



Volume 99 No. 4

AUSTRALIA

October—December 2016

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8)

It is common practice for Australian companies to include a statement in their advertising material advising how long they have been in business. Usually the statement is only a minor component of the advertisement, being comprised of a few words such as “since xxxx” (xxxx being the date when they commenced operations), or “xx years experience”. The purpose of including such information is two-fold: to assure their hoped-for clients that they are “established” and hence will continue to be in business for some time hence, and to convey the impression that the company is experienced and therefore provides expert service.

The same criteria apply to the assurances given in the Bible: not only is the “information” provided of long-standing but also it has been provided by the longest standing and Highest Authority in the universe.

Long standing

Regarding the Bible being of long standing, Psalm 90:2 reads: *“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God”* (Psa. 90:2). God existed before He created the earth; indeed it was He who formed it.

God revealed His long standing to Isaiah also: *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isa. 46:9-10).

God declared to Isaiah that is He is omnipotent—that is, all powerful—and from “ancient times” He has done all that He wished, and that He will continue to do all that He pleases, including the “things that are not yet done”, that is, those elements of His plan that have not yet been carried out.

The prophets

To those testimonies may be added the words of the prophets, as Peter affirms: *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables... We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Pet. 1:16-21).

Belief in the trustworthiness of the prophecies is fundamental to the Christian’s faith. As Paul testified: *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust”* (Acts 24:14-15). The fulfilment of the things prophesied by the “holy men of God” provides the present day Christian with a bulwark for their faith, just as Paul further testified: *“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day,*

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witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22).

Jesus' long standing

Hebrews 1:1-2 declares that Jesus was with God at the creation of the world: "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*". Since Jesus was present with God, and in fact was the One by whom God made the worlds, He is fully aware of all of God's actions since creation.

In that vein Revelation 13:8 is significant. It declares that "*the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world*". "The Lamb" is none other than Jesus Christ: "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). The fact that Jesus was "*slain from the foundation of the world*" is testimony that God has been "*working out His pleasure*" since He created the world; His "*pleasure*" includes Jesus' coming down to earth from heaven (John 6:35-38) and His subsequent crucifixion. Those two events were part of God's plan "*from the foundation of the world*".

The lamb slain

Perhaps there is a deeper truth underlying Revelation 13:8, that Jesus was "*slain from the foundation of the world*". However, as it is commonly translated, Revelation 13:8 does not specify whether Jesus was "slain" before the earth was created, or whether He was not "slain" until after Adam transgressed.

The difference is significant in that it determines whether God planned Adam's transgression before He created the world or whether Jesus' sacrifice was not part of God's purpose until after Adam transgressed (which time, although later, may also be regarded as "*the foundation of the world*").

A third understanding is that God provided for Jesus' death before He created the world, but only because He "foreknew" Adam would transgress. This view may be regarded as something of a "safety net", that is, that before He created the world, God provided for mankind's redemption "should it become necessary". As such it may be contended that Jesus' death was not part of His plan from the "*very beginning*".

Arguments can be substantiated from Scripture for each of the three interpretations regarding when Jesus was "*slain*", and it is acknowledged that among the students of God's Word, all three views are held. The purpose of this article is not to be dogmatic and

dictate to any whether their understanding is correct or incorrect. The principle that determines whether an article is published in this journal is whether consideration of it will help the reader to be "*fully persuaded in their own mind*" (Rom. 14:5). If a reader agrees with the thoughts expressed in the article, it may be taken as a positive aid to their conviction; if they disagree with the understanding expressed, their consideration of the arguments presented might help them to consider the view of another and hence to better explain to others how the verse should be understood.

In either case the exposition to another should be given in the spirit exhorted by the Apostle Peter: "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*" (1 Pet. 3:15). All explanations to others should be given in a sanctified (holy) manner, remembering always that one is able to understand anything of God's plan only because God has revealed it to them, as Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth: "*...we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory... as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Cor. 2:7-14). And as Paul continues: "*For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase*" (1 Cor. 3:4-7).

Peter joins Paul in reminding his readers that the way of the Christian is one of humble progression: "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Nevertheless it seems that no definite conclusion regarding the precise time when God planned Jesus' sacrifice can be drawn from Revelation 13:8; the Greek words used in Revelation 13:8 are not sufficiently precise.

Calling out of the church

Another truth to which long standing testimony of the Scriptures is vital is the “calling out a people for His name” (Acts 15:14).

The Apostle Paul leaves no doubt that the calling out of the church was part of God’s plan from before the foundation of the world: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*” (Eph. 1:3-5).

An examination of the meaning of the word “before” gives added assurance that the calling out of the church was an integral part of God’s plan before He created the world.

Before

According to Strong’s Concordance, the word “before” is translated from the Greek word “pro”, which Dr. Strong defines (#G4253) as “a primary preposition; “fore”, that is, *in front of, prior* (figuratively *superior*) to”. “Pro” occurs 46 times in the New Testament, some of its occurrences being:

- “*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*” (Matt. 5:12). The prophets existed before, that is, at an earlier time, than when Jesus was speaking to His disciples;

- “*For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark*” (Matt. 24:38). Jesus was describing the situation that existed on the earth before, that is, at an earlier time, than when God sent the flood;

- “*Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead*” (John 12:1). Jesus went to Bethany before, that is, at an earlier time, than when He kept the passover.

Thus it seems the Greek word “pro” means before—ahead of in time—and therefore God planned the calling out of the church before He created the cosmos. For that to be the case, it seems consistent to understand that Jesus’ sacrifice was also planned before God created the cosmos.

God’s foreknowledge

There is one feature of God’s plan that is consistent with all three interpretations regarding the time to which Revelation 13:8 refers, and that is as recorded in Isaiah 46:9-10 (quoted previously; but for convenience it is repeated here): “*Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*”. One can certainly hold firmly to the truth of the statement that God knows the end from the beginning, which includes the time at which God planned the necessity, role and time of Jesus’ “slaying”.■

ISRAEL’S BORDERS

In the secular world the borders of Israel have been the subject of heated international debate for centuries, in many cases leading to armed conflict. The comment below is an excerpt from an article by Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz on June 8, 2016. Adam is an Israeli Rabbi (the official definition of a rabbi is “a religious teacher and person who is authorized to make decisions on issues of Jewish law”—see <http://www.jewfaq.org/defs/rabbi.htm>).

* * *

“Prophetic literature shows a clear and surprising picture: the Messianic age will feature an Israel that encompasses the entire world. Haters of Israel can interpret this in a negative light, but the truth is a utopian vision of universal brotherhood.

The borders of Israel cannot be described in absolute terms because they have changed frequently. Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, head of the Gal Eini religious Zionist movement, taught that there were actually

three different sets of borders described in the Bible and one that came later in history.

The final set of borders is described in prophetic teachings:

- The borders promised to Abraham in the book of Genesis, which extended from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18-21). This was much larger than any of the other descriptions in the Bible;
- The borders described in the Bible before the Israelites entered the land (Numbers 34:1-12);
- The borders established by conquest after six years of battle by those who entered the Holy Land with Joshua (Joshua 13);
- The borders of those Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile, which were substantially smaller than before the exile”.

—www.breakingisraelnews.com/69368/global-kingdom-israel-times-messiah/KcitS5qXBfcdpzx1.99■

THE PATH OF THE JUST

“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18)

The following article is based on the writings in 1939 of H. W. Longfellow. The question is whether the events of the last 77 years mean the light shining more brightly today.

* * *

In order to understand the “*path of the just*” throughout the ages it is necessary to understand that God is omnipotent—that is, all powerful—which enables Him to make promises such as He made to Abraham: “*As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be*” (Rom. 4:17-18). Even though Man’s life expectancy in those days was greater than it has been during centuries since, it seemed to Abraham that it was impossible for any man at his age to beget children. And for Sarai to bear children when she was 90 years of age seemed beyond all possibility. Nevertheless that is what God promised: “*And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?*” (Gen. 17:15-17). Nevertheless “... *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*” (Rom. 4:3).

Abraham’s justification

Abraham’s righteousness was the equivalent of what today is more commonly called justification; the term simply means “to be rendered innocent”. The expression does not mean that Abraham was perfect, but that God did not level his transgressions against him, as Romans 4:1-2 reads: “*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God*”. There were no grounds “*pertaining to the flesh*”—that is, deeds he did during his earthly life—by which Abraham could claim to be righteous, not even the preparations he made to kill his son Isaac. God deemed him to be righteous because he believed God. It was on the basis of his faith, and his faith alone, that God deemed him to be righteous. His belief was that God would fulfill His promise.

Likewise Noah was deemed to be a “*just man*” (Gen. 6:9). Noah is also said to be “*perfect*”. However Noah was not perfect in the literal or fleshly sense; it was because of Noah’s faith that God counted him as righteous: “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*” (Heb. 11:7). God regarded Noah’s faith to be as Abraham’s faith, as is evident from the surrounding verses in Hebrews 11: “*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went*”, and “*But without faith it is impossible to please him*” (Heb 11:6-8).

Paul repeated the words of Isaiah 41:26: “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:10). The fact that Noah was not perfect in the absolute sense is borne out by the fact that he died: “*And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died*” (Gen. 9:29).

The glimmer of hope

Notwithstanding the fact that neither Noah nor Abraham was perfect and therefore did not gain eternal life at that stage, God has always given a glimmer of hope that it was not His plan that man should live a few years and then perish. Such a plan would mean that His plan for mankind was contrary to His purpose in sending His Son to earth to die on the Cross: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). However, so far, that glimmer of hope has been concealed from the majority of mankind.

Nevertheless the “only reason” He could consistently give any glimmer of hope is because He is omnipotent. It is because He is omnipotent that nothing could prevent His plans from being realised, and therefore Jesus’ sacrifice being successful. It was on that basis that He was able to regard Noah and Abraham as righteous: He was “able” to “*count those things which be not*” (Jesus’ righteous sacrifice) *as though they were*”. As Peter declared: “*Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which*

is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).

The glimmer of hope revealed to Eve

On the very day the sentence of death was pronounced, and before the guilty pair had been expelled from their beautiful home—the Garden of Eden—a statement was made by the One who sentenced them, that some descendant of Eve would bruise the head of the serpent.

Eve had been instrumental in procuring the disobedience of herself and her husband. However an examination of the circumstances under which she was deceived, and consequently disobeyed, does not condemn her outright, but rather exemplifies God’s wisdom and supernatural power.

Eve’s deception was consistent with the prevailing situation. She was of human form and therefore of a lower generation than the angels: *“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psa. 8:3-6).* Even though Man was set over God’s earthly creation, the serpent was of a higher level of species: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made” (Gen. 3:1),* and therefore was able to deceive Eve: *“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14).* Deception is when one mind is led to believe their understanding is correct when it is not correct. That situation is facilitated by one agent (the deceiver) being of a higher intellectual ability than the other (the one who is deceived).

One element necessary to appreciate God’s wisdom in the scenario in the Garden is to realise that it also demonstrates God’s omnipotence: there never was any doubt that Eve would be deceived; indeed Paul declares that it was by this incident that God would accomplish His plans, being the author of Man’s fall: *“For the creature (creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20-21).* The creation was deliberately made subject to this present situation by God; He subjected it *“by reason”* because His plan has always

been for mankind to be delivered from the ensuing bondage of corruption. And so all is in harmony with God’s grand plan—that He subjected it—because the experience will ultimately be to Man’s advantage, as Solomon declared: *“And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised (profited) therewith” (Eccl. 1:13).*

Nevertheless, in spite of all those considerations, the glimmer of hope given to Eve—that the seed would bruise the serpent’s head—was far from definite in expression of detail. In itself it indicated only that at some unspecified future time the serpent who had misled would be crushed, and his present advantage would be turned to defeat. But as to who was to be the descendant of the woman, and how He would accomplish His victory, were not stated. Neither was anything said as to the scope of the benefits, if any, that would accrue to the woman and others of her posterity. Nevertheless Adam and Eve might have inferred that this promise, indefinite as it was, gave some ground for hope that this calamity would be undone and they would be restored to their home.

The promise was made several thousand years ago, and it has not yet been fulfilled. But the delay shows that God’s appreciation of time is on a much larger scale than human’s frame. Indeed a thousand years in Man’s time is but a day in His time (2 Pet. 3:8), and so the Christian can rest assured that in His time the God of Peace will bruise the serpent.

Promise to Noah

After the Flood had subsided, so that Noah and his human and animal companions could leave the ark and again inhabit the dry land, God made a promise to Noah, which later was expressed as a covenant between God and all flesh, that never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood. The perpetual succession of seed time and harvest, summer and winter on the earth was guaranteed by the covenant. In guaranteeing the perpetual existence of the earth, the ordained dwelling for the human race, it would seem that God would have it understood that inasmuch as the dwelling is to be preserved there will be human beings to occupy it. This a ray of light additional to that given to Eve: Noah’s star began to shine in the second or third (thousand year) day after the star given to Eve, so the additional light granted to Noah was not long in coming. However the darkness of sin and unbelief had become very dense indeed just before the Flood.

Promise to Abraham

Some few hundred of “our years” after Noah’s star of

promise began to shine there appeared a new luminary: the promise to Abraham and the covenant God made with him embodying this great promise. To Abraham, God promised—and confirmed the same with an oath formally sworn and according to the manner then in vogue among men—that in his seed *“shall all families of the earth be blessed”*.

From Eve’s star shone the light that the serpent shall be bruised, but nothing was said of a benefit to her descendants; from Noah’s star came the light that the earthly home is to be preserved in perpetuity, now from Abraham’s star shines the light that all the families of the earth are to be blessed in one of his descendants. Verily the light shone more brightly.

But in the meantime dark clouds of error—some superstitious, some scientific, all more or less sinful—have obscured and from many have hidden, these beautiful stars of hope and promise, so that vast numbers of persons are quite in ignorance of these lights, while others who know or who have heard something of them cannot now see all clearly. From the human perspective this is very saddening and part of the mission of Christian witness is to clear away the confusion and ignorance so that many hearts may be gladdened by the gracious rays of light.

Faith counted for righteousness

Of Abraham it was said that he *“believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness”*. While this statement in so many words first occurs in connection with Abraham, it is to be understood from Hebrews 11:39-40—*“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”*—that the same blessing was true of Abraham’s predecessors in the way of faith, back to the very first, just as it has been true since Abraham’s time of all his successors in the same way—*“the path of the just”*—to the present day. The principle of the imputation of righteousness on account of faith is indeed one of the fundamentals of God’s dealings with men, and will continue to be so until all His purpose respecting the blessing and salvation of men is completed.

The imputation of righteousness on account of faith to a person who is not righteous in himself requires the offering of a sacrifice acceptable to God; the One who imputes righteousness to the imperfect believer. This sacrifice is shown by the Apostle Paul to be that of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins had not been offered in Abraham’s time and was not offered until two thousand years later. How then could it be the basis or ground or sure foundation of that

righteousness imputed to Abraham, to Noah, to Abel, and to others in ancient times on account of their faith? The answer is that from the very foundation of the world Jesus Christ was the “Lamb slain”, and even though the sacrifice had not been offered in Abraham’s time, the fulfilment of God’s purpose was sure and steadfast, and could not be thwarted by any influence, human or spiritual. Indeed God’s power is so utopian that the successful offering of the sacrifice was never in doubt, and hence He was able to *“call those things which be not as though they were”* (Rom. 4:17). Thus He was able to justly impute righteousness to believers before the event just as He is able to impute righteousness to those who believe after the sacrifice has been offered.

Promise to Moses

Moses was one of the great men of all time; one of the majestic figures of human history. Under divine guidance, and upheld by divine power, he accomplished a feat that has never been equalled. Notwithstanding the hostility and opposition of Egypt, he led away safely, from the greatest and most cultured nation of that day, an army of about three million slaves (the children of Israel), and welded them into a nation. How little the self discipline among those people, and how much forgetfulness of the wonders that were wrought by divine power in Egypt, was soon shown by their complaints in their journey to freedom. And how little their conviction that their leader was God’s servant among them, was evident by their deliberate decision *“up, make us gods... for as for this Moses... we know not what is become of him”* (Exod. 32:1) while he was in the mount receiving instruction from the God who had brought about their miraculous deliverance.

Moses was not only the divinely appointed leader of this people: he was also their lawgiver and the mediator of the covenant formally made between God and them. In his personal character Moses was one of those men of faith to whom righteousness was imputed in anticipation of the sacrifice that was to be offered. In his official capacities Moses was a shadow of the Coming One who would supersede him as leader of God’s people. Moses had been given this promise of another leader to be raised up, and he made it known to the children of Israel so they might be watchful and expectant, ready to receive the promised one and to render Him obedience in whatever He would say to them: *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken”* (Deut. 18:15).

The star of promise given to Moses shone more brightly that it did to Eve, Noah, and Abraham. Several centuries later Peter reminded them that God

had provided a successor to Moses just as He promised: *“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities”* (Acts 3:22-26). Peter enlightened them that the promises to Abraham and Moses find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ: He is not only the Seed of Abraham, but also the One who was to be raised up *“like unto Moses”*. Peter also gave assurance that Jesus is the promised descendant of Eve who is to bruise the serpent’s head, as indeed the New Testament plainly enough states: *“... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8).

Moses, in his official capacities—one of which was that of Mediator—was a shadow, so also was the Law Covenant which he mediated. However the Law did not have any merciful provision of justification and life for those who sought, unsuccessfully though sincerely, to commend themselves to God by its means. The Law of Moses said: *“Do and live”* (Lev. 18:5). None of the children of Israel could *“do”* therefore none could live—Jesus Christ excepted—and so all came under the curse of the Law. This curse was additional to the inherited curse—like the rest of the race—from Adam’s transgression. It required the Redeemer to hang on the tree of Calvary to remove the Adamic death sentence for both Jew and Gentile: *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Gal. 3:13-14).

Promise to David

When David desired to build a house for the Lord because he considered it was not fitting that he should dwell in a house of cedar while the Ark of God dwelt behind curtains, the prophet encouraged him in what must have seemed to them both an entirely worthy conception. But that same night the Lord gave the prophet a message for David, to say that David should not build the proposed house for the Lord, but his son should build it. Meanwhile the Lord promised to build David a house, not meaning a

material house, but that his “house” or family should supply the One who would sit on the throne of the Lord for ever. Through the prophet Isaiah this promise is called *“the sure mercies of David”* (Isa. 55:3). Later Paul explained that *“The sure mercies of David”* is Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and is the fulfilment of God’s promise, Jesus being the Son of David: *“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David”* (Acts 13:32-34). The gospel ray was now shining brighter than at any time previously: the One who would bruise the serpent, God’s plan to preserve the earth forever, the means by which God’s promise to Abraham could be accomplished, Moses’ successor, and the sure mercies of David were all identified.

Promise through Jeremiah

The Law Covenant, under which the children of Israel were bound and specially cursed, was *“weak through the flesh”* (Rom. 8:3), that is, none of those under it was strong enough to obey all its precepts and thus become entitled to life. Under the Law, the children of Israel were in a hopeless position of despair. They were prisoners in a pit wherein was no water; they found no way to be delivered from *“this body of death”* (Rom. 7:24).

But the Lord caused a star of promise to shine in the time of Jeremiah, the prophet, about six hundred years before Jesus’ first advent. The promise was that a New Covenant would be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, and that this New Covenant would contain every necessary arrangement for the extension of divine mercy and forgiveness to those under it, so that God would be able to completely forget their sins and iniquities: *“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: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt... But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, 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”* (Jer. 31:31-33).

How privileged are those whose eyes God has touched and so are able to realise that *“the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”*. ■

ISRAEL: PREPARING FOR MESSIAH

'Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? [Malachi 3:1 (The Israel Bible)]

The following report is printed with the kind permission of "BreakingIsraelNews".

It reports an interview by Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz given on July 20, 2016, 12:30 p.m. (Israel time).

* * * *

Last Saturday night, Rabbi Shalom Berger, the spiritual leader of the Mishkoltz sect of Hassidic Orthodox Jews, paid a visit to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, one of the leading rabbis of this generation.

A large crowd gathered to witness the auspicious meeting of these two great Torah authorities. Rabbi Berger brought a copy of his book on the section of the Talmud (Oral Law) dealing with Shabbat, as a gift for Rabbi Kanievsky, who studied a few pages and encouraged him to write more books of this kind.

Rabbi Berger then asked Rabbi Kanievsky if it is true that this year is especially auspicious for the coming of the Messiah.

Rabbi Kanievsky answered without hesitation. "Of course, the year, 5776, in Hebrew letters (תשע"ו) spells 'salvation' (תשועה)."

Breaking Israel News spoke to Rabbi Yosef Berger, the son of Mishkoltz Rabbi Shalom Berger and the rabbi of David's Tomb in Jerusalem, about Rabbi Kanievsky's declaration. Rabbi Yosef was by his father's side when the two Torah greats spoke.

Rabbi Yosef told *Breaking Israel News*, "It is generally accepted that Rabbi Kanievsky is on a high spiritual level approaching prophecy, what Jewish scholars call *ruach hakodesh* (holy spirit). He has been speaking about Messiah this year in a way he has never done before."

Rabbi Berger asked Rabbi Kanievsky what must be done to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Rabbi Kanievsky gave an unexpectedly direct and simple response: Wait.

"Now," said Rabbi Kanievsky, "All that can be done is to anticipate the imminent arrival of the Messiah."

Read more at <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/72238/rabbi-kanievsky-mishkoltz-rabbi-can-done-wait-messiah/#KXsvwxIRx73LVdS0.99>.

Comment:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom 11:25). Has the time arrived for God to begin opening Israel's eyes?■

LET HIM TEACH THEE

LET Him teach thee, weary soul; (Psa 27:11.)
Let His hands now make thee whole; (Job 5:18.)
Let His peace thy heart control,-- (Col. 3:15.)
Let Him teach thee.

Into paths of righteousness (Psa. 23:3.)
Let Him lead and let Him bless; (Psa. 67:7.)
Let Him save thee from distress,-- (Psa. 107:13.)
Let Him teach thee.

Let Him guide thee with His eye; (Psa. 32:8.)
Let His hand thy need supply; (Phil. 4:19.)
Let His goodness satisfy,-- (Psa. 65:4.)
Let Him teach thee.

Let His good Word sanctify; (John 17:17.)
Let the furnace purify; (1 Peter 1:7.)
Let Him say, "Fear not; 'tis I",-- (Mark 6:50.)
Let Him teach thee.

Let Him probe thy heart within; (Psa. 66:10.)
Let Him search out every sin; (Psa. 139:23.)
Let the glorious light shine in,-- (2 Cor. 4:6)
Let Him teach thee.

Let the Shepherd kindly feed; (Isa. 40:11.)
Let Him firmly, truly lead;
(He'll not break the bruised reed,) (Isa. 42:3.)
Let Him teach thee.

Let Him give thee songs at night; (Job 35:10.)
Let Him make the darkness light; (Isa. 42:16.)
Let Him set thy spirit right,-- (Psa. 51:10.)
Let Him teach thee.

In the tumult let Him hide, (Psa. 27:5; Psa. 31:20.)
Let Him keep thee at His side; (Ex. 33:21.)
Let His name be glorified,-- (Isa. 61:3.)
Let Him teach thee.■

THE MOST HOLY NAME

In Hebrew, God's name is the tetragram: YHWH ("tetra" means four; "gram" is something written; hence four letters). According to Charles Ryrie's Study Bible it occurs more than 6500 times in the Scriptures. Consequently there is good reason to examine its meaning.

In Old Testament times, a name was not only a means of identification, but also a title that reflects the person's character. One example of a name being an identity is Nabel, whose name means fool, and as such is the target of Abigail's explanation to David: "... for as his name is, so is he, Nabel is his name, and folly is with him..." (1 Sam. 25:25).

Likewise God reveals his identity through his name. Exodus 3:14 reads: "*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you*". "AM" is translated from a primitive Hebrew root meaning "to exist, that is, be or become, come to pass". A wide variety of English words is used to convey the thought of the original Hebrew. One meaning that may be ascribed to it is "he causes to become"; a meaning that is appropriate for the creator of all things. Additionally He not only caused the physical universe and all living beings to come into existence, but He continues to cause His will and purpose to be carried out.

YHWH

While GOD is reverentially addressed in the Bible with different titles such as "our Father", "our Lord", and other phrases such as "Alpha and Omega" and "King of Kings", the tetragrammaton YHWH is unique. It is exclusive in all Hebrew literature, both secular and religious; it is never used to refer to any other person or creature, only to God: JEHOVAH.

In the King James version the title "Jehovah" occurs only four times:

- Exodus 6:3: "*And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them*";
- Psalm 83:18: "*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth*";
- Isaiah 12:2: "*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation*"
- Isaiah 26:4: "*Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength*".

The King James Version

The King James Version is an esteemed translation of the Holy Scriptures. It has been known to hundreds of millions for more than 400 years as the Authorized King James Version.

For those 400 years this English translation has been a bright light. Although the King James Version was not the first translation of the Word of God into the English language, it has been referred to as the HOLY BIBLE, that is, it has been regarded as one of the most trustworthy and influential translations of all times. Because it became the Bible of the common man, it has been said that the entire English language was progressed more by this version of the Bible than any other literary work in English.

The preface of the original King James Version reads: "*Zeal to promote the common good, whether it be by devising anything ourselves, or revising that which hath been laboured by others, deserveth certainly much respect and esteem, but yet findeth but cold entertainment in the world. It is welcomed with suspicion instead of love, and with emulation instead of thanks: and if there be any hole for cavil* to enter, and cavil*, if it do not find a hole, will make one; it is sure to be misconstrued, and in danger to be condemned*" (*CAVIL: "To find fault unnecessarily; raise trivial objections").

Jehovah

While "Jehovah" is the most important name in the Earth, it has been trivialized by regarding it merely as the traditional Hebrew name for God and only one of the many names of God, rather than recognizing it as being descriptive of God's character and authority. Later translators have sought to improve on the King James Version, however many have continued to substitute "Lord" instead of the name "Jehovah".

Strong's Concordance defines the Hebrew word translated LORD (#H3068) as "(the) self Existent or eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God".

Jehovah is not just one of God's many names in current use, but is His great name forever: "*And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations*" (Exod. 3:15).

In 1870 the councils of the Church of England recommended to the British Crown that a revision of

the Authorized King James Version (AKJV) be produced and so the Revised Version (RV) of the Old and New Testaments was published in 1885. It was the first officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Version. A group of translators from the United States of America was chosen to simultaneously collaborate with the translators to produce a version in “American English”. This counterpart to the RV of 1885 is known as the American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV) and is largely identical to the Revised Version, the most noticeable difference being the restoration of “Jehovah” in approximately 7000 places, rather than LORD, to represent the Divine Name: “the tetragrammaton YHWH”.

God’s jealousy

Jehovah is a jealous God: *“Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”* (Exod. 34:12-14).

While one may muse over the reasons why the translators have almost totally avoided using the name “Jehovah”, His name has been preserved to some extent by it being the only tetragrammaton in the Hebrew language; just as God as Creator is unique so also is His name. And the prophecy is that when God (Jehovah) reveals Himself to His chosen people of Israel, He will bring again His name of Jehovah into common use: *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there”* (Ezek. 39:25-28).

The Trinity

One consequence of not fully appreciating the name Jehovah is the accommodation of the concept of the Trinity. It is not claimed that the non-use of the word “Jehovah” is the cause of the term “Trinity” being introduced into Christian literature, but merely that its non-use tends to mask the authority and individuality of Jehovah and His Son Jesus Christ. On the other hand, use of “Jehovah” and conscious realisation of

its meaning is one factor that guards against the two being confused.

Final comment

The non-use of the name Jehovah in many recent translations is made more remarkable by the fact that the significance of YHWH is well known. Regarding God’s Name, the preface of the American Standard Version of 1901 reads: *“This Memorial Name, as explained in Exodus 3:14-15, and emphasized as such over and over in the original text of the Old Testament, designates God as the personal God, as the covenant God, the God of revelation, the deliverer, the friend of Abraham, He is the Eternal One, the helper of those who are in trouble”*. Much can be made of each of the characteristics of God’s character quoted in that preface.

The uniqueness of the tetragrammaton YHWH is one means that aids the believer to appreciate that “Jehovah” is indeed the Almighty, the I AM, and hence His plan will be totally fulfilled in His time.

A treasure

Nevertheless the Scriptures, in all its various forms and translations, is a blessing to all who are privileged to be able to peruse its pages, and to whom its message affords hope and comfort. It might be beneficial to remember that, prior to the invention of the printing press, few people had books of any kind, let alone a Bible, and even after the press was invented providing for the mass production of the King James Version, few people could afford to buy one. So precious was its pages that many bought it one page at a time and shared it with others.■

LISTENING AND DOING

James 1:22-23 reads: *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass”*.

Those few words contain a powerful lesson:

- Listening is very important because it enables one to learn what the Scriptures say, what the speaker holds in their heart, and about oneself (are we prepared to learn?);
- Doing is important because the Christian must not *“love in word only but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:18). James continues: *“But wilt thou know O vain man, that faith without works is dead”* (Jas. 2:20).

James’ letter is addressed to the *“twelve tribes scattered abroad”* (James 1:1). However his exhortations apply to all believers.■

WHOM JESUS LOVED

The crucifixion of Jesus, as recorded in John 19:26, is rich in human sentiment, so much so that it may be regarded as the moment when human emotion reached its pinnacle: *“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, ‘Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home”* (John 19:26-27).

The only man who has ever come down from heaven was being crucified. He was God’s only Son and had come to earth *“that they might have life”* (John 10:10). However, in spite of His personal agony, He cared for His earthly mother and asked one of His disciples to provide for her.

One may wonder to which disciple Jesus committed His mother’s care. The expression *“whom he loved”* might seem to indicate that there was one particular disciple whom He loved more than the others.

The expression *“whom He loved”* occurs only in John 19:26, however the expression *“whom Jesus loved”* occurs four times, all of which are in the book of John: John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20.

A similar expression—*“other disciple”*—occurs four times: John 18:16; 20:3-4 and 20:8, but no reference provides any direct reference regarding who is meant.

Hence it is unclear what significance should be given to the expressions: was Jesus’ love for that disciple greater than for any of the other disciples?

Further, if all the references are to the same disciple, what particular characteristics did He possess that made Jesus prefer him above the others?

Textual evidence

There is little textual evidence to support the understanding that the disciple is John. The Greek words used for “love” in these verses imply a general affection, rather than a specific —or singular—love. Strong’s Concordance quotes the Greek in John 13:23, 19:26, 21:7 and 21:20 as *“agapao”* (G25), which is defined as “to love (in a social or moral sense)”. *“Agapao”* is used to describe God’s love for the world (John 3:16), Jesus’ love for *“Martha, her sister and Lazarus”* (John 11:5), and the disciples’ love for one another (John 15:17; Rom. 13:8).

Another Greek word that is translated “love” is *“phileo”* (Strong’s Concordance G5368) which is

defined as “to be a friend to (*fond of* [an individual or an object]), that is, *have affection* for (denoting *personal* attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while G25 is wider, embracing especially the judgment and the *deliberate* assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety: the two thus stand related... the former being chiefly of the *heart* and the latter of the *head*)”. That definition indicates the Jesus’ love for “the disciple” was not a personal love for an individual.

Notwithstanding to whom John’s record refers, one can be assured that Jesus loved them all: *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you”* (John 15:12).

Side effect

If Jesus had a “special love” for John, or any other of His disciples, it could mean that it is acceptable for His followers to have different levels of affection for various ones in their fellowship.

Such a disposition is contrary to both Paul’s and Peter’s teaching: *“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (1 Cor. 12:22-27), and *“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins”* (1 Pet. 4:8).

Another over-riding principle is that all of Christ’s followers are *“... but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph. 2:19-22).

Maybe John did not wish to give any grounds for the assumption that He was preferred above any other and so did not refer to himself by name. ■

HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED: THE PRINCE OF PEACE

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The last title ascribed to The Child in Isaiah 9:6—*"The Prince of Peace"*—gives an air of hope and confidence in these unsettled days when the news bulletins are filled with stories of conflict.

A prince is a leader; one who is in charge of a group, and is elsewhere translated "captain": *"So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes" (Deut. 1:15).*

Subordinate

While they are in charge of a group, a prince is still subject to a higher power. They are not the ultimate authority, "merely" carrying out the wishes of their leader. Saul was one such prince: *"Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of, this same shall reign over my people" (1 Sam. 9:15-17).* Saul was anointed to be a prince over Israel to carry out the Lord's work.

Consistent with being subject to a higher power, the scope of a prince is limited in both the geographical area over which they have jurisdiction, and the people who live in that region. Saul's mission was to bring the nation of Israel out of the land of the Philistines.

David a Prince

Ezekiel 34 describes the role of prince David in the re-gathering of Israel: *"And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (verses 23-25).* David's role will be such that he is called a prince.

Michael as prince

Daniel 12:1 foretells a time when Michael will stand up and assume His power as a prince: *"And at that*

time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book". Thus the first event in the reign of Michael as prince will be a time of trouble and *"not of peace"* (Jer. 30:5). Revelation 12:7-8 confirms that initially there will be a battle between Michael and the dragon, with Michael being the victor: *"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven".*

World wide dominion

Michael's realm will not be limited to the nations of Israel but will extend to the whole earth: *"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. 72:7-8).*

Likewise His authority will not be limited to the nation of Israel but will be over all nations: *"Then the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28).*

While Michael's realm, as a prince, will be world wide and He will dominate over all other powers, He will be subject to God, the Ultimate Authority. ■

**PEOPLES PAPER
AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM**
ABN 23 734 654 922 Reg. No, A0022186J

*Published by the Berean Bible Institute, Inc.
P.O. Box 402 Rosanna, Victoria, Australia, 3084
Email: EnquiryBBI@gmail.com*

Internet: www.bbi.org.au

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