

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Man with the Writer's Inkhorn

"Go through the midst ... of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4).

The passage in Ezekiel chapter nine has intrigued Bible Students for many years. It describes a man clothed in linen who is instructed by God to go through Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of those who mourn over the abominations of Jerusalem. In examining the surrounding context we see a very sad picture of the sins being committed by God's ancient people.

Residing in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel was given a vision of what was transpiring some 500 miles to his west, in the temple of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel chapter eight the Lord showed him the idols and pagan worship that had been brought into the temple courtyard and hung on its walls. He then led Ezekiel to the entrance of the temple proper and showed him women weeping for Tammuz, a pagan idol. Finally the Lord brought the prophet into the inner court to see 25 men standing with their backs to the temple of the Lord, worshipping the sun.

The Lord's words to Ezekiel were, "Do you see this, son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with violence and provoked me repeatedly? ... Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them" (Ezekiel 8:17, 18, NAS).

It is difficult to imagine the temple being used for anything more deplorable than idolatry. Could there have been any more inappropriate place on earth to worship the sun, with backs turned to the temple of God? There is little wonder that God would be angry, especially because of who was committing these abominations. Israel was in a unique position before God, having His special favor. They were given His divine laws. But now they turned their backs on Him, preferring to worship inanimate objects. They should have

known better. They bore a greater responsibility for these sins than any other idolatrous nation.

This is the context for what follows in chapter nine. There we read God's condemning words and prophecy of destruction. He said,

"Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand. Behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each with his shattering weapon in his hand; and among them was a certain man clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case. The LORD said to him, Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst. But to the others He said in my hearing, 'Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare. Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from my sanctuary.' So they started with the elders who were before the temple" (Ezekiel 9:1-6, NAS).

This was the decree of God, that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Six men from the north with shattering weapons would come and carry out God's punishment. But before that destruction could proceed, a man with a writer's inkhorn was instructed to mark out those faithful Jews who mourned

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the abominations being committed in the temple. Who was this special man, and who were the ones that would receive the “mark?”

NEAR TERM FULFILLMENT

There is, of course, a near term fulfillment to this prophecy. We see its first fulfillment in Jeremiah chapter nine.

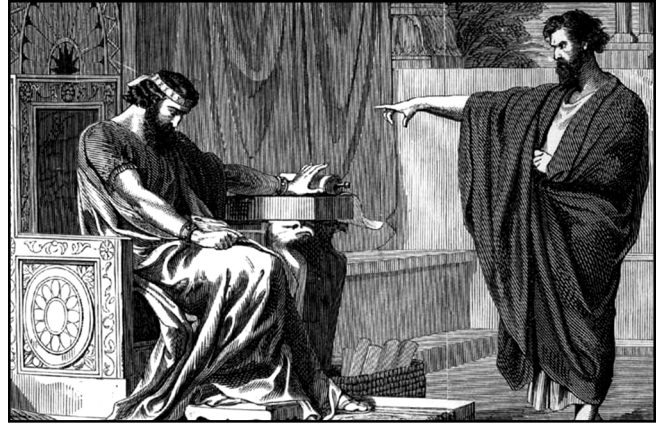
“Now when Jerusalem was captured in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah ... Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah ... the city wall was breached ... The Chaldeans also burned with fire the king’s palace and the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem. As for the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to him and the rest of the people who remained, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard carried them into exile in Babylon. But some of the poorest people who had nothing, Nebuzaradan ... left behind in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at that time.

“Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan ... saying, ‘Take him and look after him, and do nothing harmful to him, but rather deal with him just as he tells you.’ Now the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was confined in the court of the guardhouse, saying, “Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I am about to bring My words on this city for disaster and not for prosperity; and they will take place before you on that day. But I will deliver you on that day, declares the LORD, and you will not be given into the hand of the men whom you dread. For I will certainly rescue you, and you will not fall by the sword; but you will have your own life as booty, because you have trusted in Me, declares the LORD’ ” (Jeremiah 39:1, 2, 8-12, 15-18, NAS).

Nebuchadnezzar’s army, coming from the north, was sent to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. This is the direct fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy of the six men with destroying weapons who also came from the north. Notice, too, that in the Jeremiah account a remnant from Jerusalem would be saved. These were the poor who did not support Zedekiah’s rebellion, or take part in Jerusalem’s idolatry. Jeremiah tells us that Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar, actually gave to them lands and vineyards for a possession. Presumably these were lands and vineyards owned by those Jews either killed or taken captive to Babylon. These poor, but faithful Jews, correspond to the mourners of Ezekiel who receive a figurative mark in their foreheads.

Jeremiah 21 helps us to identify the man with the writer’s inkhorn as it was fulfilled in Israel. There we read that King Zedekiah had sent two men to inquire from Jeremiah what would happen when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem. He wanted to know if the Lord would deliver them as He had done in the past.

The answer from God, through Jeremiah, was that there would be no deliverance. Jerusalem would be destroyed



Jeremiah the Prophet before the King of Judah

and many of the inhabitants of the city would be killed. Survivors would be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar.

Then the Lord makes an interesting statement through Jeremiah. “And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus says the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty” (Jeremiah 21:8, 9, NAS).

There was a way out, a way to be saved from the coming destruction. The first step was to leave Jerusalem. The next step was to “fall away to the Chaldeans.” This phrase means, “to surrender to the Chaldeans.” The Contemporary English translation says, “The Babylonian army has surrounded Jerusalem, so if you want to live, you must go out and surrender to them.”

The verse ends with an interesting statement that we read elsewhere. The Lord said that the one surrendering to the Chaldeans would “have his own life as booty.” Booty is spoil. In other words, his spared life would be his spoil. That phrase used here in chapter 21 is the exact phrase used later, in chapter 39, of the man that God had told Jeremiah about, Ebed-melech. As a faithful man of God Ebed-melech obeyed Jeremiah, left Jerusalem and surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. As a result, his life was among those saved from the destruction of Jerusalem. But he was an Ethiopian, not one we might expect to find deliverance from destruction.

These saved ones are those who obeyed Jeremiah’s message, left Jerusalem, and surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. They are depicted in Ezekiel chapter nine as the ones who received the mark in their foreheads. They were expressing their faith in the word of the Lord related by Jeremiah. They would not be destroyed by the invading army, represented by the six men with shattering weapons.

In the first fulfillment of this prophecy then, the man with the writer’s inkhorn was the prophet Jeremiah. He was used by the Lord to call the faithful out of Jerusalem, safe from the coming destruction. He gave the words of the Lord that, when received, distinguished faithful Jews from those who

defended the evil ways of Jerusalem. So in this amazing Old Testament prophecy it is important that we first see the immediate application to those who actually heard the message.

GREATER FULFILLMENT

As with many prophecies, there are multiple fulfillments to Ezekiel chapter nine and the vision of the man with the writer's inkhorn. As we read through Ezekiel chapters eight and nine, we notice that the word "abomination" is mentioned multiple times — seven in fact.

The Lord was disgusted with the abominations being committed by Israel. That conduct is what precipitated Ezekiel's vision of the coming destruction. But there is a clear Gospel Age application to this vision as well. In Daniel chapter 12, the prophet talks about "the abomination that maketh desolate." Also, in chapter eight, Daniel speaks of a "little horn" that would defile the sanctuary and cast truth to the ground.

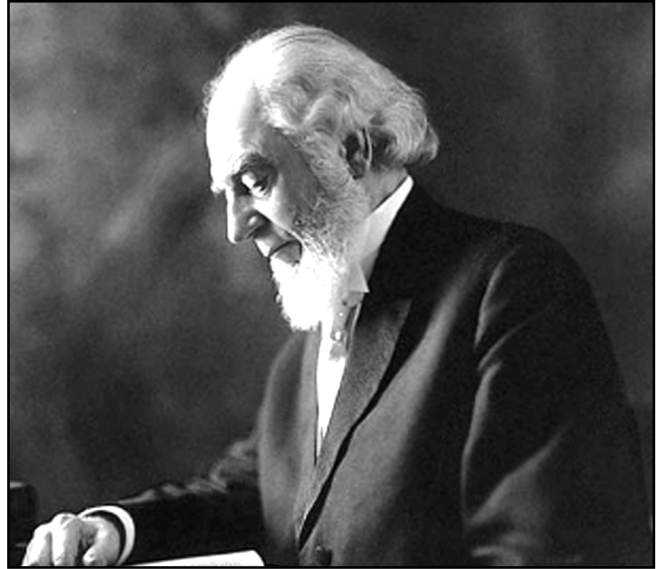
The corruption of Christianity through the Papal system is the antitypical parallel to what happened in the temple at Jerusalem where idols were brought into the temple of God and where people turned their backs on the sanctuary and worshipped the sun. There has been a defiling of the Gospel Age sanctuary with false worship, idolatry, and other corruptions. Truth was "cast to the ground." Just as God's anger was kindled by the corrupted worship in Israel, so He looks at the Gospel Age desecration of the spiritual temple with similar contempt.

There is a clear parallel between the destruction of ancient Jerusalem and the destruction of nominal spiritual Babylon. Upon the destruction of Spiritual Babylon we read "and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer" (Revelation 18:23, NAS).

At one time Babylon had been a golden cup in the Lord's hand (Jeremiah 51:7, Revelation 17:4), but now, as a result of her abominations, she is condemned to the same end as ancient Jerusalem. Notice the similar expressions used of Jerusalem that we read in the Revelation account. "I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp" (Jeremiah 25:10).

The parallel is clear. The destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah is a figure of the destruction of nominal Christianity in the harvest of this age. As there was a messenger sent to forewarn the faithful in olden times, so there has been a messenger to call the faithful out of Babylon. The call mentioned in Revelation is the antitypical message given by the Lord through Pastor Russell, the antitypical Jeremiah. "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

The Lord gave specific directions to the faithful. In order to have their lives spared they would have to leave



Pastor Charles Russell

Jerusalem and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. Similarly, the work of calling out the Lord's people of our day has been through the writings and work of the antitypical man clothed in linen. The writer's inkhorn is a very fitting symbol for the prolific writings of the Harvest Messenger.

FAITHFUL ONES

The ancient Israelites who surrendered to the Babylonian army were in essence saying, "We give ourselves up to you in recognition that your destroying army is a punishment from God. We will not defend Jerusalem." To continue the symbolism we ask, "What is pictured by the faithful Jews surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar?"

The answer may be seen in the reason for surrendering. Like the faithful ones who left Jerusalem, we know that in the destructive process of spiritual Babylon we are seeing God's just and righteous sentence. We accept it as such. We do not defend the systems of man nor do we get involved in politics or the military. We surrender to the coming trouble because we know that it is God's judgment, and that in the long run it will be for the good of mankind. We leave Jerusalem, a picture of nominal Christian churches, and accept the Lord's judgments as just and good. But there was an Ethiopian man who shared in the deliverance of Jerusalem, a man of faith. We see in him a harvest lesson that the Lord is no respecter of persons. He sends out the call and any of faith can respond.

Like the prophet Jeremiah, Bro. Russell was used by God to do a special work of separating out those who have not been in sympathy with nominal religion. The mark of God is initially received by those who leave the city of nominal Christianity. However, receiving the "mark" of God must involve more than simply leaving the city. Understanding the truth is the first step in having God's stamp of approval, but it is a process which indicates that the truth must change us from within. It must teach us to live life in full consecration. Such a lifestyle will set us apart for holy service.

Six Men

Why does the prophecy in Ezekiel chapter nine specify that there were six men with shattering weapons? One possibility is suggested by their very work. Their purpose was to destroy Jerusalem. We have seen the antitypical application to this in a general way. It is a picture of the destruction of nominal Christianity. More specifically, Revelation 16 says that the destruction of Christendom will be accomplished by seven plagues. Before the destructive work of Jerusalem could begin, the message to come out of the city had to be given. This work was assigned to the man in linen. Thus there are actually **seven** men who take up the Lord's work of destroying the temple and the city. This may correspond to the **seven** plagues of Revelation 16.

If that connection is true, then we have the **first** plague on Babylon identified as the work of Pastor Russell. His message accomplished a number of things. By calling out the Spirit Begotten, the preserving influence of the saints has, for the most part, been taken out of the system. This would have a debilitating (or plaguing) affect. Second, the Harvest Message contains very specific truths relating to the corruptions of Papacy. Volume Two details God's dealing with "The Man of Sin." These elements of the Harvest Message have also had a plaguing effect. The tearing down process began by laying this foundation of truth that has continued as the remaining **six** plagues have taken shape, ending soon in Babylon's complete destruction.

Commenting on Revelation chapter seven where we see 144,000 saints sealed in their foreheads, Adam Clarke says, "There is manifestly an allusion to Ezekiel 9:4 here. By sealing we are to understand consecrating the persons in a more special manner to God, and showing, by this mark of God upon them, that they were under his more immediate protection, and that nothing should hurt them. It was a custom in the east ... to stamp with a hot iron the name of the owner upon the forehead or shoulder of his slave."

Thus, the seal of God not only shows His approval, but it also shows His ownership. We belong to Him. We have consecrated our lives to do His will. We wear His mark where everyone can see it. We are His slaves, willing to obey His commands and represent His word.

The work of the man with the writer's inkhorn will be accomplished once all the 144,000 are sealed. The work involves hearing the call to leave the city, obeying the call, and faithfully living a life of sacrifice in the true worship of our king. Let it be said of us that "These are they which follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth" (Revelation 14:4).

— Bro. Tom Ruggirello

Origins of the Two Horned Beast

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11).

It has been well stated that if one wants to understand prophecy he must first study history. That seems especially true when studying the book of Revelation. There we see historical entities portrayed as beasts and dragons. Without knowing history we could not decipher why certain images are conveyed or their time settings.

An excellent example of this is the 13th chapter of Revelation. There we see a leopard-like beast rising up out of the sea. Bible Students have seen an historical application to this beast. In the early 200s AD, the once great Roman Empire began to weaken under attack, particularly hordes of barbarians from the north. The once mighty and unified empire divided into Western and Eastern Rome. Western Rome then divided again and again.

The Roman Empire eventually fell in 476 AD, but the crumbling process had begun more than two centuries earlier. It was a time of unrest and instability among the people. So, out of the restless sea, the troubled masses of people, arose the Papacy. With it came promises of calm and stability to a distressed world.

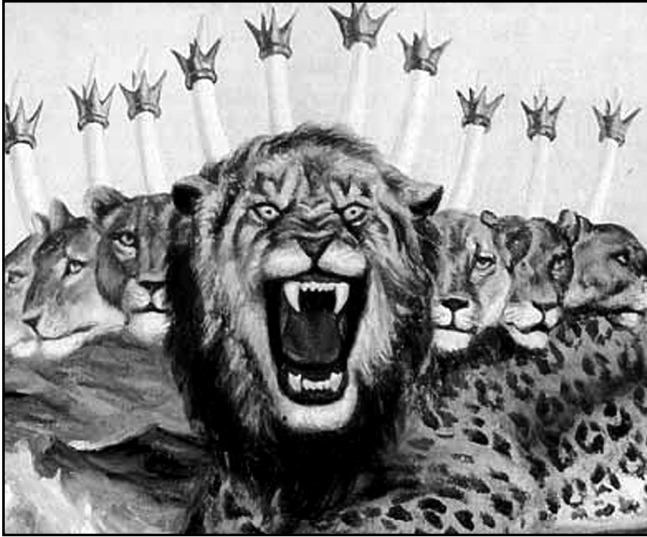
As the 13th chapter narrative continues, we see a dragon giving its "power and seat and great authority" to the beast (verse 2). A dragon symbolizes Satan's control through a dominant political power. In this case, the dragon was the Roman Empire under the Caesars. In 535 AD Emperor Justinian sent his army to Rome to drive the barbarian Ostrogoths from the Western region. This led to the fall of the Ostrogothic capital of Ravenna in 539 AD. This eventually solidified the Pope's power in Europe.

Thus 539 AD is a significant marker as the date the beast received power and gained control of the remnants of the Western Roman Empire. The dragon, the civil power of the Eastern Roman Empire, gave to the leopard-like beast ecclesiastical power under the Popes. Thus we see a transformation from the civil Roman Empire to Ecclesiastical Rome.

The further verses of this account detail for us the historical record of the abuse of power. Great boasting words and blasphemies were prophesied of this beast (verse 5), and it would go on to persecute the saints and control the nations (verse 7).

A SECOND BEAST

Then we see a second beast enter the scene. "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from



Beast like a Leopard, with Bear paws, Lion mouth, and 10 horns

heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (Revelation 13:11-13).

What does history tell us regarding another beast that would fit the above description? The church-state system of England has been identified as this second beast. The fulfillment of this prophecy is precise in its details. It began during the reign of Henry VIII who became king in 1509 at age eighteen. Henry was a firm Catholic, as was officially all of England at that time. In fact, Henry regarded Luther as a heretic and in 1518 wrote a book against heretics entitled, “The Seven Sacraments.” For that service the Pope bestowed upon Henry the title, “Defender of the Faith.” The monarchs of England still carry that title today.

Henry notoriously had six wives. His first, Catherine of Aragon, was a devout Catholic from Spain’s royal house. They were married the same year he became king. It was a time when kings greatly desired a male successor. Indeed, two sons, “an heir and a spare,” was the minimum expected of royal wives. Catherine bore him five children, four of whom died young. The sole survivor was a daughter named Mary, born in 1516. Around 1529 Henry asked Pope Clement VII to annul his marriage to Catherine so that he could marry Anne Boleyn, a lady of the court who had caught his eye. The Pope refused Henry’s rather audacious request, whereupon Henry decided to take matters into his own hands. He dismissed the Catholic Cardinal Wolsey and replaced him with Anne Boleyn’s family chaplain, Thomas Cranmer, who then became archbishop of Canterbury. In 1533 Henry secretly married Ann Boleyn who later that same year bore him a daughter, Elizabeth. Soon after that Archbishop Cranmer declared Henry’s first marriage to Catherine null and void so that he could be legally married to Anne Boleyn.

In 1534 Henry directed Parliament to pass a law titled “The Act of Supremacy.” It decreed that the king was the supreme head of the Church of England. In spite of this Henry still regarded himself a good Catholic. He was merely establishing his authority over the Catholic hierarchy in

England. Soon would follow another law at Henry’s direction. “The Law of Treason and Heresy” stated that to hold any doctrines other than those of the Catholic Church was heresy, and to refuse to acknowledge the king as the head of the Church in England was treason. Then in a stroke of political genius, Henry confiscated the churches lands, and buildings. Taking personal ownership of these he presented them as gifts to his political friends — the dukes and nobles who supported his desire for power.

Henry was unwilling to give Anne a second chance to bear him a son. The marriage turned predictably sour. In 1536 Anne was beheaded on a trumped-up charge of unfaithfulness. Henry married his third wife, Jane Seymour that same year, and she at last gave Henry the long awaited heir, a son named Edward. Jane Seymour died shortly after giving birth.

AFTER HENRY

This family history is the key to understanding the origins of the Anglican Church-State of England, the two-horned beast. When Henry VIII died in 1547, England was still a Catholic country, although Luther’s Reformist teachings had gained some followers in London and south-eastern England. When Henry died his nine year old son Edward became King Edward VI. His uncle, the Duke of Somerset, who favored the Reformation more as a political revolt against Rome than as a doctrinal struggle, effectively ran the country. Under Edward’s reign England separated itself from the Pope’s authority, and the Church of England, also called the Episcopal Church (in America), developed its own hierarchy, ceremonies, and in a few instances, doctrines. It remained however very much like the Roman Papacy, except it was ruled by the head of the state rather than by the head of the Church. But the rise of the two horned beast would soon be severely challenged.

Edward died of tuberculosis at age sixteen after a short reign of only seven years. He left no successor, and so the next ruler of England would be either Mary or Elizabeth, the first two daughters of Henry VIII. But which of them would rise to power as the next Queen of England? In a series of political machinations Mary won out and had Elizabeth imprisoned. Queen Mary I, the daughter of the spurned Catherine, a staunch Catholic, exacted her mother’s revenge, undoing all the laws passed under Henry VIII and his son Edward. Mary turned the clock backward, and England was once again Catholic. But Mary’s zeal did not stop there. She had some 300 of Edward’s supporters burned at the stake as heretics, including Archbishop Cranmer. For these atrocities she earned the nickname “Bloody Mary.”¹

Mary died after only five years as queen and was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth I. Elizabeth then undid everything Mary had done. She restored the separation from Rome, and the Church of England came back into prominence. It has survived as a separate entity to this day. Elizabeth ruled firmly but wisely for 45 years, guiding her country and her people through the difficult transition from Catholicism to Episcopalianism. She never married, realizing



Beast with Two Horns, out of the Earth, calling Fire from Heaven

that if she married a Catholic man, it would alienate her Anglican subjects, and if she married an Anglican, it would alienate her Catholic subjects. Elizabeth died in 1603 and was succeeded by her cousin, King James I. James is well appreciated by many Bible Students for the King James translation of the Bible; although, like his predecessors, he murdered many Protestants.

As the Reformation took root in England it became the work of the government — of kings and queens and those vying for power. Political interests in England used the Reformation for their own ends. The Reformation there was less a peoples struggle for religious purity than it was in other countries. This is in fulfillment of Revelation 13:11 which tells us that this two-horned beast came up out of the earth. By contrast, the first beast, the leopard-like beast, came up out of the sea. The sea represents an unstable society, the lower classes. The earth represents the more stable wealthier classes. As history demonstrates, the Church of England rose up not from an outcry of the common people but from the desires and maneuverings of the king himself. His efforts were supported by his friends and nobles, who were well rewarded by King Henry.

TWO HORNS

The two horns of this beast indicate the fact that Henry VIII ruled both England and Ireland. Indeed, this new Church was called the Church of England and Ireland for 333 years, from 1538 to 1871. The horns were horns “like a lamb,” showing that England, at this time was not yet a dominating, imperious, warlike nation. It was at relative peace with its neighbors. We are also told (verse 11) that this two-horned beast “spake as a dragon.” As we saw earlier, a dragon refers to Satan as head of civil power. The voice

of the Church of England was in reality the voice of the king of England, the civil ruler.

The prophecy also tells us (verse 12) that the two-horned beast exercised the power of the first beast, and caused the earth and the people to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed. Martin Luther’s Reformation was a deadly wound upon the first beast. It was Henry VIII’s “Law of Treason and Heresy” which declared it to be heresy to hold any doctrine other than those of the Catholic Church. Thus did the Church of England, under Henry VIII, caused the people to worship the first leopard-like beast.

Verse 13 goes on to say that the two-horned beast did great wonders, making fire come down out of heaven in the sight of men. This was fulfilled when Queen Mary I called for the burning of those who supported a separation from Rome. In essence, she called down fire from the ecclesiastical heaven of her day in an attempt to undo the separation. With the ascension of Elizabeth the place of the two-horned beast in the pages of history and prophecy was eventually secured.

These were not good times for truth to flourish. Protestants were slain by all the early monarchs. When political intrigue and self interests lie at the origins of a church system it is not difficult to see why God would describe the Church of England as another beast. History then tells us facts which can be related to prophetic fulfillment. However, the deeper lesson comes in understanding the importance that God places on true and sincere worship. Politics and self interests must never have a part in the heart of a true Christian.

— Adapted from a discourse by Bro. Joe Megacz,
based on a treatise by Bro. Chester Sundbom

(1) None of the kings and queens of Reformation England were benign. Bloody Mary slew Protestants and Anglicans at a higher rate; Elizabeth I slew more Protestants total, though at a slower rate, just because she reigned longer (as well as slaying many Catholics). King James I slew still more Protestants; both Protestants and Catholics were absolutely forbidden to have any part in the 1611 translation. (Editor comment.)

Who Are the Jews?

The world’s 13 million Jews are strongly linked by religion and culture. But do they share a common genetic heritage? Two new studies conclude that most members of the far-flung Jewish Diaspora can trace their roots to ancestors who lived in the Middle East more than 2000 years ago. The new research, based on recent advances in genome technology, apparently refutes controversial claims that most of today’s Jews descend from more recent converts. And it finds that Jews in Ethiopia and India who also claim origins in ancient Israel are more distantly related to other Jewish groups.

Michael Balte, “News of the Week, Human Genetics: Who Are the Jews? Genetic Studies Spark Identity Debate” *Science*, 11 June 2010, Volume 328, Number 5984, page 1342

The Foul Waters Will Be Sweetened

“Every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live ... for they shall be healed” (Ezekiel 47:9).

The Dead Sea is one of the most prominent features of the land of Israel. It is the lowest elevation on the face of the earth, being some 1,312 feet below sea level. It is the deepest salt lake in the world, and one of the world’s saltiest bodies of water, with 33.7% salinity. It is 8.6 times more salty than the ocean. As a result of its harsh environment, animals cannot flourish. In fact, it is completely devoid of life; hence its name, “Dead Sea,” is most appropriate.

The River Jordan once poured some 1.3 billion cubic meters of water into the lake daily, yet it does not overflow, even though there is no outlet. This flow has been greatly reduced in recent times due to human intervention. 70% to 90% of the water from the Jordan River is now used for human purposes. As a result, the Dead Sea is shrinking. The shallow waters at the southern end of the lake are now dry salt flats.

In spite of the harsh conditions of the Dead Sea, God has promised that it will some day teem with life. Describing a river flowing out of the east gate of the temple to the Dead Sea, the Lord said, “These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed” (or “sweetened” as some translations have) (Ezekiel 47:8, 9, Rotherham).

Earlier in the chapter the Lord described the river in more detail. As it progressed eastward, the depth of the river increased from the ankles, to the knees, to the loins, finally into a giant river that could not be crossed. We are told that on the river banks were “very many trees” (verse 7).

This description of a river proceeding out of the temple is also alluded to in the Book of Revelation. “Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from



Jordan River

the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him” (Revelation 22:1-3, NAS).

KINGDOM BLESSINGS

The river flowing from the temple pictures the blessings of the Kingdom which will issue forth from heaven. The river begins small, to the ankles, and then increases to a giant flow. This is a depiction of how the blessings of the Kingdom will begin to flow, slowly at first, but then increase to encompass all mankind. The trees along the river bank have amazing restorative qualities. We are told that they are “for the healing of the nations.” This is a picture of universal blessings, for all nations. It shows mankind being healed from the blight of sin and death. There will be no more Adamic curse and the trees will be life sustaining.

Jesus connected this temple class with his followers when he said that out of their bellies would flow “rivers of living water” (John 7:38, see also Zechariah 14:8, 9). The church will be used by God to dispense life giving truths, guidance, discipline, and parental love. This in turn will result in eternal life for all those who accept the terms of consecration. There will be great character growth, as demonstrated by the twelve manner of fruit produced.

The river will finally flow directly into the Dead Sea, making its foul waters sweet. What a lovely picture of the full restitution of mankind. It begins with a small flow, increases to a great river and eventually encompasses an entire lake where, in the past, life had been unknown. It will then be a place of abounding life. The Dead Sea then pictures the grave, a place where all people eventually end up. There is no consciousness or thought in the grave. There is no discussion, no joy. There is only quietness. Being the lowest elevation on earth aptly conveys the thought that death is our worst enemy. It is the lowest point any person can reach. The Dead Sea illustrates the fact that the grave is never full. No matter how many flow into it the banks never overflow.



Dead Sea Salt Formations

The high salt content of the Dead Sea reminds us of the many tears that man has shed on his wayward course to death. Much of the shoreline is encrusted in the white salt that remains after evaporation. It casts a cadaverous pale impression that reminds one of leprosy, another symbol of sin and death.



JORDAN RIVER

Jordan River, Descending

But what do we see before the healing of the Dead Sea, before the temple waters restore it to life? As we look to the original source of the Dead Sea we see the River Jordan. It flows into the sea from the north. Looking even further north we see that the source of the Jordan is the majestic Mount Hermon. Its name means “Prominent,” a fitting name because it is the highest spot in Israel, being situated on its northern border. Mt. Hermon is alluded to in Psalms 133:3. There it describes the holy spirit of God descending as the “dew of Hermon” bringing life. If the dew of Hermon is the holy spirit, then the mountain must represent God himself.

The natural blessings of Mt. Hermon are in the melting snow and springs of water that descend from its slopes. When these unite they form the beautiful and tranquil River Jordan. If Mount Hermon pictures God and the dew his holy spirit, then the River Jordan may also be symbolic. The name Jordan means “Descender.” It is a fitting name, for the Jordan descends from the highest point in Israel to the lowest point on earth.

As Mount Hermon pictures God, and the Dead Sea represents mankind in death, it is reasonable to assume that the downward course of the Jordan River illustrates the descent of mankind, from life and health in the perfection of Eden, to his current condition of death.

There are some interesting aspects of the Jordan’s descent that we notice. First we see that almost 3/4 of the river lies below sea level. There are also two lakes that exist along its path. The first, Lake Huleh, is near sea level. In Biblical times it was called “Merom,” meaning “Elevated.” This may well picture the condition of mankind, as represented in father Adam. In his perfection, pictured at sea level, he was elevated, being given dominion over “every living thing that moved upon the face of the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

After leaving Huleh, the Jordan plunges rapidly below sea level and the waters become very muddy. These two elements picture the rapid descent of man into sinful thoughts and practices as mentioned in Genesis 6:5, “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Jordan’s rapid downward path is then stopped briefly at the next lake, the Sea of Galilee. Though the waters of Jordan enter Galilee very muddy, the lake has a cleansing affect, and the waters leaving Galilee are clear. As Galilee slowed the descent of the Jordan, so we find that the Flood of Noah’s time also slowed the downward course of mankind. It had, in essence, a cleansing affect on our race. The word Galilee means “Circle” and may bolster the application here. God used a rainbow to confirm his covenant with Noah never to send another flood. A rainbow is actually a full circle. We rarely observe the full rainbow circle because the lower portion is blocked by the earth. A full rainbow can be seen by someone standing on a mountain, or in an airplane.

After leaving the Sea of Galilee, the River Jordan takes a most winding and crooked path. Mankind’s descent after the flood continued a crooked course of sin and depravity on its way to the Dead Sea.

And so, in the very topography of Israel, we see an illustration of God’s plan. It begins at God’s holy mount, as the source of blessing and life. It initially blesses man for a brief time in a garden of perfection, pictured by Lake Huleh. It then proceeds to the sinful descent of man below sea level, stopped briefly at the Sea of Galilee. We see there a cleansing of the race through the Noachian Flood. The descent finally ends in a sea of death. From there God promises to restore and uplift our race in the cleansing waters that issue forth from his very temple.

GIVEN TO SALT

There is one final feature of this picture that needs to be examined. After the healing of the Dead Sea we are told, “But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt” (Ezekiel 47:11, Rotherham).

Marshes and miry places refer to stagnant waters. These unhealed waters aptly represent those of mankind who, after being raised from the dead, will consistently refuse to make any progress, even after every possible assistance is given to them by Jesus and the Church. Not all will accept the conditions of the Kingdom (see Isaiah 65:20, Revelation 20:8). Not all hearts will become devoted to truth and righteousness. Not all people will be willing to consecrate their lives to God. These will not receive eternal life, but will be cut off in second death, an unconscious condition from which there will be no resurrection. These will be “given to salt.”

As the last of mankind reach perfection God’s Divine Plan will reach its fruition and the once foul waters that we have all tasted of will be fully healed and made sweet. Abundant life will be lived and loved by all.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17, Rotherham).

— Adapted from a discourse by Bro. George Tabac