



THE MILLENIAL AGE

PACE Wednesday Night Bible Class

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1

PURPOSED FROM THE BEGINNING

OVER the years the Bible student gleans a heart-stirring picture of what God will bring about in this fair earth. And so with Bible in hand we go forward in thought to the future age, seeking to appreciate its beauty and grandeur, its holiness, its happiness and peaceful prosperity. There is the vastness of the world-wide administration, the awe and majesty of the great temple worship, the detail of life for the individual. The more we study and contemplate, the more real these things of our faith become. We hope to unfold this vision of faith in a series of articles. The intended topics are:

- A Divine Plan from the beginning.
- The setting up of the Kingdom.
- Preparing Israel to meet their King.
- The Theocracy: Worldwide Administration.
- Daily Life in the Kingdom.
- Worship in the Age to come.

The present world

We dwell on the present world only to provide a contrast with what shall be. To us it is a very sick world, crisis-ridden, evil, and nearing its end. Nevertheless in these last days of Gentile rule we can see the hand of God preparing for the coming age. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4) summarises our age. This has brought about a universal awareness of "peoples, nations and tongues"; also in some degree a civilising of backward areas with literacy, communications and a rising standard of living. In some senses the whole world is being prepared for that One King, One Empire, One Religion. At present the intercourse of nations is the reverse of harmonious: nationalism, independence, rivalry, bitterness are the manifest features. They certainly have one thing in common – a universal godlessness, a full development of that wisdom that is from beneath. This earthly wisdom, with its wonderful inventions, makes man full of pride, and scornful of a Creator and our responsibility to Him. And this wickedness brings increasing sorrow, tragedy and disaster.

Out of this turmoil of human pride and human failure and its moral chaos, God will bring a new order. Righteousness, "glory to God in the highest", blessing, peace, will be everywhere. It is hard to imagine the nations of today in so changed a spirit that they say, "Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths" (Isa. 2:3).

The world to come

This is not the result of a sudden rescue operation by God. In His foreknowledge all was planned from the beginning. Says Paul to the Ephesian brethren: “(God) having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ...” (Eph. 1:9, 10). Or as another version puts it: “And it also accords with the good will which God purposed to exhibit in Christ, in view of that divine order which was to mark the completion of the ages, when he should make everything, both in heaven and earth, centre in him” (20th Century).

So there have been the various “ages” under God’s control. History has not been haphazard: “(God) hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). Not only Israel, but all nations have been under His controlling hand to prepare them for the kingdom. As the Psalmist writes: “All nations *whom thou hast made* shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name” (Psa. 86:9).

The harmony of the future age is not utter uniformity. Variety with harmony is the hallmark of God’s work. Nations with their differing customs, traditions, dress, and facial appearance will mingle together in friendship. As with a beautiful landscape that is so pleasing in its harmonious blending of different kinds of trees, shrubs, and flowers; so it will be with the nations, especially as they assemble at Jerusalem to worship.

Wonderful as the millennial age will be, it is only an intermediate state. It is not the ultimate perfection: rather it is an age of progression towards the final perfection. “He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). The great enemy in league with death is human nature. It will still exist in the millennium, but it will be kept under control by firm discipline:

“He that overcometh ... to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 2:26, 27).

The millennial age has the purpose of providing enough God-fearing people developed by faith and love to be worthy of eternal life at the end of the millennium. These will constitute the “earth” of the final “heavens and earth” of Revelation 21:1. When sin and death have gone for ever, there will continue a heaven and earth – rulers and ruled – all immortal: a divine society, the details of which have not been revealed.

How is the millennial world governed?

When the kingdom is established, human nature with its self-will and rebellious spirit is not miraculously changed. The change in behaviour comes about by a firm and righteous control; a formidable task indeed to maintain law and order where the laws are not pleasing to the flesh. And this control has to be applied not just to one nation, but to many nations, a basic 70, (Genesis 10). A very extensive administration, centred on the capital city Jerusalem, will be required. The Creator has been preparing for this very requirement

through 6,000 years. He has made known His plan and purpose, yet very few know it or believe in it.

To the world's astonishment it will become manifest that the nation of Israel is to rule the world. All has been prepared: the land, the city, the king, the government, and the people. Isaiah has given us quite a detailed picture in chapter 60. The end of the previous chapter tells us that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Zion ..." (vv. 19, 20). Then chapter 60 tells us:

1. The Zion government becomes the light of the world (vv. 1, 2).
2. Kings and nations come to Zion's light (v. 3).
3. Her sons and daughters are gathered in, brought by the ships of Tarshish: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God" (vv. 8, 9).
4. Israel becomes a righteous people, inheriting the land: "Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever ... I the LORD will hasten it in his time" (v. 21).
5. All nations become tributary: "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee." "All they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet" (vv. 12, 10, 14).
6. Commerce and wealth will focus on Israel and their land: "Thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces (wealth) of the Gentiles shall come to thee." "Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breast of kings" (vv. 5, 16).
7. Zion's light administers justice and peace: "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land" (vv. 17, 18).
8. It will be a stable unchanging rulership: "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself" (v. 20).

Unrecognised by men, preparations for this new order have been steadily moving to their consummation, under angelic control. The land and the city are identified in the book of Genesis. The king – Son of God and son of David – is revealed in Old and New Testaments. The rulers will come from all the past ages, yet all prepared on the same principles of faith in the promises and obedience to God's laws, making them fit for world rulership, with characters that are honest and upright, without partiality, tempered with compassion, attuned to the exaltation of God. They were all known of God from the beginning, that each stone of the building might be "fitly framed together" for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:21). As the Master could say to James and John, "To sit on my right hand, and

on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father” (Matt. 20:23). Lastly, the people that make up the bulk of the nation of Israel will be a generation that has inbuilt into their experience 3,500 years of divine chastisement. They are the holy nation, springing from Abraham, and the inheritors of the promises nationally speaking. They are God’s first-born son from the land of Egypt. They became the holy nation at Sinai:

“Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob ... Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and *brought you unto myself*. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me *above all people*: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:3–6).

A holy people

When the house of Israel and the house of Judah enter into the new covenant (Jer. 31:31) the law of God at last will be in their inward parts and written on their hearts; the LORD will be their God and they shall be His people (verse 33). Then will the words of Exodus 19:6 be fulfilled: “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” This is the apostle Peter’s future “new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). “Heaven and earth” includes the whole nation of Israel – King, princes and people. Together they are a kingdom of priests, to minister righteousness to the rest of the world. Christendom is in darkness concerning all this, because they do not realise that the nation of Israel is to become a righteous people when their King returns.

The nation of Israel, established in the land of promise under the benign reign of their Messiah and the guidance of their rulers, the saints – this will be the kingdom of God. The rest of the world, as a vast empire, will be under the administration of this kingdom of God. The saints as a world rulers of this new age will have the co-operation of mortal Jews, providing the vast administration that the situation requires. Under the saints, the Jews will be officials throughout the earth. In Isaiah 61, the theme of chapter 60, from which we have quoted, is continued. Verses 1 to 3 speak of the blessing of those who have been mourners in Zion in the days of their pilgrimage. Verses 4 and 5 describe the restoration of the cities of Israel; with the alien as Israel’s keepers of flocks, ploughmen and vinedressers, because the people of Israel have a nobler part to play. As verse 6 adds:

“Ye shall be named the priests of the LORD: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.”

Israel’s future

The people spoken of here are the people of Israel, and not exclusively the saints. This is clear from the next verse: “For your shame ye shall have double; and for your confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.” This is the experience of wayward Israel, having shame and confusion. The world-wide activities of Israel in the future are expressed in the rich language of Isaiah 27:6.

“He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and fill the face of the earth with fruit.”

The descendants of Abraham have their part to play in bringing about the great blessing: “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Our Jewish brethren will have an honorable position in all the earth:

“Behold at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and praise among all the people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD” (Zeph. 3:19, 20).

Discussion Questions 1

1. Read Hebrews 11:13-15. What does a prophecy vision do for us?
2. Why is having a prophetic vision of future important?
3. What verses or events/stories from the scriptures illustrate this for you?
4. Read Daniel 12:1-4. What do you understand the last phrase of *verse 4* to mean (“*many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*”)?
5. Read Ephesians 1:9-10. What is the “fullness of time” that is being referred to here? Be specific.
6. Have there been any time periods or ages not under God’s control?
7. When is the *final* perfection?
8. What is the purpose of the millennial kingdom?
9. How is the millennial kingdom going to be governed?
10. Read Isaiah 60. Do you follow / understand the 8 points listed in the article as to the interpretation given for the chapter?

11. What vehicle is God using to bring about His future Kingdom?
 - a. How's it relate to the world?
 - b. How's it relate to us in the household of faith?

12. What is the role of the Jew (nation of Israel) in the millennial kingdom?
 - a. What status will they have?

2

THE SETTING UP OF THE KINGDOM

THE time of the setting up of the kingdom will be the most calamitous of all history. Daniel describes it as “a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that time” (12:1). It will be worldwide in its effects; and whereas previous upheavals – political earthquakes – only replaced one human rule by another, leaving human nature still in charge, this will be a vast change, bringing human nature under the control of divine law. Or as the Scripture puts it:

“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:2).

The great men – politicians, financiers, scientists, religious leaders, entertainers – will lose their status and authority; the common people will lose their pleasures. We can readily see the picture of Psalm 2 in the resistance to this unacceptable “repressive” rule:

“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed (Christ), saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us ... Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”

The last trumpet

The Revelation record reaches this crisis in the sounding of the last trumpet, and the pouring out of the seven vials of the wrath of God:

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever ... And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them that destroy the earth” (11:15, 18).

Following the resurrection – the time of the dead – Christ and his saints attain to a ruling position, expressed in verse 19 as “the temple of God opened in heaven”, and the ensuing conflict is graphically expressed in the figures of “lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

The day of recompense

This epoch is calamitous for a further reason: it is the occasion that gathers up the consequences of man’s disregard of, and enmity towards, the God of the Bible. The opposition to the true Christian Gospel by the apostasy over the centuries is brought to a head with the manifestation of Christ in person on earth again. He comes to vindicate his

faithful few, who each in their day preached the way of righteousness in word and deed; and suffered cruelly at the hands of those in power. Their treatment is illustrated in Revelation 12:17:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Now these faithful witnesses are alive again, strong and immortal, ready to render a recompense to their enemies:

“Reward her (Babylon) as she rewarded you, and double unto her according to her works” (Rev. 18:6).

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her” (18:20).

“In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain on earth” (18:24).

Such is the relation of the saints to Babylon the great. All the evil done to Christ’s brethren over some 1,600 years is to be avenged. This is appropriate at this time because the evil apostate system will have reached its greatest glory when Christ comes. The day of judgement is described in chapters 17 and 18. In chapter 17 the harlot woman is seen sitting “upon many waters”, and also riding the ten-horned beast. And when she has been judged, the saints rejoice:

“Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at their hand” (19:1, 2)

To fill out the detail of the judgement the symbolism is changed. Chapter 17 concludes: “The woman which thou sawest is that great city that reigns over the kings of the earth.” So the following chapter presents the judgement of the great whore as the destruction of the great city Babylon. This picture in Revelation 18 of the final Babylon is fascinating. It teaches us that there is yet to develop an all-embracing system governing Europe – reigning over the kings of the earth – and also influencing the rest of the world; the many waters of “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues”. We are told “*all* nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (v. 3). This worldwide system prospers. There is commercial and religious intercourse, expressed in the figure of “the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies”. And verse 7 adds:

“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”

We are seeing the beginning of this final build-up of her glory in the increasing influence of the papacy and in the work of the present Pope among many nations, as well as in

Europe. It is only a beginning; a vast system is to develop: the counterpart of the original great Babylon that ruled over the nations, and spoke similar words of pride (Isaiah 47).

It is Revelation 18 that we have the Bible account of the enemies of Christ and his rulership. There are many powers in the earth today which we may think important, but we shall be wise to be guided by the word of God. Babylon the Great is the “city” that will be governing the world and which must be destroyed to allow the other “city”, the holy city, new Jerusalem, to take over. Babylon is to be “utterly burned with fire”, cast like a millstone into the sea, to be found no more. Or again, using the words of Old Testament prophecy, the fourth beast and its audacious little horn must be slain and its body given to the burning flame (Dan. 7:11); then “the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (7:18). If we can get our minds attuned to all this, we shall then have a right perspective on what lies ahead.

Enlightenment

Judgement alone will not set up the kingdom. Present wickedness rests on ignorance, an ignorance described as “gross darkness”, resulting from the dense cloud of accumulated falsehoods over many generations, so that the truth of God’s word cannot penetrate. Significantly, the chapter 18 of Revelation which describes the fall of Babylon opens with the theme of enlightenment:

“I saw another angel come down from heaven having great power; and the earth was enlightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen ...”

“The earth enlightened with his glory” is the beneficent object of Christ’s coming, and great Babylon must be removed to allow it to come to pass. More detail about this is given in Revelation 14, where the judgement of Babylon is first mentioned. This chapter introduces the theme of the final judgements and it continues through to chapter 19. Christ gives an opportunity for the world to believe and repent before destruction comes. The chapter opens with the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion. They go with Christ in all the judgements that are to follow: “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (v. 4). But before the work starts, a messenger power proclaims a Gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people:

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (v. 7).

It is after this final appeal and demand that the judgements come on Babylon: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen” says the next angel.

The keynote of the Gospel proclamation is, Give glory to the Creator. No doubt far more detail will be included than is stated here – words of enlightenment explaining the nature of Christ’s rule and the central position of the nation of Israel, inviting them to become tributary to the king in Jerusalem and share in the blessings of his rule. We know that the European system, the fourth beast of Daniel, refuses to respond and this will be the point

when the ten horns make war with the Lamb (Rev. 17:14; 19:19); it is the point at which the rainbowed Angel strides forth to plant his feet on the sea and the earth – the countries of the Mediterranean and central Europe.

But though this hard core of Europe resists Christ to the last, other nations respond to the enlightenment, and are not destroyed. This is expressed in Daniel that the fourth beast is destroyed, but the other three beasts, having their dominion taken away, are allowed to continue (Dan. 7:12). One of the submissive nations is mentioned in Psalm 45. When Christ and his redeemed rejoice together as king and queen, “the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, and the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour” (v. 12). Evidence can be produced to show that Britain is the latter-day Tyre. One supposes other Protestant countries will similarly submit.

The response of the nation of Israel

Israel is in a different position from the other nations. They too need enlightenment, but they are under special favour from God leading them to obedience, honour and blessing. Prior to the events we have been sketching, the land will have been invaded and the present state of Israel crushed. The city of Jerusalem is taken (Zech. 14:1); two thirds of the Israelis are killed (Zech. 13:8); others flee into the surrounding countries (Isa. 16:4). In this humbled and desolate situation they gladly receive their deliverer, “Ye shall not see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:39). They recognise him as the one their fathers crucified (Zech. 12:10).

After the Gospel preaching to all nations (Rev. 14:7), there are still many Jews outside the land, and they now return, brought as an offering by the tributary nations:

“... they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD” (Isa. 66:19, 20).

But at this point in time “all your brethren” does not include those still held in bondage in Europe. These are called upon to “deliver themselves”.

“Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwelleth with the daughter of Babylon” (Zech. 2:6, 7).

Isaiah in chapter 52 speaks in similar style. They do not deliver themselves by their own power. They are strengthened and guided by God:

“For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward” (Isa. 52:12).

Jeremiah, prophesying of the overthrow of Babylon, and clearly speaking of the Babylon of the latter days said:

“The portion of Jacob is not like them (the idols of Babylon); for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name. Thou art

my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms” (Jer. 51:19, 20).

In the Revelation this same time is described in chapter 19. Christ is the leader on a white horse; the armies follow him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Israel are the horses ridden by the saints. Christ as King of Kings wages war in righteousness (vv. 11–16). The defeat of the enemy is described in verses 19 and 20.

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet ... These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

And the complete end of Babylon is expressed in the final verse: “And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse.” So Israel rises to power and glory. In the figure of Ezekiel’s bones coming together, the dead body of Israel is energised by the Spirit of God: “So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (Ezek. 37:10, 14).

These, says the prophet, “are the whole house of Israel”. Ephraim and Judah as two sticks are joined together (vv. 16–20) and “one king shall be king to them all” (v. 22). David the second is their prince for ever (v. 25); and God makes with them “a covenant of peace”:

“Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them (the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31): and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for ever more. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (vv. 26, 27)

PROBABLE TIME SEQUENCE AND RELATIONSHIP OF EVENTS			
	Christ and the Saints	Israel	Gentile Nations
1	Resurrection, judgement, immortalisation (Rev. 16:15; Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:11)		
2	“He gathers them to Armageddon” (Rev. 16:6)	Elijah mission to instruct Israel “before the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:4–6)	The Image confederacy being formed (Dan. 2:28, 41–44)
3		Israel crushed, many killed, some flee (Zech. 14:2; 13:8; Isa. 16:4; 41:17)	Northern host invades the land (Dan. 11:45; Ezek. 38:15, 16)
4	Christ saves Israel (Zech. 12–14; Joel 3:16)		Gigantic slaughter of the Gentile armies (Joel 3:11–14; Ezek.

			38:21, 22; Isa. 30:27; 34:2-6)
5		The earthquake changes the land contour. The desert blossoms (Zech. 14:4, 8-10; Isa. 41:18-20; Joel 3:18)	
6	Christ King in Jerusalem (Joel 3:16, 17; Jer. 25:30; Rev. 14:1)	“Purified third” mourn, rejoice in Jesus (Zech. 13:9; 12:10; Matt. 23:39)	World wide alarm: “I will be known in the eyes of many nations” (Ezek. 38:23; 36:23)
7	World proclamation (Rev. 14:6-7)	Call to Jews to return (Isa. 66:19; Zech. 2:6-9)	Gospel of submission: “fear God” (Rev. 14:7)
8		“The isles” bring back “my sons” (Isa. 66:20; 11:12; 60:9; ch. 18)	Babylon defies (Rev. 18:7)
9	Rainbowed Angel marches against European countries (Rev. 10:1-4; 19:11-21)		7th vial events: Babylon to be judged (Rev. 16:17-21; ch. 18)
10	The Lamb is victorious (Rev. 17:14; 19:15)	Israel as “my battle-axe” (Jer. 51:20-21; Zech. 10:5-7)	Ten horns make war and are destroyed (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-21)
11		All Israel returned; temple built; New Covenant made (Ezek. 20:34-41; ch. 37; Jer. 3:18; 31:31; Ezek. 37:26)	
12	World rulership from Jerusalem (Jer. 3:17; Zech. 6:13-16)	“A kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6; Isa. 60)	Developing obedience brings peace and blessing (Psa. 72; Isa. 32; Psa. 96)

Discussion Questions 2

1. How far reaching will the political earthquake be when the Kingdom is set up?
2. Read Psalm 2. How will the world initially react to Christ’s rule as king?
3. Read Revelation 11:15-19.
 - a. Why were the nations angry?
 - b. What does the Temple being opened in Heaven signify?

4. How is Babylon the great going to be handled / treated?
 - a. What are some specifics we learn from Revelation 17 & 18?
 - b. What does Christ do prior to the judgments being poured out on Babylon?

5. How will Christ bring the world into subjection to his rule?
 - a. What nations do you think will respond relatively quickly to Christ?

6. As the nations are being brought into subjection, what will be transpiring with the Jews and the nation of Israel?

3

PREPARATION OF ISRAEL TO MEET THEIR KING

THE future of Israel is of the greatest interest to us. It is our nation by adoption, and our future is bound up with the promises made to the fathers of the nation. How are events to develop, to make Israel a righteous people, the light of the world, the first dominion? The outline has been well known from the days of Brother Thomas: the land is invaded; there is unexpected deliverance; a new spirit pervades the nation; they look on him whom their fathers crucified and mourn; they become the kingdom of God under their Messiah. Since Brother Thomas' day much has happened. A State of Israel has come into existence, and is a considerable factor in world happenings today. Moreover, the whole of the Middle East has been transformed and many other nations are developing into modern states. It is a vast development that our early brethren could not foresee. From our present vantage-point, can we see the developing future a little more clearly than our earlier brethren could do? Some details in well known Scriptures which we may have passed over may today appear more understandable.

The modern State of Israel is far removed from what it is to become. It regards itself as a member of this world's "United Nations"; it is morally little better than other Gentile states; it trusts in its own wisdom and very little in the God of Israel. How is the nation to progress from this present condition to being a people with the law in their inward parts, and written in their hearts, a people fit to enter the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34)? Jeremiah in two earlier Scriptures reveals the means by which this comes about.

"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15).

"And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them ... And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking" (Jer. 23:3, 4).

Isaiah speaks of this controlling hand of the shepherds:

"Yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30:20, 21).

The resurrection will provide these teachers, these "pastors according to mine heart", faithful Jews brought to life again. They will be the shepherds and teachers to bring about this happy transformation.

Elijah's work with Israel

The work of restoring Israel is in the hands of Elijah. The nation will not be allowed to see the King until their hearts and minds have been turned to faith and obedience. When Jesus was talking to his disciples about John the Baptist in relation to what is written about Elijah in Malachi 4, he said: "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). These are plain words. Elijah is to restore *all* things; first in the land where the King will appear, and afterwards among those still scattered abroad. The work of Elijah is stated at the end of Malachi's prophecy:

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgements. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth (*eretz*, land) with a curse" (Mal. 4:4-6).

The arresting phrase in this prophecy is that there is to be a teaching mission before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The prophecy is addressed by Malachi to "Judah and Jerusalem" – those in the land returned from captivity. What then is the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" for those in the land when Elijah fulfils this prophecy? The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the invasion that destroys all that they have built by their own strength and wisdom. Isaiah pictures the invasion as their day of grief and desperate sorrow:

"Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength (how true today!), therefore shall they plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips: in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow" (Isa. 17:10, 11).

The great invasion

All their present efforts – agricultural, industrial and commercial – likened to caring for their pleasant plants, though seemingly successful, and producing a "great spoil" for the invader (Ezek. 38:13), are to finish in great calamity when the country is overrun. The next few verses in Isaiah tell of this day of grief and desperate sorrow. The prophet describes the mighty host invading the land:

"Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters."

The picture concludes:

"And behold at eventide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us".

The divine teaching before the invasion will have turned some hearts back to the ways of the fathers of old; others will remain stiff-necked and faithless. The invasion makes manifest this state of things. It is, in fact, a trial and judgement for those in the land, after

they have received the benefit of this good instruction. It is reasonable to connect this situation with Zechariah 13:

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them” (Zech. 13:8, 9).

A third of the people are different. How is this? We would expect that this third are the ones who responded to the previous instruction. For there to be this refining process by means of the invasion it is necessary for some degree of faith to exist beforehand – some gold and silver mixed with dross on which the refining fire can work. The work of Elijah will produce this “gold” and “silver”.

The good effect of the pre-invasion teaching is expressed in Malachi’s final words, that the hearts of the children be turned back to their fathers “lest I come and smite the land with a curse” (4:6). There will be a nucleus in the land who have responded to Elijah’s teaching, so that Christ is able to come with deliverance and salvation instead of smiting the land with a curse.

The previous chapter in Malachi also speaks of the two aspects of teaching followed by trial.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in ... But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver” (3:1–3).

The messenger of the covenant is Jesus Christ; and when he appears he carries out a purifying work, separating silver and gold from dross. So there are some silver and gold elements to be separated; this surely requires that there has been previous divine instruction to develop these silver and gold elements. Malachi is definite that this divine instruction is *before* Christ appears to his people:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.”

This messenger who prepares the way before Christ is Elijah, as Malachi 4 shows.

The opening words of Malachi 3 were applied to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:9). But his was only a preliminary fulfilment of part of what Malachi wrote. At that time Jesus did not sit as a refiner and purifier, followed by Levi offering sacrifice in righteousness. So Malachi’s prophecy refers mainly to the time of Israel’s future restoration. Levi is singled out in the purifying process because Malachi’s main charge is against the priests – see chapter 2. The past example of the work done by John the Baptist before Jesus was revealed to Israel may be taken as some guidance as to what Elijah will do; for we are told John came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). John proclaimed the imminent appearing of Messiah, and called for them to repent of their ways and walk in uprightness and

compassion (Luke 3:10–14). We may expect Elijah’s work to be similar, calling on Israel to “remember the law of Moses my servant, with the statutes and judgments”.

Another very interesting Scripture is Zechariah 12, where again it appears that some have faith in the LORD of hosts while the warfare is raging in the land. Taking the A.V. margin, supported by the R.S.V. text, verse 5 reads:

“And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, there is strength to me and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the LORD of hosts, their God.”

These inhabitants of Jerusalem presumably are “the residue of the people not cut off from the city” (Zech. 14:2). Being strengthened by God, they fight at Jerusalem and gather in much spoil (v. 14). In chapter 12:6 they are likened to a torch of fire in a sheaf, “and they shall devour all the people round about”.

From the Scriptures we have considered, and others (see later, on Isaiah 30) there is quite an amount of evidence that there is to be a teaching mission in the land prior to the refining judgements of the great invasion that destroys two thirds and saves one third.

If there is to be a teaching mission *before* the great and dreadful day of distress to those in the land, when and how will it begin? We have already read that God is to provide His people with good shepherds – “pastors according to mine heart”. Elijah is chief, but who are the others, for we would expect there to be more than one teacher, just as John the Baptist was aided by his disciples? The probable answer is that the resurrection has taken place, and there are faithful Jews alive again, to fulfil the work of pastors after God’s heart. Theirs would be a powerful and stirring call to their nation, as was that of John the Baptist, “a burning and shining light”. It would be known that they were Elijah’s helpers, and that Malachi’s prophecy in their Scriptures was being fulfilled in preparation for Messiah’s appearing. Such a mission would be appropriate to calmer times than the present, to the time when, according to Ezekiel 38, those returned to the land dwell safely and at rest before the host of Gog comes down on the land.

There may be a pointer in Malachi 4 to the resurrection taking place before the Elijah work. Note the sequence of events. The reference to the resurrection and the gift of everlasting life, is in verse 2:

“But unto you who fear my name, the Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings. Ye shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall (i.e. with joy)” (R.S.V.).

Then follows the reference to giving heed to the law of Moses and the sending of Elijah.

Is there any other Scripture that supports this sequence of events? In the Revelation record there is a time interval when this teaching mission could take place. Resurrection and judgement take place in chapter 16, verse 15. Then in verse 16 we read:

“And he gathered them (the nations of verse 14) together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

The gathering of the nations together will take time – one would expect years. It will be a time when the saints are taking over from the angels in the directing of world affairs behind the scenes, creating the circumstances that “gather the nations together” into the

Holy Land. Indeed, it may be that the work of the Elijah mission, stirring up a true Israelitish spirit in the land, will be one of the factors causing the great “christian” confederacy to invade the land, to defend their christian rights in Jerusalem.

The latter-day Assyrian is destroyed

There is a very interesting confirmation in Isaiah chapter 30 of this divine teaching in the land before the invasion by the northern host. Isaiah, writing at the time of the Assyrian invasion in the days of Hezekiah, describes the destruction of the Assyrian army. It is not, however, the destruction of the Assyrian army of Sennacherib, which took place silently in the night when the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four score thousand (c. 37). In Isaiah 30 the destruction is in quite different terms:

“And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones” (v. 30).

This is language in line with Ezekiel 38. So we must regard Isaiah 30 as dealing primarily with a latter-day Assyrian. The text itself tells us this in verse 8: “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come” (see margin, Heb. “latter days”). We may conclude that the situation in the time of Hezekiah was suitable to sketch a similar situation in the latter days. In Hezekiah’s time the nation was divided between those who trusted in God (verse 15), and the faithless remainder who trusted in Egypt (vv. 1, 2) – the southern super-power of the day. A similar situation may be expected in the future.

In the last section of the chapter, we see the Yahweh name approaching the land. This can be none other than Christ and his saints:

“Behold, the name of the LORD (Yahweh) cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue a devouring fire” (v. 27).

This anger and indignation correspond with that in Ezekiel 38:

“When Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face.” (v. 18).

Isaiah then describes the divine judgement – fire, tempest and hail – on this latter-day Assyrian, culminating in total destruction at Jerusalem:

“For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”

Such is the graphic picture Isaiah gives of Christ and the saints coming up into the land and destroying the northern invader. But now for the fascinating detail we have passed by:

“Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the

mighty One of Israel ... And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him (the Assyrian), it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it" (vv. 29, 32; mg. "against them").

What a strange picture this is! For explanation we need to go back to the law of Moses:

"And Moses sent them to war, a thousand of every tribe, and Phineas the priest, to war, *with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand*" (Num. 31:6).

So Israel were to go to war praising the LORD and trusting in His angelic care to give them victory. There is an incident in the life of Jehoshaphat that is very close to that in Isaiah chapter 30. God had told Jehoshaphat:

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 20:17).

This is the same message as Isaiah gives in 30:15. The next morning Jehoshaphat,

"appointed singers unto the LORD, and that they should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever" (2 Chron. 20:21).

The mighty hosts of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir then fought against one another instead of joining together against Israel. From all this we deduce that in the future there will be a stage in the campaigns when those instructed by Elijah appreciate the situation and fulfil the words of Isaiah 30, praising the Lord with tabrets and harps.

A great slaughter in the land

At what point in the warfare in the land this takes place we do not know. Various Scriptures indicate an extended warfare, a series of campaigns in the land. There is a great slaughter in the south at Bozrah (Isa. 34); then there are "multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision", south of Jerusalem (Joel 3); in Ezekiel 38, after the terrible earthquake brings every wall to the ground, "I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword against his brother" (as was the case in Jehoshaphat's time); and in addition, presumably at a later stage, Zechariah says, "Judah shall fight at Jerusalem" (14:14). In this tremendous warfare the stricken enemy will bring up further reinforcements, campaign after campaign. At some point the "Praise the LORD with tabrets and harps" will take place. And this requires that some in the land have given heed to the teaching of Elijah, and have turned their minds and hearts back to the faith of their fathers. This is the only way to explain the strange language in Isaiah 30:29, 30.

Such an early start on "restoring" Israel may take some by surprise. But in all the past upgrading by God it has been a slow process, with various stages. In every era, faithful instruction has occupied long periods of time.

It would be unrealistic to suppose that the nation of Israel in the land today could be suddenly transformed when Christ comes. Rather it is a matter of gradual moral regeneration through various stages. After the instruction by Elijah, followed by the testing of faith in the great invasion, and their miraculous deliverance by an "unrecognised" power,

the next step is that God “pours upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications” (Zech. 12:10). Only after this has had its proper effect are they fit for the final solemn step: “And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.” Humbled by the terrible events of the invasion of the land, the taking of Jerusalem, and then their unexpected deliverance, they are now able to respond to the spirit of grace poured upon them.

The repentance of Israel

They are in a similar position to those in Acts 2, when the spirit of grace was poured out by the apostles. The Gospel was preached with Holy Spirit power by Peter, and sustained by miracle; and they urgently besought Peter, “What shall we do?” A similar spirit of grace will be poured out upon the “third” that have not been cut off; and they will respond with “supplications”. They had been instructed to look for the coming of Messiah but now they realise that he is Jesus of Nazareth whom their fathers crucified. They whole-heartedly repent and acknowledge their King.

Not until they are in this contrite state of mind will they be allowed to enter the presence of the king. After this, the land is cleansed of idols – there are plenty of modern idols – (Zech. 13:2); a procedure for the cleansing of sin is instituted (v. 1); and they become the initial phase of the kingdom of God, reconciled and blessed: “I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (v. 9).

By this time great changes will have taken place in the land. The great earthquake will have changed the contours of the country, lifting up the site of the future temple, altering the level of the river Jordan, and causing streams and rivers to break out in the land (Zech. 14:10; Ezek. 47; Joel 3:18; Isa. 30:25). The desert places will be clothed with verdure and trees (Isa. 41:18–20); and the whole land will be “like the garden of the LORD” (Isa. 51:3). So Jesus will be established in Zion; and temporarily the hostile nations are silent, paralysed by the shattering events of Armageddon. So ends the first phase of “the kingdoms of this world” becoming the possession “of our Lord and his Christ”.

Elijah still has much work to do in regathering and teaching the rest of his people still scattered throughout the world. Brother Thomas, in *The Mystery of the Covenant of the Holy Land Explained*, dealt with this later work of Elijah.

The work of Elijah in the land before the great invasion may have a personal bearing, if the resurrection takes place before this teaching under his direction. We may not think this a likely sequence, but the proposal carries a warning that we would be wise to live in expectation of an early call to judgement.

While we know God is about to interfere openly once again in human affairs, we may find it difficult mentally to picture this actually happening in the day to day world in which we live. We may think it unlikely that a few thousand people will be removed from Britain in, say, 1985 with no explanation. At some point, however, this will happen, and it will be no less strange whether it be 1985 or 1995. And far greater “strange events” are about to face the world than the removal of a few thousand people.

Events hidden from the world

We tend to measure God's abilities by man's abilities. It will be no difficulty for God to hide His work of judgement at Sinai from the world's eyes. Are there not hosts of angels around all the time, yet our eyes are held that we do not see them? Jacob on one occasion had the privilege of seeing a host of them (Gen. 32:2). Did not God smite with "blindness" a great host of the Syrians (2 Kings 7), and brought them to Samaria and "opened their eyes"? They had not been literally blind in journeying to Samaria, but their minds were suitably affected to behave as God intended. So it will be with those who would pry in the future into events in Sinai.

The judgement of many generations from Adam will probably take years, perhaps the earliest generations raised first, followed in an orderly way by later generations, and lastly the living being called. The work of Elijah and his helpers could be in operation while the judgement is being completed. Yes, pure speculation; but let us have our minds flexible to possibilities; pondering the likely events of the near future instead of being absorbed in the affairs of this present world.

Discussion Questions 3

1. How will the nation of Israel progress from a secular nation that exists today to a people with the law written in their inward parts and written in their hearts?
2. Read Malachi 4:4-6. What is Elijah's mission on this passage? Be specific. To who, when, where, etc.
3. What does the great invasion accomplish, i.e. what is its purpose?
 - a. What other passages do you know that deal with this invasion?
 - b. Who is involved?
4. Read Zechariah 13:8-9. What details do we learn about this invasion from this passage?
5. What is the purpose of Elijah's mission being prior to the great invasion and its refining judgments?
6. Does Elijah's mission accomplish any positive results? If so, what proof are we given of this in the scriptures?
7. How was John the Baptist only a preliminary fulfillment to this mission of Elijah?

8. Who will be involved in the “teaching mission” that will take place with the Jews?

9. What are some things we learn about the future in the land through Isaiah 30?
 - a. What potentially shows the impact of the teaching of Elijah

10. What brings about repentance for the nation of Israel?

11. What happens in the land at this time?

12. Will God have any issues keeping the gathering of saints for judgment hidden from the world?

THE THEOCRACY: A WORLD-WIDE ADMINISTRATION

AFTER the last two world wars there were genuine efforts to develop world unity, first in the League of Nations, and then in the United Nations. Their charters expressed ideals of peace and national cooperation. Today the U.N. has members meeting regularly in New York. What a hopeless picture it presents: it is a babel of voices and discord! What a vast task it will be to bring all into harmony and obedience to God's will! It will require a very extensive organisation and super-human powers and wisdom. God has prepared for this. The resurrection will bring on the scene a great multitude of wise, capable, indestructible men and women able to establish good and righteous laws against all opposition and occasions of rebellion.

The systems and parties associated with government today are many: democracy, communism, fascism, military dictatorship. capitalists, socialists, liberals, conservatives, etc. All revolve round power and glory to men. The future is to be glory to God, which means God's rule, God's laws – a theocracy. The dictionary describes this as the government of a state by divine guidance. It will be more positive than this; the very Son of God will be the autocratic king, maintaining directly the will of God.

Disciplining human nature world-wide

The glory of the coming Age is peace and happiness through righteousness. This will require very firm government. Human nature is not miraculously changed. With our knowledge of God's standards – nationally in the Law of Moses, and individually more particularly under the apostles – we can be sure that this new order will be very irksome to human nature. Israel found it so, and continually turned to the ways of the world around. Imagine the restriction on the present way of life: no theatres, no football matches and prowess of Olympic sports, no race meetings, no dance halls, no public houses, no pop stars, and certainly not the permissive pleasures of today; How dull and unacceptable, people will say – until we consider the positive joys and blessings of the age. A firm and extensive discipline will be needed to get a world system of righteousness into operation. It will be a simple necessity that "He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:27). This means a vast administration and control to maintain righteousness world-wide, and allow the material blessings and general happiness that the Bible promises.

The elements of successful government

To govern nations successfully according to divine laws, three elements will be involved. *First* is the character of those who govern. God's rulers are totally different from today's rulers:

1. They are righteous and wise in their own characters, and so, like their Master, they are fitted to administer God's righteous laws. They are themselves examples.
2. They have been given adequate power for the task. All difficulties will be overcome, as for the angels now (Psa. 103:20, 21).
3. They can read men's minds; all details of crime will be so accurately revealed that the person or nation stands condemned without lengthy trials, juries and conflicting evidence. As with their king, so for them: "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him ... and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth" (Isa. 11:2-4).
4. Being immortal, their perfect rule does not change: "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). In reading Israel's history one is occasionally cheered by the rule and reforms of a good king; but soon he dies and is replaced by a king who undoes all the good. But not so in the future.

The *second* element is that these rulers of the future Age are king-priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). This means that their rule combines teaching and judgment. Persistent divine teaching is the key to the wellbeing of this future Age. Men and women are constituted, by divine creation at the beginning, to be able to respond to higher concepts than that of our natural thinking and feelings. We are capable of being changed, capable of "overcoming". All who live in the future will be under that discipline Paul describes in Colossians 3: "Put off the old man with his deeds"; "put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge". This is as it is for us now, except that for them it will be under much more favourable conditions. The saints as priests teach, warn, console (Heb. 5:2; Mal. 2:6, 7); as kings they execute judgement when required. Their rule is that of their king, of whom Zechariah says:

"He shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (6:13).

Such is the way to world peace. Human nature will not be constitutionally changed, but will be engulfed in the refining power of the Word; judgment removing the rebellious (Deut. 21:18-21; Zech. 13:4; Isa. 32:1-8).

The *third* important element in the future government of the world is the overall control that gradually unifies the nations that today are in rivalry and enmity. With one centre of administration, the same laws go forth to all nations. All have loyalty and allegiance to the same king, reigning in power and glory. All eyes are drawn to the same marvellous city and temple, the capital of the world, the city of the great king. All speak a common language (Zeph. 2:9), so that there is fellowship in the common words of praise and rejoicing. Having the same faith and outlook, though personally strangers when they meet, they feel a kinship, as with Christadelphians from different parts. They meet with other nationalities in a happy spirit, feasting together with the bounty provided by the king (Isa. 25:6; Psa.

36:8), rejoicing in the beauty of this land: “like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3). The effect of all this on rising generations, as it becomes the established custom to assemble with other nationalities in happiness and rejoicing, will mould the nations into one family.

How fitting that the world capital, the city of the great king, should be called Jerusalem – “founded in peace” is the usual interpretation of the name. From this centre will develop the true spirit of peace, after the manner of Melchizedec, king of Salem, “first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that, king of peace” (Heb. 7:1, 2). So shall it be for a thousand years.

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords be broken ... For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our king; he will save us” (Isa. 33:20, 23).

Under this rulership of the saints that we have described, it will come to pass that “the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21); delivered from the bondage of sin to the joy of willing service to God’s king in Jerusalem.

Descriptions of world government

With these three elements of the future government in mind, let us reflect on several Bible similes and metaphors that describe the all-embracing character of this government. The world government is described as a great mountain. The destruction of Nebuchadnezzar’s Image is by the Stone of divine origin, and after the Image is ground to powder, the Stone grows and becomes a great mountain filling the whole earth. Mountains in Scripture represent great powers, as for instance Babylon (Zech. 4:7; Jer. 51:25). The Revelation speaks of the end of human rule as “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Rev. 16:20). The future has one mountain ruling over the whole earth.

Isaiah speaks of the same great mountain:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isa. 2:2).

Beyond the literal meaning there is the figurative, as so often in Isaiah’s prophecies. The “mountain” of Yahweh’s rulership towers over the lesser mountains of the local governments of the nations.

The New Jerusalem rulership is also a great and high mountain in the Revelation. The bride of Christ, the redeemed, in their corporate work as rulers of the world, are described thus:

“Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (21:10).

God's glory on earth

The rulership is in harmony with God's will; it comes down from heaven. Its glory is the glory of God. The moral glory of God consists in His qualities of truth, mercy and judgment; qualities perfectly reflected in His Son. This glory is the light of the millennial age:

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved (Brother Thomas, ‘being saved’) shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it” (v. 23).

The kings of the earth are the saints, appointed to rulership in all places of the world, and responsible for the honour and praise from the people over whom they have jurisdiction.

Notice the emphasis on divine teaching in these similes we are looking at. Isaiah plainly says, “He shall teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths”. Here in the Revelation, the figure of light is used. Without light, without knowledge, there is only the darkness of the natural mind, and death.

Another picture of the future world rulership is in Psalm 19, where again the theme is light – the world being bathed in the sunshine of Christ's presence. Christ's rule is likened to the sun traversing the heavens:

“In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

This is the universal rule of Christ. Christ, together with his saints, are “the heavens (that) declare the glory of God; and the firmament (that) sheweth his handywork”. The figure is taken from the glory of the natural heavens. The Psalmist is not only thinking of the natural, but prophesying of the future Age as indicated by the way Paul applies the Psalm to the preaching of the Gospel:

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:17, 18; Psa. 19:4).

The rule of the saints

When this figurative sense of the Psalm is appreciated, there is great beauty and fitness in the whole Psalm. Verses 2–4 have much more meaning than could be attached to the natural heavens:

“Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

It would be but poetry to apply such words to the natural heavens, but as describing the world-wide teaching and rule of the saints it is very expressive and accurate. This is indeed

how “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

We can see how the rest of the Psalm follows on. There is no break in the subject at verse 7. The “speech”, “knowledge”, “voice”, “word” of the previous verses are now declared to be a setting forth of God’s law:

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

So the word of God will be brought to bear everywhere, in every corner of the earth. And its purpose, as with us today, is to convert all people into the fear of God, and obedience to His commandments.

The natural sun and stars as a figure of Christ and the saints ruling the world carries with it the thought of orderliness and stability in the world organisation of the future. In the natural, the heavenly bodies, year in and year out, continue in their orderly procession. A thousand years ago they would be the same as today. Just as each star and planet has its position in our sky, so God has prepared all the positions in the world’s future ruling heavens. The saints in general are “the brightness of the firmament”, while “they that turn many to righteousness” will be particular bright stars, (Daniel 12:3).

It is a pleasant speculation to think of the role of God’s great men. We know the twelve apostles rule over the twelve tribes, (Luke 22:29). The left and right hand of Christ are reserved in the plan of God (Mark 10:40). Will Moses be the chief law-giver? Will David be in charge of military affairs? Will Paul have overall charge of the Gentile world? And we can think of Joseph and Daniel as already skilled in administering on a wide scale. These are some of the very bright stars in the millennial heavens.

There is a further picture of future world rulership, of light bathing the inhabitants of the world. In Zechariah 4 Zerubbabel is portrayed as governor over the Jews restored to their land. The temple is in process of being built, and against this background there is a prophecy of the future. Babylon, the great mountain, is to become a plain; the temple is to be built, with the headstone (Jesus Christ) exalted, crying, Grace, grace unto it (v. 7). This is the day when human power is finished, and a new Age dawns with God’s Spirit directing all things:

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (v. 6).

The divine enlightenment of the future age is shown as light from a golden lampstand. In the vision there are two olive trees, two special branches that deliver the golden oil “out of themselves” (not from the olive trees) into the golden lampstand with seven burners, and the light from the lampstand is shed on the two olive trees. We are told that the two branches are two “sons of oil” that stand by the “Lord of all the earth”. These are the redeemed from Jew and Gentile associated with the Lord Jesus Christ. The saints provide the golden oil that burns in the lampstand, and the light, their teaching and blessing, is shed over Jew and Gentile, represented by the two olive trees. (A fuller account of the vision is given in *Prophets after the Exile* by Brother John Carter).

The river and the tree

In the New Jerusalem picture of the coming world administration in Revelation chapter 21, we are told that the nations that are being saved walk in the light of the New Jerusalem; further detail is then given at the beginning of chapter 22. A pure river of water of life flows from the throne in the centre of the holy city. The water of life sustains a wood of life, bearing fruit every month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. The pure water of life from the throne is the Spirit of God; the wood of life represents the saints sustained by the Spirit, and they provide fruit and leaves for the nourishing and healing of the nations. In this delightful symbology we have the teaching of the saints on which the nations must “feed”; and we have the shepherd-like administration of the saints that attends to the spiritual ills and diseases of the people, providing gracious healing as the priests of God. All that God has arranged for the future is good. The literal picture of the future on which this Revelation symbolism is based will be found in Ezekiel 47.

National organisation

We have looked at the broad pictures of world administration that the Scripture paints. Further detail can be gleaned from brief phrases throughout the word of God. The Zion government is in charge of all the nations, and the law goes forth from Zion to the ends of the earth, but the nations will still have their own national organisations. Such governments will not possess inherent power and authority, but will be subservient to the central government. This conclusion comes from the brief phrase in Daniel 7:12. Whereas the fourth beast, the Roman European system, is completely destroyed, “its body given to the burning flame”, the other three beasts continue: “They had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged.” We need not attempt to define the nations represented by the three beasts. The main point is that these are active still – nations as living organisations, separate entities with their differing characteristics. So each nation will have its own organisations necessary to national life. What a variety of functions are involved in a nation’s government. They have to deal with birth, marriage, death; health; education; trade; agriculture; law and justice etc. So when we speak of the future world organisation and get down to its details it is indeed a vast administration. We only have to think of a small country like Britain, with ministers, chief secretaries, undersecretaries, tens of thousands of civil servants. Add in the judiciary, the embassies, the trade organisations, local officials in every town of the land. Multiply this for all the towns throughout the world. If it be proposed that there will not be needed such extensive administration in the future, we have the pattern of theocracy as it functioned in the past kingdom of God. It takes four chapters, 160 verses, to describe all the officers arranged by David and Solomon under instruction from God (1 Chron. 23 to 28).

Whether it be the main government of the nation, or the organisation of each town, one may suppose three levels of officials. The overall authority is with the saints; perhaps a saint residing in each town, as the king-priest. Most executive servants could be local inhabitants. But the main administration will probably be associated with the Jews, operating under the saints.

The honourable status of Israelites

We pressed the point in Part 1 of this series that the Jews have an honourable position in the coming world administration. It is the nation as a whole that was appointed in the beginning to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:6). This means not only the princes of Israel, but all the Jews that make up the nation. These will all be righteous (Isa. 60:21, 2 Pet. 3:13), and fitted to be administrators of the law that goes forth from Zion. If Israel is “to blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isa. 27:6), it surely means that Jews are operating throughout the world. Their fruit is to minister to the nations and cause them to glorify God, to bring forth good fruit. The thought is the same in the expression, “I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame” (Zeph. 3:19) and also in the prophecy that out of “all languages of the nations” men shall “take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with thee ...” (Zech. 8:23). From these Scriptures it would seem a safe conclusion the Jews will be important administrators throughout the world, the right hand men of the saints. Perhaps the most telling Scripture that expresses this is:

“And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Dan. 7:27).

The most High is represented on earth by Jesus Christ, who sits on his throne as the Ancient of Days. His ministers are the saints – “thousand thousands ministered unto him” (v. 10); and under the saints are the Jewish nation that ministers to and for the saints. They are “the people of the saints”. As Brother Thomas says in *Exposition of Daniel*: “They possess these (the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven) in the sense in which a nation is said to possess such things, while at the same time it is only the princes and rulers of the nation who possess the glory, honour, majesty, and high offices of the kingdom” (section 7).

Law and justice

The change in the behaviour of the world does not come about by a miraculous constitutional change of human nature. Rather it is a slow improvement through several generations as the law of God influences people, particularly the young minds, as children grow up in the fear of the LORD. Without doubt there will still be disobedience and crime; but it will be dealt with speedily before it affects others, thus providing a sober warning to others of the consequence of wilful disobedience. The king-priests, each in their locality will see that there is true judgement (Isa. 32:1), and that the sentence is carried out. For special cases, and perhaps also as an appeal court, there will be courts of justice at the capital city. In Israel of old they were told to appoint judges and officers in all their gates; but difficult cases went to Jerusalem for judgement (Deut. 16:18; 19:8). Brother Sulley, in *The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy*, locates the courts of justice in the inner circle of the vast one mile square sanctuary. Remembering that the world government is a theocracy, religion and civil law are blended together, as in Israel. This law goes forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2) and therefore it is appropriate that the final judgements relative to that law should be made at the headquarters from whence it originated. The Psalmist refers to the seat of judgement at Jerusalem in Psalm 122:

“For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David”.

The “House of David” includes all the saints, and cases of judgement will not be limited to the people of Israel. The wider picture is given in Revelation 20:4:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them.”

Though this is part of the symbolism of the Revelation, yet it rests on the literal. Where would thrones of judgement be, but at the law courts in Jerusalem, from whence law is declared? Brother Sulley, in describing the ring of inner buildings that make up the temple, has each entrance flanked by large figures of a lion on one side and a man on the other: appropriate emblems of judgement combined with mercy.

Judgement at Jerusalem

The carrying out of the sentence takes place at Jerusalem. When the LORD of hosts reigns in Mount Zion before his ancients gloriously, the captive prisoners, the kings of the earth, are “visited” (margin “found wanting”: Isa. 24). and the LORD of hosts punishes the host of the high ones. At the conclusion of Isaiah’s prophecy he speaks of “all flesh” coming to worship at the house of the LORD, and he adds:

“And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isa. 66:24).

There is to be happiness and rejoicing before the LORD; but there are also features of a sobering kind:

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly” (Isa. 34:14, 15).

This is the age of righteousness, and all flesh must fear the LORD.

When Israel is restored to their inheritance they are joined to the LORD in the New Covenant, called a “covenant of peace” (Jer. 31:31; Ezek. 37:26). They have close fellowship with Yahweh: “Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” How other nations may be related in a covenant sense, we are not given details but there are Scriptures that bear on the question. Zechariah rejoices in the restoration of Israel to favour: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee”; and there immediately follows: “And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people” (Zech. 2:11).

Isaiah has an expression that suggests some kind of covenant-making with various nations:

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high ... So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider” (52:13, 15).

“Sprinkling” many nations seems to have the character of sacrifice and atonement. When the covenant was made with Israel at Sinai, part of the procedure was to sprinkle the people:

“And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exod. 24:8).

Several kings in later times made covenants with the people to keep the law of God. It may be that a covenant-making will take place with a nation after a period of time, after a generation or so, when they have been subject to divine instruction, and have responded with willing obedience and service. This will be their joining to the LORD, with the blessings that will entail.

Nations adjacent to Israel

The nations near to Israel appear to have a closer relation with God than others. This is fitting; they have a greater awareness of the God of Israel, their visits and contacts will be more frequent. Israel’s evil neighbours were soon to be “plucked out” of their lands for touching God’s inheritance. But in a future time:

“It shall come to pass ... I will return and have compassion on them, and will bring them again ... And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD (Yahweh) liveth, as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people” (Jer. 12:14–16).

These words would have some application to the release granted by Cyrus to many nations; but it will only be in the future that the surrounding nations “diligently learn the ways of my people”, and then they will be “built in” the midst of Israel.

Isaiah makes a similar prediction regarding Egypt and Assyria:

“In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be a third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance” (Isa. 19:23–25).

This linking of Egypt and Assyria with Israel, and their being blessed with Israel, indicates a close relationship and friendship. The highway linking the two countries with Israel and with each other suggests frequent contact, trade, and visits to worship at the temple. What a different picture to the past, when Assyria and Egypt scorned the God of Israel, and they were hostile to one another and to Israel! These words seem to epitomise the great change that is coming, the day of peace, goodwill, and honour to God. One can imagine the highway referred to being the route for the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem, and these two countries acting as their hosts and welcoming them on their journey.

The phrase “Assyria the work of my hands” arrests attention. There are several words in Hebrew that are translated “work”; the meaning can best be seen from other contexts. The word is used of men making idols (Deut. 4:28; Isa. 37:19); it is used for making the

tabernacle furniture throughout Exodus 28. So there is a real sense of work being done. It is parallel with the previous phrase, “built in” the midst of Israel. We have to conclude that just as God has been shaping the nation of Israel, He has done something similar with Egypt and Assyria, and other nations. These nations each have their place in the structure of kingdom and empire.

The blessing of all nations

If we will ponder these various gleanings from Scripture, as well as the broad principles more boldly set out, we can be helped to see the future as a real world; as real as the world of today, but under such different conditions. The reward that is held out to us is not some vague heaven, but service in this coming kingdom; as shepherds, guides, teachers, rulers, playing our part in developing obedience and blessing to all people, bringing to pass the original promise, “all nations blessed in Abraham and his seed”.

Discuss Questions 4

1. How does man’s system of rule compare to God’s?
2. Describe some cultural / societal changes to take place in the Kingdom.
3. What 3 elements will be involved to govern the nations successfully according to Divine Laws?
4. In what ways will God’s rulers be different than today’s rulers?
5. The king-priests ruling with Christ ... what is their role as priests? What is their role as kings?
6. Describe some of the metaphors and similes about the Kingdom identified in the article.
7. Read Zechariah 4. What is this prophecy describing (consider the different elements in the chapter)?
8. In Revelation 22:1-2 it describes a pure river of water of life flowing. What is this representative of?
9. What structure will there exist to the world-wide government involving the nations?

10. Where will the Jews fit into this world-wide government (ref. Daniel 7:27)?

11. Human nature still exists in the Kingdom age. If that is the case, how does the change in behavior of the world take place?

12. How do the nations near to Israel seem to be different than those elsewhere in the world?

DAILY LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

WE now turn to more personal aspects of life for mortals in the future Age. The purpose of life will be the same then as now – developing a godly character suitable for perpetuation in immortal life. Man’s wisdom is of no use in this matter, as the present evil state of society testifies. Suitable conditions for godly living and character development have been made known by God long ago, and have been largely ignored through the ages. When Christ rules, God’s way will be established in all parts of the earth. The way of life God approves was made known at the very beginning in general terms, and later set out in detail when He created His holy nation. The many laws, statutes, and judgements given to Moses were intended to shape life in right ways, bringing a proper awareness and reverence of God, providing discipline, and resulting in a happy state of family life. These guidelines for daily living are extolled as excellent; and we have no reason to believe God has better rules for living in the future Age. Moses, when exhorting Israel to hearken to God’s instructions, and teach them to their children, said:

“Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (Deut. 4:6–8).

Can there be any better laws than these?

The Psalmist centuries later repeatedly praised the perfection of these laws. As Psalm 119 draws to a close he emphasises their excellent and enduring qualities:

“Thy word is very pure” (v. 140); “thy law is the truth” (v. 142); “the righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting” (v. 144); “concerning thy testimonies, I have known from of old that thou hast founded them for ever” (v. 152); “thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy judgments endureth for ever” (v. 160).

We must remember that for David the word of God was limited to the early books of our Bible; and that the laws, statutes, and judgements he has in mind were those given to Israel by Moses. In chapter 20 of Exodus there is the record of the ten commandments, and chapter 21 begins, “Now these are the judgments thou shalt set before them,” and details follow through the next three chapters. Moses later in his final words to the nation in Deuteronomy enlarges on some of these statutes and judgements. It is this law that David meditated in day and night; it is these testimonies that are for ever; these judgements that endure for ever, as we have noted from Psalm 119. They are basically right for the future as for the past. They are part of the “restitution of all things” that Peter says will take place when Christ comes (Acts 3:21). So we may be sure that those laws, statutes and judgements

that were given to control daily life in Israel's past kingdom are also to operate in the future.

The significance of the jubilee

When we give attention to these statutes and judgements in Exodus and Deuteronomy, it is apparent that they relate to a rural life – cultivation, sowing, harvesting, flocks and herds – which is the God-intended life for man's wellbeing and for divine discipline. That God intends a rural life for the future is seen indirectly, but clearly, from the fact that the jubilee is to be reinstated. In the life of the nation of Israel, the years were marked off in sevens, the seventh being a sabbatical year, and every seventh sabbatical year was a jubilee, the year of joy and happiness when every man returned to his land inheritance. We learn from Ezekiel 47:17, 18 that the jubilee will be in operation again. This means for Israel – and probably for the rest of the world, as we shall see later – that each family will possess a quota of land which cannot be permanently sold, but remains in the family through generations. So possession and use of the land are the basis of life in the future. It follows that the other laws regarding tillage, reaping, first fruits, first-born of animals, the sabbatical year of fallow ground, will be in operation again. A rural life based on the land and agriculture is the pattern for the future.

The prophets in many places speak of a coming age of joy, happiness and peace, in the context of this rural life. Jeremiah in the midst of his trials is sustained with such pictures:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; as yet shall they use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they shall go forth with their flocks ... Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me” (Jer. 31:23, 24, 26).

There follows in the rest of this chapter the promise of the New Covenant, and God's faithfulness to Israel. The theme of the restoration continues into chapter 33:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land”.

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the LORD” (Jer. 33:14–15, 12–13).

Though having application to the restoration after the 70 years' captivity, the full sense belongs to the days when the Branch reigns in righteousness.

The cities of the future are not cities as we know them, vast expanses of brick and concrete buildings and factories, where man labours with little satisfaction, where the rich make their riches, and where there is much discontent and wickedness. God is not in such cities. The cities Jeremiah sees in vision are part of the countryside where flocks of sheep can be seen. This is the pattern of the future.

Why a rural life?

Why should the pattern of life in the future be a rural life? It is because this provides the best environment for godly life and character development. It was God's arrangement in the beginning. In the days when life began, man was made an integral part of creation, in which all the parts were interconnected and harmonious. As the creation week proceeded there was grass, fruit trees, animals, man, a garden to be cultivated and cared for. God surveyed all, "and behold it was very good". So this close connection of man with nature was very good, and must be the best environ for his life of probation. And it is not difficult to see how this is so.

There are various good features in the kind of life God arranged. The rural life and its success depend not only on man's activity and skills but also on the blessing of God. Man has to wait for the sunshine and the rain, and the hidden forces that bring about growth. This kind of life brings humility and consciousness of God; so different from the pride and self-sufficiency men show in their machines and inventions. They cannot live without God's provision, though they choose to ignore this. Further, the rural life promotes health and happiness because man fulfils his part in the whole cycle of nature as God made it. His labour, his satisfying nightly rest, his health from simple foods freshly eaten, his thankful state of mind: all is for man's well-being. Again, his life in the midst of God's marvellous, beautiful, creation must direct the mind continually towards the Creator, in awe and thankfulness. How obvious it is, when we stop to consider, that the rural life is the life God intended.

But there is a higher level of appropriateness in rural life than we have yet noted: it provides a continual pattern of teaching analogies that help in shaping character. The cultivation of the ground, the pruning of trees, the caring of sheep, and the foresight and judgement necessary for a successful harvest – these activities direct the thoughtful mind to similar features in spiritual life, affecting parents and children. Weeds grow in our characters just as they do in the ground, and diligent cultivation is essential; pruning is needful for us as well as for trees, with care to heal the wounds; and the watchfulness of the shepherd for his flock finds an echo in the affairs of the ecclesia. How frequently did Jesus use the daily activities of rural life in his teaching: sowing seed, wheat and tares, the vine and its branches, himself as the good shepherd. While we all appreciate the analogies, they will be much more powerful to those for whom they are a familiar experience.

All part of Christ's kingdom

Just as in the beginning all creation was harmonious and integrated, with man, as God's highest creation, in charge, so it will be in Christ's kingdom. The animals and all else have their part in the kingdom, as well as man. So says the Psalmist regarding Christ's rule:

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth” (Psa. 8:6–9).

These are the words Paul applies to Christ in his Letter to the Hebrews. Beasts, fowl and fishes have their place when God’s purpose is completed. They belong to the future as well as the present. When the earth emerged from the flood, the promise was made that seedtime and harvest should not cease while the earth remained, indicating that the cycle of nature is permanent. In this the animals have their part, and it is worthy of note that the covenant that God makes with Noah is also made with the animals:

“And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth that is with you” (Gen. 9:9, 10).

It was not intended that we should live divorced from the rest of creation, as so many do today. This will be put right in the kingdom.

Our thoughts on life in the kingdom for the mortal population have related chiefly to Israel, because the divine record is mostly about Israel. Is the pattern of Israel’s life to be extended to the rest of the world? A brief answer is that what is good for Israel is good for all other nations; what was good in the beginning is still good for all people. The quotation from Psalm 8, Christ ruling over all the varied forms of life on this earth, concludes extolling Yahweh’s name as excellent “in all the earth”. This suggests there is one pattern of life in all the earth. The Psalmist in another place expresses this more definitely.

Earlier we considered Psalm 19 as a description of the rule of Christ and the saints over all the earth, expressed in the “rule” of the sun and stars in the natural heavens. The emphasis was that divine teaching extended to the ends of the earth:

“There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Psa. 19:3, 4).

What are “their words”, the teaching that controls all nations? The rest of the Psalm gives the answer; it is “the law of the LORD”, with its testimony, statutes and judgements (vv. 7–9). For the Psalmist these testimonies, statutes and judgements are those given to the nation through Moses. He knew no other. So it is clear that the governing law for Israel is the law for all the world in the future. And as we have already seen, when we study the code of laws in Exodus and Deuteronomy we find them cast in the mould of rural life. For such laws to have proper application, people must for the most part be living and working on the land.

Before we turn to worship in the future Age, we will examine the virtues of some of Israel’s laws and see how well they guide daily life and shape godly character.

We have deduced from Scripture that the condition of Israel under the Law of Moses is the pattern for the future. This projection of the laws given to Moses into the future Age may seem strange to some. Has not the Law been done away in Christ, it may be asked? It is

true that Paul consistently demonstrates that the Jews of his day were wrong in seeking justification to life by the works of the Law, and by their carrying out the various sacrifices appointed by Moses. The sacrifices were intended to point forward to Christ, and had ceased to be effective when Christ made the one great offering of himself. As to justification by works, this was, and always had been, a misuse of the Law, and manifested a wrong state of mind. But the Law as an expression of moral right and wrong was still true; as the Psalmist says, it is “for ever”.

We shall appreciate this better if we read Exodus chapters 20 to 30, and differentiate between chapters 20 to 24, and 25 to 30. The first group are these unchanging laws, the Ten Commandments and the related statutes and judgements; the second group describes a system of worship for the period until Christ came and fulfilled all its types and shadows. Regarding the first group, let us remember that the godly characters of God’s great men, including Jesus himself, had been built on these statutes and judgements. There should be no difficulty in seeing that they are appropriate for the coming Age.

Israel’s laws in daily life

We shall see how effective the many commandments given to Israel by Moses were in moulding godly character. This code of laws dealt with more than justice; its aim was to regulate the whole of living. It provided a routine of life with God to the fore. It set out a cycle of recurring events that provided a framework for orderly life – the sabbaths, the new moons, the annual feasts, the sabbatical years, and the jubilee. And within this framework there were regulations that would cultivate what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit.

These virtues in the Law may be summarised in three groups: developing praise and thankfulness; bringing true happiness; insisting on mutual care. And if we wish to condense this further, all is contained in the two commandments, to love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself. As the Master said: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:40). With wise and authoritative teachers and rulers in the future, the application of these laws given to Israel will assuredly develop an age of peace, happiness, prosperity, and above all, exaltation of the Creator. It will still be necessary to have those other severe laws of the Mosaic code to curb rebellion, and allow right to prevail, for “those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more such evil among you” (Deut. 19:20).

The sabbath and the feasts

Life will be regulated by the recurring cycle of sabbath days. The sabbath will be restored in the future, as Isaiah says:

“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD” (Isa. 66:23).

It is Isaiah who explains what is the true character of the sabbath; it was to provide freedom to put aside daily care and give one’s mind to thoughts centred on God:

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him,

not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD ..." (Isa. 58:13, 14).

What a lovely world it will be when all who live respond to these words! Embodied in the sabbath there was also the principle of caring for others, for both man and beast:

"Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest ... and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, and be refreshed" (Exod. 23:12).

Sabbath keeping was absolute: "In earring and in harvest thou shalt rest". "Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death" (34:21; 35:2).

The three feasts were intended as a response of the people to God's care and goodness. The passover was for Israel a remembrance of divine deliverance from Egypt; in the future it will be remembrance of deliverance in Christ, not only for Israel but for the whole world.

The other two feasts were occasions of responding to the goodness of God in their daily labours. This thankfulness to God was expressed in the command, several times repeated, "Thou shalt *rejoice* before the LORD". And the rejoicing included those less fortunate:

"And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates" (Deut. 16:14).

As we think of these instructions, we can begin to see the beauty of God's laws given through Moses. Care, compassion, rejoicing before the LORD; these are qualities God desires to see.

The assembling before the LORD, whether at Jerusalem for Israel, or other local centres for others in the future, is not to be with sad face and outward sanctity; it is to be with real joy, real feasting. So Isaiah describes the future:

"Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies, and the sons of strangers shall not drink thy wine for the which thou hast laboured: but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness" (Isa. 62:8, 9).

Jeremiah, in his visions of the restoration, sees a picture of joy and animation:

"Therefore shall they come and sing in the height of Zion, and they shall flow together for the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be like a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jer. 31:12, 13).

Again in these words we see the background of a rural life. As on the special occasions of appearing before the LORD, so also in daily life there will be the same spirit, a joy of living, a praise to the Almighty, a care for the poor, bereaved and lonely.

Looking in another direction, the appreciation of total dependence on God for life and well-being was maintained in the requirement of giving the firstborn to God:

“All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God ... Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household” (Deut. 15:19, 20).

The same was required with fruit trees. For three years the fruit was to be regarded as “uncircumcised”; the fruit from the fourth year “shall be holy to praise the LORD withal”; and in the fifth year they were allowed to eat the fruit (Lev. 19:23–25). Thus one was taught patience and humble obedience to the Giver of all. And so it will be under these laws in the future.

Care for others

In so many of the activities in the life on the land, God required care and consideration for other. When the fields are reaped, the gleaning is to be left for the poor; likewise with the olive and the grape (Deut. 24:19–24). The law allowed freedom to eat from a neighbour’s vineyard or standing corn (Deut. 23:24, 25). What a different spirit today, when we are more likely to find a notice “Trespassers will be prosecuted”. Of course, in carrying out these instructions, one can be generous, like Boaz who told his servants to “let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her”; or one can leave the minimum of gleanings in the field.

“The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful ... The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand” (Isa. 32:5, 8).

The seventh year of release was a gracious arrangement. Debts were cancelled, and those who had sold themselves were freed from service. Not only did God require this, but His law required it to be done in a generous spirit, not grumbling at one’s “loss”:

“And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress” (Deut. 15:13, 14).

Similarly they were to lend the poor man all he needed:

“But thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought ... thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works” (Deut. 15:8–10).

There was a further requirement on a larger scale to provide for the stranger, fatherless, widow and Levite. Every third year there was to be a tithing to provide for their needs:

“... and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite (because he hath no part nor inheritance with you), and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest” (Deut. 14:28, 29).

With the whole village giving a tenth of the year’s increase, this would be a bountiful supply for all in need. Here is a God directed “Welfare State”. Truly as Moses said, What nation had

statutes and judgements so righteous as all this law? When applied in the future it will transform the world.

Many other statutes and judgements for the direction of daily life will be found in Exodus and Deuteronomy – “sundry laws and ordinances” as the top of the page in most Bibles puts it. Wages are to be paid promptly (Lev. 19:13); no false balances, weights or measures (Deut. 25:13–16); respect for old age, the blind and the deaf (Lev. 19:14); care for thy brother’s animal or raiment when it is lost (Deut. 22:1–4); and the same care even for one who is your enemy:

“If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help him” (Exod. 23:4, 5).

This is the spirit of the “Sermon on the Mount”, where Jesus sets out the true values of the Mosaic laws, in contrast to the corruptions of the “commandments of men”.

When such a supreme code of laws is insisted on by those in authority, there will develop worldwide a disciplined godly spirit pleasing to God and Christ.

Education and health

Education is a great topic today, especially “higher education”, in science, mathematics, electronics, art, literature, law, administration. Children are told that their future depends on studying in one of these fields. In the future there will be no place for all this; it will not be needed. All necessary wisdom will permanently reside in the immortal rulers and administrators. In the concept of rural life, training and skills will relate to that kind of life. And it will not be the technical skills of today’s farmers, coping with various powerful chemicals that boost growth, attempt to control disease, and produce many technical problems. Proper attention to the laws of nature as applied to the land, together with the blessing of God, will bring health and plenty:

“And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take away sickness from the midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days will I fulfil” (Exod. 23:25–26).

There will be no need for research laboratories and chemical factories producing the present-day chemical fertilizers, pesticides, growth promoters, food preservatives, etc.

A rural life implies stable communities, with their inhabitants cooperating in the various needs of life, providing scope for craftsmen of various kinds, traders, as well as those directly concerned with the land. The age of “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” will be gone, replaced by a simpler, more stable life. Education will be directed towards a knowledge of the laws we have been considering, and the necessary practical skills that life will require.

Life in harmony with God’s moral laws, and in harmony with nature, will bring health and general well-being; there will be no need for today’s drugs, psychotherapy, and surgical skills. Nevertheless, wayward human nature will not give perfect attention to all that God requires, and there will still be some ill health, and also accidents. God provided

for ill health in the beginning with the wonderful healing power of many plants. In the future this will be the basis of healing for the whole world, as Ezekiel describes. On the banks of the river flowing from the temple there are special trees producing fruit month by month; and also “the leaf thereof for medicine” (Ezek. 47:12).

We conclude with the Psalmist’s picture of a happy nation:

“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets ... Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 144:12–15).

Discussion Questions 5

1. What is the purpose of life for mortals in the Kingdom Age?
2. Read Deuteronomy 4:6-8. Will the principles at the heart of this passage be any different in the Kingdom Age?
3. How does David’s life testify to this principle?
4. Why will life in the Kingdom Age be rural life (consider both the natural and spiritual aspects)?
5. How does nature and animal life factor into the Kingdom Age?
6. How is it that though the Law had been done away in Christ, why is it that it will be the underlying foundation of life in the Millennial Age?
7. Read Isaiah 58:13-14. What value will with Sabbath have in the Millennial Age?
8. What are benefits and lessons to be derived from the three feasts?
9. Who will the care of others be different in the Kingdom than it is today?

10. Can you see how such Divine principles will change the world in which we live and work today?
a. Can such transformations take place today?

11. Why type of education and technology will exist in the Millennial Age? Why is that the case?

WORSHIP IN THE AGE TO COME

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his praise: make his praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible thou art in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing unto thy name. Selah.” (Psalm 66:1-3)

IN the six days of creation the most wonderful work was the making of Adam and Eve in the image and likeness of Elohim. Of all living creatures, they only were given powers of understanding and reflection, and a corresponding power of emotional response. In this original constitution of things lies the basis of the purpose of God to fill the earth with His praise. This requires an enlightened and appreciative people who rejoice in His greatness and His goodness, and in the glory and beauty of His physical creation. No doubt Adam and Eve expressed this spirit of praise on the seventh day, as is echoed in Haydn’s oratorio. We are all made in the image and likeness of Adam (Gen. 5:3), and have the ability to appreciate God and His works, and render proper praise and obedience. But what a sad story is the 6,000 years’ history of this earth. God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of Adam only to hear, with some exceptions, profanity, superstition, and indifference to His glorious Being. Nevertheless, the all-wise God, seeing the end from the beginning, has endured this, knowing the final outcome.

The voice of praise

At the resurrection there will be heard a great voice of praise, as the God-fearing of all ages express their joy and gratitude for the great gift of immortality and the certainty that evil is about to be swept from the earth. In Revelation 4, when the throne is being established in the millennial heavens, John hears the praise of the redeemed:

“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Yes, despite human rebellion and waywardness, all created things will eventually give pleasure to the Almighty. His power and wisdom will accomplish this, as Paul expresses it:

“For by our union with him (Christ) we became God’s heritage, having from the first been destined for this in the intention of him who, in all that happens, is carrying out his own fixed purpose; that we should enhance his glory” (Eph. 1:11, 12, *20th Century New Testament*, 1904. cf. A.V.).

It is a thought-provoking phrase, “enhance his glory”; the praise that ascends from this earth will be a new addition to the praise that already ascends from other places of divine

habitation. As Brother Thomas suggests: “Our mundane system is but the pattern of things of other worlds, which ere this have attained to the perfection which awaits this earth” (*Elpis Israel*, 14th edition, pp. 187, 180, 185).

Praise from all nations

With the nations subdued by the might of Christ, the work must begin of bringing forth praise from all nations as the quotation from Psalm 66 describes. Praise is the glory of the millennial age. Praise means God is supreme and is honoured; man rejoices in the blessings that surely follow. Initially the response of the nations arises from fear: “Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.” But acceptable praise is from the heart, and this must begin with enlightenment. So the kingdom has to be organised, and the world administration set up, to provide regular instruction in the word of God for the many nations of the world. It will take several generations before there is general pleasure in God’s will and genuine praise from the heart; when men say “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways”.

When the millennium has come to an end, there will be a resurrection to life of those who have been obedient, and there will be established a final heavens and earth – rulers and ruled – an organised society that fully reflects the Creator’s praise. What a beautiful world it will be when all who live love the LORD with all their mind, soul and spirit.

Arrangements for worship

The arrangements for worship that have been revealed mostly concern Israel. They can be gleaned from the prophets in general, but in most detail from the last chapters of Ezekiel. Malachi has brief reference to the Gentiles, and clearly speaks of local worship established in all parts of the world:

“For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place shall incense be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 1:11).

Detailed arrangements for this have not been revealed.

In addition, the Gentiles are required to attend at Jerusalem and join in Israel’s worship. They must pay their respects to Israel’s king; and if there is any spirit of rebellion, that nation will be severely punished (Zech. 14:17–19). The Psalmist pictures this mingling of the nations with Israel in the house of prayer for all nations:

“Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee ... Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord. Selah” (Psa. 68).

We do not know how these Gentile pilgrimages will be organised; but Isaiah 66:22 suggests there will be a steady flow of people the whole year round:

“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD”.

Each nation may come at the appropriate time of their own harvest of ingathering, corresponding to the original meaning of the feast of tabernacles. One supposes that a selection of people from the nation will come at one time, every one having the privilege of seeing the king in his beauty at least once in their lifetime.

Jerusalem the city of peace

There is a political aspect in bringing all nations to Jerusalem to worship. It will be a vast and ongoing task to weld the nations into an harmonious whole. We are very conscious of the lack of harmony today. Past wars have created deep traditions of hatred between various nations; differing cultures have moulded nations into unfriendly attitudes to each other; rich “civilised” nations despise third world “primitive” nations. The assembling together at Jerusalem will gradually unify the nations. World conquerors in the past have followed this idea, but with little success. The Olympian games of Greece, the circus celebrations of Rome, the golden idols of Jeroboam, were designed as centres of attraction to bind the people together. But the Olympian games exalted competition and human pride; the Roman spectacles were violent and debasing. In the future, the international assembly is to be founded on *peace*.

To Jerusalem they all come, of whatever rank in society, of whatever national status; all are on a common level as they come to worship the King, the Prince of Peace. They come to acknowledge the blessings of prosperity and peace that his reign of peace has brought; and to fulfil the words of Jeremiah:

“O LORD, my strength, and my fortress in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein is no profit” (Jer. 16:19).

All are able to speak the same language (Zeph. 3:9), and so are united in one voice of praise. Though of differing climates, geography, and national life, they are all held under the same divine laws; they all acknowledge that they have one king, one religion, one loyalty.

They are deeply impressed with the beneficence of the king. They are all his guests at Jerusalem, and he has prepared for them a feast of things material and spiritual:

“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations” (Isa. 25:6).

Those trees described by Ezekiel that miraculously bring forth new fruit month by month (Ezek. 47:12) will be part of the provision for the guests; and Israel, abundantly blessed in basket and store, will provide the rest; and earn the respect and gratitude of the visitors. So in social and spiritual activity Chinese, Ethiopians, Indians, Europeans, those from the New

World, each so different in dress and appearance, will mingle together in friendship. The solemnity of the worship; the majesty of the king and his court; the grandeur of the temple building; the beauty of the countryside – all this will be a common experience, deeply impressing all with feelings of awe and wonder. So the city of Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, becomes the focus of the world, the common link with all people, the centre of attraction to all nations, the light of the world (Isa. 60).

The holy oblation

Appropriate arrangements will be needed for so vast a movement of people coming to and going from Jerusalem. A large area of the Land of Promise has been set aside for the temple worship in the plans God has prepared and revealed through Ezekiel. This region, an offering of the tribes for the temple worship and called the Holy Oblation, is some 50 miles by 50 miles in size. This vast area is divided into three parts: the north part is given to the saints, including those who are active in the temple service; the middle section is given to the Levites; and the south part contains a hostel city of great size, some 9 miles by 9 miles, suitable for accommodating the visitors to the temple (Ezek. 49).

Physical changes will have prepared this area, lifting up “the holy hill of Zion” and making the surrounding country a plain or open valley (Zech. 14:10). The temple, a city-like building, surrounds the holy hill, and is a magnificent and unique structure a mile square. With the canopy of glory spread out over the building and above the holy hill – “a cloud and a smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night” (Isa. 4:5) – it will present an aweinspiring sight to the pilgrims travelling from the hostel city some 20 miles to the south, to attend worship and see the King in glory. Entering the outer court of the temple, they will see a mile-long vista of a “roadway” with buildings on either side – vast banqueting halls for the feasts. The eastern side is private, reserved for the King. Within this outer court which runs four miles round the perimeter of the temple building, there is an inner range of buildings surrounding the holy hill; these are the administrative headquarters of the world. Here are the thrones of judgement (Psa. 42:5). There is ample space for the worshippers to assemble. The grandeur of the buildings and architecture will be impressive:

“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following” (Psa. 48:12, 13).

They will go home and tell their children (the generation following) about their whole marvellous experience.

The size of the temple

Brother Henry Sulley gave us this large scale appreciation of the Jerusalem temple in his book *The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy*, first published in 1887, and now in its fifth edition. Some have wished to reduce everything to a mere sixth the size by making the building 500 cubits square instead of 500 reeds square. Such a small temple just cannot meet the needs of the situation, as Brother Sulley himself gradually appreciated – for he started off

accepting the small temple idea. The introduction of the temple description by Ezekiel is significant:

“In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by (margin, upon which) was the frame of a city on the south” (Ezek. 40:2).

“The frame of a city” indicates a vast building, and is an apt description of Brother Sulley’s presentation. To be like a city would need an area at least a mile square. The future Jerusalem is not an irregular spread of houses and streets. The Psalmist says:

“Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city compact together” (Psa. 122:2, 3).

Note the emphasis on the city being compacted together. Brother Sulley’s description of Jerusalem as a city-temple is in harmony with this.

When we study the text, there is no uncertainty about the temple being 500 reeds and not 500 cubits. After being told that the temple was as the frame of a city, Ezekiel is immediately given the basis of measurement: it is a reed (Ezek. 40:5). So when later in the text measurements are given without a unit of measurement attached to them, it is proper to accept those figures as reeds. If there is an exception to the unit of measurement being reeds, the text will say so and add “cubits”. This is illustrated in chapter 45:2:

“Of this shall be the sanctuary five hundred in length with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty *cubits* round about for the suburbs (margin, void spaces).”

With the “500” figure neither reeds, length or breadth are in the original: it is simply 500 by 500. In contrast the last measurement in the verse is specifically given as “cubits”. This must mean that the unit of measurement differs from that of the “500”. It is quite wrong to make the 500 and the 50 have the same unit of measurement.

In a previous reference to the size of the sanctuary, chapter 42:16–19, the A.V. and the R.V. read “500 reeds with the measuring reed”. The R.S.V. has changed this to “500 cubits by the measuring reed”. This is incongruous. The use of the measuring reed defines the size as reeds. Again, if the temple is reduced to 500 cubits, then the hostel city must be reduced to 4,500 cubits as well. But the text says specifically that the city is “four thousand and five hundred *measures*” (48:30). “Measures” surely means the length of the measuring rod. If the measuring rod is not for a basis of measurement, why give it? The sad comment on the R.S.V. is that substituting “cubits” for “reeds” expresses the measure of unbelief of modern translators.

Peter told the people in the temple that when Jesus Christ returned it would be “the times of the restitution of all things” spoken by Moses and all the prophets (Acts 3:21). With Israel restored to their land and again in covenant relationship with God, it would appear from Ezekiel chapters 43 to 46 that the arrangements for Israel’s worship will be similar to that in Mosaic times. The people are to keep the passover and the feast of unleavened bread in the first month (45:21); and the feast of ingathering in the 7th month (45:25); also the solemn assemblies on the sabbaths and new moons (45:7). The jubilee is

restored (46:17), and presumably the year of release and the sabbath of the land. As before, the Levites have no land inheritance with the other tribes, and are provided for by the offerings of the people (44:28–30).

The official offering of a lamb as a burnt offering every morning is re-instituted (46:13), though there is no evening sacrifice. Likewise there are the various offerings on the sabbaths and at the feasts (46:4–6). Individuals bring their sin offerings, trespass offering, and peace offerings (40:39; 46:20, 12). The difference between clean and unclean has to be observed (44:23). All these functions and ceremonies relate to the people of Israel. What is required of the Gentiles has yet to be made known.

Sacrifice restored

There can be no doubt that there will be animal sacrifice in the millennium (see Isa. 60:7; 56:7; Jer. 33:17; Zech. 14:21; Mal. 3:1–4). The Master himself confirmed this by indicating he will eat the passover in the kingdom. We must examine why sacrifice is appropriate to the worship in the coming Age. Offering of an animal has no efficacy of itself, neither in the future nor in the past. Faith in a symbolic act is needed. In Mosaic times the offerer looked forward in faith to the “Lamb of God”; in the future the offerer will look back in faith to the “one great offering” (Heb. 10:14) at the end of the Mosaic age. The future sacrifices are a *memorial* of his sacrificial death – just as our breaking bread and drinking wine is a memorial. Eating the bread and drinking the wine has no virtue by itself. It is only valuable when it is a declaration of our faith and our thanksgiving. So with future sacrifice.

Why should the memorial for the future age be animal sacrifice? The answer is that it has the same appropriateness as it did when the nation was established in the land in the past, and assembled in large numbers at the tabernacle or temple. It will continue boldly to teach the relation of man to God. Blood poured out, life given, flesh consumed, is powerful teaching that human nature – flesh of itself – is self-centred, ungodly, and carries the law of sin and death in its members. The sacrifice is directed to God and God’s supremacy is acknowledged, and man is abased. Watching the sacrifice and accepting its meaning expresses an acceptable attitude to God. This is a suitable ceremony for a large assembly of people.

There is a further reason for this challenging act of sacrifice. With Christ in glory, seen as the great and immortal king, Lord of lords, and King of kings, it would be easy to lose sight of the basis of salvation – the obedience unto death of the one who was despised and rejected of men. The unpleasantness of an animal slain and offered on the altar powerfully revives the picture of the Son of Man hanging on the cross, yielding up his life that we might have life. We must remember that mortals in the millennium are still being redeemed by the blood of Christ, and must ever keep this in mind. The saints likewise continue to rejoice in remembering that “Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood”. Israel in partaking of the passover lamb will remember their deliverance, not so much from Egypt, but more their deliverance from Gentile oppression by the one their fathers crucified.

Jesus will join in the passover service, as he said. He provides the animals for the official sacrifices, as did the kings of old (2 Chron. 31:3, 8, 13). He leads the worship:

“The priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate” (Ezek. 46:2; 45:23).

So he fulfils the Messianic psalm that begins with his cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and which reads at verse 25, “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear thee” (Psa. 22).

The Most Holy and the altar

One matter has great emphasis in Ezekiel’s description of the future worship at the temple. It is introduced as “the law of the house”:

“This is the law of the house: upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house” (Ezek. 43:12).

The word “limit” here is translated in Exodus 19:12 as “border”. “Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death.” It appears therefore that the whole central elevation of the temple is “most holy”. This is the dominant law of the house. Being “most holy” it must be reserved for immortals. There is a striking contrast with the tabernacle and the original temple, where the most holy was an innermost place curtained off by the veil; “signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest” (Heb. 9:8). But now the most holy is vast and open to view. Jesus has “abolished death, and hath brought immortality and life to light” (2 Tim. 1:10).

This glorious fact is now manifest to all the world: and it is architecturally expressed in the Most Holy being visible to all who assemble in the temple. This area is exclusive to the saints. Says the Psalmist: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?” (Psa. 15); “Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” (Psa. 24).

Mosaically the altar of sacrifice was in the outer court, and priests could only pass from the outer court into the holy place after washing and sacrifice. This was part of the typical pattern of reconciliation. The altar represents Christ, and entering the holy state involves reconciliation by baptism and partaking of the altar sacrifice. In the future temple there is likewise a suitable positioning of the altar.

In the future temple the altar is not in the outer court, but is in the Most Holy! This appears to be so because the details of the altar follow on immediately after the law of the house concerning the most holy has been given. Furthermore in Ezekiel 40:47 the altar is said to be “before the house”, with the sense of “in the presence of” the house. With the outer court buildings placed round the perimeter of the mile square house, the only place for the altar to be “in the presence of” all the house is for it to be on the central holy hill. That the altar is on an elevation is apparent from Ezekiel 47:1 where we read “the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar”. So the water *descends* from the altar, requiring the altar to be high up. Lastly, as immortals do the actual offering of the sacrifices after they have been prepared by the Levites, it is appropriate that the altar should be in the most holy.

Two orders of priests

There are two orders of priests in the temple worship. Chapter 44, except verses 15 and 16, gives details of the mortal Levitical priesthood who have the charge of the gates, slay the sacrifices and stand before the people. They may “approach unto the LORD” (R.V. “are nigh”) (42:13); but they may not “come near to any of my holy things in the most holy” (44:13). The higher order of priests are called the “sons of Zadok” who “shall come near to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer the fat and the blood” (44:15). The saints are the king-priests of the future Age. and as mediators “stand before me” and “minister” the holy things.

The following extract is from Brother Thomas under the heading “The Priesthood of the New Covenant”:

“The next class of priests above them is to consist of the Levites, the sons of Zadok (verse 15). These will have no communication with the people in performing the service, but will officiate immediately between the people’s priests and “the Prince” who is the High Priest, and Jehovah’s anointed for ever. Zadok signifies just or justified. Zadok who was contemporary with David and Solomon is their representative father in the priesthood, as David is their representative father in the royalty and Abraham their representative father in the faith. Hence in the priesthood, the saints are the sons of Zadok; in the royalty the sons of the Prince; and in the faith the seed or sons of Abraham (*The Faith in the Last Days*, p. 83 – For a full consideration of this matter see chapters 5 and 10 in *The Faith in the Last Days*).

The symbology of the temple structure

In Brother Sulley’s exposition of Ezekiel’s description of the future temple we have the Outer Court as a square, patterned on the Israelite encampment – this is for the people; within is a circle of buildings surrounding the Most Holy hill – the circle appropriate to the eternal life of the saints. Then we have at the very centre, in high elevation, the altar from which the smoke of sacrifice ascends, and living water from under the altar descends and encompasses the two sides of the temple (47:9). What does this signify?

The altar typifies Christ (Heb. 13:10; Rev. 11:1), but in a different position and significance from that of the Mosaic altar. Ezekiel 43:15 margin tells us that the word there translated “altar” is “Ariel” in the Hebrew, meaning Lion of God. “Lion of God” signifies Christ ruling as king-priest upon his throne. It is a throne of judgement, but also a throne of mercy and blessing. See how beautifully this is expressed in the “architecture” of the temple. The altar represents the throne of the LORD established in the Most Holy, that is, in the midst of his saints. The fiery sacrifices, consumed as they ascend, depict judgement and honour to God; the living water as it descends from under the altar depicts blessing and mercy to the people below. The people, as they enter the temple, pass through this water and are “washed” and made acceptable to offer sacrifice, particularly the sacrifice of praise.

The symbology in the Revelation expresses the same theme of judgement and mercy from the throne. In chapter 5, the “worthy” one “in the midst of the throne” is both the Lion

of the tribe of Judah, and also the Lamb that had been slain. Isaiah had declared this dual aspect of the Worthy One long ago:

“Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him ... He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead them that are with young” (40:11, 12).

What a wonderful character the Lord Jesus is: how greatly he will be loved, praised and honoured:

“His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory: Amen and Amen (Psa. 72:17–19).

The symbology of the temple structure can be followed through into the millennium picture given in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. The Most Holy on the central mount of the temple in Ezekiel is here presented as the New Jerusalem bride established on a great and high mountain (21:10); obedient nations walk in the light of the city (v. 24); and living water from the altar is here “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb” (22:1). It is this river that produces the leaves of the trees that are “for the healing of the nations”. The river represents the spirit of God, which in the saints – the trees – provides spiritual healing of the ignorant nations. May it be our lot to be one of those trees of righteousness that distil the Spirit word to the mortals of the future Age.

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

Discussion Questions 6

1. The 20th Century New Testament version of Ephesians 1:11-12 says that “we should enhance his glory”. How will this happen?
2. There will be great praise offered God in the Millennial Age. What will be the basis of this ... the source?
3. From where can we gain insights regarding worship in the age to come?
4. In addition to the redeemed, who else will worship God?

5. How will worship figure into building unity in the world?
6. Why are animal sacrifices re-instituted in the Kingdom Age?
7. Christ is the immortal king, Lord of lords, and King of kings ... why do sacrifices still need to be offered?
8. What will be Jesus' role in the worship at the Temple?
9. With the altar on top of the mountain in the center of the Temple, what things does this teach or represent to the worshippers.
10. What are the two different groups of priests associated with worship at the Temple, and who fills those roles?