

Israel's dwelling safely prophesied in chapter 38 leads to positive action by the nations against Israel, with Israel being invaded and pillaged and two thirds of them cut off, as stated in Zechariah 13:8–14:1. It can only be that the safety of chapter 38 is a temporary condition provided by God to allow the invasion of a confederacy, otherwise it would mean that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, stands by in Jerusalem without any support for the nation he comes to save, or action against the enemies of Israel. Chapter 34 excludes the idea that chapter 38 occurs after the return of Jesus.

If it is thought that a time of safety in Israel is impossible under present circumstances, we should be ready for the circumstances to change, perhaps suddenly. The events in New York on 11 September brought about immediate and dramatic changes amongst the nations, and continue to influence ongoing international relations, including those to do with Israel and the Middle East in general.

I am reminded of an article published in 1973 which stated: "All present indications are that the political power of the church of Rome is as good as finished. Fantasies about a political union between Rome and communism are ventilated from time to time but these lack even a vestige of Biblical support . . . even if such a monstrosity were to be begotten, the time for its gestation would be far longer than the political scene in the Middle East would allow". Yet at the end of the 1980s organised Communism came to a speedy end, opening up the way for Roman Catholic influence over all Europe to be extended almost overnight.

We should be aware as we watch the signs of the times and observe perhaps slow but steady progress that, when required, the Lord can change things in a moment. The interpretation of prophecy by our pioneering brethren has been visited many times by brethren and sisters for several generations, looking in depth, often through a glass very darkly, but time and time again being satisfied that the basic interpretations stand the test of time and are coming into much sharper focus in recent years.

As fundamentally differing views on prophecy can result in topics not being discussed, or can undermine our preaching activities, I am of the opinion that the only strife which should exist on these matters is that which the apostle Paul expressed in Philippians 1:27, "that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving to-

gether for the faith of the gospel", bearing in mind the exhortation, "be . . . of one mind" (2:2). God's Word is harmonious, and it is impossible for a variety of opposing views all to be right. It certainly is beneficial for us, and all who hear us, to express as much as we possibly can the one mind of the Lord, and it is our pleasure to search it out.

David Gore
Rochdale

In "From the Editor's Postbag" (p. 58) it is pointed out that Brother Thomas appears to have come to the conclusion that the dwelling safely of Ezekiel 38 in fact occurs after Christ's return.—T.B.

The circumcision at Marah

I was rather taken aback by this bold title in the December 2001 issue of the Testimony (p. 451), and when I read the article was struck by the rapid application of types to what does not seem to be proved, nor perhaps provable.

The law of the Passover required all males to be circumcised before partaking of the Passover meal, and Joshua 5:5 establishes that those coming out of Egypt had been circumcised. After three days the pain from the operation subsides, so a three-day period is required for the operation and recovery. The Israelites were a people toughened by years of hard slavery; their women too were "lively", so minimal healing would be required.

The tenth plague was, of course, the death of the firstborn, and only those who had blood-sprinkled door posts and had faithfully kept Passover would be saved—Exodus 12 is very specific. Moses was able to command the people, including the "mixed multitude" who knew that "Egypt is destroyed" (Ex. 10:7). The first eight plagues had established his authority. He could now give them instructions for circumcision in connection with the last two plagues.

The ninth plague brought darkness over all Egypt, "but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (vv. 21,23). Verse 22 tells us that the darkness persisted for three days. Could this have been a providential plague on Egypt to allow all the men to comply with the Passover law while there was no work for three days?

But what proof have we besides this circumstantial evidence? Perhaps there is a clue in Psalm 105. This psalm gives a brief history of Israel in

Egypt, and outlines the plagues in verses 28-36, perhaps giving the most important one first. It is a strange statement: “He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against His word”. Does this not indicate that Yahweh provided the circumstances for circumcision to take place so that they could keep His Passover according to His law?

Ralph King
Southport, Queensland

Interpreting the seals

I am deeply disappointed, though not surprised, in Brother Tony Benson’s comments on the interpretation of the sixth seal (Nov. 2001, p. 435). Everybody agrees that there is much symbolic language in the Apocalypse. The real question is, How are the symbols to be interpreted—fancifully, or according to some well-recognised principle or group of principles? The one great principle to which I hold is that if one part of Scripture plainly refers or alludes to another part, then as a conscientious student I must take this into serious consideration in shaping my own interpretation.

The six seals are particularly rich in quotations and allusions to earlier Scripture, but so is every chapter in the book of Revelation. Brother Benson dismisses the force of the existence of these quotations and allusions by saying that Brother Thomas spends some fourteen pages on it in *Eureka*. The correct conclusion from the fact that there is a minimum of ten allusions to the Olivet Prophecy in Revelation 6 (see below) must surely be that the Lord is giving us his own personally expanded view of this prophecy. Oth-

erwise, why are those allusions there? I would appreciate a direct answer to this point. With any other book of the Bible, we would leap gleefully on the allusions and thankfully use them to help us interpret the passage in question. This does not happen here; instead the Continuous Historic view generates any number of fanciful and subjective interpretations regarding the Roman Empire. With sufficient imagination and determination, I am sure one could do the same with the Inca or the Chinese Empires.

Brother Benson also makes the point that there is no common conclusion among those who have abandoned the Continuous Historic view, and implies that this is a reason for *not* abandoning it. A poor theory remains a poor theory whether or not there is a better alternative in sight. There is a better methodology in sight, letting Scripture interpret Scripture, one he describes as “clearly the right thing to do”.

For the benefit of those who may not know about the ten allusions mentioned above and may like to check whether or not they do exist, they are shown in the table below.

The most remarkable proof that the seals really do refer to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 comes from the mouth of the Lord himself. Revelation 6: 15,16 says: “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, *Fall on us, and hide us* from the face of Him That sitteth on the throne”. This is an allusion to Hosea 10:8, which the Lord himself uses on the way to the cross, referring to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me,

Revelation 6		Olivet Prophecy in Matthew 24	
v. 4	take peace from the earth	v. 6	wars and rumours of wars
vv. 5-7	famine prices	v. 7	famines, pestilences
v. 9	those slain for the word of God	v. 9	deliver you up to be slain
vv. 12,13	sun black moon as blood stars fall	v. 29	sun black moon as blood stars fall
v. 14	heaven removed as a scroll	v. 35	heaven and earth shall pass away
v. 15	kings, princes, chief captains (being the ones whose pastime is eating and drinking)	v. 38	eating and drinking
v. 17	the great day of His wrath is come	v. 51	and shall cut him asunder