

BIBLE STUDIES

" Now **these were more** noble than those **in** Thessalonica, **in** that they **received** the word with all **readiness** of **mind**, **examining** the **Scriptures** daily, whether these things were so " (**Acts 17. 11**).

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

VOLUME 33

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Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so*' (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 33

JANUARY 1965

EDITORIAL

We now begin a study somewhat different in nature from those that have engaged our attention in recent years. It is to be hoped that the change will prove acceptable, and that the new subject will appeal to former correspondents who may be considering resuming writing to us. With a subject of this nature the temptation will be to write at considerable length.

Please try to keep your papers within reasonable length for a magazine like *Bible Studies*. We are fully aware that the reduction of a long paper to say, 800 words entails considerable work and thought. In order to do so it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the essential and foundational. It is a most profitable exercise to seek out such things, and to delineate them in a concise statement. If you leave it to the editors, you will lose much of the profit that work for *Bible Studies* was intended to bring.

In brief, we should aim to gather abundantly from the Scriptures, to use secular sources sparingly and critically, and to give much thought and labour to setting our thoughts in order. "In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury" (Proverbs 14. 23).

During 1965 we shall be considering the scriptural records concerning certain cities. It may be of interest to note that in the Old Testament there are several words that are rendered "city" in our English versions of the Scriptures. In all of the references for the month of January the word is *iyr* (or *ar*, or *ayer*), which, according to Strong's Concordance, suggests a place guarded by waking or a watch, and should be understood to signify a city in the widest sense of the term (even a mere encampment or post). We find it in such place-names as Rehoboth-Ir (Genesis 10. 11), which some render as "the city Rehoboth" or "the city of Rehoboth", while others prefer "the broad spaces of the city" (Nineveh?): "Rehoboth" means "broad places". This would lend support to the assertion of some that Rehoboth was closely associated with Nineveh (in the more narrow sense) and that Calah was, or became, a suburb of Nineveh. This would make Nineveh cover a great area indeed and would make room for a very large population. There would

then be no difficulty in accepting the statements in Jonah 3. 3 and 4. 11 in the most literal sense, as we believe we are intended to do, whether we understand them or not.

The other words translated "city" indicate building, either in general, or by reference to floor or door, etc. Among these the most frequently used is *airyah*, which we find in such names as Kerioth, Kirjath-arba, Kirjath-baal and Kirjath-jearim. It is helpful to have both concepts in mind when we consider the cities of these very early days. God created Adam and placed him in a garden, an enclosed place. The Scriptures show men after the flood building enclosed places of their own conceiving, cities. There was much activity in building, and not always with the best of intentions, as witness Genesis 11. 1-9. Men built cities as a mode of protection against the evil that then abounded on the earth. And so it was that when God was scattering men, men were gathering themselves into close-knit communities.

•God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7. 29). J. B.

THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH

Nahum's vision is the burden of Nineveh. He prophesied some 80 years or so after Jonah. His book relates to the destruction and desolation of Nineveh.

Nahum begins where Jonah left off. Jonah ends by declaring that God is a gracious God, slow to anger, full of compassion and plenteous in mercy (Jonah 4. 2). Nahum begins with the words, "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power", but he adds, "and will by no means clear the guilty" (Nahum 1. 3). The LORD said to Jonah, "Should not I have pity on Nineveh?" (Jonah 4. 11). but through Nahum His word is, "Behold, I am against thee" (Nahum 2. 13). The goodness of God is in Jonah, but His severity is in Nahum: Nineveh had returned to its wickedness.

This city which Nimrod built (Genesis 10. 11) was sited by the river Tigris, and, as it had many fortresses (Nahum 3. 12), it was able to withstand attack for a long time. A breach of the wall by a flood of water ruined the city. The prophet speaks of an overrunning flood (Nahum 1. 8). This allowed the Babylonian armies in. Nineveh became empty, void and waste (Nahum 2. 10).

A graphic description of the sinful city is given in chapter 3: - full of lies and rapine, a multitude of slain, the multitude of whoredoms, and nakedness and shame. Nineveh was laid waste. The judgement of God had fallen. Its fate is the same as that of No-am on. Yet out of the darkness of the book of Nahum shine such illuminating words as,

"The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble" (1. 7). and "The LORD bringeth again the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel" (2. 2). A. M. Hope

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

NINEVEH

From Southport. — In the city of Nineveh we are considering no mean city, for it is described as "an exceeding great city" (Jonah 3. 3): but we are not thinking of some of our own cities packed with buildings. This was a city in which there was "much cattle" (Jonah 4. 11), which indicates that within the walls of the city were pastures and pleasant places. It was a "joyous city that dwelt carelessly" (Zephaniah 2. 15). The city was situated on the River Tigris and the map at the back of our Bibles shows that it was approximately 600 miles from Jerusalem.

Nineveh was not a mushroom city which had sprung up overnight, for it was founded by one of the early descendants of Noah, as Genesis 10 shows. It became the capital city of Assyria.

At the period of the end of the kings of Israel it was an exceeding great city and it was then that Jonah was sent there to preach. Isaiah 20 shows the power of king Sargon, for it was prophesied that he would take the men of Egypt and Ethiopia captive. Later Sennacherib came out against Hezekiah, king of Judah, and no doubt Hezekiah would fear greatly on learning that this powerful monarch, of whom the world was afraid, was in his land. King Hezekiah admitted the power of Assyria in his prayer to the LORD for he said, "Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands" (2 Kings 19. 17). But the LORD fought for Hezekiah and gave him victory (2 Kings 19. 35). Some time after the fall of the last king of Judah, Nineveh was destroyed, and commentators tell us that its destruction was complete, the city becoming, "a desolation, and dry like the wilderness," even as Zephaniah prophesied (2. 13). Again commentators tell us that through the centuries that followed the city remained a desolation; later archaeologists unravelled something of its history.

The Lord Jesus Christ uses the men of Nineveh as an illustration of those who repented at the preaching of God's message and then He pointed out that a Greater than Jonah was in their midst. It should be remembered, as has already been written, that it was an exceeding great city, yet from the king downwards they accepted simply and entirely God's message, after which we read that they experienced God's mercy. Israel at the time of the Lord's ministry on earth were a more privileged people but they rejected God's message and slew their Messiah.

Although the Ninevites were a Gentile people, God had mercy on them on the occasion when they repented. We too as Gentiles should be thankful that God's mercy in salvation extends to the Gentile as well as to the Jew in this day of grace.

In addition to the scriptures given in the syllabus there is the prophecy of Nahum, which forms a message to the people of Nineveh (1). In it we read of God's power (1. 3, 5), His character (Nahum 1. 3) and His goodness (Nahum 1. 7). Immediately following, however, is foretold God's judgement of Nineveh by

flood (Nahum 1. 8), and the remainder of the **book is a detailed prophecy of the city's destruction. It was pointed out during our discussion that the people of Nineveh had been against the LORD and His people, and when the time came that God did judge it was to the complete destruction of the city. It is a lesson that we should take to our own hearts that we should never act against the Lord or against His Christ. W. S. Holden**

From Edinburgh.—Nineveh became the chief city of Assyria. It is described by Jonah as a **great city**, "an exceeding **great city of three days' journey**", by Nahum as "the **bloody city**" and by Zephaniah as "the **joyous city that dwelt carelessly**". The **people of Nineveh became cruel**, wicked, bloodthirsty and violent. As Assyrians they were the enemies of Israel and ultimately they took the ten **tribes** into captivity. The **city was completely destroyed by the Babylonians, Medes and Persians about 600 B. C.**

The importance of Nineveh as a city of the Bible is in relation to Jonah. Why did Jonah **try to avoid going there?** Jonah himself answers this when he says, "I knew that Thou art a **gracious God**" (Jonah 4. 2). Some felt that Jonah, in his **patriotic** zeal for his own nation, was prepared to forfeit his standing as a prophet in Israel rather than go to Nineveh, for he knew only **too well** that if Nineveh was spared Israel was doomed. This may be the **import** of the words, he fled "from the presence of the LORD" (Jonah 1. 3, 10). Others thought he chose the **easy way out** and disobeyed God because of the difficult task ahead of him. The Ninevites listened to the **message** of judgment heralded by Jonah, repented and believed God — so different from the **Jews** who refused the preaching of **Him** who was greater than Jonah, although **His was a message** of love. Nineveh was spared. God would have had no pleasure in destroying Nineveh, a city with a large population which included over 120, 000 people who were unable to discern between their right and left hands, i. e., children or immature persons.

A. M. Hope

From London, S. E. — If we were to look at the **map** today to find Nineveh we would search in vain, for the city is no longer in existence. Nineveh was the last capital of Assyria and its history extended back before Abraham. The **New Bible Dictionary states**, "Excavations eighty two feet down to virgin soil show that the site was occupied from prehistoric times". The city is sited in the northern part of Iraq on the east side of the Tigris river opposite modern Mosul, bounded in the north by Turkey, on the east by Iran (Persia), and on the west by Syria. The city was lost and obliterated until 1847, when excavations by A. H. Layard positively identified the location of Nineveh. Surely we must ask ourselves the question: **How did such a great city with such a wonderful past become destroyed and finally pass into near oblivion.**

Genesis 10. 8-11 reveals that it was Nimrod that founded the city of Nineveh. It is surely true to say that a city is the creation of its citizens; the **image it gives is** the crystallization of the prominent features, the characteristics of the **people**. In **New Testament times**, for example, Corinth was a byword

for wickedness and immorality. What image then do we get from Holy Writ of this city of Nineveh? We can sum it up in a phrase somewhat after the words of Scripture — a great and wicked city.

When we read the account in Jonah the description it gives concerning Nineveh emphasizes and highlights these features: - "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me" (1. 2); "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city" (3. 2); and "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey" (3. 3). Some have argued against the accuracy of Jonah in the last reference, since excavations reveal that the city wall, built in the days of Sennacherib (705-681 B. C.), measures eight miles in length and forty feet in height, and thus does not show it to be outstanding as to size. This difficulty is easily solved when it is remembered that excavations also reveal that "the ruins of the city stretch all the way from Khorsabad, about twelve miles north-east of Nineveh proper to Nimrod (Biblical Calah) about fifteen miles south-east of the city, and that this suburban area may be considered part of the metropolis. If we measure this whole complex from end to end, we arrive at a figure of about thirty miles. To go around the entire area would then be a journey of more than sixty miles or a three-day journey, at the rate of twenty miles a day. Moreover, Nineveh may well have had a population of 600,000, necessitating a much larger territory than that enclosed by the walls" (Howard F. Vos, *An Introduction to Bible Archaeology*)(2). The writer aforementioned goes on to say, "At present, Nineveh is represented by two great mounds, Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunis (the Prophet Jonah), and the site is so large that it may never be properly excavated."

What impresses us in the story of Jonah is that Jonah preached a simple message of judgement — "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" — and this same wicked people believed God's word (3. 4, 5). The citizens were wholehearted in their repentance and it is amazing to consider the extent of their reaction that from the king on the throne to the beggar in the street, and even the animals, all were draped in sackcloth. The people fasted and turned from their evil way. How merciful is our God, "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Jonah 4. 2)! and thus the city was spared from destruction.

R. F. Robertson

EXTRACTS

From Whitehills and Macduff. - Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was founded a few generations after the flood, by Asshur, a descendant of the great hunter, Nimrod. It was notorious over the centuries for wickedness and cruelty and described by the prophet Nahum as "the bloody city" and "all full of lies and rapine". Though noted for their vice and sin, the inhabitants of Nineveh were nevertheless pitied by God for their ignorance, for they could not discern between their right hand

and their left hand (3). The grace God sought to show them in the **days of Jonah was at variance** with the thinking of God fearing people (4), so that Jonah fled from having any part in the offer of mercy. To proclaim judgement against the city might result in repentance, **but** their sins were such that in the **eyes of men they deserved to be cut off** without warning (5). If Nineveh repented through Jonah, then the men of Israel should have repented **at the preaching of a Greater than Jonah**. To persist in sin in the **face of the warnings of God's prophet** is disastrous. Eventually judgement overtook Nineveh when the inhabitants returned to their sinful ways in later generations. Nineveh has significance in the Scriptures for the **grace of God shown to it when the burden of wickedness seemed unforgivable.**

A. B. R.

From Atherton. — The history of this city **dates back to its first building as recorded in Genesis 10. 11, but** since the Hebrew of this passage is apparently difficult to translate (compare A. V. and R. v.), **it may be impossible to ascertain beyond doubt the implications of the passage (6).** The expression "**a mighty hunter before the LORD**", used of Nimrod who (in the R. V. at least) appears to have been the founder of Nineveh, is itself capable of widely differing interpretations. **But Genesis 10-11 does at least inform us that Nineveh as a city goes back to early post-diluvian days.**

We next read of Nineveh as the place to which Jonah the prophet **was sent.** From the reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14. 25 we may form some idea of the time when Jonah lived — many years before the Babylonian captivity of Judah.

The book of Jonah, in common with other Old Testament books, reveals the interest God had in Old Testament days in other peoples besides Israel. Jonah **must** have preached with much power and earnestness to effect the repentance of that city so saturated in wickedness. The Lord Jesus referred to this repentance on the part of the men of Nineveh (Matthew 12. 41) and contrasted it with the rejection of "the Greater than Jonah" by the generation of His own day. In some way, in the day of judgement presumably at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20), the response of these men of Nineveh will be to the condemnation of those who **did not receive the Lord Jesus,** whose preaching (unlike Jonah's as far as we know) was accompanied by wonderful miracles and signs (7).

Jonah's effective preaching emphasized particularly the imminent judgement of God, and the consequent need for immediate repentance, rather than the divine attributes of mercy, love and grace. There may be a tendency to regard the doctrines of sin, repentance and hell as out of date, **but** these are among the basic facts connected with effective gospel-preaching.

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). — The repentance of the men of Nineveh after the preaching of Jonah was notable, considering that the inhabitants were Gentiles and the city was so great. **But** elsewhere in the Old Testament the Assyrian is regarded as the instrument used to chastise Israel (Isaiah 10. 5). Nahum prophesied the terrible downfall of Nineveh, and the removal of the Assyrian yoke (Nahum 1. 13).

In Isaiah's day the oppressor of Israel was Sennacherib, but the removal of the yoke was associated in Isaiah's prophecy with the birth of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9. 6). Micah also gives a message of hope in which he firstly describes a "Ruler of Israel" and then the devastation of the land of Nimrod (Micah 5. 5). So also Nahum, describing the cutting off of the man of worthlessness, exclaims, "Behold, upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" (Nahum 1. 15). *Eric Archibald*

From Glasgow (Parkhead). —Nimrod's name is associated in the **Hebrew language** with rebellion, and **Babel** with its tower **was** the beginning of his kingdom in the land of Shinar. The strategic location and subsequent history of Nineveh suggest that some human purpose **was** the motive for its being built. It rose to prominence under the Assyrian king Shalmanezar and continued to **be** an important city during the days of Assyrian power.

Presumably the wickedness of Nineveh and the Assyrian attacks on Israel are the reasons for God's warning, through the prophet Jonah. 2 Kings 14. 25, 26 suggests that Jonah's mission to Nineveh took place in the time of Jeroboam II. Whilst the men of Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching and were spared divine judgement, they were later used by God to carry away captive the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel. This use of Assyria by the LORD did not prevent its overthrow by the Medes, as graphically foretold by Nahum and Zephaniah,

The spiritual lessons for us today emanate from the Lord's words in Matthew 12. 41. For those who repent at the voice of God there is salvation. In these last days He has spoken to us in His Son, a message more powerful than that spoken to Jonah. Rejection of salvation through Christ will have consequences far worse than those which Jonah prophesied to Nineveh.

J. J. P.

From Methil. - This city we are told was built by Nimrod whom Scripture describes as a mighty hunter. Though little is told us of the very early days of the city, we see the low spiritual condition of its later inhabitants. Indeed, their sinful state was so great that God said, "their wickedness is come up before Me" (Jonah 1. 2). Seeing their condition, God called Jonah that he might go to Nineveh and cry against them, in order that they might repent of their wickedness. Although God granted repentance to the people of Nineveh at this time, we know that later they again practised many evil things. Zephaniah describes Nineveh as a "joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me" (Zephaniah 2. 15). The prophet Nahum gives us a very similar picture when he tells us how they had been indulging in idol worship (1. 14) and the marginal notes to Nahum 1. 11 describe them as a worthless people, so revealing to us their low moral standing. They had become so full of themselves and their greatness that they had no time for God.

God's anger was so kindled at their wicked ways that He utterly destroyed the whole city. The siege of the city is fully

described in the **last** chapter of Nahum's prophecy and it has been **suggested** that from the tone of his writings he might well have been present at the **time of its** destruction.

A. R. Smith, Iain T. H. Hunter

From Greenock. — Nineveh was built by Nimrod, the grandson of **Ham**. Nimrod (**some state** that his name means "Rebel", which **seems** in keeping with our brief glimpse of the man) was evidently a leader of exceptional **courage** and ability. ("He began to be a mighty one....**He was a mighty hunter** before the **LORD**...the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...." i. e. Nimrod was a king). Nimrod "went forth into Assyria and builded Nineveh". Do **we** not hear an echo of "I will ascend etc...." in the restless ambition of this mighty one? Surely Nineveh's inhabitants took on something of Nimrod's character, for in the days of Zephaniah they said in their heart, "I **am**, and there is none else **beside me**" (Zephaniah 2. 15). This attitude brought **swift** destruction.

"**But** Nineveh hath been from of old like a pool of water*" (Nahum 2. 8). The Hebrew word for "pool" is from *barak*, to kneel. A pool was a place where camels kneel. Nineveh was a place where kings had kneeled in homage to the king of Assyria, **but** Nineveh had failed to kneel to the King of kings and Lord of lords, and so God **made** Nineveh "a desolation, and dry like the wilderness.... a place for **beasts** to lie down in". Even **now** there are still only ruins at Nineveh, for **God made a full end of Nineveh**.
John N. Johnson

From **Sydney**, Australia. — Nineveh was built in Assyria by Nimrod whose **name means** "rebel" and who was leader in the building of the **tower of Babel**.

This great **city of three days'** journey, with one hundred and **twenty** thousand persons, had in Jonah's **time become** degraded to the extent that their wickedness **came up before** the LORD (Jonah 1. 2), and **He was caused** to send them a warning by Jonah (8). This reminded **us of God's** infinite grace in **His** dealings with sinful men. It would **seem** that Nineveh was the first Gentile **city to** which a **Hebrew prophet was sent**.

Nineveh, as a result of Jonah's preaching found repentance and God spared it from judgement. **But** in Nahum's **time, some 150** years after Jonah's preaching, the city had returned to its old **ways** (Nahum 3. 7), and its **doom was sealed by** God's word against it in Zephaniah 2. 13-15.
J. C. I.

From **Cardiff**. - The **Hebrew** word for "**Ham**" means "hot" and the Egyptian word for Ham is *Kem* meaning black or warm. The curse of Noah rested on Canaan the son of **Ham**. The way in which Shem and Japheth acted is worthy of the highest praise, **as** showing marked **respect** for their father. The sin of **Ham**, like the earlier **act of Adam**, brought his posterity under judgement.

Jonah eventually went and preached to Nineveh concerning their evil **ways** and God's judgement thereupon, resulting in their remarkable repentance. Nahum, **some 150** years later, pronounced the **city's doom**, which involved the mighty Assyrian

nation as well. It is said that Alexander the Great marched by and did not know that a great city was under his feet.

Austin Jones

From Vancouver B. C.—The scripture in Genesis 10 tells us the origin of Nineveh, founded by Nimrod. The very meaning of a city implies ideas of a man's unity which God did not wish at that time, though we would not go so far as to say that God made the country and man the city.

Nimrod was "a mighty hunter before Jehovah". Nineveh remained obscure in the Scripture for about 1,500 years from its founding. The next time it is mentioned is in 1 Kings 19. 36, 37. During this time in God's will it was being built up to be one of the strongest powers at that time. Facts about its rise and fall, with many interesting details, may be gained from secular history. At the same time as Israel was erring, Nineveh was at its zenith as the capital of Assyria, which was used of God to punish His people. But Nineveh also was punished because its people were not humble before God.

J. Pope, J. Bell Jr

From Melbourne and North Croydon, Australia. — The first reference to Nineveh is found in Genesis 10. 8, 12, where the R. V. text states that Nimrod the great-grandson of Noah went forth from the land of Shinar and builded Nineveh. The A. V. text gives Asshur as the builder, but this does not appear to be accepted by the majority of commentators. The R. V. text would appear to be correct. It was built on the banks of the river Tigris. The next reference to Nineveh is found in the Book of Jonah. At this time it appears to have been the capital of Assyria and the seat of the royal palace. The repentance of an entire Gentile city is unique, and it has been suggested that the story of Jonah's experience, which must have left permanent physical marks upon him, would also have become known in the course of his journey through the city, and confirmed to the people of Nineveh the imminence of their impending doom and the urgency of the necessity for repentance towards God. We make no comment on the reaction of the prophet when repentance became manifest. But to his complaint, "I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil," the LORD replied, "And should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?" This may indicate that children not yet of responsible years are here referred to, and if this be so, we may estimate the population as being at least 500,000. Repentance brought to Nineveh a stay of God's judgement.

Another reference to the city follows the destruction of 185,000 men of the Assyrian army by plague outside the walls of Jerusalem, as recorded in 2 Kings. 19. 36 and Isaiah 37. 37. Whereupon "Sennacharib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh".

In 1839-40 Mr. A. H. Layard, during his travels in the region of the river Tigris noticed the peculiar shape of certain mounds, and, finding pieces of bricks and alabaster became

convinced that something lay below. **Five years** later the work of excavation began, and gradually **came** the uncovering of relics of **past ages**. Under what was known to the Arabs as the Kouyunjik mound, Nineveh was found. After **2, 500 years**, the grave of Nineveh had been opened, and before the **eyes of men** were displayed the evidence of **facts** which men had questioned. At every point where Biblical history is touched upon, the accuracy of the inspired Scriptures is confirmed, and our reverence for the word of **God** is deepened as these records are dug from the **dust of ages**. It was estimated that the mound covering the **palace ruins** contained **about 14, 500, 000 tons of earth**; as the prophet had said, "**I will make thy grave**" (Nahum **1. 14**). *T. W. Fullerton*

COMMENTS

(1)(Southport)—Nahum's prophecy is not in its opening sentences addressed specifically to any named people. Its title is "The Burden of Nineveh. The Book of the Vision of Nahum the Elkoshite". The **R. V.** margin is helpful for "The Burden of Nineveh" it gives "The Oracle concerning Nineveh". In the course of this **message** certain people are addressed by name: Judah (1. 15) and the king of Assyria (3. 18). Clearly the **message or Nahum** is not for the people of Nineveh alone.

J. B.

(2)(London)—If there is any justification for this reckoning of thirty miles "from end to end", then the perimeter is likely to be much more than **sixty miles**. Further **some** allowable ways of reckoning the population of Nineveh from Jonah 4. 11 would lead to a much larger estimate than **500, 000 or 600, 000**. These popular estimates are commendably conservative, and so we need not be perturbed by the doubts some would oast upon Jonah 3. 3 and 4. 11. It is always advisable to be conservative in such reckoning.

J. B.

(3)(Whitehills and Macduff)—The fact is that the people of Nineveh were among the civilized peoples of their day. For their times they were not a backward or primitive people. That being so, Jonah 4. 11 cannot rightly be applied to the whole population of the city. It is generally taken to be an assessment of the number of very young children, and these would not have reached years of responsibility. In the case of Nineveh, as in the case of others, the rule is the same: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18. 25). *J. B.*

(4)(Whitehills and Macduff)—By the time that Jonah prophesied, the LORD had long been known as showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep Him commandments (Exodus 20. 6, Deuteronomy 5. 10). Jonah himself spoke of this known character of the LORD: "a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Jonah 4. 2). Again, we read, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?... He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7. 18). This unchanging character of the eternal God is also brought before us in Nahum: "The LORD is slow to anger,

and great in power... The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that put their trust in Him" (Nahum 1. 3 7). The view of the LORD as a merciful God is certainly not at variance with the way of thinking of God-fearing people: those who know not His mercy know not God. *J. B.*

(5)(Whitehills and Macduff)-The significant fact is that the wickedness of the people of Nineveh had come up before the LORD. The LORD's standard of right and wrong must be applied, not men's. Fallen men are apt to condone sin, as is distressingly evident from the present-day attitude to evil. *J. B.*

(6) (Atherton)-The R. V. margin, "went forth Asshur", is the same as the A. V. text; but many, whose understanding of Hebrew is to be respected, regard the R. V. text as the better translation. Strong's Concordance shows that in the Hebrew the words Assyria and Asshur are to all intents and purposes alike; it is difficult to distinguish which is intended. Due weight should be given to Genesis 10. 10, "The beginning of his kingdom was...in the land of Shinar". That great man (as among men) Nimrod, having established a kingdom in Shinar, moved into Assyria to extend his kingdom. Furthermore, Micah 5. 6 speaks of "the land of Nimrod". *J. B.*

(7) (Atherton)—Was not Jonah's preaching also accompanied by wonderful miracles and signs? "The sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly" (1. 15, 16). The LORD prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah" (1. 17). Jonah survived three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. He was vomited out at the appropriate time and place. Then there were the signs of the gourd and the worm (4. 6-8). Jonah himself was a sign unto the Ninevites (Luke 11. 30). *J. B.*

How was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? Was it not in his appearance, he having been subjected to the terrible effects of the juices of the stomach of the great fish upon him? His message of judgement upon Nineveh was backed by the appearance of God's judgement on him. Even so shall the Lord be a sign in the day of judgement, when they shall see Him who was pierced (Rev. 1. 7). The Lord Jesus whose message to the sorrowful and repentant was one of grace, preached more concerning eternal fire and punishment than any other preacher. *J. M.*

(8) (Sydney)—Jonah 4. 11 does not say that the population of Nineveh was 120, 000 but that the population included 120, 000 who were unable to ¹⁴discern between their right hand and their left hand". Discernment belongs to the mature, and so the use of the word "discern" would suggest that the point is that there were 120, 000 persons who had not yet learned to know the difference between their right hand and their left hand. *J. B.*

Questions from Edinburgh. -(1) Will the men of Nineveh stand up in the judgement at the Great White Throne?

Answer—The Lord Jesus said, "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in His judgement *with this generation*" (Matthew 12. 41, Luke 11. 32). This defines the judgement at which the men of Nineveh will appear, which we take to be at the Great White Throne. **J. B.**

(2) The marginal alternative in Genesis 10. 11 is "out of that land went forth Asshur," and in verse 22 one of the sons of Shem is called Asshur. Are these two Asshurs the same? or is one Hamitic and the other Semitic?

Answer—The text of the R. V. is probably the better rendering, and if we accept it as correct, the problem disappears. The words Asshur and Assyria in the Hebrew are indistinguishable from one another. This circumstance with regard to names occurs in several places in the Old Testament, and is one of the difficulties that the translators had to cope with. In some cases the best choice is by no means obvious. See, for example, Genesis 2. 20.

If, in fact, the marginal rendering is correct, then there would be two Asshurs, one Hamitic and the other Semitic. But this, if established, need not be a difficulty; the same circumstance is found elsewhere in the Scriptures. For example Cain had a son called Enoch (Genesis 4. 17) and there is an Enoch in the generation of Adam in the line of Seth (Genesis 5. 21-24). Again, there was a Lamech in the line of Cain (Genesis 4. 18-24) and in the line of Seth (Genesis 5. 26, 28-31). There are many other such cases. **J. B.**

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 26

This is another of David's psalms. How prolific a son-writer he was! He was as prolific a songwriter as his son Solomon was a writer of proverbs. David wrote many songs, many of which were his own experience; his experience has been the experience of many other saints, and his words have been a comfort to an innumerable company of sufferers. Solomon gave counsel to the simple and to the wise in his proverbs, but it is found that at times it is easier to give counsel to others than take it to oneself. So was it with Solomon towards the end of his life.

David begins this psalm with the words:

*"Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity:
I have trusted also in the LORD without wavering.
Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my reins and my heart"* (verses 1 and 2).

There are few who have laid themselves open for the LORD to judge them and to examine them in the inner secrets of their being, as set forth in the reins (the kidneys) and the heart, as David does here. But the path he trod, and the dangers and experiences to which he was subjected in his youth, would have been impossible for him to endure, but for his perfect soundness in his dealings with God, and his unwavering trust in Him. We all know that we have many deficiencies and many things to confess. The Lord knows all this, but it is this wholeness of heart, this trustfulness, this love for Himself that He looks for in us all. But if these things are not in us, the decorative hypocrisy, the external conformity to being a saint, is of no value in His sight. We may cheat men, but we cannot cheat God.

*"For thy lovingkindness is before Mine eyes;
And I have walked in Thy truth.
I have not sat with vain persons;
Neither will I go in with dissemblers,
I hate the congregation of evil-doers,
And will not sit with the wicked" (verses 3—5).*

Those who would appreciate God's lovingkindness in His dealing with them, and value His truth as a way to walk in, that is, how to behave themselves, must choose their company. They cannot, for their own sake and for their testimony's sake, sit with vain, empty persons, or with the wicked, and they cannot go in with dissemblers (hypocrites), nor be found in the congregation of evil-doers. Unless the believer is careful of his company, he may soon become like them that so down to the pit. The psalmist said, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee" (Psalm 119, 63). Daniel had his three companions, God-fearing young men like himself, in Babylon (Daniel 2. 17). How sadly Judah failed when he went down from his brethren and associated with Hirah, an Adullamite. This left a stain upon his memory which was never erased (Genesis 38. 1-7).

*"7 will wash mine hands in innocency;
So will I compass Thine altar, O LORD;
That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard,
And tell of all Thy wondrous works.
LORD, I love the habitation of Thy house,
And the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (verses 6-8).*

This is a choice part of the psalm and one that is sweet to meditate upon. It was not his to minister at the altar of God; that was the portion of God's service allocated to the house of Aaron or the tribe of Levi. The priests had always, when they drew near to minister at the altar, to wash their hands and feet at the Laver (Exodus 30. 17-21). David here spiritualizes this service and thinks of himself washing his hands to compass the altar. Well he knew that cleanness of hands was necessary to divine service, even as he says of those who would ascend the hill of the LORD and stand in His holy place, that they must have clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24. 4). Asaph also writes of cleansing his heart, and washing his bands in innocency (Psalm 73. 13). As clean water was necessary to

wash the hands of the priests, so innocency of conduct was necessary to all the worshippers among God's people. Innocency is the highest attainable by God's saints, and next to it is repentance for wrong doing. This washing in innocency was in order to make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, that is, to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, that is, divine service. Godward, and to tell of all God's wondrous works, that is, God's service, manward. The New Testament answer to this is in 1 Peter 2. 5, 9, in the service of the holy priesthood, Godward, in the offering of spiritual sacrifices, and that of the same priesthood, as a royal priesthood, manward, in the showing forth of the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. David very touchingly tells the LORD that he loved the habitation of His house, which was the place where His glory dwelt. This was the outstanding characteristic of his life, his love for God and for the house of God. He laboured and strove to gather the materials to build God a house which would be worthy of His name, in so far as mortals may build such a house, though as Solomon who built the house said, the heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain God much less the house that he had built. God said that it was well that it was in David's heart. May we love God and love His house. What is nothing to others is everything to us, so far as service to our God is concerned.

*"Gather not my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with men of blood:
In whose hands is mischief,
And their right hand is full of bribes.
But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity:
Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
My foot standeth in an even place:
In the congregations will I bless the LORD"*
(verses 9-12).

Both the A. V. and the R. V. margins give "'Take not away" in place of "Gather not". If this means that David asks not to be taken away from this scene of service with sinners and men of blood, we see that he did not wish to associate with this kind of people either in life, as in verses 4 and 5, or in death; but it may be that verses 9 and 10 are somewhat of a repetition of verses 4 and 5. It shows how separated the psalmist was from all kinds of evil-doers. In David was found that which God required of Abraham, when He entered into the covenant conditions of the covenant of circumcision. He said, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be thou perfect", that is, be a man of integrity, of wholeness and soundness. David was a man of like character. He sought redemption, though he was already a redeemed man, for he says in Psalm 31. 5 "Thou has redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth". See also Psalm 71. 23. I therefore conclude that redemption in verse 11 is from his enemies. In the last verse he speaks of himself standing in an even place, in a standing of security, and of his blessing the LORD in the congregations. It is well to know where we are standing, both in Christ as to salvation, and also standing in the truth, in the house of God, with His people who are gathered together to praise and bless His name.

Psalm 27

This psalm, it seems to me, was written in David's early life, possibly at the beginning of his persecutions at the hand of Saul. I would gather this from his reference to his father and mother in verse 10. We shall say a little more about this later.

David strikes a note of high confidence in verse 1.

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?"*

(verse 1).

David did not always speak from his stronghold in the LORD, there came a time when he said,

"I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in all the borders of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand" (1 Samuel 27. 1).

In the human spirit of saints that are tried, there are times of great confidence and joy in the Lord, and times of depression, and even despair. The land through which we pass is one of hills and valleys. In John Bunyan's pen pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress* Christian had his mountain experiences and also his valley of humiliation. It is so too, in the psalms of David; sometimes he is heard singing and sometimes crying in distress. As David starts this psalm he declares that the LORD is his light and salvation, and also the strength or stronghold of his life. This being so, he need not fear. His confidence in God is as when he went down into the vale of Elah and slew Goliath the Philistine.

He follows on in verses 2 and 3 in the same note of confidence.

*"When evil—doers came upon me to eat up my flesh,
Even mine adversaries and my foes,
they stumbled and fell.
Though a host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident" (verses 2, 3).*

David was confident that God would see him through, however dark the days and dangerous. He was like Habakkuk the prophet who wrote his prophecy before the Chaldean invasion of the land of Judah. It was a day of trouble. Yet he had received such an uplift, that though the land was destroyed and there were neither figs, nor fruit of vines, no olives, no flocks or herds, he said,

*"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,
And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
And will make me to walk upon mine high places"*
(Habakkuk 3. 27-19).

As we look down to this world of strife and sin and darkness, we become troubled and distressed, but when we look up to heaven, and by faith see the Lord on the throne with full authority in heaven and on earth, light and confidence stream into our souls. We can say, All's well; He is in full control.

Here we come again to a delightful passage:

*"One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after;
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in His temple.
For in the day of trouble He shall keep me
secretly in His pavilion:
In the covert of His tabernacle shall He hide me;
He shall lift me up upon a rock" (verses 4 and 5).*

If we are right that this psalm was written in David's early days, then we are sure that what he was in youth he was in old age, for in his closing days on earth he is found handing over the vast treasure he had gathered together to build God's house and also the pattern of the house which he had been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord (1 Chronicles 28. 11-21; 1 Chronicles 29). He also prayed to God.

"O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee: and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision"
(verse 18, 19).

How fully God answered the prayer of David His servant, to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life on earth! He not only prayed for this, but he sought after it. How unfruitful is the prayer that is not backed by seeking after what we pray for! There is a beauty of the LORD to be seen in His house as in nowhere else on earth. His house or Temple is also a place of inquiry and discovery. There too He keeps those therein secretly or hides them in the day of trouble. The covert of His tabernacle is a hiding place. Saints need to know this phase of the house of God, as well as that God's house is a place of worship and service. There too we get an uplift, as David said, "He shall lift me up upon a rock" J. M.

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were **more** noble than those **in** Thessalonica, **in** that they received **the** word with all readiness **of** mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether **these** things were **so**" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

Why should all **the** cities of the Plain come under **condemnation** and **judgement** along with Sodom and Gomorrah? The **account in Genesis 18** and 19 clearly includes them along with Sodom and Gomorrah **as** practising the same evils. New Testament Scripture confirms this; "the cities about them (Sodom and Gomorrah), having in like manner with these given themselves over **to** fornication, and gone after strange flesh" (**Jude 7**). The people **of** the Plain **were** entirely given over to grossest evil, and were ripe for divine judgement. There, as in other **passages of** Scripture, we see man's depravity and consummate wickedness amidst God's most generous provision for **his** good. We may apply the principle of Romans 1. 18-32 to the story **of** Sodom and Gomorrah and the judgement that overtook **them**. And further, "the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense **of** reward" (Hebrews 2. 2).

It would **be** unlike God the just Judge **of** all the earth, to destroy the righteous with the unrighteous. Abraham, knowing this (for he **was** a man that knew God), pleaded **for** the cities on the basis **of** the possibility that there might **be** even a **few** righteous persons in these wicked cities. In laying hold upon **God**, he **made repeated** pleas based upon lower and lower numbers **of** righteous persons. His pleadings ceased at ten persons: **it was the** LORD who left **off** communing with Abraham (Genesis 18. 33). All pleading **was** then at an end: there comes a **time** when judgement **must** be brought **to** bear upon those who persist in evil.

The history **of** God's ancient people Israel **is** recorded for the guidance **of** His present-day people. "These things happened unto them by **way of** example; and they were written for **our** admonition" (1 Corinthians 10. 11). In like manner, in God's dealings with the peoples **of** the world in former times, **we** find instruction and warning for the people **of** this present evil **age**. The overthrow **of** Sodom and Gomorrah **is** an example unto the ungodly **of** this dispensation (2 Peter 2. 6), and their

complete destruction by fire is a **type** of the punishment by eternal fire (Jude 7). These cities never rose again; they **were** destroyed once for **all**: and this finality indicates the eternal **nature of punishment in the Lake of Fire.** **J. B.**

THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN

There are **some valuable** lessons for **us to** learn from a consideration of the **subject** of the Cities of the Plain.

Men **today** are trying to achieve ecclesiastical unity. **No doubt** they will at length, but it will be unity at the expense of truth and, in consequence, not true unity at all. Why should brethren **separate** themselves and have no fellowship with others? is a question that is often **asked**. The first separation between brethren in the Scriptures (1) occurs as early as Genesis 13. 9, where we read — "Is not the whole land before thee? **separate** thyself, I pray thee, from me"¹¹. The reason for the separation between Abraham and Lot was contention between their herdmen. Abraham had first separated himself from his family and country, and then he separated himself from Lot his brother's son, when he deemed that they could not longer dwell together in unity. There is a **most** valuable lesson for **us to** learn here, which we should not **lose sight of**. Separation unto **God** brings blessing and power. Like Abraham we should **value** highly our separated position, and **make** no compromise with those who are disobedient **to**, or are ignorant **of**, the truths which we hold dear. There arose a sharp contention between **two** great servants of the Lord, **Paul** and Barnabas, over John Mark, and they separated from each other because of it (Acts 15. 37-40) (2).

We see the character of Abraham in Hebrews 11. 8-10. He was a tent-dweller. He had no interest in the **cities** of the Plain. "He looked for the **city** which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God". In all the varying vicissitudes of life **God blessed** Abraham because he had called him to **walk** a path of separation apart from this world, and because Abraham on his part had obediently separated himself at the behest of **God**. Abraham's faith in obeying the **call of God to leave Ur** of the Chaldees delighted God's heart. God honoured Abraham's faith and said that **He would make** him a great nation, and promised him a **better** country (Genesis 12). Abraham and Sarah knew **God's** protection and deliverance in **Egypt**. Truly **God was** Abraham's shield and exceeding great reward (Genesis 15). **God gave** Abraham **victory in battle**. Melchizedek, **priest of God Most High**, sustained him with **bread** and wine

(Genesis 14). God appeared to Abraham in a vision and promised him a son, and told **him** what the borders of the promised land would **be** (Genesis 15). God revealed Himself to Abraham and made a covenant with him (Genesis 17). Three men appeared to Abraham. We are reminded of the words in Hebrews 13. 2: "Forget not to shew love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares". We believe these words refer to the incident in Abraham's life recorded in Genesis 18. Was not one of the three men none other than the Angel of Jehovah? Because of his separation Abraham had power with God in prayer, and spoke to Him as a man speaks with his friend. God made known His purposes to Abraham concerning the destruction of the **cities** of the Plain (Genesis 18). The words of Hebrews 12. 14, seem apposite here: *• Follow after. . . . the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord".

In contrast to Abraham, Lot preferred city life. He did not manifest the pilgrim character of his uncle. The well-watered plain of Jordan did not long detain him. He moved his dwelling into Sodom and was content to stay in it. Foolish man! He still had not learned his lesson when the destruction of Sodom was imminent, and he had to be forcibly led by the hand out of the condemned city. Instead of escaping to the mountains as he was told, he entreated the men to let him turn aside to the city of Zoar.

God, who is rich in mercy and love, is also terrible in judgement. He spared not His own Son (Romans 8. 32). He "spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell. . . . And spared not the ancient world. . . . when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2. 4-6). We cannot **assess the extent of the wickedness of the cities of the Plain**. We have felt that the great cities of the world, at the present day, could fill up the measure of sin, and **might** even surpass the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. Divine judgement upon **this** guilty world, which is ripe already for judgement, is inevitable, because the word of God, which foretells its doom, is irrevocable. Perhaps John Bunyan had the cities of the Plain in mind when he wrote of Christian, in Pilgrim's Progress, leaving the City of Destruction to journey to the heavenly country.

Lot's experience in **being saved from the destruction of the cities of the Plain** can be likened to the experience of the sons of Korah, who perished not with their rebellious father, who, with Dathan and Abiram went down alive to hell. The Psalms of the sons of Korah are full of the mercy, judgement and deliverance of God. We little appreciate the great salvation

that God has wrought for us in Christ. We were bound **for** hell and the Lake of Fire, but for the grace and mercy of God which intervened in our case. How grateful we should be to God for His great salvation! What an effect it should have on our service, and how much more urgent would be our gospel preaching in warning men to flee from the wrath to come, if we fully realized the awful doom that awaits them should they continue to reject Christ! With the increasing iniquity and and lawlessness which is abounding on every hand today, we would do well to become intercessors like Abraham, and plead with God for the perishing souls of men.

The cities of the Plain are a constant witness to all generations of the goodness and severity of God, for, perhaps, they lie beneath the waters of the Dead Sea. Salt in the Scriptures speaks of judgement (3).

Ezekiel 47. 1-12 is very interesting in connexion with our studies. The time is the Millennium. The earthy with its curse removed, will bring forth plentifully. "There shall be abundance of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains" (Psalm 72. 16). "The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed" (Amos 9. 13). "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35. 1). The waters of Ezekiel 47. 11 will bring forth life and healing wherever they go, but we read that the "miry places thereof, and the marishes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt".

⁴⁴Let us have grace (thankfulness), whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12. 28, 29). *J. Peddle*

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN

From Whitehills and Macduff. - David, the psalmist of Israel, said that the LORD had no pleasure in wickedness, neither in the workers of iniquity (Psalm 5. 4, 5). The inhabitants of the Plain of Jordan were described as wicked and sinners against the LORD exceedingly (Genesis 13. 13). They had given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh (Jude 7). In our study of Nineveh, we saw that the Ninevites gave heed to the warning of Jonah as the longsuffering of God waited. Similarly God had waited for those in Sodom and Gomorrah but they ate, they drank, they bought, they planted, they builded (Luke 17. 28). In their thoughts God had no place whatsoever.

To **such a sin-ridden city** did Lot **come** after strife between the herdmen had caused him to **part company** with his uncle Abraham (**Genesis 13. 7-9**). The river Jordan, winding **its way** to the Dead Sea, watered the Plain, **making it a** most desirable **possession**. Lot's choice, wordly-wise, **was an excellent one, but** it **was** also a regrettable decision. Daily **in Sodom** his righteous soul **was vexed as** he witnessed the abundance of lawlessness (**2 Peter 2. 8**). The **new** neighbours he befriended had **no fear of God and no** respect for workers of righteousness. Abraham pleaded with God **on** behalf of the people, but alas **in Sodom** there were **not found ten** righteous persons. Lot, his **wife** and **two** daughters listened to the **message** of the angels, but even Lot had a desire to linger (**Genesis 19. 16**). The ties of Sodom were **strong**; looking back caused the downfall of Lot's wife. The word of God stood firm and the cities were turned **into** ashes **as an** example to those who should live ungodly (**2 Peter 2**). The Lord Jesus upbraided the **cities** of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, wherein most of **His** mighty works were done, because they repented not. If such works had been done **in Sodom** it would have remained until this day. In the day of judgement it will be more tolerable **for Sodom** (**Matthew 11. 20-24**). J. C. W.

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). — Sodom and Gomorrah with the cities about them, were **set** in a fertile plain **like** the garden of the LORD, but unlike that holy place, pride, fulness, prosperous **ease** and oppression of the poor and **needy** characterized them (**Ezekiel 16. 49**). They were unashamed of their iniquity and practised it with a high hand (**Isaiah 3. 9**). Accordingly, their punishment **was also** made **manifest** to all.

In these cities we see a **figure of times to come**. Men will yet establish a **mock** paradise of fulness and plenty, but with **it** evil will flourish without hindrance. In those days, the righteous remnant will **endure** great **opposition** and unpopularity. This relates especially to the **Jew**, who will suffer even **at** the hands of his brethren. Lot called the **men of Sodom** "my brethren" (**Genesis 19. 7**), but spiritually they were children of wrath.

Lot was a righteous man, who sat in the gate, the place of judgement (**Genesis 19. 1**), pleading, we may be assured, the **cause** of the righteous, but **Sodom** would **not** have his judgement. Their feelings were revealed later when they rejected him **as a** judge, when he was pleading the **cause** of the stranger (verse **9**). So God's elect will be rejected as they plead God's **cause** in the **midst** of wickedness.

The cities of the Plain were similar in character to **Egypt** (**Genesis 13. 10**); and it was in a city spiritually called Sodom

and Egypt that the Lord was crucified (Revelation 11. 8). The place God chose **to be like Eden was turned by men** into a **Sodom and Egypt** of wickedness. Such was the degree of sin both here **and** in the original Eden, that God Himself **came** down to ascertain the **matter and effect** judgement (4). **So** God will **descend** in judgement in a day to come.

Judgement **came upon** the Plain at a time when **men** were overstepping the bounds of natural relationship. **So** in a day **to come**, when the abomination of desolation will be set up in the Holy Place, **God's** time of judgement will have drawn near. **But just as** the **men of Sodom** pressed sorely upon Lot, there will be a great tribulation such as has never been **known** heretofore. **But** God's way of escape will be provided **and** the godly **Jew** will **obey** the **command** to flee to the mountains (Genesis 19. 17, Matthew 24. 16). Those whose hearts long still for the pleasure of the evil order will remain **to be** pillars of salt.

In **Sodom and Gomorrah** we have a picture of the world in all its moral, as distinct from spiritual, decadence. The world of evil, which was first **destroyed** by water, will later perish in fire. T. H. S.

From Methil. — There were five cities of the Plain, and each had its **own** king. The **names** of these cities were **Sodom**, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim **and** Zoar (Genesis 14. 2). **Sodom** and Gomorrah are well **known** and were probably the largest and **most** influential. In Genesis 14 they are mentioned first, while **Zoar** is the last in the list. **We know** from the Scriptures that it was a little city (Genesis 19. 20, 22); **Zoar** means "little". **It was** to this city that Lot asked permission to flee when escaping from the judgement that the other four cities of the Plain received from **God** (Deuteronomy 29. 23).

Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as **Sodom**, then he lived in a house (Genesis 19). The **men** of Sodom were wicked **and** sinners against the LORD exceedingly. Here is a lesson for us to learn. Sometimes an apparently good **move** may involve us in dangerous **contacts**. How careful we should be in every **move** we take! **Paul** says, "**Be not** deceived: Evil **company** doth corrupt **good** manners" (1 Corinthians 15. 33). **Solomon** said, "In **all** thy ways acknowledge Him, and **He** shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3. 6). **We felt** that **Lot** is an example of a wordly believer. **He** lost all his possessions in Sodom's **day of judgement**, reminding us of the word to the Corinthians, "**If any** man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer **loss**: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3. 15).

It is interesting to note that these cities were populated by the offspring of Ham (Genesis 10. 1, 15, 18, 19,) whose descendants were also responsible for the building of the tower of Babel. Lot was sore distressed with this wicked people, characterized by the words of Jude 7.

Meanwhile " Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD" (Genesis 13. 18). In these few words we have a picture of his peaceful and fruitful dwelling. The LORD revealed to him the imminent danger of impending judgement before Lot knew. Abraham did far more outside the cities of the Plain by his intercessions with God than he could ever have done by dwelling among them, and being involved with them (James 5. 16). Abraham's pleading was heard and remembered (Genesis 19. 29) by God, who sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow.

The Lord Jesus upbraided many cities which He visited, because of their lack of repentance despite His mighty works, warning them that it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgement than for them (Matthew 11. 23, 24). The LORD here sets forth Sodom as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7). In Luke 17 the Lord Jesus describes a future day when He will come as Son of Man to execute judgement. Men in that day will be as they were in Lot's day, careless and heedless. "After the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17. 30).

We should be glad that like Lot we shall be removed before then, for the Lord will come to take His own to be with Himself.

Neville Coomer

EXTRACTS

From London S. E. — Lot moved by gradual steps towards Sodom. Genesis 10 makes it clear that the occupants of the cities of the Plain originated in Ham the son of Noah through Canaan the son of Ham. On Canaan was a curse (Genesis 9. 20-29), and his posterity appear to have been very wicked. What later became the land of Israel was occupied by these wicked tribes right on to the time of Joshua. God was righteous in His punishment of them, both in the destruction of the four cities of the Plain and in the mopping-up operation under Joshua.

The well known story of Lot's choice of a location near to, and eventually in, the cities of the Plain, despite their renowned wickedness, in contrast to Abraham's choice of a

nomad's life with the altar of God ever present, is a telling lesson of the value to God of the separated pathway for those who would please Him in all ages.

Luke 17. 28, 29 indicates that the punishment which God meted out to Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness will be paralleled in the coming of the Son of Man in judgement to a wicked world. The suddenness of the destruction and the completeness of it, for none will escape, are also common to the two events.

C. L. Prasher

From Vancouver, B. C.— With regard to the pentapolis, some lessons can be gleaned from the meanings of the names. The theme seems to be "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart". Sodom means "my secret" or "burning". But the secret things belong unto the LORD whereas Lot was learning the secrets of men. Gomorrah means "submersion" or a "rebellious people". Such a meaning clearly reveals the submersion of the people in sin and rebellion against God and separation from God's ways. Is it not a solemn warning to all?

Admah means "red earth", similar in meaning to Edom. The idea of clay turns us to the scripture, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3. 19), and in contrast, "the clay in the Potter's hand" (Jeremiah 18. 6). Zeboiim has the meaning of "gazelles", "deer", "goat". We did not feel free to apply a practical significance to it. Zoar or Bela means "little" or "small". This might remind us of the importance placed on little things whether, good or bad. It was not saved because it was any better, but only because once again Lot disobeyed God and fled there instead of to the mountains.

J. Bell Jr., J. Pope

From Edinburgh — Sodom and Gomorrah, the two most important cities in our study, are outstanding examples of sin and its consequences, in particular the sin of a practice unnatural to man. God, completely abhorring any form of sinful practice, appears to be especially severe when dealing with this form of vice (Romans 1. 26-32), but even in the extreme case of Sodom, where the majority of the men, if not all, were thus perverted, the mercy of God is clearly evident.

These cities, especially Sodom, are inevitably linked with Lot who separated from his uncle Abraham, and went east (a sign of departure from God) to the plain of Jordan, eventually moving his tent as far as Sodom. The stature of Lot grew among his neighbours, until finally he became recognized as a man of substance and wisdom, and took his place amongst the elders at the gate of the city, where one day two men arrived, to whom Lot, as the custom was, offered his hospiti-

ality and took them to his home (Genesis 19. 1-3).

The LORD had heard the cry of wickedness from Sodom and Gomorrah and, accompanied by two angels, visited Abraham and told him of their impending doom. God's mercy is ever abundant; here in the face of appalling wickedness the LORD heard and granted the pleas of Abraham to save the city of Sodom if fifty righteous men be found, reducing this number finally to ten.

Lot knew full well the intent of the men of Sodom when they clamoured at his door. It is possible that he now knew who his two visitors were; at any rate he was prepared to deliver his two unmarried daughters to the mob rather than have his guests violated. The lust of Sodom was now being witnessed by two of the LORD'S angels and judgement was nigh.

L. Burgoyne

From Glasgow (Parkhead) — Cities made by men, whether for protection or for any other reason, **must** be distinguished from that prepared by God. We believe it **was** not the mind of God that **man** should colonize of his own choice as he did, but rather that his life with tent and altar should be one of faith — dependent upon God (5). Little wonder then that the cities of the plain of Jordan should become centres of iniquity. If the number five speaks of human weakness, then we have it here in the five cities.

Yet these were royal cities. Each had a king, and how like the devil himself did the king of Sodom turn out to be! "Give me the persons" (Genesis 14. 21) is still the plea of the adversary of man. Righteous Lot became entangled so that his life for God was wasted. When Abram rescued Lot and his sustenance from the grip of the four triumphant kings, he brought him back to where he had been before. But Abram was soon to know by the mouth of the Divine Messenger that the iniquity of the cities of the Plain was full. His pleading to God are an instruction in prayer to us today.

If the heart of Lot was full of expectant joy as he walked in the sight of his eyes to the place of his choice, he was soon to know deep bitterness of soul as he looked out daily upon the men of Sodom, grievous sinners against the LORD. It would almost seem that the LORD could not believe the extent of their wickedness (Genesis 18. 21) (6), for in **mercy** He would have spared the city for the sake of ten righteous souls. Alas, there were less than ten. God's judgement **fell** upon the cities and Lot and his daughters were barely saved. **Yet out of it all, the pleadings of Lot** were heard on behalf of Zoar (7).

R. I. Shaw

From Southport — The **cities** of the Plain in Abraham's time appear to have **been five** in number, **Sodom**, Gomorrah, Admah, **Zeboim** and Bela (also called Zoar) which, with the **exception of Zoar**, were **destroyed in** the holocaust following the deliverance of **Lot**, his **wife and daughters**. It is **significant** that these **cities** were not rebuilt and this indicates that the judgement of **God** was absolute and irremediable.

The fertility of the Plains, described as like the garden of the LORD, and the **prospect of dwelling in the cities**, appealed to Lot (8), who separated from Abraham to reside there, Abraham **continuing as in a land not his own**, dwelling **in tents**, looking for the **city** whose Builder and Maker is God (Hebrews 11. 9, 10). **Even** Lot's experience of war and captivity did **not** change his choice and although he personally maintained a standard of righteousness, the demoralizing influences that surrounded them seriously **affected his wife and daughters** and sons-in-law.

Because of very grievous sin Isaiah branded Jerusalem as "Sodom" (Isaiah 1. 10). The Lord **Jesus**, linking Sodom and Gomorrah's sudden destruction with the flood of Noah's day, indicates the **swiftness of judgement** when the **Son of Man** shall be revealed (Luke 17. 23-37). *L Jones*

From Greenock — Lot resided in Sodom, **one of the five cities** situated in the Plain described as being like the garden of the LORD. (It is said that in this area the Arabs have a five-fold harvest annually). These **cities** were vilely corrupt and as Lot entertained his angelic guests the **action of the Sodomites seems to hasten on** their judgement. The destroying angels dealt temporarily with those **citizens and** urged Lot to warn his friends to flee the **city**.

It would appear that Lot and his **wife and two daughters** were the only **ones** of his family that **escaped** the overthrow. In the **morning** they were forcibly taken outside the **city** and warned to flee for their lives. Abraham would have **saved** Sodom from **destruction**, but did **not** prevail with the LORD, but Lot **was** successful with the angels in the **saving of Zoar** (9). *J. B.*

From Melbourne, Australia — In the days of Abram and Lot the **Plain of Jordan** was a land to be **greatly** desired, **from** the viewpoint of a shepherd or **one** who **lived off** the land. From the words, "It was well **watered** every where", it appears to be suggested that a **system of irrigation was used** (10). This, combined with the natural fertility of the **valley**, largely made up from the **soil** which had **been** washed down from the surrounding hills through the **centuries**, and the heat, which still prevails in the **valley**, could well **account** for the words

of Scripture, "Like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar" (Genesis 13. 10).

The sin which specifically characterized these city dwellers causes us to ask the question: How far did the sin of Ham, as recorded in Genesis 9. 22-25, have an effect upon his descendants?
T. W. Fullerton

From Sydney, Australia — The story of Lot brings before us a picture of a child of God whose mind was set on earthly things and not on the things that are above (Colossians 3. 2); this eventually led him into a situation wherein he was deeply embarrassed by the unseemly behaviour of those amongst whom he dwelt and whom he called brethren. But God in His grace and for Abraham's sake (Genesis 19. 29) delivered Lot before destruction took place.

The writer of 2 Peter 2. 7, 8 reveals that Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day, but it is noticeable that he was prepared to put up with this for the sake of the position he had attained, sitting in the gate of the city of Sodom. And when he sought to save his sons-in-law he seemed as one that mocked. This is in contrast to the story of Noah whose daughters-in-law heeded Noah's warning and escaped God's judgement.

Lot's exit from Sodom, as the angels literally had to drag him with his wife and daughters out of the city, is a sad picture. He went down into the plain a wealthy man and barely escaped with his life. The lure of the place had become such to Lot's wife that, notwithstanding the warning given by the angels, she could not resist a backward look. Thus Lot was left with only his two daughters. We eventually find him as an old man dwelling in a cave in the mountains — a sad ending compared with his life when dwelling together with Abraham.

From Atherton — Genesis 14 narrates how the cities of the Plain became subject to Chedorlaomer king of Elam, but later rebelled. The ensuing battle resulted in the ransacking of Sodom and Gomorrah, and among the people taken away captive were Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his family. On hearing news of this, Abraham and his three hundred and eighteen trained men pursued Chedorlaomer and the kings associated with him, and destroyed them, rescuing his relatives and their goods. The king of Sodom, not having had any part in the defeat of Chedorlaomer, later met Abraham (or Abram as he then was) and requested the return of his subjects. He appreciated that he had no claim on the goods, having himself been defeated in the battle. But Abraham, strengthened by the earlier ministry of Melchizedek, refused to have any of

Sodom's goods.

There **can be** little **doubt** that Lot did foolishly in staying **in** that **evil city**. It is always **true** that "evil **company** doth corrupt good manners" (11). As **time went on**, the standards of righteousness which he had learned from his uncle Abram probably deteriorated **in** his **mind**—an **indication** of this **being seen in** what he said to the **men of Sodom** when the **two** angels visited him (19. 8). Was Lot's **warning** to his sons-in-law **ineffective** because of his **way of life** (19. 14)? And why **did** he linger **in Sodom** as the angels tried to hurry him **out**(19. 16)?

The catastrophic overthrow of **Sodom and Gomorrah** became proverbial **amongst** Abraham's posterity, and is **often** referred to **by** the prophets. The Biblical **description** of what befell these **cities** is given in **Genesis 19. 24**: "Then the **LORD** **rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah** **brimstone** and fire from the **LORD out of heaven**". Such **summary divine** judgement on grievous **sin** finds its parallels to **varying** degrees in the Flood, the **drowning** of Pharaoh's hosts, Korah's calamity, the fall of Jericho **in** Joshua's **time**, and the fall of Nineveh. We need, however, **in view** of the Lord's words **about** certain Galilaeans and **men of Siloam** (Luke 13. 1-5), to **exercise** great restraint in interpreting modern calamities as divine judgement, where there is **no accompanying** revelation. The Lord's **comments** about Sodom and Gomorrah **in** Matthew 10. 15; 11. 23, 24 reveal that the rejection of God's Christ is **even more** grievous to the divine mind than all the lustful **sins of flesh**. *D. S. Jones*

COMMENTS

(1). (Cities of the Plain) — This overlooks such matters as the call of Abraham from **Ur** of the Chaldees, when the **LORD** said, "**Get thee out of thy country, and** from thy kindred, and from thy father's house" (**Genesis 12. 1**). Are there **not** also **in** the earlier chapters of **Genesis** separations such as that **between** the line of Seth and the line of Cain, the breach of which **separation** brought disaster (**Genesis 6. 1-8**)? *J. B.*

(2). (Cities of the Plain) - The **separation** between Paul and Barnabas is **not** of the same nature as that **between** Abraham and Lot. Lot was **not** called with Abraham, **but** Barnabas was called with Paul (Acts 13. 1-3). Though this **most** regrettable separation **between** Paul and Barnabas would **appear to have been** healed (Colossians 4. 10), it nevertheless left a scar. We should **be most** careful **not to** mar the harmony that should prevail **in** the house of God. *J. B.*

(3). (Cities of the Plain) - **Not** always. This **statement** is

too **sweeping**: salt sometimes speaks of **quite** other things, as, for example in Matthew 5. 13-16. *J. B.*

(4). (Glasgow, Govan and Partick) - The LORD is **omni-scient, and had no need to ascertain** the matter. **But** such statements as Genesis 18. 20, 21 are needed by **men, even men of the standing of Abraham, to whom** these words were addressed. God has **to speak in** such terms so that **men** may understand. Abraham felt the weight of the LORD'S words, for, when the **men** turned and went toward Sodom, Abraham stood **yet** before the LORD (Genesis 18. 22). For Lot's sake he interceded **on behalf of** the cities of the Plain, and he **was** graciously heard.

When the Scriptures **use** such terms, as for example in Genesis 3. 10-13, 4. 9, 10, it is **not** because the LORD **does not** know in full, but for a testimony to **men, to convince** them, and **so** that their mouth should be stopped. *J. B.*

(5). (a) (Glasgow, Parkhead) — It would be **necessary** to adduce much more evidence **in** order to establish that by dwelling **in cities men** displeased the LORD. The people of the **cities of** the Plain were brought under God's judgement not merely because they were city-dwellers, but because their **sin was** very **grievous** before the LORD (Genesis 18. 20); "the **men of Sodom** were wicked **and sinners against** the LORD exceedingly" (Genesis 13. 13). Abraham himself would appear to have been a city-dweller by upbringing **in Ur of the Chaldees**, but it **was** the **city** that hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God, that **was** the **city of his choice** (Hebrews 11. 10). *J. B.*

(b) City-dwelling is **not an evil in** itself, but the evil is **in** what **men** do when they dwell together **in cities**. They hide themselves and their wickedness **in** the **mass of** humanity that is there together. *J. M.*

(6). (Glasgow, Parkhead) - The LORD **knew** full well the the **extent of** their wickedness. It **was** for the **instructing of** Abraham and the **just condemnation of** the **men of the cities** that these words were **spoken** (Genesis 18. 21). The LORD **knew** what **was in man**, and needed **not** that **any** should inform **Him** (John 2. 24, 25). The **most** secret thoughts and **intentions of men** have ever been **known to God** who **made man**. *J. B.*

(7). (Glasgow, Parkhead) - Did Lot plead **on behalf of** Zoar? It would appear to be much more accurate to say that **in** his failure to understand the **ways of** the LORD **in** judgement he pleaded for himself. He demurred at having to flee so far as the **mountains**, lest the evil might overtake him (Genesis 19. 19),

but it was not the LORD'S purpose to **execute** the judgement until **Lot was safe (Genesis 19. 22)**. **Lot was an unenlightened man** and asked a wrong thing, which God in His longsuffering granted, **even** though it involved the sparing of **the wicked city of Zoar**. *J. B.*

(8). (Southport) — **Does not** this overstate the **case? Genesis 13. 10, 11 does not give city-dwelling as one** of the attractions that influenced **Lot in** his choice. *J. B.*

(9). (Greenock) - Lot did not plead with the LORD in order to **save Zoar**. He felt that Zoar (wicked **as it was**) would **be a place of refuge for him**. It is significant that he did **not** remain there. *J. B.*

(10). (Melbourne) — There is **no evidence in** Scripture for this. It is better to accept the simple word of Scripture that before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 13. 10**) the **Plain was a place of beauty, well watered and very fertile indeed**. *J. B.*

(11). (Atherton) — How true! It should **be borne in mind** that, **in** this older **use** of the word, "manners", had a much wider application than **in** present-day parlance. It includes **a man's entire manner of life**. In this dark day of rapidly increasing **evil we should be careful as to** the company we keep. *J. B.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question from Greenock — "The great **city**, which spiritually is **called** Sodom and Egypt, where **also** their Lord was crucified" (**Revelation 11. 8**). Is this Jerusalem?

Answer: **Yes**. This is **not the only passage in** which Jerusalem is referred to **by names** which indicate the prevalence of **sin in** Judah and Jerusalem. See Isaiah **1. 10-17**, where a similar **use is made** of the **names Sodom and Gomorrah**. In Ezekiel 16. **44-50** the **condition of the LORD'S people is indicated by** application of the **names Hittite, Amorite and Sodom**, and in Ezekiel **23 the label used is Egypt**. Note the expression, "spiritually is **called**", which **indicates that "Sodom" and "Egypt" are used** figuratively. To the abominations of Sodom and Egypt they **added** the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. *J. B.*

Psalm 27

(Continued from page 16)

"And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me;
 And I will offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy;
 I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD"
 (verse 6).

Thus ends this section of the psalm. David has reached the mountain top of his experience of confidence in the LORD. With uplifted head above his enemies round about, he offers the sacrifices of joy and sings the praises of the LORD. James says, "Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise" (James 5. 13).

God does not expect a song from his afflicted saints; these are to pray. David's prayer is a cry which shows the earnestness of the psalmist.

"When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee;
 Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
 Hide not Thy face from me;
 Put not Thy servant away in anger:
 Thou hast been my help;
 Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation¹¹ (verses 8, 9).

We have here, what we have alluded to before, evidence of the great oscillations of the spirit of the psalmist from times of great confidence and joy, as in the early verses of this psalm, to that state of apprehension and fear of what could befall him, as shown in the verses quoted above. On the one hand he is singing praises with joy to the LORD, and on the other he is exhorted to pray, that is to seek the face of God, and in so doing he asks, "Hide not Thy face from me; put not Thy servant away in anger". We too, have many exhortations to pray and many examples of praying men (and women too) in the Scriptures. We may briefly refer to one or two such exhortations:

"Continuing stedfastly in prayer" (Romans 12. 12; Acts 1. 14).

"Continue stedfastly in prayer" (Colossians 4. 2).

"Praying at all seasons" (Ephesians 6. 18).

"Pray in every place" (1 Timothy 2. 8).

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5. 17).

Men "ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18. 1).

Side by side in life's experiences we have found urgent needs for prayer, and at the same time causes to raise the voice of praise and thanksgiving. It is so also in the Scriptures. The words of the hymn put these matters of prayer and praise together:

"I may sing with Christ beside me,
 Though a thousand ills betide me,
 Safely he has sworn to guide me,
 Peace, peace is mine¹¹."

Similar strains issued **from the inner prison in Phillipi long ago**. "About midnight Paul and Silas **were** praying and **singing** hymns unto God, and the prisoners **were** listening to them" (Acts 16. 25). **This was something that these prisoners had never heard before. These, the most ill-treated of all the prisoners, were actually singing!** And God too **was** listening and **He** shortly afterwards changed the aspect of the **entire** prison. Such **was** prayer and praise and their sequel. Such servants, David, Paul, and all the rest, **God could not** and would **not** put **away** nor forsake. **But sometimes it has happened that the nearest and dearest of their relatives have turned against them,** and following the R. V. rendering of verse 10, **this seems to be the case with David, for he says:**

"For **my** father and my mother have forsaken **me**,
But the **LORD** will take **me** up" (verse 10).

Christendom for a brief spell at Christmas **sings of the coming** of Christ to earth, **as** though **it** were **an assured fact** that this **was** the **time** that the Lord **was** born **in** Bethlehem;

"Glory to God **in** the highest,

And on earth **peace**, goodwill toward **men"**

Was, or is, the peace offered to men accepted by men? Was the Peacemaker not crucified by men and sent back to heaven with wounds in His hands and feet and side? Were not Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas reconciled and became friends when they both rejected Christ and He was sent to Calvary? (Luke 23. 12). The world will never know peace till Christ the Peacemaker gets His rightful place in the hearts of men. The words of the Lord on this matter of peace are never mentioned. They are these:

"Think not that I **came** to send **peace** on the earth: I **came** not to **send** peace, but a sword. For I **came** to set a **man** at variance against his father, and the daughter **against** mother, and the daughter **in** law **against** her mother **in** law: and a **man's** foes shall be **they** of his **own** household. **He** that loveth father or mother more than **Me** is not worthy of **Me**; and he that loveth **son** or daughter more than **Me** is not worthy of **Me**. And he that doth **not** take his cross and follow **after** **Me**, is **not** worthy of **Me**. **He** that findeth his life shall lose **it**; and he that loseth his life for **My** sake shall find **it**"(Matthew 10. 34-39).

We are told of the Lord's brothers, that "even His brethren did not believe on Him" (John 7. 5). And He said on different occasions, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house" (Matthew 13. 57). It was prophesied long before that those who believed in and followed the Lord would be cast out by their brethren (Isaiah 66. 5). This was what the Lord said would happen to His own (John 16. 1, 2). We need not further allude to this matter of the rejection of those that followed the Lord. The world has no place for both Him and them.

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind) examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

There are at least two Bethlehems in Scripture, one in Judah and one in Zebulun, the latter being mentioned possibly only once (Joshua 19. 15). It is not clear which Bethlehem is intended in Judges 12. 8-10. Jephthah, who judged Israel six years, was a Gileadite. Then came Ibzan of Bethlehem, who judged Israel seven years. Thereafter Israel was judged by Elon (a Zebulunite), Abdon (a Pirathonite) and then Samson (a Danite). Clearly then, there was no pre-determined rule of succession, but the LORD was raising up judges from different families in Israel, and there is nothing in the passage to show definitely which Bethlehem is intended in the case of Ibzan. It may be that the man and his work are of greater significance in their bearing upon the history of Israel than the matter of the city of his origin.

In contrast to this case, there are instances in which the LORD makes it quite clear that the reference is to Bethlehem of Judah, and so we are enabled to trace in Scripture the nature of the history of that little city. In these instances we are guided by the fact that along with the name Bethlehem there is a reference to Ephrath or Ephrathah (as in Genesis 35. 16, 19; Ruth 4. 11; Micah 5. 2), or to Judah (as in Ruth 1. 1, 2; 1 Samuel 17. 12; Judges 17. 7; 19. 2) or to Judaea (as in Matthew 2. 1). It might be enlightening if we could discern why these various names were used. It will be observed that the events recounted in these passages are all of prime significance in the history of Israel, even though they vary considerably in nature.

It would appear that the place-names Ephrathah and Bethlehem were also names of Israelites descended from Caleb (1 Chronicles 2. 51, 54, 4, 4; Ezra 2. 21; Nehemiah 7. 26), so that the people of Bethlehem had a valiant and godly forefather whose faith in the LORD was worthy of emulation. That the Bethlehemites did not altogether forget their ancestry would be suggested by the blessing they pronounced upon Ruth's

kinsman-redeemer Boaz, for they said, "Do thou worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Bethlehem: and let thy house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman*" (Ruth 4. 11, 12). This blessing was prophetic, and was fulfilled as seen in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus: "Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar; . . . Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king" (Matthew 1. 3, 5, 6).

Bethlehem itself would appear to have had little in the way of natural advantages, so that its place in the history of Israel (and of the world) is a definite example of divine choice. But we do know that there were fields in its vicinity (Ruth 2. 3) and also pastures (1 Samuel 17. 15). It does not appear to have been noted for the abundance or quality of its water supply. Indeed, it is said that its only (or main) natural supply was the well by the gate, the well to which David referred.

In the course of its long history Bethlehem (or Ephrathah) saw such varied events as the death of Rachel (Genesis 35), the departure of Elimelech and Naomi, the union of Boaz and Ruth, the call of David to be king, the offering of the yearly sacrifices in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 16. 2-5, **20. 6**), and from it came the erring Levite who was involved in the sordid events of Judges 17-19. Generations later Micah's prophecy marked it out as the birth-place of the promised Messiah, a prophecy that made a profound and definite mark on the people of Israel, for, when that time came, the Jews understood from that scripture that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem. Their response to Herod's enquiry would appear to be given without the slightest hesitation or doubt: "In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet" (Matthew 2. 5). Again, in the days of the Lord's ministry some said, "What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" They knew His lineage, and they knew His birth—place, and yet they knew Him not!

J. B.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE TIMES OF THE PATRIARCHS

From the Birth of Abraham to the Exodus

<i>Year</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1	Abraham born in Ur of the Chaldees (Terah 130 years of age)	Genesis 11. 26, 32
75	Abraham leaves Haran and enters Canaan	" 12. 4

CHRONOLOGY

35

85 Sarah gives Hagar to Abraham	»•	16. 1- 3
86 Ishmael Hagar's son born	"	16. 16
99 Covenant of circumcision (Ishmael 13)	M	17. 1
100 Isaac born (Ishmael 14)	"	17. 17
137 Sarah dies (The first burial mentioned in the Scriptures)	"	23. 1
140 Isaac marries Rebekah (Isaac 40)	"	25. 20
160 Esau and Jacob born (Isaac 60)	"	25. 26
175 Abraham dies (Ishmael 89, Isaac 75, Jacob 15)	"	25. 7, 8
200 Esau marries Judith and Basemath (Hittites) (Esau 40, Jacob 40)	"	26. 34
223 Ishmael dies (age 137)	"	25. 17
237 Jacob flees to Laban from Esau (Jacob 77, Isaac 137)	"	27. 41-43
(Jacob serves Laban 14 years for his wives)	29.	20-30
251 Joseph born (Jacob 91. Jacob serves other 6 years for his cattle)	"	31. 25-41
257 Jacob returns to Canaan (Jacob 97, Isaac 157)	"	31. 3
268 Joseph sold into Egypt (Joseph 17, Isaac 168, Jacob 108)	"	37. 2, 28
280 Isaac dies (age 180, Esau and Jacob, 120, buried him)	"	35. 28, 29
281 Joseph before Pharaoh (age 30, Jacob 121. Beginning of 7 years of plenty)	•'	41. 46
290 Jacob enters Egypt and stands before Pharaoh (age 130, Joseph 39. This was the 2nd year of the famine, 215 years after Abraham entered Canaan)	"	47. 9
307 Jacob dies (age 147, 17 years after entering Egypt. Joseph 56)	M	47. 28
361 Joseph dies (age 110. Joseph lived 54 years after Jacob's death)	"	50. 26
505 The Exodus of Israel from Egypt, 144 years after the death of Joseph. Deducting 75 years, the age Abraham entered Canaan, from 505 years gives 430 years, as given by Paul in Galatians 3. 17.		Exodus 12. 40 A. V.

It was **25 years from the time that Abraham entered Canaan, at the age of 75, to the birth of Isaac, when he was 100 years old.** Allowing **five years to the weaning of Isaac, as is done by Mr Newberry and others, the 400 years of the affliction of Abraham's seed (Genesis 15. 13, 14), began with the persecution of Isaac by Ishmael (Genesis 21. 8-10; Galatians 4. 29, 30), and ended with God's judgement upon the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus. Ishmael was the son of an Egyptian mother, and took his character from her; he was called the son of the bondwoman.**

The **Septuagint version (LXX) says that the sojourning of the sons of Israel in Egypt and in Canaan was 430 years (Exodus 12. 40). Jacob entered Egypt 290 years after the birth of Abraham: hence deducting 75 years from 290 gives 215 years as the time of the sojourning in Canaan. From the time that Jacob entered Egypt to the Exodus is also 215 years. Thus the two periods of sojourning in Canaan and Egypt gives the 430 years (Exodus 12. 40; Galatians 3. 17).**

We repeat what we have placed for the consideration of our readers in the list of years from Abraham's birth, that Joseph was 56 when his father died, and he lived 54 years in Egypt after his father's death, and died at 110 years. Joseph died 286 years after Abraham entered Canaan, and from his death to the Exodus was 144 years as we have stated. We repeat that the A. V. does say that the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. Paul's statement regarding the four hundred and thirty years seems to follow what is given in the Septuagint version. I say "seems", but we must remember that he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The rendering of Exodus 12. 40 as in the R. V. and other versions raises a great difficulty in the chronology of the period from Abraham to the Exodus. If the R. V. gives the correct translation of the inspired words of Moses, then it may be, and I say what I am about to say with a great deal of hesitancy, that in God's reckoning of years, the sojourning in Egypt was from the time Abraham went down into Egypt in the time of the famine, as told us in Genesis 12. 10-20, when he was 75 years of age. The account of the chronology of this period has been a difficulty with students of the Scriptures. It may be possible that there is a parallel between the two fathers, Adam and Abraham, for if "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Romans 5. 19), we had no say in this. And it may be that because of Abraham's going down to Egypt, the children of Israel are deemed to have sojourned in Egypt for the period of 430 years. I only say this if the R. V. gives the true reading of Exodus 12. 40.

J.
Miller

BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem has the distinction of being the birth-place of the great king David, and of David's greater Son, the King of kings.

The name "Bethlehem" means "the house of bread" or, "the place of food". The setting of the Book of Ruth is Bethlehem at harvest time. To this city came the Saviour, the true Bread out of heaven, to give His flesh for the life of the world (John 6. 32, 51). The Book of Ruth is a pre-intimation of the calling of the Gentiles. Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer is a type of Christ. Ruth is a type of the Gentiles. The Moabite, shut out by the law ("A Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation": Deuteronomy 23. 3) is admitted by grace.

David's words, "Oh, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (1 Chronicles 11. 17), have found an echo at some time or other in our life's experience, and remind us of the words: —

*"Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I sought the Lord?"*

So David, too, when he uttered these words, longed for the experiences of his youth, when the power and presence of the LORD his Shepherd was very real to him.

Who were the three among David's mighty men who attained to the first three? Compare 2 Samuel 23. 8-23 with 1 Chronicles 11. 10-25 and 1 Chronicles 27. Jashobeam and Joab must come into the reckoning as two who attained to the first three, but Joab's name is not mentioned in the first two scriptures. David's three mighty men Eleazar, Abishai and Benaiah, attained not to the first three. Can it be that the omission of Joab's name from the roll of honour of David's mighty men is on account of his slaying Abner (2 Samuel 3. 27), Absalom (2 Samuel 18. 14), and Amasa (2 Samuel 20. 10), and because he turned aside after Adonijah, one of David's sons who tried to usurp the throne at the beginning of Solomon's reign? (1).

J. Peddie

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

BETHLEHEM

From Atherton. —Bethlehem (which was also known as Ephrath or Ephrathah) was a village some six miles from Jerusalem. It never grew to be a large town, perhaps because of

its lack of water. The name Bethlehem (House of Bread) may have arisen originally because of the corn around it. The village was and is also noted for its sheep. On this point, Dr. Thomson (in *The Land and the Book*) writes, "Sturdy, hard and fearless people have ever been connected with Bethlehem. David and his family, his mightiest captains, Joab and others, came from it, and they were fierce, terrible men. The men of Bethlehem were noted shepherds, even to the time when the angel announced the birth of the Saviour. This occupation, in such a region, contributes greatly to educate just that sort of man... Seated on the summit-level of the hill-country of Judah, with deep gorges descending east to the Dead Sea, and west to the plains of Philistia, the shepherds of Bethlehem had to contend not only with bears and lions, whose dens were in those wild wadis, but also with human enemies, the Philistines on the west and Arab robbers on the east. They would, therefore, from childhood, be accustomed to bear fatigue, hunger, heat and cold, both by night and by day, also to brave every kind of danger, and fight with every kind of antagonist".

At least from Boaz to David, the royal line was associated with Bethlehem. It is interesting that there appear to have been only nine generations from Judah to David (Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse) covering a period of at least 600 years; we may infer, however, that at least three of the line — Judah, Boaz, and Jesse — were comparatively old men at the births of their sons Perez, Obed, and David respectively (Genesis 38, Ruth 3. 10, 1 Samuel 17. 12) (2).

Despite associations with such mighty worthies as Boaz and David, Bethlehem continued to be reckoned as "little to be among the thousands of Judah" (Micah 5. 2). But from a certain point in human history Bethlehem acquired a fame so great that many an unlearned child in many a foreign land has heard of little Bethlehem. For there the Word became flesh: there was born Jehovah's Ruler, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. By a remarkable series of events Mary, the favoured of the LORD, along with the heir to David's throne, Joseph the carpenter, was found in Bethlehem at the time appointed for the advent of the Saviour of the world.

The chief priests and scribes of Jerusalem knew Bethlehem was to be the birth-place of the Christ. It is, however, puzzling to read their quotation from Micah 5. 2; for they describe Bethlehem as "in no wise least among the princes of Judah", which, while not contradicting, certainly means something different from, "little to be among the thousands of Judah" (3). Their quotation, it may be noted, is not taken from the Septuagint version, in which the rendering of Micah 5. 2 closely follows the Revised Version rendering of the Hebrew. It has been suggested that the priests and scribes either quoted

Micah 5. 2 incorrectly or paraphrased the passage, and that Matthew records their exact phraseology.

Herod later ordered the slaughter of the innocent babes of Bethlehem. Matthew sees in this the fulfilment of Jeremiah 31.15. It has often been noticed that Rachel was buried near to Bethlehem. But where was Ramah? — "A voice was heard in Ramah". Dr. Thomson points out that Ramah was a common name in that country, and it is quite likely that there was one of the places so described (i. e., seated on a hill) somewhere near Rachel's tomb. It may be difficult to see how Rachel's children were affected at Bethlehem-judah, for Leah, not Rachel, was Judah's mother. It may be, however, that Bethlehem was inhabited at that time by many of the tribe of Benjamin, for Judah and Benjamin were united in the former southern kingdom, and doubtless intermarried to a large degree; and Rachel was Benjamin's mother (4).

But "the village where David was" was not to be the permanent dwelling-place of David's Son and Lord. His stay as a Babe in those parts was most unwelcome and short-lived. Not once do we read of *His* return to His birth-place* and many of the people were stumbled in their ignorance (John 7. 40-44) (5).

D. S. Jones

From Edinburgh. — It is not given unto men to be able to choose their mother or the place or time of their birth. The Lord was able to do all three, and in grace He chose a lowly maiden to be His mother, and a city that was little among the thousands of Judah (Micah 5. 2) as His birthplace. The importance of Bethlehem to the believer lies in the fact that the Saviour was born there. In this we see the fulfilment of the word of God which clearly indicated that the Christ should be born in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth and, in the ordinary course of events, the Lord would probably have been born there. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled, and so, "it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled" (Luke 2.1). At this vital moment in history Caesar's decree went forth, which made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to go "to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enrol himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child. And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered" (Luke 2. 4-6). Caesar's decree was but a faint echo of a greater decree that had gone forth long before.

What of the place where the Lord was born? Bethlehem had rich associations with the past. Like other cities, it had seen joyous events and sad events. Great men had been born there before, and great men and women had died and been buried

there. Bethlehem finds a place **in the story of Ruth**. It was there that the Moabitish damsel **met Boaz**, with all the important developments **from the subsequent marriage of these two**. David was born there **and one of the most significant events in Israel's history took place in Bethlehem** when Samuel anointed David **in the midst of his brethren**. And **so it was that, years later, the wheel turned full circle and a Son of David, who was David's Lord, was born in Bethlehem**.

Bethlehem means "the **House of Bread**". It is a reflection on the spiritual condition of God's people that Elimelech and Naomi experienced **famine** there (Ruth 1. 1). We can rejoice in the fact that from Bethlehem, the **House of Bread**, there sprang one who could say, "**I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst**" (John 6. 35). *M. Dyer*

From London. S. E. —In the Scriptures Bethlehem has a rich history. From its first mention (as a burying—place) to its last mention (as a birth-place) its story builds up to a great climax in the coming of Christ. As the "**House of Bread**" it was true to its name, for in each stage of its history it was truly a place of provision. The surrounding land being a centre of agriculture and abundant harvest, it is not surprising that Ruth's first impression of the place would be that of plenteous provision. Bethlehem, however, was much more than a place of material provision, for we see it as the city of David out of which God provided Israel's great king who was the sustainer of the nation. In Micah's prophecy, the smallness of the place is referred to (from an estimated 600 then its population has grown to 60, 000 today), yet notwithstanding its smallness from it came David the ruler of Israel. About 700 years later the great climax came when the angelic voices sang "**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men**". At last out of the "**House of Bread**" had come forth the Bread of Life. Bethlehem saw the shepherds come and go, and probably later the wise men with their treasures, and it also felt the bitterness of Herod's wrath. Thus it finally passed out of the Bible record having been destined under the hand of God to serve His great purpose. *J. K.*

EXTRACTS

From Whitehills and Macduff. —Bethlehem has not been noted in Scripture for its size or the importance of its position. It was a small city, and in John 7. 42 is actually described as a village. It had no geographical advantages and was apparently

in mountainous country and subject during its history to famine. Its importance in Scripture is in its people, from Rachel to the Messiah; but after the birth of the Lord Jesus it declines to insignificance. However, the fact that Rachel was buried near there compels interest on the part of Israelites, the tomb being a landmark even at the time of Saul's search for his father's asses. Bethlehem has a central place in the history of the tribe of Judah, and important people of several generations are associated with it, notably Boaz and David in Old Testament times. It was not a metropolis in which great events took place almost daily, so that the choice of this small city as the birthplace of the Messiah, great David's greater Son, commands attention.

The wise men looked for the new Prince in Jerusalem, but the sign of His coming was that He should come out of Bethlehem, "which art little to be among the thousands of Judah". Some looked no further than Nazareth for the background of the Lord Jesus but it was in Bethlehem, the city of David's birth, than the King of kings was born. A. B. R.

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). — The main significance of Bethlehem is that the Saviour was born there. Its original name was Ephrathah, which indicates fruitfulness. The book of Ruth tells of a time of abundance when the LORD visited his people in giving them bread (6) The name Bethlehem, then, is suitable for a city of such blessing, since it means "house of bread".

When Naomi returned to Bethlehem, "all the city was moved". Ruth, the alien, became famous in Bethlehem. Her great-grandson was David. And when the Son of David entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?"

In the book of Ruth, the city is named Bethlehem-judah. When Herod inquired about the Christ, it was shown from Micah's prophecy that Bethlehem was notable among Judah's princes, because out of it should come forth a Governor. Jacob said in blessing Judah, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49. 10).

Speaking of the dwelling place of God, the Psalmist said, "Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah". Of the Saviour it is written, "And they shall call His name Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us". Bethlehem was known as "the village where David was". It was with longing that he remembered the well by its gate, when he was in the hold and the Philistines possessed the city.

The city of Bethlehem is often mentioned in connexion with families, beginning with the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel, who with Leah "did build the house of

Israel", and **continuing** until the birth of **Jesus** and the death of the **infants** which **caused** Rachel's weeping for her children.

Eric Archibald

From Glasgow (Parkhead). — Bethlehem was in the lot of the inheritance of the tribe of Judah. It was also called Bethlehem of Judaea and, in the days of the Judges, Bethlehem-judah. Naomi went from Bethlehem-judah full and came back empty, as she herself declared, realizing the mistake she had made in forsaking the land or house of bread. But when she came back she found that God had not forsaken His land, for it was barley harvest and Ruth was brought into the sphere of the purposes of God, although she was a Moabitess.

In 1 Samuel 16. 1 we see how God again brought Bethlehem into the picture through a man called Jesse a Bethlehemite, and chose one of his sons to be king over Israel in place of Saul, who had disobeyed the word of God through Samuel. Thus from Bethlehem came forth the LORD'S anointed king of Israel, a man after God's own heart who would do all His will. From that great king David of the city of Bethlehem, God prophesied that a Governor and a Shepherd of His people Israel should come. When the time came, a Gentile governor sent out a decree that all the world should be enrolled, and so Joseph, who was of the family and house of David, came to Bethlehem to be enrolled, with Mary who was betrothed to him. It was in that city that Jesus was born to be the Saviour of the world, as the angels declared to the shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem: "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2. 11). *F. Harvey*

From Southport. — The first mention of Bethlehem in the Scriptures is associated with joy and sorrow, birth and death. History has often repeated itself in this respect, life being given for life. Passing strange it is that the Greatest of all, who was Himself born in Bethlehem, was born to give His life that all who believe should have eternal life.

At Ephrath (Bethlehem) Rachel gave her child a name just prior to her death, **Ben-oni** (son of my sorrow) which reminds us of what was said to Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus, "Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul" (Luke 2. 35). But Jacob, the child's father, gave him another name, Benjamin (son of the right hand). This is a figure of the greatest of all Jacob's seed, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has now the Name above every name, and sits at the right hand of God the Father (Philippians 2. 9, Psalm 110. 1).

It was on the hills of Bethlehem that David became eminently a type of Him who was to be the Good Shepherd, who

was to lay down His life for the sheep. It was on those fields around Bethlehem that he learned those attributes of God, which caused him as moved by the Holy Spirit to write such words as we find in Psalm 23, which have ever since been a source of comfort to numberless souls. *T. R.*

From Methil. — Bethlehem still exists today and lies 6 miles S. E. of Jerusalem in a beautiful situation with surroundings richly covered with olives, vines and fig trees. It should be distinguished from the Bethlehem of the tribe of Zebulun, close to Nazareth.

The earliest reference is found in Genesis 35. 19. For Jacob it was indeed a momentous occasion when under the call of God he went out with his wife Rachel and all his people and came to Beth-el. There God spoke again to him. As he moved on between Beth-el and Bethlehem, his son Benjamin was born and his wife Rachel died in child-birth. Later, near the close of his life, Jacob had occasion to recount to Joseph his experience of this place, which he never allowed himself to forget (Genesis 48. 7).

The next reference of importance is in Ruth. Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons, Ephrathites, left Bethlehem to sojourn in Moab because of famine in the land. This was a journey of great consequence. Elimelech and his two sons died in Moab. Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, from whom great men were to come, came from the obscurity of Moab to a place of honour and privilege in Bethlehem. She became the wife of that mighty man of wealth Boaz, who was of the family of Ruth's father-in-law, Elimelech (Ruth 4. 10-13). To Ruth was born Obed, from whom came Jesse the father of David (Ruth 4. 22). Boaz and Ruth had indeed done worthily in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem (Ruth 4. 11).

From the household of Jesse (1 Samuel 16. 1) God had provided for Himself a king. From verse 4 we learn that Bethlehem was a city to become great because of the young man who dwelt there, David. In his early years he was content to feed his father's sheep (1 Samuel 17. 15). In its beautiful surroundings some of his Psalms would be composed (Psalm 23).

Bethlehem later figured in a remarkable desire of David in the cave of Adullam, because the Philistines had occupied Bethlehem. David cried, "Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" In response to this cry certain of David's men put their lives in jeopardy. But David could not drink the water; to him it was **too** precious (2 Samuel 23. 13-17). *Iain T. H. Hunter*

COMMENTS

(1)(a) (J. Peddle)—David's military **arrangements** appear to be somewhat complicated. There was the host, comprising all males capable of bearing arms (1 Chronicles 27. 1-15). In the days of his persecution by Saul the host was Saul's to command, and he used it against David. But the time came when "from day to day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God" (1 Chronicles 12. 22). Thus David's little army of 600 grew to be a great host. There was also his body-guard, consisting largely of strangers (Cherethites, Pelethites and others) but under the command of Benaiah, an Israelite of purest descent, a son of Jehoiada the priest (2 Samuel 8. 18; 15. 18; 20. 23; 1 Kings 1. 38, 44). David also had a standing army of 600, originating in, and maintained at the number of, those that came to him at the cave in the time of his rejection (2 Samuel 23. 8-39; 1 Chronicles 11. 9-47). The 600 men were commanded by thirty officers over twenty each, and over them were three officers over 200 each, the chief over all being Abishai. There is some overlapping in the lists for the host and for the six hundred, but those expressed by name (1 Chronicles 27. 1-15; 2 Samuel 23. 8-39; 1 Chronicles 11. 9-47) are sufficient in number for the complicated organization of David's forces.

This is a very involved, but very interesting, problem, for the resolution of which time and space fail us. We trust we have said enough to set our readers to work for themselves.

J. B.

(b) David's first three mighty men are given in 2 Samuel 23. 8, 9, 11. *J. M.*

(2)(Atherton)-Was Judah old at the birth of Perez? I think not. *J. M.*

(3)(a) (Atherton)-It may be that in Micah 5. 2 there is a permissible dual application of the names Bethlehem and Ephrathah as the names of the progenitors of the line and also as place-names. "Princes" suggests the leaders and "thousands" suggests the hosts. *J. B.*

(b) "Little" can be "no wise least". *J. M.*

(4)(a) (Atherton)-There are at least three Ramahs in Scripture-Ramah of Benjamin (Joshua 18. 25), Ramah of Asher (Joshua 19. 29) and Ramah of Naphtali (Joshua 19. 36). Ramah of Benjamin was re-occupied by Benjamites after the captivity (Ezra 2. 26; Nehemiah 7. 30; 11. 33). It is frequently associated with Gibeah (Judges 19. 13; Isaiah 10. 29). Matthew 2. 18 may convey the idea of a massacre of Benjamites in Gibeah. *J. B.*

(b) My view of this difficulty is that Jeremiah 31 referred

in the first instance to an event of contemporary history, but the Holy Spirit has applied the passage as a foreshadowing of the "massacre of the innocents" (Matthew 2). Compare the Spirit's application of Hosea 11.1 (a historical event in Israel's national experience) to the Lord Jesus Christ's return from Egypt (Matthew 2.15).

G. P., Jr.

(5) (Atherton) Did not the wise men find the Christ in Bethlehem? I think so.

J. M.

(6)(Glasgow: Govan and Partick)—Quite so. It is well to bear in mind that even in the "house of bread", it is the LORD who gives the bread. In whatever circumstances we may be, the LORD is the source of all our blessings. Further, when things seem to be going against us, we should wait for the LORD to lead us out of all our troubles. This Elimelech and Naomi failed to do.

J. B.

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 27

(continued from page 32)

No doubt David's parents thought highly of their youngest son, of his rapid ascent to fame and glory. He was the court musician, then he was set over the men of war. Wherever he went he was admired and praised by the people. He was also the king's son-in-law. The shepherd lad had his place among the princes of Israel. Then came his fall from favour, his flight from murderous Saul. The reaction on his parents would be tremendous. Had wisdom forsaken their son, for the which he was so famous? Their attitude toward him changed. Their love froze toward him. But David believed, though he had not a home with his parents, not even in his own house with his wife or in Saul's palace, that yet the LORD would take him up. He found a shelter in the cave of Adullam on the south-west of Jerusalem. His father and mother did not seem to be long in learning of the true facts as to why David was cast out by Saul, and they with his brethren went down to the cave of Adullam to him; and there were gathered to him about four hundred men, who became a famous band of David's men, together with others who joined themselves to David later. Much may be written and many lessons learned from David and his men who clave to him through thick and thin.

David besought the LORD to teach and lead him. He said:

*"Teach me Thy way, O LORD;
And lead me in a plain path,
Because of mine enemies.*

*Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries:
For false witnesses are risen up against me, and
such as breathe out cruelty" (verses 11, 12).*

How very important it was for David in the day of his rejection that he should be taught the way of the LORD for him day by day and be guided in a way of plainness! (A. V. marg). Enemies in the service of Saul lurked every where, sending their messages to Saul as to David's whereabouts, and false reports of why David had left Saul were no doubt in circulation. These were days when David was ground between the millstones of bitter experiences, experiences which prepared him to be the man fitted for the work God intended him to do. He said:

*"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the
goodness of the LORD*

In the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD:

Be strong, and let thine heart take courage;

Yea, wait thou on the LORD" (verses 13, 14)-

David tells us that he had fainted, unless he had believed to see (not hoped to see) the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Many hope to see better days, and even hope that it shall be well with them in eternity but have no grounds for their hopes. But David had the word of the LORD as the foundation of his faith. Samuel the prophet had poured out the holy oil of anointing and proclaimed him king in the presence of his father's house, and king he would be, except of course he wantonly cast away God's purpose in him by his own acts of folly. No one but ourselves can undo God's choice of us, and His work in us as to His service, but ourselves. If we keep the Lord's way, even Satan and his hosts cannot overthrow us. We may even resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4. 7). We are told not to give place to the devil (Ephesians 4. 27).

David encourages us to do what he himself did, to wait on the LORD. He had to wait God's time; and while he waited he kept himself strong, training himself and his men to be in readiness for the day that would surely come, when they would quit the caves and hide-outs and march in to take control of the kingdom. Though David had his times of depression, yet he had ever to go back in thought to the day when Samuel came to Bethlehem and he was sent for in haste from the hills of Bethlehem, where he was keeping the sheep to be the shepherd king of Israel. Our day will come too, when "our David" will come into His own. May we be strong and of good courage to do what we can do in the time of the Lord's rejection, and then

those who have been faithful and suffered with Him shall reign with Him. J. M.

Psalm 28

"A Psalm" in the heading is printed in italics which shows that it is not in the Hebrew, only "of David". This is true of certain other psalms. We have in verses 1 and 2 the beginning of the psalmist's prayer.

*"Unto Thee, O LORD, will I call;
My Rock (Heb. TSUR), be not Thou deaf unto me:
Lest, if Thou be silent unto me,
I become like them that go down to the pit".*

Frequently in the Scriptures the LORD is called the Rock by those who trusted in Him. David uses this metaphor of the LORD being his Rock more than any other Old Testament writer. He uses two words for rock: these you will find in Psalm 31. 2, 3: —*TSUR*, which means a rock hard and strong, as compressed, a cliff, and *SELA*, a, lofty, craggy rock, a refuge or fortress. He uses *TSUR* in the first verse of this psalm, and thinks of the LORD as one that is strong. Isaiah uses this word *TSUR*, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH (JAH JEHOVAH) is an everlasting Rock" (or, Heb. the Rock of ages) (Isaiah 26. 3, 4).

Moses refers to the LORD as the Rock (*TSUR*) in Deuteronomy 32. 4, 13, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37, and in verse 4 he says,

*The Rock (TSUR), His work is perfect;
For all His ways are judgement:
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is He".*

Such was the character of the Rock on whom David called. His cry was that He would not be deaf to him, nor silent, but speak to him. Those who would live in fellowship with God must speak to Him and He must speak to them. Indeed, this is the meaning of walking with God, as Enoch and Noah did of old. This is what it means to live by faith. We must hear God speak through the Scriptures and He must hear us speak to Him in prayer. Where this is not true, God's children in time become like them that go down to the pit, for such neither hear God speak to them nor do they speak to Him. It is the silence of death. Where children of God absent themselves from prayer meetings, as some do for weeks and some for years, death has set in.

David continues and says,

*"Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry
unto Thee,
When I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle".*

This **as** the R. V. and A. V. margins **say**, means the innermost place (or oracle) of God's sanctuary, the **place** where **God** dwelt in that **past** day. This **was** where God heard His people and whence He spoke **to** them.

"When **Moses** went into the Tent of Meeting **to** speak with Him, then he heard the Voice speaking unto him from **above** the mercy seat that **was upon** the ark of the testimony, from between the **two** cherubim: and **He** spake **unto** him" (Numbers 7. 89).

This shows that the speaking **was** mutual; God spoke **to** Moses and Moses spoke **to** God. **See** also Exodus 34. 29.

As David had **no** wish **to be** like them that **go down to** the pit, he continues **to** speak **to** God in the words,

*"Draw me not away with the wicked,
And with the workers of iniquity;
Which speak peace with their neighbours,
But mischief is in their hearts.
Give them according to their work, and according
to the wickedness of their doings".*

What **we do** or **say can** only **affect** people **on** the earth. **Even** the abominable **ways of** those that dwelt in Sodom and Gomorrah only **affected** the citizens and those that visited those cities. David had no desire **to be** drawn **away** with the wicked or workers of iniquity. **He** lived, fought and taught **for** the well being of his people. What an abomination it is **to** speak **peace, yet at** the **same** time **to** have mischief in the heart! David had however **one** dark stain **on** his character, when he thought of his **own** carnal pleasure which brought grief **to** others. It is written of him,

"David did that which **was** right in the **eyes of** the **LORD, and** turned not aside from any thing that **He** commanded him all the days of his life, **save** only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 155).

David **was** forgiven **by** **God**, but he suffered greatly in his later **days** for what he did. God **may** forgive a sorrowing and repentant saint who confesses the wrong that he has done, **but** though forgiven he **may** reap the consequences of his action.

J. M.

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

Compared with modern cities, the Bible cities of Palestine were relatively insignificant. Yet because of their association with God's plan of revelation they assume an importance out of all proportion to their size or population. It is noteworthy that God has often chosen to demonstrate His ways with men against a background which we might naturally have regarded as inadequate for such high purpose. Divine wisdom so ordained it, impressing upon men of all generations that, however poor or uninfluential their earthly circumstances may be, it is spiritual principle which counts in assessing the issue of their lives. God will "render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek" (Romans 2. 6-9).

As shown in an earlier study, the cities of the Plain were virtually synonymous with man at his lowest moral degradation. The summary judgement which befell the cities has vividly illumined to men's minds the severity of divine judgement on such sin. In striking contrast, Bethlehem has gracious associations of divine mercy, in God's visitation of peace and salvation through Christ. Ponder the background of the Saviour's birth. In infinite grace, the Eternal Word was born of a woman. An act of such magnitude, we might have thought, called for the utmost that earth could offer by way of dignity, splendour and comfort. Yet God ordained the stable and the manger as birthplace and cradle for His only begotten Son. The unrelieved austerity of the background of the Saviour's birth enhanced the wonder of the grace that brought Him there.

It was amidst the humble background of peasant life in Palestine that Jehovah's Servant walked with His Father through more than thirty years of perfect consecration. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael's question

reflected the contempt in which the place was held. Yet out of Nazareth arose to God that wondrous fragrance of the completely sanctified life of His Son. Religious Pharisees later scoffed that He was the Friend of publicans and sinners. Among such characters the saving power of divine love was so gloriously shed abroad by His ministry. Whatever else He brought of grace and truth found its ample outworking in His words and works, even though He experienced so much of poverty and sorrow and homelessness during those years.

The cross stands at the centre of all God's redemptive purposes. That mighty sacrifice was accomplished in circumstances utterly forlorn — a Man in weakness on a cross, reviled by men, and dying an accursed death. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" For in that starkly fearful scene was displayed as nowhere else the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ, which passeth full knowledge.

Our study of Jericho this month illustrates principles both of judgement and mercy. Even the severe judgement of the city under Joshua was relieved by the salvation of Rahab and her family. Despite the curse fulfilled at the rebuilding of the city by Hiel, Elisha worked in beneficent power there a few years later (2 Kings 2. 22). Centuries afterwards the Lord Jesus trod the streets of Jericho, and ministered to the spiritual and bodily needs of its inhabitants. Where sin had abounded, grace abounded more exceedingly. *G. P., Jr.*

THE PLAINS

There are several **plains** mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures, and several Hebrew words are translated "**plain**". They **can be considered in two** readily distinguishable **classes**—those **applied to plains** in general and those restricted to particular **plains**, almost as proper names.

In Judges 11. 33 *abel* (meadow) is translated "**plain**" in the A. V. (**plain of** the vineyards), while the R. V. **uses *abel* as part of the proper name Abel-cheramim but gives in the margin "the meadow of the vineyards" as the meaning of the name.** A word of more frequent occurrence is *elown* (**oak**, as suggestive of strength). It is rendered "oak" in the R. V. **in such texts as Genesis 12. 6; 13. 18; 14. 13; Judges 4. 11; 9. 6, 37, but "plain" in the A. V.** In these verses the translators had to read in the light of the context and something can be learned from each rendering. *Biqah* and *miyshowr*, though they both have

other meanings, **are quite** literally rendered "plain". *Biqah* indicates a wide level valley between mountains. It is applied to the **plains** of Lebanon (Joshua 11. 17; 12. 7) and of Mizpeh (Joshua 11. 2). It is also applied to the plain of Dura (Daniel 3. 1) and of Ono (Nehemiah 6. 2). It is used also in Ezekiel 8. 4. These show the general application of *biqah*, which, it should be noted, is also translated "valley" in Ezekiel 3. 23 (Chebar), 2 Chronicles 35. 22 and Zechariah 12. 11 (Megiddon). *Miyshowr*, also a general term, conveys the idea of "level" and is applied to different plains (Deuteronomy 3. 10; 4. 43; 1 Kings 20. 23, 25; Joshua 13 and 20).

In contrast to these four Hebrew words, there are three which are practically proper names. *Shephelah* (lowland) is used only of the low hilly land west of the mountains of Judaea (Jeremiah 17. 26; Zechariah 7. 7). *Arabah* is of more frequent occurrence. It is variously rendered as Arabah, desert, heaven, plain and wilderness. The basic implication of the word is "desert" (in the sense of sterile). It occurs in such texts as Deuteronomy 1. 1, 7; 2. 8; 3. 17, and always refers to the valley or plain from Hermon to the Red Sea.

Finally, there is *kikkar* which applies exclusively to the Jordan valley. The *kikkar* of Jordan was the place of Lot's choice (Genesis 13) and the scene of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). It was shown to Moses as part of the delectable promised land (Deuteronomy 34). It was the route by which unhappy tidings were brought to king David (2 Samuel 18. 23). The clay of its soil provided moulds in which to cast vessels for Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7. 46; 2 Chronicles 4. 17). This restricted use of *kikkar* in the Scriptures makes it almost a proper name and leaves no doubt as to the plain intended, the which circumstance provides a factual answer to those who would cast doubts upon the scriptural record of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, advancing as one of their arguments that there is now no definite trace of these cities in the Jordan valley. J. B.

ZACCHAEUS

The matter of (1) what was said about this man by some of the people in Jericho, (2) what was said by himself, and (3) what the Lord said about him, have been matters of difference of mind by those who have commented on this brief story. It is evident that the people who spoke about him classed him as a sinner with publicans (tax gatherers) generally,

for these **men** were often guilty of **taxing** people beyond what was legal.

In contrast, the **man in justification** of his behaviour said to the Lord, who would know well whether he **was** lying or telling the truth, "The half of **my goods** I **give** to the poor; and (2) **if** I have wrongfully (by false **accusation**, A. V.) exacted aught of any **man**, I restore fourfold". It should be noted that he does not **use** the future **tense** about **giving in the future** the half of his goods to the poor, and restoring fourfold what he had wrongfully exacted. To have used the **future tenses in both cases** would have shown that **now** he **knew** that his conduct would have to be different from what **it** had been, because he **now** knew the Lord and because the Lord had associated Himself with him. The present **tense** shows, **I** judge, what had been his habit of life.

The Lord called him "**a son of Abraham**", **one** whom the people called **a sinner**. Sonship **not only conveys** the thought of begetting, but also that of likeness. Think of the mistake of the Revised Version, where the revisers allowed the word "**son**" instead of "**child**" to appear in Luke 16. 25. Abraham in addressing the rich **man in Hell** is made to say, "**Son**, remember", whereas the marginal reference says that the Greek is "**child**". The rich **man**, though he was a child of Abraham, bore **no resemblance to Abraham in life or in death**.

In Matthew 5. 43-48 the Lord deals with the behaviour of those who were children of **God**, and teaches that **if** they acted as God did they would bear **His** likeness, and so they would be **sons of their Father** in heaven. The same is true in Romans 8.15. Note the difference between "**sons**" and "**children**" in verses 14 and 16.

I take it that the manner of life of Zacchaeus bore **some likeness to that of Abraham**. He was **not** merely of his seed and of his children, as in John 8. 37, 39. The **Jews** generally in Jerusalem (but **not** all) were of their father the devil, for they sought to kill the Lord.

I **cannot** think that all publicans were rogues. **Indeed, I cannot** think that Matthew the publican was a rogue up till the time that the Lord called him (Matthew 9. 9).

As to the matter of sonship, the Lord was never called by others nor by Himself "the child of **God**"¹¹ or "the child of **man**". He was ever "**Son**" in both cases, for He is the **Image of the invisible God**, and He was made in the likeness of **man**.

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

JERICHO

From Glasgow, Govan and **Participle** — Jericho's sin has not been recorded in the Bible, unlike that of the cities of the Plain or Nineveh, and yet it was ruthlessly destroyed. The only indication is that the men of Jericho fought against Joshua (Joshua 24. 11) before the city was shut up (1). Perhaps the city of palm trees shared the fruitfulness of the cities of the Plain, and was another cell of the same wickedness; compare its association with Zoar in the plain of the valley in Deuteronomy 34. 3. Here the men of Jericho are included in the seven nations as Amorites, when their iniquity was filled (Joshua 24. 11).

Jericho's fall shows that God's kingdom could not be setup alongside wickedness; the land must be cleansed before God could bring in blessings for men. The men of Jericho and those like them were to be displaced in the strength of God, in order that Israel might be established in the land, when the blessing of God could be known of them and passed on to others.

After **the** terrible **judgement upon** sin in the plains of Moab, God **took** Israel over Jordan, where they had to learn again the **meaning of** circumcision. Jericho, then, must be in a particular way **a type of** the world and our separation from it. Our **overcoming of** the world (1 John 5. 4, 5) depends on **faith in** entering **in upon** our possession. This seems to link itself with the essential preliminary before taking Jericho — the putting **away of** the flesh **at** Gilgal; we must have no confidence in the flesh. Our possession is **to** be seen in the cities **of** the land, **of** which Jericho is the first, and therefore must be seen as relating **to** our inheritance now. Israel found an adversary as we do, **and** as God brought resistance crashing down through the circuits of the city and the sounding of the ram's horns, so Satan can only be subdued by simple faith in Christ. God is bringing in to an inheritance men redeemed from sin and all corruption. In our case it is spiritual principalities and powers with which we contend, and only faith in the work **of** Christ will enable **us to** carry **it** out. *Martin Archibald*

From Melbourne, Australia — Jericho, situated in the fertile Jordan valley and only a few miles north-west of the place where the Jordan empties its waters into the Dead Sea, was the first city overthrown when Israel advanced into the land of Canaan. Divine instructions were given as to how Israel's men of war were to act (Joshua 6.1-5). They acted

in faith upon the spoken word of Joshua (Hebrews 11. 30) and on the seventh day the city was taken and burnt with fire.

There are known to have been at least five cities, each built upon the ruins of the previous one, and the evidence would appear to indicate that it was the fourth city which was destroyed by Israel under Joshua. In common with other cities in Canaan, its moral and spiritual corruption was such that no mercy was to be shown to its inhabitants (Deuteronomy 7. 1-5), yet out of this complete destruction we find Rahab and her kindred saved because of her act of faith in receiving the spies with peace (Hebrews 11. 31). By divine grace she was brought into the royal line from whence came the Christ (Matthew 1. 5).

A divine curse was placed upon the rebuilding of the city (Joshua 6. 26), and it would appear that no attempt was made to rebuild it for over 500 years, but in the days of Ahab king of Israel, when spiritual life was at a low ebb and the word of the LORD was treated as of little value, we read that Hiel the Beth-elite built it again, only to find to his sorrow that the word of the LORD through Joshua, although over 500 years had passed, was not void of power.

In 2 Kings 2 we find Elisha at Jericho where had been established a school of the prophets, and after the search for the missing Elijah he was asked to heal the bitter waters which had caused the formerly fertile land to become barren: from this time onwards the natural fertility of the land returned. During the centuries that followed, the city attained a place of prominence, becoming the place of residence of a large number of the priests. In the days of the Lord it was considered to be next in importance to Jerusalem and had within it a royal palace where Herod the Great is said to have died. Because of Jericho being a residence of the priests the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a fitting setting for the parable of Luke 10. 30-35.

It is one of the most ancient cities excavated **and** investigated by archaeologists during the present century. Professor Garstang, writing in 1947, states, "The revelations of the spade.... show that the city destroyed (by Joshua) occupied the site of one.... of the earliest settlements of man found anywhere". Following upon a description of how the walls fell he states, "Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones, charred timbers and ashes. This was no ordinary burning.... fuel had been added to the fire. It looks, in short, as though Jericho was finally burnt after deliberate preparation; that it was in fact devoted as a holocaust, precisely in the manner described in the Book of Joshua: "They burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein" (Joshua 6. 24). T. W. F.

From Whitehills and Macduff - At the top of Pisgah over against Jericho, Moses espied the inheritance of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 34. 1), and Joshua was soon to lead the nation into the land of promise. "Go view the land, and Jericho", was the command of the new leader to the selected men, who found a haven in the house of the harlot Rahab. The risk was great but by faith she hid the messengers (Hebrews 11. 31). The inhabitants of Jericho were not ignorant of the wonders of the LORD. The exodus of Israel from Egypt and the Red Sea crossing were incidents known to them as well as the death of Sihon and Og the Amorite kings (Joshua 2. 10). Yet with all their knowledge they lived in disobedience to the claims of their Creator. All Jericho had been given into the hand of Joshua (Joshua 6. 2) and no power could alter the divine decision. The march forward by the Israelites began with the crossing of the river Jordan, which was indeed a miraculous undertaking. The hearts of the Canaanites melted with fear as the wanderers from the wilderness converged on Jericho. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, but salvation came for Rahab and her family. To dwell in Israel was now the portion of the converted harlot (Joshua 6. 25).

Many centuries after its humiliation Jericho again became a mark in the landscape. A Beth-elite named Hiel in the days of Ahab decided to rebuild the city, but the curse Joshua spoke of had not over the years lost its power. The LORD fulfilled His word and Hiel suffered the loss of two sons (1 Kings 16. 34). Jericho, however, became once more a city of renown, famous because of its pleasant situation but marred as a result of death due to the curse. Through Elisha the LORD intervened to bring life again to the fruitless trees (2 Kings 2. 19-22). Jericho in New Testament days was again famous as the Lord Jesus graced its streets with His presence. Rich and poor, young and old, were associated again with Jericho and many, Rahab-like, put their faith in the Messenger from heaven.

J. C. Watt

EXTRACTS

From Edinburgh — The land that God promised **and** which **Moses saw from** Pisgah was beyond Jordan. One **of** the nearest **and** largest cities to Pisgah was Jericho, the city of palm trees, in the valley of Jordan, some 825 feet below sea level. The expression, "Going down from Jerusalem to Jericho*" is a physical fact, for Jerusalem is about 2600 feet above sea level, and is only 20 miles from Jericho. Spiritually also there

is a going down from the city of Peace to the cursed city, although its name is literally "the place of fragance". Jericho was a city of Benjamin. It was necessary that it should be taken by the Israelites in their advance into the promised land, as it was heavily fortified and commanded the southern end of the Jordan valley and the passes into the mountains.

Elijah's last journey carried him through Jericho. Elisha then returned and tarried in Jericho. There he healed the spring of water. Apart from the dividing of Jordan, this would seem to be Elisha's first miracle. A school of prophets lived in Jericho. Elijah's Lord also passed through it on his last journey, when Bartimaeus received his sight, and Zacchaeus received "something more than gold".

At various times Jericho was a royal residence. Eglon, king of Moab, lived there when oppressing the Israelites, and Herod the Great had a royal palace there. *William C. Taylor*

From Methil — Jericho was one of the oldest cities in the land of Canaan and was the most low-lying on earth (825 feet below sea level). It was a well-established city in the days of Moses, who saw it from the top of Mount Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34. 1). Jericho, the city of palm trees, was described by its inhabitants as having a pleasant situation (2 Kings 2. 19). It appears to have been a meeting place for traders crossing the Jordan at this point.

For the children of Israel under their leader Joshua, Jericho was the site of the first conflict in the promised land. Although surrounded by thick walls, yet by the mighty hand of God the city was miraculously overthrown and utterly destroyed. Only Rahab and her family were saved, and that by faith (Joshua 6). We are told in Hebrews 11, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,.... By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient". Rahab features in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, she being the mother of Boaz (Matthew 1. 5).

From Joshua's day a curse was to be put on any man who would dare to rebuild this city (Joshua 6. 26). Hiel, a man from Beth-el, in defiance of the word of God rebuilt Jericho with the loss of his oldest and youngest sons Abiram and Segub (1 Kings 16. 34). We note that the rebuilding took place during Ahab's exceedingly wicked reign (1 Kings 16. 33). Elisha healed the waters soon after the rebuilding, by adding a new cruse of salt to the spring of the waters, so making the land fruitful again. Is there a lesson here? Elisha, the man of God, with salt, the word of God, brought fruitfulness to a barren land. *David Reid, Neville Coomer*

From Southport — The word of the LORD was nearing

fulfilment when He said to Moses on mount Nebo, "This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed". It was part of God's purpose for His people that the city of Jericho should be acquired by them, and in God's wisdom and power it was miraculously thrown open to Joshua. The city and all that was in it was devoted to be burnt with fire, but through God's grace Rahab and all that she had were saved by Joshua (Joshua 6. 16, 17, 24, 25).

In New Testament times Jericho was visited by the Lord Jesus. Here blind Bartimaeus received his sight, and Zacchaeus heard the Lord Jesus say, "To-day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19. 9). *E. I. Hodson*

From Wigan - The rebuilding of Jericho (1 Kings 16. 34) was symbolic of the character of that day. Under Ahab Israel provoked God and worshipped Baal. "In his days did Hiel.... build Jericho", seems to be a significant statement. Jericho was associated with the prophets Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2) when Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind by God into heaven. We thought it significant that Moses on one side of Jordan overlooking Jericho had died and been buried by God, and no man ever found his grave, and Elijah on the opposite side was taken up to heaven and the men of Jericho failed to find his body. These two will be the two witnesses in Revelation 11. We are not dogmatic about this (2).

In 2 Kings 2. 19-22 Jericho again has its lesson for us. The miscarriage of the fruit trees was healed by the salt from the new cruse, so the unfruitfulness of our lives is cured by the corrective power of the word of God.

Luke 18. 35-43 shows that Jericho was standing at the time of the Lord's sojourn here and is associated with His mercy shown to sinners. Perhaps we could say that the mercy of God is seen on each of the occasions that Jericho is mentioned, with one exception, when it was rebuilt by Hiel. *J. H.*

From London, S. E. — The curse of Joshua meant that Jericho was not permanently settled for another 400 years although the spring and the oasis certainly induced sporadic occupation (Judges 3. 13; 2 Samuel 10. 5). Jericho was refounded by Hiel the Beth-elite in the reign of Ahab, and he knew in consequence the weight of the curse. It was to this city that Elijah and Elisha came (2 Kings 2). Jericho was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B. C. and Judah's last king, Zedekiah, was captured by them in the plains of Jericho (2 Kings 25. 5). The occupation of Canaan finished where it began.

New Testament references to Jericho are few. The town

had been resettled and made by Herod into a profitable holiday resort from which he collected revenue by means of publicans, like Zacchaeus. The Lord describes the hazards of the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho in Luke 10. It was the last town He visited before going to Jerusalem to be crucified. The place of Joshua's curse saw the healing of blind Bartimaeus and the salvation of Zacchaeus.

Two related points emerge from this study. Firstly, the number of times that Jericho features at the beginning or conclusion of events, and, secondly, that it can be taken as a type of the flesh. Jericho was Israel's first obstacle in Canaan. Militarily it was formidable. Sin in the flesh is the first obstacle to the Christian but, like Jericho, it can be dealt with by God's power and in His way. The victory is not, however, won once and for all; Jericho grew again in spite of its curse. Significantly, it was refounded by a Beth-elite. Jericho was the last town through which Elijah passed. The men of Jericho persuaded Elisha at the very commencement of his ministry and against his better judgement to send out fifty men on a foolish errand. The flesh is active in mature men at the start of new and important service for God.

The last picture of Jericho is that of the healing and salvation of two men, the one from blindness and the other from a lucrative and dishonest life in the city (3); the power of God can accomplish what ordinarily seems impossible. Yet, men from Jericho have been used by God in His service. Faithful men, drawn by God, were among those who, with trowel in one hand and sword in the other, rebuilt the city of Jerusalem with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3. 2). The flesh can overcome and be used in profitable service (4). *A. C. Bishop*

From Vancouver — Jericho as a strategic gateway was an obstruction to Israel in their entry into the land and stands comparison with obstructions in spiritual life. As the "city of palm trees" it had outward beauty but inward wickedness.

Under Joshua it was destroyed by faith. The fulfilment of the curse (1 Kings 16. 34) reminds us that the word of God cannot be broken. When Elisha healed the waters (2 Kings 2. 19-22) they remained "healed to this day"^M, and thus the extreme fertility of the land was restored. Jericho is a city of the curse and of grace, as seen in the cases of Achan and Rahab. *J. Pope, J. Bell, Jr.*

From Crowborough — Although Jericho is often referred to as "the city of the curse", the term is not actually used in Scripture. There is no doubt, however, that both by fact and by implication the curse is associated with it. When Joshua had taken the city he pronounced a curse on the man who should rebuild it, the which curse was fulfilled (1 Kings 16. 34).

The **view** has been expressed that by the death of the **two sons of Hiel** the Beth-elite the curse was removed. **But this is tantamount to saying** that, when **God** warns of **judgement on an act of defiance** and judgement has fallen, then normal relations are restored. This **confuses** the death of the devoted thing with the death of the sacrifice, which was the mistake which **cost** Saul the kingdom (1 Samuel 15. See also Leviticus 27. 29). It seems clear from Joshua's **action** that **it was** contrary to **God's** will that the **city** should be rebuilt.

In the story of the **good Samaritan**, emphasis is often placed on the downward path of the **man** to the place of the curse. Whilst this **no doubt is a** useful illustration of the path of the **sinner**, it is **not** necessarily integral with the parable that Jericho was in those days **associated** with the curse. The Jericho road was a notoriously perilous road and illustrates the **man's** danger and his **need**. Whatever its current associations then, the **city** was certainly blessed by the Lord's **presence** there. In the history of Jericho, first of all in its original pleasant **setting**, then **coming** under the curse, later knowing the **gracious** dealings of **God** in Elisha's **time**, and finally, knowing the incomparable privilege of the personal **presence** of the Lord, we see a parallel to God's wonderful dealings with a world of **sin and sinners**. *S. Johnston*

From Atherton — Jericho was a **city** of considerable importance, **situated in a plain** traversed by the river Jordan. It had a king, was a **fenced city**, and its walls were so **stout** that houses were built thereon. Its wealth is to be observed in the spoil taken at its fall: silver and gold, brass and iron **being some of the things associated** therewith. The Babylonish garment may be an indication of existing commerce between Jericho and the east. It was outstanding, in a country where natural advantages have **been** always regarded as of tremendous import, and in an age when people depended so much upon such resources. Prior to its curse by Joshua, there can be **no doubt as to its charm and beauty**, which seem to have been observed by Moses in association with the revelation of **Nebo's** mount.

Rahab's statements to the **spies** are of paramount importance in the declaration of Jericho's terror and dread of Israel's **consistent** supremacy (in spite of its powerful defences) and also in the operation of the Holy Spirit in such a locality upon herself. By contrast, it is equally remarkable that, according to the **divine** record, she was the **sole** individual thus exercised, and to obtain wonderful deliverance from that power of darkness, and translation into the royal line of the Messiah.

After its **rebuilding** Jericho received further prominence, as seen in isolated passages of Scripture. To its vicinity the

sons of the prophets had withdrawn. **Over** against it, "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven". Elisha healed its spring waters. **In** its plain Zedekiah fell into the hands of the Chaldeans (2 Kings 25. 5). **In the return of** the Remnant under Zerubbabel, its children, comprising 350, assisted in rebuilding that part of the wall of Jerusalem that was next to the sheep-gate (Nehemiah 7. 36; 3. 2). *E. Birchall*

COMMENTS

(1)(Glasgow: Govan and Partick) — The men of Jericho fought against Israel because they knew that Israel had come to dispossess them. They were in a state of fear, for they had heard of the way the LORD had wrought for Israel. The extent of their knowledge of the mighty acts of God may be gathered from what Rahab said to the spies (Joshua 2. 9-11). The evil ways of the peoples of the land had long been displeasing to the LORD, who waited until their iniquity was full (Genesis 15. 15, 16). **It** should be borne in mind, however, that the judgement upon these wicked peoples is but one aspect of the matter; there are other aspects. *J. B.*

(2)(Wigan) — (a) The identity of these two witnesses has provoked much thought and discussion, and it is interesting to consider the various suggestions and the reasons offered in support of them: **but** in the absence of clear statements in the Scriptures **we** do well not **to** be dogmatic **about** the matter. *J. B.*

(b) Both **Moses** and **Elijah** were on the **east** side of **Jordan** when **Moses** died and **Elijah** was taken **to** heaven **by** a whirlwind. See Deuteronomy 34 and 2 Kings 2. *J. M.*

(3)(London) -(a) There is nothing in Luke 19.1-10 that would justify **us** in saying that **Zacchaeus** followed a dishonest way of life, though it is generally accepted that many in his position did exact more than **was** due. Even verse **I** does not necessarily imply that he **was** dishonest. *J. B.*

(b) The interpretation of the **Zacchaeus** story has been much debated. **I** have **felt** disposed **to** the view that taking the story as **a** whole there is sufficient circumstantial evidence **to** consider that **Zacchaeus** was typical of his **class**. While verse 8 could be construed as describing his habitual practice (e. g. in rectifying over-charge) it seems to me that if **Zacchaeus** had been so virtuous as this there was no basis for the criticism of verse 7. It therefore seems more in harmony with the story to regard verse 8 as an expression of repentance and restitution for past wrongs. *G. P. Jr.*

(4)(London) - (a) In the New Testament Scriptures "the flesh" is represented as being entirely unprofitable. It includes

the immoral **members** which **we must** mortify (Colossians 3. 5-11) and all that it connotes is undesirable and unprofitable. **In** the flesh there dwells **no good** thing (Romans 7. 18). *J. B.*

(b) It seems clear that our friends are confusing "the flesh", ' the immoral nature that is in all naturally born of Adam's race, and "the flesh", as to the body of flesh in which we all live. The former is ever unprofitable, but as to the latter Paul says, "Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2. 20). *J. M.*

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 28

(Continued from page 48)

Let us give good heed to the words of Ephesians 4. 29-34: in these verses the good of our fellows is dealt with by the apostle.

"Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you".

If we live for the good of others, we shall know the blessedness of pleasing God, and the lasting joy that is to be reaped from this. But where there is the wickedness of speaking peace, yet having mischief in the heart, such hypocrisy will be displeasing to God, and we shall reap nothing but misery. God will give to such according to their work; He will render to them their desert; He will break them down and not build them up (verses 4 and 5).

David in verses 6 to 9 blesses the LORD for hearing his supplications. He is jubilant and speaks of the LORD being his strength and shield. He had trusted in Him and was helped. His heart rejoiced and he praised God with his song. Not only was He the strength of David the king. He was also the strength of the people. He asks the LORD to save them, to bless them, to feed them, and to bear them up for ever. As it is in this psalm, there is a difference between the beginning of it and the end, so is it in many others of his psalms. It is well when our prayers begin on a sad note, that we are quick-

ended to praise God before we end. Paul in his exhortation to prayer, lists the various phases of prayer, as "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings" (1 Timothy 2. 1). When we truly pray we shall not forget to give God thanks.

Psalm 29

The heading of Psalm 30 says, "A Psalm; a **Song at the Dedication of the House; a Psalm of David**". It has been held by some, that the heading of certain psalms belong to the previous psalm. This ruling they have taken from the close of the prayer-song of Habakkuk (chapter 3), where we have the words "For the Chief Musician, on my stringed instruments". There may be something in this suggestion, but I do not press it upon my readers. But I am of the opinion that the first part of the heading of Psalm 30 belongs to Psalm 29. The character of this psalm appears to me to suit the Dedication of the House much better than Psalm 30. The house of God was the place where Israel could give to God and worship Him; there they had to come with their sacrifices and their gifts and there they had to do all that He commanded them.

The matter of giving to God and worshipping God occupy the first two verses. First we have—

"Give unto the LORD (Jehovah), **O ye sons of the Mighty**".

Who are the sons of the Mighty? I think that there can be no doubt that the exhortation to give is given to the sons of Israel. Similar Hebrew words are used in Psalm 89. 6, "sons of the Mighty", but in the latter psalm it seems to me to refer to angelic beings. The word for sons in the Hebrew is the word *BEN* (son) in the plural number, *BENEE*. The word for "mighty" is one of the names of God, *EL*, which means one who is strong and mighty, and is in the plural number, *ELIM*. So the Hebrew words in the psalm are *BENEE ELIM*. *ELOHIM* is the plural of *ELOAH*, and *ELIM* is the plural of *EL*. I take it therefore, that the marginal reading of the R. V. is correct, "sons of God", and applies to Israel. The sons of the Mighty were to—

"Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name".

Glory (Heb. *KABOD* means what is heavy, a weight, and is used of honour, &c.). Paul speaks of "an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4. 17). It was no light thing that the Lord referred to when He said, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (John 17. 4). And for saints, to obey the exhortation of the apostle is no light matter either, "Ye were bought with

a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6. 20). Such we know is a very weighty matter from our experience. It seems at first sight to be unnecessary for the sons of Israel to give strength to one who is mighty, yea, almighty. We have some help in understanding this from the statement in the song of Deborah in Judges 5. 23,

"Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;
Because they came not to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty".

The explanation is that God had associated Himself, His name and His glory, with the nation of Israel, and it was His will to work through them as His servants. He could easily have Himself destroyed Sisera and king Jabin's army without the help of Israel at all, but that was not how He willed to work. His will was to work through Israel, to strengthen them to do His will. Hence it was that those who came to the help of Deborah and Barak, came to the help of the LORD against the might of Sisera and the army of the Canaanites. The same principle applies in our day. It is God's will to work through His saints to the accomplishment of His will. He could send angels to do perfectly what men do partially, but that is not His will. Thus it was that the sons of Israel were not only to give God glory, but they were to give God strength, and this by being strengthened by Him. Hence by not coming and giving their strength to the others who were gathered in Deborah's day, the inhabitants of Meroz brought the curse of God upon themselves. Did not the apostle say something like the words of the angel in Deborah's song, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema"? (1 Corinthians 16. 22).

Giving to God is closely associated with worship. The Hebrew word for worship is SHACHAH, which means to bow **down** one's self in adoration. The Greek word for to worship (PROSKUNEO) has the **same** meaning. David when he called the **men** of Israel **to** the bringing **up** of the ark said,

"O come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker"

(Psalm 95. 6).

A feature in Hebrew poetry is the repetition of the same ideas in different words. The three expressions "worship", "bow down", "kneel", mean the same thing. The people who were gathered to do this important thing, to bring up the ark of God to Zion, were to bow down in worship before Jehovah the God of Israel, to hear His voice saying in David, after so long a time,

"Today if ye shall hear His voice,
Harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 4. 7; Psalm 95. 7-11).

The **proper** attitude for those who would **do God's will, and to give to Him, is to bow down in worship before Him in the beauty of holiness.** The **beauty of holiness is illustrated to us in the crown, which was the gold plate, upon the mitre of the high priest of Israel.** The mitre was made of fine linen, upon which a lace of blue was put, and upon this lace of blue was put the plate of gold on which were engraved the words, "**HOLY (OR HOLINESS) TO THE LORD**". In the instructions relative to the clothing of the high Priest, we read, "Thou shalt set the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre" (Exodus 28. 36-38; 29. 6). "And he set the mitre upon his head; and upon the mitre, in front, did he set the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses" (Leviticus 8. 9). The mitre with its crown, upon which were the words "**HOLY TO THE LORD**", was connected with the children of Israel giving or hallowing their gifts to the LORD. The priest would bear the iniquity of the holy things, where such iniquity may have existed in the people's giving, and the people would be accepted of the LORD in their giving. Their gifts would be accepted in the beauty of holiness of the holy crown of the mitre of the high priest on which were the words, "**HOLY TO THE LORD**", Any iniquity would remain with the priest, and the gifts would partake of the holiness of the crown of gold and be accepted by the LORD.

This teaches us much as to our Lord's work as High Priest on behalf of the people of God. That which is unfit to be offered by Him to God of the spiritual sacrifices of God's people (Hebrews 8. 1-3; 1 Peter 2. 5) never passes through Him to God. But-

"To all our prayers and praises
He adds His sweet perfume,
And love the censer raises
Their odours to consume".

Thus David conceives in Psalm 29 that, as God's people bowed down in worship in offering their gifts, these went to Him in the beauty of holiness, in the words, "**HOLY TO THE LORD**". We can profitably remember the words of the apostle Paul,

"Through Him (our High Priest) then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit, of lips which make confession to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13. 15, 16)

(To be continued) J. M.

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now **these** were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

The study of God's word written, with a view to the knowledge of God Himself, stands in contrast to the study of all other subjects. For all other subjects will open up before the application of able human intellect, irrespective of the student's attitude of heart. Not so with the study of the Scriptures. Intellectual ability or scholastic zeal will of themselves be equally unavailing to unlock the mysteries of the divine Word. Witness the futile attempts of clever but unregenerate students to interpret the Holy Scriptures. Such were many of the scribes and Pharisees, deeply versed in the letter of the Old Testament, but failing to recognize the One of whom all the **prophets had spoken** (John 5. 39), and entirely misrepresenting the character of the God whom they professed to serve (Matthew 9. 13).

An indispensable factor in effective understanding of God's Word is a right attitude of heart towards God Himself - a dependence upon the Holy Spirit's guidance in interpretation of what He caused to be written. Given this attitude of heart, students of indifferent ability or education have advanced far in their knowledge of God, and devout men of brilliant intellect have penetrated deeply into different aspects of scriptural revelation. The Lord Himself touched the root of the matter when He rejoiced in spirit that God had hidden these things from the wise and understanding and had revealed them unto babes (Luke 10. 21). Only those with a child-like spirit could expect to make progress in the knowledge of God. All too often the wise and understanding would through their own pride debar themselves from entering into this greatest of all fields of knowledge. In similar strain Paul quoted from Isaiah 29. 14:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And the prudence of the prudent will I reject"
(1 Corinthians 1. 19).

The prophetic context of this quotation makes clear that it was the wise and prudent of Israel who were in mind originally, and the reason that their wisdom would perish was that

they "have removed their hearts **far from Me**". In 1 Corinthians 1.18-21 Paul by the **Spirit** applies this more widely in relation **to** the preaching **of** the word **of** the cross, but the principle remains: "In the wisdom **of God** the world through **its** wisdom knew not **God**".

Besides humility **of** heart, an earnestness **of spirit** is vital **to** progress in the knowledge **of God**. For many great principles which run right through the Bible **must** be laboriously searched out. **It seems** that **God** has presented **His** revelation in this form **to test** the earnestness **of** those who **seek Him**. **He does not set** before **us** a catalogue which could be quickly learned by rote. **He** enshrines **His** truth in history, song and didactic epistle, in genealogy and vision. Would **we** know **Him**? Would **we** understand **His ways**? Then **He** counsels **us**:

"My son, if thou wilt **receive My** words,
And lay **up My** commandments with thee;
So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom....
If thou **seek** her **as** silver,
And search for her **as for** hid treasures;
Then shalt thou understand the fear **of** the LORD,
And find the knowledge **of** God" (Proverbs 2.1-5).

The similes **of** this **passage** imply intensive application **to** God's word, and readiness **to** carry **out His** commandments. The treasures **of** divine revelation will not **be** imparted to the indolent or the disobedient.

Indeed, the re-discovery **of** great Bible truths over the **past five** hundred years has consistently illustrated the price required **to** "buy the truth". An **academic** grasp **of** a Bible subject **was** not enough. **As** men searched the Scriptures, would they **be** ready **to act** and perhaps **to suffer** in order **to** carry **out** what **God** showed them? Martyrs **of** the Reformation period were among those who gained **a** fuller understanding **of God's** will **at extreme** cost.

Our **subject** this month centres around Bethel, "the house **of God**". This theme has special significance for those in churches **of God** today. For **at a time** **of** intense spiritual conflict, truths relating **to** the house **of** God were opened **up by** the Holy **Spirit** **as** light for that day. Does **it** matter how or where believers serve the Lord? Should all believers **be** welcomed **to** participate in the Remembrance? Should local assemblies **be** independent in teaching and government? Once the principles **of** the house **of** God are **grasped** they shed light on all these problems. For the house **of** God **was** seen **to be** the divinely ordained place **of** worship and testimony in **past** and present dispensations. The churches **of** God in New Testament **times** were seen **as** united **to** form "a holy temple in the Lord". **It was** clear that **God** had only one house **at** any given period. **It was** this line **of** truth, uniquely revealed **to** our

spiritual forefathers, which confirmed them in the view that such things as "occasional fellowship*" and the independence of the local assembly were contrary to the sound teaching.

So when we turn our thoughts to Bethel at the beginning, as introduced in Genesis 28, it is of arresting interest to find enshrined in the story great principles of the house of God which run on through the dispensations. For to Jacob Bethel became the place of revelation, the place of worship and the place of witness. Such the earthly dwelling place of God has ever been, and such it will be in millennial times. Would the truths of the house of God have been revealed in such delightful clarity if men of God had been unprepared to give effect to it? I think not. Brethren who were deeply exercised about the will of God sought out this truth as for hidden treasure. In many cases they paid dearly to give effect to it. History repeated itself in that God granted revelation of His truth on evidence being shown of a real desire to honour Him by obedience to it.

G. P. Jr.

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

Bethel

From Methil — Bethel was a city of Palestine which was situated west of Ai, south of Shiloh (Genesis 12. 8; Judges 21. 19) and near Michmash (1 Samuel 13. 2). It was near here that Abraham pitched his tent and built an altar unto the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD (Genesis 12. 8). On his return from Egypt, he visited the place and set up his tent there, and again called upon the name of the LORD (Genesis 13. 3, 4).

It was not until Jacob fled from his brother Esau, that the place was called Bethel — the house of God. Jacob was filled with fear (reverential fear) and, realizing the presence of God, called the place Bethel. This we took to be the first mention in Scripture of the house of God.

We considered Genesis 28. 18, "Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it". Some thought that it was not the stone that made this the house of God, but the fact that God was present there — "Surely the LORD is in this place" (verse 16). Others were of the opinion that verse 22 was a key verse, indicating that the stone was the house of God: "This stone... shall be God's house". To others the stone may have been of little significance but it was God's choice; and Jacob realized this. Whether it be a stone, a tabernacle or a temple, it matters not; the importance is seen in God's choice. Jacob (verse 18) took oil and poured it upon the top of the stone (1).

This city was originally called Luz (separation or departure). Joshua shows that these two places were distinguished from one another (Joshua 16. 2), while historical writers state that the name Bethel soon supplanted Luz as the name of the town.

Some time later Jacob was told by God to return to Bethel and to dwell there and set up an altar unto God who revealed Himself to him in his flight from Esau (Genesis 35. 1-8). It would appear that Jacob's household had not at this time been worshipping God, but strange gods; and so Jacob instructed them to put these gods from them, for they were to go up to Bethel.

When Israel (the people) were gathered at Mizpah and Gibeah to war with Benjamin, the Ark of the Covenant was removed from Shiloh, 18 miles distant, and brought to Bethel, 8 miles away (Judges 20). The men of God went there to seek counsel of God (verse 18) and built an altar and offered sacrifices (verse 26). After the battle they returned to Bethel and built another altar and again offered sacrifices to God (Judges 21. 2-4).

Up to this time it could be said of Bethel that it was indeed "the house of God", but in the days of Jeroboam a golden calf was set up there and it became a centre of idolatry (1 Kings 12. 32; 2 Kings 10. 29). The city was denounced by the prophets as being a place of idolatry (Jeremiah 48. 13), and called Beth-aven - house of naught (Hosea 4. 15; 10. 5). Amos was found in great danger in Bethel because of his forthright preaching against Jeroboam and his idolatry (Amos 7. 10-17). Though we do not actually read that Bethel was totally destroyed, we see the end of this city in 2 Kings 23, where we read how Josiah broke down the altars and high places and burned the vessels of idolatry along with the bones of the so-called priests, which he took from the sepulchres (verses 15-20).

We in the house of God should, like Jacob, fear the LORD with a reverential fear, realize the importance of the place that we are in, and recognize it as the place of God's choice with its associated responsibilities, walking in a manner becoming the people of God. We should continue to serve God as obedient servants and ensure that we do not, like Jeroboam, become disobedient to the mind and will of God, thus bringing **His house into disrepute.**

A. R. Smith

From Southport — Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran, and lighted upon a certain place and tarried all night to sleep. He dreamed of the ladder set up on earth, the top of it reaching to heaven and angels of God ascending and descending on it. He was afraid and said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28. 17). In Genesis 9. 27 we read

that God would dwell in the tents of Shem, and it is interesting to note that Jacob, one of Shem's descendants, was the first to mention the house of God. This was further revealed in the divine Presence in the Tabernacle of Israel (Exodus 40. 34, 35).

The stone on which Jacob's head was pillowed he raised for a pillar and said. "This stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house". Here is something set up by human agency. Jacob then speaks of giving; so we see that this first mention of the house of God embodies the great outstanding features of the house all down the ages. Paul in his writings speaks of how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3. 14, 15). A pillar and a witness are spoken of in both places.

God had told Jacob to return unto the land of his fathers, and to his kindred. He promised to be with him (Genesis 31. 3) and to bring him back (Genesis 28. 15), and reminded him that He was the God of Bethel (Genesis 31. 13). Jacob built an altar and called the place El-beth-el or God of Bethel (Genesis 35. 7).

Jeroboam used his political power to draw away the people, and set up his golden calves in Dan and Bethel, saying, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem" (1 Kings 12. 28). This was rebellion, causing Israel to sin, because he drew the people from the house of God. Therefore the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them and delivered them into the hands of the spoilers until He had cast them out of His sight (2 Kings 17. 20). Yet God's judgement was tempered with mercy when Josiah king of Judah stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies (2 Kings 23. 3). He burnt dead men's bones upon the altar of Bethel, as had been prophesied by the man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13. 1-3). Josiah also restored the temple worship (2 Chronicles 34, 35).

Another man of God from Judah was sent to prophesy at Bethel during the reign of Jeroboam II in the person of the herdman Amos. He records God's lamentation over the house of Israel: "Seek ye Me, and ye shall live: but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal,.... Beth-el shall come to nought" (Amos 5. 4, 5). *Thomas Brown*

From Glasgow (Parkhead)—Bethel, which was called Luz at the first, derived its chief importance from the fact that God revealed Himself to Jacob there. Many another place with no outstanding feature about it became hallowed ground by reason of what happened there, like the place where God revealed Himself in the bush to Moses. Thus the stone on which Jacob rested and anointed was called by him Bethel, the house of

God. To the fearful patriarch it was a dreadful place, the house of God and the gate of heaven, the place of God's choice, where He would reveal to Jacob truths concerning the house of God, that have never altered throughout the years. Bethel again came into prominence in the life of Jacob as he returned after fleeing from Esau his brother. God said to him, "Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God". The immediate reaction upon Jacob was the need for the sanctification of his household. It is a pity that the strange gods were only hidden under the oak and not buried. There may be in the households of God's people today things that ought to be buried.

The next prominent mention of Bethel is very different from the account in Genesis. The notorious Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, used for his own purposes the hallowed associations of Bethel to keep God's people away from the place of the Name, which was now in Jerusalem. King Josiah, when he came to the throne, did not overlook the corruption of Bethel and did not hurry away from that site until he had destroyed it completely, as had been prophesied many years before by the man of God from Judah. *R. Shaw*

EXTRACTS

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick) — The associations Bethel had in the days of Amos distracted the Israelites so much from God that He could say to them, "Seek ye Me, and ye shall live: but seek not Beth-el". In setting up an altar in Bethel, Jeroboam had focussed attention on the place itself, so as to make it a centre of national worship. He had his own motive for this, but Josiah realized in a later day that it was far from God's intention that the people should desert Jerusalem to worship at Bethel.

Something of the truth of the house of God was revealed to Jacob, the patriarch, who was a stranger and sojourner like his fathers. When he was fleeing from Esau, and dreamt of the ladder set up on earth whose top reached to heaven, he felt the presence of God and found there a resting place. "This stone," he said, "which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house". Many stones and obelisks set up have later become objects of idolatry, but this pillar signified for Jacob the testimony of the house of God.

For long years God dwelt within the curtains of the Tabernacle, and His presence required good conduct, First Nabad and Abihu in the wilderness, then the sons of Eli at Shiloh paid the penalty for irreverence, then Uzzah died when he touched the Ark. Paul spoke of "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the

living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3. 15).

But Jacob's life was a struggle for the blessing. He had received a renewal of the promise of blessing when God spoke with him at Bethel and his name was called Israel. With faith like his we can have patience that we may receive the promise, for "He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry".

Abraham pitched his tent between the house of God and the heap of ruins. But he looked for the city which hath the foundations whose Builder and **Maker** is God. *Eric Archibald*

From Whitehills and Macduff—Bethel was a meeting place between God and Jacob while he was a wanderer. It would appear that this was the place where he vowed a vow to the God of his fathers (Genesis 28. 20-22). Some years later God sent Jacob back to Bethel and this was a testing time for him. His company were told to put away the strange gods which should never have been among them. On this occasion he viewed the place differently; he called it El-beth-el, the God of the house of God, being taken up more with God than the house. Here God renewed the covenant which He had made with Abraham and Isaac; and Jacob offered his drink offering.

We noted that the Tabernacle was erected in Shiloh (Joshua 18. 1), and yet we read in Judges that they went up to Bethel to inquire of the LORD, for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days (Judges 20. 18, 26, 27). We read in 1 Kings 12 of idolatry being practised in Bethel. Jeroboam, that mighty man of valour, had been chosen to rule ten tribes, but he set up two places, of false worship, one of which was in Bethel. Thus an abomination was set up in the place which had been held sacred. This indicates the low spiritual condition of the people, which continued until the days of Josiah, when that wise and good king destroyed the images and groves.

We find in Amos a very sad word prophesied by the prophet: "Beth-el shall come to nought" (5. 5), surely a disastrous end for what was called the house of God. Furthermore, it **was named** in derision "Beth-aven" (Hosea 4. 15), which means "house of nothingness". *Jas. Whitelaw*

From Melbourne — When Jacob lay down to sleep outside Luz, his dream indicated the divine approval of a place on earth where God could meet with and have communion with men. The pillar which he erected marked the place which he called the house of God. We would ask, was it God's purpose for Jacob to remain at Bethel, or was he right in passing on? (Genesis 35. 1) (2)

Immediately following Israel's conquest of the land of **Canaan, and also in the days of Samuel, the Tabernacle was at Shiloh, yet Bethel was in some way associated with God's name** (Joshua 18. 1; 1 Samuel 10. 3). Here we would ask, was

it ever God's purpose that the Tabernacle should be at Bethel? (3)

When Jeroboam placed a golden calf at Bethel, it would appear to have been an appeal to national pride. The place, being associated with Israel's progenitor, would make a national appeal to the ten tribes, who would readily look upon Jerusalem as merely a rival to Bethel. *T. W. F.*

From Edinburgh — The word "place" is used six times in Genesis 28, which impresses upon us that it was not an ordinary place. To the people that place was Luz: not so to Jacob. To him it was the place where he communed with God and, as seen in Genesis 35. 13*15, it was the place where God spoke with him (mentioned three times). The place where God was revealed to him was the gate of heaven. What blessing, pro* mises and spiritual insight he obtained in this place because God was there! In comparison, Jeroboam found sorrow and brought shame and sin to the people by his action. It is a sad thought that Bethel came to be no more (Amos 5. 4-6).

Jacob took one of the stones and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon the top of it: and he called the name of that place Bethel. Today men are built up as living stones to form the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3. 15). *D. B. Renfrew*

From Wigan — Bethel was so named because there God manifested Himself to **Jacob at night in a vision (Genesis 28. 19)**. Bethel was situated approximately 12 miles north of Jerusalem on the road to Shechem. One of the most remarkable circumstances connected with this place is recorded in Genesis 31. 13: "I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst a pillar, where thou vowedst a vow unto Me". The Ark of the Covenant lodged there for some time, and most probably the Tabernacle also (Judges 20. 26).

To keep the people from Jerusalem, the place of God's choice, Jeroboam set up high places in Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12. 28, 29). *C. O. Latimer*

From Vancouver RC — As is well known, Bethel means "house of God". There is an interesting contrast between the name of the city beforehand, which was Luz. Luz means "almond tree", and the almond tree was the first tree to bloom after winter and would indicate the first natural impulses (4).

Another name for Bethel was El-beth-el. Here we have the meaning "God of the house of God", revealing a very strong emphasis placed upon the God of the place. Later we see that

Bethel was Bethel in name only and had no real spiritual significance. Such should not be true of the house of God today. We see an example of this happening in the case of Jeroboam, who set up a place of idolatry in Bethel, as are many places today. But the LORD says, "Seek ye Me, and ye shall live", not the place only but His presence. Jeroboam also set up an altar at Bethel for convenience only; too often today any place is good enough in which to worship, even for professing Christians. May we not see the decadence that ancient Bethel saw.

Bethel was replaced by Jerusalem and it was never mentioned by the Lord Jesus: Jerusalem was the focal point,

J. Pope, J. Bell Jr.

From London, S. E. - In Jeremiah 48, which deals with the sins and destruction of Moab, there is a striking allusion to Bethel (verse 13). The inference is that just as Israel had trusted in Bethel, and this confidence turned out to be misplaced, so too the Moabites would also be ashamed of Chemosh, their national god. It reminds us of the words of Jeremiah concerning the religious leaders of the day who cried, "The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD" (Jeremiah 7. 4). If God's presence has left a place, then there can be no real blessing. The God of the house of God gives character to the house itself.

The time of Amos also was one of departure. Israel had forgotten the sound counsel of Samuel to king Saul: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15. 22). In Amos 4. 4 we see that Israel were still carrying out the form of worship in the days of Amos the prophet. He mocks them by telling them to bring their sacrifices, tithes and offerings of thanksgiving, but they would heap judgement on themselves. All that they were doing was to "multiply transgression" (See also Isaiah 59.12). The remedy is given in Amos 5. 4, 5; they had to seek the LORD to obtain life and not put their trust in a shrine, however hallowed **its** associations with the **past**. *R. F. Robertson*

From Atherton — The place upon which Jacob lighted was one of divine revelation and blessing towards himself and his posterity. Its significance **was** duly appreciated by Jacob, who thereupon took the stone which had served for a pillow, set it up for a pillar, poured oil on the top of it and named the place Bethel, the house of God. Henceforward these underlying principles relating to the house of God are seen in the Old and New Testaments as we consider the Tabernacle, the temples, and the spiritual house (whether in apostolic times or today). A chosen place of divine revelation and something set up therein by man according to God's will, with its associated separation and sanctification, are absolutely essential in its

constitution. In Genesis 35 further principles are enunciated when **Jacob on his return is commanded to go up** to Bethel, to dwell there **and to make an altar** there, God ever looks for worshippers **in all ages, and is** always saddened and robbed **by** departure therefrom. **Did Jacob** fail when he left Bethel where **God** had told him to dwell? (5)

The record with **respect to Bethel is** continued in Israel's **conquest of Canaan. It may well be** that God's **intention was** for the Tabernacle **to be set up** from the commencement, which eventually transpired (**Judges** 20. 26-28; 1 Samuel 10. 3). Finally, however, **God** forsook both Bethel and Shiloh **on account of** the tragic failure of the tribe of Joseph, and chose **Mount Zion** for His dwelling place (6).

Josiah, **in** fulfilling the prophecy of **1 Kings 13. 2, not** only burned the bones, **but** destroyed the altar and high **place at** Bethel. Thus **its** Biblical record closes, and **its** historical deterioration is summed **up in** the words of Jeremiah that "the house of Israel was ashamed of **Be th-el** their confidence" (Jeremiah 48.13). The fundamental principle of the constitution of the house of God had been ruthlessly displaced so that the **city became** Bethel **in name** only. **May it be** our objective to honour **God**, lest the history of the house of **God** should repeat itself!

E, Birchall

COMMENTS

(1) (Methil) - The principle **in** connexion with the truth of **God's** house **is**, that God chooses the place of His dwelling **and there men** erect His house **according to** the **pattern He** gives. Mount **Sinai** was the place **He** chose where Israel built **Him** a sectional building **suited to** a pilgrim people, according to the pattern shown to Moses, and of the materials specified. David **said of** the threshing floor of **Oman** the **Jebusite which he** bought, "This is the house of the **LORD God, and this is** the altar of **burnt** offering for Israel" (1 Chronicles 22.1), while **as yet there was no house** built there. Similarly **in connexion with** Bethel, the place where **Jacob had** slept with a stone for a pillow **he** called Bethel, **and that stone he** set up, anointed it **and sanctified it, and called it** the house of God. God accepted **then as He does throughout all time, what a man** hath, not what he hath not. J. M.

(2) (Melbourne) - The command of God to **Jacob** was plain, "Arise, **go up to** Bethel, **and** dwell there: **and** make there an altar **unto** God". This **I judge to be** God's will for **him, but he** "journeyed from Bethel" and then **his** great sorrows began. Rachel died on **this** journey **at the** birth of Benjamin. Then **we** have the sin of Reuben; for **which he** lost his birthright. Then **we** have the selling of **Joseph by his** brethren into Egypt. Then

follows Judah's **wrong-doing** and **the sin of incest**. These things all **have a voice** for us to dwell and keep dwelling in God's house. **God** acted in grace toward Jacob **and** his family through Joseph, and he **was** well cared for **to the last**, **but it took God** in His love and grace **to** redeem Jacob's seed **out of** Egypt. My opinion is, **that** Jacob should have obeyed God's **command** relative **to** dwelling in Bethel. It is **no easy task** bringing **up a** large family as those **know** who have had such, but **it** is better by far **for** parents who have such **to** remain in God's house, than to go from God's house for their children's sake, or for any other reason. *J. M.*

(3) (**Melbourne**) — God's choice, while yet the people of Israel were in Egypt, was Joseph, that is, in Shiloh, situated in the land of Ephraim, which was the firstborn tribe of the **tribes of** Israel. See Psalm **81.1-5**; Genesis **48.14-20**. Alas, Ephraim sadly failed and, though armed, they turned **back** in the day of battle (Psalm 78.9). Then God refused the tent of Joseph and chose not the tribe of Ephraim. But He chose Judah, and the mount Zion He loved, and also chose David his servant (Psalm 78.67-72).

Whatever movement there may have been of the altar or of the Tabernacle, Shiloh was the first place of God's choice, in Ephraim, then came the choice of Zion, in Judah, and of David in whose heart was found the desire to build God a house, when he knew the place, when he had gathered the necessary materials, and when he received the pattern in writing from God. Solomon his son was chosen both to be king and to build God's house. I take it that when God left Shiloh, He chose no other place than Zion. After Jacob's time Bethel was not the place of God's choice. *J. M.*

(4) (Vancouver) — Others give other meanings to Luz. *J. M.*

(5) (Atherton) - See comment (2) to Melbourne *J. M.*

(6) (Atherton) - See comment (3) to Melbourne *J. M.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question from Atherton - When **did** Bethel **lose** its significance as "**the house of God**" (Genesis **28. 17, 22**)?

Answer: Psalm 81, referred to in Comment (3) (Melbourne)* shows clearly that the **places of God's** choice were first Shiloh in Ephraim and then, many years after the **LORD** forsook **it**, He showed to David, who **was exercised about** the truth of God's house, that Zion **was the place** of His choice (**Psalm 132**, particularly verses 13 and 14). The movement of

the **Ark or the Tabernacle** by God's people here **or** there (the latter **was** at a high place **at Gibeon** in David's **time**) never changed what **was** the place of God's choice, Shiloh **or** Zion. The revelation of these places **to God's** people **was** national and fundamental in importance. **After** the days of **Jacob**, Bethel **was** only in name house of God. **Jacob** **was** never **back** there, and prior **to** the Exodus **God** had chosen Joseph, Ephraim, and Shiloh **as** the place of divine service. **We** have dealt with this in Comment (3) (Melbourne) J. M.

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 29

(continued from page 64)

Let **us** remember what God **said** through Malachi **to** the Remnant:

¹⁴"Bring **ye** the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there **may be** meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the **LORD of Hosts**, **if** I will not open **you** the windows of heaven, and pour **you out** a blessing, that there shall not **be** room enough **to** receive **it**" (Malachi 3. 10).

The house of God **is** a storehouse, and a record **is** kept of what **we** store there.

We **may** ask ourselves the question **as** **we** read the next portion of the psalm. What **is** the connexion between this and **verses** 1 and 2 which deal with the giving and worship of God's people?

Verses 3 to 9 **give** a description of a tropical thunderstorm and **its** effect upon things natural. A tropical thunderstorm **is** a **fearsome** thing and reveals the Creator's powers in the clouds of heaven. In such **is** **to** be heard the **voice** of God in things natural. Seven **times** the **voice** of the **LORD** **is** referred **to** in the storm.

"The **voice** of the **LORD** **is** upon the waters. "
 "The **voice** of the **LORD** **is** powerful. "
 "The **voice** of the **LORD** **is** full of **majesty**. "
 "The **voice** of the **LORD** breaketh the cedars. "
 "The **voice** of the **LORD** cleaveth the flames of fire. "
 "The **voice** of the **LORD** shaketh the wilderness. "
 "The **voice** of the **LORD** maketh the hinds **to** calve. "

Such manifestations of divine power in the convulsions of nature should produce the fear of God in the hearts of men. When **God** spoke the words of the ten commandments to the people of Israel at mount Sinai, **we** read of the fear of that people.

"And all the people **saw** the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the **voice of** the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people **saw it**, they trembled, and stood afar off. And they said unto **Moses**, **Speak** thou with **us**, and **we** will hear: but let not **God speak** with **us**, lest **we die**. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for **God is come** to prove **you**, and that **His fear may** be before **you**, that **ye sin** not" (Exodus 20. 18-20).

We read of its effect even upon Moses, "**So fearful was** the appearance, that Moses said, **I exceedingly fear and quake**" (Hebrews 12. 18-21). In referring to that fearsome scene later, Moses said, "Who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the **fire** and lived?" (Deuteronomy 5. 26; 18. 16). The voice of God which was heard at Sinai, is also to be heard in the light which streams from the heavenly light bearers (Psalm 19. 1-6), and it is to be heard in the violent thunderstorm. The voice of God heard and heeded will **cause men** to fear, reverence and worship God.

In contrast to the **voice of** God being heard in thunderings and lightnings, we have what we may call the still small **voice of** Jehovah to be heard in the Temple, **for**—

"In **His** Temple everything saith, **Glory**".

In the Tabernacle the boards were plated with gold, and the Temple was plated with gold inside, and the vessels of the service in the sanctuary were either of gold or plated with gold. The **voice of** gold is **Glory**. Our **voice**, we who are in **His** temple today, should be, "**Glory be to God**".

In the storm of the Flood in Noah's day God sat as King. Men had denied and forsaken **Him**, and also corrupted **His way** upon the earth, and they perished in their sin. The LORD sitteth as King for ever judging righteously. Proud Nebuchadnezzar learned this after he had been humbled to be as a beast of the field. Amongst his last words, he said, "None can stay **His** hand, or say unto **Him**, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4. 35). He learned that the heavens do rule.

The closing words of the psalm show that the LORD'S people have ever had **His special** favour.

"The LORD will give strength unto **His** people;
The LORD will bless **His people** with peace".

Psalm 30

(See note at the beginning of Psalm 29, as to that psalm probably being the "Song at the Dedication of the House".)

This psalm is described simply as "of David". At the beginning David extols (exalts or raises up) the LORD in his words of praise, because He had raised or drawn him up, and had not allowed his enemies to rejoice over him. It is evident from the words of verses 2 to 4 that David had been very low, either in physical weakness or mental depression, and he had been brought near to his end. He says,

"O LORD my God,
I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me.
O LORD, Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol:
Thou hast kept me **alive**, that I should not go down to
the pit.
Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye saints of His,
And give thanks to His holy name".

God had heard his cry and healed him. It is quite clear from the words of verses 2 and 3 that he had not gone down into Sheol, for God had healed him and kept him alive. The words of verse 3, "Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol", do not mean "out of Sheol", but that he had come nigh to death and to Sheol, and from his nearness to Sheol God had brought him up. In consequence he was in a state of jubilation and encourages the saints to sing praise to the LORD, and give thanks to His holy name.

It is well to realise that, if God is displeased with us,

"His anger is but for a moment;
In His favour is life".

How short is His anger! Another translation before me says that "His favour is for a life-time". What a contrast, "anger for a moment", but "favour for a life-time"! Also—

"Weeping may tarry for the night,
(May come in to lodge at even, R. V. marg.)
But joy (Heb. singing, A. V. marg),
cometh in the morning".

The night is far spent, during which there has been some weeping; but weeping is only a lodger, and shall depart in the morning. The day is at hand, the dawn is **about to** break, when joy and singing will fill our hearts and mouths.

The psalmist said,

"In **my** prosperity (*SHELEVAH*, prosperity, security, ease), I shall never **be** moved.
Thou, **LORD**, of Thy **favour** hadst made my mountain **to** stand strong (or a stronghold) "

It is well in times of prosperity or ease not **to** be over-

confident, as long as we are in this scene of turbulence and strife. We may profitably consider what happened to Job. He was a man of great prosperity; one who was honoured by all who knew him, and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had. But God allowed Satan to strip him of all, his possessions, his family, and even his health, and he was brought down to the dust. We should not encourage ourselves to say, "I shall never be moved". David speaks of a change that came in his experience,

"Thou didst hide Thy face; I was troubled.

I cried to Thee, O LORD....

What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?

Shall the dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth?"

Here he returns to what he said in verses 2 and 3, to his having cried to the LORD, who had healed him, kept him alive, that he should not go down to the pit. Changes in our circumstances in life can come quickly upon us, if God is pleased to hide His face from us. I would emphasize again that we do not well to say in days of prosperity, that we shall never be moved.

God turned David's mourning into dancing, and his sackcloth (his mourning garments) He loosed and girded him with gladness. We can think of Job's end and of the great blessing of the LORD which came upon him.

David ends the psalm as he begins it with praise to God,

"That my glory (his tongue) may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for _____ever".

Psalm 31

David's trust was in the LORD. The Hebrew word for trust is *CH AC AH*, which literally means, to flee for refuge or protection. In consequence David would not be ashamed (Heb. *BUWSH*, to be in paleness and terror, one whose hope is gone). He sought deliverance in God's righteousness.

He says to the LORD,

"Be Thou to me a strong Rock, an house of defence to save me.

For Thou art my Rock and my fortress;

Therefore for Thy name's sake lead me and guide me.

Pluck me out of the net that they have laid privily for me;

For Thou art my strong hold".

The LORD was to be to him a strong Rock (*TSUR*, which means a Rock which is hard and strong), and the Rock was to be a house of defence. He had often in his early days known a rocky cave as his house, the cave of Adullam and the like. See note on *TSUR* in Psalm 28. The LORD was also his Rock (*SELA*, a lofty, craggy Rock, a fortress). We can understand how the LORD, in metaphor, was to him a Rock, for in his early days he was continually pursued by Saul, and he found rocks to be places of safety. How vital was the LORD'S leading and guiding in those days of his rejection when his life was daily in danger. But the LORD'S leading and guiding of him were vital in his greater responsibility when he was king of Israel. His enemies were ever ready to take privy counsel to lay a net to catch him, but the LORD was his strong hold.

"Into Thine hand I commend my spirit".

These words carry our thoughts to the last words that the Lord spoke on the cross. His fight with the forces of evil and darkness was over; His work was done.

David adds,

"Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, Thou God of truth".

In contrast, to these words, the Lord was the Redeemer; David was one of His redeemed.

David continues,

"I hate them that regard lying vanities:
But I trust in the LORD".

Jonah said in his prayer while yet in the fish's belly,

"They that regard lying vanities
Forsake their own mercy" (Jonah 2. 8).

He had reached the end of his vain course, in his flight, as he thought, from the presence of the LORD. He had forsaken his own mercy. When Jonah reached that point he offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving, saying finally, "Salvation is of the LORD". Then God spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah out on dry land.

David speaks of his gladness and joy in God's mercy. God had seen him in affliction, known him in adversities, but he had not shut him up in the hand of his enemy. Though God had set his feet in a large place, yet he sought His mercy still, for he was in distress, his eye, soul and body wasted away with grief; his life was spent in sorrow and his years in sighing. He traced the failing of his strength to his iniquity, and his bones wasted away.

J. M.

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

The city of Athens has only incidental reference in God's word. In human estimation it would rank high among the great cities of history because of its association with Grecian thought and culture. Among Grecian philosophers such men as Socrates and Plato stand distinguished as brilliant thinkers who tried by human reasoning to explain the problems of man's existence and destiny. While awaiting his execution (by the enforced drinking of the poison hemlock) Socrates coolly discussed with his disciples what he supposed might be man's state after death! The philosophy of ancient Greece has influenced human thought ever since. Yet it was in Athens that Paul encountered the altar with the inscription "To an unknown god". Fitting epitome of the failure of human reason to find out God! For the most brilliant minds cannot reason through to the knowledge of God.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11. 7). This question echoes down the ages since it was asked by Zophar in ancient times. It was never more relevant than today, for man's God-given ability to search out the secrets of the divine handiwork is yielding phenomenal results. Building on the accumulated knowledge of successive generations of research, rapid advances are being made in every field of science. From exploration of the immense universe to minute investigation of virus or electron, fresh "searching out" is feverishly pursued. Yet each new triumph of scientific discovery gives rise to further questions for exploration. As Eliphaz put it, God "doeth great things and unsearchable" (Job 5. 9). His work cannot be fully traced out by His creature. Nevertheless, the seeker after God has more evidence opened up to him than ever before as to God's everlasting power and divinity. In this sense he is "without excuse". If God held ancient man accountable to recognize Him through the things that are made, how much more responsible is modern man? Back in the eighteenth century Addison wrote of the heavenly bodies:

"In reason's ear they all rejoice,
 And utter forth a glorious **voice**,
 For ever singing **as** they shine,

'The Hand that made **us** is Divine'."

Reason's ear, **if** opened to hear the testimony adduced by modern scientific discovery, will recognize the ever growing weight **of** evidence that the design revealed throughout creation could only result **from** a supremely **wise** and powerful Originator. By **a** strange paradox **of** human folly, modern scientific knowledge has been allowed by **some** to overthrow their faith, either through misreading **its** true implications, or through the "profane babblings and oppositions **of** the knowledge which **is** falsely **so** called" (1 Timothy 6. 20). Proved conclusions **of** scientific investigation **must** be distinguished **from** unestablished scientific theory.

What may be known **of** God through **His** created works **is** wonderful indeed, but **is** far transcended by the fulness **of** revelation in God's word written. Can **we** by searching find out God in the written Word? **Yea** verily, even though many lines **of** revealed truth "terminate in infinity". **We** follow them until they rise beyond reason's power. Then faith rests on the promise **of** future revelation in fuller measure. Meantime the Scriptures challenge each new generation **of** students **to** build on the accumulated knowledge and experience **of** earlier studies. This **is** one **of** our **aims** in *Bible Studies*, The present-day student **of** the Word has certain advantages. There has been **a** noteworthy development **of** conservative evangelical scholarship **at** university level during the past **few** decades. Great central truths **of** the Christian faith, such **as** the inerrancy **of** the inspired Word, the Deity **of** Christ, **His** redemptive work and resurrection, have been presented with vigour and freshness against the arguments **of** modernist assailants. The **fruits** **of** archaeological research in defence **of** the Scriptures have been made widely available. Helps **to** understanding the background **of** Bible life and history are many. Guidance in the accurate sense **of** Hebrew and Greek renderings **is** readily accessible. Then the extension **of** general education has **fitted** **a** growing proportion **of** students **to** benefit from this widening range **of** Bible **study** material. It **is** **a** welcome reflection **of** this trend that **a** New Testament Greek Course has recently been prepared on behalf **of** students in Churches **of** God.

Yet in our "searching **out** God" through Bible **study**, correct principles **of** interpretation and the leading **of** the Holy Spirit are vital. Over against the valuable scholarship **of** modern conservative evangelicals there **is** the scholarship

of the modern "liberal theologian". In contrast to the "higher criticism" of the nineteenth century, this school of theology tends to patronize the Bible as a message from God to men. The fearful failures of mankind during the past forty years (including Hitler's anti-semitic slaughter, World War II and the Hiroshima bomb) have driven many back from their dream of human evolution towards the Bible conception of man's alienation from God through sin. This patronage of God's word is deceptive, for such scholarship is applied to ingenious explanations of the Bible message. Whether a passage of Scripture is factually true is to such thinkers incidental. It may in their view be allegorical. The important thing, they argue, is to find out what message we individually may glean from such parts of the Bible as appeal to us. Other parts may be ignored! Such principles of interpretation leave us without any authoritative revelation from God at all. This is but theological philosophy bereft of Holy Spirit revelation.

We are favoured with opportunity month by month to share our findings as we search the Scriptures with a view to a fuller knowledge of the God of the Word. This month's study takes us to Hebron, "seat of association", or place of fellowship. Fellowship in study of the Word is a safeguard. We must prove all things by the Scriptures, abiding in the things we have learned and been assured of, knowing of whom we have learned them, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. *G. P. Jr.*

HEBRON-ZION

I think that there can be little doubt that Hebron means, as our fellow-editor says in his editorial, "'seat of association' or place of fellowship." It was at the first known as Kiriath-arba, the city of Arba. Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim (giants) (Joshua 14.15). He was the father of Anak, who in turn was the father of three giants whom Caleb drove out of the city of Arba (Hebron) (Joshua 15.14). Hebron and its environs became the possession of Caleb, who was a man of Judah, as Joshua, the leader of Israel, was of Ephraim.

Hebron was an ancient city, but is first mentioned in Scripture in Genesis 13.18, and was the place where Sarah the wife of Abraham died (Genesis 23. 2) and it was there that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah with the field and trees from Ephron the Hittite (Genesis 23.17-20), and in the cave he buried Sarah. This became the family burying-place (Genesis 49. 28-33). Jacob's, the last recorded burial of all there, was the most outstanding of all.

Now I wish to draw a spiritual contrast between what is said of the movements of Jacob and David the king, both of whom were associated with Hebron for a time. God appeared to Jacob as he slept outside the city of Luz, as he fled from his brother Esau, and when he awoke he called the place where God spoke to him Bethel (house of God) (Genesis 28). There he erected the stone he had for a pillow and poured oil upon the top of it. There he also vowed that the LORD would be his God, and that he would give a tenth of all He would give him. That stone pillar he called God's house.

Then he went on his way to Laban, and there he was working for Laban, and there he got wives and a family and flocks during his twenty years' sojourn. At the end of this time the LORD appeared to him and said that He was the God of Bethel. Later, when Jacob had stopped short of Bethel, He told him to go up to Bethel and dwell there, and he built there an altar unto God (Genesis 35. 1). This he did, but alas, he did not dwell there. This was the great mistake of his life. He built the altar and called the name of the place El-beth-el (the God of the house of God). He there set up a pillar of stone where God spoke to him, and poured a drink offering thereon and also poured oil upon it, but the following words are these, "And they journeyed from Bethel" (Genesis 35. 9-16). Then quickly followed the death of Rachel, the sin of Reuben, which led to the change of the birthright from Reuben to Joseph, and afterwards the selling of Joseph into Egypt, by his brothers. The journey south after leaving Bethel ended in Egypt, and there Jacob died, and it required the power of God to redeem Jacob's descendants from that dark and sinful land. This is the Genesis story of Jacob, that after leaving Bethel (house of God) he came to Hebron (fellowship), to his father, and he dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings (Genesis 37. 1, 14) for something over twenty years, **but** Bethel (house of God) never came into Jacob's life any more.

David was anointed king in Hebron by the men of the tribe of Judah, to which tribe he belonged, and he reigned there over Judah for seven years and **six** months (2 Samuel 2. 4, 7, 11). While David reigned in Hebron he had that wonderful experience which is recorded in Psalm 132, a song of Ascents, in which we have the words of his oath unto the LORD, the Mighty God of Jacob:

"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
Nor go up into my bed;
I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids;
Until I find out a place for the LORD,

A tabernacle for the Mighty **One of Jacob**.
 Lo, **we heard of it (the Ark) in Ephrathah**:
We found it (the Ark) in the field of the wood.
We will go into His tabernacles;
We will worship at His footstool.
 Arise, O **LORD, into Thy resting place**;
 Thou, and the **Ark of Thy strength**. "

Where **was God's resting place to be, in Hebron or where?**
 This, **we are told later in this psalm, was Zion**.

"For the **LORD hath chosen Zion**;
He hath desired it for His habitation.
 This **is My resting place for ever**:
 Here will I dwell; for I have desired **it**"
 (Psalm 132. 3-8, 13, 14).

David, who dwelt **in Hebron, was not** satisfied with his **own** place, his deep deep exercise **was**: where **was** God's place? **He** knew that God had forsaken Shiloh, and he knew that the **Ark was in a man's house** where it had been **for** years. That, he knew, **was never** God's mind. **He** would have God to tell him where **He** wished to dwell. **Human reason is one** thing, but divine revelation another, and these **are** usually **far, far** apart. **He was** told that it **was Zion**, but it **was in** the hands of the Jebusites. **He** would take it, as he did. **Zion was** God's chosen resting place, and David travelled the **same country as** Jacob had done years before, but **in** the opposite direction. Jacob left Bethel (house of God) and left it **in the face of** God's command **as to** where he **was** to dwell, and where the place of divine service **was to be**. **He went** south to Hebron to his father and dwelt there. David **in** the light of divine revelation travelled north **to** the place of God's choice. There **was** commenced the service of song, an addition to the service that Moses **instituted in** the wilderness. There were the **songs of Zion sung**, which were never **to be sung in** a strange land (Psalm 137). Many children of God, sharers **in the common** life **in** Christ, are pleased **to** have fellowship with such, whatever **sect or system** they **may be in**, but they **seem to have no** thought for the place of God's rest. (See Hebrews chapters 3 and 4; also Acts 7. 48-50; Isaiah 66. 1, 2). As the dispensation of grace draws **to an end**, and **in** the light of the Lord's **coming again** (which **may be soon**), is it **not time** for God's saints **to be Zion-minded and to come to the mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem** (Hebrews 12. 22-28), there **to render service to** the living God? To **find** the house of God, the place of God's rest, **is indeed** a revelation from God, **as it was to** both Jacob and David: **and it is** a place which should **not be** left. Jacob left **it**, but David never did
 (Psalm 23. 6; 27. 4). J. H.

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

HEBRON

From Atherton. — This **city of Judah, some 20 miles south of Jerusalem, was originally named Kiriath-arba, so-called from Arba, the father of Anak and progenitor of the giant Anakim. The chief interest of this city arises from its having been the scene of some of the most remarkable events associated with the patriarchs. Sarah died there, and it was the place where Abraham bought the field and cave of Machpelah to serve as a family tomb. Isaac and Jacob both lived there, and Joseph was sent out therefrom to seek his brethren. At a later date it was taken by Joshua in his conquest of the land and finally given to Caleb (Joshua 10. 36; 14. 6-15; 15. 13, 14). Here David first established his kingdom, and it was his seat of government for seven and a half years (2 Samuel 2. 11).**

The following important details emerge from this study: -

(1) The city **was of long standing, one of the most ancient, established before Zoan, the capital of Egypt.**

(2) **It was clothed with luxurious vineyards. Its grapes were reputed to be the finest in southern Palestine, and probably Hebron was the place where the spies obtained such prodigious fruit (Numbers 13. 22, 23). It was also famous for its olive groves and other notable fruit trees.**

(3) **Caleb, as one of the sent out spies, realized how strong were its defences.**

(4) **It was later assigned to the tribe of Levi to become a city of refuge (Joshua 20. 7), although the fields and villages thereof were the possession of Caleb (Joshua 21. 12).**

(5) **In the conquest thereof it was necessary to overcome and drive out the three giants Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai.**

Hence **its excellencies were clear and unmistakable, as the revelation of its spiritual counterpart is intended to be. The name Hebron comes from the Hebrew *Chabar*, to join, to couple together, to have fellowship with (Genesis 14. 3, Exodus 28. 7, Psalm 94. 20, etc.), thus directing our attention to 1 John 1 and 2, where the merits and delights of spiritual fellowship are examined and recommended.**

Applying the **five** points already indicated relative to Hebron, **we note:—**

(1) **The principles and practices of fellowship Godward and manward are of long standing, going back to the days of Eden, seen in the Israel nation, and later in a special sense handed down from the Father and the Son to the apostles who shared them with us in the Scriptures.**

(2) Its spiritual riches, fulness and delights are abundantly offered for the investigation and realization of God-fearing men and women.

(3) Its basis is the Scriptures of truth (as indicated four times in 1 John 1).

(4) Its refuge is unquestionable, and its particular link with the priesthood not without significance.

(5) The formidable triple opposition of the world, the flesh and the devil is outlined in 1 John 2. Anak means "strangling,"¹ and such forces of evil will and can choke, mar and spoil the possession and enjoyment of the fellowship of which the beloved apostle writes. Hence the recurring need to overcome (for its delights are highly conditional) by the sword of the Spirit, and by being subject to the will and commandments of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Caleb's assessment was very sound, and his desire worthy of our emulation: "Give me Hebron!"

E. Birchall

From Wigan. —Hebron was well situated in a fertile wooded part of the country of Canaan, at an elevation of 2700 ft. above sea level, resting on a mountain ridge about 20 miles from Jerusalem and about half the distance from the Dead Sea. The importance of some cities of Abram's sojourning is seen in his choosing to build an altar in them after the appearing of the LORD unto him with the wonderful promises. From Bethel (God's house) to Egypt was a downward path: sorrow and trials were encountered (Genesis 17. 3, 4). At Hebron Abraham bought for 400 shekels of silver a burying-place to bury his wife Sarah.

Hebron was the first city the spies came to (Numbers 13. 22). Here was a challenge to the leaders of God's people, a land of giants, but also a land flowing with milk and honey. But some of them had very little faith, the most important asset in the attack on the enemy's land. God will always honour faithfulness such as was recognized when Caleb, one of the spies, was blessed by Joshua and given Hebron for an inheritance. Caleb's was a very fine commendation: he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel,

P. Howarth

From London, S. E. —Hebron, about 20 miles south of Jerusalem in a fertile area, lies snugly in a valley between hills in generally high land. The word "Hebron" means "ford", according to Young's Concordance and the easy river crossing almost certainly decided the town's location. The theme of "crossing over", or separation in that sense, seems to be associated with the town's biblical history as will be now examined (1). It is appreciated that Cruden's Concordance gives "Society, friendship" as the meaning of Hebron, but

the events connected with the city seem to fit into the pattern of separation—though, of course, the idea of society or friendship is also connected with a "ford" in a complementary sense.

The first mention (Genesis 13. 18) follows closely the separation of Lot from Abram; and near Hebron were the field of Ephron (Genesis 23. 19) and the cave which were purchased for Sarah's burial, after the separation of Sarah from Abraham by death. Further, Isaac was buried near Hebron (Genesis 35. 27). It was at Hebron that Joseph parted from his father Jacob on the eventful journey to see his brothers, the parting that was to prove to be so long and so grievous to Jacob (Genesis 37. 14).

The spies sent to Canaan by Moses (Numbers 13. 22) were separated in outlook chiefly on the issue of the giants, the Anakim, who lived in Kiriath-arba, which is Hebron. Hence it is not surprising that it was Hebron which Caleb asked for and obtained as a possession (Joshua 14. 13) after the giants were driven out (Joshua 11. 21). The five kings, including the king of Hebron, were slain on Joshua's long day (Joshua 10); a real separation of the inhabitants of Canaan and Israel was effected that day.

When settled in the land, Israel was given Hebron as one of the cities of refuge, in which the fugitive, pursued by angry and revengeful people, might find security till his case was heard. When the fugitive "crossed over" the border of the town he was safe (Joshua 20. 7).

David was proclaimed king in Hebron, obtaining the allegiance of Judah, part of Israel, before he was finally acknowledged by the whole of the nation in Hebron (1 Chronicles 11. 1-3). In Hebron Absalom separated himself from his father in an attempt to usurp the throne, and proclaim himself king (2 Samuel 15). His rising was soon to be quelled by David's army, but even this strong separation by a son could not overcome the forgiving love of a father.

Hebron is inextricably intertwined with Israel's chequered history, the centre of many experiences in which decisions and partings were made. God's people today will know many similar experiences, will have rivers to ford and high ground to conquer, but through them all they will have the same God who helped Caleb and David and others who knew Hebron so intimately.

C. L. Prasher

EXTRACTS

From Southport. —Hebron appears to have been an ancient

city and was in fact a city in the time of Abraham. When the latter separated from his nephew Lot, he **was** instructed to look northwards, southwards, eastwards and **westwards**, for the LORD promised to give to him and his seed all the land he saw. Further, he was instructed to walk the length and breadth of the land. This is advice which we could well follow, for Peter writes of an inheritance reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1. 4). We should take a look by faith at that inheritance more often, that we may see those things which are ours through the Lord's work.

The men of Hebron acknowledged Abraham as a mighty prince amongst them (Genesis 23.6). Yet he never erected a royal palace for himself, nor did he dwell in a house, but he moved his tent to Hebron, for he dwelt in a tent. Although the land was his by promise he dwelt apart from the citizens of this world, looking for "the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11.10). There at Hebron Abraham erected an altar, and there he offered sacrifices to God.

In the course of time Isaac dwelt in Hebron, followed by Jacob. When famine caused Jacob to move into Egypt, and his sons became settled in the rich pasture lands of that country, Jacob looked beyond the fair skies of those days and saw something of the tribulations their families would endure in that land (Genesis 49). He looked beyond to God's promise when his sons would dwell in the land of promise, and so he gave instructions for his body to be carried back to the land of promise and to be buried in Hebron. Even at death he preferred a cave in the land of promise to a pyramid in Egypt.

W. S. Holden

From Whitehills and Macduff. —When the spies went up from the camp of Israel, Hebron was one of the places they came to and was probably the place where they saw the giants, which made them bring back an evil report. Caleb was the one who could stand out in the midst of the people that day and say, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it". For his faithfulness Caleb was given Hebron as a possession, as God had commanded Moses (Numbers 14. 24, Judges 1. 20).

There was some discussion about the name "Kiriath-arba". Some felt this was the original name, but others thought that the name was originally Hebron, and then changed to Kiriath-arba and finally back to Hebron (2).

One of the great moments in the life of David was when he was proclaimed king of Judah in Hebron (2 Samuel 2. 1-4): he

reigned there **for seven and a half years**. **It was** here that his **son Absalom came to** claim the kingship, **hoping to** be received **as** his father had been forty years earlier.

We do **not** find the **name of Hebron mentioned** in the New Testament. It **was** however pointed **out** that Zacharias and Elizabeth dwelt **in** the hill **country in a certain city of Judah** (Luke 1. 39, 40), and **it may have been** that this **was Hebron** (3).

J. H. Mitchell

From Edinburgh. — Abraham moved his **tent**: Abraham dwelt by the oaks **of Mamre** which are **in Hebron**: there Abraham built **an altar** and there Abraham buried Sarah. This **sums up Abraham's connexion** with Hebron. **He** who had **no abiding city** found a resting-place where he could offer sacrifices **to** his God. There he buried Sarah his **wife** and, when he died, there **two of his sons** buried him. Abraham's faith **is** outstanding.

Hebron **was** visited by the twelve **spies**, and **was** given to Caleb for his faithfulness. The land **on** which his **foot** had trodden **as a spy was promised to** him by the **God of Abraham**; and Joshua fulfilled that promise. After he **took the city**, **peace** followed. **It** later became a **city of refuge and was** given to Aaron, though Caleb had the suburbs. **So** from being a resting place where Abraham worshipped his **God** it became a **city** where the righteous protection of God **was** extended to the manslayer who killed unwittingly.

So **one man** finds his resting-place; and a **nation** finds its King, although **one** sought **to** steal them **away** by subtlety. **So** we have our resting-place today. A small people **own** their king even though the evil **one** **seeks** to draw them **away** by subtlety. The day will **come** when all shall **own Him** as King **of kings**.

T. Hope

From Crowborough. — Hebron **was one of** the oldest **cities of** Scripture. It **was** situated **twenty-two** miles south **of** Jerusalem **in** a rocky but fertile district. **It was known at one time by** the **name of** Kiriath-arba (**Genesis 23. 2, 19**). **In Joshua 14. 15** we are told that Arba **was** the greatest **man among** the Anakim. Could this **city** have **been** called after him (4)?

Hebron **was a city rich in** biblical history, being the burial place **of Sarah and** other Old Testament saints. Joshua **took** this **city**, and **it was** later given **to** Caleb for **an** inheritance. David had a close **association** with **it**, having been instructed by the **LORD** to live **in it**. **He** **reigned** there for a period **of seven and a half years**. During this **time six sons** were born **to** him **in Hebron**. There **is no mention of Hebron at all in** New Testament Scripture. **In** the Old Testament **we** could find little said

against it, unlike some of the cities previously studied.

J. Robertson

From Glasgow (Parkhead). -Hebron, formerly Kiriath-arba (**Joshua 21. 11**), was a city of Judah situated twenty-two miles south of Jerusalem. Hebron figures prominently in the Old Testament and in the history of Israel. It was a royal city (2 Samuel 2. 11), a city of refuge (Joshua 20. 7), a city of the priests and Levites (Joshua 21. 13), and the inheritance of Caleb (Joshua 21. 12). It was also a city of great antiquity, being built seven years before Zoan in Egypt (Numbers 13. 22): perhaps the oldest city in the land of Israel.

Abraham (Genesis 13. 18, 23. 2, 19), Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 35. 27) are linked with Hebron. Because of its association with the three great patriarchs, and at a later time, Caleb and David, Hebron would be greatly venerated in the minds of Jews of subsequent generations, especially as Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were buried in the cave of Machpelah close to Hebron (Genesis 49. 29-32). Rachel was buried at Bethlehem (Genesis 35. 19). Perhaps Hebron is best known because of its association with Caleb, who wholly followed the LORD. We would do well to emulate him today.

It was thought significant that Abraham (whose name was then Abram) was called Abram the Hebrew after he came to Hebron (5). Compare Genesis 13. 18 with 14. 13. We have since learned that the word "Hebrew" comes from "Eber". Eber was the great grandson of Shem, who lived 2255 B.C. (Genesis 10. 21). *J. Peddie*

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). -Hebron was founded seven years before the city of Zoan in Egypt. Its name means "communion". Abraham, who was the "friend of God", enjoyed communion by the oaks of Mamre when he entertained the angels unawares. Near Hebron was the cave of Machpelah where the patriarchs were buried. When Jacob died in Egypt, he charged his sons to bury him in this cave. The Egyptians sought, by embalming their dead and furnishing them with all that was dear to them in this life, to make their existence more pleasant in the world of the dead. But though their physicians embalmed Israel, he was placed in the tomb of his fathers in the land of promise.

This city became important in Judah, and when the tribes moved into their inheritance it was a city of refuge and a priests' city. David was proclaimed king over Judah in Hebron. He remained there for seven and a half years, until after the death of Ishbosheth, before he occupied Jerusalem.

Moses had spoken to Israel of "the place which the LORD thy God shall choose". It was now Mount Zion which was

chosen as the centre of worship for the twelve tribes. Thither the priests would go to fulfil their courses in the temple, and return again to Hebron. Absalom tried to reverse this purpose of the LORD when he had himself proclaimed king in Hebron, and it was with great sorrow that David retreated to Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth had reigned over Israel. Absalom's pretext was that he had vowed to the LORD, and had to pay his vow in Hebron.

Eric Archibald

From Methil. —Commentators have thought of Hebron as a place of friendship, the seat of association or alliance. We, however, have looked upon it as a city of promise both for God's ancient people and to the children of Israel.

As God gave to Abraham His great promise (Genesis 13), Abraham arose, moved his tent in separation from Lot and his associations and came to Hebron, dwelling in the region of Mamre. We thought it significant that there he should build an altar unto the LORD. Hebron and its surrounding regions became well known to both Abraham and Isaac, who both so-journed here (Genesis 35. 27).

We have little indication of what area the city with its suburbs may have covered. From Joshua we learn that at that time Hoham reigned as king in Hebron. The fact that reference is made to Zoan in Egypt alongside Hebron (Numbers 13) may be an indication of its age, size and importance in the world at that time, for Zoan, an ancient city and capital of an Egyptian kingdom of that era, could tell of its kings, its Pharaohs, princes and counsellors (Isaiah 19. 11-13).

Numbers 13, despite the evil report, is the prelude to the dawn of God's promises to Abraham, as the twelve men of Israel went to spy out the land. "They went up by the South, and came unto Hebron;... and they came into the valley of Eshcol".

In a later day Joshua, in his conquest for Israel, fought through the district of Hebron and the cities thereof and **smote** and utterly destroyed all the souls therein (Joshua 10. 36*39). In doing so, he cut **off** the Anakim from It and its surrounding hill country (Joshua 11. 21). The reward **was to** the "grass-hoppers" (Numbers 13. 33) who by God's strength had overcome the giants. The similitude is applicable to the overcomers of evil among God's people today: their rewards will be equally satisfying (Revelation 2, 3). *Iain T. H. Hunter*

COMMENTS

(1) (London). —According to Strong's Concordance Hebron (*Chebrown*) is derived from *Cheber*, a society, which in turn is from *Chabar*, to join. Davidson's Analytical Hebrew and

Chaldee Lexicon gives the meanings of quite a number of words associated with *chabar*, and without exception they are in agreement with Strong's Concordance. The use of the name Hebron in Scripture would appear to be in harmony with the thought of communion: but we should also bear in mind that communion with God requires first of all separation from the world and separation unto God. If therefore the thought of separation is implied, it can only be in a secondary sense. J. B.

(2) (Whitehills and Macduff). -We can find no evidence for this double change of name: there are in Scripture other instances of dual place-names. Kiriath means "city", and so Kiriath-arba means "city of Arba", which agrees with Joshua 15. 13. J. B.

(3) (Whitehills and Macduff). -Clear evidence would be required before we could build on such a suggestion. J. B.

(4) (Crowborough) -This would appear to be the significance of Joshua 15. 13. J. B.

(5) (Glasgow: Parkhead). —Our friends have touched upon an interesting and instructive point, and we should have been happy to see them develop it. Abram was called when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, which is on the east of the Euphrates, and God led him into Canaan on the west of the Euphrates, which is sometimes referred to as "the great river" or, simply, "the River". It is a river that has had a place in God's dealings with man from the creation of Adam, and will continue to figure significantly to the end of time, as may be seen from the Revelation. The Euphrates was the north-east boundary of the land promised to Abram (Genesis 15. 18); and so, when he crossed over into that land, he was to the peoples there an incomer or immigrant from beyond the River and would be to them a Hebrew. Genesis 13. 18 shows him to have dwelt for some time in Hebron, and Genesis 14. 13 would suggest that he was still dwelling there at the time of the sacking of Sodom. It would appear that he became Abram the Hebrew when he crossed over the Euphrates. He was then still in uncircumcision (instituted as a token of the covenant in Genesis 17) and his name was not yet changed to Abraham (Genesis 17. 5): so then it was not these that made him a Hebrew, but his going out in obedience to the call of God (Acts 7. 2-5).

It should be noted that when we speak of Abram the Hebrew we make a difference between him and the peoples among whom he dwelt, and when we speak of the Jews as Hebrews we make a difference between them and all other nations. The call of God makes the difference: called ones are strangers and so-

journalers **so** far as the rest are concerned. It would **be** well if God's present-day **people** as the Israel of God **gave effect** in their lives **to** their true Hebrew character **by** truly **effective** and complete separation from the world. And when **we** separate ourselves **we** should not **go back** in heart **as** Israel did: **we** should be like Abraham who crossed over never **to** return. **J. B.**

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question from Glasgow (**Parkhead**). —Who **was** the founder of the Hebrew nation, Eber or Abraham?

Answer—(1) We find that certain highly respected helps to the study of the Scriptures make suggestions that we cannot accept. This may be why this question appears in our friends' paper.

Strong's Concordance **gives** Hebrew (*Ibriy*) as "an Eberite ... or descendant **of** Eber" and **by** back references *Ibriy* is traced **to** *abar*, which has a remarkably **wide** range of English renderings. **Its** primary meaning is given **as** "**to** cross over" and **it** is described **as** being "used very widely **of** any transition". Davidson's Analytical Hebrew Lexicon **gives** "**to** pass over, **as** a river, a sea", and then **sets out** a considerable number **of** related words and phrases. **Some** commentators **associate** the word "**Hebrew**" with the crossing **of** the Jordan.

It may be that the definition **of** Hebrew **as** a "descendant **of** Eber" is **based** on Genesis 10. 21. This **we** regard **as** at least very dubious **if** not definitely wrong. "The father **of** all the children **of** Eber" is descriptive **of** Shem, from whom all **Semitic** races are descended. The literal meaning **of** *abar* is helpful: **it** has **to do** with a crossing over, **but** not the crossing **of** the Jordan, for the name "Hebrew" **was** obviously applied **to** Abraham and his descendants generations before the nation crossed the Jordan. **It** has **to do** with Abram **as** having crossed the Euphrates.

As to the founding **of** the nation, the Scriptures are clear and definite: Abraham **is** the founder. Genesis 17. 1-8 **leaves** no doubt about this, and it is reiterated in various **ways** in the Scriptures, as, for example, in Acts 7 and Hebrews 11.

J. B.

(2) There is no doubt whatever from scriptural record and authority that Abraham, and not Eber, **was** the founder **of** the first of the Hebrew people. The coining and giving **of** names may be a matter which calls for the knowledge **of** circumstances associated with the birth of, or events connected with, persons, and with the substance of things — we have

only to think of the name "Moses" to see how the daughter of Pharaoh coined the name. I take it that the people of the land of Canaan coined the name "Hebrew" as applicable to a man who had come from beyond the river Euphrates. Similarly the name "Christian" was first given to the disciples in Antioch, because of the fact that they were followers of Christ and like Him in practice. The mental powers of Adam can be seen in that when God created the animals he brought them to Adam to see what he would call them and he gave names to all cattle etc. Adam was then no mental pigmy coming, as some say, from the same stem of previous creatures as the apes, which cannot yet after millenniums either speak or write their own names. Adam could both speak and write his own name and the names of his descendants (see Genesis 5. 1, 2), and much else besides.

J. M.

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 31

(continued from page 80)

David uses two words for mercy in verses 7 and 9. In verse 7 it is *CH EC ED*, love, kindness, of men amongst themselves, and also of God's mercy toward men, in mercies and benefits. The word is frequently translated "lovingkindness". In verse 9 the word is *CHANAN*, which means to bend or stoop, and shows kindness to an inferior, to be favourable, to favour someone.

The psalmist's adversaries had made him a reproach exceedingly to his neighbours and a fear to his acquaintance. They that saw him fled from him. Whether he is here describing his experiences in his days of rejection in his early life, or in the time of the rebellion of Absalom his son, or at some other time, we may never be sure. He describes himself as one forgotten and useless.

"I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind:
I am like a broken vessel. "

How like to our blessed Lord he was! Man may talk about God, and speak about the Most High, but to most men our Lord is as a dead man out of mind. But it will not be always so with Him, neither was it so with David, for he died full of days, riches, and honour (1 Chronicles 29. 28).

David says,

"For I have heard the defaming of many,
Terror on every side:

While they took counsel together against me,.....

But I trusted (Heb. *BATACH*, to confide) in Thee,

O LORD:

I said, Thou art **my God**.

My times are in Thy hand:

Deliver **me from** the hand of **mine enemies**, and from them that **persecute me**".

As **one continues to** read this psalm, **one seems to** be impressed that David is **writing of** the things that he suffered during his **rejection** by Saul and by Israel in his early days. **He writes of** the **defaming of many**, of **terror on every side**, **men taking** counsel **against** him, **even devising to take away** his life. **Yet** despite all this his **confidence was in** the LORD whom he affectionately calls, "My God". **He said** that his **times** were in **His** hand. (**Gesenius says of "times"** here and in Job 24. 1 as "the **vicissitudes of things, events**"). He believed that the **vicissitudes**, the changes, the **passing from one condition to another**, that **came in** his life were in the hand of God. David continued to **seek deliverance from his enemies** and his persecutors.

"Make Thy **face to shine upon** Thy **servant**:

Save me in Thy lovingkindness (*CHECED*).

Let **me not be** ashamed, O LORD; for **I** have called **upon** Thee:

Let the wicked be ashamed, let them **be silent in** Sheol.

Let the lying lips be **dumb**;

Which **speak** against the righteous insolently, with pride and **contempt**".

What **was true of** David's experience has been the experience of all **saints in** vital **testimony for God** in this world. The worldly minded believer will **know** nothing of David's rejection and sufferings. **But to** those who **suffer** for the Lord's sake and for the sake of His righteousness and truth, they will **find in** David's words **comfort** and support. God's servants have ever had to have confidence in their God, and have ever sought the shining of His **face upon** them. David asked God that he might **not be** ashamed, **but** that the wicked would be ashamed, and **put to silence in** Sheol, which is **not** the grave, **but has been** called by some the nether-world. **David now** turns from the wickedness and lying of **men to** the goodness of **God**. This is a **common** feature in his psalms, the goodness of **God** and the badness of **men**. *J, M.*

(to be continued D. V.)

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so " (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

The present-day **tendency in some quarters to view the New Testament in isolation from the Old has no support in Scripture itself. Such scriptures as Hebrews 1. 1, 2 and John 2. 22 assume the essential unity of all the inspired writings.** Those who, under God, penned **the books of the New Testament** were themselves steeped in **the law, the prophets and the psalms.** They liberally drew **from the Old Testament the necessary quotations, illustrations and allusions to make their meaning clear.** It follows **that, in order to obtain a sound understanding of their work, it is essential that their doctrinal background should not be ignored by the student, and also indeed, the general reader of the Bible.** Those who presume **to ignore the Old Testament writings will find that a great deal of the New Testament teaching is unintelligible, and much will be misunderstood. One result of this defective method of study is the widespread failure to appreciate the true significance of the house of God in this dispensation; others will readily come to mind.**

The greater part of this year's syllabus **has to do with Old Testament history and geography. It may be thought by some to be an academic study which offers little of doctrinal or hortatory value.** To such **we would suggest that a more detailed knowledge of the ancient cities of Scripture will result in a better understanding of the circumstances in which the Old Testament saints lived and in which the nation of Israel traced out its tragic history, for the characters of prominent men are frequently reflected in the cities they build or govern, and the courses of men's lives are often profoundly influenced by the cities in which they live.**

Some interesting questions pose themselves as we study the history of Samaria and its people. For instance, who was the great and noble Osnappar (Ezra 4. 10)? Although we can infer that he was a prominent prince under Esar-haddon king of Assyria, beyond that we know nothing. But the ruthless efficiency with which he carried out the king's plan for the enforced mass migration of men, women and children from their

homes to **the** depopulated city of Samaria and its environs during the reign of Hezekiah had a marked **effect upon** the subsequent course of **events** in the land of Israel. The re-establishment of God's **remnant** people in the land after **seventy** years of captivity, and the resumption of worship in Jerusalem, were seriously threatened by the descendants of the immigrant races (Ezra 4). **Moreover** by their blandishments **many of** the Jews and **even of** the priests were influenced to intermarry with them. **So** the hands of God's people were weakened and the testimony **was** marred (Ezra 9. 1, 2).

What connexion **was** there **between** the Samaritans of the **New Testament** and the foreign people brought in by Osnappar? It has been **suggested** that in the time of Hoshea, king of Israel, the Assyrians did **not** take **away** all the Israelites, and those who were left intermarried with the **new** population. There **does not seem** to be **any** support in Scripture for this theory. The **use** of the word "Israel" in 2 Kings 17. 23 **seems** to have a completeness, and finality **about** it which precludes the thought of **any** number being left behind. However it is quite certain that in later times there **was** considerable intermarriage between the Jews recently returned from captivity **and** the other nations which had **now** become established in the land (Ezra 9. 10; Nehemiah 6. 17-19; 13. 23-31). There **seems** little doubt that **it was** the descendants of these **mixed** races who were still in **occupation** of Samaria in **New Testament** times. Although the Jews had **no** dealings with Samaritans, **and in fact** used the **name to convey** the **utmost** contempt (John 8. 48), **yet** they were regarded as having a nearer place than the Gentiles. Peter needed a vision **to** prepare him for the command **to** preach **to** a Gentile, **but** he **went to Samaria** without demur (Acts 8. 14, 15). The Samaritans claimed descent from Jacob (John 4. 12) **and**, like the Jews, awaited the coming of Messiah (John 4. 25). The **woman at Sychar's well** could converse intelligently **about** spiritual matters and historians tell **us** that her people had a law book similar to the Pentateuch, carrying **on** a form of worship **on** Mount Gerizim **in imitation of** the **services of God's house in** Jerusalem. Thus the evidence **points to** a closer resemblance **between** the Jews and Samaritans than **existed in** the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. This difference **can** be **accounted for by** the intermarriage of those days between the **two** nations, resulting in a people who inherited **at least a little knowledge of** the God of Israel **and His ways**.

After the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon to the land of Judah, the inhabitants of Samaria were openly **opposed to** them, the Scriptures portraying this opposition as being wholly reprehensible. **It is** therefore remarkable that **in**

New Testament times references by the Lord to the descendants of these people were, without **exception**, favourable, and furthermore, tended to throw discredit upon the Jews by comparison. The very people who **displayed** such bitter **enmity** in former **times** were the first to be introduced to the new order of things in which God desired true worshippers in every nation, including the despised Samaritans (John 4. 23, 24). Before long many of these were to be partakers of the greater eternal covenant, **superior** in every way to that which their fathers had once opposed. **L. B.**

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

SAMARIA

From Vancouver B. C.—The first reference to the city of Samaria tells us that the hill of Shemer was bought by Omri for two talents of silver. This reference to a hill being bought called our remembrance to the act of David in buying the hill of Oman the Jebusite on which to build the Temple (1 Chronicles 21). But the intentions of the two men were completely different. Omri built the city, and his successor Ahab raised up idols to Baal there; but David's actions were carried out with a view to pleasing God. It was noticed that Samaria is only spoken of in the Old Testament with reference to its wickedness. The kings of Israel that ruled from that city were evil in the sight of God, and the Samaritans and the people of Judah were continually in a state of conflict, hence arose the longstanding hatred on the part of the Jews.

Although at first that area was populated by the ten tribes, in later times the people of Samaria would seem to be almost a mixed race, as seen in 2 Kings 17. 24. We read that after Shalmaneser had taken captive the ten tribes, foreign races were put in the cities and priests were installed to teach the people about the "God of the land". Thus in later years these people would set themselves up as the descendants of Jacob, as the woman at Sychar's well did, and class themselves as equal with the Jews. We can easily see how a hatred would arise in the heart of a Jew.

But even if we only see a black picture of the sin that was prevalent in the city of Samaria in Old Testament times, its character seems to differ from the city mentioned in Acts. Both Philip (Acts 8. 5, 6) and Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15. 3) were favourably received by the brethren in Samaria, who were overjoyed by the news of the conversion of the Gentiles.

There are instances when the Lord would seem to cast a

favourable light on the Samaritans, indicating that **some** of them were kind and gentle-hearted: for **example**, the Samaritan in the story of the **man** travelling from Jerusalem **to** Jericho, and the one Samaritan leper who returned **to give** thanks. Also, the Lord told His disciples **to go into** Samaria specifically to preach (Acts 1. 8), and it **seems** that they were well received (Acts 8. 5, 6). And the Lord **must** needs **pass** through Samaria **to meet** the **woman** of Sychar. *J. Pope, J. Bell, Jr.*

From Edinburgh. —Samaria had a very chequered history. **It** was the seat of the kings of Israel from Omri (who **built** the city) to Hoshea. Throughout this dark period of history **many** wonders were wrought by the prophets as they sought to turn Israel, through their leaders, **to** God. Sad **it** is **to** read time after time, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the **LORD**" and "He did not that which was right in the eyes of the **LORD** his God". Surely the magnitude of the mercy of God is seen in this dreary story of the kings of Israel. They were not all of one line, since not in every case did a son follow his father, but they were the people of Israel. Indeed, many of those men saw, in a remarkable way, the hand of God.

Omri must have reigned about six years in Samaria, to be followed by Ahab, his son. The wickedness of Jezebel in the murder of Naboth took place in association with Samaria, and was followed by the sad stories of Israel's falling away to the worship of Baal. Even in the time of Ahab the question was asked, "Is there not... a prophet of the **LORD**?", and the answer was, "There is yet one man" (1 Kings 22. 7, 8). Even the sudden and miraculous delivery of the city during the reign of Jehoram from Ben-hadad was accepted and forgotten, and they continued in their evil ways. So in the reign of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took the **city** and carried Israel **away** captive to Babylon (2 Kings 17. 5). All the **cities** of Samaria were depopulated and then re-peopled with other nations under Assyrian rule. Such **people** made gods **to** themselves and served them, and they feared the **LORD**. This seeming contradiction would imply that they feared the God of the land **but** knew not, nor feared, the **LORD** Jehovah. The woman **at** Sychar's well said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" (John 4. 20) The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans **was** manifest to all. The intolerant abhorrence of the orthodox **Jew** is scarcely veiled in the scathing remark to the Lord in John 8. 48.

The well-known story of the kindness of a Samaritan to a Jew, recorded in Luke 10, is surely not a parable but an actual incident (1). Again, ten lepers were cleansed, but only one, a Samaritan, returned to give thanks. So the grace of God reached

the heart of **this** people until Philip, the evangelist, preached **to them the good news of** salvation. "And the multitudes gave heed **with one accord...** and there was much joy in that city". **So the history of** this city closes in Scripture with a people receiving **the Holy Spirit** in the coming of Peter and John, **having** received the word and been baptized. *T. Hope*

From Whitehills and Mac duff. -When Zimri, the king of Israel, burned the king's house over him seven days after **seizing the throne**, Omri, his rival and successor, set about building a **new** royal city. He bought the hill Samaria for two talents of silver and called the new city Samaria after Shemer, the seller of the land. The new centre of government for the **ten** tribes quickly became the centre for evil practices, notably Baal-worship in the new house of Baal. Omri's son Ahab, pursued this evil all his life. Samaria was thus established as an evil city and the centre of organized idolatry. In spite of the evil practices, God did not give up His interest in the ten tribes: notable prophets like Elijah and Elisha had their responsibility and ministry among them and lived, at least a part of the time, in Samaria, the latter sharing many of the privations of siege and famine brought on the inhabitants by their wickedness. The prophecy of Amos signifies that the luxury of later days, in that evil and sometimes prosperous city is something from which God would save His people. There would not be much to save, so corrupting an influence was Samaria on its inhabitants, but God would seek what He could.

The clearance of the city and area of Samaria by the carrying **off** of the native Israelites into Assyria was followed by the resettlement of men from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim. These feared not the LORD who sent lions among them which killed some of them. So the king of Assyria gave commandment that a priest should be carried back to teach them the manner of the God of the land. These new settlers were never accepted by the Jews, and down to New Testament times were objects of scorn. Remarkably, it was one of the Samaritans, a notable sinner, to whom the Lord Jesus **spoke of** worship in the **context** of the new covenant **soon to be enacted**. The spread of the gospel in early apostolic days **was to** the Samaritans before the Gentiles. *A. B. R.*

EXTRACTS

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). —Samaria stood **on a** hill, **compassed** all around by a broad, deep valley; its situation **was** very beautiful and strategically strong. The hill and

its four neighbours have rich soil **to the top**, planted with **fig** and olive trees **and vines**. Such a hill would attract a **man of Omri's military** outlook when seeking a **site** for his capital **city**.

The **name Samaria was given to the town** after the owner of the hill, Shemer, who sold the hill **to Omri**. **It** shows the slight regard the Israelites had for **God's word in these times** that the land **was sold at all, even for so small a price**, for Shemer had **no right to do such a thing** (Leviticus 25. 23).

Under Ahab the **city was a stronghold** for the worship of Baal, with **an open** place before **it** where prophets lied, and Micaiah, the prophet of the **LORD was** foully treated. Here Jehoshaphat joined Ahab, **and as a result was well-nigh slain**. Compare this with the **days** of Jehoram, when Elisha could **come and go as he pleased**, after the expulsion of Baal, **and was known to** the people of the land, if **not to the king, and could enlighten Naaman** about the God of Israel and His power, **gaining in the end a more satisfactory response** from the heathen of Syria than from Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

Martin Archibald

From Southport. — **Some 25 years or so** after the **city was** built Elisha **is** quoted **as residing at Samaria**, a fact revealed by a little girl taken **captively by the Syrians** (2 Kings 5. 3). The faith of this little girl **is indicative** that, notwithstanding the gross evil of the people of **Samaria** generally, there were **exceptions**. We should **not fall into** the error of thinking, **"I, even I only, am left"**.

In the days of Amos, whose period of **activity was** probably a century or more after Ahab, the **sins** of Samaria were still accumulating, **and** through this prophet God prophesied the day of **visitation, saying** that those rescued would **be of no more value** than the worthless **pieces of a sheep, shanks or an ear**, a shepherd might recover from the mouth of a lion, **not withstanding** their wealth and luxury. This **visitation** appears to have occurred **in the reign of Hoshea** (B. C. 721), when the Assyrians carried the people of Samaria into **captivity** (2 Kings 17. 6, 7).

Later, Samaria **was** partly re peopled with Assyrian settlers, and although **it** flourished for a **time it** gradually declined. **In the time** of our Lord, Samaria **still** existed, **but** without **its** former **importance and to it Philip made a visit** and preached the **gospel** (Acts 8. 4-8).

The **Samaria** of John 4, however, **was not the city but** the tract of land stretching from the Mediterranean **Sea to the Jordan** and **comprising approximately** 1, 500 square miles. Thus the traveller from Judaea **to Galilee must pass through Samaria** (John

From Wigan. —In Samaria, Israel's spiritual condition went **from bad to worse**, though **God** sent **His** messengers, the prophets, **Isaiah**, **Hosea**, **Amos** and others to warn them of the terrible judgement which **was** building **up** for Israel. Even when many of Israel's sons and daughters had been carried **away** into **captivity** by the Syrians, **God's** prophet Elisha **was** in Samaria, **as** the **captived maid** in the house of Naaman well knew (2 Kings 5. 3). **But** the prophets' warnings were not heeded and the judgement fell in the reign of Hoshea (2 Kings 17. 1-18). The king of Assyria **took Samaria** and carried Israel **away to** Assyria; and he brought men from Assyria and placed them in Samaria instead of the children of Israel, and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the **cities** thereof (2 Kings 17. 24). **Amos**, whilst he describes this judgement, tells of God's mercy in that **a very** small remnant would be delivered **out of** the lion's mouth (Amos 3. 12). Perhaps the **way** for the fulfilment of the prophecy of **Amos** was being opened **up** by the Lord. In Acts 1. 8, after Jerusalem and Judaea, the apostles were told **to go to** Samaria with the gospel. Later Philip **went down to** the **city of Samaria** and proclaimed unto them the Christ, and the multitudes **gave** heed with **one** accord (Acts 8. 4-12). True worshippers were found **once more in Samaria**, worshipping **in** spirit and truth. *J. H.*

From Kingston-upon-Thames. —The **sin** which divided Israel under Solomon (1 Kings 11. 33), the worshipping of other gods, and the greater **sin** of the people under Jeroboam (1 Kings 12. 25-30) increased **yet** more under Omri, king of the ten tribes of Israel (1 Kings 16. 25).

The idolatrous character of the **city** was prophesied beforehand (1 Kings 13. 32) and fulfilled in the reign of Ahab, Omri's son. Ahab married Jezebel, a union which produced the greatest counterfeit **system** of worship (2) in Israel. The house of Baal with its priesthood **was set up** in **Samaria**, marking the climax of departure from God.

The judgement and desolation of **Samaria** are foretold in **Hosea 13. 15, 16**, Micah 1. 6, 7 and Isaiah 8. 4. Difficulty was expressed **as to** whether these scriptures applied to Israel or to the later **period** under Gentile occupation (3)

God's judgement was upon **His** people and He used the king of Assyria to carry them **away captive**. The **city** was preserved and inhabited by other nations (2 Kings 17). The wicked character of the **city** **persisted**; the nations, whilst knowing the God of Israel, worshipped other **gods**. *L. Parker*

From Glasgow (Parkhead). —Samaria was ideally **suited to** be the capital of the northern kingdom. Lacking perhaps the

grandeur and **majesty** of the city of Jerusalem, the **city** of the great king, the place of God's choice, it nevertheless occupied a strategic position, and perhaps for this reason was preferred as the capital rather than the older **city** of Shechem. Built on an unnamed hill, known simply as the **hill of Samaria**, it commanded a panoramic **view** of the Mediterranean, which lay a score of miles to the **west**, and of the nearby fertile valleys, which were among the finest in all Israel. The valleys were a natural thoroughfare between Galilee and Judaea, and were the scene of the frequent civil wars between the northern and southern kingdom, consequently the inhabitants of Samaria knew little of **peace**, despite the fortifications that were built to protect the **city** from enemies.

Samaria's history as the capital of the northern kingdom was short-lived, for two-hundred years later, in **721 B. C.**, the ten tribes of which it was the head were carried **captive** to Assyria by Shalmanezar. The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of **Samaria**. The descendants of these people were the Samaritans of whom we read in the **time** of the Lord.

Historians record that about **300 B. C.** these mixed people built for themselves on Mount Gerizim a rival temple, which was destroyed about two hundred years later. They brought with them their gods from Assyria, and though we read that they feared the LORD, yet they continued to serve their own gods (2 Kings 17. 38). This is in keeping with the Lord's words to the woman at Sychar's well in John 4. 22: "Ye worship that which ye know not" (4). Sychar is deemed to be the **city** of Shechem in the Old Testament. *E. Barton, J. Peddle*

From Crowborough. —As to its position, **Samaria** was an ideal place for a stronghold. It is said that it was probably chosen with the **eye** of a soldier. Being built on a hill it would be easily defended. The situation was also very pleasant naturally, and it lay midway between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. It was bought cheaply enough by Omri for two talents of silver, but a vast amount of wealth was lavished upon it by the kings of Israel. It seems that nothing was spared to enhance the beauty, strength and riches of Samaria. Ahab built there a palace of ivory. The **city** became prominent at first as the capital of Israel, the ten tribes. Afterwards it was notorious for its luxury and wickedness. Amos spoke of it as such, and pronounced the judgement of God upon it. The deliverance he prophesied did not amount to much, judging from the **figure** of the shepherd and what he rescued from the mouth of the lion. The **city** was besieged twice without success, owing to the intervention of God in grace to Israel. On the third occas-

ion it fell, but only after three years of siege, begun by one man and ending with the success of another.

Although Samaria was associated with the wickedness of Ahab and others and with the worship of Baal, it is very noteworthy that it was also the place of much of Elisha's ministry. It seems to stand out that where there was great wickedness there was also great grace. Micah (1. 5) makes it clear that the sin of Samaria was very great, and because of that it would fall. All the strength and beauty of that which in reality was corruption would be reduced to ashes. J. Brennan

From London, S. E. — The story of the four lepers (2 Kings 7) who entered into Samaria shows the unique power of God. The Syrians fled because the LORD caused them to hear a noise like that of chariots, of horses, and of a great host. The lepers, and later the Israelites, went in and spoiled the Syrian camp. Elisha's prophecy was surely fulfilled when a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, in answering the taunts of the king's captain who questioned that such a thing could be so in Samaria.

When the great persecution came against the first church of God, many saints fled, except the apostles, from Jerusalem to various parts of Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8). In fulfilling the prophecy of the Lord, Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ (Acts 1. 8). The citizens believed what they saw and heard. It became a joyful city because lame, palsied and demon-possessed were healed. Simon, a sorcerer, believed the glad tidings too and was baptized. The apostles at Jerusalem heard of this great work of God. They sent Peter and John down, and they laid their hands on those Samaritans who had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them. Simon offered money to receive the power that the Spirit might be given by the laying on of his hands, but that gift of God could not be bought, and they urged Simon to repent. Mark McKaig, Jr.

From Methil. —The first thing to note as we seek to study the city of Samaria is its name, which was given after the name of Shemer, the previous owner of the hill. The city was situated north-west of Shechem and was built by Omri who bought the hill on which it stood for the comparatively small sum of two talents of silver (1 Kings 16. 24). Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him (1 Kings 16. 25). See also Micah 6. 16. Little else is told us of Omri except that he was buried at Samaria.

Ahab, Omri's successor **was to** prove no better; in **fact**, Scripture reveals him **as** worse (**1 Kings 16. 33**). He soon built an altar **to** Baal **at** Samaria. His wife **Jezebel** is also distinguished for her extreme wickedness, and no doubt between them they had **a** considerable influence upon the people. Against Ahab and his idolatrous practices Elijah worked (**1 Kings 18**). Elisha also dwelt **at** Samaria (**2 Kings 5. 3**).

The wickedness **of** the **people** had **become so** great before the LORD that His wrath **was** kindled against them and He allowed the Assyrians **to come** in and carry them **away** to captivity (**2 Kings 17. 5, 7**). This **of course was** only the fulfilment **of** prophecy (Isaiah **8. 4**, Hosea **8. 5, 6**). **No doubt** it could **be** equally true today, that if like these people in **a past** day, God's present **people** are found deliberately indulging in wicked and sinful practices, they **must expect** judgement.

A. R. Smith

From Atherton. —This city, founded around B. C. **925** by Omri, the sixth king **of** Israel, **was** built on an oval-shaped hill renowned for the excellence **of** its situation; the site **was** one **of** considerable beauty. One disadvantage, however, despite the abundance **of** water (and consequent fertility **of** the neighbouring valleys) **was** the entire absence **of** fountains on the hill itself. This circumstance rendered the city vulnerable in times **of** siege, when cisterns had **to be** relied upon **as** the only **source of** water. Nevertheless the city **was** able **to** sustain **a** siege **of** three years duration **before** it fell (**2 Kings 18. 9. 10**), which shows the remarkable strength **of** the city's situation. **By** contrast, Jerusalem's vulnerability **to** siege **was** much greater (falling **to** Titus in **about a third of** this period **of** time), for its water position **was** even worse than Samaria's; neither **was** its physical position **by** any means **so** strong from **a** military point **of** view (**5**).

It may seem surprising to us that **at least one of** God's **greatest** prophets, Elisha, **was** closely associated with the city **of** Samaria, and not with Jerusalem. In "the prophet that is in Samaria" and his **God was a** captive maid's solution **to** Naaman's problem. God undoubtedly recognized the northern kingdom **of** Israel. Certain prophets, such **as** Elijah and Elisha, appear **to** have been confined in their ministry **to** this kingdom. **We may** ask, did **God** still regard Israel and Judah together **as** His people? Did He still hold the northern kingdom responsible **to** serve Him **at** His house in **Jerusalem**? Do such matters have any bearing on our collective testimony **today**? (**6**)

D. S. Jones

COMMENTS

(1)(Edinburgh)-The story of the **Good Samaritan** (Luke 10. 30-35) **was intended** for direct application to the life of the lawyer to teach him what the word "neighbour" **meant; it is at the same time a most** instructive portrayal of the Lord **Jesus in coming to where we were in order to save us.** *J. B.*

(2)(Kingston-upon-Thames)—The idolatry in the time of Ahab and **Jezebel was no counterfeit, it was open** rebellion **against** the LORD. "Counterfeit" implies **imitation** or simulation in order to **deceive, and this was absent in** the flagrant unashamed evil of the **days of Ahab.** *J. B.*

(3)(Kingston-upon-Thames)--The Scriptures **quoted** from **Hosea 13; Micah 1; and Isaiah 8** have to do with Israel, **not with the Samaritans brought in** by the Assyrian king. The portion of Ephraim, the leading tribe **in Israel, was included in the land of Samaria.** *J. M.*

(4)(Glasgow: Parkhead)—The woman at the well claimed descent from Jacob (John 4. 12). **In** the course of her conversation with the Lord **Jesus she came to perceive that He was a prophet (John 4. 19), that is, a prophet of the LORD, and then she spoke of worship (John 4. 21). In reference to worship the Lord Jesus said, "Ye worship that which ye know not. " They worshipped in ignorance, as many in all generations have done.** *J. B.*

(5)(Atherton)—Jerusalem was the place of **God's choice, and on that basis alone it was the centre of divine rule in** the nation. At the **same time it is a fact** that strategically Jerusalem was very strong, **and** secular writers who **ignore the matter of divine choice pay tribute to David for the wisdom of his choice of such a strong position for his capital city. So, while Samaria may have been very strong, so was Jerusalem, and we cannot afford to overlook that fact if we are to read aright the lesson of history. As children of God who accept the Scriptures as true, we read history in a true light not seen by those that refuse to see the hand of God in these things. In weighing up such matters we should keep prominently in mind such scriptures as "Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalm 127. 1).** *J. B.*

(6)(Atherton)—(a)We suggest our friends consider such **matters as** the following. From the **time of** the twelve fathers Israel is ever twelve **tribes, never more and never less, and this applies throughout the Scriptures both in regard to past history and in regard to events that are to come. Every time the tribes of Israel are listed there are only twelve tribes**

named, and **it is** very **instructive** to investigate the differences in the lists. **So we** should **say** that Israel and Judah together were the LORD'S people, but they should have been one and not divided. Even **today** folly and sin **may cause** divisions in **God's** people. Again prophets were sent **to** Israel as well as **to** Judah, and further, **it was** sin **to go up to** the altars in Bethel and Dan. The words of Deuteronomy 12.11-14 are echoed again and again in that book and definitely confine worship **to** the place where the LORD should **cause His Name** **to dwell.** *J. B.*

(b) The mind of **God as to His** choice of the twelve tribes of Israel **to be His** people, and also in regard **to** the future glory of the united nation, are as our fellow-editor has **stated** above. **But we must** bear in mind that **as to His** people's responsibility **to serve Him**, only a remnant in Judah and Benjamin are found together connected with the house of **God** from the early days of Solomon's son Rehoboam. Such **were His** people actively and literally, and even a fewer number **were together from the times** of Ezra and Nehemiah. **We** live in remnant days **too**, when **it is ours to** adhere to the truth of God's house, of which **most of God's** children today know little or nothing. *J. M.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions from Kingston-upon-Thames:

(1) Who were the remnant who were rescued (Amos 3. 12)?

Answer: The ten tribes of Israel used **to be** called "the lost ten tribes". **But** these tribes are not and will not **be** lost. Those rescued above **as** from the mouth of a lion are the **same as** those mentioned in Jeremiah 31. 1-9, for **God is a Father to** Israel and Ephraim **is His** firstborn. **We** have in Revelation the **12, 000** sealed of all the tribes (**save** Dan) who are sealed that they **may escape** the judgements which will **be** experienced **by** others (Revelation 9. 3, 4). **So** that there will **be** those rescued in a day that **is** future **to** the present. The Remnant which **came** back from Babylon were largely of Judah and Benjamin, hence called **Jews** from that **time.** *J. M.*

(2) Can **we** determine whether the events of John 4 occurred before or after the command of Matthew 10. 5, 6?

Answer: The events in John 4 took place after the Lord's first **visit to** Jerusalem (**at the time of** the Passover) after He entered upon **His** public ministry. They occurred on His **way**

back to Galilee through **Samaria**, and after His arrival in Galilee (John 4. 3, 4, 43). The **sending forth of the twelve was some time after that.** **J. M.**

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 31

(continued from page 96)

⁴⁴Oh how **great is Thy goodness**, which Thou hast **laid up for them that fear Thee**,
Which Thou hast wrought **for them that put their trust in Thee, before the sons of men!**
In the covert of Thy presence shalt Thou hide them **from the plottings of man:**
Thou shalt keep them secretly **in a pavilion** from the **strife of tongues."**

No **man or woman** who has **been a servant or handmaid of the LORD** has **been free from the strife of tongues** or the plottings of **man. It has been aptly said**, that **men persecute living saints, but praise dead ones.** Those who have been in the Tower of London and have **visited the cell of the Lollards**, the followers of **John Wycliffe**, will have seen their scriptures scratched on the sandstone walls, which are now preserved **by pieces of plate glass to keep those servants of Christ in memory.** Thus the **memory of men** who were accounted not worthy **to live in freedom in those times**, when the Roman Catholics held **sway**, are kept in **memory** now. How much **of the goodness of God** those men knew, not physically **but** spiritually. The Christian is not promised in this world **a life of ease and a bed of roses.** Suffering **is one of the things he is assured of, if he follows the Lord.** God will hide him from the plottings of men, and keep him **secretly** in His **covert** from the **strife of tongues.**

"Blessed be the LORD:

For **He** hath shewed **me His** marvellous lovingkindness in a strong **city.**

As for **me, I said** in my haste, **I am cut off** from before **Thine eyes:**

Nevertheless Thou heardest the **voice of my** supplications when **I cried unto Thee"**.

Is it not ever so, that, like David, **we come to wrong conclusions when we are being tried**, and like him **say that we are cut off from before His eyes? It is well** in such circumstances **to think of the words of Jeremiah**, that **greatly** tried prophet,

"It is good **that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD**" (Lamentations 3. 26). God will answer the sincere prayers **of His saints in His own way and time. Let us not be hasty to come to conclusions; delays are not denials.**

David's closing words **to the saints are good words of exhortation, which we can profitably hearken to:**

**"O love the LORD, all ye His saints:
The LORD preserveth the faithful,
And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
All ye that hope in the LORD".**

Psalm 32

This is **a psalm of David—Maschil (to teach or give instruction). It is one which, like Psalm 51, flowed from the sad event of David's life in connexion with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11. 2-27). It is said of David,**

"David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15. 5).

How David could have wished that it would have been possible for him **to rub out that fact from the record of his life! but that was impossible. A great man has said that a fact is the most stubborn thing in the world. He could not remove the fact, but he could repent of it, and receive forgiveness for it. This he did and God was gracious to him and forgave him. David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12. 13, 14).**

When David entered into the sweetness and **peace of divine forgiveness, he took his pen and wrote words which have been, not only expressive of his own comfort, but have been the comfort of myriads of believers since that day, of the blessedness of divine forgiveness.**

**"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile" (verses 1, 2).**

The word "Blessed" in the Hebrew is a plural interjection of the word *Esher*, which literally means "happiness", as we pointed out in our notes on Psalm 1 in Bible Studies 1964, page 59. The writers of the Psalms, David and others, found many causes of happiness, but for the individual there is none greater than that which arises in the heart as the result of God's forgiveness. Repentance (not penance) is said to be next to innocence. No human being who has come to years of responsibility to God can plead innocence. That faded away in the act of Adam and Eve, and fades away from all their children at an early time in their life, and if God was not a forgiving God, then all who have sinned would be lost souls for ever.

"But there is forgiveness with Thee (the LORD),
That Thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130. 4).

David describes his fearful state during which he was under the conviction of his sins, (verses 3, 4).

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
Through my roaring all the day long.
For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me:
My moisture was changed as with the drought of
summer".
Selah

Conviction of sin has been a solemn reality for those who have known it. Alas, these days there seems to be little of conviction before conversion. We live in a day when there seems to be little understanding of what sin is, and also little fear of what it will entail for those who are guilty and unforgiven by God after their life on earth is over. It is sad to think of those who are deceived and depend on men (man-made priests), sinners like themselves, to absolve them from their sins.

David's grief and distress were great. He kept silence; he roared all day long; he felt the hand of God upon him, and he seemed dried up and baked like a piece of clay by the sun. All this experience was his till the prophet Nathan came with his parable and David pronounced the death sentence on the man in the parable: "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die.....And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12. 1-7). What a blow! but David knew the truth of it. He had tried to cover by his deeds that which no man can cover—his sins. But, "Blessed is he. . . . whose sin is covered" by God, covered by the blood of sacrifice. Such indeed is the blessedness of those whose sins are covered by the blood of Christ, who is the Sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 9. 25-28; 10. 12).

David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD",

and here **in** the psalm he **says** (verse 5),

**"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid:
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;
And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin".**
Selah

His silence and also his roaring under the conviction of **sin** are over. He with a guileless spirit and a repentant heart makes full acknowledgement **and** confession to God **as to** what he had done. There **was no** taking cover under circumstances or seeking to shelter behind anyone. He speaks of **"my sin"**, **"my transgressions"**, **"mine iniquity"**. Alas, Adam's **and Eve's** method of placing blame **on** others has been passed **on to** their children, when, alas, **too many** seek **excuses** for their wrongdoing because of what is deemed to be their background. All **sinner**s have a background, as David **says in Psalm 51. 5,**

**"Behold, I was Shapen in iniquity;
And in sin did my mother conceive me".**

But the fact of original sin clears **no one of** what they have **done** wrong, and **in most cases,** as in David's they knew that they were **sinning.** **J. M.**

**"For this let every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found:
Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.**

**« Thou art my hiding place; Thou wilt preserve me from trouble;
Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance".** SELAH (verses 6, 7).

In the light of David's acknowledgement of sin and confession and his receiving forgiveness, he encourages **all** godly (gracious or **pious**) ones to pray (Hebrew "in a time of finding" A. V. marg.). The **R. V. marg. says** "in the **time of finding out sin"**, **but there is** no word for sin in the Hebrew. **No doubt it is** in this **time of finding** what is wrong that David encourages the godly to pray for forgiveness. **But** in the **gospel as preached by** the Lord and **His apostles to** those who were ungodly, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord **Jesus Christ was their message** (Mark 1. 14, 15; Acts 20. 21). Where only repentance is mentioned faith is implied, and where faith is mentioned repentance is implied. **J. M.**

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scripture! daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

What kind of city was Babylon in the days of Nebuchadnezzar? Most people who are familiar with the book of Daniel have probably tried to imagine the city's grandeur and magnificence: the hanging gardens, the broad high walls, the temples, the palaces, the enormous edifices of brick built by the toil of hordes of slaves captured in foreign lands. As well as being a successful soldier, Nebuchadnezzar had political and constructive talents. On the completion of his conquests he set about improving and beautifying his capital city. He devoted much time and energy to the project. Because he had the necessary resources of men and materials at his command he had no difficulty in putting his grandiose schemes into effect. The results were a source of wonder to Nebuchadnezzar's contemporaries, so that his name has gone down in history as one of the greatest of the ancient kings.

But in those days there was a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon: Daniel, the brave Jewish captive, the wise counsellor, the interpreter of dreams, the student of Scripture, the prophet, and the beloved of God. During his stay of over seventy years in Babylon and Persia, as well as influencing his own countrymen Daniel was instrumental in forming the policies of at least one great emperor. He was Cyrus, a Persian king with a Godless background. It may seem surprising that such a man should deal favourably with the Jews, even to the extent of giving them all facilities to return to their native land. Why, in marked contrast to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4. 30), did Cyrus acknowledge that he ruled all the kingdoms of earth by the good hand of God (Ezra 1. 2)? The reason for such humility may be seen in God's dealings with him through His servant Daniel.

When, on the downfall of Belshazzar, Darius the Mede received the kingdom of Babylon, he quickly became aware of the wisdom and faithfulness of the aged counsellor of the previous dynasty. He came to rely upon Daniel in the administration of the kingdom. But the relationship developed into something more than that of master and servant. Darius's

untiring **efforts to save** Daniel, his sorrow and **concern** when the cunning plot to kill him **seemed to be** succeeding, his sleepless night, his early **morning journey to** the den of lions, and his obvious relief **on** learning of Daniel's **safety**, indicate that a firm friendship had grown **up between the two men**. Thus Darius must have learned much from Daniel **about** the living **God** (Daniel 6. 20, 26, 27). Daniel would naturally have answered the monarch's **questions** about the **God of** Israel by showing him the Scriptures. Daniel himself had **paid** special attention **in** the first year of **Darius to** the prophecies of Jeremiah (Daniel 9. 1. 2). **He would point** these **out to** Darius **and** also the prophecies of **Isaiah about Darius's** ally Cyrus. God, through Isaiah, had spoken of Cyrus by **name and of** his deeds **many** years before his birth (Isaiah 44. 26-45. 7). Thus **when** Cyrus **came to** Babylon he would learn both from Darius, **and** possibly from Daniel himself, the marvels which God had wrought. Isaiah's prophecy, which **was** being fulfilled in his **own** life, could **not** fail to make a strong impression **upon** him. The foregoing **is, we** believe, the background to the words of Scripture, "The LORD stirred **up** the **spirit of** Cyrus" (Ezra 1. 1). Cyrus obeyed God's commandment to him through Isaiah the prophet to rebuild the temple **in** Jerusalem. (Compare Isaiah 44. 28 with Ezra 1. 2).

These **events, of** such profound **importance in** the history of Israel, were **not** brought **about** by Daniel's wisdom. **He did not, as far as we** are aware, try to persuade Cyrus to allow the **Jews to** return to their **own** land. The power **in** Daniel's hands **was** prayer. **He** knew the promises of **God to** Israel; by careful study of the Scriptures he **knew** that the divine **purpose was** ripening **and** great **events** were imminent. **In** the first year of Darius he prayed with fasting, sackcloth and ashes; he poured forth from the depths of his heart his confession, supplication **and** intercession (Daniel 9. 1-19). **He** prayed to God, **not** for himself, **but** for "Thy **sanctuary**", "Thy city" **and** "Thy people". He said, "Defer **not**; for Thine **own** sake, O my God, **because** Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy **name**", implying that God would **deny** Himself if He failed to bless. Could **men so** pray today **we** should see more of the blessing of the LORD **among** us.

Although the complete destruction of **Babylon was** prophesied **by** both Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Scriptural record gives little information **as to** how or when the prophecies were fulfilled. **Indeed, Babylon was** still an important city **many** years after its overthrow **by** the Medes and Persians (Ezra 5. 17). Historians tell **us** that it **was** occupied to a varying degree until

New Testament times, an assertion which appears to be confirmed by the apostle Peter, if we can take his reference to Babylon literally (1 Peter 5. 13).

Isaiah 13. 17 foretells the assault by the **Medes**, which **took place in the reign of Belshazzar (Daniel 5. 30, 31)**, but **it does not seem that Babylon's judgement at that time was comparable with the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 13. 19-22).** Again, although **much of Jeremiah 50 and 51 had its application to the downfall of the Babylonian Empire in Daniel's day**, scriptures such as **Jeremiah 50. 3, 13, 41 and 46 do not appear to have been fulfilled as yet.** This **aspect of prophecy** will require **consideration in connection** with our subject for next month: **Babylon of the Future.** *L. Burrows*

BABYLON (OLD TESTAMENT)

In considering Babylon we are looking at a city which pre-dates any that we have studied previously with the exception of Nineveh. In the days of Nebuchadnezzar the walls of Babylon, its gates and hanging gardens were among the wonders of the ancient world. Passing over centuries of Babylon's existence, we come to the period of the captivity. In the seventy years of the desolations of Jerusalem the land was to enjoy her sabbaths, while Judah was in Babylon. The carrying away to Babylon took place in three stages. Daniel was carried captive to Babylon in the third year of the reign of king Jehoiakim (Daniel 1. 1), 606 B. C. Ezekiel followed in king Jehoiakin's (Jeconiah) captivity (compare 2 Kings 24. 12 with Ezekiel 1. 2), 593 B. C.; and Jeremiah eventually found himself in Egypt (Jeremiah 43. 7), 589 B. C. The period of captivity lasted exactly seventy years, for the Remnant returned under Zerubbabel and Ezra in 536 B. C.

It is interesting to note that not only Judah and Benjamin but perhaps also some of the twelve tribes were represented in the carrying away to Babylon. Let us bear in mind that before the carrying away into Assyria of the ten tribes in 721 B. C. those that set their hearts to seek the LORD rebelled against the idolatry of Jeroboam and the worship of his calves, and came to Judah and Jerusalem to the pure worship of the Temple as ordained of God. Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon have special mention, but there were also some from other tribes of Israel (as distinct from Judah).

Zion in the days of her glory was "the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth", but while the exiles were in Babylon, she sat alone, bereaved of all her children, who were

the precious **sons** of Zion, comparable to **fine** gold (Lamentations 4. 2).

It was ever God's **desire** that **His** people should dwell every **man** under his **own vine**, and under **his own fig** tree in his inheritance. But, like the **men in the time** of the Lord, they knew **not** the day of their visitation. God **sent unto** them **His** servants the prophets, rising early **and** sending them, but **His** people sinned until there was **no** remedy. The land was indeed desolate when Israel and Judah were in captivity. **Even** the highways to **Zion** mourned, as they lay desolate, **when** the **joyous** throngs **no** longer **went to the** place of the **Name** to keep the Feasts of Jehovah (**Lamentations** 1. 4).

There are deep spiritual lessons for **us** to learn **in** all this. The things which happened unto them by **way of** example were for **our** admonition, upon whom **the** ends of the **ages** are **come** (1 Corinthians 10. 11).

The words of Psalm 137 were applicable only to the godly Remnant **in** Babylon. **Many** of the exiles would be heedless and careless **of** their once great privileges and responsibilities. The tragedy **of** the situation **in** which the exiles **found** themselves **in** Babylon was that they were deprived **of** the privileges and responsibilities **connected with the service of** the house **of** God through the **sins** and folly **of** others, and perhaps even more tragic, **some** may have **come** to appreciate their privileges and responsibilities when it was **too** late, when they were far removed from the land, and the house **of** God was inaccessible to them.

The **lesson we can** learn from this **is** that **we** should **not** wait till **we** are **in** heaven before **we** appreciate the place to which God **in His** grace has brought **us on** earth. *J. Peddie*

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

BABYLON (OLD TESTAMENT)

From Glasgow (**Parkhead**). —The **ancient city** of Babylon had **its** origins **in** the mind **of** Nimrod, whose **name is associated in** Hebrew with rebellion. **He** had a high **opinion of** himself, which he expressed **in** the **extension of** his kingdom. This urge to self-aggrandisement **is** further **seen in** the **actions of** the **men** who agreed to work together to build the tower **of** Babel, which **was to** have **been a** tribute to their prowess and a **centre** for their **affairs** lest they should become **scattered** and **so** weakened. God and **His** rule had, apparently, **no** place **in** their

thoughts or their plans. Seeing the drift of things, God intervened and scattered them, thus demonstrating that His power was supreme and His authority was not to be challenged or ignored. The city and its tower received a set-back and no more is heard of it until the times of the kings of Israel and Judah. The name "Babylon" first appears in 2 Kings 17. 24. The history of the city had then become absorbed into that of the empire to which it gave its name. The empire grew in power till it reached great prominence in the days of king Nebuchadnezzar.

Because of declension among the people of Israel and Judah they were committed by the LORD into captivity in Assyria and Babylon respectively. The prophet Jeremiah gave timely warning of this captivity and it is he who has written most references to Babylon. He foretold the exile and the return of the Jews and the final destruction of Babylon. The record of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of the house of God makes sad reading (2 Chronicles 36. 17-21). The subsequent abuse of the vessels of the Temple whilst in the custody of Belshazzar and the divine judgement on that king are recorded in Daniel 5. The self-esteem of these Babylonian kings seemed to know no bounds; the lesson of the destruction of Babel seems to have been forgotten. So through seventy years the land of Israel lay waste and the service of God's house suspended until, in fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy, the godly Remnant who never were happy in Babylon were permitted to return to rebuild Jerusalem and restore the house of God.

The kingdom and city of Babylon remained for a time but they were eventually overthrown and destroyed as foretold in Jeremiah 51. There is little doubt that Babylon was very great commercially, politically and militarily. The city had broad walls, high gates and a broad moat, but these did not protect it from the judgement of God upon the fearful deeds of its proud kings.

The lessons to be learned from its history were learned by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4. 37) but were lost on his son Belshazzar. The children of God in any **age** can learn that pride, disloyalty or unfaithfulness will bring upon them the judgement of God.

J. J. P.

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). —The sons of Zion could not truly rejoice when they were in Babylon, because they were strangers in a strange land. The God of glory had appeared to their father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, saying, *'Get thee out of thy land". This showed that God had a special purpose in Abraham, opposed to the ideals of Abraham's fellow-countrymen. The Babylonians before Abraham's

time formed the nucleus **of a** strong kingdom founded by Nimrod. They reached out to **unite** the children **of men** in building a city and tower that they might aspire **to heaven without God**; and this design **of theirs was of such a nature that God had to** intervene and confound it. It did **not originate** with **Him**, for **He** had purposed to make **Zion His** dwelling-place **and there to meet with men**.

Fourteen generations passed and God raised **up** David, who "asked to find **a** habitation for the God **of** Jacob ^M (Acts 7. 46). Yet another **fourteen** generations and the people polluted the house **of** the LORD which **He** had hallowed **in** Jerusalem, until **He** sent them all **away** from Jerusalem **to** Babylon, **because** there **was no** remedy. Nebuchadnezzar burnt the house **of** God and put the vessels **of** the house **of** the LORD **in** his temple **at** Babylon. Nevertheless the LORD did **not forget Zion**, nor did **He** wish **His** people to forget.

The boast **of** Nebuchadnezzar **was** self-sufficiency, but he **was** caused to know that "the Most High ruleth **in** the kingdom **of men**" (Daniel 4. 25). The sudden doom foretold by Jeremiah **was to fall on a** nation which left God **out of its** reckoning and **was** itself found **wanting**. **But out of it God again** led forth **His Remnant** people **to** rebuild **His** house **and** city.

Eric Archibald

From Methil. —Nimrod, who **was a son of** Cush **and a** great-grandson **of** Noah, **is** reputed **to** have been the founder **of** the Babylonian civilisation. Babylon **was in** the land **of** Shinar **and** situated **on** both sides **of** the river Euphrates. It must have **been a** marvellous city, **according to** the description **in** Daniel 4. 30: **a city fit for a king, even one so powerful as** Nebuchadnezzar. Famed **for its extensive commerce, it was a** land of traffic and **a city of** merchants (Ezekiel 17. 4, 12). Jeremiah **suggests** that Babylon **was** heavily fortified, with walls both broad and high, and high gates (Jeremiah 51. 53, 58). **Yet** despite its **fortifications**, he prophesies **its** downfall. Isaiah also tells **of** the beauty and the glory **of** Babylon and then prophesies its doom **to be similar to** that **of** Sodom and Gomorrah. From Isaiah 21. 9 **we** learn that Babylon **was an** idolatrous city.

This very **ancient** city presents **to us a** picture **of** this present evil world. The world **can** swallow **up** the spiritual life **of** the people **of** God today, **so in a** past day Babylon swallowed up God's people. This **was a** fulfilment **of** Jeremiah's prophecy. **God** brought judgement **on His ancient** people because **of** their wilful **sins** (2 Chronicles 36. 12, 16), therefore **He** brought **upon** them the king **of** the Chaldeans, resulting **in** terrible slaughter without compassion. At the **same** time the vessels **of** the house **of** God **and** the treasures **of** the house were **removed to** Babylon.

They burnt the house of God, and those that had escaped from the sword were carried captive to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36). Psalm 137 described the thoughts and experiences of those who were in that captivity. While it is true that Babylon was a very beautiful city with rivers and willows and wonderful buildings, the captives* thoughts were for Zion, the city of their God, and so their harps were silent and they could not bring themselves to sing the songs of Zion in the city of Babylon. Meanwhile Jeremiah was in the city of Jerusalem. In due course those of the captivity received a letter from Jeremiah who prophesied that after seventy years were accomplished the LORD would visit this people and cause them to return to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29. 1-10). The power of God is unlimited: all were soon to know, like Nebuchadnezzar, that " the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will** (Daniel 4.32). Babylon was to experience complete and utter destruction.

Psalm 126 describes the feelings of those whose prayers were answered when the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion. No wonder their hearts were glad and their tongues were filled with singing. For the past seventy years they had been shown no mercy (Isaiah 47. 1-6). Such aggression and hardships had altered the condition of the people of God in that day and caused them to confess sin, and to desire to return unto the LORD. AS Soloman said in his prayer in 2 Chronicles 6. 38, 39. "If they return unto Thee with all their heart and with all their soul... hear Thou from heaven^{1*}. During the captivity there were those individuals whose hearts were right before the LORD and who kept their place of separation, even though they were forced to live in the city of Babylon. Daniel is a good example of this.

God's ancient people had to leave Babylon in order to build the house of the LORD. His house is associated with the ^{1*} Place of the Name*', and that is only reached by leaving Babylon. If we would be found in God's house today, then we also must leave Babylon with all its sects and systems.

David Reid, Neville Coomer

EXTRACTS

From Vancouver, B. C. -Babel, which is the equivalent of Babylon, was one of the centres started by Nimrod; and anything associated with Nimrod was not of God.

Babylon for most of her era was the pinnacle of the world, as can be seen by its having one of the seven wonders of the world. It was the commercial and educational centre of the

then known world. **But** what made **it** a bad influence **was** the **fact** that coupled with **its** prosperity **was** its idolatry. **Babylon is a type of the sects and systems of today, conceived by the devil to lure men to apathy and to deceive men as to the truth of the house of God. Education offered by the sects and systems also provides an attraction for the unsuspecting. So, with all those pitfalls, we should give heed to our separation more and more, since Babylon is nothing but "confusion". But there is another warning of a different kind. We must remember that as Babylon was used of God to punish Israel when they went astray, so God may use spiritual Babylon to punish us. But if we do go astray as Israel did, we shall find no joy in Babylon (Psalm 137. 1), but may be restored and again help to rebuild the wall as Nehemiah did.**

J. Pope, J. Bell, Jr.

From Kingston-upon-Thames. —**Babylon is first mentioned (as Babel) in Genesis 10.10. From here we learn that the city was built by Nimrod, a mighty hunter, whose name means "rebel". This is significant, for rebellion was a marked characteristic of the city of Babylon. It was suggested that Nimrod was not only a hunter of animals, but also a hunter of men, for it seems that he wanted to draw men and women away from God and gather them together in one large city.**

Babylon is the Greek form of Babel. Babel means "confusion". In Genesis 11 we read about the tower of Babel. The builders were determined to make a name for themselves, but with no thought for God. The building of the tower ended in confusion. How much better it is to find our place in God's association than in man's! The former ends in glory, the latter in disorder.

P. A. C. Bartlett

From Wigan. —**At Babylon (Babel) the LORD came down to see the work of men. God saw them as one, having one language, and what they did displeased Him because they sought not after Him in Nimrod's time.**

The great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was used by God in judgement against Judah in the evil reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. The house of the LORD was robbed of its vessels, which were put in Nebuchadnezzar's temple. Thus came about the downfall of Jerusalem, and a great number of God's people were taken into captivity (2 Chronicles 36. 18-20).

In Daniel 4 we see that the mill of God begins to grind slowly in judgement upon king Nebuchadnezzar because he lifted up his heart and gave no glory to God but ascribed all the power, glory, majesty, and might to himself. *P. Howarth*

From Whitehills and Macduff. -That mighty hunter Nimrod had the first kingdom, of which Babel was a part (Genesis 10. 10). **Nimrod, who** built Babel (**confusion**) **was a law** unto himself, and when **he** set up a kingdom **he was a law** to others. Here **we** find a very definite pattern of **things**; there **was nothing** for God.

In Genesis 11 we find the story of the building of the tower. They **had journeyed east** and they **came to** the plain of Shinar. Here they were united **in one** mind to build a city, and also a tower **that** would reach up to heaven. The **most** significant part about this **was** their purpose, "Let **us** make **us** a name"; they **wanted** to be remembered after they had passed from this scene. **In** pride, they sought to leave their mark in history, but God **stepped in** and confounded them. **We** find here a parallel with **today**; men are **attempting** to create a unity, of language, of ideas, of politics, and God has **no** pleasure in unity of this kind. **Men** speak together, trying to create a unity for themselves but **giving** God **no** place in their schemes. Like Babel of old, God will confound and set them at nought.

In 2 Chronicles 36. 5-7 we read that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon **came** up against king Jehoiakim and carried him **away captive** (1). **He** also took **away** the golden vessels from the Temple and put them **in his own** temple in Babylon, which history tells **us** stood on the spot where the tower of Babel **was** reputed to have stood. This great king **was used** of God to punish the children of Judah. **He** was perhaps the greatest king that had ever reigned. **In Daniel 4. 30** we find him praising himself for the great and wondrous Babylon that he had built; and here **again** there **was** nothing for God. *J. M. W.*

From Edinburgh. —The carrying away to Babylon **was an** important landmark in Judah's history; **it is** recorded in the genealogy of the Lord as **King** (Matthew 1).

What kind of city was Babylon? **It was a city** of broad walls, high gates and well fortified (Jeremiah 51. 44, 58). **It is** described by Isaiah as "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldean's pride", and by Nebuchadnezzar as "great Babylon", yet the day came when its overthrow **was as** complete as that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 13. 19, Daniel 4. 30). Jeremiah uses a striking phrase when he says of Babylon, "They are mad upon idols" (Jeremiah 50. 38). Their chief god was Bel (Jeremiah 50. 2). **It was** also a city of merchants and a land of traffic (Ezekiel 17. 4) and in 538 B. C. **was conquered** by Cyrus, king of Persia, who in the first year of his reign sent out a call to the "whosoever" of the captivity to return from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 1).

Although the captivity of Judah in Babylon was because of their transgression (1 Chronicles 9.1), yet during this time God worked in a special way through Daniel. Amidst the sin and wickedness of Babylon we mark, in contrast, that Daniel's companions would never bow down and worship a golden image, so much so that they could say quite definitely, **** Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us"** (Daniel 3.17). Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem (Daniel 6. 10). *A, M. Hope*

SAMARIA

From Hamilton, Ont. —The city of Samaria was originally built as a fortress. The reigning king at the time was Omri, better known as the father of Ahab. Omri purchased the hill on which the city was built. The city was well named for it means "watch mountain" or "watch tower".

It was the home of the prophet Elisha, and many were the miracles wrought by the power of God in that place. We think of the time when the host of Syria was led captive into this city, and how Elisha's servant had his eyes opened to see the chariots of Jehovah. We think also of the great famine during the siege of Samaria by Ben-Hadad and how the word of Jehovah came true and the power of God prevailed when human hands were weak and helpless. More blessing is seen in Samaria when, through the agency of a young Hebrew maid, the captain of the host of Syria knew the miracle of healing in the river Jordan.

The mixed multitude that later populated Samaria, both the city and the province, brought forth hatred from the Jews, but God's grace was sufficient to meet their need: the experience of the woman at the well is a case in point. *N. MacKay*

HEBRON

From Melbourne. —" Hebron " means "confederacy" or " fellowship". It was felt that Hebron is a type of fellowship. It is in this that we enjoy the sweetness of collective worship (as portrayed by Abram's altar), and can know fellowship or communion with God, as those who are subject to His will, and who, like Abram, walk in faith, separated from that which is contrary to the mind of the Lord. Many believers today are like Lot, choosing that which appeals to the old nature. They are not prepared to walk in separation from the evils which surround us, both carnal and ecclesiastical.

It was in Hebron that David was crowned king of Israel. Here he was given his rightful place, and was enthroned. We

thought of how **the Lord Jesus Christ is given His** rightful place **in the Fellowship**, and **it is here that He is the enthroned One; His will is paramount. It is in the collective people of God in the spiritual house of God that He is "Son over His (God's) house "** (Hebrew 3.6). P. W. A.

COMMENT

(1) (Whitehills and Mac duff). -In **2 Kings 24. 6 we are told that after the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, "Jehoiakim slept with his fathers "** but **in 2 Chronicles 36. 6 we are told that, "against him came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon". Was he carried to Babylon? Did he die in Jerusalem or in Babylon? Jeremiah 22. 18, 19 seems to indicate that he was to die at Jerusalem. It says, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem". He was the king who cut Jeremiah's roll with a penknife and cast it on the fire. In consequence of this he was to have none to sit upon the throne of David (Jeremiah 36. 25, 30). Jehoiakim was a bad son of a good father, Josiah. Sons who have good fathers should take notice.** J. M.

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

PSALM 32

(Continued from page 112)

The **man who is forgiven** shall never know the flood of divine **judgement** reaching to him when the overflowing **waters** shall reach the hiding place of others (Isaiah 28. 16-20). There will be **no rest or security** for the unbeliever. The **LORD was David's hiding place and His were the songs of deliverance.**

Then for the **forgiven man** he has the assurance that his will be **instruction and teaching as to his behaviour.**

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:

I will counsel with thee with **Mine eye upon thee.**

Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding:

Whose trappings **must** be bit and bridle **to hold them in,** Else they will **not come near unto thee" (verse 8, 9).**

Words from these **verses** fell from John **Ruskin's pen** when

he said in effect, that if men refuse to be guided with God's eye upon them, the sooner they should be guided like the horse and mule by bit and bridle the better. Though men in general know nothing of being guided by God's counsel, realizing that his eye is upon them, it should not be so with those who know God's forgiving mercy. Mercy and truth meet together in God's dealings with men. They met in the Mercy-seat which covered the Ark in which was the law of God—mercy through atonement by bloodshedding and the law, which was the truth of God for Israel. Similarly grace and truth came (became) by Jesus Christ (John 1. 14-17). He was full of grace and truth.

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:

But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart"
(verses 10,11).

What a pity and what a great mistake in life, when men do not find forgiveness from God through Christ's atoning sacrifice! for only in this way can men find their true centre in God, and the true meaning of why they were created. But if men go on in their wickedness, they are adding sorrow to sorrow which they will in time fully experience. But to the man that trusts in the LORD, His mercy shall encompass him. What sure and happy protection is his!

The righteous are to be glad and rejoice, and all that are upright in heart to shout for joy. All believers need to know the experience of—

Down with the doubters,
But up with the shouters.

Psalm 33

This psalm has no heading. It may have been written by David as a continuation of the latter part of Psalm 32, for it strikes the same note at the beginning as that on which the previous psalm ends.

"Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous:

Praise is comely for the upright.

Give thanks unto the LORD with harp:

Sing praises unto Him with the psaltery of ten strings.

Sing unto Him a new song;

Play skilfully with a loud noise" (verses 1-3).

The roaring of the convicted sinner in Psalm 32. 3 has

given place to the song of the converted sinner. It is not that David thinks of **rejoicing** and **giving** thanks alone. What he says is an exhortation to the righteous and the upright. The words righteous and upright are in the plural number. Joy is **infectious**. It finds expression in **music** and **song**. The world has its songs, its folk songs, its songs of countries and nations, of love and war, and, alas, the youth of our time gloat over their songs of utter folly, but worldlings will sing about something. Their songs come first, the groans will come later, for groans there will be, but they will not be heard by the ear of mercy. David groaned, was forgiven, and then sang his song, a new song. In heaven they sing a new song:

"They sing a new song, saying, Worthy art Thou (the Lamb) to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5.9).

So the new song of redemption and forgiveness will resound in heaven over the work the Lord wrought for the peoples of all races and nations through His death and blood shedding.

"For the word of the LORD is right;
And all His work is done in faithfulness.
He loveth righteousness and judgement:
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD"
(verses 4, 5).

Though the LORD is good to all, even to the unthankful and unholy, and forgiving to the repentant, yet His word, all that He has said, is right and all His work is done in faithfulness. He will be faithful in performing all He has said in His promises and prophecies. In the intense holiness of His Being He cannot do otherwise than love righteousness and judgement, and the earth is full of His lovingkindness (mercy) for He has done all with mercy to mankind in view, as the temple singers sang in Jerusalem of old, "for His mercy endureth for ever".

"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:
He layeth up the deeps in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the LORD:
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
For He spake, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast" (verses 6-9).

We have here confirmation of the fact that the earth is full of the LORD'S mercy in the manner of which He made all, and

also the psalm is in agreement with what is said in Genesis 1 about the **six work days of God**. There is nothing in that chapter of God working **as man** does with mechanical diggers and bulldozers, like human moles. All **He** did was that **He** spoke: "Let there **be** light", "Let there be a firmament", "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together **unto one** place, and let the dry land **appear**". Thus day **by** day **He** spoke and **His** word wrought all **in** heaven **above** and **in** the earth beneath. Behind **and** within **His** word was almighty power, **and** besides, the love **of His** heart **towards man**, for whom **He** was making the earth a place **of** human habitation.

**"For His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end".**

All **He** did was that "**He** spake, **and it was** done; **He** commanded, and it stood fast"; and it all stands **fast still**. The One who spoke lay **in a manger** for a cradle, **yet** the word **He** spoke was then vital **as ever it was**, for **He** upholds all things by the word **of His** power (Hebrews 1. 3). and in **Him** all things **consist** (SUNISTEMI, stand together, **permanently** framed) as they consisted **in Him** (Colossians 1. 17), and so they remain, and will **remain** till they flee **away** from the **face of the Lamb**, our Lord **Jesus** Christ when **He** sits on the Great White Throne **in** the last **and** final **judgement of men** (Revelation 20. 11). Should **not** all the earth fear **Him**, and stand **in awe of Him**?

"The LORD bringeth the **counsel of the nations** to nought:
He maketh the thoughts **of the peoples**
to be of none effect.

The **counsel of the LORD** standeth **fast** for ever,
The thoughts **of His** heart **to all** generations "
(verses 10. 11).

Here we have **two** great contrasts (1) the **counsel of the nations** and the thoughts **of the peoples**, and (2) the **counsel of the LORD**, and the thoughts **of His** heart. The **nations** have had **and** still have their counsel **and** their counsellors, and their thoughts have **been** written **on stone** and brick (**fit objects for museums**), or **on** parchment or paper. **It** all seemed proper and laudable, **but it came** to nothing, and what was true **of the past** will be true **of the present** and future. **It is but the dying counsel of dying men**. **But in contrast** the **counsel of the LORD** standeth **fast** for ever, and **His** thoughts **will** remain **till** the last **of** the generations **of** the human **family**. Where is **His** counsel written **and** where are **His** thoughts recorded? They are found **in** the book we call "the Bible", the **Holy** Scriptures, all that is **between Genesis 1** and Revelation 22. The book **despised** is the book appraised, appraised **by** the Lord who **said**

of it, "Thy word is truth" (John 17. 17) and this truth is eternal.

"Blessed is the **nation** whose God is the LORD;
The people whom **He** hath chosen for **His** own
inheritance" (verse 12).

Here **again** we have another **of** the blessednesses of the LORD. It belonged **to** the nation of Israel, and had they been **wise, with the fear of the LORD in** their hearts, their history would have been different, both **in** times recent and remote. Though they **have yet** more sorrow to reap and more grief **and pains to bear, yet** they are beloved for the fathers¹ sake, and their last **days on earth will be** their best days. They will then truly be **the LORD'S** own inheritance.

"The LORD looketh from heaven;
He beholdeth all the **sons of men**;

There is no king **saved** by the multitude **of an** host:
A mighty **man is** not delivered by great strength.
An horse is a vain thing **for** safety:
Neither shall he deliver any by his great power*
(verses 13-17).

While the LORD **gave** to Israel **in** the past a special place **in His purposes among men**, yet **He** looked **from** heaven **on** all the **sons of men**. **He** fashioned the hearts **of** all, and considered all their works. All peoples **came** under review. **Kings** and mighty **men came in for** special mention. None **of** these **can save** themselves by their hosts and by their strength, and **though** they might look at the strength **of** cavalry, **yet**, the horse is a **vain thing** for safety.

"**He** delighteth **not in** the strength **of** the horse:
He taketh no pleasure **in the** legs **of a man**"
(Psalm 147. 10).

"Behold, the **eye** of the LORD is **upon** them that
fear **Him**,

Upon them that hope **in His** mercy;
To deliver their soul from **death**,
And **to keep** them alive **in famine**" (verses 18, 19).

Whilst the LORD looks **upon** all the **sons of men**, **He** has a special **eye** for them that fear **Him** and that hope **in His** mercy. **We** should all **take special note of** this, **and** let us **be anxious to come in** for this special care, **of being** delivered from death **and kept** alive **in famine**, whatever be the nature **of** the **famine**.

"Our soul hath **waited** for the LORD:
He is our help **and** our shield.
For our heart shall **rejoice in Him**,

Because we have trusted in His holy name.
 Let Thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
 According as we have hoped in Thee " (verses 20. 22).

The psalmist closes the psalm with words which **speak of his complete dependance upon the LORD**, which likewise is the experience of all who **trust Him**. There were **many** such in the days before the **time of David**; there were those in his days, and since in many places and many lands there have been those who waited on the LORD, rejoiced in Him, trusted in His holy name, and He proved Himself **to be** their help and shield. On these His mercy descended, and in the dark clouds of trial their hope shone bright **as the rainbow**, and the darker the cloud the brighter **was the rainbow of their hope** in the immutable character of His word.

Psalm 34

We come now to a psalm with a heading which describes the circumstances which gave rise to its contents. The circumstances were, "When he (David) changed his behaviour **before Abimelech**, who drove him **away**, and he departed". Had **we** only the account of this event, **as given in 1 Samuel 21, 10-15**, **we** might conclude that David had lost his hold **upon God** and that his faith in **God's** delivering power had vanished. **But 1 Samuel 21 gives us the external view of what happened, but this psalm gives us the view of what was internal in David's heart, and in the hearts of his men also. David saw that in going to Achish king of Gath he had gone into a trap, undoubtedly a trap of Satan to bring about his end as God's chosen servant. He gathered this from what the men of Achish were saying about him, that in the dances after David slew Goliath, and Israel were victorious over the Philistines, they sang,**

"Saul hath slain his thousands,
 And David his ten thousands".

Because of these words he was driven out by jealous Saul, and now these words were like to be the death of him at the hands of the Philistines. So he changed his behaviour before Achish. He cunningly feigned to be a madman with his spittle falling down upon his beard, and he scabbled on the doors of the gate, and Achish, thinking he was mad, told his men not to bring him into his house, so he was driven away. So David and his men departed and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

(to be continued D. V.) **J. M.**

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BIBLE STUDIES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

Viewed from the Scriptural standpoint, certain features are prominent in connexion with Babylon from age to age, for example:—

- (i) a concentration of power and wealth as an expression of human greatness,
- (ii) false religious substitutes for divine revelation, and
- (iii) confusion of thought and principle.

The tower of Babel illustrated these tendencies of human self-will. The city and tower were planned on a spectacular scale with the object of providing a mighty centre. ** Let us make us a name", said the designers of this scheme, hoping in their pride to make this city the focal point of world power. The spiritual principle of "reaching unto heaven" by human endeavour was the antithesis of all that God had revealed to fallen man. God visited the men of Babel in judgement, confounding their language, and scattering them abroad upon the face of the earth.

It was about 1600 years from the Babel of Nimrod to the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar. Yet in Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon there was a development of the same principles which had governed Nimrod and his associates in their plans for the tower of Babel. Nebuchadnezzar personified the concept of man's self-exaltation. Brilliant in mind, versatile in ability, of powerful personality, he threw his energies into amassing wealth and power. His will would dominate the world. His capital city would be the centre of world administration and culture. He would make himself a name. Archaeology has revealed that Nebuchadnezzar's name was written on millions of bricks used for the building of Babylon. The swellings of pride in the haughty monarch's heart are expressed in Daniel 4. 30: *' Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? ".

False religious substitutes for divine revelation were seen in the idolatrous cults of Babylon. The confusion of thought and principle was illustrated by the legion of magicians, enchanters and sorcerers (Daniel 2. 2). Nebuchadnezzar had tried

to attract or **coerce** to his court at Babylon the cream of human ability. The occult arts, the natural **sciences**, the philosophies of that **age**, all would be represented there. From **among** the Judean captives **were** selected "such as had ability to stand in the king's palace"¹ (Daniel 1. 4). Nebuchadnezzar would have wished Daniel and his companions to assimilate Chaldean thought and culture, perhaps **contributing** something from their Hebrew thought and religion, but blending this with the ideas of other religions or philosophies. This could only have **meant** the loss of truth through **confusion** of contrary principles. It **was** to the eternal honour of Daniel and his friends that they recognized the need to take **an** uncompromising stand on the principles of divine revelation. From this discernment and purpose stemmed their mighty witness for God amidst the spiritual gloom of ancient Babylon.

In the context of Israel's historical experience, Babylon became the place of their judgement for spiritual apostasy, their slave-master in chastisement for **sin**. So Babylon was to them antithetic to Zion, the place of the **Name**. The pure spiritual revelation to Israel could find its expression only in restored liberty to return to Jerusalem and rebuild God's house. By the rivers of Babylon the spiritual Israelite could but weep and hang his harp upon the willows (Psalm 137). The **LORD'S** song could not be sung in a strange land. This vivid contrast between Babylon and **Zion** in the **time** of the captivity **brings** out into clearer relief the spiritual **confusion** represented by Babylon, a spiritual characteristic which **assumes** increasing importance as we proceed to study the Babylon which emerges on the prophetic page as a prominent feature of the **future** world scene at the **time** of the end.

Whatever difficulties of interpretation may arise in connexion with the Babylon of the future, there is **no** mistaking the broad spiritual principles which **emerge** from the Holy Spirit's references to Babylon in the sacred **writings**. Whether in **ancient** or future **times**, Babylon stands for a **system** of human thought in rebellion against God, substituting the **confusion** of human thought for the clarity of divine revelation, and relying upon the influence of material enrichment and political power. Revelation 17 and 18 show the ultimate results of **man's** self-sufficiency and self-will. Our study is **most** relevant to present-day conditions. For there are powerful trends today towards the future order depicted by Babylon the great. Particularly in the religious world there is a spirit of compromise with a view to establishing a vast union. Questions of scriptural principle are subordinated to the expediency of creating "one world-wide church". All shades of religious opinion are to be brought together in one outward visible unity. By many this is hailed

as a triumph of tolerance and mutual accommodation. From the divine viewpoint, however, it can only lead to a confusion of principle which will result in "gross darkness" covering the peoples (Isaiah 60. 2). *G. P. Jr.*

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

BABYLON (FUTURE)

From Southport. —During our discussion on this city of the future some expressed the view that a spiritual Babylon was referred to, but the view was also put forward that it will be a material city. It was pointed out in support of this latter view that it is written, "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth"^M (Revelation 17.18).

We are not told whether the future Babylon will be on the site of the former Babylon or not. It would appear to be the centre of government (Revelation 17.18), of commerce (18. 11-13), and of religion, for the kings of the world will commit fornication with her (18. 3). The Old Testament provides examples of idolatry being referred to as fornication, and so it would appear that Babylon is to be the centre of false religion. It was noted that the woman had a golden cup and we were reminded that in the Temple of old were golden vessels associated with its service. Man is ever ready to copy a part of the God-appointed way and incorporate it into his own religious ideas to deceive the people.

Verses 11-13 of chapter 18 list the many precious and valuable goods included in the merchandise of the city. The dainty and the sumptuous things were there also, as befitted a city of luxury. Her merchants are described as princes of the earth. **Further**, it is inferred from Revelation 18. 22 that pleasant music will be heard in the city, giving us an indication that not only will it be a commercial city but it will also be **one** of culture. Included in the list of merchandise were the slaves and the souls of men. Surely this will be the lowest form of commerce.

It is little wonder that men will look upon the outside and compare the city to a woman dressed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. On the outside will be seen the emblems of majesty and pomp, but of the colours one is lacking, namely, the blue which speaks of heaven. We are given a look under the outer covering and we are told that she is drunken • with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus " (Revelation 17.6). She is ever the opponent of those who witness for the Lord

Jesus Christ. "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth" (Revelation 18. 24).

The overthrow of Babylon will be very swift, for it will be in one hour (Revelation 18. 17) (1). Indeed it is likened to casting a millstone into the sea. The beast, the ten kings and their armies will plunder the city and then set it on fire (Revelation 17. 16). Their work will be thorough and it will become a habitation for demons and a hold, or (as the margin reads) prison, of every unclean and hateful bird (Revelation 18. 2). *W. S. Holden*

From *Wigan*. —There does not seem to be anything good to be said of Babylon in any age, but Babylon of the future as described in the Revelation is wholly evil and corrupt. It is symbolized in chapter 17 as a woman of unchaste character, the great harlot, suggesting moral and spiritual corruptness, and it is described as a great city in chapter 18, the centre of activity and control, a unity of evil, a cesspool of iniquity, to which men and women, kings and merchants are lured. It is the devil's counterfeit, set over against the Bride the wife of the Lamb, which is also seen as a city, the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21. 10) Just as at the cross the rulers, the religions and the people of the world were represented as opposed to the Son of God, they are seen in greater detail associated with Babylon in the Revelation. Not only religious but, perhaps under the cloak of religion, political and commercial systems are also drawn to this woman, for in the Old Testament fornication was often used to describe Israel's departure from God to serve other gods.

God's call to His people in chapter 18. 4 is, "Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins." This is always God's call to His people: "Come ye out from among them, ... and touch no unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6. 17). She, Babylon, has been responsible for the murder of all the saints and prophets that have been slain on the earth (18. 24), showing that Babylon, whether a religious system or one of trade or rule, or all three united, has always been opposed to God and His people. Indications of this evil system are evident today, but it would appear that when the Lord has taken His saints from the earth it will become increasingly manifest in its working and corruption.

But the judgement of Babylon is certain, for God will bring about her destruction (14. 8, 16. 19). First by causing the Beast and the confederate kings to hate her and make her desolate. Perhaps this is against the system described as the woman (the great harlot), then God's further judgement will come upon the great city: hailstones from His treasures, reserved for

such times as these (Job 38. 22. 23). Babylon will be utterly burned and destroyed **for** ever (18. 8). *J. H.*

From Edinburgh. —Moral sin figures prominently in the description of the city. **It** would appear, however, that this degeneration although most probably a literal feature of the city, is primarily a description of its spurious unions in connexion with commerce, government and, perhaps most significantly in the light of present trends, religion. This city will become the world centre that man has desired, especially at the present time, to achieve lasting peace and co-operation between nations. However, as has been the case throughout the world's history when men have gone against God, there are always those who will witness for Him and renounce Godless practices; so in Babylon will there be testimony against her actions, a testimony which will be met with violence and death (Revelation 17. 6). The city must have attained a tremendous and seemingly invincible position, as the kings and merchants indicate by their amazement that in one hour the city could be destroyed. However, no matter the size and power at its command, it was not invincible, and the Lord specially prepared a terrible end for it. When the seventh and final angel poured out the seventh bowl of wrath, final judgement was brought on a city whose nature from the earliest days of man's history had been against God and against righteousness.

It is perhaps a question of debate as to the site of this great city. It would certainly seem that it will be situated on a river or on the coastline, since the shipmasters and mariners mourned at her destruction. The opinion was generally held that its position will be at or near the site of the Old Testament Babylon and on the river Euphrates. Although Scripture speaks of Babylon being a great city, the extent of its boundaries will not be limited by its natural position; the system and influence of the future Babylon will have world-wide effects, such that only the power of God will be able to annul.

L. Burgoyne

EXTRACTS

From London, S. E. —Looking to future Babylon as revealed in the Revelation and in Isaiah and Jeremiah, a link with the now present "Babylon" would be expected and Revelation 17 seems to be just this. The harlot is associated with a city which has seven hills (verse 9), is responsible for the blood of the saints (verse 6), has world-wide influence (verse 1) and is full of abominations and luxuriously adorned in purple, scarlet and gold. What an accurate description of the false church centred at Rome! Hence Revelation 17. 18 is taken to refer to the city of Rome (2).

Revelation **18** has very much in common with Revelation 17, but now the city of Babylon is specifically mentioned in verses 10, 18, 19, and 21. Yet **the** characteristics of the harlot are still visible and the word "she" often occurs. The harlot seems to be centred again in Babylon city in the final phase before complete extermination. The return of the wicked woman to Babylon is taken to be portrayed in the seventh vision of Zechariah (Zechariah 5. 5-11). The ephah is typical of merchandise, a subject of which Revelation **18** is full. As a measure of dry goods, the ephah is a container of a certain size. The woman will be transported secretly (the heavy leaden lid will secure her inside) to the land of Shinar, where she will become established again in a Babylon city, "her own **place**" (Zechariah **5. 11**) (3).

Divergent views were expressed in relation to the destruction of Babylon. Most, however, thought that the "falling" of Revelation 14. 8 and the judgement of Revelation 17 referred to the harlot, the false church, which the beast will see fit to put out of the way, so that it will not detract from his own eminence when he sets himself forth as God in Jerusalem (the abomination of desolation), nor from the worship of his image. Reasons advanced for this view were (4):

- (a) men will destroy Mystery, Babylon (Revelation 17. 16) and burn with fire the visible expression of it (the Vatican); whereas God will destroy Babylon city as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 13. 19 and Revelation 18. 8),
- (b) the ten kings who will be subservient to the beast will vehemently accomplish the downfall **of** Mystery, Babylon, with intense hatred (Revelation 17. 16) **but will** lament when they see the smoke from divine destruction (Revelation **18. 9**), and
- (c) the context **of** Revelation **14. 8** suggests the beginning of the second half **of** Daniel's seventieth **week**, whereas the destruction of the city would appear **to be** at the end of this period. Hence it is probable that the **two** judgements will be separated in time by three and a half years (5).

C. L. Prasher

From Hamilton, Ontario. —The influence **of** Babylon is great. It makes all nations to sin, all the peoples are deceived by its sorcery, and the judgement that falls on the city is a judgement on all the nations. There is some relationship and identification with a religious power, the great harlot of chapter 17, who is positively identified with the city in verse 18.

All the interpretations of the meaning of the city and the harlot that have identified it with existing political and religious states look unreal in our rapidly changing world. Mussolini and Hitler have gone, Rome is less than it ever was, and the

Church of Rome is vacillating in the face of modern learning and social demands.

Some suggest that the city is symbolic, but it is hard to see how a symbolic city can be destroyed, as Babylon will be destroyed. In the amazing flux of international relationships, it is not hard to think of a new, international city, the pride of the nations, and the centre of all false religion. *Les Home*

From Glasgow (Govan and Particle). —The seventh bowl is associated with the fall of Babylon in the future (Revelation 16. 17-20). This city will hold sway over peoples and nations. It will be the centre of trade for the kingdoms of the earthy and so secure will it seem in its prosperity and power that men will be astonished at its rapid downfall. The economic effects of this downfall will be far-reaching and will be accompanied by upheavals in the physical structure of the earth, unparalleled since the days of creation. The sins of this city reach even unto heaven. It is a city utterly opposed to the testimony of Jesus. But though the nations are wroth, the determinate counsel of God will be fulfilled, and His word accomplished. Wickedness will reach gigantic proportions and swallow up millions of souls by its influence, but those who refuse to have fellowship with Babylon, and who give their allegiance to the Lamb will overcome. This vision concerning the fate of Babylon gives perspective to all endeavours to serve the King of kings (I Timothy 6. 15), showing the tremendous danger of association with the godless principles which Babylon expresses.

Eric Archibald

From Whitehills and Mac duff. —The Scriptural record concerning Babylon indicates that she is always the opponent of that which is righteous. From the tower of Babel to the final fall of future Babylon there is a trail of lewd and idolatrous practices. It seems from Revelation 16. 19 that there will be in existence a literal city named Babylon. The city is described as a woman, a mother of harlots, sitting upon many waters (Revelation 17. 1). The waters refer to peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues (Revelation 17. 15). This is a view of a city which is the head of world government. Great prosperity is also associated with this great power; this will indeed attract men of all nations. Those who trade are also seen to be blessed with the abundance of that which will pass away. Some of God's people, enticed by luxurious prosperity, will become entangled. The cry to them is "Come forth, My people" (Revelation 18. 4).

An angel will herald the fall of Babylon. The will of God is to be carried out by the last Gentile ruler, namely the beast. Ten kings will, with the beast, destroy with fire all that which

was once **prosperous**. There will be great mourning **by** all those whose interests **become** desolate. The kings **of** the earth, the merchants who traded, will all witness the destruction **of** the once proud den **of** lawlessness. In contrast **to** the weeping there will **be** rejoicing in heaven. The invitation to saints, apostles and prophets will be: " Rejoice over her,... for God hath judged your judgement on her ^M (Revelation 18. 20). Thus the final phase of Babylon will be no more, the nations of the earth will be no longer deceived by her sorcery. The location **of** this city is **a** mystery still to be revealed. *J. C. Watt*

From Methil. — **We** conclude **from** Scripture that Babylon (future) will be **a** material city (Revelation **18. 12, 13**) which will embrace and control the **major** systems **of** that day (Revelation **17. 1-8**). Systems of government, commerce and religion are with us already. Seeds have been sown, and their fruits, such as rebellion in all its forms, confusion, self-will and iniquity, so characteristic of Babylon (Babel) at its beginning, are ripening fast, ready to be seen in the city which as yet is future. Babylon, we feel, may well be built (as was the former city) in the land of Shinar **or** Chaldea on the river Euphrates. In making this statement, consideration has been given to such scriptures as Isaiah **13. 19, 20**; Jeremiah **50. 40**, Jeremiah **51. 26, 62, 64**, which indicate that Babylon **of** old will never again be inhabited, but will sink and be desolate **for** ever. Zechariah **5. 8, 11**, however, points to **a future** building among wickedness **in** the land **of** Shinar which, when it is established, will be set upon its own base (**R. V. M.**). In Zechariah **4** we have the rebuilding **of** the remnant temple; in Zechariah **6** the building **of** the glorious house **of** millennial **days**, and, between these chapters, **we** feel **we** have **a** glimpse **of** the then existing Babylon (future). This **too**, **would** give the **key to** when and where the city **will be** built.

Great Babylon will **be** exceedingly wicked, the mother **of** harlots (Revelation **17. 5, 18. 3**). Its character will **be** such **because of** leadership going **astray**: **people** will stagger **about** in darkness and confusion, while the lives (**souls**) **of** men are bought and sold in the holds and habitations **of** its unclean **places** (Revelation **18. 2, 13**). **No** real spiritual life is **to be** found, **so** far down in sin has the city sunk that **"* her sins have reached even unto heaven and God hath remembered her iniquities"**.

Iain T. H. Hunter

COMMENTS

(1) (Southport). " One hour " is used to describe the speed of the destruction of Babylon, but we must not think that this is

an hour of sixty minutes. This should be remembered in the light of the words of the apostle John, " Little children, it is the last hour" d John 2. 18). J. M.

Revelation 18. 8 states that " in one day... she shall be utterly burned with fire". This strengthens the view expressed in Southport's paper that the overthrow of the city will be accomplished very suddenly, and in one day it will be utterly burned. G. P., Jr.

Of course "in one day" does not mean twenty-four hours any more than "one hour" of Revelation 17.12 means sixty minutes. J. M.

(2) (London, S. E.). The Babylon of Revelation chapters 14, 16, 17 and 18 is a future Babylon and not the Church of Rome. Much foolishness has been written on Rome's seven hills, no doubt because of the words of the A. V., " The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: and there ('they* R. V.) are seven kings; five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come^M (Revelation 17. 9, 10). If these verses had been completely read, both the translators and readers would have seen that five mountains (kings) had fallen in the vision that John saw, and only one existed at that time. He would pass away and another would come in his place. Then the beast would be an eighth but he is of (EK out of) the seven, that is, he is one of the first five: which one is not revealed to us. All that has been written about Rome being the city of the seven hills is complete foolishness. That Rome is a phase of Babylon, I have no doubt, but it is not the Babylon of the **book of** the Revelation, that one is future to our time, but its rise **may be** sooner than many expect. J. M.

There does not seem to be much to choose between the alternative translations: "there are seven kings" or "they **are** seven kings". Both translations have some support from authorities. It is suggested, however, that the meaning of the verses is not greatly influenced whichever rendering is adopted. The important question is, what is the antecedent of "they" in the R. V. ? The R. S. V. and the N. E. B. both indicate that the antecedent is "heads" rather than "mountains". In other words, the seven heads represent both seven mountains and seven kings. I think that close attention to the English of the R. V. would confirm that this is the more likely meaning of the angel's words. L. B.

What Revelation 17 says is that the woman, the city of Babylon (verse 18), sits on a scarlet-coloured beast which has seven heads and ten horns. The heads quite clearly are seven kings which reign *consecutively* and the ten reign *concurrently*. She sits on the seven heads (kings). But one of these heads is

the man called the beast, who is slain and goes down into the Abyss and comes up in the middle of the week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9). When he comes up he is an eighth (in a second term of office) but he is (*ek*) out of the seven, one of them (17. 11). To read the passage as "there are seven kings" might be taken to mean that there are other seven heads or kings. This is not so, There is but one group of seven, and the Greek *estin* here should be read "they are", as in the R. V. The ten horns come to power with the beast for one hour, not sixty minutes but three and a half years. The use of "one hour" shows the shortness of their time of reigning. The beast (the man) and his ten kings will make war with the Lamb at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16). J. M.

(3) (London, S. E.). Though our friends do not say as much, there are those who speak of two Babylons, the one of Revelation 17 and the other of Revelation 18. There is but one Babylon in these chapters, and it is the same Babylon as that of Revelation 14. 8 and 16. 17-19. It is the centre of fornication, of abominable idolatry etc., the centre of world government and the centre of commerce. J. M.

(4) (London, S. E.). See note (3). J. M.

(5) (London, S. E.). Babylon will be rent into three parts by the great earthquake (Revelation 16. 19); it will be sacked by the beast and his confederate ten kings (Revelation 17. 16). They will destroy the city by fire as we see in chapter 18. J. M.

I consider that points (a), (b) and (c) put forward in London's paper are important and give weight to the view that there will be an expression of Babylon (as described in Revelation 17) preceding the final city (of Revelation 18). It seems difficult to resist the conclusion that the context of Revelation 14. 8 places the destruction of the harlot at the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. Not until the end of that week is Babylon (the city) destroyed.

Nor does it seem clear that the "great city" of Revelation 16. 19 is the city of Babylon; linked with the reference to the "great city" in Revelation J 1. 8, it would seem rather to be Jerusalem. Revelation 16. 19 deals with the end of Daniel's seventieth week, and summarises the effect of God's judgments on Jerusalem, on the cities of the nations and on Babylon the great. It will further be noted that Revelation 18. 8 does not say that the ten kings burned the city with fire.

Students will be interested to consider alternative views in further exploration of a complex prophetic problem. G. P., Jr.

From what is said by one of the seven angels it is quite clear that it is Babylon's judgement that is given: "Come

hither, I will show thee the judgement of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters ". Before this judgement is described in all its fearfulness (chapter 18), there is a description of Babylon (the harlot) and of the beast (the composite beast, the system, as distinct from the beast who is a man, a king) that carried her. The previous comment says, "It will further be noted that Revelation **18. 8** does **not** say that the *ten kings* burned the city with fire". But Revelation 17.16-18 says, "And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast (the man, the king), these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, *and shall burn her utterly with fire*. For God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. And *the woman* whom thou sawest is *the great city*, which reigneth over the kings of the earth". The woman, the harlot of Revelation 17, is the great city of Babylon, the city which is destroyed by an earthquake (Revelation 16. 18, 19). This city is not Jerusalem, as is suggested by G. P., Jr. Verse 19 makes this quite clear and definite.

The symbolic words of Revelation 17.16 show that (after the earthquake, I judge) the ten kings under the beast sack this rich city, "make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh", then they "shall burn her utterly with fire". **J. M.**

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 34

(continued from page 128)

As he begins his psalm he says,

*⁴I will bless the LORD at all times:
His **praise** shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make her boast in the LORD:
The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad.
O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together" (verses 1-3).

There is nothing of the madman in these words, but they are the words of a young man, one of the greatest saints in his time, indeed, one of the greatest in the history of Israel. He said that he would bless the LORD at all times and would continually praise Him. He would boast in the LORD and the meek would hear him and be glad. He calls upon his men, perhaps in the cave of Adullam, to which he and they escaped,

to magnify the LORD with him and they together would exalt His name. David is called "The sweet psalmist of Israel" in Scripture (2 Samuel 23, 1). Such a description is only once in Scripture given to anyone. "Sweet" is something delightful, pleasant. ** Psalmist" means one who sings a song to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. I have no doubt that David was a skilful player on the harp, but he was also one with a beautiful voice, and it would be a delightful experience to hear him sing his own compositions. So he led his men to magnify the LORD for their deliverance.

"I sought the LORD, and He answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked unto Him, and were lightened:
And their faces shall never be confounded.
This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him,
And saved him out of all his troubles" (Verses 4-6).

Here we have uncovered the real state of David's heart. Though he outwardly appeared to be a madman, inwardly he was a praying saint seeking deliverance from the Philistines in Gath. Not only was David praying, but his men were also praying, for of them David writes, "They looked unto Him, and were lightened". They looked to the One from whom light springs. David, the poor man who cried, was saved from all his troubles at that time.

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round **about them**
that fear Him,
And delivereth them" (verse 7).

Here was the unseen guardian **of** David and his men, and from Him deliverance **came**. **But we** cannot **see** the angels who minister **to** and do service for God's saints, and **we may** doubt their presence (Hebrews **1. 14**). Had **we** the sight which Elisha asked the LORD **to give to** his servant, who **saw** horses and chariots **of** fire around Elisha (2 Kings **6. 8-23**), we might see wondrous things **too**.

*J. M**

(to be continued D. V.)

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BIBLE STUDIES

¹ Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

Several contributors have suggested that early mention of the names Salem and Moriah referred to Jerusalem and the Temple area respectively. Was Salem another or earlier name for Jerusalem? Asaph uses the shorter form in a context which unmistakably refers to Jerusalem (Psalm 76. 2). Melchizedek, who met Abraham and blessed him after his successful battle with Chedorlaomer and his allies, is described as "King of Salem... priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14. 18). By analogy it would be fitting for Melchizedek's priesthood to have been exercised in the earthly Jerusalem as that of his great Antitype is in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The well known story in which Abraham takes Isaac to a divinely appointed mountain in the land of Moriah (Genesis 22. 2) might be taken as identifying that mountain with mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the place where Solomon built the house of the LORD (2 Chronicles 3. 1). Again, analogy seems to confirm the identification, for Abraham's knife uplifted above his son (Genesis 22. 10), and the judgement of God laid upon His Son at Calvary, have similarities which would lead us to conclude that the first incident should, like the second, be closely associated with Jerusalem.

Under David's wise and God-fearing administration Jerusalem's strength and **beauty** began to develop. Many Israelites **came to** have a passionate love for their capital city, a love which is frequently alluded to in the Old Testament: the sons of Korah (**Psalms 48 and 84**), Asaph (**Psalm 78**) and the Jewish captives in Babylon (**Psalm 137**) are examples. Daniel's face **was** ever towards the city of his fathers (Daniel 6. 10). Nehemiah, far **away** in Persia, mourned on learning of the ruined condition of Jerusalem's **walls** (Nehemiah 1. 3, 4). Although he risked the extreme wrath of the king, he found it impossible to hide his sadness in the king's presence.

Jeremiah's affection for Jerusalem **was** outstanding, **but** his contemporaries persecuted him and eventually threw him into prison **as** a traitor (Jeremiah 37. 15). They had defiled God's house and refused to repent at the voice of Jeremiah. They prepared to resist the Chaldean invaders to the bitter end

in the mistaken belief that God would never forsake His house (Jeremiah 28. 1-17).

When the city finally **fell to** Nebuchadnezzar's army, and the temple **too was** devastated, many **of** the inhabitants **were** either slain **or** taken captive **to** Babylon. The enemy saved Jeremiah alive, **but** his **sorrow** knew no bounds. He had actually seen the fulfilment **of** God's word through him concerning the city's doom. The depth **of** his feeling is expressed in the Book **of** Lamentations. Therein he compares the former glories **of** Jerusalem with its present desolation and he describes his own poignant **sorrow** and copious **tears as** he **gazes** upon the ruins. Such were the bitter experiences **of** the "weeping prophet", **yet** he was the prophet who spoke **of** the Babylonian captivity being limited to seventy years and the return of **a** remnant **to** Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29. 10-14). **L. B.**

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

JERUSALEM (OLD TESTAMENT)

From Whitehills and Macduff. —Jerusalem **was** the envy **of** the kings and they constantly joined **forces to try to** overcome it, but without success (1). **It was** not until David came to the throne that, with the help **of** the LORD, he **was able to** conquer Jerusalem and overcome the Jebusites. **It** thenceforth became known **as** " The city **of** David " (2 Samuel 5. 7) and **** of** God" (Psalm 46. 4).

David found **favour** in the **eyes of** the LORD, and brought back the Ark **of** the LORD **to** its **proper place** in the midst **of** the **people**. During David's reign Jerusalem **was a peaceful** city. Although David **was a** man that found **great favour** in the eyes **of** the LORD, he **was** not allowed **to** build the temple **of** the LORD. David **was a** man who added ground **to** the borders **of** Israel. **Before** he died he told Solomon how **to** construct the temple **of** the LORD and where it should **be** built. **After** David died **we** read **about** Solomon commencing **to** build with the materials his father had gathered. This shows that Jerusalem, the chief city, **was the place of** His Name, and there He **was to be** praised. Some time **after** this magnificent building **was** in use, **we** see the beginning **of** God's hand in judgement. Through Judah's sin, the king **of** Egypt enters Jerusalem and makes havoc, carrying **away** the gold and the silver (1 Kings 14. 25, 26).

In 2 Kings 14. 13, **we** read that Jehoash king **of** Israel defeated the king **of** Judah, and went **up to** Jerusalem with the thought in mind **to** destroy the **walls of** the city. In 2 Kings 24. 10 **we** read that the servants **of** Nebuchadnezzar king **of** Babylon came and fought against the people **of** the city and

took many captive. Later his army overthrew it and burned it with fire. **We** read also that he carried **away to** Babylon the vessels **of** gold and silver that king Solomon had made. Thus the people **of** Jerusalem were brought into captivity. In due course **some** faithful **Jews** were allowed **to** return and Nehemiah, moved **by** the Spirit, **set to work to** build again the walls **of** the city (Nehemiah 2. 18). *W. S. Johnston*

From London, S. E. —Wherein lies Jerusalem's importance? There were mighty cities throughout the world in Old Testament times and only **at** the time **of** David and Solomon, and then for **a** period, did Jerusalem achieve magnificence and splendour.

The four Psalms suggested for our study are Psalms **of** intense feeling: **of** exaltation and sorrow, **of** pride and shame, and deep inexpressible longing. It would **be** well if **we** in our day emulated the godly **Jew** in his longing for Zion **as** regards our Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that is **above**, the mother **of us** all (see Galatians 4. 26).

Let **us** look briefly **at** the Psalms in turn. Psalm **48** is a psalm **of joy** and exaltation. Jerusalem **was** highly **favoured** since the holy God dwelt in her and the city **was** holy **as a** result (verse **1**); its situation **was** excellent, it **gave joy to** the whole earth and surely this **was due to** the great King dwelling there, even God Himself (verse **2**, see also Matthew 5. 35). God **was a** refuge **to** the dwellers in the palaces (verse **3**). Jerusalem's glory lay in the **fact** that **it was** God's **city**, God's temple **was** there (verse **9**), the judgements **of** God were displayed **to** the inhabitants (verse **11**) and God **was to be** Israel's guide for ever. Thus the people were **to** delight in the familiar boundaries and landmarks since it **was** the source **of** their joy throughout life (verses 12-14).

In **Psalms 78. 68** we have the statement that God " chose the tribe **of** Judah, the mount Zion which He loved". Here is the principle **of** divine choice; it **was** divine election irrespective **of** what the people thought. Again in our day God has chosen **as** the **place of** "His Name" those who collectively form the house **of** God. In verse **69** we have the thought **of** permanence: **as long as** the earth exists His house will **be** there. Even if demolished, God's purposes and choice are still the **same**. Men, however, **may** spurn the purposes **of** God. **It** is not presumption **to say** that God has **a** testimony today; the presumption is in not believing this truth (**2**).

In **Psalm 122** we have David's inmost thoughts regarding God's house in the city **of** Jerusalem. One **was** linked with the other and his mind turned **to** God and His things when he thought **of** the city. Blessings were heaped on those who valued

the city, since they valued God and His things. Jerusalem's good **was** sought **because** the house **of** the LORD **was** there. **We** believe that such **a** promise still applies in **a** literal way, in our day and time, **as** regards the city **of** Jerusalem (3).

Psalm 137 is very sad. The exile is many miles from his beloved city. How could he sing **of** its glories **to** his captors? The memories **of** past glories and **joys** associated with Jerusalem **was** too much for his spirit. How fierce is his declaration **of** undying love for Jerusalem! He will keep the flame of love burning ever bright. Jerusalem **was to be** his paramount joy.

R. Robertson

From Melbourne, Australia.—Jerusalem, **as** Salem, appears to be first mentioned in Genesis 14.18, when Melchizedek, its king, brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abraham. At what stage of its history it became Salem is not clear to **us** as it would appear to have been builded **by** the Jebusites (see Genesis 10.16) and called after their father **Jebus**. It **may** have been known by both names—**Jebus** and Salem, which afterwards became Jerusalem. The first mention **of** the city **as** Jerusalem is in Joshua 10.1.

It is however evident that God had set his heart upon, and chosen, Jerusalem, as the one place in all the earth where He would condescend to dwell among men. **It was to** the land, or mount, **of** Moriah that the patriarch Abraham **was** sent **to** offer up Isaac; a scene which pointed down the centuries **to** another scene on or about the same place, **at** Mount Calvary.

Young gives the meaning **of** the word **Jebus** as ***'trodden down"**. We are reminded **by** this that a place apparently **of** so little importance among men **was** the **object of** a sovereign divine choice (see 1 Kings 11.13). How often **we** are reminded in the Scriptures **of** this **fact**, that God had chosen Jerusalem!

When Israel entered the land **of** Canaan, **we** find that the city **was** on the borders **of** the territory allotted **to** Judah and Benjamin. **It was** built upon four hills, Zion, Acra, Moriah, and Bezetha. **Because of** the strength **of** the fortress **of** Zion, Israel **was** unable **to** drive **out** the Jebusites, and although entering other parts **of** the city, the inhabitants retained control **of** Zion for the next 400 years. When David **came to** the throne they taunted him with their security, still believing their fortress **to be** invulnerable. Nevertheless David took their stronghold and drove them **out**, after which it **became** known **as** the city **of** David (2 Samuel 5.4-10), and **of** God.

Jerusalem **came to be** recognized **as** the centre **of** divine service and worship from the time that David brought **up** the ark **of** God **out of** the house **of** Obed-edom, and set it in its

place, in the midst of the tent that he had pitched for it (2 Samuel 6. 17). The specific indication at the threshing floor of Oman, that here was to be the altar of burnt offering for Israel, was a further assurance to David of the fact of God's choice of Jerusalem and Mount Moriah as the place where His dwelling should be.

Despite centuries of failure on the part of Israel, we find Zechariah, after the return from Babylon, reminding the remnant of the word of the LORD, "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy...I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies...the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem*" (Zechariah 1. 14-17), and again, "I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth" (Zechariah 8. 3). No other city of earth, ancient or modern, has ever been, or can be, like unto Jerusalem, "the city of the great King".

T. W. F.

EXTRACTS

From Edinburgh.—We cannot think of Jerusalem without thinking of David. Spiritually-minded man that he was, he discerned something of the 3 purposes of God concerning Jerusalem. David established his throne in Jerusalem and reigned over Israel for thirty-three years from this place. One of the most significant events in David's reign and in Jerusalem's history is recorded in 2 Samuel 6 when the ark of the LORD was brought up to Zion with great joy. A day of rejoicing for David was later followed by a day of mourning as recorded in 2 Samuel 24, when Jerusalem was near to destruction because of David's sin. These two events seem to sum up for us Jerusalem's history: great joy and great sorrow, no city like it for one or the other. What great joy when the LORD took up His dwelling place in the house built by Solomon: "and they blessed the king, and went **unto** their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David His servant, and to Israel His people" (1 Kings 8. 66). Alas, alas, a day of great sorrow came when the Lord was led out of Jerusalem to die: "And there followed Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23. 27, 28). Jerusalem means the possession of peace, but its inhabitants did not always understand the things which belong unto peace (Luke 19. 42).

M. Dyer

From Methil.—Jerusalem appears to have been in two parts, Zion being the part of the city on which the house of God was built, and Psalm 48 suggests this was the north side (4).

The children of Judah could not drive the Jebusites out (Joshua 15. 63), so they compromised and dwelt side by side until David made it his residence. In 2 Samuel 5. 7 the city is referred to as the "city of David*".

Because of David's sin, 70, 000 men were destroyed, and God might have destroyed Jerusalem, but "He repented Him of the evil", and David with the elders fell down before God. It was then that God revealed to David that the simple threshing floor of Oman was His chosen place for the house of God. Oman himself was a Jebusite, one of those who were originally enemies of the house of Judah, and yet he was prepared to give his threshing floor along with the animals for sacrifice to David at no cost at all. David refused his gift and gave Oman the full price of the property and animals—600 shekels of gold. Perhaps we can take the lesson from this that our offerings to God should not be without some cost to ourselves.

The house itself was not in fact built by David, but by Solomon his son. Its splendour was short lived, for about thirty years after the building it was plundered (2 Chronicles 12. 9), and again about 607 BC by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, when many captives were carried away to Babylon. Still later around 597 BC it was again raided, and later destroyed in 588 BC.

Alex Smith

From Glasgow (Parkhead). —From Canaan, the son of Ham, sprang the Jebusites who were the early dwellers at Jerusalem and the hill country round about it. A little later, that is in the days of Abram, we read that the king of Salem, Melchizedek, went out to meet Abram after he fought the five kings to bring back Lot from captivity (Genesis 14. 18).

The last phrase of Deuteronomy 32. 8, "according to the number of the children of Israel", would suggest to our minds that in the foreknowledge and purpose of God David was to set up his throne there, and God's ark was to find a resting place within the temple which was to be the house of God upon the earth for the nation of Israel to worship Him. We conclude this because God had promised Abraham not only a seed but also a land wherein to dwell for a possession for all time, a land which originally belonged to the Canaanites. *Fred Harvey*

From Southport. —After the death of Joshua, "Israel asked of the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up" (Judges 1. 1, 2). The place of honour is given to Judah in accordance with Jacob's prophecy (Genesis 49. 8). Jerusalem was formerly inhabited by the Jebusites, but Judah was unable to drive them out (Joshua 15. 63). The same is said

of the children of Benjamin (Judges 1. 21). When David was anointed king over Israel in Hebron the Jebusites were firmly established in Jerusalem, though it had been conquered by the tribes of Judah and Simeon after the death of Joshua, and had been set on fire (Judges 1. 8). The Jebusites appear to have so completely regained possession of the place, and to have rebuilt the city, that it is mentioned in Judges 19. 11 as the city of the Jebusites. Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, the same is the city of David.

Before the death of David, Solomon, his son, began to reign (1 Chronicles 23. 1). He began well, first to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father (2 Chronicles 3. 1). This is the only passage where the site of the temple is called Mount Moriah, and the only other place where Moriah is mentioned is Genesis 22. 2. There is no reason to doubt that the same place is meant in both passages.

The magnificent house built by Solomon had its conception in the heart of David (5), and for it he prepared with all his might. Here then, the LORD dwelt, and Jerusalem became the place of the Name.

Thomas Brown

From Wigan. —In accord with its early history and position, the name Jerusalem or Jebus Salem, was considered to mean ⁴⁴ "foundation of peace" (6). Its position gave it great strength against any attack from its enemies. It stands on a well elevated place between the Mediterranean sea and the Dead sea, thirty-two miles from the Mediterranean and about eighteen miles from the river Jordan. On the west and south are deep clefts in the rock known as the valley of Hinnom. On the east is the Kidron valley. These unite at the south-east angle, thus isolating the city on three of its sides. The ridge itself is cleft from north to south by a valley dividing the city into two hills: Zion on the west and Moriah on the east. Of these, Zion is the highest, reaching a height of 2, 550 feet above sea level. But Moriah is the more notable, for there Abraham offered Isaac (Genesis 22. 2), and there Solomon built the temple (2 Chronicles 3. 1).

Peter Howarth

COMMENTS

(1)(Whitehills and Macduff). —As far as the Scriptural record goes it would seem more accurate to say that from the time Israel invaded Canaan under Joshua it was desired to capture Jerusalem. According to Joshua 15. 63 the children of Judah attempted this, but could not drive the Jebusites out. Judges 1. 8 suggests that a later attempt had at least partial success;

it was left to David's men finally to overcome the last stronghold of Jebusite resistance in Jerusalem, "the stronghold of Zion" (2 Samuel 5. 7). G. P. Jr.

(2)(London, S. E.). -It is important to distinguish between a principle and its practical application. Whereas it has been God's desire in principle to have an earthly dwelling place in both the dispensations of law and of grace, there have been periods when through human failure there has been no dwelling place for God upon earth (e. g. during the Babylonian captivity). G. P. Jr.

(3)(London, S. E.). — In David's day prosperity was promised to those who loved Jerusalem as the place of the Name. A parallel may be drawn today that spiritual prosperity will result from a true love for God's spiritual house. An understanding of God's future purposes through the Israel people may also beget a prayerful interest in modern Jerusalem as the capital of the new nation of Israel. But can we seriously suggest that such an attitude would result in the prosperity spoken of in Psalm 122. 6? G. P. Jr.

(4)(Methil). -The house of God as built by Solomon was built on mount Moriah, which was on the east side of mount Zion. David pitched a tent for the ark on mount Zion. The ark with its covering and over-shadowing mercy seat were the only part of the tabernacle and vessels of the service which found a place in the Solomonic temple. I take it that the north, in Psalm 48. 2, is connected with the beauty of Zion as viewed from the north side. J. M.

(5)(Southport). —We should not forget, however, that the LORD gave David the pattern of the House (1 Chron. 28. 12. 19). L. B.

(6)(Wigan). —Jerusalem is not Jebus-Salem, but is from the Hebrew word *Yeruwshalayim*. This word ends in the Hebrew plural "IM" and Dr. Strong says "a dual (in allusion to its two main hills)". He traces the word to *Yara* and *Shalom*, which latter word is like *Shalom* peace, and signifies to be safe, well, happy, friendly. *Yara* has various meanings, e. g. to flow, and may mean to point out, to teach, to show, etc. We sometimes sing, "When peace like a river attendeth my way". Thus the base of the word Jerusalem is peace, and this is preceded by the idea of peace flowing. Jerusalem can never know abiding peace till the Prince of Peace, who made peace by the blood of His cross, is there reigning. The cross was an exhibition of human violence and lawless inhumanity, but Christ, though His power is almighty, endured it in order to meet divine claims against sin, to destroy the devil's power, and to say to all weary and believing sinners, "** Peace, be still". J. M.

STUDY IMPRESSIONS OF THE TIMES OF NOAH

(A) **Perspective of the Antediluvian Period**

The following tabulated summary of the genealogy of certain patriarchs **who** lived before the Flood (based on Genesis 5) is useful to show the link between Noah's immediate forebears and Adam.

Name of Patriarch	Meaning of name	Born (number of years after Adam was created)	Years of life
Adam	Red, earthy	—	930
Seth	Appointed	130	912
Enosh	Frail mortal man	235	905
Cainan or Kenan	Acquired	325	910
Mahalalel	Praise of God	395	895
Jared	Descent	460	962
Enoch	Dedicated	622	365
Methuselah	When he is dead it shall be sent. (or Man of a Dart)	687	969
Lamech	Powerful	874	777
Noah	Rest or Comfort	1056	950

This period represents two-fifths **of the** entire span of time from Adam until Christ. It will readily **be** calculated **that** Methuselah, **Noah's** grandfather, **was** contemporary with Adam for **243** years; **Lamech, Noah's** father, **was** contemporary with **Adam** for **56** years; Enoch **was** translated only **57** years after Adam's **death**; Adam had been **dead** only 126 years when **Noah** was born. It is helpful **to** appreciate this wide overlapping **of** men's lives during **that** period. For this **would** facilitate **the** transmission through **the** generations **of the** truths **of the** **Fall**, **of** **the** promised Seed, and **of** God's purposes **as** revealed **to** Adam and others.

The Spirit **of** God deals with **these** sixteen centuries **of** human experience (from Adam until **the** Flood) within **the** first eight chapters **of** Genesis. The **way of the** righteous and **the way of the** wicked are contrasted, their relative **places** in relation **to** divine purpose are balanced **out**. These opening centuries **of** God's dealings with men establish fundamental principles which run on through **the** ages **of** Bible revelation.

(B) **Features of Noah's Generation**

- (i) *' The wickedness **of** man **was** great in **the** earth... every imagination **of the** thoughts **of** his heart **was** only evil continually" (6. 5).

That mankind had **so** deeply corrupted God's **way** upon **the** earth within 1500 years or **so** is a **powerful** illustration **of the** progressive **effect** **of** sin. Men **who** deliberately forsake **the**

light of divine revelation tend to deepen in spiritual darkness. They pass a boundary when God " gives them up", i. e. allows them **to work out** the fruit **of** their folly unrestrained.

- (ii) "The earth **was** corrupt before God, and the earth **was** filled with violence. And God **saw** the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted His **way** upon the earth" (6. 11, 12).

With spiritual departure from God there tends **to be** an accompanying moral degeneration. This principle **of** the outworking **of** evil is dealt with in Romans 1. 26-31. **It** found expression in Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude **7**), among the Canaanitish nations which Israel drove **out** (Deuteronomy 12. 31), among backsliding Israel (Hosea **4. 1, 2**), and among peoples **of** more recent **ages** who have for centuries been alienated from the life **of** God.

- (iii) "The sons **of** God saw the daughters **of** men that they were fair; and they took them wives **of** all that they chose " (**6. 2**).

There was a breakdown **of** the principle **of** separation among the godly line described as "sons **of** God". Satan succeeded by this means in so leavening the once godly families that in the course **of** years all had been assimilated into the general spiritual corruption except Noah and his family.

- (iv) An age of Materialism.

The Lord Jesus summarized this characteristic of Noah's generation when prophesying of the similar conditions which will obtain at the time **of** the end (Matthew **24. 38-39**). *G. P. Jr.*

(to be continued, D. V.)

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 34

(continued from page HO)

"O taste and see that the LORD **is** good:
 Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.
 O fear the **LORD**, **ye** his saints:
 For there is no want **to** them that fear Him.
 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:
 But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good
 thing" (verses **8-10**).

The LORD gives us a taste of His goodness which whets

our appetite to come **back** for more. Peter **says**, "**If ye** have tasted that the Lord **is** gracious: unto whom coming" (1 Peter 2. 3). **We** taste and **we** keep coming **to** taste **again**. Blessed **is** the man that trusts Him. How often **we** are encouraged **to** trust Him. **See** the contrast drawn **by** Jeremiah between trusting **in** man and trusting **in** the LORD, in Jeremiah 17. 5*8. Here **is** the difference between the blessing and the curse. Here **David** draws **a** contrast between those that fear the LORD, and the young lions. The young lions lack and suffer hunger, **but** those that fear and seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. What encouragement, and what assurance.

"Come, **ye** children, hearken unto **me**:
I will teach **you** the fear of the LORD.
 What man **is** he that desireth life,
 And loveth **many** days, that he **may** see good?
Keep thy tongue from evil,
 And they lips from speaking guile.
 Depart from evil, and **do** good;
 Seek **peace**, and **pursue it**" (verses 11-14).

Here are some verses of sound counsel **as to** the fear of the LORD, and **its** practical effect on the lives of God-fearing **people**. All who **desire** life and love **to see** lengthened **days** of **good**, the fear of the Lord teaches such **to be** careful in the **use** of the tongue **as to** what they say. James **writes** forcibly in chapter 3. 1-12, on the **use** of the tongue, that member that never tires, nor **is** afflicted with rheumatism. The Godfearing man **is to** keep his tongue from evil, **to** depart from **evil** and **do good**, **to be** a pursuer of **peace**, and he **will be still** greater if he **is** not only **a** peace-seeker, **but a** peace-maker, for the Lord **said**,

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for **they** shall **be** called
 sons of **God**" (Matthew 5, 9).
 "The **eyes** of the LORD are toward the righteous,
 And His ears are open unto their cry.
 The face of the LORD **is** against them that **do** evil,
 To **cut** off the remembrance of them from **the** earth"
 (verses 15, 16).

Here again are great contrasts, between the righteous and the evildoers. The LORD'S **eyes** and ears are upon and towards the righteous **to** watch them and **to** hear their cry. How precious **to** think that He hears their prayer! and the prayer that God hears **He** will answer. **But** the face of the LORD **is** against evildoers, not only **to cut** them off, **but to cut** off their remembrance from the earth.

"The righteous cried, and the LORD heard,
 And delivered them out of all their troubles.
 The LORD is nigh unto them that **are** of a broken heart,
 And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
 Many are the afflictions of the righteous:
 But the LORD delivereth him **out** of them all.
 He keepeth all his bones:
 Not one of them is broken*" (verses 17-20).

What delightful words these are that flowed from the psalmist's pen concerning the righteous, and such as have a broken heart and a contrite spirit! The righteous cry and the LORD hears, for many are the afflictions of the righteous, and David knew this from experience, even in his present experience of being delivered from the Philistines. He delivered David in due time from all his afflictions. He keeps the bones of the righteous from being broken. It may be that behind these precious words about the righteous and the keeping of his bones, there is an allusion to the experience of the Lord in His crucifixion. Not one of His bones was broken by the cruel nails which held Him to the cross (John 19. 36).

"Evil shall slay the wicked:
 And they that hate the righteous shall be condemned.
 The LORD redeemeth the soul of His servants:
 And none of them that trust in Him shall be condemned"
 (verses 21, 22).

The wicked think that the evil they do to others will not recoil upon themselves, but their evildoing in time kills themselves. Those that hate the righteous shall be condemned or held guilty. As one looks back to the martyrs of past days, those that hated and persecuted and slew them are held guilty by all honest and serious-minded people. But more serious still, before the Lord they are guilty. The closing verse is a great comfort as to the LORD'S redemption of the soul of His servants, and that none that trust in Him will be condemned or held guilty.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them
 that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8. 1).

J. M.

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BIBLE STUDIES

¹ Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

There came a time in the life of the apostle Paul when he felt the constraining power of the Holy Spirit directing his steps to Jerusalem. Whatever the consequences, trials or bonds or even death, he would not draw back from following the Master. He obviously had a broad knowledge of the pattern of his future service but he did not know the details of what awaited him (Acts 19. 21; 20. 22-25).

The apostle had experienced in many cities the bitter hatred of the Jews and the attacks of mobs incited by them. Friends tried their utmost to dissuade him from his purpose (Acts 21. 4, 11, 12), but he had long since learned that man's reasoning was out of place in such matters; he would follow the Lord, come what may, assured that the divine purpose for the spread of the gospel world-wide would thereby be furthered.

The troubles which followed tested his faith to the utmost. The lies, the plots, the violence, the hatred and the subterfuges of the Jews must have had a great effect upon the apostle but the Lord stood by him in the prison with words of encouragement (Acts 23. 11).

Luke's vivid portrayal of the events of those days gives us an insight into the political climate which was developing in Judaea. The Jews were becoming bolder and more rebellious, they were quick to riot in the temple area, even attempting to assassinate a Roman citizen under the eyes of the Roman garrison. Because of the unrest, the chief captain found it advisable to protect his prisoner on the journey from Jerusalem with 470 soldiers. These circumstances indicated the unsettled state of the country; soon the final rebellion would break out and the Jews would reap the bitter reward for rejecting their Messiah. But the forgiveness of God had once more been proffered to them by the apostle (Acts 22. 1-21), who then had to leave Jerusalem for the last time, to engage in another phase of the work of the Lord.

L. B.

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

JERUSALEM (FROM THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE MILLENNIUM)

From Southport. —Jerusalem contained the temple, and it remained the place to which the faithful in Israel were **to go**, despite the presence of the Romans. Thus it is recorded in Luke 2. 22 that after the birth of the Lord **Jesus** Christ, and when the days of **Mary's** purification were completed, Mary and Joseph brought the Infant to Jerusalem. In general the men of the city preferred Moses and the Law to their Messiah, although some did ponder over the meaning of the sacrifices and saw in Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God.

The citizens of Jerusalem were privileged to see the Lord Jesus Christ on several occasions. His triumphal entry into the city must have been a wonderful picture to behold, for it was not something undertaken by a few disciples in a corner but it was by a great multitude who "took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel " (John 12. 13). Great as was His entry into Jerusalem, the city was to witness a yet greater event just outside its walls: we refer to the death of the Saviour. No event in the whole history of the Romans could compare with His death, for it was the most important event in the world's history that one man should die for the whole world.

But what of the future? The men of the city will hear again the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. The citizens will see the two witnesses whom God will send and the **beast** will slay, and they will also **see** the abomination of desolation standing in the Holy Place. **But yet** darker days are in store for the city, for armies will encompass the city and it will **be** taken (1). The dreadful calamities recited in the opening verses of Zechariah 14 will take place. Jerusalem will know a great deliverance, for the Lord Jesus Christ will return to the mount of Olives, and great will be the punishment of the nations which came up against the city. He will come "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24. 30). The people will cry to God at that time and He will hear. God will say, "It is my people"; and they shall say, "The LORD is my God " (Zechariah 13. 9). **W. S. Holden**

From Methil. —Jerusalem's reputation was anything but good, for she killed and stoned the prophets that were sent to her. As the Lord said, "For it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem " (Luke 13. 33). What a condemnation ! However, "When the days were well nigh come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"

(Luke 9. 51 and Isaiah 50. 7). He well knew all that lay before Him. The triumphant entry of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem (John 12. 15) was in fulfilment of Zechariah 9. 9. Yet this took place only a few days before they crucified Him outside the city wall (Hebrews 13. 12). There is positively no excuse for the action of the rulers or the people that dwelt in Jerusalem. The Jews said, "If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly*'. Jesus answered them, "I told you, and ye believe not" (see also John 10. 24, 25).

In A. D. 70 the city was sacked by the Roman armies under Titus, and finally levelled. Micah prophesied, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (3. 12). We are reminded of the words of the Jewish mob "His blood be on us, and on our children". Before that generation had passed, the vengeance fell. In Luke 21. 24 we read, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations". A. D. 70 saw the fulfilment of these prophecies. The doom of Jerusalem had been pronounced by the Lord Himself, "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19. 44).

Jerusalem today is still a city of turmoil, for it is divided and controlled partly by Arabs and partly by Israel. Zechariah 14 clearly shows that Jerusalem's days of battle are not over. But war will be followed by a reign of peace such as the world has never known before.

What a beautiful prophecy of Jerusalem is seen in Zechariah 8, where she is called the "city of truth", the "holy mountain"! Then it will be a happy city, no longer stoning the prophets of God. Instead of strife and hatred, it will be a peaceful city. "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zechariah 8. 4, 5). *Neville Coomer*

From Atherton. — Jerusalem remained the religious centre at the time of the Lord's coming to earth. There had been no change in the dispensation. This change the Lord would Himself introduce. The temple in Jerusalem was still, as the Lord said, "My Father's house". The Lord, though not born in Jerusalem, was often there in His lifetime. He was brought by His parents to Jerusalem when about a month old (Luke 2. 22-24). He came with His parents to keep the passover at the age of twelve (Luke 2. 41-43). We may rightly conclude that as a Jewish male He would be there year after year, and three times in the year, to observe the three important feasts

(Exodus 23. 14-17). Instances during **the time of His public ministry** are recorded (e. g. John 7. 2, 8 and 10). **Many of His mighty works were wrought** there (John 2. 23; 5. 1-9; 9. 1-7). **As Israel's king, according to Zechariah's prophecy He entered Jerusalem riding upon an ass. This was only a week before His death** (John 12. 1, 12-15). Although actually crucified outside Jerusalem, the Lord's death **as the suffering Messiah is linked with the city** (Acts 4. 27, 28; Revelation 11. 8). After His death, when raised, **He appeared often to His own at Jerusalem. We would judge that the upper room was the place of His meeting with them** (Acts 1. 4, 12, 13).

After Pentecost Jerusalem **was no longer to be regarded as the sole place for collective worship, yet in the mercy of God from this city went forth the word of God through Spirit filled men.** Marvellous indeed, that the **city** over which the Lord cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent to her!" **was the city** chosen by God, and from this **centre the testimony** increased mightily. The first church of God was located **in Jerusalem, and in number reached vast proportions. Jerusalem was not a divine centre in New Testament times as formerly, but the word of God was disseminated from that city.** The people of God **are now seen as coming** "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12. 22*24).

G. A. Jones

EXTRACTS

From Glasgow (Parkhead). —Perhaps a brief word concerning the **intervening** period between the close of the historical narrative of the Old Testament **and the birth of Christ would be apposite here, as it will show the events** which led to the conditions which existed when the Lord **was** born. God spoke **once more to His** people through Malachi, then there **was** silence from heaven for four centuries. Secular history provides much **information concerning** this period. Israel **once** again fell **into** apostasy. Greece conquered the world. On the death of Alexander the Great the Grecian Empire **was** divided **among** his four generals. Antiochus Epiphanes, a descendant of **one of the four generals, tried to impose** Hellenistic customs and worship **on** the Jews, **but was** gallantly resisted and finally defeated by the Maccabees. The land of Israel eventually became tributary **to Rome, and it was a** subjugated land, overrun and occupied by the **Romans, to** which the Lord **came.**

The fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy in Luke 21. 5, 6 took place **some** forty years later. **In** the month of April, A. D. 70, Titus, at the head of **not** less than **one** hundred thousand trained and seasoned troops, advanced **against** Jerusalem. The

city was defended with fanatical bravery, but all was of no avail. It fell, and was razed to the ground, excepting three towers and part of a wall, that might stand as witness to how great a city had been captured.

Jerusalem has been "trodden down of the Gentiles" since then. The Romans, Saracens and Turks of the Ottoman race have all occupied it in turn. From 1918-1948 it was under British Mandate. When Israel became a state in 1948, Britain relinquished mandatory powers, and Jerusalem is now divided between **Jews** and Arabs. *J. Peddie*

From Whitehills and Macduff. —Jerusalem, the centre of God's choice, is being trodden down (Luke 21. 24). Gentile rule began with king Nebuchadnezzar; it will end with the last Gentile emperor, the Antichrist. Energized by Satan, the man of sin will pursue a policy of utter ruthlessness against all that is of the Most High. His well marshalled forces will compass and overflow the holy city, Jerusalem (2). The object of the ruler in that day will be to blot out every vestige of testimony to the true God. Then the Lord Jesus will come in power and great glory (Luke 21. 27). Satan will be bound and his confederates will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 19. 20; 20. 2).

Jerusalem will then be the chief city of the earth, and the King of kings will be ruler of the universe. The duration of His reign will be one thousand years (Revelation 20. 4-6). During this time earth's inhabitants will know peace and plenty. Earth will not be free from sin, however, neither will all men be happy under the righteous reign of the Lord Jesus. Jerusalem will be the place of worship, and there the feast of tabernacles will be kept (Zechariah 14. 16).

At the end of the thousand years some will refuse to obey and, deceived by Satan, will conspire to go against the camp of the saints and the city of Jerusalem. This rebellion will be dealt with by God and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20. 10). *J. C. Watt*

From London, S. E. —The study subject under consideration gives much scope for thought. How privileged Jerusalem was to be graced by the presence of the great King ! From the time that He was carried in on His mother's arms to the time that He was led out by the hostile crowd to be crucified, the divine presence was manifested there in a number of remarkable ways. The city saw her King's authority, for the Lord twice purged the temple therein. The city saw her King's compassion, for the Lord wept over her. The city saw her King's humility, for the Lord came to her meek and lowly, riding upon an ass. And at the end the city saw her King's death, for the Lord was rejected and driven outside her wall. What condemnation

rested upon the **city**! For the words of John 1 have truly an application here, "**He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not**". Thus inevitable judgement was passed upon the **city**, for **not one stone** would be left upon another. **Some** feel that the destruction of the **city** by the **Romans** under Titus was **not** complete, and that the prophetic fulfilment of the Lord's words is still to come (3). Zechariah's writings tell us that the **great King** will come back again. Not this **time to be carried in on His mother's arms** but to enter with power and **great splendour**. What glory it will experience then **in its millennial peace** for it will be the **joy of the whole earth**!

John Kerr

From Glasgow (Govan and Partick). —From the death of the Saviour Jerusalem has been brought **into** the allegory of the handmaid and her children (Galatians 4. 22-26). At all **times** there were those who regarded the **city** as more important than the King who rode into it upon the **ass's colt**. As Ishmael was the **son of the bondwoman**, so the people who treasured the **city**, but despised the King, were slaves to the ritual, and failed to **see** the parable of the **time now present** (Hebrews 9. 9), carrying out what were described as carnal ordinances imposed until a **time of reformation**.

The city, which was famous for its worship, condemned Him, and so forfeited its place of importance until the rapture of the Church (John 4. 21). It is true that His parents brought Him to Jerusalem, and at the end of His ministry the scripture was surely fulfilled, *'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee", but at the present day Jerusalem has only memories of its **one-time grandeur**. When He returns, it will be described as the **city of the great King**, for it will be called, "Sought out, A city not forsaken" (Isaiah 62. 12; 49. 14-16). *Eric Archibald*

From Edinburgh. —The Lord spoke of the **time** which was approaching when the temple and the **city** would be destroyed and the people scattered or killed. The temple was the important part of Jerusalem in the old dispensation. After the crucifixion the temple was left desolate; the **city** then changed in importance and the **times of the Gentiles commenced**. Here was the first church of God. Titus destroyed the **city**, but God loved, and still loves Jerusalem. The verses in Luke 21 were fulfilled in A. D. 70 when Titus destroyed the **city**, whereas the prophecies in Matthew 24 point forward to the **days of the Son of Man** and the abomination of desolation.

Although the **city is now divided**, this is **not a fulfilment of Zechariah 14. 2**. The Jew is now in the land in unbelief. **Time must pass before** the rebuilding of the temple. Later the Messiah, the Branch, will build the temple at the **beginning of**

the days of the millennium (Zechariah 6. 12, 13), when the Lord will have delivered the city and removed the curse. From it He will rule over all the earth. See Zechariah 14. 16-19 as to the Lord's requirements as to the worship of the nations and the keeping of the feast of tabernacles, and the punishment if they fail to do so.

W. C. Taylor

From Melbourne. —Since the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948, the city of Jerusalem has compelled the attention of men and nations, and we are told in the Scriptures that in future days the eyes of all nations will be focused on her. Unknown to the people of Israel, who still fail to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah, there are sad days ahead. "The Jewish problem", we would suggest, may yet be the means used by God to "gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zechariah 14. 2). Here will be "the great winepress of the wrath of God" (Revelation 14. 19, 20), and in the final hour of her travail, when her destruction appears imminent will be realized the protection of the LORD of Hosts:

¹⁴ As birds fly ing, so will the LORD of Hosts protect Jerusalem; He will protect and deliver it, He will pass over and preserve it" (Isaiah 31. 5). Then shall they look on Him whom they pierced (Zechariah 12. 10), and the marks of Calvary will lift from off their spiritually sightless eyes the veil that has covered them, and a nation shall be born in a day (see Isaiah 66. 8). Henceforth throughout the blissful millennial scene, God will rejoice in the city which He has chosen, "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Micah 4. 2). Then "the LORD shall be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14. 9) and "every one that is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts" (Zechariah 14. 16).

T. W. F.

COMMENTS

(1) (Southport). —The picture of Jerusalem at the time of the end, as given through the prophet Zechariah, suggests that the city will not be entirely taken. It will be the scene of fierce resistance to the international forces of Antichrist. Zechariah 12. 1-11 gives a vivid impression of the devotion and bravery of the Jewish forces against tremendous odds. But the picture is one of continuing resistance despite grievous losses, right up to the time the Deliverer appears. Similarly in Zechariah 14. 1-3 we are told that "half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations".

G. P. Jr.

(2) (Whitehills and Macduff). -See comment (1). *G. P. Jr.*

(3) (London, S. E.). -Comparison of Matthew 24. 1-31 and Luke 21. 5-28 will impress the student that the Lord's prophetic words about Jerusalem had an application both to the destruction of the city by Titus in A. D. 70, and to its future investment at the hand of the Antichrist. This is a pattern of prophetic utterance (i. e. one with a dual fulfilment) frequently used in Scripture. While the thoroughness of the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus is one of the best attested facts of history, it is also clear that there will be a fearful siege of the city immediately before the Lord's coming as Son of Man. *G. P. Jr.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question from Atherton. —How do we reconcile the Lord's coming to Olivet, and His coming as outlined in Isaiah 63. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom... " ?

Answer. —(a) It is one of the problems of prophetic study to fit various portions of Scripture into their correct place in the future development of God's purposes. On some of these matters we do well to speak tentatively. May it not well be, however, that those of Israel who "flee unto the mountains" (Matthew 24. 16) will find refuge among the mountains of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, that being the nearest mountainous area available? We are told that "Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" will be delivered out of the hand of the king of the north at that time. If there is a concentration of Israeli refugees in that area, it is conceivable that the Antichrist will marshal forces against them there, just as he will concentrate his forces against the main centre of Israeli resistance in Jerusalem and Judaea. When the Lord Jesus is manifested as Israel's Deliverer, He may then well render vengeance on those attempting to crush the refugees in the Edom area, as well as relieve the siege of Jerusalem. Some have suggested that Isaiah 63. 1-6 represents the conquering Messiah, already blood-stained from the crushing of His foes in Edom, now approaching Jerusalem, where His feet will stand on Mount Olivet. See also Isaiah 34. 5-8 for further association of great slaughter in Edom with "the day of the LORD'S vengeance, the year of recompense in the controversy of Zion"... *G. P. Jr.*

Answer. —(b) It is clear from Revelation 12. 6 that the woman who brought forth the Man Child (Christ) flees into the wilderness, where they (who?) will nourish her for 1, 260 days. This flight from the dragon (Satan) is for a time, times and a half

time (3½ years), a period similar in length to that of the days just mentioned (Revelation 12. 13-17). When the worship of the beast and his image (the abomination of desolation) is begun in Jerusalem, those that fear God will, in obedience to Matthew 24. 15-22, flee unto the mountains and to the wilderness beyond the Jordan, no doubt to the lands cited by our fellow-editor. The dragon will cast out of his mouth water as a flood or river that he might cause her to be carried away, but the earth opens her mouth and swallows up this flood. This flood I take to mean a flood of soldiery. See Daniel 11. 22 where we have the "arms of a flood". The fleeing Jewish people will be in the wilderness until the Lord comes (Isaiah 35. 3-10). The order of events in the Lord's coming to earth seems to be, (1) that the Lord first comes forth to fight against the beast and the false prophet and their assembled armies, and His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives (Zechariah 14. 1-4; Revelation 16. 12-16; 17. 12-14; 19. 11-21) (2) Thereafter, I judge, He goes to Edom to deal with Edom (see what is said in Isaiah 34. 1-5, before we come to the judgement which will fall upon Edom, from verses 5-17; see also Ezekiel 25. 12-14). Possibly there will be vast forces of an Arab concentration headed by Edom (Isaiah 63. 1-6). These have ever been and are against Israel. The ten kingdom confederacy will also be against Israel (Revelation 17. 12-14), and against the Lord, and will have the support of the whole world (Revelation 16. 14). (3) It may be that when the Lord returns from Edom to Jerusalem, He may act a similar part to that of Joshua of old, in leading the people of Israel from the wilderness to Zion (Isaiah 35. 10). There are many other things to fit in in the early times of the setting up of His Kingdom by the Lord. J. M.

Question from Glasgow (Parkhead). — Revelation 3. 12, is this the millennial temple that is mentioned here ?

Answer. — (a) It does not seem to me in harmony with the distinctive relationship of the Church the Body to the Lord Jesus that this reward of an Overcomer in the present dispensation should be related to the millennial temple. I should prefer to link it with "the temple of God in heaven" (Revelation 11. 19), however little we may at present understand what is implied in this. G. P. Jr.

Answer. — (b) It is evidently not a material temple, for overcomers are pillars in the temple. Also, please note, that upon these will be written the name of the new Jerusalem, besides that of the God of the Lord Jesus, and His own new name. This undoubtedly points forward to the new Jerusalem in which there is no material temple, but "the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof" (Revelation 21. 22). I take it that this is the temple that is referred to in Revelation 3. 12.

J. M.

STUDY IMPRESSIONS OF THE TIMES OF NOAH

(continued from page 160)

The student **may well** regard **the** ante-diluvian period **as a prototype of the outworking of the law of sin** in human experience. Departure from divinely revealed truth, **a lowering of moral standards, a blurring of principle to break down the separation of the godly, an outlook of sheer materialism**-these results develop from man's rejection **of divine light as surely as abandonment of principles of hygiene will bring epidemic and disease.** The **most** fearful operation **of this law of sin** in the human race will follow the present dispensation **of the grace of God. Because** men have "believed not the truth, **but** had pleasure in unrighteousness", God will once more "**give them up**" to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2. 10-12). With unprecedented opportunities **to give expression to their rebellious thoughts and unbridled self-pleasing, the time of the end will prove to be the darkest era of all human history.** All the features **of the ante-diluvian age will be reproduced, but in greater intensity, with vastly expanded powers, and on an immensely greater scale.**

(C) Characteristic Features of God's Dealings with Noah's Generation

(i) The Striving of the Spirit of God (6. 3).

This reference **to the Holy Spirit's activity** among men in that day **is illuminating.** There are **but** three references **to the Spirit of God** in the **Book of Genesis,** which covers almost **2, 300 years of human history.** Chapter **1. 2 associates** the work **of the Holy Spirit with God's creative activity.** Chapter 6. 3 shows the work **of the Spirit among men in striving with them that they should repent and turn back to the living God.** In every **age it is the Holy Spirit who has worked in men's hearts to effect** repentance and faith.

(ii) Longsuffering

"The longsuffering **of God** waited in the days **of Noah,** while the ark **was a preparing**" (1 Peter 3. 20).

⁴⁴ **It is an integral feature of the divine character that God is full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger**" (Exodus 34. 6). The fearful provocation **of human sin before the Flood might justly have been visited in judgement much earlier and without particular warning. Yet by the Spirit we learn through Peter that the longsuffering of God waited while the ark was being prepared. The witness of Noah would leave the world without excuse as to God's intentions of judgement. The marvel is not that God should punish the world by the Deluge, but that He restrained from executing the judgement for so long. Will students please compare other Biblical examples of visitation in judgement, and note the similar longsuffering shown by God?**

Note the reluctance of God to sweep His people into captivity (2 Chronicles 36. 15, 16), illustrated in the remarkable vision of the slowly departing glory—from the sanctuary to the threshold of the House (Ezekiel 10. 4); from the threshold to the door of the east gate (10. 19); from the midst of the city to the mountain which is on the east side of the city (11. 23). Even the judgement pronounced upon Ahab's family was deferred because he humbled himself before the word of the LORD through Elijah (1 Kings 21. 27). Manasseh, king of Judah, had fearfully provoked the LORD to anger (2 Chronicles 33. 6), yet he knew God's longsuffering mercy when he "humbled himself greatly" (verse 12). The uninformed or forward may cavil at the judgement of the Flood, or other aspects of divine judgement on men, but the devout student will rather marvel at the longsuffering of his God, to whom judgement is a "strange work" (Isaiah 28. 21).

(iii) The Goodness and Severity of God
 "Behold then the goodness and severity of God"
 (Romans 11. 22).

We may well borrow Paul's words from Romans 11 in contemplating God's dealings with men at the time of the Flood. His amazing goodness in patient longsuffering has already been noted. His particular goodness to Noah is reflected in the words, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (6. 8). Man tends readily to forget visitations in divine judgement. Yet history has been punctuated with such visitations. There is widespread scepticism today about the wrath to come. Satan has done his utmost, through a false wresting of the word of God, to undermine belief in eternal judgement. One effect of our studies of the sacred writings should be a sobering conviction that there will be a fearful visitation of the wrath of God on this world before its blessing in millennial glory, and that every soul whose name is not written in the Book of Life will suffer eternally in the Lake of fire. The goodness of God was abundantly manifested in sending His Son as Saviour; the severity of God will be seen in the judgement executed by that same glorious Person, "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world brought under the judgement of God".

(iv) Covenant Dealings

In Noah's experience we see illustrated God's covenant dealings with men, first in chapter 6. 18, and again in chapter 9. 8-17. The former occurrence was linked with God's commands about the ark as a means of salvation from the Deluge; Noah would be safely preserved if he obeyed the divine instructions. The second occurrence was in relation to Noah and his sons, and was as far-reaching in its terms as to embrace the whole of the human race for all ages, an unconditional covenant of

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⁴* Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

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EDITORIAL

Consideration of the new Jerusalem this month is a fitting climax to a year's study which has touched on many aspects of God's purposes from the times of Nimrod onwards. Reflecting on these purposes we share the adoration expressed by David in Psalm 40:

"Many, O LORD my God, are the wonderful works
which Thou hast done,
And Thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
They cannot be set in order unto Thee;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered*".

Yet our current study opens with a glimpse of future divine purpose with which we shall be intimately associated, a purpose reaching forward beyond the range of our present apprehension to an eternity of further revelation. Paul wrote of this result of our faith in Christ, tracing in Ephesians 2 the course of God's dealings in grace from the depth of our natural alienation through sin to the heights of our association with Christ in the heavenlies, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus".

In the nature of things certain difficulties arise when we approach the study of a future order which so far transcends our present range of thought or experience. Yet the Scriptures reveal details of "the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God". Faith ponders what is written, and rejoices in the glory and inspiration of knowing that such a destiny could be laid up in store for *' frail mortal man". If the mind reels in attempting to grapple with the facts presented by God, the heart warms with adoring gratitude at the prospect before the believer. The city's glory, beauty, immensity, security and purity appeal with power against the background of present experience. The heart yearns towards that wonderful era of sinless service for the One whose face we shall see and whose name will be on our foreheads. Whatever problems of exegesis may arise in the study of the new Jerusalem, may each of us receive a fresh impression by the Spirit of the glory that is to be revealed to usward in this connexion !

Editors take this opportunity of **sending greetings** to all fellow-students with appreciation of **their interest** in "Bible Studies". We look **forward** to further fellowship during **1966** (D. V.), in studying the personality and **work** of the Apostle Paul.

"Let **us** know, let **us** follow **on** to **know** the LORD; **His going** forth is sure as the **morning**: and **He** shall come unto **us** as the **rain**, as the latter **rain** that watereth the earth" (**Hosea 6.3**). *G. P. Jr.*

SOME IMPORTANT CITIES OF SCRIPTURE

THE NEW JERUSALEM

From Edinburgh. — In John's **vision** he **sees** a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, **for** the first heaven **and** the first earth have passed away. This word "new" **in** the Greek is *kainos*, **meaning** new, recently made, **not** had before. The emphasis is further stressed when **He** that **sat upon** the throne said, "* Behold, I make all things **new***". Not only are all things **new**, but "the first things are passed away"-

This great walled city of twelve **gates** and twelve foundations **is** foursquare. The foundations, garnished with all **manner** of precious stones, have inscribed **upon** them the **names** of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **We** then **come to** the **gates** of pearl, bearing the **names** of the twelve tribes. These **gates** shall never close by day **and** there **is no** night there. **Having** seen the outward appearance, let **us** enter within the **gates** and see somewhat of the magnificence of the city. John looked firstly for a temple, but there **was none**, "for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof". The **street** of gold, **as** it were transparent glass, has **in its** midst the tree of life which bears twelve **manner** of fruits, and yields her fruit every month. The fruit **is** not forbidden, **but is** for food and the leaves for healing. The river of life, clear **as** crystal, proceeds from the throne of God. Here divine rule **is seen**: "**and His** servants shall do Him service". The seal **of** their service **is** His name upon their foreheads, **an** acknowledgement of their sonship.

Lastly we come to the **nations** who will walk **in** the light of the city and whose kings will bring their glory **into** the **city**. It was generally held that the redeemed of Israel and those saved outside the day of grace, either before or after, are not part of the Bride, but that the Church which **is His** body are the people in the city.

R.

Fisher

From Wigan. — In the future day, in a new earth wherein dwell eth righteousness, God will in very deed dwell with men (Rev-

elation 21.3). The place of His dwelling will be the new Jerusalem, twofold in its description, both the Bride the wife of the Lamb, and the holy city. These signify a people, dwelling together in a city. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 23.37 said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem", in speaking of the people of that city, so the Bride the wife of the Lamb will be dwelling in the new Jerusalem. What is symbolic and what is real is not easy to define, but we suggest that all the redeemed of this dispensation both Jew and Gentile are the Bride, dwelling in the city, new Jerusalem. The twelve gates having written on them the names of the twelve tribes of Israel signify, we suggest, the redeemed of Israel of the past dispensation and in the future, as distinct from the Gentiles who were redeemed before and after this present dispensation. Those of Israel will have a place near to the Bride, perhaps doing service in the gates of the city, while the Gentiles under divinely appointed kings will be dwelling outside the new Jerusalem in the new earth, yet walking in the light of the glory of God, which shines forth from within the city (Revelation 21. 23, 24) (1). Neither sun nor moon will be needed; these belong to the present heaven and earth.

As to the expression, " His servants shall do Him service " (22.3), we consider that the worship of God the Father will be through the Lord Jesus Christ, so often described in the Revelation as the Lamb, who was provided by God that men may draw near and be accepted by Him. *J. H.*

From Melbourne, Australia. —**Most** thought that Revelation 21 could be divided into two, verses 1 to 8 being descriptive of the Church which is His Body in the eternal state, the remainder referring to the Millennium. The suggestion was made that in the eternal state there will be " peoples " and not nations with their kings. We know that there will be nations and kings during the Millennium, but will these be present in the eternal state (2)?

In chronological order, we find chapter 20 deals with the final judgement of Satan. The beast and the false prophet have already received theirs. The present heavens and earth pass away (2 Peter 3. 10), the Great White Throne is set up and judgement executed, and then chapter 21 describes the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem city.

We thought that from verse 9 onwards the Church is seen as during the Millennium (3). Some of the wording of this chapter is very similar to that of Isaiah 60, which seems clearly to deal with Israel during the Millennium. The gates of the city are twelve in number and on these are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Does this indicate that the glory and the

honour of the nations will be brought to the Lord, who dwells in the midst of the city, through the agency of Israel (4)?

Again we were more inclined to the view that Revelation 22. 1-5 describes the millennial scene. It was asked, will there be the necessity of healing during the eternal state (verse 2)? (See Comment 3). We are sure that there will be during the Millennium, and this causes us to feel that these five verses describe the millennial experience. *M. McF., P. W.A.*

EXTRACTS

From Glasgow (Parkhead). —Though there are some similarities between certain Old Testament scriptures and what we have in Revelation 21 and 22, we need to be careful to distinguish between things that differ; e. g. Revelation 21. 4 may be placed against Isaiah 25. 8, Revelation 21. 23 against Isaiah 60. 19, 20, Revelation 21. 24 against Isaiah 60. 3, Revelation 21. 25, 26 against Isaiah 60. 11, Revelation 22. 1 against Ezekiel 47. 1-11 and Revelation 22. 2 against Ezekiel 47. 12. The Revelation scriptures will be fulfilled in the new Jerusalem in the eternal state. The Isaiah and Ezekiel scriptures apply only to the Millennium. Some thought that Revelation 21 was in two parts, verses 1 to 8 applying to the eternal state and verses 9 to 27 reverting back to the Millennium, but help with this would be appreciated (5). The Church which is His Body and the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, are synonymous.

We believe that the Church which is His Body is co-extensive with the Bride and that Israel has no part in it whatsoever. In a figurative sense God is viewed in the Old Testament as a husband to Israel, e. g. "Thy Maker is thine Husband" (Isaiah 54. 5); "I was an Husband unto them" (Jeremiah 31. 32); "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever" (Hosea 2. 19, 20). Christ is seen in the New Testament as the Bridegroom of the Bride. Israel and the Bride must ever remain separate entities and separate lines of truth (6). *J. Peddle*

From Atherton. —Revelation 21 unfolds the main characteristic features of the glorious eternal state. The Millennium will yet exhibit a reign of righteousness never witnessed on earth before, when immeasurable blessings will be enjoyed. But that kingdom, though manifesting an undeniable advance upon any previous state or age since the fall, will not provide a perfect condition. This can only exist when and where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3. 13), entailing the completion of every phase of judgement by the Son, as well as the subduing of every enemy. Then, and only then, will the way be clear for eternal perfection, and for God to be all in all (1 Corinthians 15. 28).

Will worship in the eternal state be still through the Son? One view was that the Son will for ever be the centre of divine purpose and service, and that we shall still approach God through the Son. Another view was that 1 Corinthians 15.24-28 indicates a change in the functions of the Son prior to the eternal state. Then will God be worshipped directly, not through mediation, as the triune God (7). The exponents of this view held that "His" and "Himself" in Revelation 22.3,4 refer to the triune God and not to the Lamb exclusively (8). It was suggested that Revelation 21.23 indicates that the glory of God will be seen, as well as that of the Lamb. God will then reveal Himself to us without any intermediary stages such as temple or mediator. *E. B., D. S. J.*

From London, S. E. —To treat the new Jerusalem in a strictly literal sense is to lose the depth of its meaning. The extent to which the passage in Revelation 21 can be taken as figurative was a matter for debate; some saw the city as an entity separate from the inhabitants whilst others interpreted the whole in a figurative sense (9).

The essential characteristics of the holy city are purity, perfection and holiness. The description of the city, it must be emphasized, should not be taken too literally; rather the emphasis should be on the spiritual realities that underlie the symbolic language. Some pointers are given below (10).

The cubic shape of the city, with its high symmetry and solid, enduring appearance would suggest permanence and perfection of design. The very thick walls suggest impregnability and immense strength. The city's enormous dimensions would suggest gigantic size. The appearance of the city with its transparent gold and precious stones speaks of holiness and purity. Everything in it is so pure that it is crystal clear; nothing is cloudy or obscure. The main point is that God and the Lord Jesus Christ are the centre of the city; there are no outside influences. *A. C. B.*

From Whitehills and Macduff.—The new Jerusalem which John sees coming down out of heaven as "a bride adorned for her husband" is described as the "Bride, the wife of the Lamb" and is apparently associated with the Church the Body of Christ, whose members appear to dwell within this remarkable city. John relates the magnificence of the materials used for its foundations, gates, walls and the city proper. The gold is finer, the jewels bigger, than anything previously seen, and the overall size is immense - 1500 miles in all three dimensions. It appears to be a symbolic description of the Church the Body as Christ has made it - faultless, magnificently adorned, equal on every side - but the fact of the city is not in doubt (11). It is the "tabernacle of God with men" and in it is

the throne **of God and of the Lamb, and thus** apparently the centre **of divine government upon the earth.** Control will be exerted from the **city,** and the river **with the associated tree are** for the blessing **and well-being of men upon the earth.** Though **no temple is seen,** the Lord **God and the Lamb are so** described, and **we may thus** suppose that worship **goes on in** the city.
A. B. R.

From Methil. —The inhabitants **of the city** will be those composing the Bride. There are three **groups of people seen as** being associated with the **city:** (1) the Bride (Revelation 21. 9), (2) the redeemed **of the twelve tribes of Israel** (verse 12), and (3) the redeemed **of Gentile people** (verse 24). Nevertheless **we are of** the opinion that only the Bride the **wife of the Lamb** actually dwells therein. What then **of Old Testament saints** such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc., who all died **in faith, not** having received the **promises** (Hebrews 11.13)? God's promise to them **is** that **He** has prepared for them **a city** (Hebrews 11. 10, 16). What too **of David, Samuel and the prophets** (Hebrews 11.32), God having provided **some** better thing concerning **us** that apart from **us** they should **not** be made perfect (Hebrews 11. 40)? It may be that for them it will **be sufficient to be** associated with the city, and **to have** fellowship with those within the city, and **to be able to go in** and out unhindered **to the dwelling place of God to serve Him** there (Revelation 21. 3, 25) (12). God **in** that day **can** dwell with **men.** Satan, who had caused sin and separation will have **been** banished to the lake **of fire** for eternal punishment (13).
Ian T. H. Hunter

COMMENTS

(1) **Wigan.** —With our present limited understanding **of the** eternal state care **is** needed **in** attempting **to** define privileges **of access** to the **new** Jerusalem. **We** are told **of Abraham** that "**he** looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker **is** God". (Hebrews 11.10). Other Old Testament saints who were **of the faith of Abraham** are linked with him **in** the statement **of Hebrews 11.16:** "God **is not** ashamed **of them,** to be called their God: for **He** hath prepared for them **a city**". If God had prepared the city for them, it would **seem** odd to suggest that they had **no access** to it. This **suggestion is** further discounted by the **fact** that "**the nations** shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings **of the earth** do bring their glory into **it...** and they shall bring the glory and the honour **of the nations** into it" (Revelation 21. 24, 26). If the nations **of the new earth** are to **frequent** the city **in** this way, how much more the **eminent among Old Testament saints!** Accepting the view that the Bride, the **wife of the Lamb, in*** eludes only **saints of the dispensation of grace,** that **view is**

not strengthened by postulating rigid lines of demarcation which are inconsistent with the plain statements of Hebrews 11. 10, 16. *G. P. Jr.*

(2) (Melbourne). —See answers to Question from Atherton.

(3) (Melbourne) (a). —The suggestion that Revelation 21 refers partly to the Millennium and partly to the eternal state gives rise to more difficulties than it removes. For example, it is clear from Ezekiel 40 - 48 that a temple will be associated with millennial Jerusalem, whereas there will be no temple in the new Jerusalem described in Revelation 21. 9-21. The measurements of the millennial city referred to by Ezekiel are small compared with the prodigious dimensions of the new Jerusalem as recorded in Revelation 21. Chapter 22 continues naturally in the description of the same city, verses 3 and 5 agreeing with chapter 21. 22-23. *Therapaia*, translated "healing" in Revelation 22. 2, " primarily denotes care or attention, and then medical service or healing" (Vine). Our English word "therapy" is derived from it. So in the context of Revelation 22. 2 it could validly be understood as meaning " for the health of the nations" rather than implying healing from disease. *G. P. Jr.*

(b). —I agree with Comment 3 (a). I consider that the whole of Revelation 21 and the beginning of 22 refer to the new Jerusalem, not to the Jerusalem of the Millennium. The verb *Therapeuo*, according to Green's Lexicon, means to serve, minister to, render service and attendance. Moses was a *Therapon*, an attendant, a servant, a minister (Hebrews 3. 5). The verb is also used to mean "heal" or "cure". *J. M.*

(4) (Melbourne). —There is no statement that Israel so acts for the kings of the new earth. Wherein God does not reveal His mind, we must take care that we do not seek to fill in what we think to be lacking. *J. M.*

(5) (Parkhead). —The references in the Old Testament are to what Israel and Jerusalem will be in the Millennium, not to what the saints of the church which is His (Christ's) body will be in the new Jerusalem. *J. M.*

(6) (Parkhead). —It has to be remembered that when God spoke of being a husband to Israel, He was dealing with Israel after the flesh. He says through Paul, " They are not all Israel, which are of Israel... it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God" (Romans 9. 6, 8). There were men and women of faith in Israel, but there were also many wicked people, and to class God as the husband of Israel with Christ as the husband of the Bride, as on parallel lines, can lead only to confusion. All who are in the Bride are persons saved by grace, but Israel in the past were not all such. *J. M.*

(7) (Atherton). —We know what we are to do now, but what the divine arrangements will be in the eternal state for ourselves and others, it will be well to "wait and see". *J. M.*

(8) (Atherton). —It is difficult to know what the antecedents of pronouns are in some places, and I think this is so here. Here God and the Lamb are mentioned, and then we have the singular pronouns His and Him. No doubt these pronouns refer to the divine Being, but to conclude that God's arrangement then will be exactly the same as now, is more than I would care to venture any explanation. *J. M.*

(9) (London, S. E.). —My view is that we are given a pen picture of a city, not a figure or sign of something else. A city always implies two things, (1) a mass of buildings, and (2) a multitude of persons dwelling therein, and both are often called by the same name. The wife of the Lamb as to persons is given in Revelation 19. 7, 8, and the place wherein she dwells is given in Revelation 21. This new Jerusalem is not a city of the dead, of buildings without inhabitants. *J. M.*

(10) (London, S. E.). —The city is not a symbol of something else. *J. M.*

(11) (Whitehills and Macduff). —Friends should think of what they mean when they use the words "symbol" and "symbolize". "The Body of Christ" (not His own literal body which God prepared for Him) has been called by some a symbol. So that to follow them, the Body is a symbol, then the new Jerusalem is a symbol, the gold, the precious stones, the wall, the gates, etc., etc., are all symbols. This word symbol soon becomes like a magic ship in which our minds sail away into a land of mystery, till we reach a place of thought without substance. The wife of the Lamb is composed of saints (Revelation 19. 7, 8). Saints must have a place in which to dwell, as the Lord said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14.3), a place for saints in a disembodied and spiritual state. And when they have been raised with bodies like the Lord's they will need a place to dwell. The saints have been raised and changed by the time of Revelation 19. 7, 8 and, in my opinion, the city of the new Jerusalem is their eternal habitation. *J. M.*

(12) (Methil)(a). —Does not this suggestion too lightly pass over the promises of Hebrews 11? Those faithful men and women who wandered in deserts and mountains, and lived in caves and holes of the earth (verse 38), would surely receive a poor reward unless they were to enjoy residence within the city. Can residence outside the city, with occasional entrance into it, be a proper and full satisfaction of Abraham's hope (verse 10)? Verse 16 says, "He hath prepared for them a city". It seems to me that these Old Testament worthies were sadly mis-

taken **in** their hopes **if** there was **no** prospect **of** their living within the **city** walls. Without **in** any way prejudicing the identity **of** the Church the Body **of** Christ with the Bride **of** the Lamb, is **it** not possible that those envisaged **in** Revelation **22. 14** **are** entitled **to** reside within the city, even though they are not part **of** the Bride? Hebrews **11. 40** would perhaps support the opinion that there will be some outside the Bride who nevertheless will be able to live in the new Jerusalem after its establishment. *L. B.*

(b).—It is needful I think first of all to bear in mind that this city is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. Then we must be clear as to what saints are included in the wife of the Lamb. When we have decided this, we can then proceed to the further consideration of what is meant by those who looked for such a city as is the wife of the Lamb, and then as to the privilege of such as shall enter the city. Unless we go with care in each stage of our consideration of such matters we may get into confusion of thought. Help may be derived from a consideration of Jerusalem in the land of Israel. Were not the real inhabitants the people who belonged to Israel? Then were Gentile people allowed to enter the city? I think we must say yes to both questions. That the kings of the nations or Gentiles shall bring their glory into it is definitely stated, so that we have no doubt as to others entering who are not saints of the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. Then last, we come to Abraham and others who looked for this city, and we ask ourselves the question which is an important one, "Are they part of and included in such as are comprised in the Bride of the Lamb?" I say no to this question definitely. I believe that Abraham and his seed who are saved outside this dispensation of grace are not part of the Bride. *J. M.*

(13) (Methil). — Many questions may be asked as to Old Testament **saints**, but we must be careful that we see and teach clearly that the Lord had not commenced to build the Church till after the time of Matthew 16, nor till Acts 2 and that nowhere **in** Scripture are Old Testament saints shown to be incorporated **in** the Church, the Body **of** Christ. These saints, Abraham and all others, form no part of the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. *J. M.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question from Atherton. —Who are the nations of Revelation 21. 26?

Answer (a).—There is little scriptural material to guide in answer to this question, but it seems reasonable to suggest that the nations of the new earth may include at least — (1) the

redeemed of Israel: (2) the redeemed **of** nations which will have peopled the present earth **in** millennial **times**: (3) those whose names will be found written in the Book **of** Life **at** the Great White Throne Judgement.

Deuteronomy **32. 8** discloses that God gave the nations **of** the present earth their inheritance, setting their bounds according **to** the number **of** the children **of** Israel. A divine allotment **of** national inheritance in the new earth would **be** in harmony with this. **G. P. Jr.**

Answer **(b)**. — The "nations", frequently translated ****** Gentiles^M in the **New** Testament, are never confused with Jews or Israelites, **so** that the nations **are** saved people **of** the Gentiles who are constituted nations under kings in the eternal **state**. Thus, **we** have three classes in Revelation **22**. (1) the Bride, the **wife of** the Lamb, (2) those **of** the Israel people whose names are on the **gates**, and (3) the saved **of** the Gentiles constituted **as** nations. **JM.**

STUDY IMPRESSIONS OF THE TIMES OF NOAH

(continued from page 164)

(D) The Ark

The Hebrew word **Tebah** is used only **of** Noah's ark and the ark **of** bulrushes in which **Moses** was hidden. The word signified "box", which helps little in forming any impression **of** the shape **of** Noah's vessel. **It was** built **of** gopher wood, gopher being **a** transliteration **of** the **Hebrew** word, the only occurrence in Scripture, and probably referring **to a type of** cypress wood.

The ark **was** made with "rooms", **a** translation **of** the Hebrew word **gen**, which usually means "nest". The force **of** this in relation to the ark **is** difficult **to assess**.

The gopher wood **of** the ark **was** covered within and without with pitch. The verb "to pitch" in Genesis **6. 14** **is a** rendering **of** the Hebrew word **Kaphar**, meaning "**to cover**". It **is** used in various senses in the Old Testament, and **is** translated no less than seventy times **as "to make atonement"**.

The dimensions **of** the ark were specific; taking **a cubit to measure 18** inches, the ark would **be 450 feet** long, **75 feet** wide and **45 feet** high. There were three **storeys to** the vessel (6. 16).

The word translated "window" in the A. V. **is** rendered "light" in the **R. V.** It **is** the word **Tsohar**, and in no other place in Scripture **is it** translated **as "window"**. **It comes from a**

root meaning "to glisten", and is elsewhere translated "noon" (11 times), "noonday" (10 times). This evidently suggested to the revisers a larger source of light than would have been afforded by a small window. There is another reference to "window" in 8. 6, but this is the word *Challon*, which occurs 31 times in the Old Testament, and is uniformly translated "window".

There was one door, "set in the side" of the ark.

Spiritual Reflections:

The technical details of the ark have been given in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. They present an impression of a thoroughly seaworthy vessel, designed to weather the Deluge, and to provide space for the formidable cargo of animals and their human caretakers. The ark may reverently be looked upon as a picture of Christ, the Refuge from the wrath of God. It had but one door, illustrating the only way of escape from the wrath to come. Once inside the ark, the safety of the occupants was divinely guaranteed—God shut the door, and He had made His covenant with Noah that the ark would be secure. So with those whose "life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3. 3).

(To be continued D. V.) G. P. Jr.

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

Psalm 35

(continued from page 164)

"Let them be ashamed and brought to dishonour
that seek after my soul:
Let them be turned back and confounded that devise
my hurt.
Let them be as chaff before the wind,
And the angel of the LORD driving them on.
Let their way be dark and slippery,
And the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
For without cause have they hid for me their net
in a pit,
Without cause have they digged a pit for my soul.
Let destruction come upon him at unawares;
And let his net that he hath hid catch himself:
With destruction let him fall therein" (verses 4-8).

The word "let" is used some seven times in these verses, and the things David thinks of that should be allowed to come upon those that strove with and fought against him become worse as he proceeds. First he thinks that shame and dishonour should be theirs, and that they should be turned back

and confounded. Then he thinks **of** the day **of** winnowing **of** **grain**, **in** which the chaff **is** blown away, and he asks that they should be **as** the driven chaff (Psalm 1.4,5). But still more terrible **is** the thought he **expresses**, **in** the angel **of** the LORD driving them away. **He** thinks **of** his persecutors **being in** a way which **is** dark and slippery and the angel pursuing them. Then he thinks **of** his enemies digging a pit for him, in which they have their net **to** catch him, and he asks that his enemy's net may catch himself, and asks God to let his enemy fall therein with destruction. If his enemy envisaged **was** Saul, then **we** can **see** that after his years **of** persecution **of** David, he reaped the result **of** his folly, **as** he said **of** himself, "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly" (1 Samuel 26.21). What **a** confession **of** his own conduct! That **was** the last incident in his pursuit **of** David. The **next** evidence **of** his folly **was** his going **to** the witch **of** Endor, in whose house he received notice **of** his end, which happened soon after, following his defeat by the Philistines.

"And **my** soul shall be joyful in the LORD:

It shall rejoice in **His** salvation.

All **my** bones shall **say**, LORD, who **is** like unto Thee,
Which deliverest the poor from him that **is** **too** strong
for him,

Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?
Unrighteous witnesses rise **up**;

They ask **me** **of** things that **I** know not.

They reward **me** evil for **good**,

To the bereaving **of** **my** soul* (verses 9-11).

Despite the evil intentions **of** his enemies, David finds great joy in the LORD and in his salvation, even **as** **we** do **too**, despite the sorrows and trials **of** the daily life. **We** have an adversary who **is** ever seeking **to** bring **us** down, using, **as** he does skilfully, every means to this end. **We** can like David **say**, and **as** he said that his bones spoke, "LORD, who **is** like unto Thee?" There **is** none like the LORD, whose knowledge **of** **us** and all our **ways** **is** the **most** intimate, and whose delivering power **is** always **at** hand. **It** **was** **so** with David, who said that the LORD delivered the poor and needy from him that **was** **too** strong for him, and from him that spoiled him. There were unrighteous or violent witnesses in David's **time** and in the Lord's time also, who lied in their witness-bearing, and their **purpose** **was** **to** return evil for good **to** the bereaving **of** the soul **of** God's servants. **We** can **see** the evil, lying witnesses in the **time** **of** the martyrs and other sufferers for truth they held dear, dearer than life itself. (to be continued D. V.)—J.M.

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