

Marconi to help the poor in Africa. Britain has won commendation from support agencies for its backing of debt relief for many African countries. Moreover, bilateral aid (aid given by one country directly to another) from Britain for Africa has increased from £346 million in 1997-8 to a present total of £499 million, with the countries with historical ties to Britain tending to benefit the most.

The article goes on to highlight further the new commitment of Britain to Africa by considering the role of Britain in Sierra Leone: "The most dramatic sign of Britain's commitment to Africa has been the deployment of several hundred soldiers to Sierra Leone to train and equip

that government's army and to deter more rebel attacks on the capital, Freetown".

Of course, it would be wrong to overstate the British involvement in Africa, and it may change if the government changes. However, we do know that when Christ returns there will be a power in existence whose wings are spread beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, and which will bring the Jews back to Israel by sea. By giving much-needed aid to Africa, the wings of Britain are providing a measure of help for this continent. Current events provide evidence for the providential preparation of Tarshish for her role in bringing "a nation scattered and peeled" back to Israel.

Will we be ready when Christ returns? —The sequence of events (1)

Carlo Barbaresi

A CONSIDERATION of the way in which Christ will return can have a bearing on whether we are ready for his coming. Jesus said: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). If Jesus is to come as a thief, we can easily be caught unawares. Hence Jesus's words: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 24:44).

The phrase "as a thief" means that Jesus will return with the world at large not being aware of it (v. 43). But his household should be aware: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:4-6).

There are two views with regard to the return of the Master. One is that when he returns the judgement will take place at Sinai and he will come up from the south with the immortal saints to Jerusalem. This view has been held by brethren for over a hundred years. The other view is that Christ will return to Jerusalem and the judgement will take place there.

This latter view requires that the Gogian invasion will take place before Christ returns, whereas

with the former view the invasion will not take place until after Christ has returned. If we are expecting this invasion before the Master returns we could be caught unawares. There is a very helpful booklet by the late Brother Graham Pearce entitled, *How Will Christ Come? The Way to Jerusalem*,¹ in which he deals with the arguments for these two views. For any reader who would like to look at the arguments analytically, this booklet is well worth obtaining. Another valuable book on this subject which should be read is *The Mystery of the Covenant of the Holy Land Explained* by Brother John Thomas.²

I propose in this series of three articles to look at the sequence of events on the basis that the judgement takes place at Sinai prior to the Gogian invasion. The view that the judgement will take place at Sinai is based on three scriptures which we shall now consider.

From Sinai to Jerusalem

The first passage is Deuteronomy 33:1-3:

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1. Obtainable from Brother Don Pearce, 76 High Street, Hillmorton, Rugby, CV21 4EE. Price £2.50 post paid.
 2. *The Mystery of the Covenant of the Holy Land Explained* is bound with other works in the book entitled *Contending for the Faith*, obtainable from Sister (Mrs) Carol Middleton, 17 School St., Dunchurch, Rugby, CV22 6PA. Price £8.25 post paid.

“And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD [Yahweh] came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words”.

When Israel came out of Egypt, they came from Egypt to Sinai, but here we are reading of Yahweh coming with the thousands of saints to Israel from Sinai. Bear in mind that both Paran and Seir are north of Sinai. Therefore we are reading of Christ, who is the manifestation of Yahweh, with the saints, travelling from the south up into the Land. Of these saints we have read that they are “in thy hand”, “they sat down at thy feet”, and “every one shall receive of thy words”. As Mary sat down at the feet of Jesus and hearkened to his words, so those who do this now will be among those who enter the Land with Christ. It is for this reason that we believe that these words refer to Christ and the saints coming up into the Land of Israel after the judgement has taken place. It could not have been said of Israel at that time, “every one shall receive of thy words”.

From Sinai into his sanctuary

The second scripture is Psalm 68:17: “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place”. A better rendering of the end of this verse is: “the Lord among them hath come from Sinai unto his sanctuary”. The theme of this psalm is the coming from Sinai to Jerusalem. Verse 1 (reflecting Numbers 10:35) refers to the going forth of the encampment through the wilderness of Sinai—see verses 7 and 8. Verse 18, however, takes us forward to Christ—see the quotation in Ephesians 4:8. Therefore the “Thou” in verse 18 applies to “God” in verse 17, which must apply to Christ who is the manifestation of God. Bearing this in mind, we are therefore reading of the same incident as in Deuteronomy 33, that is, Christ and the saints coming from Sinai to Jerusalem.

The phrase “the chariots of God [Elohim, mighty ones]” can have reference to the angels, but we believe that in this instance it refers to the saints. Chariots refer to angels in 2 Kings

6:17, which recounts how the servant of Elisha saw them surrounding his master: “And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD [Yahweh], I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD [Yahweh] opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha”. This would be the angelic host which was in the pillar of cloud that led Israel through the wilderness, headed by Michael the archangel. It was surrounding Elisha because he was now the faithful prophet in the midst of Israel.

But when Christ returns the saints will take over from the angels: “For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb. 2:5). The world to come will be put in subjection to Christ and his brethren (vv. 8-10). Hence the Apostle Paul’s words: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2). The “chariots of God [Elohim]” of Psalm 68:17 are thus the saints.

The Hebrew for ‘chariot’ in Psalm 68:17, *rekeb*, is the root of another word, *merkabah*, which is rendered ‘chariot’ in 1 Chronicles 28:18, “the chariot of the cherubims”, thus linking the word ‘chariot’ with the cherubim. In Ezekiel 1 the prophet saw a vision of the chariot of the cherubim. We know this from 10:20, where we read that he “knew that they were the cherubims”. Ezekiel 1:24 tells us that what the prophet saw was a host or multitude. We meet this multitude in Ezekiel 43:1-3 when they come into the east gate of the newly completed temple in the Kingdom:

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God [Elohim] of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face”.

This surely is a vision of Christ and the saints coming into the temple. Where the four living creatures occur, as they do in the vision of chapter 1, they are typical of or representative of the saints. Therefore in Revelation 5:8-10, where we read of the four beasts, or living ones, their “odours” are “the prayers of saints”, and they say: “Thou . . . hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”.

The word 'angels' in Psalm 68:17 is the Hebrew *shinan*, which simply means 'change' or 'repetition'. This is the only place where the word occurs, so the sense is thousands on thousands and one can ignore the word 'angel'. Therefore we conclude that the "chariots of [Elohim]" of Psalm 68:17 are the saints.

Eloah will come from the south

The third scripture is Habakkuk 3:3. This relates to the vision of Habakkuk 2:1-4, so let us look at these words first:

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the LORD [Yahweh] answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith".

The Apostle Paul quotes verses 3 and 4 in Hebrews 10:37-39 and applies them to the coming of Christ, so we know that this is the background of the prophecy. When we look at the words in Habakkuk 2 in this light they are very exciting. They tell us that the coming of Christ is not a moveable day but an "appointed time". The first word translated 'tarry' in Habakkuk 2:3 means 'to hesitate' or 'be reluctant', and the second 'to loiter' or 'procrastinate'. The prophet therefore seems to be saying, "though it hesitates or is reluctant, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not loiter or procrastinate". It is an appointed time, that is, a fixed time or season.

These words should have a profound effect upon us, for we read: ". . . that he may run that readeth it". This idea is picked up in Hebrews 12:1,2:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us *run with patience* the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God".

As the prophet looked unto the vision, so we are exhorted to look unto Jesus.

In Habakkuk 3 the prophet speaks of this vision and is looking unto Jesus. Hence his words in verse 2: "O LORD [Yahweh], I have heard Thy speech [2:2-4, etc.], and was afraid: O LORD [Yahweh], revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy". The words in verse 3 are better rendered: "Eloah will come from Teman [the south], and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise".

In this verse we are reading of the coming of Christ from the south, from Paran, as we read in Deuteronomy 33. Let us consider verse 4 of Habakkuk 3: "And his brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power". This seems to link up with Deuteronomy 33:3, "all His saints are in thy hand". Brother Thomas renders this verse: "He has horns out of His hand: and there is the covering of His Strong Ones [that is, the saints]".

The following verses in Habakkuk enlarge upon the vision: "He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: His ways are everlasting . . . Thou didst march through the land in indignation, Thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, even for salvation with Thine anointed [Christ]; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck" (vv. 6,12,13).

The three scriptures expounded above form the basis for the conclusion that the judgement will take place to the south of Israel, possibly at Sinai.

A fifty-year period

From the return of Christ to the establishment of the Kingdom could be at least forty years. In fact there is reason to believe that it will be fifty years. The basis for it being forty years is that, as Israel wandered for forty years in the wilderness after they came out of Egypt, so there will be a second Exodus (Jer. 23:7,8), during which they will be brought into "the wilderness of the people" (Ezek. 20:35), also lasting forty years, as indicated in Micah 7:15: "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things".

With regard to there being a fifty-year period, there are some very significant dates in the prophecy of Ezekiel. From the eighteenth year of Josiah to the time the prophet Ezekiel saw the vision of the temple, as recorded in chapter 40 onwards, was a period of fifty years all but six months. We read in Ezekiel 40:1,2: "In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD [Yahweh] was upon me, and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south". The fifty-year period is calculated as shown in the table.³

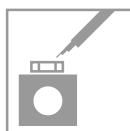
Since it was in the fiftieth year that Ezekiel had the vision of the temple, we wonder whether the temple will be completed fifty years after the return of Christ. The judgement could take place within the first ten years of the fifty-year period, for the first event to take place after Christ's return is the judgement of his household (1 Pet. 4:17). After this, Elijah, having been raised from the dead, will be sent forth on his mission to regather Israel back to the Land. The remaining forty years will be occupied by Israel being re-

<i>Reign of Josiah after Passover in his eighteenth year (2 Kgs. 22:1; 23:23)</i>	13 years
<i>Reign of Jehoahaz (2 Kgs. 23:31)</i>	3 months
<i>Reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kgs. 23:36)</i>	11 years
<i>Reign of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs. 24:8)</i>	3 months
<i>Captivity of Ezekiel calculated from Jehoiachin's captivity (Ezek. 1:1,2; 40:1)</i>	25 years
Subtotal	49 years 6 months
<i>Intervals</i>	6 months
Total	50 years

gathered in "the wilderness of the people". We propose to consider these events, God willing, in our next article.

3. See *The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy*, Henry Sulley, sixth edition, 1984, Logos Publications, Box 220, Findon, South Australia 5023, or Logos agents, and *Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ*, Graphomatic Publications, 17 Bunora Ave., Ferny Hills, Queensland, Australia.

(To be continued)



Correspondence

Prepared for invasion?

Brother Bill Davison's observation, published under the above title (Jan. 2001, p. 24), that "Russia appears to be in no fit state to invade Israel", whether or not accurate, seems to me to be irrelevant. We do not need to be unduly influenced by the opinions of the Russians he mentions, since some prophecy (at least) was given to Christ's servants (Rev. 1:1), not to the man in the street, and in any event it would be a mistake even for Christ's servants to base their expectations of future events on what appears likely from the situation at any particular time. Perhaps I might illustrate the point by three examples of varying Scriptural importance.

1. The fall of Communism in the late 1980s/early 1990s. I am not aware of a specific proph-

ecy of this monumental change in European politics, though we can safely say that it contributes towards the call to "the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). Yet which of us would have said that these events seemed possible, even a matter of days before they happened? The speed of it all took our breath away, and simply bore no relationship to the apparent likelihood of it happening.

2. The resurrection of Christ. To the heart-broken and dispirited disciples of the Lord, there was nothing more improbable than that within a few days they would again be speaking with the one they had just seen put to death—the Gospels make it plain that they were simply not expecting the resurrection to take place: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets

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