

of national Israel, and is inconsistent with the context in verse 28.

Important points for a valid interpretation

To help achieve a valid understanding of verses 25-27, the following matters need to be taken into account:

- 1 If a cumulative view of “the fulness of the Gentiles” and of “all Israel” is entertained, then the natural end point is the end of Christ’s thousand-year reign when no more Gentiles or Israelites can be saved, not his second coming. Christ’s reign is a time when Israel as well as the nations will learn righteousness (Isa. 2:1-5; 59:21; 60:21). This contradicts the idea that Israel remains blind until the salvation of Gentiles is completed.
- 2 The parallel Old Testament passages with links to Romans 11:26,27, including the “all” of Jeremiah 31:34, “the whole house of Israel” of Ezekiel 39:25 and the purging of Israel of Ezekiel 20:34-40, should be taken fully into account.¹⁰
- 3 The salvation of mortal Israel, and the redemption of immortals, should be distinguished, and the relationship between these two parties clearly worked out.

Conclusions

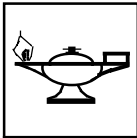
Supersessionism undermines the fulfilment of the promise to David that God would raise up

Christ from the dead to sit on David’s throne, reigning as the King of Israel (Acts 2:30,31). In so doing it also undermines the kernel of the gospel, that is, “the gospel of the kingdom of God”, which is the rule of God and the fullness of His glory in the earth (Num. 14:21; 1 Cor. 15:24). Other aspects of the gospel, although essential, are the means to achieve this—to achieve the situation where all creation glorifies God for His power and love.¹¹

In the next article, we propose to consider the status of Israel in the land today.

(To be continued)

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10. Note that the purging of Israel will be like what happened in the coming out of Egypt. Those who entered the land were a mainly refined and faithful generation. In a similar way those gathered out of the countries, who are to be purged and to have their “ungodliness turned away”, will become another faithful generation.
 11. A reader of early articles in this series has been kind enough to point out an article by A. McCaul which Brother Thomas published in *The Herald* (“New Testament evidence of the restoration of the Jews to the land of Israel”, Oct. 1856, pp. 217-25). Other readers may find this a helpful article for further study. Although it duplicates some of my own arguments, it presents them in a most cogent manner, and also makes a number of additional points and covers further Scripture passages.



Encounter

Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by the Publishing Editor

The Law given through Moses*

9. Capital punishment

Islip Collyer

CRITICS have often suggested that the Mosaic Law was more severe than laws which have ruled in more recent years and in Gentile lands. It has been affirmed that capital punishment was inflicted more frequently and men were sometimes condemned to death for offences which in these days would not be subject to penalty of any kind. It is interesting to

observe how completely modern Gentiles will forget the claims of God, and yet, by some strange process of reasoning, will conclude that they are more religious for so doing. They recognise that it is reasonable and just that high treason to the

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State should be a capital offence, but they would take no notice of the man who said, "Let us serve other gods," or even of one who openly denied that God had any existence. Can they not see that in a theocracy, with God as the King, any suggestion to serve other gods would be high treason of the worst possible kind?

People who think that the Mosaic Law was unduly severe in its imposition of capital punishment should remember the conditions which prevailed in England at no remote period. The well-known common saying, "As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb", had its origin in the fact that hanging was the punishment for stealing either lambs or sheep. At one time in England a man might be subject to capital punishment for stealing anything to the value of a few shillings, the sum which might bring the death penalty varying from time to time. The contrast between this and the unchanging law given to Israel hardly needs to be pointed out. Under the Mosaic Code a man who was convicted of stealing a sheep would have to make restitution fivefold, or if he could not so pay for his offence he was liable to become a bond servant. There was no suggestion of capital punishment for stealing.

This contrast, however, does not nearly express the superiority and charity of the old Law. In ancient Israel, provision was made for the poor and even for the thriftless. There were no neglected, landless and poverty-stricken people such as there have been in England even in times of great national prosperity. Each family had its inheritance of land, secured by law and guarded against a thriftless squandering by the provision of the Jubilee. Even temporary poverty was alleviated by the regulations prohibiting husbandmen from reaping the corners of their fields and vineyards. The poor were allowed good gleaning, so that even if a man had sold his land he could get a supply of food.

For many years in England, rich men lived in senseless luxury, while thousands of people were deprived of all land and of all rights; yet if they were driven by want to steal a few shillings they might be hanged for the offence. It is true that in recent years a great change has taken place. The swing has been in fact to the opposite extreme, saving alive some men who would be better dead, and treating with futile gentleness hardened scoundrels and incorrigible vagabonds who would never understand anything but the rod of stern justice.

Under the Mosaic Law, the death penalty was inflicted to put away from the nation gross evils which God would not tolerate. One who despised the Law, violating its provision in a spirit of proud rebellion, "died without mercy". Murder, adultery, rape and some other perversions of sex were all to be punished by death. It was possible, too, on particular evidence being presented, for a wastrel who refused to work to come under the same condemnation and to be put away with the other evil things. The object was to cleanse the nation from intolerable evils which would rapidly spread unless severely checked. There was none of that cruelty to the unfortunate, such as prevailed for so long in England, when a man driven by want might be hanged for an act of petty larceny.

If a critic should seek to find evidence that modern laws are milder, perhaps the matter in which the old and the new present the greatest contrast is in connection with the marriage tie. The public attitude as to this subject reflects the morals of the age. With the decay of religion there is a growing laxity becoming so marked that some thoughtful people are beginning to realise that the severity of the Mosaic Law in this matter was based on a knowledge of human frailty. At least it is possible for all reasonable students to perceive that, from the Divine point of view, the death of a few unfaithful sinners was much better than the growing looseness and the underground abominations of the modern world.

THERE is another matter in connection with the death penalty which should be noted. The Israelites were told that the father should not be put to death for the sin of a son, nor a son for the sin of a father. Each offender should be punished for his own sin (Deut. 24:16). This was a precept which, until recent years, might not have seemed necessary in modern Europe. In the days when the Law was given, rulers often wreaked their vengeance on the children of their enemies, not only in wars of extermination when they were trying to destroy a people, but in private revenges on men of their own race. The history of modern Europe has shown to what infamous depths of savage injustice men may sink when the influence of Christianity has waned. This gives us a hint as to the kind of brutality which prevailed in the ancient world. There can be no doubt that there was a very real need for this just precept to be emphasised in the days of Moses.

There is a reference to this law in the Second Book of Kings (14:3,6). Amaziah the king of Judah in the main "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD". He slew the murderers who had conspired against his father, but he did not slay their children, "according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin".

Some critics have rather strangely suggested that there is conflict between this law from the Book of Deuteronomy and the reference to the sins of the fathers in the Ten Commandments. It should be recognised that in any approach to this matter no proper comparison can be made between the laws which men are called upon to observe and the acts of an all-wise God. There is reason, however, to think that the wording of the statement regarding inherited responsibility has not been noted with sufficient care: ". . . visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Ex. 20:5,6).

WE NEED not here raise the question as to whether this refers in any way to the natural ill effects of certain sins which directly undermine the health of a man and so affect his offspring. The main contrast is surely between severity for three or four generations and mercy for thousands of years. Sons who hate God have "remembered" (or imputed) against them the sins of a father whose evil example they follow. The righteousness of fathers will be remembered for thousands of years for the blessing of sons who are fit to receive such mercy, even though they are far below the paternal standard.

The sons of Ahab were wicked men, but they might have been permitted to live out their natural days if their father had been righteous. Ahab's record, however, had been so evil that they were exterminated. The people of Israel who will be living in the latter days are called upon to be ashamed and confounded for their ways, yet God will remember the righteousness of the patriarchs and save the remnant of Israel, not for *their* sake, but for His Name and the promise made to the fathers (Ezek. 36).

In certain circumstances God may order the extermination of a family or of a nation, but only

God has the wisdom and the authority to make such an order. The Law given to Israel was as stated in Deuteronomy 24:16. Amaziah obeyed this law, slaying the murderers of his father but sparing their children, although he must have known that they were a potential menace to him.

THE strangest objection we ever heard to this interpretation was the suggestion that the book of Deuteronomy is not of the same authority as the earlier books of the Pentateuch. For Christians it is surely an all-sufficient answer to point out that the first of the two great precepts which, as the Lord Jesus said, are the foundation of the Law and the Prophets, was from Deuteronomy, and that all the passages cited in resisting temptation were from the same book. The fact is that the book of Deuteronomy puts the Law in its complete and final form. There were some precepts given in Exodus and Leviticus which were clearly designed for the experience in the wilderness. The book of Deuteronomy makes certain necessary adjustments for the life of a settled community when some members of the nation might be a hundred miles or more away from the centre of government and of religion.

Thus in the book of Leviticus they were commanded that whenever they slew an animal from herd or flock it had to be brought to the door of the tabernacle and killed there. Any man who slew ox, lamb or goat away from the appointed place should be cut off from among his people (Lev. 17:3-5). In Deuteronomy (12:15-21) this embargo was lifted. The people were about to enter the Promised Land, and many of them might live at too great a distance from the place that God would appoint for sacrifice. There is a repetition of the command not to make their offerings at any other place than that which God would choose; but when flesh was wanted for food they were permitted to slay and eat in all their borders, only they were once again charged never to eat the blood.

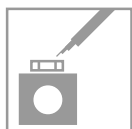
This is an interesting and illuminating commentary on the popular idea of unbelief that the Mosaic Law was a product of much later, even post-Exilic, times. It is surely too much even for a sceptic to suggest that in perpetrating an outrageous fraud to be enforced on the nation as a Divinely bestowed law, the forgers should introduce detailed legislation which could only apply to the forty years' wandering in the wilderness many centuries earlier. A similar thought

arises in connection with the rules for sanitation dealt with in an earlier article. The obligation to keep the camp clean is stated in such terms as to indicate a primary application to the experience in the wilderness. Obviously it was of special importance in the restricted dimensions of the camp. There was the possibility of extending the rules even to the whole of the inhabited land; and for a good many years it is probable that the law in this matter was properly observed. But it was when the people were on the march and their camp was restricted to a small area that the precept was of most importance. The burial of all uncleanness as a religious duty would be of great benefit to health and keep the land as a model of cleanliness.

The command that animals should be slain only at the door of the tabernacle was of a differ-

ent character. It was not practicable when the people entered on their inheritance, if they were to be permitted to eat flesh at all. The necessary adjustment was made in the book of Deuteronomy.

This book, which contains the first great precept of the Law as quoted by the Lord Jesus, the book from which all his quotations were made in repelling the tempter, the book which contains some of the finest and most extraordinary of all the prophecies of Scripture, is without question of the fullest authority. We do well, therefore, to remember that the great principle repeated and emphasised in later years by the prophet Ezekiel is quite plainly stated. The son shall not be put to death for the sin of the father nor the father for the sin of the son. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4).



Correspondence

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

Jordan in Bible prophecy

Could I comment on Brother Michael Jenner's article, "Jordan—the latter-day Moab and Ammon" (Jan. 2002, p. 19)? He writes: "Concerning 'the time of the end', Daniel 11 tells us that Edom, Moab and Ammon are to escape out of the hand of the king of the north when he surges towards Egypt (vv. 41,42). The fact that Jordan remains unscathed is a central part of the prophecy of Isaiah 16. In verses 1-5 we are told that the people of Jordan will take in and protect God's outcasts".

If we read these verses carefully they tell us in fact about the destruction of Moab, who is described as "a wandering bird cast out of the nest" (v. 2). This leaves us with a problem in verse 4, at least it does in the AV, which wrongly reads, "Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab", which of course is not possible if they have been cast out of their land. This should read, "Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee", that is, with Israel. The error in the AV is corrected by nearly all other versions: RSV, NIV, Septuagint, NEB and Moffatt, to name a few. Isaiah 16:5, it appears, proceeds to tell us that it is by such mercy, that is, as shown to Moab, that David's throne is established.

The misunderstanding as described above has long existed in the Brotherhood, and does so because of the desire to prove that Daniel 11:36-45 and Ezekiel 38 refer to the same event.

How long will it be, we wonder, before we are prepared to accept Ezekiel's own commentary on his 38th chapter, which is found in 28:24-26 and then expanded upon in 34:23-31? May the debate on Israel's future continue in *The Testimony*, that we may all try to help each other to become faithful watchmen.

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Wombourne*

Reply

The view expressed by Brother Hughes was first put forward by Gesenius. Though it seems that some versions translate Isaiah 16:4 as though Moab is to take refuge with Israel, I would argue that the AV translation is in fact accurate. The literal translations tend to follow the AV. For example:

"Sojourn in thee do My outcasts, O Moab, be a secret hiding-place to them, from the face of a destroyer, for ceased hath the extortioner, finished hath been a destroyer, consumed the treaders down out of the land" (Young's literal translation);