

read, "And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?". This passage is to do with Israel going astray after the gods of the nations, in particular the two dominant powers of the years before the prophet began his ministry, Assyria and Egypt. The RV margin says against Sihor, "That is, the Nile", and against "the river", "That is, the Euphrates".

The IVF *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* takes a different view, however, claiming that all four references are to the most eastern branch of the various rivers of the Nile delta. Other more modern authorities take the same view. However, I am not convinced by this. Joshua 13 is clearly referring back to Numbers 34, where God tells Moses what territory the children of Israel are to possess. The Hebrew *nachal*, "brook" in Numbers

34:5, is, as explained above, not appropriate to the Nile, and the context of the reference to "Sihor" in Joshua 13 is that of the Philistines and Geshur, territories nowhere near to the Nile. 1 Chronicles 13:5 is referring to the northern and southern limits of the kingdom of David, and there is no evidence that this extended to the Nile.

The name 'Shihor' is stated by the IVF *Dictionary* to come from the Egyptian for 'waters of Horus', the name of an Egyptian god. *Strong's Concordance* says it probably means 'dark', referring to the turbidity of the waters. The name 'Shihor' occurs again in Joshua 19:26 as part of the name 'Shihor-libnath', referring to a place in the north of the Land, being part of the tribal inheritance of Asher. This indicates that the Hebrew 'Shihor' was used both as a name in its own right and as a translation of the Egyptian place name meaning 'waters of Horus'.

# Interpreting symbols in the Apocalypse

Geoff Cave

*There are two different methods employed by people to interpret symbols in the Apocalypse which are derived from the rest of Scripture and they result in very different ways of interpreting the prophecy. This article examines these methods and offers a conclusion as to which is correct.*

**T**HE TWO DIFFERENT methods employed when using the rest of Scripture to interpret symbols used in the Apocalypse may be described as follows:

- 1 By looking at symbols and phrases in the Apocalypse and noting a likeness with similar symbols and phrases used elsewhere in Scripture, then making a conclusion that there is a connection between what the Apocalypse is describing and the *event* described elsewhere in Scripture.
- 2 By looking at the same scriptures and noting what the *symbol means* in order to decide what it means in the Apocalypse.

Whichever method is used, a consistent approach is needed. To chop and change to suit our ideas of what the prophecy is about is surely to misuse Scripture.

By way of example let us look at the language of the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-17. [Table 1](#) shows

some of the similarities between this and the language used by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Olivet Prophecy when he foretells the fall of Jerusalem. This is not an exhaustive comparison, but it is enough to show a similarity between the two passages.

Table 1	
Sixth seal: Revelation 6:12-17	Demise of the Jews in A.D. 70: Matthew 24:29
Sun black as sackcloth of hair (v. 12)	Sun darkened
Stars of heaven fell (v. 13)	Stars fall from heaven

Using method 1, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that the sixth seal is foretelling the events of A.D. 70. However, a similar list can be compiled to show the similarities between the sixth seal and passages describing the demise of other powers. Take the example of Egypt, as shown in [Table 2](#). It may be said that Egypt fell long before the Apocalypse was written, and

<b>Table 2</b>	
<b>Sixth seal: Revelation 6:12-17</b>	<b>Demise of Egypt: Ezekiel 32:7</b>
Sun black as sackcloth of hair (v. 12).	Sun covered with a cloud.
Moon became as blood (v. 12).	Moon shall not give her light.
Heaven departed as a scroll (v. 14).	I will cover the heaven.
<b>Sixth seal: Revelation 6:12-17</b>	<b>Demise of Babylon: Isaiah 13:10</b>
Sun black as sackcloth of hair (v. 12).	The sun shall be darkened in his going forth.
Moon became as blood (v. 12).	The moon shall not cause her light to shine.
Stars of heaven fell (v. 13).	For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light.

therefore the events prophesied in Revelation 6 cannot be linked with the events surrounding the fall of Egypt. This is not entirely true, for Egypt still exists today. Ezekiel was describing the fall of Egypt as a 'superpower', but it continued to exist as a nation. Another example where similar symbols are used is in Isaiah 13, where the fall of Babylon is the subject. See [Table 2](#) again.

In the three examples considered above, the symbols themselves do not say which nation is involved, the overall context of the proph-

ecy shows this. To use the rest of Scripture to interpret events in the Apocalypse rather than the meaning of the symbols leads to confusion. Consider the further examples taken from the symbols used in the sixth seal in [Table 3](#). Here are the only examples from Old or New Testaments outside Revelation using the symbol of figs falling from the fig tree. It must be noted that this symbol is never used in relation to Israel. A further symbol used in the sixth seal is shown in [Table 4](#).

<b>Table 3</b>	
<b>Sixth Seal: Revelation 6:13</b>	<b>Fall of Nineveh: Nahum 3:12</b>
And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.	All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.
<b>Sixth Seal: Revelation 6:13</b>	<b>Fall of Idumea: Isaiah 34:4</b>
And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.	And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

<b>Table 4</b>	
<b>Sixth seal: Revelation 6:15,16</b>	<b>Judgement on Samaria: Hosea 10:8</b>
And the kings of the earth, and the great men . . . said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him That sitteth on the throne.	And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.
<b>Sixth Seal: Revelation 6:15,16</b>	<b>Jesus speaking of A.D. 70: Luke 23:30</b>
And the kings of the earth, and the great men . . . said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him That sitteth on the throne.	Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

The following points arise regarding attempts to link the symbology of the sixth seal with an *event* mentioned elsewhere in the same symbolic language:

- 1 Because so many events are involved, the whole process becomes very confusing.
- 2 By selecting examples which suit a particular interpretation whilst ignoring other examples, it is possible to arrive at the desired conclusion. This is not allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, but selecting the passages which suit a particular solution.

If, however, symbols are compared with symbols, it is possible to be consistent and to say that in every example given above, the symbols describe in some way the demise of a power or government. Let the context decide the event. Furthermore, each and every example will now reinforce this conclusion, instead of causing confusion.

### To what does the sixth seal refer?

This leaves another question to be answered, namely, To which power or government do the symbols in the sixth seal relate? The answer to that question lies within the overall context of the prophecy of Revelation. The overall message of the prophecy can be described in the following terms:

- 1 The destruction of human rule and the establishing of the Kingdom of God.
- 2 The destruction of the harlot and the marriage of the virgin to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 Babylon destroyed, Jerusalem exalted.
- 4 The beast and the dragon destroyed by the Lamb.

In each of these examples two powers are involved, one evil, the other good, and the evil is destroyed by the good. The prophecy of Daniel describes this scenario in similar terms:

- 1 The kingdom of man in opposition to the Kingdom of God.
- 2 The kingdom of the beast in opposition to the saints.
- 3 The kingdom of men destroyed and the Kingdom of God established.

There are too many links between Daniel and Revelation to mention here. Just one example is enough to show beyond all doubt that Revelation is an expansion of Daniel's prophecy. Daniel 2 reveals the phases of the kingdom of men from the time of Daniel to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, that is, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the divided state and the Kingdom of God. Daniel 7 foretells the same periods as seen from the Divine perspective, symbolised by four beasts. An expanded version of the prophecy of the fourth beast, which equates with Rome, is found in Revelation. Consider the links given in [Table 5](#).

The conclusion is surely inescapable that Daniel and Revelation are describing the same power, a power which is destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ when the Kingdom of God is established. The links in Daniel's prophecy clearly show that this power is Roman. As mentioned earlier, Revelation shows the different phases of this power.

Returning now to identifying the events of the sixth seal, links with Daniel show the *overall* subject of the prophecy to be Rome. It becomes clear when looking at the *detail* of the prophecy in

<b>Table 5</b>	
<b>The fourth beast and little horn of Daniel 7</b>	<b>The beasts of Revelation 13 and 17</b>
Ten horns (v. 7).	Ten horns (13:1).
"a mouth speaking great things" (v. 8).	"a mouth speaking great things" (v. 5).
"he shall speak great words against the most High" (v. 25).	"a mouth speaking . . . blasphemies" (v. 5).
"made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (v. 21).	"to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (v. 7).
"until a time and times and the dividing of time [3.5 years]" (v. 25).	"to continue forty and two months [3.5 years]" (v. 5).
"judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (v. 22).	"the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (17:14).

the seals that events in the Roman world are being described. John was living within the Roman Empire when he received the vision. Events from the first century through to the fourth century can

be seen to equate with the opening of the first six seals. Thus the overall message and the details in the prophecy point to events in the Roman world being the subject of the sixth seal.

# Paul's epic journey to Rome

## 3. The voyage begins

Tom Barling

*We are now ready in this series to consider the voyage itself. Embarking from Caesarea, Paul and his companions in travel, Luke and Aristarchus, make the short journey to the Phoenician port of Sidon, where they are able to meet with the local brethren and sisters in their brief stop.*

**W**E HAVE GIVEN already in the previous article some consideration to the intrinsic interest of Luke's narrative in Acts 27-28 for the light it sheds upon maritime conditions in the first century A.D., and intimated that there is much more to be said on the subject. We have also briefly reflected on Paul's own maritime experiences. The Lucan record touches on so many aspects of contemporary life, as we shall progressively discover, that it is in some ways unique.

At the same time we must not lose sight of the fundamental interest of the two chapters; they describe events in the life of the apostle, whose sole purpose, after his conversion on the Damascus road, was to preach the gospel and to testify to the grace of God in His Son. Hence the apostle's conduct in the varied circumstances of his career must always be of interest, and we shall discover evidence of Paul's nobility and resilience in this present series. We must also not forget that by his side throughout the voyage and shipwreck was that exquisite character Luke, whom the apostle himself describes, briefly but eloquently, as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

### Embarking at Caesarea

It was, then, on a coasting vessel bound for a port in the Aegean that the relieved procurator Festus, acting possibly through the agency of the centurion Julius, embarked Paul and other prisoners on a ship in the harbour at Caesarea. We think the departure was a precipitate one, as the governor would be glad to see the last of Paul.

Then there is the possibility that the vessel was on the point of departure and no time could be lost.

As already stressed in the previous article, the presence of this vessel in Caesarea was a token of the extent of the maritime trade that characterised

the empire in the heyday of the 'pax Romana'. We may well feel it would be a waste of time to speculate about the cargo carried by the coaster, but we can make some suggestions. Caesarea was no ordinary city on Palestinian soil; its very presence was an offence to Jewish susceptibilities. Looking in two directions, Herod had endeavoured to create a city in which Jews and Gentiles could coexist.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, after the deposition of Archelaus by Augustus in A.D. 6, Caesarea became the principal residence of the Roman procurator. All this constituted a potentially explosive mixture; and so it proved, for in A.D. 66 the Jewish revolt against the Roman yoke started here. Yet it was here, too, that faith in Christ made its first conquest of a Gentile, one Cornelius, an officer, moreover, in the service of the occupying power (Acts 10).

### Paul's companions for the journey

We now come to the consideration of the first part of the long journey to Rome: "And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band" (27:1, RV).

We first observe the reappearance of the "we", last encountered in Acts 21:17,18. Thus, typically unobtrusive, to the extent that we might miss it,

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1. Josephus records the construction of an amphitheatre, theatre and marketplace, all features of a Gentile city. See *Wars of the Jews*, Book 1, xxi.8.