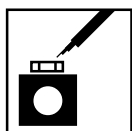


grouping in Ezekiel 38, where “Persia” is another of the nations allied to Gog (v. 5). At the time of writing this act has around eighteen months to run before it will be up for renewal. Whatever the original motivations behind the act, we know that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10), and the desire for trade

on both sides may well lead to an agreement being reached so that the act is not renewed. However, Libya will continue to ally itself to the northern host gathering across the Mediterranean, and, as we have seen, there are developments in this regard in the pipeline in more senses than one.



Correspondence

Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.

Interpreting the seals

I agree with Brother Wilfred Alleyne ([Feb. 2002, p. 55](#)) that the [comments by Brother Tony Benson](#) in the November 2001 magazine regarding the interpretation of the sixth seal of Revelation 6 are not necessarily watertight. However, we need not go to the other extreme and throw out the baby with the bath water.

I cannot see all Brother Alleyne’s suggested links between the Olivet Prophecy and the sixth seal; there does not seem to me to be any link at all between Matthew 24:38 and Revelation 6:15, for example. Nevertheless, some of the similarities are plain enough. The question we are asking is, When we see these links, what conclusions should we draw?

What are our options? The most obvious option (and the one which Brother Alleyne plumps for) is that two or more passages of Scripture using the same language may be talking about exactly the same thing. We are very used to this idea, as our public preaching and Bible studies prove. It is an undeniable characteristic of the Word of God.

But there is another option, one which in my experience is far too often bypassed in trying to make Revelation apply only to natural Israel and her land, and that is this: the passages may just as validly be talking about *similar* things, not the *same* things. To insist that even identically worded scriptures have to be describing only one event is just as unsound as ignoring the link in the first place. May I try and illustrate the point from Revelation?

Moving away from chapter 6 for a moment, the trumpet prophecies of chapters 8 and 9 allude to at least half of the plagues of Exodus chapters 7–12: water to blood; hail; locusts; darkness; death of the firstborn. (I leave to other read-

ers the benefit of finding these allusions for themselves.) Does this mean that Revelation 8 and 9 are about Egypt? Of course not—no-one believes that.

So what are these obvious allusions telling us? They are telling us that, whoever God is judging in Revelation 8 and 9, He is treating them just as He treated the Egyptians—which means that the faithful of this period, sealed in the forehead in chapter 7, are equal in status in God’s eyes to the children of Israel thousands of years before. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find that God eventually makes a distinction between the faithful and the ones He is judging (9:4), just as He made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians from the fourth plague onwards (Ex. 8:22,23, etc.). So both Israel and the sealed are separate, holy. (There is some wonderful exhortation in this, by the way.)

Returning now to the sixth seal, the language of Revelation 6:14 is lifted from Isaiah 34:4, almost word for word, but Isaiah is talking about God’s judgements on Edom. Nobody claims that Revelation 6 is talking about Edom; rather, we are being told again that God is acting against those who oppress the saints exactly as He acted against Edom when it oppressed His people centuries before. Can we see the point? It is nothing to do with identically worded passages referring to the same event, but it is everything to do with history repeating itself in patterns, as it does through the whole of the Bible. Our God is a ‘predictable’ God, in that, although He is all-powerful and ultimately inscrutable to our feeble mortal minds, He nevertheless reveals Himself to us as acting in recognisable patterns. For this we should be thankful.

There are other reasons why I struggle to apply the sixth seal to A.D. 70, not least because Revelation 6:15 seems to me to be describing a

much wider area than the tiny Roman province of Judea: just who are the “kings” (plural) who had hitherto reigned over the territory in question? And was there wholesale acknowledgement of Jesus as the Lamb of God, as verse 16 describes, in A.D. 70? Surely not; the very opposite was true, and the events of A.D. 70 were designed not to convert what was left of Judah’s commonwealth but to destroy it. Doubtless there are parallels between A.D. 70 and the overthrow of pagan Rome, as each dispensation was judged by God and came to an end. But I think that closer attention to the detail will tell us which one is being described in Revelation 6.

Brother Alleyne asks for a direct answer to the question, If the similar phrases of Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 are not describing the same events, then “why are those allusions there?”. The answer I offer is this: because they are describing *similar* events—it is as simple as that.

Revelation is characterised by literally hundreds of quotations and allusions from the Old Testament, and very many of them are given new and unexpected applications by the Lord Jesus. So, whilst examining similarly phrased passages of God’s Word is undoubtedly a basic tool of Bible interpretation, there is often much more involved in comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Jeremy Thomas
Sale

Israel’s dwelling safely

Brother Whittaker’s analysis of Israel’s dwelling safely (Dec. 2001, p. 464) is very interesting. He seems to be correct when he points out that, for Gentiles who are outside the covenants of promise, *betach* is translated ‘careless’, involving being caught off-guard, whereas for Israel it is usually translated ‘in safety’ or ‘safely’.

We must note, however, that in Leviticus 26:5,6 Israel is offered safety on the condition that they keep God’s commandments. We know that from A.D. 70 onwards Israel was placed right outside God’s loving protection, and have faced over the years such things as the Inquisition and the Holocaust, the outworking of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. They are having a very hazardous time today, with danger in every corner.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 are about God’s final punishment on Israel for their wayward behaviour over the past 2,000 years. In their present situation the nation of Israel is without Divine protection,

as they are living in their own self-confidence, like the Gentiles who know not God, and are living outside the covenants of promise. Thus Ezekiel 38:11 would be best rendered, “I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell carelessly [*betach*], all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates”, and similarly verses 8 and 14.

Those who survive the catastrophe described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 will recognise Christ as their Messiah when he shows them his hands (Zech. 13:6). Once they do this they will again come under Divine protection and will dwell safely. But at this time Israel are living as the Gentiles do, carelessly, without Divine protection.

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The meaning of God’s Name

I would like to comment on some of the points made by Brother Mark Vincent concerning the Name of God in his series on Exodus. I agree with the point he made concerning addressing God as ‘Father’ rather than ‘Yahweh’ (Jan. 2002, p. 14). God is our Father by adoption, and the pattern laid down by the Lord Jesus, “Our Father Which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name”, shows how we can address God as our Father whilst giving due reverence to His Name.

However, I would not agree with him when he says concerning Exodus 3:14: “it is quite legitimate to translate the Hebrew as either ‘I am’ or ‘I will be’” (Aug. 2001, p. 307). Whilst acknowledging that Brother Vincent does not rule out a future application, I would argue that the Scriptural evidence points to the future tense as being the only right way to translate these words.

In verse 12 the same Hebrew translated “I am” in verse 14 is found, but here it is translated “I will be”. In verse 12 God was saying how He would be with Moses when he went into Egypt. As this was to be in the future, God said, “I will be with thee”. It would be expected that the AV would also use the future tense for the other occurrences of this word in this passage. However, the AV translators chose to translate it in the present tense in verse 14. The RV recognises this inconsistency, and suggests in a footnote, among other variations that use the present tense, “I will be that I will be” as a translation.

The same Hebrew translated “I am” in Exodus 3:14, *ehyeh*, is found in 2 Samuel 7:14, “I will be his father”. This is quoted in Hebrews: “I will