

quotes Professor Bill McGuire at a recent news conference on natural disasters as saying that, "Eventually, the whole rock will collapse into the water, and the collapse will devastate the Atlantic margin".⁸ He urged both the Spanish and US governments to begin monitoring the mountain for signs of volcanic activity.

What makes Cumbre Vieja particularly susceptible to collapse is that it contains large amounts of water. A BBC documentary described what could happen as follows:

"When a new column of magma rises and starts erupting, water trapped between the dykes will be heated up. This will make it expand, creating enormous pressures within the heart of the Cumbre Vieja . . . scientists believe this will trigger the collapse of the western flank of the volcano into the sea".⁹

It is interesting to compare this with Psalm 46:3: "though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof". As the waters are heated in Cumbre

Vieja the mountain will shake and swell and then eventually slide into the midst of the sea.

It could be that Cumbre Vieja will collapse as a consequence of the great earthquake when Christ returns. When this earthquake occurs "the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall" and "the fishes of the sea . . . shall shake" (Ezek. 38:20).

Conclusion

Though faced with both the tumult of the nations and also the possibility of natural disaster, we know that we have no need to fear, for soon Christ will return and will rebuke "the winds and the sea" so that there will be "a great calm" (Mt. 8:26). As the psalmist wrote: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear".

8. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3553368.stm>

9. http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/2000/mega_tsunami_transcript.shtml

Moses' last words to Israel

4. Blessings for Reuben and Judah

David Green

REUBEN

Deuteronomy 33

v. 6 Let Reuben live, and not die,
Nor let his men be few.*

Live and not die

BECAUSE OF Reuben's sin, Jacob took away his birthright, and said: "thou shalt not excel" (Gen. 49:4, AV; cf. 35:22). The outworking of Jacob's words can be seen from the census records. At the second census, shortly before entering the Promised Land, only two of the twelve tribes had a smaller number of fighting men than Reuben, whereas at the first census, shortly after leaving Egypt, that tribe was seventh in order of size. In a period of forty years the number of men above twenty years old had reduced from 46,500 to 43,730 (Num. 1:21; 26:7).

Much later on, in the days of Jeroboam II of Israel, the trans-Jordanic tribes, Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, could muster a total

force of only 44,760 fighting men (1 Chron. 5:18). It is very probable that the destruction of the Reubenite leaders Dathan and Abiram, together with their households, and then the later destruction of many Israelites by plague at Peor, had a significant impact on the size of the tribe of Reuben.

In contrast to Jacob's prophecy, the blessing by Moses, "Let Reuben live, and not die", brings salvation and prosperity to Reuben. In order to emphasise the importance of what is being said, the common Scriptural idiom is used in which one thing is affirmed and the opposite is denied. For example, the Kohathites were not to watch while the holy things were covered by the priests, "that they may live and not die" (Num. 4:19), and Hezekiah was instructed to set his house in order, "for you shall die and not live" (Isa. 38:1).¹

* All quotations are from the NKJV unless stated otherwise.

1. Other examples are Genesis 43:8; Deuteronomy 9:7; 1 Samuel 1:11; Psalm 118:17; Jeremiah 20:14; John 1:20; 1 John 2:4,27.

Let not his men be few

In most versions the second negative, which is lacking in the Hebrew text of verse 6, has been supplied to complete the parallelism. It is generally assumed that there is an ellipsis, the first 'not' serving for both parts of the verse. This agrees with the positively expressed statement of the Septuagint version, "let him be many in number".

The words "men . . . few" are used to translate a pair of Hebrew words meaning 'men of number'. This is an idiomatic expression, also occurring in Genesis 34:30 and elsewhere in the Bible,² that means 'easily counted', and hence 'few in number'.

Not all translators agree that a negative should be supplied in the second line of this verse. For example, the Jerusalem Bible reads, "live too, his small band of warriors!", and the Interlinear Bible³ has, "and let his men be numbered".

It has already been pointed out that the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint inserts the name Simeon in the second line. This manuscript reads: "and let Simeon be very numerous". If this reading truly represents Moses' words, there has been no fulfilment in the past history of Israel.⁴ However, in the Kingdom age the Simeonites will no doubt prosper numerically in their inheritance, which will lie between the areas allocated to Benjamin and Issachar (Ezek. 48:24,25).

Future fulfilment

In this prophecy, Reuben, Jacob's first-born, can be seen to be representative of the whole nation of Israel, who were appointed God's first-born son: "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is My son, even My firstborn" (Ex. 4:22, AV). Because of unfaithfulness Israel lost this position of honour, being replaced by spiritual Israel, just as Reuben lost his birthright to Joseph (1 Chron. 5:1,2). In addition, natural Israel, like the tribe of Reuben, became few in number when God's punishments were poured out on the disobedient nation: "And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldst not obey the voice of the LORD thy God" (Deut. 28:62, AV).

However, there will be a reversal of fortune when Israel is restored to God's favour in the Kingdom age (Jer. 31:27; Zech. 2:4). Then not only the tribe of Reuben but also all the other tribes, including Simeon, will become very numerous. Thus the promise to Abraham that his

descendants would become as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16), the sand on the seashore and the stars of heaven (22:17) for multitude, will receive its ultimate fulfilment.

JUDAH**Deuteronomy 33**

v. 7 And this he said of Judah:
 "Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah,
 And bring him to his people;
 Let his hands be sufficient for him,
 And may You be a help against his
 enemies".

The voice of Judah

The voice of Judah has been expressed through the prayers and psalms of many great men of that tribe, including David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat and Daniel. To these may be added Nehemiah—whose tribe is not specified but who most certainly prayed on behalf of the nation of Judah—and the greatest of all of Judah's line, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Jesus it is written that, "when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him Who was able to save him from death, [he] was heard because of his godly fear" (Heb. 5:7).

However, reasons have been put forward for applying Moses' words to the time of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. In view of this, the fulfilment is to be seen in the words of Zechariah concerning the nation of Israel: "they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (13:9, AV).

Bring him to his people

The "him" of the phrase "bring him to his people" must refer to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who will come to the Jews as their deliverer when the time of Jacob's trouble is upon them (Jer. 30:7,9). At that time "The Redeemer will come to Zion" (Isa. 59:20) and will "save the tents of Judah first" (Zech. 12:7). In the words of Jacob's blessing to Judah: "Shiloh comes; and to

2. Page 536, Vol. 1, *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Moody Press, 1980.

3. Translated and edited by Jay P. Green, Hendrickson, second edition, 1986.

4. See "The omission of Simeon" in Part 3 ([Aug. 2004, p. 328](#)).

him shall be the obedience of the people” (Gen. 49:10).

Let his hands be sufficient for him

Jacob said of Judah, “your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies” (Gen. 49:8). A major fulfilment of these words was in the wars of King David (Ps. 18:37-43), but David’s victories merely foreshadowed those of Jesus, who will bring all enemies into subjection, including death itself: “For he must reign, till He hath put all enemies

under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:25,26, AV). However, it must be recognised that it is through the mighty power of God that Jesus will “possess the gate of his enemies” (Gen. 22:17, AV). It is God, the Father of Jesus Christ, who will “put all things under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:27; Ps. 8:6). It is God’s hand that makes Christ’s hands “sufficient for him”. In this way will be fulfilled the prayer, “may You be a help against his enemies”.

[\(To be continued\)](#)

An overview of the last six chapters of Zechariah

Geoff Walker

LOOKING AT THE prophecy of Zechariah as a whole, it is clear that there is a marked difference between the first eight chapters and the last six (9–14). There is a distinct change in style and approach.

Chapters 1–8 are dated. The dates are given in 1:1,7 and 7:1. All three dates relate to the reign of Darius the Persian. Comparison with Ezra 4:24 and 5:1 pinpoints the time as the time of the building of the temple under the guidance of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. The temple took four years to build, between the second and sixth years of Darius’s reign, and all three dates have reference to that period.

The date given in 1:7 (in the second year of Darius) was the day on which all the visions seen by Zechariah, and recorded in chapters 1–6, were revealed (the visions follow naturally one after another, suggesting that they were all revealed together). Chapters 7 and 8, given in the fourth year of Darius, are linked together, the questions asked of the priests at that time, as recorded in the beginning of the seventh chapter, being answered at the close of the eighth (v. 19). Thus chapters 1–8 have a definite historical setting. There is nothing to compare with this historical background in chapters 9–14. This is one clear difference between the two halves of the prophecy.

Judah and Ephraim

There is a further difference. The first eight chapters are concerned with happenings in Judah and Jerusalem and the building of the temple in

Jerusalem (see 1:12,19; 2:2,4,12; 3:2; 4:9; 6:12,13; 7:2; 8:3,4,9,19). There is but one reference to the “house of Israel” (8:13), which has to do with the future, and is an indication that Israel as well as Judah would share in the future blessings that would accrue when the Lord dwelt in the newly built temple. There is no reference in these chapters to any specific activity by the northern tribes, nor any indication of their standing before God, nor of their relationship with Judah in the days of the return from exile.

Chapters 9–14 are different, bringing in the ten tribes in conjunction with Judah. Chapter 9 speaks of the cutting off of “the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem” (v. 10), and deals with a time “when I have bent Judah for Me, [and] filled the bow with Ephraim” (v. 13). Chapter 10 has, “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph” (v. 6), and “they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man” (v. 7). In fact, the rest of this tenth chapter appears to have reference to the fortunes of the ten tribes. Ephraim and Judah together thus feature prominently in these two chapters, which is in marked contrast to the picture presented in the first eight chapters.

There is a definite change of format and thought in chapter 11, and yet the relationship between Judah and Israel is prominent in it. The ‘cutting asunder’ of the prophet’s staff “Bands” portrayed the breaking of “the brotherhood between Judah and Israel” (v. 14). There is clear reference to the history of the two nations here, as there is in chapters 9 and 10.