

### Is this the face of Jesus Christ?

Forensic scientists have put imaginary flesh on the skull of a first-century Jew and have proposed that this is what Jesus must have looked like. It seems that the so-called religious are not the only ones to be fascinated by his appearance (echoes of the Shroud of Turin).

Once more humanism tries to bring the Lord of Life down to man's level, to demolish what they believe is a myth by giving him feet (and features here) of clay. By doing so they presume to make a graven image of the Son of God, and we should steer clear. Those who have produced this sensational effigy do not respect the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are merely pandering to the need of the crowd to tell or hear some new thing (Acts 17:21).

What a pity these blasphemers do not turn their attention to our Lord's moral attributes instead of his physiognomy, to his role as our redeemer, high priest and heir to the whole world. The Scriptures tell us that Christ was the "express image" of his Father, "the brightness of His glory", and that his face was illuminated by "the knowledge of the glory of God" (Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:6). Surely our Lord was "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16) as he grew in grace; he had supreme spiritual beauty, whatever his facial characteristics, and we know that little children flocked to him.

However, that face was set like a flint (Isa. 50:7) to go to Jerusalem, and the burden that his Father was pleased to lay upon him took a terrible toll. He was oppressed and afflicted, and bore the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53 shows that Christ was abhorred and shunned as a leper. He must have looked appalling, since his visage was disfigured more than any man (52:14). The reason we are given this description of our Master's face is surely to drive home the enormity of what he suffered for our sakes. Everything else is just vanity, a following after the world.

Yet we are taught that we shall see him as he is (1 Jno. 3:2), and I believe that on the resurrection morn Jesus had all his former beauty restored to him, since those who had known him well in his ministry simply failed to recognise him. Once more he had "the dew of [his] youth", "in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning" (Ps. 110:3).

The Bridegroom who is to come is described as the epitome of loveliness, "the chiefest among ten thousand", in the Song of Solomon (5:10),

which presents each one of his magnificent features as the object of adoration by the Bride. This is our hope and expectation, that in the Kingdom we will be united with him in all his resurrection glory, that by grace we shall be like him.

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### The future of Israel

I would like to offer some comments on Brother Paul Bouwer's letter published under the above heading ([Feb. 2001, p. 60](#)).

I question whether Brother Bouwer's application of Jeremiah 17:1-4 to modern Israel giving land to the Arabs is justified. Admittedly the RSV renders the first part of verse 4, "You shall loosen your hand from your heritage which I gave to you", but these words seem to relate to the time of Jeremiah, when Zedekiah, because he refused to listen to the words of Jeremiah, was taken into captivity. In this his hold on the land was loosened or discontinued (see AV). Zedekiah and those that were with him were the evil figs of 24:8-10, who were "consumed from off the land that [God] gave unto them". I do not think we are justified in applying these words to Israel handing over land to the Arabs.

Regarding Zechariah 14:1,2, we expect to see Israel suffer at the hand of all nations at the time of the end. These words are not, however, speaking of annihilation, for it is only half of the city that goes forth into captivity. Soon after this, the Lord Jesus Christ (who, as Brother Bouwer rightly says, is "termed 'the LORD' because he is the Name-bearer") "shall be king over all the earth", and then "Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together . . . in great abundance" (vv. 9,14).

I also do not think it is justified to say that, when Isaiah says, "the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people" (11:11), the first time was the present-day return of Israel to their land. There was no parting of the sea to mark this return, but verse 15 shows that this passage is speaking of an event like the crossing of the Red Sea under the hand of Moses. That this was the first time is confirmed by verse 16: "like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt".

With regard to Israel dwelling safely, this applies to her before she recognises Christ, as we

see from Ezekiel 39:25,26, which speaks of Israel bearing their shame and their trespasses, "when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid". Therefore in some way Israel must dwell safely and fearlessly before the Master returns. Have we not seen this to be the case for some years now, in particular in the rise of Ariel Sharon to power as a result of his fearless visit to the Temple Mount that started off the present violence?

As well as none making her afraid, we are also seeing Israel defiling herself among the nations (37:23). This is being seen in many ways, and was particularly shown when Israel made an agreement with the Vatican in 1999 "to end 2,000 years of antagonism between them and forge an amicable partnership" (*Daily Telegraph*, 21.1.99). This, of course, was followed by the visit of the pope to Israel.

Israel is to bear her shame, but Jeremiah says: "For I am with thee, saith the LORD [Yahweh], to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (30:11). This time of trouble will take place when Russia comes down into the Land and all nations are gathered against Jerusalem to battle. But then "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26).

When this takes place there must be a remnant in the land, who "shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son" (Zech. 12:10).

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## Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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# The story of Jonah and the Yanush legend

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**J**ONAH LIVED in troubled times. It is likely that he lived during the reigns of Jehu and his three succeeding descendants, who reigned over Israel from 840 to 752 B.C. It seems reasonable to assume that he lived through that time period on the basis of another of his prophecies, recorded in 2 Kings 14:25. This came to pass, as the context shows, during the reign of Jeroboam II, Jehu's great-grandson. Verse 26 then reads: "For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel". This seems to imply that this prophecy was given when much of the territory spoken of in verse 25 was lost to Syria (2 Kgs. 10:32,33). The most serious of these losses happened towards the end of Jehu's reign.

In Jonah's lifetime the Assyrian armies had fought their way east and west from their capital

city of Nineveh, defeating every Aramean (Syrian) city-state between the Tigris and the Euphrates that might, in time, have become strong enough to threaten them. The Aramean states west of the Euphrates, and those that were part of northern Syria, were not approached during Ashurnasirpal's reign (883-859 B.C.).

But the question on everyone's mind was, How long were they to be left in peace? The Assyrians were brutal and vicious, enjoying cruelty, both as warriors and as victors. These Aramean national groups, along with Judah, Israel, Philistia, Moab, etc., were in a very nervous state. In 854 B.C. Benhadad of Syria and Ahab of Israel buried their animosity (see 1 Kings 20, especially verses 32 to 34) and joined forces with ten other kings to go to war against the Assyrian army. The Assyrians turned south to cross the Orontes River. This runs through Syria about