other words it is being able to make our bodies do what our mind tells us to. Proverbs 25:28 says “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” The truth of this proverb is easy to see. We can have the knowledge to know what we need to do, but in the battle to overcome the flesh, unless we can turn down our appetite for sin, we are like that city with no walls. The enemy can march right in and walk all over us. We all have difficulty in controlling our fleshly desires, but in the area of sensual appetites, as Strong put it, things seem to be most acute.

The next couple of points are directed at men specifically, but principles can apply to either gender, though perhaps in a slightly different way. Think of it for yourself: Have you ever heard of the sex that sells? It is an advertising concept which says that by putting sexually attractive women on ads you will get more attention and therefore sell more products. That is because it is a weakness for most men. In every list of things that need to be avoided, fornication and other sexual problems feature prominently. For example, Galatians 5:19 lists things that will prevent us from obtaining the kingdom:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envysings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Note, the first four things:
• Adultery (married people having sexual

Right: A shop on Ben Yehuda Street Jerusalem stocks clothing for women who desire to dress modestly in the modern world.
relations with people other than their spouses)  
- Fornication (inappropriate sexual relations)  
- Uncleanness (moral impurity)  
- Lasciviousness (unbridled lust especially sexual)

Clearly it is important to control immoral lusts in our lives. This explains why Peter places these things so high on his list—that we may focus on making our calling and election sure. We need to work not just on our personal lives, but we also need to support, encourage and help others to avoid immoral thoughts and behaviour as well. How far do we need to go to avoid these things? How far exactly do we think Christ would expect us to go in order to control this problem?

He tells us what he expects in Matthew 5:28-30. As we read it, remember that this is the only man who has ever completely overcome this problem.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

To offend is to cause to stumble. It is literally to put something in someone’s way that will cause them to trip up. Christ is saying that even if it is our own eye that is the problem, we need to get rid of that problem. This is what the verse is saying. The real point must be that there is nothing too important, too hard or inconvenient for us to remove if it is a stumbling block. Truly, if we do not learn to control this in our lives, we will not be in the kingdom. But note in Matthew chapter 5 Jesus is talking only about looking on a woman to lust after her. Sinning in your heart. This is such a serious issue he says, that we should go to any length to avoid it—even to the point of plucking out an eye. Do you think he would go that far, to tell us to maim ourselves if it wasn’t important? Our Lord is trying to drive home to us the vital and critical nature of these issues.

In the degenerate age we live in today, this must mean that we are going to have to make changes in our lives in order to keep our minds on Godly things, and off the sexual onslaught of the world. Any avenue the world has—billboards, internet, music, TV, movies, songs in stores while you shop—it uses to blast you with wrong, lust provoking things. We need to cut these out. If we get caught in such sins, they will keep us from the kingdom. Consider how Christ’s words might apply in the world we live in. What is easier to cut out, your right eye, or a TV show? An internet site? To take an alternate route to work to avoid a billboard?

A few years ago in Israel, I had a conversation with a Jewish man who lived in a moshav near the foot of the Judean hills. He invited my brother, his wife and myself back to his house after expressing great interest in some comments that my brother made about prophecy. As we were chatting he related to us how he loved the water, the beach, and boats, but that he didn’t go anymore because of the things that the girls wore. It was hard for him to cut this out, but he knew that he needed to. He said that his Rabbi told him that he should not stop going, but he knew in himself that it was a problem and that he was better not to go, so he didn’t. This kind of behaviour is what I am referring to by changing our lives so as to avoid the world’s filth. We need to be prepared to go out of our way to avoid temptation. Sometimes things will show up in our lives, even out of our own heads, that need to be dealt with, but if we are going out of our way to avoid as much as we can, shunning wrong thoughts will start to become habitual and these evils will be more abhorrent to us.

Sometimes men talk as though girls have no idea what this is about. Girls can sin in their hearts too. I am sure there are no shortage of girls around with posters of Brad Pitt. Men and women might be different, but we all have human nature and we all need to crucify its passions and lusts.

Against Nature to “Love not the World”

We must have nothing to do with the evil models of this world. We should not choose spouses according to standards of the world. We must change ourselves within seeking to find the things of God attractive, and not the things of the world. This is unnatural of course; it requires work. This love of the world and its things are addressed in 1 John 2:15-17.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

The world plays on the weakness of the flesh to get our attention. People of the world try to attract the other sex by showing off their bodies. They are thrilled if they make the opposite sex sin in their hearts. In fact they do all they can to provoke this response.

- They let various parts of their bodies that should not be seen hang out of their clothes.
They pattern clothes after underwear styles, so you are not sure whether a person is wearing clothes or underwear.

They make clothes fit tightly so that a little more can be seen, and many more similar things.

As I am sure that we are aware, males of the world behave much the same.

They wear their shorts really low with underwear hanging out.

They take off their shirts to show their muscles.

They try to score spectacular goals in their favorite sport and then check to see if the girls are impressed!

All these things are the filth of the world that we must have nothing to do with. We must not be part of the disgusting world. Is there any way that such behaviour can be described as modest or meek? These things are natural to us. It is against nature to hate them. However we must have nothing to do with. We must not seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the hole in the middle that a head might be able to fit through.

A Wrong Attitude

There can be a wrong attitude among some girls who dress in revealing attire. Whether actually verbalized or not, the thought is, “That is the boys’ problem: they need to learn to control themselves?” However we don’t need to look too far in scripture to see this differently. It is good to think this through and to make sure that we are mindful of how important it is to keep these things in check.

The Greek word for offense refers to any kind of stumbling block that might be put in someone’s way. Today we use the word to refer to upsetting someone’s sensibilities, but Biblically the word is used for something that might cause a person to sin against God. Remember what Jesus says about causing our brother to stumble?

Seek Modesty

Note the following passage: “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger” (Zephaniah 2:3).

We are being instructed to seek meekness. The Hebrew word for meekness means humility, or modesty. We must seek humility and modesty. This is also the instruction of the apostles:

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array: But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands” (1 Peter 3:3-5).

Problem not Limited

This article was originally intended for a young people’s group, but we must understand that men and women of all ages are challenged by these things. Some have learned to deal with it better than others, but to a degree, it is in all men and women.

Was Job married? did he have children? But note what he says about sinning with his eyes and heart,

“I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1).

He knew that what he saw with his eyes affected his mind. He had to control what he saw. Although men and women might be different and the things that distract them may be slightly different, they are both just as capable of being filthy. All of us then need to be actively on guard against these works of the flesh.

Two Jewish girls studying Torah

“It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” (Luke 17:1-2).

After reading this verse what do we imagine Jesus thinks about the attitude that “it is the boys’ problem” if the girls make them sin? It is true that offenses will come, there will be men who lust after women, and many who fall in many other ways. However it is a very serious thing to cause that fall! Christ is saying that it would be better for the one who caused the offense to die, rather than making that boy sin! A millstone is a large stone, about two or three feet across with a hole in the middle that a head might be able to fit into. It is highly important that the things we do will not cause others to sin. We might be able to handle a situation, but what of our example? If our way of behaviour causes others to sin, we will not be in the kingdom.

Modest Clothes

Now the common complaint is that you cannot buy modest clothes. The truth is that you cannot buy modest clothes if you’re trying to dress like people in magazines, TV, and the like. But these clothes can be bought. The world’s clothes are designed to make the girls look nice and are “cut,” but many are not modest. They are made to make the human body as attractive to the flesh as possible, not to be as modest as possible. However, if anyone honestly has trouble finding modest clothing (and the more modest you try to be the harder it is), try search for “modest clothes” in Google. You will find a plethora of places to buy them. And for those young girls who are scared they will look like a grandma, you will also find that there are other people out there who want to be modest, yet not totally out of style.

Who do you think would be pleasing to our master, one who tries to get as close as they can to the world’s standards, or one who tries to be as modest as possible?

We need to develop a culture of modesty, and a system of avoidance for the world’s filth, for both ourselves and our young people. Again in Israel, you see this kind of modest culture among the Religious Zionists (see picture at centre), and many other religious Jews as well. We also need to be prepared to be different from the world, and stand apart from their sins.

Moving to the Heart

In Matthew 5, Christ is taking the law, the actions, and moving them into our hearts. So rather than thou shalt not kill, he is saying don’t be angry with your brother. It is about the heart. The same concept is found in Psalm 119 verse 11

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

Our very basis of covering and hope is in the new covenant. There is one place where it is referred to in the Old Testament. It is Jeremiah 31:31-34,

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Once again this is all about the heart. We need to have God’s word in our heart. The summary of the New Covenant is God's law written on our heart and mind.

Heart Control

The heart is metaphorically the seat of emotion. Meaning that it is with our heart that we love and hate things. This world cannot control the heart; they say “just follow your
By Daniel Billington BRANTFORD ON.

“Free out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul” (Jeremiah 51:6). In the spirit of this verse you, like us may have been on the lookout for an Internet filtering product that would effectively protect yourselves, and the children from undesirable content. For those of us who have the Internet, we have a responsibility to ourselves and our families to implement some kind of protection (at least having the computer in the living room). Most of the products out there require buying, installing and maintaining software on each computer for protection. For some this can be an obstacle. For example if you have a Mac or work computer that is controlled by company policies, not to mention the hassle of software glitches and slow downs. As our children get more computer savvy there is a likelihood that they will figure out ways and means behind the scenes to turn the software off altogether!

For those living in Australia, there is a recommendable Internet Service Provider (ISP) that filters content before service is delivered to your home or business (see www.webshield.net.au). For the rest of us, who do not have this option, there is a very convenient and reliable solution from a US based company called “Phantom Technologies.” They have a wireless router (called iBoss) that doubles as a parental Internet web filter requiring no installation or configuration on any of the computers that are protected by it (which also includes anyone visiting your home). Optionally 3 different security levels may be setup (with one as default) and only known computers can be provided access. Times can also be setup for each level only allowing use of the Internet during reasonable periods of time (e.g. you may not want your children using it at 1:00 a.m.).

We purchased the router and installed it after our high speed modem (in place of the wireless router we had previously) and it is working very well. Configuration is relatively straightforward, and Phantom offers support if needed. Those who were able to configure their existing wireless router will probably be able to configure this one. See the web site residential.iphantom.com/iBossHomeProductResidential.html for iBoss product details.

The iBoss is available internationally for around $40 plus shipping, which includes filtering for any number of computers using your home Internet connection. Start with the 30 day free trial subscription and then purchase an annual subscription (to update the web sites in the filtering categories). This currently includes free replacement of the router if it fails at any time while a subscription is maintained. This is a small investment considering the protection it provides and the temptations and dangers it removes.

Nothing is perfect, and so the only complaint we have is that in the “Private Websites” category (which the description says includes adult content) no distinction is made between private sites that contain undesirable content and those that do not. Although we could have chosen not to select this category for filtering, thankfully you can add specific sites to an exception list to allow them, which is what we have done. It is also possible to filter out undesirable content from major search engine results which is a good idea. Services such as instant messaging can also be controlled. The speed of Internet access has not been noticeably impacted by filtering.

The router can be configured to email reports that summarize usage, violations, and alert to anyone unplugging the router (although this can be a nuisance). We have configured ours so that my wife and I both are emailed the reports (a friend of ours has alerts going to Mom and Grandpa). It is possible to temporarily disable filtering (default 15 minutes) if needed, and this will appear in the log. A wise man will put the password in his wife’s care (or other person that will have his eternal welfare at heart), and if needed, changes to the configuration can be made together.

“Therefore thus says the LORD: If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth... And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the LORD. I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, the base minded, and them that work iniquity” (Jer. 15:19-21 RSV).

But if we follow what is naturally in our heart we shall fail,

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” (Matthew 15:19).

There is a fierce competition for our hearts—the world versus God. The trouble is that the things of the world naturally occupy our hearts unless we actively fight them and spend considerable consistent time filling our minds and hearts with the word of God. The Psalmist prayed:

“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 19:14).

For this to be true for us, there needs to be enough of the things of God in our minds and hearts so that they spring to mind. Our goal is to reflect Psalm 119:97.

“Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”

Clearly if we are to meditate on the word all the day, we need to have that word hidden in our heart. To get the word there will need constant attention. Today we have far more means of doing this than ever before, with tapes, CDs, DVDs, and reading material. However whatever way we use to get the word of God in, we must be sure that it sinks in, that we hide it in our heart. Unless we do this our time spent will be far less valuable. Consider Psalm 24:3-6

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.”

What does it mean to have a pure heart? How about to lifting up our soul to vanity?
The current economic crisis has hit almost every nation on the planet and is causing concern to many people. It is perplexing to those whose finances are tied up in volatile stock markets. In a sense we see “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:26). It is a similar time to AD 70 when we must not be overwhelmed but look for our Lord’s return (v. 27).

Financial analysts are placing the blame of the global financial meltdown at the feet of the US housing market—but these are only symptoms which stem from a much greater issue tied to Bible prophecy.

Europe today is the successor to the Roman Empire, and corresponds to the feet and ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s image in Daniel chapter 2. This system is part of the 10 horned Roman beast of Daniel 7:7. This imagery is carried into the book of Revelation where the last phase of the Roman beast is depicted with 10 horns and ridden by a woman—symbolic of Europe today under papal influence:

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3).

The meaning of the ten horns is given: “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast” (Revelation 17:12).

Individually, the nations of Europe which make up the beast empire are depicted as being impotent. This has been the situation in Europe for many years—a collection of squabbling nations amounting to nothing significant by themselves, “they received no kingdom as yet.” However, once they unite, they “receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” They achieve the status of powerful rulers once they become part of the beast system.

This bolstered status comes with strings attached: “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Revelation 17:13).

To achieve their position as powerful kings they first have to voluntarily give their “power and strength unto the beast.” They have “one mind:” their thinking is universally aligned by the teachings of humanism derived from liberty, equality and fraternity, called frog spirits in Revelation 16:13-14, which “go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world” and set them on a collision course with Israel and the Lord Jesus Christ, “to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” As a result, “These shall make war with the Lamb” (Revelation 17:14).

The Greek word for strength in verse 14 is exousia, and is described by Strong’s as, “the power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases …the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege)… the power of rule or government, authority over mankind, the power of judicial decisions, authority to manage domestic affairs… etc.”

From this we understand that the nations of Europe will give up their liberty of doing as they please, their rule of government, their authority over their citizens, their power over judiciary matters, and their authority to manage domestic affairs. This is now the situation throughout Europe as it is governed from Brussels. This has formed the subject of many Bible Magazine articles.

The Greek word for power in verse 14 is...
dunamis, and is described by Strong’s as, “strength power, ability... the power and influence which belong to riches and wealth... power and resources arising from numbers... power consisting in or resting upon armies, forces, hosts.”

The nations of Europe are also to give up the power and influence coming from their wealth. This has been seen in the introduction of the euro. The Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992 brought about the establishment of the European Monetary Institute in 1994, the birth of the currency for business and banking transactions in 1999, and the introduction of the euro currency into public life in 2002.

This is a direct fulfillment of Bible prophecy, indicating that we live in the epoch immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, and the great conflict which will ensue.

**Strategy Behind the Euro**

The creators of the euro had much more in mind than ease of financial transactions when they introduced the currency. Mr. T.R. Reid in his book *The United States of Europe* wrote the following:

“The other epoch-making aspect of the united Europe’s new currency was the challenge it presented to the planet’s dominant form of money, the almighty dollar. From day one, the euro had more daily users than the dollar... the euro became the world’s second-most important currency on the day it was launched. But the Europeans have larger ambitions than that. The euro was specifically designed to challenge the global hegemony of the U.S. dollar as the world’s preferred reserve currency and as the standard unit of exchange for international financial transactions. The common currency is an ‘assertion of Europe’s desire to create a monetary system that serves its own interests rather than accept a framework set up to work to American advantage,’ argues a best-selling book by British analyst Will Hutton. “With the euro, the EU now has a weapon with which to fight back...” (page 64).

The creation of the euro was not a resentful fit by the European nations fed up with American foreign policy and monetary influence—it was a carefully thought out strategy. In the late 1980’s, in a lecture at the University of Quebec entitled “An Economic Revolution,” Nobel prize winning economist Lester Thurow, former dean of the Sloan School of Management at MIT, stated:

“It has always been one of the rights and privileges of the largest market to write the rules for world trade. If you guard the gates to the world’s largest market and say, ‘this is how you are going to play my game,’ that very quickly becomes the world game. That is why the British wrote the rules for the world game in the 19th Century; and it is why the United States or North America wrote the rules for world trade in the 20th Century... the rules for the world game are currently being written by the Common Market (now called the European Union). They aren’t just writing the rules for the Common Market... it will be clear a decade from now that those rules are world rules... You can see it very clear if you look at manufacturing firms today in the world economy. What are they all trying to do? They are all trying to get themselves certified in ISO 9000... That is a European quality standard. Every firm in North America now has to meet a European quality standard.”

The emergence of Europe as a force to be reckoned with is clear from the prophecy of Revelation. Europe’s goal is to unseat American economic power and establish itself as a contender on the world scene. This is borne out by the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel which depict united European nations, under Russia’s military leadership, standing against the US at the time of the end. Two power blocks are described: a king of the North struggling with a king of the South in Daniel 11:40-45, and a northern confederacy of nations including geographical areas such as the tribes of Gomer (Western Europe) and the Land of Magog (Eastern Europe) allied with Rosh or Russia in Ezekiel 38:1-6—being opposed by the “merchants of Tarshish with all the young lions thereof” along with Sheba and Dedan in Ezekiel 38:13.

**The Rise of the Euro and the Collapse of the American Economy**

When examining the current economic crisis in the light of Bible prophecy, we understand it is part of the upheaval that will bring Europe to such a position of prominence that it will eventually be able to “make war with the lamb”—the Lord Jesus Christ.

In his book, *The United States of Europe*, Mr. Reid also states,

“It’s unlikely that many Americans lie awake at night worrying about the threat to the almighty dollar posed by Europe’s new anti-dollar. But perhaps they should. The emergence of a new currency backed by some of the richest nations on earth and used as a medium of exchange for the planet’s wealthiest trading block could pose a serious threat to the dollar’s vaunted stature as the world’s preferred reserve currency. Just two years after its launch, the euro was already forcing Washington to pay higher interest rates to central banks around the world to induce them to buy U.S. Treasury bonds. This means that, at a time when the U.S. deficit was rising to new records every year, the mere existence of the euro was making it more costly for...
Americans to finance that debt. Corporations and governments that once had to maintain large reserves of U.S. dollars won’t have to anymore now that the euro offers a reliable alternative… In short, the European Union’s common currency could undermine some of the benefits of financial dominance that Americans have enjoyed, and taken for granted, since the end of World War II.”

The European Commission’s president, Romano Prodi, stated, “The historical significance of the euro is to construct a bipolar economy in the world. The unipolar world is over. There are two poles now: the dollar, and the euro.” The bipolar picture painted by Daniel and Ezekiel is becoming a reality.

This fact is confirmed by former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, quoted by Reuters, on September 17, 2007, as saying, it is “absolutely conceivable that the euro will replace the dollar as reserve currency, or will be traded as an equally important reserve currency… the European Central Bank had developed into a global economic force to be taken seriously.” US Senator Ron Paul stated in January of 2008, “the euro, the new currency created only five years ago and used by most European nations, has supplanted the U.S. dollar as the most widely used form of cash internationally. There are now more euros in circulation worldwide than dollars.”

The impact of this change on the world scene has brought the economic crisis of recent months. Reid also makes the observation in his book, “The dollars global allure is far more important as a crutch to prop up America’s incorrigible habit of deficit spending… Every month, the United States spends about $50 billion more on foreign goods than it earns in foreign sales… Most nations could not continue to run a deficit like that for very long; their currency would face bankruptcy” (The United States of Europe pages 240-241).

Reid points out, “To put it simply, the success of Europe’s common currency could bring America’s financial house of cards tumbling down. The dollar could lose much more value on international markets; foreign investors could pull out of American markets, sending stock market indexes steeply downward; the U.S. government could be forced to raise taxes to make up for the bonds it can no longer sell around the world. If all that happened, America would wake up to the revolution in Europe in the most painful way” (page 243).

The current economic crisis has been partially created by the growth of the European Union’s financial clout. The aftershocks have hit almost every nation on the planet as the world struggles to re-align itself with the new economic reality.

America’s deficit spending on defense has been funded by nations buying US Treasury Bonds. As America’s financial dominance is curtailed so will its military dominance. It will not be possible for America to fund its military presence all over the world on the same scale.

**Association Press** reported September 15th, “A weakened United States could start retreating from the world stage without help from its allies abroad… The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies… report said the U.S. struggles against insurgent groups in Iraq and Afghanistan had exposed the limits of the country’s military muscle, while the near-collapse of the world financial markets had sapped the economic base on which that muscle relied. The report also claimed that the U.S. had lost traction in its efforts to contain Iran’s nuclear program and bring peace to the Middle East. ‘Clearly the U.S. share of ‘global power,’ however measured, is in decline,’ the report said.”

The US will be a military contender at the time of the end, as we see from the narrative of Ezekiel and Daniel, but it will not be able to stop the Gogian invasion. America will offer only verbal protest, as described in Ezekiel 38:13, when it joins with the other merchants of Tarshish crying out, “Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? To carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to make a great spoil?”

**Russia: Kicking America while it is Down**

Further evidence of the real danger America faces was seen this summer when Russia suggested the creation of an additional “world currency.” The June 17th edition of the *Moscow Times* reported on the outcome of the meeting of the BRIC nations, (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), “President Dmitry Medvedev led the leaders of Brazil, China and India in discussions Tuesday on reforming the global financial system and lessening reliance on the United States at the first summit of the world’s four largest emerging economies. The four BRIC countries which make up 15 percent of the global economy and hold nearly 40 percent of the world’s currency reserves expressed interest in working more closely together economically…”

The *Moscow Times* reported “Medvedev reserved his more fiery rhetoric for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, showing that Russia remained eager to play the role of a power broker among emerging economies and a critic of the current world financial system which it views as unfairly dominated by the United States… Medvedev continued his verbal assault on the U.S. currency, urging leaders to find a way to diversify the world’s reserve currencies. ‘The existing set of reserve currencies, including the U.S. dollar, have failed to perform their functions,’ Medvedev said. ‘There cannot be a successful global currency system if the financial instruments it uses are denominated in only one currency,’ he said. ‘This is the case today, and that currency is the dollar.’”

Following Europe’s lead, Russia is keen to see the balance of power shifted away from American dominance and toward a multipolar world, fitting the Biblical picture of the latter days.

**Holding the Reins of Power**

Returning to the book of Revelation, we find the Beast of chapter 17 is not alone. When John saw the vision he “saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy” (Rev 17:3). The woman riding the beast controls the animal being ridden. The beast is identified with the European Union, the latter day manifestation of Daniel’s 4th beast. The woman has a name written on her forehead, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT” (v. 5). She is identified as a persecutor of the saints (v. 6), who presides over “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (v. 16), and is enthroned upon seven mountains (v. 9), described as “a great city” who “reigns over the kings of the earth” (v. 18). There is only one suspect to match the assembled facts — the Vatican. She inhabits a great city Rome, the latter day Babylon, which is built on seven hills. The kings of the earth line up for an audience with her, and she exercises influence over peoples, multitudes and tongues.

Revelation 17 and 18 depict the harlot of the latter days, not the Middle Ages, for she will direct the nations of Europe to make war with the Lamb. The latter day Roman Catholic system is described as being “a great city, that was clothed in linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls” (Rev 18:16). She controls the nations of the earth, making them drunk through the wine of her fornication, which is her doctrine (Revelation 18:3). We also read that “the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (v. 3). She is closely involved in international monetary affairs, making the merchants “rich by her” (v. 15).

The Vatican has been behind the struggle to undermine American power and influence since the Second World War. It has been a constant force behind the Unification of Europe since the infant European Union was born at the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The architects of this treaty were all Roman Catholics, visiting the pope for his blessing at Castle Gandolpho before the signing of the treaty.
In the decades leading up to Monetary Union, a consistent message has been emanating from the Vatican. In his book, The Principality and Power of Europe, Adrian Hilton writes, “Perhaps the most concerning of Paul VI’s pronouncements on European unification came in Rome, in 1975, when he declared, ‘Can it not be said that it is faith, the Christian faith, the Catholic faith that made Europe?’... It is there that our mission as bishops in Europe takes on a gripping perspective. No other human force in Europe can render the service that is confided to us, promoters of the faith, to re-awaken Europe’s Christian soul, where its unity is rooted” (pages 34-35). In 1983, Pope John Paul stated, “Europeans should overcome the menacing international confrontation of states and alliances, and create a new Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.” Adrian Hilton also pointed out, “The Sunday Telegraph, in 1991, summed up the Pope’s plans for the ‘evangelisation of Europe.’ It stated: ‘He is calmly preparing to assume the mantle which he solemnly believes to be his Divine Right... that of the new Holy Roman Emperor, reigning from the Urals to the Atlantic’” (pages 36-37). That was the creation of the political entity that would govern Europe.

The Vatican knows the control money has in the political arena. Avro Manhattan, in his book The Vatican Billions, wrote “The close relationship of money with political power, and of religion with both, has always been a characteristic of the Catholic Church” (page 265). “Money is power, Power is linked with politics. Hence political problems are interlocked with the financial influence of the Vatican in monetary administration... Besides immediate targets, ecclesiastical or otherwise, their true motive is consistently the expansion of the influence of the Church...” (page 263). He states, “In modern times, the Vatican has dissipated thousands of millions of dollars in conspiratorial adventurism, mostly of an ideological subversive character” (page 268).

The Vatican has used its immense monetary resources to exert influence in Europe and has encouraged the creation of a common European currency which is controlled by an elite few. In his recent Encyclical entitled “Caritas in Veritate,” the pope visibly stuck his oar into the turbulent economic waters, stating:

“At one time it was conceivable that first the creation of wealth could be entrusted to the economy, and then the task of distributing it could be assigned to politics. Today that would be more difficult, given that economic activity is no longer circumscribed within territorial limits, while the authority of governments continues to be principally local... Economic life... needs just laws and forms of redistribution governed by politics, and what is more, it needs works redolent of the spirit of gift... Today’s international economic scene, marked by grave deviations and failures, requires a profoundly new way of understanding business enterprise... The economy needs ethics in order to function correctly... Globalization certainly requires authority, insofar as it poses the problem of a global common good that needs to be pursued. This authority, however, must be organized in a subsidiary and stratified way, if it is not to infringe upon freedom and if it is to yield effective results in practice.”

If you are wondering who the Vatican envisions as the authority at the helm of such an economic government, prescribing the “just laws” and supplying the “ethics” read on:

“Much in fact depends on the underlying system of morality. On this subject the Church’s social doctrine can make a specific contribution, since it is based on man’s creation “in the image of God”... a datum which gives rise to the inviolable dignity of the human person and the transcendent value of natural moral norms... The Christian (Catholic-JB) religion... can offer their contribution to development only if God has a place in the public realm, specifically in regard to its cultural, social, economic, and particularly its political dimensions... Reason always stands in need of being purified by faith: this also holds true for political reason, which must not consider itself omnipotent. For its part, religion always needs to be purified by reason in order to show its authentically human face...”

According to the Pope, ‘reason’ of human governments must be purified by the Catholic Church. In this vision she would hold the reigns of economic control—supplying the “ethics” along the way. The hypocrisy of this statement is sickening in the light of the Church’s own history, and past economic-religious policies outlined in Revelation 13:17-18: “no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

The Pope’s call to arms for Catholics is equally sickening. It clearly demonstrates the frog spirits are coming out of the mouth of the false prophet (Rev 16:13):

“Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God’s family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism. The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian (Catholic JB) humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead from (Catholic) truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God.”

Putting our own Houses in Order.

As we see the world going through economic upheavals, be assured that these are the birth pangs leading to the return of Christ. It is time to put our own houses in order, and to “owe no man anything but to love one another” (Romans 13:8), remembering “the borrower is servant to the lender” (Prov. 22:7), and knowing we cannot serve two masters. We don’t want our hearts to be failing us for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. We have the light of scripture which warns us to prepare for the coming of our Lord, trimming our lamps and ensuring that they are filled with oil.

“And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:11-12).
The clash between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies disrupted the Land for many years, until the Seleucids gained the upper hand after 200 BC. From that time, the rule of the High Priests in Jerusalem began to suffer from their interference. Both the Persians and the Ptolemies had ruled the province through the High Priest and the Gerousia, or Council of Elders, but now the Seleucids decided that they were going to appoint the ruling High Priests. Still under pressure to pay the indemnity after the defeat by the Romans, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164) plundered the temples throughout his empire, and cast about for other means of raising his income. One method involved the selling of offices throughout the empire. Onias III, the High Priest ruling in Jerusalem, was replaced by his brother Jason, a staunch Hellenist, who promised to raise more taxes.

Jason worked with Antiochus to make Jerusalem into a polis (Greek city) named Antiochia. A notable change was the building of a gymnasium, “a place of exercise” (1 Macc. 1:14) which soon replaced the Temple as the focus of social life. Loyal Jews were dismayed, as men socialized and exercised in the nude within the confines of the city, just below the Temple Mount. Jason was replaced by Menelaus who made even greater promises, in 171, and helped Antiochus to plunder the Temple in 169. A year later, believing Antiochus to be dead in Egypt, Jason rushed to seize control of Jerusalem, but Antiochus returned to punish the inhabitants. As part of his plan, Antiochus IV Epiphanes built the Akra just south of—and overlooking—the Temple Mount—a fortress for his Macedonian garrison from which the Jewish population could be controlled.

He filled it with non-Jews and extreme Hellenist followers of Menelaus. He also prohibited observance of the Sabbath and circumcision, with death as the punishment. Josephus tells us that “At this time the garrison in the Akra of Jerusalem and the Jewish renegades did much harm to the Jews; for when they went up to the Temple with the intention of sacrificing, the garrison would sally out and kill them—for the Akra commanded the Temple” (Antiquities of the Jews: 12).

The 1st Book of Maccabees confirms that “Then builded they the city of David with a great and strong wall, and with mighty towers, and made it a strong hold for them. And they...
put therein a sinful nation, wicked men, and fortified themselves therein. They stored it also with armour and victuals, and when they had gathered together the spoils of Jerusalem, they laid them up there, and so they became a sore snare: For it was a place to lie in wait against the sanctuary, and an evil adversary to Israel” (1 Macc. 1:33-36).

Soon after, he desecrated the Temple by setting up idols—‘the abomination of desolation’—and calling it after the Olympian Zeus. Sabbath observance was forbidden, along with the offering of sacrifices. But the majority of the population remained faithful and resisted the changes, prepared to martyr themselves.

We do not have a scriptural record of these times between Nehemiah the Persian governor, and our New Testament gospel accounts. The first two Books of Maccabees found in the Apocrypha, and the works of Josephus are our main sources. First Maccabees was written in Hebrew about 100 BC, while Second Maccabees was apparently a condensation of a history of the Maccabees written in Greek almost a hundred years later. Josephus, of course, wrote his histories after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

There was a growing belief as the persecution increased that the end of days would soon be upon the nation. The rebellious feelings stirred up by Antiochus and the Hellenists found a focus under the Hasmoneans. A Cohen named Mattithias led a priestly family from Modi‘in near Lydda. The oppressive policies of Antiochus were put into effect throughout the country. Greek troops arrived in Modi‘in to demand the sacrifice of a pig to their gods, in 167, and Mattithias the town elder refused. A Hellenized Jew who stepped forward to do the deed was then killed, along with some of the soldiers. Mattithias had five sons—Yohanan, Shimon, Judah, Eleazar and Yonaton—and they all took to the hills and organized a guerrilla army. Judah, the eldest was called Maccabee or ‘Hammer,’ and he became the first leader of a force of about 10,000 men. Their forces were poorly trained, poorly equipped and outnumbered, but they were persistent.

It took three years before the Maccabees were able to take Jerusalem and the Temple. The Temple had been turned into a pagan sanctuary, and the first thing they did was to purify and re-dedicate it. They found only one vial of pure oil for the lamp, and it miraculously lasted eight days before more was able to be produced. The Talmud records the miracle, but not the Books of Maccabees. The eight day Feast of Chanukah or Dedication now commemorates the occasion. Although city and Temple were now in their hands, the Seleucids still controlled the Akra in the heart of the city, which dominated the main access route into the Temple Courts.

It took 25 years for the struggle to achieve success. Since they wanted political independence for the kingdom, the Maccabees made a treaty with Rome which gained official recognition of Judea. In 142 BC the last surviving brother, Simon, signed a peace treaty with Demetrius, the Seleucid king. Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel was officially restored. Simon was acknowledged as the “...great High Priest, general and leader of the Jews” (1 Macc. 13:41-42). He was to rule “until there should arise a faithful prophet” (1 Macc 14:41). The Zadokite line of High Priests came to an end, replaced by the Hasmonean, which ruled for 115 years. Simon was finally able to take the Akra from the Seleucids, when the garrison, decimated by famine, surrendered. The visible destruction of the fortress of the hated Gentile power helped to firmly establish the power of the dynasty.

Simon did not call himself king, but nasi—prince, president or leader. He was not of the line of David, but he was king in all but name. A dynasty was established—(named for the great-grandfather of Mattithias) the Hasmonean—which lasted for 103 years. In his autobiography, Josephus tells us “…by my mother I am of the royal blood; for the children of Asmoneus, from whom that family was derived, had both the office of the high priesthood and the dignity of a king for a long time together.” The Hasmoneans assumed the kingly powers until they finally assumed the title as well.

The religious fervour of Mattithias and his sons was soon lost as the Hasmoneans took control. Simon’s son—Yochanan Hycanus (135) —set out to expand the borders of the country; to the north in the Galilee—taking the Hellenist cities of Beth-Shean and Samaria; to the east in the Transjordan; to the west with the coastal cities. He decided to forcibly convert the peoples who were conquered. Among those were the Idumeans or Edomites to the south. This was the first proselytization of a race of people by the Jews. The Idumean upper classes soon occupied positions of authority in the Hasmonean kingdom. Herod the Great was the descendant of one of these converted families. Aristobulus I, the son of Yochanan, was the first of the dynasty to assume the title of king in 105 BC.

By the time we come to the dying days of the dynasty, with Hycanus and Aristobulus fighting over who should be king, both are totally Hellenized and power-hungry. To solve their stalemate, they agreed to ask the Romans to mediate. Hycanus was supported by Antipater and Antipas, prominent Idumeans who saw the benefits of supporting the Roman power in the struggle. When Pompey appeared with his forces before the city of Jerusalem, they were in favour of admitting them. Aristobulus and his supporters fled to the fortified Temple Mount, and Pompey had to lay siege. Three months later the Temple was taken, the priests slain as they performed the sacrifices. Like Antiochus, Pompey insisted on entering the inner sanctuary. He made no attempt to interfere with the Jew’s religion, and took away none of the Temple’s treasure. What he did do, was to remove the kingship, and change the political status and territorial extent of the nation. Hycanus was to be High Priest only, and the Jewish state a part of the Roman province of Syria. Tribute was to be paid to Rome, and the Greek cities were re-established. Aristobulus, the Hasmonean prince, was taken to Rome to walk as a captive in Pompey’s triumph.

The end of the Hasmonean dynasty was imminent.
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“Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”  
*Genesis 13:5*

“The LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens.”  
*1 Chronicles 27:23*

“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?”  
*Psalm 8:3, 4*

“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”  
*Jeremiah 31:35-37*

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”  
*Daniel 12:3*

“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.”  
*1 Corinthians 15:41,42*