

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).

A STUDY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD Part 2

VOLUME 46

Published by
NEEDED TRUTH PUBLISHING OFFICE
ASSEMBLY HALL, GEORGE LANE,
HAYES, BROMLEY, KENT

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol 46 January 1978

We now embark, God willing, on a further year's study of God's progressive revelation of His desire to dwell among men. As we approach the present day, His dwelling becomes a spiritual house rather than a physical one, but the underlying principles are the same. God's consistent message is that His people should reflect His righteousness, and He will dwell among them if they will keep His covenant. Furthermore, acceptable corporate worship can only come from the people of God if they worship according to His ordinances. We have also seen, however, how longsuffering God was towards those who neglected or defied His law, and how gracious He was to them when they repented.

Our present month's study exemplifies this. Manasseh brought idolatry into the house of God, and led his people into sin worse than that of the heathen nations, so that God promised to do to Judah what He had already done to Israel; but when he repented, God postponed the judgement, and restored his kingdom to him. The people themselves deserved judgement, but because of Josiah's obedience to the word of the Lord, it was postponed until after his death. The Lord is indeed 'a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth' (Ps. 86: 15). As we today seek to serve in God's house, we need His grace as much as ever.

P. L. H.

THE HOUSE AND THE KINGS—MANASSEH & JOSIAH

From Methil: 2 Kings 21: 9 states that Manasseh seduced his people to do that which is evil *more* than did the nations. His persistent lawlessness led ultimately to judgement. The Lord visited Manasseh in judgement allowing him to be chained by the king of Assyria and carried to Babylon. Manasseh had totally ignored the Lord's speaking to him; only when he was in distress did he humble himself and entreat the Lord. Judgement brought repentance in his case. He was the only recorded king apart from Saul to resort to

BIBLE STUDIES

sorceries. Manasseh means 'to forget'. **He** forgot **the** Lord and forsook **Him**. Many kings started **well** and finished badly; Manasseh **was** different for after **his** repentance **he** improved **his** ways, commanding **Judah** to serve **the** Lord, **the** God of Israel (**2 Chr. 33: 16**) [Comment **1**]. Manasseh both allowed and introduced wrong things into **the** house of God. **It was this**, and idolatry, **that** brought **his** downfall.

Josiah, **the** boy king, commenced **his** reign when only **eight** years old and **at the** early **age** of sixteen years sought after God. **This led him** to God's house. **By the time he was** twenty years old **he** started purging **the** land, removing **all that was** not of God. Josiah's younger days were spent wisely. **It is** good to serve God in youthful days. Josiah **had** a real desire to know God's **will**. **Such a** true and honest desire **will** not **be** frustrated (**Ps. 43: 3**). **He that willeth** to do **His will shall** know of **the** teaching (**John 7: 17**).

It is sad to think of **such a** great man failing in **his later** years, meddling in other men's matters. Josiah **was** going astray and someone outside **the** people of God **rebuked him**. Josiah **refused** to listen and **died** for it. **Let us remember this**; Josiah restored and **kept the** Passover, and **set the** priests in **their charges** and **encouraged them** to **the** service of **the** house of **the** Lord. **He was a good man**, and **faithful is the** recording, '**All his** days they **departed** not from following **the** Lord' (**2 Chr. 34: 33**). **Neville Coomer**

From Middlesbrough: **This** story of God's dealings **with His** ancient people **reveals** once more **the** patience and long-suffering of God.

Between **the** calling out of **Abram** and **the** covenant **with** God's people, almost 500 years intervened. Between **the** revelation to Jacob of God's house, and **the** dedication of a house for God in **the midst** of **His** people in **the** land, lay a period of almost **700** years. Truly 'one day **is with the** Lord **as a** thousand years, **and a** thousand years **as one** day' (**2 Pet. 3: 8**). **Yet** in only **three** centuries, **the** ten tribes of **Israel** **had** gone into captivity and vanished from **the** Scriptural record, and one and a half centuries **later**, **Judah** also **was** **captive**, **the** Temple looted and burned, **the** land lying fallow for **its** long **Sabbath**.

In **the** life of Manasseh **we see** how one man can destroy **the** work of another. **Hezekiah** **had** restored **the** worship of

God, torn down **the** altars of **Baal** and driven out **the** heathen priests. Manasseh soon restored **the** evil things, **dealt with** wizards, **shed** innocent blood and turned **the** hearts of **the** people **away** from God. The warnings **of the** prophets meant nothing to him; **therefore** God abandoned him **to** his enemies **who** carried him captive **to** Babylon. **So** ends **the** record in **the** book of Kings [Comment 2]. However Chronicles shows again **the** longsuffering **of** God, who saw his repentance and restored him for **a** short period **to** his throne, so **that he** could undo some of **the** evil of his long reign, **a** reign so wicked **that he was** likened to **Ahab**, **that** most evil of kings.

Josiah, in contrast, **was** a good king from his earliest childhood. **He had** Hilkiah **the** priest as adviser, and although **he** inherited **a** legacy of idolatry, his wisdom and **zeal** for God's things caused **the** historian to liken him to 'David his **father**'. **As** a young man **he** began to cleanse and **restore the** Temple and **there the** book of **the Law** was found. **It** was indeed strange **that** God's **Law had** been lost in God's house [Comment 9]. Neither **the** priest nor **the** scribe **seemed** to know of its existence or of **the** lessons in it. **Josiah**, on hearing Deuteronomy **read** to him, realised how **far** Judah **had** strayed from God's pattern. **It** is to his credit **that he** sought to restore **the** Passover, **the** offerings, **the** courses of **the** priests **and the** singers **that** David **had** set and **the** porters **at the** gates.

The change of **heart** of God's people seems to **have** been **a** transient thing, for soon they turned again to **Baal** and **the** abominations, and shortly after **the death** of Josiah, Jeremiah **the** prophet proclaimed against **them**, and **the** land entered into its long Sabbath.

W. C. T.

From Nottingham: Manasseh was one of **the** worst kings **in the** history of Judah. **He despised the** house **of** God and **the** evils to which **he** sank in relation **to the** house **are** epitomised in **the** words of 2 Chr. 33: 4, 5. The **dreadful** catalogue of practised evil is **preserved** for **us** in 2 Chr. 33: 2-9.

The word of **the** Lord went unheeded (2 Chr. 33: 10) and eventually Manasseh was carried away captive. Then, in his distress, **he** repented and on his restoration **he** displayed some of **the** fruits of repentance by redressing some of his evil **acts** with reference to **the** house and service of God. **But the damage** was done and so grievous **were the** evils in **the**

BIBLE STUDIES

sight of God that He pronounced future judgement upon Jerusalem and Judah. The house was to suffer because of the failure of Manasseh.

Josiah was only a boy when he came to the throne (2 Chr. 34: 1). Eight years after his accession, at sixteen years of age, he began to seek after God and it was not long before he realised the idolatrous state of the nation. He set about to purge the evil. Thus it was that a young man was exercised in his heart about those affairs which were dear to his God. It is clear that Josiah had a personal exercise and so, too, must we have if we are to rise to our responsibilities in respect of the house of God today. Perhaps as he grew up he learned from others of the ways of his grandfather and father and, by the grace of God, he determined not to follow in their evil ways.

Josiah's purpose of heart in relation to the house of God led him to the word of God. It may seem remarkable to us that the words of the law had been so neglected that Hilkiah had to say, 'I have found the book of the law' (2 Chr. 34: 15). The king's reaction on hearing the word of the Lord, that is, the humbling of his heart to be obedient, is greatly to his credit and must have strengthened the position of the house in his day. It is instructive to notice that Josiah gave prominence to the service of the house of God, and the great Passover feast which was kept must have brought joy to the heart of God and some measure of revival to His people.

For us today there are many lessons in Josiah's attitude to the house. There is the constant need to repair the house of God subject, as it is, to attacks from within and without. The exercise that the king had, to purge out the evil, must always be before us and our guide to the service of the house should be the Scriptures.

It is sad to read of Josiah's end. For a man who had so loved the house of God to allow himself to dabble in matters which were not his concern must lead to disaster. May we remember the Lord's command to us (Mat 28: 19, 20) and not involve ourselves in affairs which belong to the world around us.

R. Hickling

From **St. Helens**: Manasseh was only 12 years old when he became king, but he reigned for 55 years. Early in his reign he began to 'do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord' similar to those things which the heathen people had

done before the Lord had cast them out. He was an evil influence on his son (2 Kin. 21: 6) and provoked the Lord to anger [Comment 3]. He desecrated the house of the Lord, and seduced others to do the same. It behoved the righteous God ultimately to punish the sins of Manasseh, who was brought very low before he finally humbled himself (2 Chr. 33: 12), and this is equally true today. Even the Psalmist could say, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray' (Ps. 119: 67).

Often good fathers can have bad sons, but equally so, bad fathers can have good sons. There is a complete contrast with Josiah who was only six when Manasseh died after a reign of 55 years. It is probable that Josiah had received good advice at a tender age during his father's twilight years, and today the older, maturer saints can pass on good advice that might achieve results at a later date. It is important that the precious truths of the house of God are passed on at an early age [Comment 4].

When only sixteen years of age, he began to seek after the God of David, and at twenty years of age began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. By diligent seeking (2 Chr. 34: 14) the book of the Law of God, which had been given to Moses, was found, as it is written, 'If any man willeth to do His will ...' and the book revealed God's will and showed to Josiah where his father and the people had gone wrong [Comment 5]. Equally so, the Scriptures are the only direct guide to the truths of the house of God and we must not be influenced by what may purely outwardly appeal to us. Our many failures indicate that we have many temptations to overcome.

K. J. Gutteridge

From Vancouver, B. C.: One wonders how such a good king as Hezekiah could have produced so bad a son as Manasseh. He was born during those fifteen years that God had added to Hezekiah's life. Manasseh's reign of fifty-five years was not only the longest but the most evil of all Judah's kings. Manasseh himself promoted:

1. *Idolatry:* he set up graven images within the house of God. How he must have hated the first two commandments, so that worship of anything other than Jehovah was promoted. Included were snake worship, spiritism, worship of the heavenly bodies, and even child sacrifice. The service of God became perverted under this fanatical idolater. This was contrary to God's way of things within His house.

BIBLE STUDIES

2. *Immorality*: closely associated with idol-worship were legalised vice, sadism, homosexuality, prostitution and even murder. Instead of being separate from the nations around, the people associated with the house were imitating the other nations to a greater degree of evil.

3. *Blood purges*: when the prophets of Jehovah denounced Manasseh's wickedness they suffered retaliation. Jerusalem was filled with innocent blood. The king silenced the prophets but he could not overcome God's word. It was the word of God that overcame Manasseh in judgement.

The account given in Chronicles reveals something that is not related in Kings. Manasseh was taken prisoner by the Assyrians and most cruelly treated. In distress and despair he realised his terrible guilt before God. He humbled himself, and pleaded for forgiveness. God in His infinite mercy heard his prayer, forgave his sins and even restored his kingdom. What amazing mercy when one considers all that this king had done against Jehovah, the people of God, and the house of God. The same mercy is seen displayed by the Son of God when on the cross He said, 'Father, forgive them'. If such a person as Manasseh could be granted forgiveness and restoration, then any person or people can receive like treatment if approach is made to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Josiah, a delightful God-fearing lad, was eight when he came to the throne. His mother's influence must have been good and godly. At sixteen he sought after Jehovah, and at twenty he instituted reforms. When he was twenty-six he was deeply disturbed by what he read in the newly-found book of the law of God. The king just could not keep the revelation to himself. It was meant for all the kingdom. So in the house of God everyone, great and small heard the book being read. At that time the people were ignorant of God's standards. They were living by their own code of behaviour. Jesus declared, 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures'. Likewise in our day God holds us responsible to know His revelation. Initially there was unhappiness, but as the people were willing to adjust and obey, peace and joy resulted.

John Robinson

From Birkenhead: It is a mystery of life that such a wicked king as Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah—a king whose life was devoted to reversing the evil of his father. During

BIBLE STUDIES

Manasseh's 55 year reign—longer than any king in either kingdom—all the good example of Hezekiah's reign was lost. The story of his life is in two parts. The first was characterised by departure from God and decline in morals. Many who resisted him were put to death. The second part of Manasseh's life is only recorded in 2 Chronicles and tells of his being taken captive to Babylon. There he repented and cried to the Lord who answered his prayer and granted deliverance and his restoration as king. The repentant king removed the strange gods and idolatrous altars and rebuilt the altar of the Lord, offering sacrifices thereon, but the reformation was too late to save the land. The lesson of his reign is that certain sins repented of may be forgiven, but their consequences stand (2 Kin. 23: 26; Jer. 15: 1-4).

Josiah had a bad father, Amon, but had encouragement from a good mother, Jedidah, and the prophets of his day, in seeking to follow after the Lord. Josiah commenced reigning at the age of eight and after eight years began to seek after the Lord. At the age of twenty his exercise resulted in his destroying idols and altars to false gods. An attack was also launched on false priests. Work on the restoration of the Temple was undertaken and during this a copy of the book of the Law was discovered. There followed a public reading of this (which should have been performed regularly at seven-year intervals—(Deut. 31: 10, 11) and a repentant spirit was the result, with a pledge to observe the law in future days (2 Chr. 34: 30-32). The celebration of the Passover was reinstated and the joy at this time was likened to that in the days of Samuel. Josiah's life ended sadly with his going to battle against Neco, king of Egypt in the face of the word of the Lord to refrain from doing so. He was mortally wounded by archers, and after his death, with his good influence gone, the people went rapidly into decline. There is every encouragement from Josiah's experiences for those living in adverse conditions, that their influence may, under the hand of God, be used to hold back the tide of evil, which would otherwise come in like a flood.

AM., R. D. W.

From Derby: They worshipped and served the created thing (mar.) rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever' (Rom. 1: 25).

The abominations of Manasseh (and his son Amon) are

BIBLE STUDIES

touched upon briefly in **Ezek. 8** [Comment **6**] including **perhaps** those of other evil kings and many of their **people**, a summary of which is included in **the** words of **the** Lord's witness, Stephen, in **Acts 7: 41-43**. After **the** repentance and restoration of this king (which is a faithful fulfilment of **Is. 55: 6-8**, '**Let the** wicked forsake his way... and **let** him return unto **the** Lord, for **He** will **have** mercy upon **him**; and **to** our God, for **He** will abundantly pardon'), **God** nevertheless would not change His purpose to send **Judah** into captivity to **Babylon** (see **2 Kin. 23: 26, 27**, also **ch. 24: 3, 4**). Some special features relating to king Manasseh are:

1. That **he had the** longest reign of any king of **Israel** or **Judah**.
2. His repentance **was real**, as seen in his subsequent works.
3. The people's repentance **was** only partial; they sought to do **the** right thing **but** in **the** wrong **places**.
4. His repentance is not recorded in **the** book of **the** kings of **Israel**.

Josiah (son of Amon) **was** a good son of a **bad father**, like king Hezekiah, **who was** also a good father of a **bad son** (Manasseh). Some of **the** doings of Josiah **were the** subject of prophecy recorded over **three** centuries before (**1 Kin. 13: 2**), and **he was** named, which demonstrates **the** importance of his mission and his work for **the** house of God. **He started** by clearing away **the** rubbish out of **the** house of God, then out of **the** city of Jerusalem, then out of **Judah**, and **the parts** of **the rest** of **the** land of **Israel** over which **he** reigned. The king then began repairing **the** interior of **the** house of God. During this **process** a **book was** found in **the** Temple which **was read** to king Josiah. When Josiah **heard the** words **he rent** his garments, which **was** a sincere token of an **affected heart** (see **Joel 2: 13**). **The** Lord **had** seen his rent garments and also **the** king's **humble and** tender **heart**, for **he wept** before **the** Lord. His prayer **was** heard. **The** king **gathered the** leaders and **the** people, both **great** and **small**, and **read** in **the** hearing of **all**, **the** words of **the** book. God's handmaid **the** prophetess **Huldah** spoke **as led** by **the** Spirit of God, even **as** God's **male** prophets always did, and **her** words **are** recorded in **2 Chr. 34: 23-28**. Josiah **kept** a Pass-over unto **the** Lord in Jerusalem, on **the** fourteenth day of **the** first month (**the exact date** as it is written in **Ex. 12: 2, 6**).

This Passover was the greatest ever, involving more animals because of the great number of people that were to participate. It seemed a great pity that Josiah felt it his duty to take sides with the king of Assyria, who had previously taken the king of Judah (Manasseh) a captive in chains, had bound him in fetters and carried him to Babylon. This was the will of the Lord, the purpose of which was seen subsequently. When Cyrus king of Persia was in power, he could say, 'All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven given me'. Thus the king of Babylon had the same sphere of dominion, including Judah, in the days of Josiah [Comment 11]. This is why Josiah ignored the words of Neco king of Egypt. Josiah did not seem to appreciate that God would use a heathen king to speak on His behalf, but it appears that this was so: But alas his mistake cost the king his life.

G. Conway, S. R. W.

From Galston: That God's will is best, even if it is against human reasoning, must surely be seen in the fact that God limited a good king to a reign of twenty-nine years whereas his son, who was exceedingly evil, was allowed to reign 55 years. It is sad indeed that Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, should cause Judah to turn further away from God than the nations round about them. Bearing in mind that Manasseh was only 12 when he began to reign, we wondered if some adult, his mother perhaps, had a strong influence in leading him astray. However, at some point during his reign the Lord had a dealing with Manasseh after which he repented and endeavoured to undo the evil which he had done. God granted him repentance inasmuch as He allowed him to lead Judah back to the worship of the Lord. Manasseh's evil deeds are recorded in 2 Kin. 21: 2-7 and 2 Chr. 33: 2-7 but see also 2 Kin. 24: 3, 4 *For the sins of Manasseh... the Lord would not pardon'. Because of the evil of Manasseh and the people God said concerning Jerusalem that He would deliver the inhabitants into the hands of their enemies. The line (to test horizontally), the plummet (to test vertically), and the wiping as a dish and turning upside down are used figuratively to signify a thorough cleansing [Comment 7]. We assumed that this cleansing took place when Nebuchadnezzar besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and took the remnant into captivity.*

It seems that Amon, Manasseh's son, did not learn from

BIBLE STUDIES

his father's error in turning away from God. His short reign of two years was brought to an abrupt end by assassination. Although his murderers may have been zealous for the Lord and His house they should not have laid hands on one who was the 'Lord's anointed' (1 Sam. 26: 9). For their offence they were put to death.

A study of Josiah lets us see how good things can be when men seek after God and should be an encouragement to all. He was only eight when he began to reign but at sixteen he began to seek after God and at twenty he started what was to be a six years' task of purging Jerusalem and Judah from the various strange gods which abounded. He set about repairing the house of God and such was the character of those who were given the money to restore the house that they were not asked to give an account of how they had spent it.

At twenty-six, in the 18th year of his reign, he kept the Passover, a Passover so remarkable that it is written that there was none like it from the days of Samuel the prophet. Even some from the ten tribes attended. Unfortunately Josiah died in war. He should have died in peace (2 Chr. 34: 28) but he refused to listen to the word of God which came to him through Neco, king of Egypt. *Donald Gillies*

From **Hamilton (Ontario)**: Both Manasseh and Josiah were young boys when they began to reign, but their records are radically different. In Manasseh's case, even though he was brought up in a godly home he turned aside and became an idolater. Josiah on the other hand did not follow his father's footsteps (the bad example of Amon) but became a worshipper of Jehovah. We wondered if his grandfather Manasseh, who repented in the latter part of his life, had a good influence on Josiah. He did not die until Josiah was six years old.

In both cases, leadership by example comes out very strongly. In Manasseh's case he led the nation into Baal worship, dealing with evil spirits and desecrating God's house by putting in it a graven image. His influence caused the people (in the words of 2 Chr. 33: 9) to do more evil than the nations whom Jehovah destroyed. Josiah on the other hand gave good leadership by his godly example in doing that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, walking in the ways of David his father. The actions of both these

men in relation to God's house was the result of their attitude to God's word. In Manasseh's case he was influenced by the nations around who according to the word of God should have been destroyed from the land of Canaan. Secondly, by personally giving heed to God's word he would have avoided all the sins of which he was guilty. These sins have always been an abomination to God and provoked him to anger. Examples are seen in the 'Golden Calf and the witch of Endor. Ex. 22: 18 states Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live'. Deut. 18: 12 tells us, 'For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto the Lord'. Manasseh's sins not only affected his own generation but as a result the nation was taken captive during the reign of Jehoiakim. Josiah in contrast when the word of God was found and read in his presence, rent his clothes and then made a covenant before Jehovah and with all his heart promised to keep the words of the covenant and caused all in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it.

The lesson for today of course is quite obvious regarding separation from the world. The word of God is still powerful and able to keep us as individuals or as a people from the lure of the world. There were things associated with idolatry which were attractive to the flesh. Similarly today there are attractive things in our world. We have been translated 'from darkness to light' and 'from the power of Satan unto God'. Once again leadership by example becomes very important. The leaders of God's people today must see clearly from God's word the path of separation. If this is so, if the leaders take the lead and the people offer themselves willingly—God will be glorified in His people. *R. Young, N. MacKay*

From Hayes: Manasseh came to the throne at the age of 12 years, having been born during the 'extra' years granted to Hezekiah. We are not told who acted as regent while Manasseh was a boy. So little did Manasseh reverence the true and living God that he set up the altars of his false gods within the Temple itself. Manasseh doubtless considered himself to be a very religious man; the worship of Jehovah only did not satisfy him. He must worship Baal, Asherah, Molech and the heavenly bodies. He must consult astrologers and mediums.

Evil beliefs and philosophies inevitably bring forth evil

BIBLE STUDIES

deeds, so that he sacrificed his own children (presumably to Molech; **see Lev. 18: 21**), and **'shed innocent blood very much'** (2 Kin. 21: 16).

Then **came a remarkable crisis—Manasseh was captured** by **the Assyrians** and taken to Babylon. Here **'he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.'** **That which he had heard from his father but rejected, came to his heart with power.** His prayers were heard; God moved **the Assyrian king to restore him to his kingdom.** **The idols and altars were taken from the Temple and thrown out of the city but not destroyed.** Manasseh commanded **the people to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.** **It is strange that there is no mention of Manasseh's repentance and restoration in the book of Kings.**

Amon reigned only two years before being assassinated **but during that time he worshipped the idols which his father had removed.**

Amon **was followed by Josiah, the last king of Judah to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.** **At sixteen years of age Josiah began to seek after the God of David his father and when twenty years old began the work of restoration which he was to carry on so thoroughly.** **He crushed to powder the idols which Manasseh had made.** **There was to be no going back this time.**

Josiah **was shocked to find how much Judah had failed to keep the Law and set about keeping the Passover in the proper manner.** **This incident shows us that constant recourse to the Scriptures is necessary to guard against error.** His reforms involved some of **the people of the broken up Northern Kingdom also (2 Chr. 34: 6 and 2 Kin. 23: 15-20).** **The Northern Kingdom itself had ceased to exist in the 6th year of Hezekiah's reign, when the Assyrians took away many of the people to Babylon and installed people from other parts of their empire, but it seems that many Israelites remained (see 2 Chr. 34: 9).**

In 2 Chr. 35: 3 the Levites are told to put the ark into the Temple. **Does this indicate that during the reign of Manasseh the Levites removed the ark and cared for it secretly?**

Jeremiah **began his ministry in the eleventh year of Josiah's reign but he says nothing about Josiah's reformation and paints a sad picture of Judah's condition (see Jer. 3: 10, for example).** **It would seem that the people's response to Josiah's leadership was outward and superficial.**

Josiah **has a** great commendation in **2 Kin. 23: 25**, He 'turned unto **the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul**'. **He was the last king of Judah who was not a vassal of Egypt or Babylon. Unhappily he meddled in the war between Egypt and Babylon and it cost him his life.**

C. R. Stoner

From Lagos: Hephzi-bah, mother of Manasseh, and Jedidah, Josiah's mother were powerful influences in the formative years of the two kings. The key of knowledge' of divine purposes was taken from Manasseh. The king rejected the multitude of counsellors who outlived his father and he shed their blood for no just cause (2 Kin. 21: 16). He turned aside from the Lord and His laws and dealt more wickedly than the heathen nations. 'For he built again the high places which Hezekiah... destroyed... he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord' (2 Chr. 33: 3-5). The righteous judgement of God struck at the foundation of Manasseh's idolatrous kingdom, and 'in chains . . . and with fetters' the Assyrians led Manasseh captive into Babylon (2 Chr. 33: 11-13). Then he learned the fear of the Lord.

Jedidah worked in the background and so stirred the spirit of Josiah that 'while he was yet young; he began to seek after the God of David his father' (2 Chr. 34: 3). First he yielded himself to be fitted by the Lord.

In the eighteenth year of his reign he commanded the repair of the house of the Lord (2 Chr. 34: 8). Josiah would be about 18 years old when the book of the Law was read in his hearing. The king rent his clothes and called for inquiry if the wrath of the Lord might be averted (2 Chr. 34: 18-28). It is noteworthy that Spirit-led revival in every age has always been founded upon the word of God. To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at My word' (Is. 66: 2). Josiah gathered the remnant of the people of God and read in their ears the words of the book of the covenant. Then he made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and to perform the words of the covenant that were written (2 Chr. 34: 29-31). Service for God by His people has always been viewed under a covenant relationship (see Ex. 19: 5, 6). The Levites were

BIBLE STUDIES

gathered and sanctified to serve the Lord according to their courses. In the fourteenth day of the first month in the eighteenth year of Josiah they killed the Passover (2 Chr. 35: 19). Thus Josiah fulfilled a service for God which had been lacking in its requirements since the days of Samuel the prophet (2 Chr. 35: 19). S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: The long reign of Manasseh began with revolt against God (2 Chr. 33: 2) but ended with a great humility and seeking after God (2 Chr. 33: 19); yet the early wickedness of Manasseh brought about the promise of the final destruction of Judah, which occurred only about fifty years later. The acts of desecration for which Manasseh was responsible (2 Chr. 33: 4, 5), against all the teaching of the priests and the word of God, moved the Lord to pronounce against him and the people (2 Kin. 21: 11-15). Many times previously God had withheld judgement because of a return to Him by king and people, but the acts of this king were too much to ignore: 'Such evil upon Jerusalem that... I will cast off the remembrance of Mine inheritance'. God had always said, 'If ye obey My commandments'... and generation after generation had accepted this condition. Manasseh's evil could not be equalled in all the history of the people. The ten tribes had already gone into captivity, a warning surely to Judah, but a stronger punishment was needed here. God brought down the host of the Assyrians on the tiny remnant of His people, and Manasseh was carried off. In the face of this, what a change we see in Manasseh's conduct! Previously ignoring God's prophets and the Law of His house, he now humbled himself greatly. This surely is where he should always have been, humble before God, doing the work God gave him in leading the people. If the early part of Manasseh's reign was spent in destroying the good done in Hezekiah's time, surely he made up for it in some degree in the latter part of his reign. God's hand of grace is ever extended to those who come in the right spirit to Him, and so it was in the time of Manasseh.

The name 'Jehovah heals' characterises the reign of Josiah. Influenced by godly men from an early age, he turned to God at the age of sixteen and began to seek after God and His truth. Even the reform of Manasseh had not brought the people back to following God truly, and it took this crusading king ten years to cleanse the land (2 Chr.

34: 8) before he could turn his attention to the core of Judaism—God's holy Temple [Comment 8]. The Temple was again in need of repair and reproduction of the services. In Hezekiah's day we are told that festival had not been kept so joyously since the time of Solomon, but in the day of Josiah it was the greatest Passover since Samuel, about 450 years before. The book of the law, generally believed to be Deuteronomy, must have been a great incentive to the young king to continue his reforming work with something concrete on which to base his ideals and learning [Comment 10]. He proceeded to follow the Law and in return God gave to him that great promise of peace in his time (2 Chr. 34: 28).

It is evident from both reigns that God's ideal of one place of worship, one order of service, could only be through men who, as leaders, were prepared to follow humbly after God, accepting Him as the One God and His Law as sacrosanct.

H. R. Dodge

COMMENTS

1. (Methil): Manasseh's commandment to serve the Lord must have seemed a little hollow to the people, who knew his former manner of life. His repentance was real, but he was unable to give the leadership which was necessary to bring the people to repentance too.

2. (Middlesbrough): 2 Kings does not record the captivity of Manasseh, although it does include a prophecy of the Lord's judgement on Judah. This was fulfilled in the national captivity in Babylon some 50 years later.

3. (**St. Helens**): It is generally thought that 'he made his son to pass through the fire' (2 Kin. 21: 6) is a reference to the offering of children in sacrifice by fire, which was a feature of the worship of Molech.

4. (**St. Helens**): Manasseh was Josiah's grandfather, not his father. Although there is great value in the teaching of young children, one rather doubts whether Josiah could have received much instruction about the house, of God before the age of six. Perhaps there is some significance in the mention of his mother's name in 2 Kin. 22: 1.

BIBLE STUDIES

5. **(St. Helens):** It appears that the book of the Law was found by accident rather than as the result of a deliberate search.

6. **(Derby):** Ezekiel 8 is dated in the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, which is about 50 years later than the reign of Manasseh. However, the evils there described were doubtless characteristic of apostate Judah.

7. **(Galston):** I suggest that 'the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab' indicates that the same standard of judgement was to be applied to Judah as had been applied to Israel.

8. **(Leeds):** It is inadvisable to use the term 'Judaism' in relation to the true worship of God in accordance with the Scriptures. The 'New Bible Dictionary' defines Judaism as 'the religion of the Jews in contrast to that of the Old Testament.' Its characteristic is the keeping of the Law as a set of principles for living, rather than the sacrificial worship of God in His house.
P. L. H.

9. **(Middlesbrough):** The book of the law, found by Hilkiah, was probably what some have called the Temple copy'. Moses directed that the book of the law should be placed by the side of the Ark (Deut. 31: 24-26). It is evident from 2 Chr. 35: 3 that the Ark had been moved out of its place, a suggested reason for this removal is made in the paper from Hayes. The book of the law might have been dealt with in a similar manner.

10. **(Leeds):** The book that was found is described as, 'the book of the law of the Lord by the hand of Moses' (2 Chr. 34: 14 RVM). The reference to the curses written in it (2 Chr. 34: 24) direct our thoughts to Lev. 26 or Deut. 28. It is also called 'the book of the Covenant, (2 Chr. 34: 30), directing us to Ex. 24. It was, I think, a copy of the Pentateuch and 2 Chr. 34: 14 confirms its Mosaic authorship.

11. **(Derby):** It was in the reign of Jehoiakim that the king of Babylon was given, by God, authority over Judah and the surrounding nations (see Jer. 28: 14). *J. K. D. J.*

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol 46 February 1978

Interest has been shown by some contributors this month in the relationship between the people of God and the house of God.

I would understand that a clearly analogous line of principle as to the people of God and the house of God runs consistently through Israel's national history from Exodus to Malachi, and on into the New Covenant concept of 'a people for God's own possession' forming 'a spiritual house'.

The 'children of Israel' were such by reason of racial descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with whom certain divine covenants had been made so that irrespective of their collective 'national' failures they were 'as touching the election' inalienably 'beloved for the fathers' sake' (Rom. 11: 28, 29). But at Sinai God put before them the conditional prospect of being 'a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation' (Ex. 19: 5, 6). This was dependent upon their fidelity to God's word and covenant. His desire to dwell among them was revealed when they had assumed responsibility as a holy nation (Ex. 25: 8). The principle is clearly expressed that God's earthly dwelling is to be among a redeemed, separated and obedient people.

During the 70 years' Babylonian captivity, and again since Israel's rejection of the Lord Jesus, Israel as a nation cannot function corporately in obedience to the divine covenant, and accordingly God does not have His dwelling-place among them. Yet during the Babylonian captivity the faith of such men as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel shone out brilliantly, enhanced by the very darkness of the national disaster. True sons of Abraham, racially and spiritually, they glorified God as fully as their imposed circumstances allowed. Yet they were deprived of the spiritual experiences associated with the house of God, because Israel had failed corporately to maintain their standing as a 'holy nation'. Israelites scattered in exile did not constitute a people in the sense of Ex. 19: 5, as Moses forewarned (see Lev. 26, contrasting vv. 11, 12 with vv. 33-35).

BIBLE STUDIES

The New Covenant relationship between the people and the house is equally clear. From Jew and Gentile God calls together those 'which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God' (1 Pet. 2: 10). They are described as 'a holy nation, a people for God's own possession' (1 Pet. 2: 9), terms similar to those used of Israel in Ex. 19: 5. Those forming this people are also 'living stones... built up a spiritual house' (1 Pet. 2: 5). The spiritual conditions of separation and obedience which constitute them together as a people also govern their association to form God's house—whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end' (Heb. 3: 6).

Departure from the spiritual conditions on which believers may be associated to form 'a people for His own possession' and a 'spiritual house' will in due course lead to the dissolution of both the 'people' and the 'house'. Children of God may be identified from others in a wide variety of contexts, just as children of Israel may be racially identifiable in various national contexts. But the house of God in this era is dependent upon children of God being corporately associated on the basis of the apostles' teaching to form a people for God's own possession. New Covenant revelation does not equate 'children of God' with 'the people of God' in the sense that this latter term is used in 1 Pet. 2: 9, 10. Nor does it allow the possibility of the 'spiritual house' existing apart from the corporate response of a separated people to fulfil the 'whole counsel of God'.

Inspired Scripture 'furnishes the man of God completely'. This month's study is of great practical help in relating divine principle to the contemporary situation. We learn that the people of God may forfeit their heritage through apostasy, at the same time losing their standing as the house of God. Godly individuals may show faith and dedication of a very high order, even though deprived of the privileges of holy nationhood and association with God's house. Restoration and maintenance of holy nationhood is essential to the existence of the house of God. The 'people' and the 'house' are inextricably linked in divine purpose. G. P.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE HOUSE- LESSONS OF CAPTIVITY

From Nottingham: Many had been the warnings God sent

by His servants, 'rising up early and sending'. There had been kings who had sought the Lord and may well have led many in the paths of righteousness, but generally speaking it had been a long sad story of decline. Starting it seems with Solomon's errors, it had continued until the inevitable happened when Judah and Benjamin went into captivity. There were some who had been faithful to God among those who were carried away. With heavy hearts they would leave their beloved city. Did they cast a glance behind them and see the house of God in ruins and the walls and gates blackened by fire?

Ps. 137 gives us an insight into the heartfelt longings of the God-fearing and God-seeking captives. It has been said by some that these longings were prompted by the marked contrast in their physical surroundings. The flat, uninteresting terrain of the Euphratean plain, was so different from their homeland. While this may be true to some degree there was a much deeper exercise. It was a matter of the heart. The heart-exercise produced a visible effect; they wept. They remembered Zion, the city and the house which they had before treated so lightly. Their captors wanted them to sing. How could they sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? These songs belonged to the Place of the Name; they had their rightful place in the service of the house of God.

We remember with deep gratitude to God the exercise of heart which constrained our spiritual forefathers to leave behind all that did not conform to the divine pattern. When the truth was revealed to them they felt grieved at the unscripturalness of much with which they were associated. They could no longer 'sing their songs in a strange land'; they must return to the Place of the Name. May we desire to sing the songs of the Lord and of Zion in God's house today, and make sure we are never found trying to sing them in a 'strange land'.

R. Hickling

From Vancouver: As with many events, the dissolution of the house was not a result of an immediate breakdown. In our studies we have witnessed the rise and fall of kings, good and bad, each of the latter contributing to the ultimate fall. Although perhaps the constant wavering from good to bad and back again was a cause for the confusion and weakening of the fibre of the people, the root cause of the

BIBLE STUDIES

captivity was the penchant of the bad kings and people to follow after strange gods. Despite warnings, they persisted in evil. Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah put the final exclamation mark to the sad story. All are recorded as being evil and at the same time only puppets, each in turn being led away to Babylon. In it all, however, there were the godly who were carried away and mocked at; they wept by the rivers of Babylon.

The question arises as to whether God's people and God's house are synonymous. The house was gone but the people still existed, though in captivity. It was among this remnant that God immediately commenced to foster the desire to restore the house. The promise was there (Jer. **25: 12** and **29: 10**) that the captivity would last only seventy years and so God's sovereign will put down kings and raised up others that the future decree could go forward. If the spiritual house was in similar dissolution throughout eighteen centuries A. D., did there still exist a people or does the type not apply? [see Editorial].

Jeremiah tells us that it was the poorest who were left to be farmers in the land. Imagine their plight! They were already poor, they had no strong brethren to rely on, and their reason for living, their worship to their God which they had ignored so long, was impossible. It was the strong, 4600 in all, who were fettered and carried off over a number of sieges and years [Comment 1]. Daniel's prayer in ch. 9 lays all bare as to their sin and blame but at the same time appeals to God to remember the real reason for the holy city. The sanctuary was desolate (v. 17) but their present desolations (v. 18) cried out for His mercy, forgiveness and a remembrance for the needed link between the people and the place. God's longsuffering and promises are sure and eternal so that restoration and renewal are always possible.

J. C. Bell

From **Barrhead**: They seemed as men that lifted up axes upon a thicket of trees. And now all the carved work thereof together they break down with hatchet and hammers' (Ps. 74: 5-6). Thus the enemies of Israel laid waste the beautiful Temple. The word of God in Lev. **26: 14-45** and Deut **28: 15-68** came to pass. The warnings went unheeded; warnings that were sent by the Lord early, but the people mocked the messengers, despised God's word, scoffed at His pro-

phets 'until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy'. The wrath of the Lord had risen against the children of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 21: 4-9) but then there was a remedy, a healing. Now the house of God was reduced to the level of the heathen and there was no remedy or healing.

In 2 Chr. 36: 17 we note that the Lord had now disowned the people, their house had been left desolate. No longer were they *God's* young men but *their* young men, no longer was it *God's* sanctuary but *their* sanctuary. The key thought would seem to be that there was no remedy or healing. In the early chapters of Revelation the seven churches received messages. If they did not repent, the lampstand would be removed. It is possible to be correct in position but wrong in condition, and possible for the people of God today to fall into such a state that the lampstand can be removed.

Although there was still a faithful remnant among a degenerate people the captivity went on; but the Lord watched over His remnant people and also the vessels of the house which were all returned in total.

The captive people now in a strange land saw the error of their ways. They who mocked, despised and scoffed at the word of the Lord now experienced the same from their captors [Comment 2]. The people wept. They had their harps but no desire in their hearts to play them. 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' (Ps. 137: 4). How precious were the memories of Zion then! Many today have learned the same lesson: they fall away from spiritual privilege before they learn to appreciate it. While we are having fellowship in enjoyment of the privileges of the house of God, let us give God the preeminence in all things.

R. Green

From Birkenhead: Our study covers the reign of four evil kings. Events rapidly moved towards a crisis with many going into captivity in Babylon and judgement falling on Jerusalem as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 21: 10). There were many occasions when the word of the Lord through Jeremiah was not received. Jehoiakim imagined that burning the roll containing the message would dispose of it (Jer. 36: 23). Zedekiah, his servants and the people did not listen (Jer. 37: 2); the people left in the land ignored advice and

BIBLE STUDIES

went into **Egypt** to their **own** harm (Jer. 42: 7-22). No **people** can prosper in God's **sight** when conducting themselves in **this** way.

The house of God was ransacked; vessels and treasures were taken away to Babylon, **the** house burned, and **the** walls of **the** city broken down (**2 Chr. 36: 18, 19**). So **was** fulfilled **the** wrath determined against Jerusalem (**2 Kin. 23: 26, 27**).

In **the** face of such difficulties **there** were those whose thoughts and lives **were** ordered before **the** Lord. When **the** captives in Babylon **were** asked to sing **the** Lord's song they **refused**, realising **that** it was inappropriate to do **that** which **had** its association with God's house, when **far** away and in a strange land.

The life of Daniel shone brightly in such a **dark** day. **He** was a righteous man (Ezek. **14: 14**) and whilst in captivity **he** prayed towards Jerusalem **as** indicated by Solomon (**2 Chr. 6: 21**) and trusted **that** **the** Lord would **hear** and answer prayer. His impassioned **pleas** **did** not go unanswered. His contrite spirit is **clear** **as** **he** casts himself and **the** people upon God's mercy and **trusts** **that** God will restore His people to their **place** for **the** glory of His own **great** Name (Dan. **9**) [Comment **3**].
R. L. S., R. D. W.

From Derby: **The** Lord, who **has** ever known **the** end from **the** beginning of **all** things, **had** before determined to **cast** Judah and Jerusalem out of His sight. When Judah **saw** and knew of **the** exile of **the** ten tribes they **did** not receive **the** warning, **but** did even more wickedly than **the** ten tribes (Jer. **3: 8-11**). Josiah's **three** sons, who **succeeded** to **the** throne of Judah, **did** very little **better** than their grandfather Amon. Jehoiakim's impious **act** in burning **the** parchments containing **the** word of God through Jeremiah brought **the** prophet's announcement of **the** end of **the** Davidic dynasty, **as** **he** would **have** none to sit on **the** throne of David (Jer. 36: 30). Coniah, by reason of his being **the** firstborn, would normally **have** been **the** king of Judah, **but** this **was** against God's purpose, for judgement **had** already been **passed** on Jehoiakim (Jer. **22: 30**): 'Write ye this man **childless**... for no man of **his** seed shall prosper, sitting upon **the** throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah'. **But** while Coniah never **became** king, **he** was a prince and **had** a godly grandson in

Zerubbabel (see Mat. 1: 12) in the line of the promised Messiah [Comment 4].

Zedekiah was the last king to reign over Judah. The Lord Jesus Christ at His first advent was rejected and crucified. The nation of Israel still awaits her Messiah, and abides in unbelief in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

In Ps. 137: 1-4 it would appear that a repentant company of exiles were manifesting sorrow, and were realising they had lost what was now beyond their reach [see Comment 2]. However, the God of Israel was providing His captives with some spiritual help through the ministry of His prophets Ezekiel, Daniel and others who had been carried away to Babylonia. Daniel, a man greatly beloved, prayed to God that His anger might be turned away from His holy mountain.

S. Wymer, S. R. W.

From Edinburgh: The deterioration in the moral and spiritual condition of the nation was as rapid as it was certain under the influence of the four kings who followed Josiah, each successively worse than his predecessor. We noted that Isaiah had predicted this course of events (Is. 39).

The pollution of the house in Zedekiah's time brought Judah's iniquity to the full, despite all God's longsuffering, 'till there was no remedy'. The outpouring of divine judgement became inevitable. By this time the people had made the cardinal error of looking to Egypt for their deliverance from the oppressor. Their departure was complete. The principle is irrefutable: God can and will cast off His people for persistent disobedience (Is. 47: 6).

The exiles' 700-mile journey to the most populous and busy city of the time must have been wearisome and perhaps afforded the people time for contemplation of the error of their ways [see Comment 2]. It seems clear that some of the exiles were treated badly at least in the early days of their sojourn in Babylon (Is. 47: 6). It was suggested that Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jer. 29: 4-7) may have been written to defuse an incipient rebellion which was brewing and of which he from afar could see the futility [Comment 5].

The attitudes of the individual exiles differed widely and the parallels for our time should not be missed. Jeremiah in his letter urged them to settle down (29: 4-7). Some took this as licence to let their roots go down deeply. They be-

BIBLE STUDIES

came indifferent adjusted to the Babylonian way of life, and Zion became a dim memory. As the years passed many prospered and their spiritual vision dimmed. There was the danger of their becoming a nation of tradesmen rather than a nation of priests. As a result, as the hour of liberation approached many were unwilling or unprepared to respond. In contrast the godly grew in spiritual maturity. There was no house, no sacrifice, no service; only a memory of the 'Place of the Name'. It was the godly remnant then who recognised that the Lord's song was reserved for the house of God and refused to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. They lived and looked for the day of their redemption!

J. M. L

From Hamilton, Ontario: Jehoahaz was the son of Josiah, a good king who returned the house of God to its proper function. His Son, who did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, reigned only for three months. He was the first of four successive evil kings who reigned until the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the house of God. Jehoahaz was deposed by Pharaoh-Neco, king of Egypt. His successors rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar who took each of them captive to Babylon. He also took away some of the goodly vessels of the house of God with each king he took captive.

The Chaldeans were used by God to punish the Israelites because the priests and the people were polluting the house of God; trespassing after the abomination of the heathen; mocking and despising the word of God that came to them through the prophets; and the land was not given its sabbaths. While in captivity in Babylon they wept because they were mockingly asked to sing the songs of Zion and they could not, because they were not in the Place of the Name.

It was not until the seventy years were fulfilled as prophesied by Jeremiah (25: 12) and the exiles sought God's face in repentance (e. g. Dan. 9: 16) that the movement to return and rebuild God's house in Jerusalem took place. But it is surprising [Comment 6] to read that God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his kingdom that 'God... hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah' (2 Chr. 36: 23; Ezra 1: 1, 2).

In looking at the experiences of God's ancient people we

can see lessons that may help His people today. They should cherish and hold dearly the word of God, reverence God's house and not pollute it with things of worldly principle, and pray for the continuation of godly leadership.

John Anthony, Gord Flack

From Hamilton, Scotland: Our study portion re-emphasizes the recurring theme of the long-suffering and patience of God towards His people.

'And the Lord, the God of their fathers, sent to them by His messengers... because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place' (2 Chr. 36: 15).

'Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak... all the words that I command thee... keep not back a word. It may be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way' (Jer. 26: 2-3).

But God's character is perfectly balanced, and the dissolution of the house of God demonstrates His righteousness and holiness.

The holy and righteous One, of whom the prophet Habakkuk (1: 12, 13) wrote, could no longer be restrained by long-suffering and patience. So the terrible words of divine wrath, fury and anger are revealed in the prophecy of Ezekiel: Thus shall Mine anger be accomplished, and I will satisfy My fury upon them... Moreover I will make thee a desolation and a reproach... and a taunt, an instruction and astonishment' (5: 13-15). The swiftness and fierceness of divine fury as evidenced by the destruction of the city of God, the house of God and the people of God was not simply a momentary judgement, for during long years of exile they remembered Zion. How full of pathos are the words of Ps. 137!

The lessons of history can soon be forgotten. Paul, as recorded in Acts 20, warned the overseers concerning future developments: 'I know that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye'. At a much later date the apostle John wrote (Rev. 2 and 3) concerning the dangers to and in the churches of God in Asia, and we know how swiftly these things came to fruition, warnings having gone unheeded.

Matthew Carruthers

From Kingston-upon-Thames: The first linking in the Scrip-

BIBLE STUDIES

tures of **the** chronology of a Gentile ruler **with that of the** people of God coincides **with** commencement of **the** dissolution of **the** house of God and **marks the** rise of Babylon **as** a world-power (Dan. 1: 1; Jer. 25: 1; Dan. 2: 37-38). Babylon's decline coincides approximately **with the** return of **the** remnant to Jerusalem (Dan. 5; 9: 2, 25-27). **Thus we** learn to **view the rise** of world-powers, **as** does God, in relation to **the** 'fortunes' of **the** house of God. From **such a** platform **we see that** companion scriptures in Daniel, concerning **the fates of the** nations **which** today **await** fulfilment, **view** those nations in relation to **the** house of God of **a future** day [Comment 7].

Nebuchadnezzar's crusade against **the** people of God included **the** incitement of traditional enemies (**2 Kin. 24: 2**) **as well as** three definite campaigns (Jer. 52: 28-34) [Comment 8]. **Thus the** dissolution **did** not happen **all at** once. Indeed **the demise of the** ten tribes **was but** the beginning of **the** process (Jer. 23: 13-14). Nebuchadnezzar **was** raised **up to do this because of the** departure of **the** people of God from **the** word of God. **All** manner of pagan practices **had** been introduced to **the** very house of God (**Ezek. 8**). **There was** no self-judgement **but** rather complacency **fuelled by the** selection of **suitable** ministry and **the** rejection of those prepared to **speak the** truth (Jer. 26: 20-24; **28: 1-17**). **The** dissolution **is** most marked by **the** unusual situation of those leaving **the place** being in **the will** of God **despite the** house of God **still** standing and God dwelling therein (Jer. 24, 29). Finally, however, God **Himself had to leave the Temple**, and **His** presence departed **as** dramatically **as it came**, presumably for those who **had** eyes to **see** from **the Mount of Olives** (**Ezek. 10: 4, 18-19; 11: 23**) [Comment 9]. Then followed **the actual** destruction **with** judgement beginning **at the** house of God **but** excluding those **faithful** ones who **had** been ignored by their fellows **but** honoured by God (**Ezek. 9; Jer. 35**).

By comparing **this** dissolution **with that which** happened to **the** spiritual house of **New** Testament history **we** may extract lessons so as to **be** prepared for **such** an event happening in our time. Departure from **the** word of God (**2 Tim. 2: 17-18**) may accompany submission to influences of **the flesh** and **be** associated **with the** introduction of alien **practices** copied from outside (**1 Cor. 4: 6**). Corrective

ministry may be stifled or circumvented by leaders who do not wish to hear unpalatable truths (2 Tim. 4: 3-4). There may be a preoccupation with place rather than service (3 John 9-10). Although there is a precise moment when God leaves His house, the process of dissolution takes time to develop and may include division of the people, contrary to (Acts 20: 31, Rom. 16: 17) or according to (2 Tim. 2: 19) the doctrine, to form rival groupings separated by geography as well as teaching. In addition, however, there is provision for a remnant who may be forced against their will away from the Place or who may continue as a persecuted minority, looking to the Lord for future deliverance (2 Tim. 3: 12-14).

In the event of such a catastrophe occurring there is clear indication in the Scriptures as to how the disciple should behave, for the events of Daniel and Ezekiel are set in just such a period. In Babylon Daniel was known to be a diligent observer of the 'law of his God' (Dan. 6: 5) but this did not extend to his rendering service appropriate to the house of God (Ps. 137: 4). From his youth he and his companions lived a life of faith and kept the law as far as they as individuals could in, for example, maintaining separation from the world (Dan. 1) or in daily prayer-life (Dan. 6). But the fact that they could not serve at God's altar did not allow them to serve at the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image.

Ian E. Penn

From Lagos: Jehoiachim was only eight and his reign as king in Judah lasted three months and ten days, after which God removed him to Babylon (2 Chr. 36: 9-10) [Comment 10]. At such a tender age and for the brief period of his kingship, he is viewed in the spotlight of divine assessment as typifying the sad and fearful condition of God's people in the grip of sin and departure in heart from the 'God of Bethel'. The continued privilege of association with the divinely ordained place of worship has always been subject to the spiritual condition of the people of God (Ps. 24: 3-6). Believers in Christ, otherwise called stones, who have been 'built up a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood' (1 Pet. 2: 5), have a responsibility to hold fast unto the end (Heb. 3: 6).

No doubt there were those of the captivity who were contented in their lot. There were others, perhaps only a small remnant who responded to the continued work of the Spirit

BIBLE STUDIES

in the heart. Thus, we read their confession: 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion' (Ps. 137: 1). They knew that the years spent outside 'the Place' were wasted, they were years of reproach and desolations (Ps. 137: 3, Dan. 9: 16-18). They that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion' (Ps. 137: 3). Their spiritual condition did not commend them to witness for God: 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' (Ps. 137: 4) [Comment 11]. Some today have forgotten that the Lord had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles... to whom He also showed Himself alive... appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God' (Acts 1: 2-3, see also Mat. 21: 43; Luke 12: 32). We do well to pray with the Psalmist: 'O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me: let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; and... I will praise Thee, O God, My God' (Ps. 43: 3-4).

E. Bassey, S. Coker

From Leeds: The years immediately prior to the time of captivity in Babylon were very dark and sombre years. Not only did the kings practise evil continually, but even the chiefs of the priests transgressed and polluted God's house (2 Chr. 36: 14). Following the good reign of Josiah, Jehoahaz, aged 23, reigned only three months before Pharaoh-Neco overthrew and carried him away into Egypt. Jehoiakim, aged 25, was permitted to reign for eleven years. In his reign Nebuchadnezzar came up and took him down to Babylon, at the same time carrying away of the vessels of the house of the Lord and putting them into his own temple in Babylon.

Jehoiachin, at the tender age of eight [see Comment 10] was only permitted to reign for 3 months and 10 days before he too was taken down into Babylon. Zedekiah, aged 21, reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. The reigns of these four kings covered the short span of about 22 years, and all did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.

The time of the captivity in Babylon, foretold by the prophet Isaiah in the days of Hezekiah (Is. 39: 6-8) and also by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 20: 4-5, 25: 1-11, 32: 26-35), was fulfilled in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 39). Jeremiah himself became a prisoner (Jer. 37: 15-16, 21: 38: 28) [Comment 12].

In these sad days, men of character and sincere men of God, such as Daniel, came forth (Dan. 1: 1-6) and in his prayer (Dan. 9: 16-19) his thoughts were towards the sanctuary of God in Jerusalem, the place where God had set His Name.

Captivity binds and restricts, consequently it is both dispiriting and disheartening. Those who are captives live on in the continual hope of being set free and if they lose this hope, they are miserable indeed. When in captivity their captors made waste of them, requiring from them mirth and songs (Ps. 137: 3), but how can those who are captives sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Jeremiah had foreseen that God would take away from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness (Jer. 25: 10).

H. R. Dodge, P. M. Jefferson

From **Methil**: Someone has said that the history of the Jewish nation is the history of the human race tried under the best conditions. This is true, for never was a nation so blest by God, and so highly privileged of God. But privilege brings responsibility. Israel was the nation through whom the knowledge of God was to be communicated to the rest of the nations. Instead of this we read (Ezek. 36: 16-23) that they profaned God's holy Name, and because of them God's Name was blasphemed (Rom. 2: 24). What a lesson this is for us in our day and generation! God has vouchsafed to us such a knowledge of Himself in the gospel and in the truth of His house for this dispensation.

The people of God had, at the time of our study, utterly forsaken Him and gone after idols till 'there was no remedy' (Ezek. 36; 2 Chr. 36). The last 221 years, up until the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, were occupied by four kings, each of whom did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. The divine principle is that judgement must begin at the house of God (Ezek. 9: 4, 6; Amos 3: 2; 1 Pet. 4: 17), and when God would begin to judge the nations, He begins with His own people.

We are apt to forget that in an event like the captivity the innocent suffered as well as, and because of, the guilty. We may also forget that people may be in captivity, and not wish to be freed from it. It is quite evident that many had settled down in Babylon when the cry arose to go back and rebuild the house of God and the city. However, it has been well

BIBLE STUDIES

said **that a spirit like Daniel's** could never **settle** down and **be happy** in Babylon, and **we see a Daniel-like spirit** in Ps. 137.

One thing **that impressed us** was **the place** God **gave** in His instructions in **the Law** to Israel concerning **the sabbath**. There **was the weekly sabbath**; every seventh year **was a year of rest** during **which the land** lay fallow. During **all the time the Jewish people were** in captivity in Babylon their land in Israel **was enjoying the long neglected sabbaths**; the equivalent of neglect for **490 years!**

Again **we are** reminded of God's purpose, His providence and His government. His purpose in spite of **all the sin and failure**; His providence in opening **up the way**, and moving kings and kingdoms to **make** it possible; His government and discipline under which His people **fell because** of their sin **and** disobedience.

A. McIlree, Snr.

COMMENTS

1. (Vancouver): The summary of Jer. **52: 28-30** does give a total of 4, 600 captives, **but I suggest this must have** been referring to limited groups, for Jer. **25: 1 states that the fourth year of Jehoiakim was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar**. So **the three phases of Chaldean activity** outlined in Jer. 52: 28-30 would **be**:

- (a) Nebuchadnezzar's **7th year**; **the incursion** described **2 Kin. 24: 10-17** when Jechoniah **was** deposed and Zedekiah installed **as** king of Judah.
- (b) Nebuchadnezzar's **18th year**: **the climax of the 18-month siege** of Jerusalem, when **the wall** was breached and Zedekiah captured.
- (c) Nebuchadnezzar's **23rd year**: presumably when **the Chaldeans returned to reassert** their authority **after the murder of Gedaliah**, their appointed 'Governor' (Jer. **40: 7-9; 41: 1-2**).

So this **passage** in Jer. **52 takes** no note of **the attack** by Nebuchadnezzar in **the third year** of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and others were taken captive (Dan. **1: 1-2**). Then it is **clear** from **2 Kin. 24: 14-16 that 10, 000 captives were** taken when Jechoniah **was** deposed, while **2 Kin. 25: 11 refers to a large-scale** captivity when Jerusalem **was** destroyed. Therefore **the overall total who were taken to Babylon was far in excess of 4, 600.**

2. **(Barrhead):** There were doubtless some who had despised God's word and learned wisdom through the bitter experience of exile. But would not the language of Ps. 137: 1-4 more generally reflect the spiritual longings of the godly, exiled through no fault of their own, but as a result of Judah's national apostasy?

3. **(Birkenhead):** It is noteworthy that Daniel's supplication was based not only on a general trust in God's covenant mercies towards Israel, but upon the specific prediction through Jeremiah of restoration after 70 years (Dan. 9: 2).

4. **(Derby):** I have understood that Jer. 22: 30 applied to Jehoniah (alias Coniah), the son of Jehoiakim, rather than to Jehoiakim himself. It seems clear from 2 Kin. 24: 8, 2 Chr. 36: 9 and Jer. 37: 1 that Coniah did indeed reign as king, although very briefly. The point of Jer. 22: 30 is that as far as a successor on the throne of Judah was concerned, Coniah was to be 'written childless'. When he was deposed, his uncle was installed as the last king of the Davidic line. That he did have sons is confirmed in 1 Chr. 3: 16-18.

5. **(Edinburgh):** It would seem improbable that a group of exiles could have contemplated the possibility of rebellion against the might of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah's letter was designed to offset false hopes raised by rival prophets who were predicting the deliverance of Jerusalem and an early return from Babylon of those exiled.

6. **(Hamilton, Ont.):** Would not Daniel and other devout searchers of the prophetic writings have identified also the prophecy of Is. 44: 28, 45: 3? If so, God's stirring up of Cyrus would not be particularly surprising.

7. **(Kingston):** Overall scriptural revelation discloses that God's complex ordering of the rise and fall of nations is governed by such factors (among others) as His purposes towards Israel (Deut. 32: 8), retribution for unrighteousness (Ps. 75: 7-10; Jer. 25: 14; Amos 1 & 2), and the ultimate manifest supremacy of Christ (Ps. 2). That the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires were used respectively to destroy and re-establish the Temple in Jerusalem is apparent; that the world-ruler of the end-time will focus attention on the desecration of the Temple is equally clear. But it seems to me that the rise and fall of world powers are seen in Scripture against wider perspectives than 'the fortunes of the house of God', central though these are to divine purpose.

BIBLE STUDIES

8. (Kingston): Is it entirely clear that attacks by Syrian, Moabite and Ammonite bands were through the direct incitement of Nebuchadnezzar? Were not these traditional enemies lurking, jackal-like, to take advantage of Judah's harrassment by the emerging 'super-power'? It is clearly indicated of course that their incursions were a chastisement from the Lord. It will be noted also from Comment 1 that the three campaigns referred to in Jer. 52 did not include Nebuchadnezzar's preliminary attack by which he brought Jehoiakim into vassalage (2 Kin. 24: 1), or the major campaign in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (Dan. 1: 1; 2 Chr. 36: 6).

9. (Kingston): I would understand that the departure of the glory from God's house, as represented in Ezekiel's vision, was not visibly demonstrable in Jerusalem. Does not Ezek. 11: 24 confirm that the whole episode took place 'in the vision'?

10. (Lagos): In 2 Kin. 24: 8 Jehoiachin's age at accession is given as eighteen instead of eight. It has been suggested that the former is correct because of Jer. 22: 30—'Write this *man* childless'. Jehoiachin is thought also to be represented as one of the lioness's whelps (Ezek. 19: 5-9) becoming a young lion and learning to catch prey. If this view is correct, the figure eight in 2 Chr. 36: 9 may have been a copying error. But the point made in paragraph 1 of Lagos paper is a useful one and still valid, since all four kings under review were relatively young when they began to reign.

11. (Lagos): Ps. 137 appeals to me as the language of the *godly* Israelite in exile. Even those in good spiritual tone felt unable to sing the songs of Zion because they were away from the Place of the Name with which these songs were essentially associated. It was a matter of 'position' rather than 'condition'.

12. (Leeds): These scriptures refer, of course, to Jeremiah's imprisonment during the siege of Jerusalem. When the city was taken by the Chaldeans Jeremiah was offered his liberty (Jer. 40: 1-6). G. P.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol 46 March 1978

Our subject this month is the parallel of the experience of brethren ninety years ago who had a fresh revelation of truth concerning the house of God. They resolved to build again the house of the New Testament believing the doctrines and practices of the Churches of God in apostolic times showed what God wanted of His people. This gives special importance and relevance to our consideration of the Remnant and their return from Babylon to build the house and set up its services.

The call to the Remnant was to restoration in the land and in the city of God's choice. There had to be careful searching of the law and of God's dealings with His people in earlier times, and the words of Moses must have carried much weight—'But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose... to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come... Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes' (Deut. 12: 5, 8).

The Spirit of God worked in many hearts and minds to stir the people to return and build, and there were many difficulties from without and within. There were no miracles to liberate and feed them as when leaving Egypt, and the returning Jews were often on their knees seeking guidance and courage. They were to know joys and disappointments, but God's promise surely sustained them—'Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you... according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt... fear ye not' (Hag. 2: 4, 5). The movement did not have universal appeal, and many preferred Babylon and its easier ways. But there were outstanding men like Ezra who came up some 70 years after the leaders. He gave himself to learning Hebrew and studying the law—'Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements' (Ez. 7: 10). He valued a place in the house and believed his highest service was among God's people.

A. B. R.

BIBLE STUDIES

THE REBUILDING OF THE HOUSE

From **St. Helens**: God watches over all His word to perform it. In every good work for God, the Holy Spirit must first instil into His people's hearts a desire 'to will and to work, for His good pleasure'. He can promote in those who do not know Him great kindness to His interests and His people. Cyrus, by the hand of his treasurer, restored the vessels belonging to the Temple at Jerusalem. God was careful to preserve these precious things in Babylon and to have them returned to Jerusalem. How much greater His care for precious things pertaining to Christ and His church! [Comment 1]. The detailed record of those returning to Jerusalem betokens God's deep, personal interest in His people. There were those among the heads of fathers' houses who offered willingly for the house of God to set it up in its place, and by the seventh month, workers led by Jeshua and Zerrubabel had the altar rebuilt, festivals were observed and daily burnt offerings made—all a grateful response of heart to God for deliverance. Monies collected for materials were distributed to skilled workmen and soon the foundation of the Temple was laid, an occasion for great joy and praise to the Lord, 'for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel'. However, the shouts of joy were mingled with the weeping and laments of the old men who had known the first house. Was this from grief when remembering the magnificence of the first house, comparing it with the new Temple, or were they tears of joy at witnessing a house for God being established again? Perhaps both [Comment 2]. But a deep love for the house of the Lord was manifest.

After cessation for eight years [Comment 11], in the reign of Darius, and encouraged by prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the faint-hearted returned to building. Haggai was chosen to communicate God's reproof for slothfulness in building, comparing this with the people's careful attention to their own homes! This provoked God to punish them with famine. Happily, there was ready obedience in response to exhortation and we read that God again stirred up the hearts of His people. God further encouraged them by assuring them that, though the new Temple might be inferior in appearance to Solomon's Temple, yet the presence of His Spirit made it glorious.

Further difficulty was experienced when Tattenai tried to question the existence of the decree by Cyrus authorising building. Again God watched over His people's interests. Darius found Cyrus' decree, issued a new decree ordering Samaritans not to hinder the work, and also instructed them to give out of the king's revenue whatever was required for building.

J. H. B.

From Barrhead: Our faith was strengthened in considering again the accuracy of God's predictions with reference to 1. the fact of the return from Captivity (Jer. 24: 6), 2. the length of the Captivity being seventy years (Jer. 29: 10), and 3. the name of the Persian king who would authorise the return (Is. 44: 28). The naming of Cyrus some 200 years before the event reminded us of the hymn 'God everywhere hath sway and all things serve His might'.

We saw several lessons applicable to ourselves. The house of God lay desolate and its service had ceased. There were priests but no priestly service in the house. Likewise, after the churches of the New Testament the service of the house of God appears to have ceased for quite some time and we see in the present movement which started about 100 years ago, a situation which bears some resemblance to the return from the Captivity. The returning company of exercised Jews under Zerubbabel was very small compared with the millions of inhabitants in the land during the days of the monarchy, yet this small remnant was engaged in restoring and maintaining that which God expected of His people. The extent and growth of the churches as related in the book of the Acts might cause us to feel that we are living in a 'day of small things'. Nevertheless, a commitment to the full will of God is more important than any other consideration. It is evident that although the captives enjoyed some prosperity and peace in captivity and although they could bear a testimony for God, they could not worship and serve God fully in Babylon. Their lack of enthusiasm to sing their songs of Zion while away from Jerusalem confirms how they felt about this matter.

Human resolution on its own cannot effect spiritual movement. God had His prophets and leaders, including such key men as Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah together with others, and God's work went forward although the position seemed hopeless. We must never be so despondent

BIBLE STUDIES

that the work of the Lord ceases.

Prior to this study not all present had appreciated the time gap between the first return under Zerubbabel and the second under Ezra. Further we noted that there were some 50 years between chapters six and seven of Ezra. It was then a further 20 years before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem.

If, as history suggests, the Temple commonly called Herod's Temple was merely an elaborate extension and embellishment of an existing Temple then it was the Temple of our present study to which the Lord came. What would that small band of faithful builders have thought if they had known details of its glorious future? D. J. Ken

From Birkenhead: Ezra 1: 1 indicates the fulfilment of the Jeremiah 25 prophecy for God stirred Cyrus, king of Babylon, to let the people return to Judah and rebuild the broken-down Temple. They had opportunity to go themselves or to send materials and money to support the work. V. 5 tells us that God stirred the spirits of the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites to build the house of the Lord which was in Jerusalem. Cyrus's enthusiasm extended as far as returning the valuables taken by Nebuchadnezzar seventy years earlier.

We are told of more than 50, 000 people returning with 8, 000 animals/Equipment, provisions and valuables would need to be transported and probably only the old and infirm would ride. Most must have walked.

The altar was rebuilt first and was immediately used for sacrifice. The significance of this is seen today in the spiritual sacrifices offered by God's people. Here we can see the importance of fulfilling God's requirements first. Everyone assisted with the work under the Levites' supervision. The instruction of Cyrus was that 'the foundations thereof be strongly laid' (Ezra 6: 3), presumably with the idea that the house of God should be firmly grounded to support the worship and service which was to take place in it. The spiritual house today makes its stand on Jesus Christ—there can be no stronger foundation than this.

The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin offered assistance with the building, which was declined by Zerubbabel and Joshua because king Cyrus' instruction was exclusive to God's people. The enemies could not accept this refusal and asked Artaxerxes to order the work to be stopped (Ezra 4: 12, 13).

Fifteen years later Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the people to leave their comfortable homes, bring timber, and rebuild the Temple. God had brought hard times on them to draw their attention to His house (Hag. 1: 2-11). Zerubbabel and Joshua organised the work, claiming the authority of God through king Cyrus. Darius checked the authenticity of this authority (Ezra 6) and went so far as to threaten punishment on any who disobeyed the decree.

Had God not provided the opportunity for rebuilding, none would have taken place. He raised up men for His work and stirred them to action and we can be sure that God will raise suitable men for His work. The description of Cyrus as 'shepherd' (Is. 44: 28) tells us his task in respect of the return, God having chosen the place (Neh. 1: 9; Deut. 12: 5).

Overall we can see God's purpose being fulfilled in the rebuilding of the Temple despite external opposition and internal weakness.

R. C. Halpin

From Derby: Ezra 6 records the completion of the building and the dedication celebrations were kept by the returned remnant with joy. Included in this remnant were such of the ten tribes as in the reign of king Hezekiah had joined up with Judah (see 2 Chr. 30). The descendants of these members of the ten tribes joined many priests and Levites whose hearts were toward the house of the Lord. Ezra 6: 18 records that the divine order was re-established and the Passover was kept for all Israel on the proper date (14th day of the first month) and they kept the feast of unleavened bread with joy.

Honour was paid to the leaders of this restoration namely the prophet Haggai, the Lord's Messenger in the Lord's message, Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Zerubbabel was governor of Judea, probably a prince descended from Jehoiakim, king of Judah, through Coniah, who was denied the throne because of the impious act of his father [Comment 3]. The name of Zerubbabel is included in the genealogy of the Lord in Mat. 1: 12, 13. Perhaps the most important person in this rebuilding project was Haggai, the Lord's representative on the earth, as all the prophets were. God was watching the reaction of the men of the returned remnant, and had already begun sanctions to cause them to consider their ways, which they did with renewed vigour.

The whole history of this divine movement is recorded by

BIBLE STUDIES

Ezra the priestly scribe. It was an act of divine grace that God should yet again desire the place of the Name among His erring people Israel. But the Zerubbabel Temple fell far short of the Solomonic Temple, and the millennial Temple will exceed in glory the Solomonic.

It is recorded that 'the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle' (Ex. 40: 34), and it also filled Solomon's Temple (2 Chr. 5: 14). In the case of the house of God under review. Thus saith the Lord of hosts... build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified saith the Lord'.

G. Conway, S. R. W.

From Galston: After Judah had spent 50 years in captivity (50 years if we reckon from the destruction of the Temple, 70 years if we reckon from the first carrying away in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar) God gave commandment to Cyrus king of Persia, in the first year of his reign, that there should be a house built for God at Jerusalem. When Cyrus proclaimed that those who wished could rebuild the house, 50, 000 took their journey to Jerusalem. We reckoned that this journey took them about 4 or 5 months (cf. Ez. 7: 8, 9). They took with them gifts (gold, silver and many other precious necessities) which were so willingly given by those who chose to remain behind, and also the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had removed from the previous house.

God wanted the house rebuilt at Jerusalem so that worship could again be offered in accordance with His will. The altar was first built and the offering of burnt offerings commenced. At first there was much joy amongst all the people when the foundations of the house were being laid, but when those who could remember the former house in all its glory saw this house, their hearts were saddened it seemed as nothing in their eyes. Their hearts were sad because unnecessarily, because, although materially the house being built was so much less than the previous house, God took delight in it (Ezra 3: 12; Hag. 1: 8, 2: 3).

When work for God is making good progress the Devil does not take long to intervene. In this case it was not long before Israel's hands were weakened by the nations round about and the work ceased for about eighteen years. [Comment 11].

D. Gillies

From Hamilton, Ontario: As the last of the captives were being taken to Babylon they possibly saw the fire raging in Jerusalem, and engulfing the Temple, a sad picture that would remain vivid through their seventy years of captivity [Comment 4]. It is no wonder that in that strange land they could not sing the songs of Zion.

God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the Gentile king, as he prophesied through Isaiah, saying, 'I will loose the loins of kings to open the doors before him and the gates shall not be shut' and he made the decree that all who wished to return and build again the house of God could do so. This proclamation was nothing short of a miracle, but God always honours His word. The ready response to the decree to go up and build would indicate that the heads of fathers' houses, Zerubbabel and Joshua had been eagerly waiting for the seventy years to pass because they would know the word of the Lord through the prophets. It is interesting to note that Cyrus had a plan whereby those remaining would give financial help to those going up. He also placed a value on the holy vessels in connection with the service of God's house, and he delivered them over in an orderly way, giving count and value. The decree was spoken by the king and caused to be written, and this became very important when, at a later date, the enemies had the work stopped, and reference was made to this writing before it could be commenced again.

The decree made the building of the house of God a national effort. A choice had to be made—to go up and build, to stay yet support, or disregard and follow one's own pursuits. Surely this has a parallel in the building of God's house today. The desire of the heads of fathers' houses to see the house of God rebuilt was not changed when they came and saw the ruins. They offered willingly a great sum of gold and silver to set up the house of God in its place. Those huge stones, burned and scattered, would almost prompt a suggestion to start afresh on a clean piece of land; it would have been so much easier, but this was the place of God's choice, and He indicated to Haggai and Zechariah that He would take pleasure in it.

'Zechariah' means 'Jehovah hath remembered'. In the Tabernacle it was the priests' business to see that the lampstand was supplied with oil but Zechariah in his vision saw

BIBLE STUDIES

a lampstand with lamps always kept burning and yet no priest to attend to it. This speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, who works not by human might or power. As the Lord said in John 15: 5 'without Me ye can do nothing'.

Zerubbabel is given a high place in God's esteem. He was reminded that God had chosen him. He was assured that all difficulty and opposition would be removed, even those that seemed insurmountable. 'Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.' The enemies of God's people were hard and proud, as great mountains—faith can remove mountains. Zerubbabel was told he would not only begin the house, but finish it, 'with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it', as the head stone was laid. This is a type of Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12: 2). He is the head of the corner, the chief corner stone in God's house (1 Peter 2: 7). *D. Beck*

From Hamilton, Scotland: While 2 Chr. 36: 16 speaks of 'the wrath of the Lord' vv. 17-20 reveal how the wrath or 'sustained anger' of God was expressed by human instruments, the Chaldeans. This terrible wrath of God was directed towards the house of God and the people of God. The order of events so recorded in Ezra 5: 12 (cf. 2 Chr. **36: 16**) highlight the provocative nature of sin and failure. Provocation was followed by punishment and punishment was followed swiftly by promise.

To the captives in Babylon who had lived through the horror of the sacking of Jerusalem, hope came through a letter from Jeremiah the prophet who reassured them by the word of 'the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel' (Jer. 29: 4) and by His command (vv. 5-7). The divine promises were not only for the present situation in Babylon, but v. 10 contains a promise for the future: 'After seventy years be accomplished, I will visit you and perform My good word to you, in causing you to return to this place. The divine purposes were to be implemented by men. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia' (2 Chr. 36: 22). Jeremiah reveals the divine plan (Jer. 29: 10, 2 Chr. 36: 22, Ezra 1: 1); Cyrus recognised his part in the plan (Ezra 1: 2); Zerubbabel rebuilt the house with his hands (Zech. 4: 9); and the remnant of the people rebuilt the house (Hag. 1: 14).

The planning, preparation and provision for the rebuilding

of the house was complex and involved a variety of skills and material, yet in spite of the fact that the builders were a remnant of the people of God, they created a house which became the focal point of life and service. However, no work for God goes unhindered. Adversaries arose who sought to instil fear into the heart of the people of God and to frustrate His purposes. That the enemies' attacks were partially successful we can see from Ezra 3: 3—'fear was upon them because of the people'; and Ezra 4: 4 (R. V. M.)—Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and terrified them in building' (cf. Ezra 4: 5). Another attack of the enemy is recorded in Ezra 4: 2 'Let us build with you'. This was an insidious attack, an attempt to dilute and debase the work of God.

In these events we see a parallel between the rebuilding of the house of God under Zerubbabel and the creation of the 'spiritual house' of the first century A. D. and the rebuilding of the spiritual house in the 19th century [Comment 5]. Fear, frustration and friendship of the world are three weapons which Satan still uses to destroy the work of God. We should pay heed to the apostolic teaching as recorded by Paul in 2 Tim. 1: 7—'God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline'; and that of James 4: 4—'Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God'.

Matthew Carruthers

From Hayes: It is generally accepted by biblical scholars that Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther form the closing period of Old Testament Jewish history and cover approximately 100 years (537 B. C. to 432 B. C.).

The first period, in which the Temple was rebuilt, covers from 537 (or 536) B. C. to 516 B. C., and Haggai and Zechariah belonged to this period. The remnant returned under a decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1: 1-4) under the leadership of Zerubbabel the Governor, and Joshua the high priest. The vessels of the former Temple were returned. It is good to note that 'heads of fathers' houses' also gave willingly for the house of God (2: 68) and gave according to their ability 'for the house of God to set it up in its place'. There were those in the land who heard of the rebuilding of the Temple, and because they were not allowed to participate (being not

BIBLE STUDIES

of Israel) **they showed** their **true** colours in causing **the** work to **be** stopped. Though God intended **all Israel** to come out of Babylon only **a** remnant returned (**less** than **50, 000**: see **Ezra 2: 64, 65**) **but** they were enthusiastic for God's things. **The** parallel today **is** obvious. **It** no doubt meant considerable sacrifice on **the** part of **the Jewish** captivity to **leave** their comfortable houses and go forward in **faith** to do God's will. **But** they **did** it. They **met** opposition, however, were intimidated, and **ceased** from **the** work.

The prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah** prophesied during **a** brief period of two years: **Haggai** in 520 B. C. and **Zechariah** from 520 B. C. to **518** B. C. (**see** **Zech. 1** and **7: 1**) [**Comment 12**]. Fifteen years previously **the** people **had** returned and **had kept the feast** of tabernacles and **had started** to rebuild **the Temple**. Opposition and apathy **had** done their work and so there **was** no progress (**Hag. 1: 2**). Then God worked through **Haggai** and **the** response to **the message** was tremendous. In chapter **2** **the** prophet reminded **the** people that God **had led them** out of Egypt and for those who remembered **the** glory of **the** former **Temple** and thought **this** one **was** insignificant, **he had a glorious message**. They **had** not to fear for **the** new **Temple** would **be** greater than **the** first and God would **give** Israel peace. **We** know that **this** **is** yet to come.

Zechariah called the nation to repentance (ch. 1: 2-4). In **a** series of visions **he** spoke God's word to reassure **the** nation that God **was with them**.

We see that in **the** things of God men are very **frail** and **that if left to them**, God's house would not **be** in existence. God, however, **is** gracious in **His** dealings and provides warnings and encouragement to **His** people that they **might build Him** a house to glorify **His Name**. **R. F. Robertson**

From Kingston-upon-Thames: The spiritual **revival** evidenced by **the** rebuilding in **the times** of Zerubbabel and **Ezra** **has to be viewed** in **the light** of **the** preceding declension amongst God's people. In **the** reign of Mattaniah (**Zedekiah**), **the** backsliding of both ruler and people **had** resulted in **a** beginning of **the** 'carrying-away' (from **the** days of Jehoiakim — **2 Chr. 36: 6**; **Dan. 1: 1-4**). **That awful** event **was** to result in more tears for **the** 'weeping prophet' (**Jer. 13: 7**) **while he** **watched the** outworking of God's word. In **later** years **the**

very need to rebuild the house was justification for more weeping (Ezra 3: 12), apart from any diminution of its material magnificence. It is not easy for men to acknowledge their own failings, and yet harder for them to feel the guilt of others. Such a trait, however, is seen in the character of Daniel (Dan. 9: 1-6), who acted as an intercessor before God whilst his contemporaries (Ezra 5: 1), Haggai and Zechariah, were pleading with the people to recommence the work [Comment 6]. Such support in prayer and prophecy found answer in willing hands, given example by the elders (Ezra 6: 14) that brought the work to completion—and this time there is no record other than that of a joyful occasion (v. 16). Unfortunately the record goes on to show a need for further godly sorrow. Lessons of separation that the people had learnt under Zerubbabel (Ezra 4: 1-3) appeared to be forgotten. So when Ezra came (ch. 9: 1, 14) the sad truth had to be told. Sadder still those who should have set an example (9: 2), and even the sons of the priests (10: 18, 44) had been most remiss in this matter. Such problems cannot be rectified as easily as they are created (Ezra 10: 1, 13), and we need to learn this fact early in our lives as disciples. The revival had been the work of God in the hearts of the people (Ezra 9: 9) and even in the hearts of Gentile kings (Ezra 1: 2; 6: 14). Men of God, like Daniel could by the help of the Spirit of God pray intelligently that the will of God might be accomplished. Those who were priests by birth (Ezra 2: 62) were able once again to serve the Lord in His house [Comment 7]. Those whose hearts had been touched (Ezra 1: 5) for the work of leadership found that of themselves they were insufficient for the task, but when prompted through the prophets subjected themselves to God and succeeded in the work of building. All these aspects have clear application to the house of God in our own remnant times.

G. M. Hydon—for the Young People's Class

From Leeds: 'Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord... The Lord shall inherit Judah, as His portion in the holy land, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.' (Zech. 2: 10, 12).

The story of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem by the captives of Israel shows the almighty controlling influence of God throughout. Who but God could put it into the

BIBLE STUDIES

hearts and minds of not only Cyrus, king of Persia, but those captives of Israel, their leaders and their priests, that the Temple should be rebuilt in the place of God's choice? The knowledge that king Cyrus had about God and His purposes is a credit to those of Israel who were close to him, in a position such as that held by Daniel. Cyrus might have granted the Israelites permission to build a house for God so that they could worship Him where they were, in Babylon, but Cyrus knew where the God of Israel wanted His house to be. He was obedient to the divine will and allowed the captives of Israel to return to Jerusalem.

So the Israelites returned purposefully together (Ezra 3: 1), raised the altar, and offered sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God for allowing them to serve Him in the rebuilding of His house in Jerusalem. We noted, from Ezra 4: 1-3, that only the people of God were permitted to build the house. Although they hired outside help, this was paid for, and so was under their direct control. Only the people of God, called out and called together, can build His house, and this principle is seen today.

There are ever those who would thwart any work for God and it was a sad day when Artaxerxes gave commandment for the rebuilding to stop, heeding the counsel of men, headed by Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe.

It would seem from Hag. 2: 18 that the earlier work, when it stopped, was still at the foundation stage and was recommenced at the foundation stage. There is much work to be done in the laying and in the establishing of foundations. All great buildings are built upon secure foundations. 'Behold, I lay in Zion *for a foundation* a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation' (Is. 28: 16): *a stone* (Mat. 21: 42); *a precious corner stone* (1 Pet. 2: 3-8); *a sure foundation* (2 Tim. 2: 19, Psa. 87: 1-3, Luke 6: 47-49). 'Other foundation can no may lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 3: 11). On this foundation let us by His grace continue to build. *I Gardener, H. R. Dodge*

From Melbourne, Australia: We contrasted the attitude of the people in Haggai 1 to that of David in 2 Sam. 7: 2 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' But God's spirit stirred the spirits of some of His people so that we have the thrilling account in the

book of Ezra of how the house of God was rebuilt. True, it lacked the splendour of the house built by Solomon, but God's word was clear: '... build the house and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified'. Surely it was wrong for the very old men who had seen the first house to weep with a loud voice. How much better it would have been had they joined in the shouting with the rest of the people!

How easily were the remnant workmen of Zion discouraged! Then ceased the work of the house of God... ' (Ezra 4: 24). Let us not give in to discouragement but let us be 'always abounding in the work of the Lord' (1 Cor. 15: 58). We know that our labour is 'not vain in the Lord'.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former... ' (Hag. 2: 9). How could this be? There can be only one answer. This latter house was to know the presence of the Son of God. His feet, which one day would be pierced on Calvary, walked in the courts of this house thus giving it greater glory by far than that of Solomon's [Comment 8].

We thought of the leaders as two fine teams of workers: (a) Haggai and Zechariah and (b) Zerubbabel and Joshua. Which of these men are represented by the two olive trees? Perhaps team (b) [Comment 9].

May the hearts of leaders in God's house today be 'stirred' and may the heart of God's people also be 'stirred' by the same Holy Spirit. If both happen then 'a great mountain' will become 'a plain' (Zech. 4: 7).

D. McFarlane, D. Mawhinney

From Methil: Many more went down to Babylon at the captivity than returned to rebuild God's house. Ezra 2 records in great detail those who made the arduous journey back to Jerusalem to build the house for their God. To do this cost them a great deal, since it was only a remnant that returned to the ruined city. But God honours those that honour Him, for their names are permanently in the divine record. Only a remnant came out of 'spiritual Babylon' after the dark ages to rebuild God's present house according to the original pattern in Acts. The children of Israel were in Babylon because they had forsaken God (Ezra 5: 12). God had used Nebuchadnezzar, a Gentile king, to punish His people. Now God stirred Cyrus, king of Persia also a Gentile monarch to encourage God's people, after the required captivity, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild Him an house. God

BIBLE STUDIES

can **use** whoever **he chooses**. King Cyrus even **restored** 5, 400 vessels! God **watches** over and preserves human **vessels** for **His** service today (**2 Tim. 2: 19, 20**).

They were careful in Ezra's day in checking **the** genealogies **of** those who returned. Some could not **be** found **and** so were **put** out of **the** priesthood and forbidden to **eat** of **the** most holy things. **We** should **take heed that** nothing disqualifies **us** from serving among God's people in **this** day. **We** trace our origin to **the** Lord Jesus.

The work began with **the** altar, **the** place of worship. Some would **attempt** to join **the** Lord's people **at** the altar, **but** go no further. When **the** foundation **was** laid some shouted for joy, while **the** old men **wept**, for they remembered its former glory. Now **there was** to **be** a day of **small** things (**Zech. 4: 10**), **but** it **was** not to **be** despised. To God it **was** exceedingly precious. His house **was** being restored in **the** Place of **the** Name. They did **well** to rejoice. Once again His people **kept** the **Feast** of Tabernacles and offered **the** daily burnt offerings. Again, they **gave** willingly, money, **meat** and drink and oil, and they sang God's praises. **The** songs of Zion **that** could not **be** sung in Babylon, **were** now to **be** heard again in Jerusalem.

Haggai's prophecy **was** a straightforward **message** for God's people then and now. Disobedience brings unhappiness and famine, while obedience brings joy and plenty.

Jo Johnston, Neville Coomer

From Nottingham: Seventy years **had** passed since **the** people **had** been carried away captive and God's house **had** been **left** destroyed, and **the** city burned **and** blackened [Comment 10]. God's word through Jeremiah **must** come to **pass** (**Jer. 29: 10**), and **we** see **the** band of those whose **hearts** **had** been touched (note particularly **Ezra 1: 5**) **start** out on **the** difficult journey of some 500 [nearer 700; *Eds.*] miles to rebuild **the** city and **the** house.

In contrast to **Israel** coming out of Egypt, when **the** word **was**, '**there shall** not an hoof **be** left behind' (**Ex. 10: 26**), not **all** those in Babylon returned. Some **had** found their **life** **there** so pleasant **that** they **had** no desire to move. **Others**, **we** judge, **such as** Daniel, remained **because** of specific circumstances. **But** **there must** have been some who could **have** joined **the** others in leaving Babylon and its associations behind, and **we** are reminded of **a** similar **state** of affairs

when the call came some eighty or so years ago to brethren and sisters to separate themselves from the spiritual Babylon. Many heard but not all acted.

In Ezra 2 we have one of God's rolls of honour. Here is a list of persons, unknown to us in the main, but recorded for ever on the page of Scripture. How God delighted in the heart-exercise of these men and women! Did He not rejoice also when men and women separated themselves to build the house of God of the present day?

The pioneer spirit was prominent indeed among the remnant who went to rebuild. The task before them was formidable, but God was with them. No miraculous signs were granted to bolster their spirits and confirm them in the movement. It was essentially a time of faith; their trust was in God and His word.

It is a fact of history that when the separation took place leaders of the day were told by some who did not separate that, although the position taken was right, it was untenable and the movement would collapse. Time has proved otherwise. The exercise was of God. Brethren and sisters had faith in Him and the house has been kept, albeit in much weakness, until today.

Many kings and men in high place were used by God to bring about His divine purpose both before and during the time of the return. Nebuchadnezzar, that proud monarch who had been used by God as an instrument in bringing about the captivity, had been taught a lesson. Cyrus and Darius served in the divine will. At an earlier stage the king of Tyre had a part to play when Solomon built his Temple (2 Chr. 2). We are reminded of the words, 'the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will' (Dan. 4: 17). We need to remember the exhortation to pray for kings and those in high place, for although we are not concerned with the world's politics, we are concerned for those whom God has allowed to have positions of responsibility in world affairs (1 Tim. 2: 1-4). *R. Hickling*

COMMENTS

1. (St. Helens): The expression 'Christ and His Church' is commonly used to speak of Christ and the Church the Body of Christ, as in Ephes. 3: 23-27, whereas our study subject, the House of God, has to do with the Churches of God.

BIBLE STUDIES

2. **(St. Helens):** Most think Hag. 2: 3 gives the answer—the old men remembered the 'former glory' and the new house was in their eyes 'as nothing'.

3. **(Derby):** Coniah 'reigned for three months and ten days in Jerusalem' (2 Chr. 36: 9). See Comments Feb. Bible Studies.

4. **(Hamilton, Ontario):** Fall of Jerusalem 587 BC, Zerubbabel and others return 539 BC. See Galston paper.

5. **(Hamilton, Scotland):** The movement of the 19th century is akin to the remnant. That of the Acts is not.

6. **(Kingston-upon-Thames):** It is not certain that Daniel was contemporary with Haggai and Zechariah, although their early life may have overlapped with Daniel's later years. Daniel's intercession is presented in an earlier context.

7. **(Kingston-upon-Thames):** Provided they were in a right condition to be in the priesthood.

8. **(Melbourne):** Although the Temple during the Lord's ministry was Herod's, not the one the remnant built (see Barrhead paper), the prophecy of Hag. 2: 6-9 may validly be regarded as having dual application—first to the Lord's presence therein the days of His flesh, and also to the millennial Temple (see also Bible Studies 1973, Vol. 41 p. 29).

9. **(Melbourne):** Haggai and Zechariah ministered as the Holy Spirit led them and so their work seems more likely to be represented by the vision of Zech. 4. However, some have thought the two witnesses of Rev. 11: 3 are represented. See BS 1973 p. 61.

10. **(Nottingham):** Re seventy years see Galston paper.
A. B. R.

11. **(St. Helens and Galston):** Reference works suggest that fifteen years was the time for which the work ceased.

12. **(Hayes):** The references quoted do not show conclusively that Zechariah only prophesied for a period of two years. Some authorities suggest a period of about ten years, while others propose that Zechariah may have written the latter part of the book towards the end of his life. *P. L. H.*

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol 46 April 1978

It has been said that the spirit of a people will rarely rise above that of their leaders. The validity of this observation has been confirmed in our review of the history of the people of God and of the house of God. Under the leadership of king David and those kings who walked in his ways there were periods of spiritual prosperity, when the service of the house of God was given its rightful place in the national life of the people. Alas, there were many teachers who failed to give a godly lead to the people, and their failure led to God's forsaking His house and delivering His people into alien hands.

The importance of the role played by the leaders can also be traced in the history of the remnant who returned to build the house of God in Jerusalem. Our study-portion for this month turns the spotlight on Nehemiah and reveals the outstanding quality of his leadership. He was a man who had a deep concern for the welfare of the people of God, and he was willing to leave his influential position in the Persian court to share in the privations of his countrymen in Jerusalem. He was a man of prayer and of action. We cannot fail to be impressed by his quiet and careful assessment of the situation in Jerusalem soon after his arrival there, by his ability to unite others and inspire them to activity, and by the wisdom he displayed in coping with the stratagems of the enemies of the people of God at each stage of the work. The enemies of Jerusalem opened their campaign with a war of words, but became more aggressive as the work progressed and the breaches in the wall were stopped.

Nehemiah's character, as presented to us, is virtually without blemish. He exhibited the qualities that are so desirable in a leader—integrity, wisdom, humility, generosity and piety. Men of such calibre among the people of God are invaluable in every age. The purposes of God among His people are furthered when the leaders take the lead and the people offer themselves willingly.

J. K. D. J.

BIBLE STUDIES

THE HOUSE AND NEHEMIAH— THE REBUILDING OF THE WALL

From Sydney: Whatever the meaning of the words 'have finished the walls' in Ezra 4: 12 (but note v. 16), it is evident that about seventy-five years later there was no wall around Jerusalem. Hanani, one of Nehemiah's brothers, came from Jerusalem to the palace in the city of Shushan in the province of Elam in Persia, where he reported the reproach of Jerusalem in that the wall was broken down and the gates were burned with fire. Whether this was the result of the captivity at the time of Nebuchadnezzar or hostile action after the time of Ezra 4 may be disputed, but there can be no dispute that there is a reproach when there is no wall (Neh. 2: 17) [Comment 1].

Jerusalem without a wall was like a village that might be reckoned with the fields of the country (Lev. 25: 29-31). And Nehemiah, realising the shame of this, sat and wept and mourned and fasted and prayed. This godly man knew in his heart that there should be a wall to separate Jerusalem from the villages and the fields of the country (compare the field, village and vineyard of S. of S. 7: 11-12). In Nehemiah the words of Ps. 102: 13-14 have an application—'It is time to have pity upon her (Zion), yea, the set time is come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones'. Nehemiah prayed long, night and day for about four months. But he also could pray a brief thought between the question of the king and his own answer (Neh. 2: 4-5). Having been permitted to account for his own sorrow of heart to the king, he was bold to ask such favours as would allow him to build all that was in his heart.

It seems that the remnant had come to accept the reproach of having no wall, and when Nehemiah went out to view the scene by night he took no one into his confidence, whether rulers, Jews, priests, nobles, or the rest that did the work (2: 16). But Nehemiah would not bear the reproach of there being no wall (v. 17) and he had understanding to know that God's people are in an evil case when there are no walls or gates. But to build is a good work (v. 18). Ch. 3 is full of instruction concerning the gates, their names, those who worked, and how and where they worked. The wall was raised by rebuilding, repairing and strengthening, and the

people **had a mind to work (4: 6)**. In the building of the wall **there was a need to watch (4: 9)**, to bear burdens, and to **have the sword girded by the side (v. 17, 18)**. This task took **all the daylight hours (v. 21)**. In their intense devotion **Nehemiah and those with him did not undress (v. 23)**. **What a contrast and a lesson to those who, in our day, would have no wall! 'Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt Thou delight in the sacrifices' (Ps. 51: 18-19). If we fear to build then there is sin in fear (6: 13).**

At last after fifty-two days, the wall was finished, and then the fear was found in the hearts of their enemies. A finished wall was a testimony to a work wrought of God (6: 16). And because of a finished wall the people met for the reading of the Scriptures by Ezra, the feast of tabernacles was kept, and personal relationships were corrected in keeping with their sanctified standing as the people of God. The wall was a solemn reminder that they had 'separated themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God' (10: 28). *Geo. K. Kennedy*

From **Vancouver: As recorded in Scripture, all large cities had walls with gates for protection. 'And they (the Chaldeans) burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem' (2 Chr. 36: 19). Later news regarding Jerusalem, the place of God's choice, caused great sorrow to Nehemiah, and his desire was that he might be used for God in the rebuilding of the wall [see Comment 1].**

Zerubbabel's return was that the house of God might be rebuilt: Ezra's return was that Israel might be taught the word of God; Nehemiah returned that the wall might be rebuilt. Thus in the purposes of God the remnant required the house of God, the teaching of the word of God, and the wall. Let us be thankful to our God for His truth revealed to us, and be diligent to maintain it. Around us there are many evangelicals who are vibrant in their praise to God for His salvation. Their version of a house for God is a place where they can thank God for His love to them. But the diligent study of the Word and the wall to separate them unto God and from the world, are considered unnecessary. All three are necessary.

Subsequent to **his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah took three days to size up the situation. His appeal to the residents of Jerusalem was such that the wall was finished in**

BIBLE STUDIES

fifty-two days (6: 15). Of course there were adversaries who did all possible to stop the work, but even they perceived that this work was wrought by God (6: 16).

The building of the wall was not done by construction equipment but by the hands of those who loved the Lord—the high priest, priests, Levites, rulers, goldsmiths, perfumers, and a ruler and his daughters. The wall and its maintenance must be the desire of all the Lord's people in every dispensation. It is sad to note that there were some who were not involved; they put not their hands to the work, and some were related by marriage to the adversaries who opposed the building of the wall.

When the work was finished, Nehemiah arranged for the dedication of the wall, that Israel might rejoice in what God had enabled them to do. They rejoiced and the noise was heard afar off (12: 43). Do we rejoice that we have a wall? Let us never be ashamed of it. Let us rejoice and may it be heard afar off that we are a people separated unto the Lord.

We read 'Ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices' (1 Pet. 2: 5). We are not stones in the wall. Our God has revealed to us through His word, His truth and His will that He has separated us from the world.

In ch. 13, we find that when Nehemiah was away, Eliashib the priest, being allied to Tobiah an adversary, cleared out the great chamber where the meal offerings, the frankincense, tithes, new wine and oil were to be kept in the house of God, and made this a dwelling-place for Tobiah. May the Lord's people ever give to the Lord His portion in His house and make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13: 14).

J. Bell

From Barrhead: The Book of Nehemiah is declared to be the work of Nehemiah himself and throughout the narrative it is in the first person. Nevertheless as we study this book chapter by chapter we find that eventually Nehemiah had fellow-labourers and workers busily engaged in the repair of the walls with its buildings, and bringing back the city of Jerusalem to its former glory. Also the house of God was greatly enriched by the invaluable contribution of Nehemiah and his co-workers. This is an incentive for the people of God today in regard to the glory and beauty of God's dwelling-place, where the service of God can be maintained,

in conformity with the divine pattern as expressed in Acts ch. 2. The divine principle of separation may be deduced from the re-establishment of the walls.

Nehemiah's deeds of action were as follows—his call, confession, prayer and intercession (Neh. 2); his conviction from God as to what had to be done (**2: 17-20**); his courage and determination in spite of all opposition from his enemies (4: 19, **23**); his contribution and hospitality in pursuit of the progress of the work and testimony (5: 14, 19); his commitment as to the charge of Jerusalem, delegating authority to others (ch. 7), his commandment in regard to the chambers, offices, the violation of the sabbath and marriage with strange women (chs. 8-13). 2 Cor. 6: 14-18, 2 Tim. 2: 19-26 apply to ourselves today.

Wm. Fullarton

From Birkenhead: Although it would seem that Nehemiah was born in captivity, it is obvious that he showed a deep concern for obedience to the will of God as evidenced by his consternation at the lack of progress in Jerusalem and his active participation in the rebuilding. His attitude towards the rebuilding has many practical lessons for us today. He firstly identified himself with the work to be done: 'Ye see the evil case we are in', and then made the matter the subject of prayer. Having determined upon his course of action, he showed a degree of dedication, selflessness and leadership, which provides example for today. He was able to carry the bulk of the populace with him not only in the rebuilding but into physical danger against the threatened attack. The rebuilding itself was not only undertaken by those with a particular facility towards this type of work but it was carried out without discrimination as to status or profession. Each had his own duty to perform, although this formed a part of the overall work.

The opposition came not only from outside the people but also from within, and Nehemiah dealt firmly with this, again maintaining the confidence of the people. The achievement in rebuilding the walls in fifty-two days after such a long period is a tribute to Nehemiah's organising ability and leadership, which he recognised was from God: 'Our God shall fight for us.' The completion of the work provided a clear definition of the city. There was now a *within* and a *without*, with equally clear means of entry, and it thus provided the means of a physical separation from the heathen.

BIBLE STUDIES

This opened the way for a spiritual separation by a return to the word as given to Moses. Ezra realised that to follow God as He required, it was necessary to do as He commanded. It was then, as now, a question of a return to the fundamentals.

Nehemiah, having supervised the work, left Jerusalem, and during his absence certain evil practices sprang up with which it was necessary for him to deal on his return (Nehemiah 13). Linked with him in this task was Malachi and they together exhorted the people to return in heart to their God [Comment 2].

R. C. Halpin

From Hamilton, Ontario: The house of God was in existence again in Jerusalem. The wall of the city, however, was still broken down and there was no separation between God's people and those around them. The result of this was that the remnant of the people in Judah were in great affliction and reproach. When Nehemiah heard of the condition of Jerusalem he wept. Nonetheless, Nehemiah was not just a man of fears, but also a man of prayer, a man of purpose and a man of action.

King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah why he was so down-cast and what it was that he wanted. Nehemiah was unsure how to answer, so he prayed. This was probably a short silent prayer during the moment of hesitation between the king asking the question and Nehemiah giving his answer. He was, however, clear in giving his answer when he said, '... send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it'. It was not long before this resolve of heart was turned into positive action and he was in Jerusalem organising the rebuilding of the wall.

It was organised with different family groups responsible for certain sections. In fact it is said of some that they repaired another portion as well. Baruch is described as having earnestly repaired another portion. Those around Jerusalem who were opposed to the work threatened the workers and laughed them to scorn, 'What do these feeble Jews?' Nevertheless, the work continued, the workers having weapons always at hand as they built the wall.

The wall was completed quickly, in only fifty-two days. Even their enemies had to confess that this great work which was completed with such haste, amid such threats and with so few people, was indeed a work wrought by Jehovah.

The wall was finished by God, using a people who '... had a mind to work' (Neh. 4: 6).

With the wall complete, the services of the house of God for all the people could recommence [Comment 3]. They gathered together as one man to hear the book of the law of God read distinctly, and the sense of the reading was explained so that all understood (Neh. 8: 8). Great weeping and confession of sin followed, but greater yet was their rejoicing, when, putting away the things of the past, they set out to follow the law of God. As their joy in His law increased, so would the strength of all the people.

Back in the days of Josiah, a revival was begun because the book was found in the rubble of the Temple and it was read. So the pattern is clear for revival amongst God's people today: the prayers, the reading of God's word and confession of sin; and in this comes joy, and in joy comes our strength.

Ron Thomas

From Hamilton, Scotland: *The Event.* The re-building of the wall of Jerusalem was an event of great import to the people of God. Its significance went beyond imparting a sense of safety and security and involved more than taking away the reproaches of their enemies (Neh. 2: 17; Ezek. 5: 14). To the people of God, Jerusalem was more than a city, it was the vital link between the glories of the past and the glorious future their nation would experience under the rule of the coming king (see Ps. 48 and Lam. 2: 15). What a contrast in perceptions! to the people of God, opportunity to restore Jerusalem to its former position, but, to the enemies of God, an impossible task (Neh. 4: 2, 3).

It took fifty-two days to rebuild the wall (Neh. 6: 15), and the enemies of God's people 'feared' and were 'much cast down in their eyes, for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God'.

The rebuilt wall also revealed the resources of the people of God; their skills, their strengths, their hopes and desires; and their enemies perceived this. But to the people of God it was the fulfilment of Nehemiah's words (Neh. 2: 20).

The Man. Leadership is vital for the continuance and the effectiveness of the present testimony, and it is essential that leaders should be characterised by the qualities that we see in Nehemiah: (i) *a listening ear* (Neh. 1: 2-4); (ii) *a sympathetic heart* (Neh. 1: 4); (iii) *a prayer life* (Neh. 1: 4-11,

BIBLE STUDIES

2: 4); (iv) *a discerning mind* (Neh. 1: 5-11) with (a) an understanding of God's being, (b) an understanding of God's word; (v) *courage* (a) before the king (Neh. 2: 5), (b) before enemies (2: 19-20), (c) before the rulers (13: 11), (d) before the nobles (13: 17), (e) before the Levites (13: 22).

Nehemiah's task was not finished when Jerusalem became a walled city. The rebuilding of the wall was essentially a first step towards separation. The next steps were methods to implement government and rule by controlling entry and exit to the city. Then came the census of nobles, rulers, and the people. So we see in Neh. chs. 7-13 a continuance of the work of Nehemiah as leader of God's people.

Matthew Carruthers

From Kingston-upon-Thames: **Nehemiah's love for God's house is manifest by his actions. On hearing of the affliction of the people, the breaking down of the wall, and the gates burned with fire (Neh. 1: 3), he sought God in prayer that the Persian king Artaxerxes might send him to Jerusalem, relieving him of his duty as cupbearer.**

Ezra 4: 12; 9: 9 and the Book of Nehemiah would suggest that the wall had been built, the house and wall being at first left half finished and finally finished. No details are given of this building of the wall, but the Holy Spirit in His sovereignty gives the teaching of the building of the house in Ezra, and then the teaching of the building of the wall in Nehemiah. The teaching is of separation not only in the actual wall but also in relationships with those people who did not share the same spiritual principles [see Comment 1].

It is clearly shown (Ezra 4: 24-5: 2) that Zerubbabel's work ceased for a while, this being clearly attributable to the pressure brought to bear on the Jews by the people round about [Comment 4]. The house remained until the time of Herod, but the wall having been broken down was rebuilt by Nehemiah. This shows that God uses different individuals at different times to do certain work, some great, some small. Only if the heart of the people is right is success assured.

Nehemiah went to the city of Jerusalem to see the destruction of the wall for himself (2: 11-12) before approaching the elders; showing the pattern that one receives the message from God. The elders recognised that he was

blessed of God and from that time on he was accepted as the leader: a man prepared to live a lowly life, taking no tax, buying no land, giving more than he was given (5: 18). Nehemiah put everything into this work of building the wall and strengthening the testimony in Jerusalem. He sought to lead them into the work of rebuilding the wall 'so that we be no more a reproach'. The people turned their hands to the work of the Lord, against the scorn of those, such as Sanballat the Horonite, who opposed the rebuilding of the wall of separation (2: 19). The people rebuilt the wall in fifty-two days, according as God had led Nehemiah, commencing, first with that which the priests rebuilt, the sheep gate. And so in the building of the wall the people became a testimony to those outside (6: 16).

The need for vigilance to watch and pray (Mark 13: 33) is always required, as it was in that time of building; also the turning of one's hand to whatsoever work be required.

On completion the people gathered themselves as one (8: 1), and the Levites read in the book in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense so that they understood the reading. Those who understood the word of God explained and interpreted to those who knew it not. And the people entered into an oath to separate themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God. Yet the old abuses crept back, showing the continued vigilance required in maintaining divine truth.

Graham J. Ackers

From Leeds: 'Build thou the walls... *then* shalt Thou (God) be pleased with the sacrifices... burnt offering and whole burnt offering' (Ps. 51: 18-19). The remnant people of Israel who came back from Babylon rebuilt the house and initiated the various services Godward through the Levites and the priests.

To establish what Ezra had accomplished in setting the people apart, separating them from the nations round about, the walls had to be rebuilt. The walls would be a positive and evident sign of demarcation, setting apart the people of God within from the other nations and peoples without. The heart of Nehemiah was greatly affected by the news that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates burned with fire. This was perceived by king Artaxerxes (Neh. 2: 2) when Nehemiah had wept fasted and prayed many days

BIBLE STUDIES

(1: 4). He was firstly a man of prayer, then a man of action. Prayer should ever precede action.

Nehemiah obtained timber for the gates (2: 8) from the king's forest, but the stones that had formed the original walls were there, although broken up and apart. The stones had to be built together and put up again on the original foundation (1 Pet. 2: 5; 1 Cor. 3: 11-14) [Comment 5]. Nehemiah put to the people that his God had directed him to take up the task to build (2: 18) and so enjoined the people 'Let *us* rise up and build'. Much can be achieved by a united people building for God. Many portions were allotted, but the unity of the work is seen in the mutual consent of all to rally together when the trumpet sounded (4: 19-20). We noted that only the people of God were to build and that those without had no portion or right (2: 19-20). Sisters too have their portion in the work (3: 12).

However, those who seek to serve God will always come up against opposition. The enemies 'without' can be more readily detected than those more subversive and subtle enemies who are, alas, 'within' (6: 7-14). In the various stages of building the wall the reactions of the enemies are seen: (1) *Scorn* (2: 19). They regarded the people of God as impudent upstarts. (2) *Anger, indignation and mockery* (4: 1). This is often the reaction of men who reject the proof of God's sovereign will being effected before their eyes. (3) *Conspiracy* (4: 8). God brought their counsel to nought (v. 15). (4) *Treachery* (6: 2). Having failed in all other ways to prevent the building of the wall they accuse Nehemiah of wishing to make himself king, and also try to tempt him into entering the Temple (6: 10-11).

Our unity of resolve in building up the Fellowship of God's separated people is our strongest wall of testimony to those unbelieving, sceptical, and ignorant people without [Comment 6].
C. Grierson, H. R. Dodge

From Melbourne: While Ezra had brought about a partial return to the law of the Lord there was need for a fellow-worker of like mind and calibre to strengthen his hands. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah, the king's cup-bearer, had conveyed to him by certain who had come from Jerusalem the fact that the remnant were in great affliction by reason of their adversaries, and that much of the city was

in ruins, **the walls were** broken down, and **the gates were** burned **with** fire. **As with such true** servants of the Lord **he was** brought to mourning **because** of this, and **his** sorrow being evident to **the king, he was** asked the reason. His **request to be permitted** to return to **Jerusalem to rebuild its walls and set up the gates was** granted, together **with a** grant of **materials wherewith** to do **the** work. Notwithstanding **the** opposition of **adversaries** who **had** no **delight** in the business of restoring Jerusalem, **the rebuilding of the walls and setting up of the gates was** commenced, and through **the** co-operation of willing workers, it was finished in fifty-two days. This was followed by **the** appointing of porters for **the** doors, together **with** singers and **Levites** for **the** house of God. Then **came** an examination of **the register** of those who **had** originally returned **with Zerubbabel with a view** to confirming **the** genealogy of people, priests, **Levites**, singers and Nethinim.

In **Neh. ch. 8** we find **the** people gathering voluntarily and requesting **that the** book of **the law be read** publicly by **Ezra** in **their** hearing. **We** note **the** reverence of **Ezra** and **all the** people **as** they stood to hear. In **ch. 9** we note **that** confession of sin accompanies and follows, **as the** people recognise **their failure** in mixing themselves **with the** people of **the** land by marriage. **This resulted** in **the** making of a covenant to **separate themselves**; also to refrain from buying **from** those who **came to the gates to sell their wares** on the Sabbath. Moreover they **agreed** to provide for **the** offerings of **the** Lord; and to bring to **Him** their firstfruits. **We** also noted **that as Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites taught the** people, they found **it** written in **the law of the Lord that** they should **keep the feast** of tabernacles in **the** seventh month; for **it had** not been **kept** since **the** days of Joshua (almost **1000** years). Once more **it was kept** again **as the** Lord commanded according to Lev. **23: 35-43**, and **there was great** joy and gladness.

We also understand from **ch. 10: 31**, **that there had been failure** throughout **the** reign of **the** kings to observe **the** sabbatical year. **Neither had the** remnant returning from Babylon under **the leadership** of **Zerubbabel remembered** this. They **had** forgotten **that the** seventy years during **which the** land lay desolate through **its** invasion by **the** Chaldeans, followed by famine and pestilence, **had been a divine judge-**

BIBLE STUDIES

ment for this failure; for during the 490 years covering the reign of the kings, a debt of seventy sabbatical years owing to the Lord had accumulated. That debt He had exacted by means of the Chaldeans (see 2 Chron. 36: 21). Now having been made aware of the failure of the nation, the covenant made included a return to the observance of the seventh year as a sabbath unto the Lord; and also that which was obligatory upon them by the law of the Lord, to forgo the exaction of every debt (see Deut. 15: 1, 2).

T. W. Fullerton, D. Mawkinney

From Methil: Nehemiah's name means 'Jah, or Jehovah, is comfort', and he knew the comfort of his God (Neh. 2: 8), as he was given an answer to his constant prayer. He was granted the permission of king Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall of the city of God (Neh. 1: 4-11) [Comment 7]. Not only was he a man of purpose, who by prayer became powerful and knew prosperity, but he was also a man of action, devoted to duty and to the leadership of his fellow Jews, in organising their various skills to work for God. This work continued day and night, and despite constant opposition by sarcasm (4: 1-6), sudden attack (4: 7-23), and false accusation (6: 1-14) from without, and discord within (5: 7-23), the work was completed (6: 15) in fifty-two days. Before commencing the work, Nehemiah prayed from the month Chisleu until the month Nisan (corresponding we believe to the period December to April), and spent three days surveying the work (2: 11-15) and exhorting the people to join in the work (vv. 16-20).

The wall speaks of separation, and Nehemiah was concerned about restoring the wall and its gates. These indicate that there was a 'within' and a 'without': a fundamental principle in relation to a people for God. Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, said 'What have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?' (1 Cor. 5: 12-13). Moses, the great leader, is seen standing 'at the gate of the camp' and at the 'gates', within which many idolaters were slain (Ex. 32: 26-27). There were twelve gates in Jerusalem, and we view this number as signifying God's rule and authority. God's people need rule and authority. There is today a wall of separation around the house of God which keeps us separate from the sects of

men and their unscriptural practices. We make it our purpose that these gates are open to none but legitimate entrants, willing to obey in its entirety His rule and authority.

Nehemiah in his implicit faith in his God could say over and over again, 'My God shall... ' and of the same God, Paul the apostle could say 'My God shall fulfil (supply) every need of yours' (Phil. 4: 19). We too can have the assurance that our God shall sustain us if we are faithful. It was because of faith that Nehemiah refused to be compromised by the subtlety of Sanballat, whose name means 'hate in disguise', and of Tobiah, meaning 'the goodness of Jehovah'. He was, however, allied to Ammon, a type of the flesh, his name meaning 'inbred', reminding us of the old nature within us, which can never be eradicated, but has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6: 6). Geshem's name means 'a heavy shower'. Soft showers speak of blessing, but heavy showers of depression and destruction. Satan, as ever, sought to depress Nehemiah and the people of God and to destroy their work [see Comment 7]. Like Nehemiah we may be aware of the presence of the enemy and be 'wise as serpents, and harmless as doves' (Mat. 10: 16).

Nehemiah's success was largely attributable to his attention to detail [Comment 8]. Harmony and unison are seen in his ensuring that at any particular point assailed by the enemy, at the blowing of the trumpet, the workers from all points on the wall could gather shoulder to shoulder in defence. Their weapons were carnal; ours are spiritual, 'but mighty before God' (2 Cor. 10: 4). As the builders carried their swords by their sides, so we are exhorted to 'take up the whole armour of God' (Eph. 6: 13) and 'take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 6: 17).

A. R. Smith

From Nottingham: In a previous study we have thought of the sorrow of a faithful few as they saw the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of the captivity. We remember, too, the emotion of the old men (Ezra 3: 12) at the time of the return. Nehemiah had a similar experience when, in far off Babylon, he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates burned with fire (Neh. 1: 3). He wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. Having waited humbly before his God he took practical steps to carry out the work which had so exercised his heart (Neh. 2).

BIBLE STUDIES

The **office** of cupbearer to **the king**, **which Nehemiah held**, Involved far more than merely waiting on **the king with wine**. Men **in these** positions enjoyed **the trust of the king**, **had ready access to his ear**, and were in **his confidence**. It was a brave action, therefore, on **Nehemiah's** part to approach Artaxerxes **with his request** (Neh. 2 1: 8). **His** urgent, silent prayer **at the moment of crisis is to be noted as an example** for ourselves (Neh. 2: 4).

It is instructive to note **that** when God **had** an important work to **be done**, in **this case the building of the wall**. He **had** to resort to those **still** in Babylon to choose a man who **was** in a **right** condition to undertake **the task**. We know **that** God **is** sovereign in **His** working **but it** appears somewhat of a reflection on **the** people of **Judah that there seems to have been none among them** who could **be raised up** for **this purpose** [Comment 9].

In drawing **parallels** between **these** events and **the** restoration of **the** spiritual house of God some eighty years or so ago, **we** thank God for those who responded to **His call** first to come out and **build** and then to erect **the wall**. **A sad thing it would be indeed if we**, in our day of privilege, allow **the wall, that is the separation of the house from the religious confusion around, to be trampled down**. **We must not confuse separation and isolation**. **We must reach out to others but not at the expense of the maintaining of the wall of separation**.

A wall was essential to a city of the east in the days which we are considering. **A broken wall was a disgrace and a danger**. **A well kept wall** prevented those outside **the city**, who **had** no right of **access** into **the place**, from entering. **It kept** those who were in **the city as a clearly defined community under the control of the lord or king of the city and subject to his rule and laws**. In 1 Cor. 5: 12 we read of **the 'without' and the 'within' in connection with the spiritual house of God of today**. **We are** responsible to maintain **the wall of separation**.

The builders were subject to ridicule and described as 'feeble' (Neh. 4: 2). In **the sight** of their enemies they may **have been**. They **were** not so in **the sight** of God. **We should not be afraid** of smallness of numbers or of **the insignificant place given us** by those without. When **ridicule failed the enemy resorted to deceit, but Nehemiah was wise in refusing**

their advances and the expression 'come down to you' (Neh. 6: 3) is replete with significance.

The remnant aspect of the people and their work is demonstrated by well known words (Neh. 4: 17-20) which should be a source of instruction and comfort to us.

ft. *Hickling*

COMMENTS

1. **(Sydney):** This raises an interesting point and one on which there is a paucity of information in the inspired record. In the account of the work of the remnant, who returned under Zerubbabel, attention is focused on the building of the house. Evidently work was also done on restoring the city and its walls, as Ezra 4: 12, 16 indicates. The extent of the progress made was, no doubt, exaggerated by Jerusalem's enemies to suit their own ends. The rising walls and gates may have suffered damage at the hands of those who caused the work of rebuilding to cease by 'force and power' (Ezra 4: 12). The work on the house was stopped for a while, then resumed and completed, but there is no specific reference indicating the completion of the wall until Nehemiah completed it. There is also some uncertainty regarding the identification of the Persian kings referred to in Ezra 4. The account in Neh. 1 gives the impression of a fairly recent disaster. Nehemiah went up to Jerusalem some ninety years after Zerubbabel did, and possibly some thirteen years after Ezra. See also the discussion of this problem in the Kingston-upon-Thames paper.

2. **(Birkenhead):** I understand Malachi to be separated from Nehemiah's day by a few decades at least. There is no direct internal evidence to link them as there is to link Ezra and Nehemiah, and there is no definite historical reference in Malachi's prophecy, only the reference of a Governor in Mai. 1: 8. The problem of mixed marriages had to be dealt with in Malachi's day, but that only shows that it was a recurring problem. There is general agreement that 445 BC was the year Nehemiah went up to Jerusalem to build the wall, and a commonly accepted date for Malachi's prophecy is 397 BC. Admittedly there is a school of thought that places Malachi in the middle of the 5th century BC. For useful references to the subject see B. S. vols. 20 (1952) pp. 89, 95; 41 (1973) pp. 162, **163**; 42 (1974) p. 2.

BIBLE STUDIES

3. **(Hamilton, Ontario):** There is no evidence to suggest that the service of the house of God had ceased prior to Nehemiah's return.

4. **(Kingston-upon-Thames):** The opposition of the people of the land played its part in bringing the work of rebuilding the House to a standstill, but the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah revealed that an underlying spiritual lethargy was the prime reason for the stoppage.

5. **(Leeds):** These scriptures are more relevant to the spiritual counterpart of the building of the House.

6. **(Leeds):** It is the concept of separation rather than that of unity that is brought before us in the building of the wall. The wall created a 'within' and a 'without'. This point is well made by many of our contributors and is, indeed, referred to in the second paragraph of your own contribution.

7. **(Methil):** It would be unwise to build too much on the meaning of names particularly when different authorities often give different meanings; for example: Dr. Strong and Dr. Newberry give the meaning of Nehemiah as 'consolation of Jehovah', while Dr. Unger gives 'Jehovah consoles'. Dr. Newberry gives 'hate in disguise' for Sanballat, while Unger and others suggest 'Sin (the Moon god) gives life'.

8. **(Methil):** Many important facets of Nehemiah's character are revealed in the narrative (see Editorial), his carefulness about details is only one of these.

9. **(Nottingham):** God always uses exercised men, and furthermore Nehemiah was in a position of trust at the centre of world power, and therefore able to obtain the concessions and the necessary authority to carry out the work.

J. K. D. J.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 May 1978

The structural splendour of Herod's Temple belied the declension that had taken place in the service of the house of God, as illustrated on the occasions on which, at the beginning (John 2: 13-18) and end (Mat. 21: 12-17) of His public ministry, the Lord Jesus found it necessary to cleanse its precincts. Yet it still was acknowledged as God's house, and a small, godly remnant continued to serve Him in faithfulness. Is not the record of the aged Anna sublime in its example? She 'departed not from the Temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day' (Luke 2: 37).

Throughout His life, the Saviour Himself was in continual association with the Temple, from the time when, as a boy, He said, 'Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?' (Luke 2: 49). With what sorrow He made the final pronouncement, 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate' (Mat. 23: 38). This material house was about to give way to a spiritual house in which God would dwell with His New Covenant people.

R. L.

GOD'S COVENANTS

Dr. Strong says the word for covenant is derived from *barah*, to select, and (in the sense of cutting) means a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh). Other scholars have other views, such as that it is derived from the Akkadian root *biritum* (space between). Dr. Strong's view has weighty support from Scripture. Jer. 34: 18, 19 clearly shows there was a covenant-victim which was cut in two, and by passing between the parts men solemnly undertook to keep the covenant. Gen. 15: 10, 17 shows that the Lord in symbol passed between the pieces and covenanted to give the land of Canaan to Abram's seed.

It would appear that generally there were covenant-victims when covenants were made. God's covenant with Noah follows on the offering up of burnt offerings. The covenant in Gen. 22 (Acts 3: 25) follows on Abraham's offering up the ram instead of his son.

BIBLE STUDIES

Each of these covenants is unconditional. God undertakes to fulfil a promise without anything being demanded in return. Even Gen. 17, often spoken of as 'conditional', is seen not to be so when examined closely. 'As for Me', 'As for thee' and 'As for Sarah' are not 'conditions' in the usual sense. They are not conditions which must be continuously observed during the lifetime of the beneficiaries, as is the case in the covenant made at Sinai, which is clearly conditional—'If... then...'. In Gen. 17 circumcision is similar to the once for all act of faith of Abraham in Gen. 15. It is somewhat like baptism today—a confession of inward faith made once.

At Sinai God makes a confidential covenant with Israel. In this case also there are covenant-victims—the animals that are offered up by the young men of the children of Israel (Ex. 24: 5-8). It may well be that the puzzling phrase 'The Lord do so to me and more also' originated when men covenanted together. The parties were virtually saying, 'May the Lord slay me if I do not keep this bargain'. In the case of God's covenants there is no thought of equal partners. God always takes the initiative. He sets out the terms of the covenant (sometimes referred to as a promise—Gal. 3: 16-18). Indeed, so much so is this the case that Israel is offered covenant-relationship and accepts the offer before she knows what the terms of the covenant are (Ex. 19: 4-8). This aspect of God's covenants is emphasised by the word used by the translators of the Hebrew scriptures into the Greek version (i. e. the Septuagint version). They did not use the Greek word *syntheke* for the Hebrew word *berith*. They avoided it, says F. F. Bruce in *The Books and the Parchments*, 'because it might have suggested that a covenant between God and men was concluded as an agreement between equals, whereas *diatheke* is better suited to the Biblical idea of a covenant or settlement which God initiates by His saving grace and freely bestows upon His people'. In the Greek New Testament the same word *diatheke* is used and is mostly translated 'covenant' in the Revised Version. The exception is Heb. 9: 16, 17. Vine says of this passage, '... there is excellent reason for adhering to the meaning "covenant-making". The rendering, "the death of the testator" would make Christ a testator, which He was not. He did not die simply that the terms of a testamentary disposition

might be fulfilled for the heirs. Here He who is "the Mediator of a new covenant" is Himself the Victim whose death was necessary. The idea of a will destroys the argument of v. 18. 'Vine quotes from Hatch's Essays in Biblical Greek in support of this and his own literal rendering is, 'For where a covenant (is) a death (is) necessary to be brought in of the one covenanting; for a covenant over dead ones (victims) is sure, since never has it force when the one covenanting lives'. Newberry's rendering is, 'For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be brought in the death of the covenant-victim. For a covenant is stable over the dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the covenant-victim liveth'.

In Luke's account of the Remembrance the Lord Jesus says, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood...'. The word for new is *kainos* i. e. new in character, new compared with that made at Sinai. That covenant was 'weak through the flesh'. Men could not keep the conditions. The new covenant has no such weakness: it does not lay down conditions that men must keep if the covenant is to survive. All the conditions have been kept by Christ representatively on behalf of all believers. It is an eternal covenant. The Holy Spirit says, 'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more' (Heb. 10: 17). Among the unconditional blessings of the new covenant are—baptism in the* Spirit, eternal life and the relationships of children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. How are these blessings received? By simple faith in our Lord Jesus Christ plus nothing more (Rom. 1: 16, 17). One positive movement of faith is the only condition.

J. H. Johnson (Galston)

HEROD'S TEMPLE — 'MY FATHER'S HOUSE'

From **Birkehead**: For details of the Temple erected by Herod we gain most information outside Scripture from historians such as Josephus. Herod was not a Jew, but was appointed ruler over them. It appears that the idea to build a Temple larger than Solomon's satisfied his 'ego', and would be something by which he would be long remembered. It took time for the people to accept his plan to demolish their present Temple which had stood for almost 500 years, but eventually the site was cleared and building commenced in 20-19 B. C. It was not finally completed until A. D. 63 and

BIBLE STUDIES

was burnt down seven years later. Scripture shows there was interest in the building (Mat. 24: 1; John 2: 20). Something of the size of the Temple may be gleaned from the fact that Satan took the Lord during the temptation to the pinnacle of the Temple (Luke 4: 9) from whence it was over 100 feet to the ground. The disciples also were deeply impressed by the large stones used to make the large buildings (Mark 13: 1-2). We must acknowledge that God's ways are not always ours. Herod was a wicked king, ordering to death all the male children born in the day when Jesus was born, and yet the Temple he built Jesus acknowledged as 'My Father's house' (John 2: 16). Incidents relevant to this are:

- (a) Service was rendered there to God. Zacharias executed the priest's office in the sanctuary (Luke 1: 9).
- (b) Sacrifices were offered there. Animals were being sold there and on two occasions the Lord ejected those engaging in wrong practices (John 2 and Mark 11).
- (c) The Lord indicated that the things of His Father were inextricably linked with His Father's house (Luke 2: 49).
- (d) This was the place to which Jesus was brought by His parents to be presented to the Lord (Luke 2).
- (e) It was a house of prayer to God (Mat. 21: 13).

However, the time came when God no longer chose to dwell in this place, and at the time of the Lord's death the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom showing that service in any earthly Temple was no longer acceptable (Mat. 27: 51; 23: 38) [see Comment 4].

A. E. Sands, R. D. Williams

From Camberwell: A period of over 400 years, during which there is silence in Scripture about the service of the house of God, followed the days of Malachi. The Temple built by the remnant appears to have been partially destroyed in the second century B. C. by Antiochus, the Syrian king, and from that period to the coming of Christ the Jews were involved in a struggle for sovereignty. The Romans invaded the land about the middle of the first century B. C., and one act of patronage by Herod was to commence the building of the Temple which bore his name.

Though built by a Gentile ruler, there is no doubt that God

owned this house as His house (see Mark 11: 17, Mat. 21: 13). The priestly service was carried on there (Luke 1: 8-10) and thither the godly ones of Israel resorted (Luke 2: 27, 37). The Lord Jesus honoured it with His presence (Luke 2: 49) and cleansed it at both the beginning and end of His ministry (John 2: 16; Mark 11: 17). Yet, at the end of His ministry He could say, 'Your house is left unto you desolate' (Mat. 23: 38). The final seal of God's rejection of His house was at the time of the Lord's crucifixion, when the veil of the Temple was rent in twain (Mat. 27: 51).

It was noted that in the early days of the church in Jerusalem, the disciples continued to associate with the Temple (Acts 3: 1; 21: 26).

An interesting development in the history of the Jews was the growth of the synagogues. These seemed to be used as a place for the public reading of the Scriptures, and for prayer (Luke 4: 16; Mat. 6: 5). Presumably they were intended as local meeting places because of the long journey to Jerusalem. They are never referred to in Scripture as God's house.

J. R.

From Edinburgh: As far as we can see, the Temple rebuilt at the return of the remnant was never totally destroyed; therefore Herod added to or extended that structure, but did not build another Temple. Work under his command commenced about A. D. 26. Some historians consider that work continued until A. D. 64 and only ceased finally some six years before it was totally destroyed in the conquest of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. The Temple area was enlarged by a series of courtyards at approx. 3ft. levels, culminating in the highest level at the sanctuary. It was at that level that the priests functioned in their courses. The lot, or allocated duty, of a priest to burn incense at the altar was the pinnacle of the service of any priest, and seldom did the opportunity present itself more than once in a lifetime. So it came about that the lot fell to Zacharias, who was given the vision and message of the forerunner of the Messiah.

When the parents of the Lord Jesus found Him in the Temple, His reply clearly indicated that the Temple in Jerusalem was still acknowledged by God as His dwelling place in the midst of the people of His choice. The word used for Temple' indicates an external court, whereas the word used

BIBLE STUDIES

in Luke ch. 1 indicates an inner sanctuary. Therefore, the Son of God in human form was not allowed to approach the area reserved for the priests, but remained in an outer court. His words, 'My Father's house' clearly indicated that, despite the terrible spiritual condition of all Israel, God honoured the place of His choice, and did so until the words were spoken, '*Your house is left... desolate*'. Eventually the veil of the Temple was rent—God had left His house.

7. Hope

From Galston: In the year 20 B. C. Herod, in an attempt to please the Jews, arranged for the building of this Temple to commence. By comparing Luke 1: 9 and John 2: 20 we see that worship in the Temple commenced many years before the complex of buildings was completed.

The first time we read of any activity in the Temple was when Zacharias entered into the Temple to burn incense. It was at this time that the angel of the Lord told Zacharias that his wife was to bear a son and his name was to be called John. The time for burning incense was a time for prayer—see also Rev. 5: 8.

Apart from general statements like Luke 2: 41, Scripture is silent about the Temple from the time Jesus was presented to the Lord according to the Law of Moses, until He was twelve, and again for a further eighteen years until He commenced His public ministry. Jesus's first recorded comment about Herod's Temple was when He was a boy of twelve. He referred to it as, 'My Father's house' (Luke 2: 49). The next time we hear the Lord's comment on the Temple was when He overthrew the moneychangers' tables and cast out the sheep and oxen. He said, 'Take these things hence; make not My Father's house a house of merchandise' (John 2: 14-16). Three years later a similar incident took place but on this occasion He said, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers' (Mat. 21: 13 and Mark 11:15-17).

When Jesus left the Temple for the last time He changed its title. He said, '*Your house is left unto you desolate*' (Mat. 23: 38), and when Jesus yielded up His Spirit at Calvary the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. This signified that the way was now open for a holy priesthood to enter into the holy place in heaven by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 9: 7, 8; 10: 19, 20) [Comment 4]. Even

although the Temple was left desolate the priests did not seem to notice, for its worship continued until the Temple was finally destroyed in A. D. 70 when Jerusalem was over-run by the Romans.

D. Gillies

From Hamilton (Scotland):

(a) Designation: The designation, 'Herod's Temple', is not a Biblical term, but one that is in common use by students of the Scriptures to denote that Temple which was standing in Jerusalem during the period between the eighteenth year of Herod the Great (circa. 21/20 B. C.) and its destruction by the Roman army under Titus in 70 A. D. It is important to note that, although the reconstruction was practically equivalent to an entire re-building of the Temple, it was only intended to be regarded as an enlarging and further beautifying of the existing Temple. It is remarkable that this great work was channelled through Herod the Great, one who will ever be remembered for 'the slaughter of the innocents' (Mat. 2: 16-18).

(b) Description: In contrast with the findings of secular history, Biblical descriptions of the Temple are brief (found mainly in the Gospel records), but reveal the size and beauty of the Temple and its precincts. Furthermore, they highlight the fact that the Temple was the focal point of Jewish society and worship:

Mark 13: 1, 2 'Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!'

'And Jesus said unto him, "Seest thou these *great* buildings!" '

Luke 21: 5 'Some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings'.

John 2: 20 The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this Temple in building. '

(c) Relationship:

(1) With the Law and Divine Service:

Luke 2: 27 The parents brought in the child Jesus... after the custom of the law'.

Luke 2: 37 'Departed not from the Temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications'.

Luke 1: 9 'According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense'.

BIBLE STUDIES

(2) With the Lord Jesus:

Brought as a babe into the Temple..... Luke 2: 27
As a boy they found Him in the Temple..... Luke 2: 46
He *did* wonderful things in the Temple..... Mat. 21: 15
He *cured* the blind and lame in the Temple... Mat. 21: 14
He *taught* in the Temple..... Mat. 21: 23 et al
He preached the Gospel in the Temple..... Luke 20: 1
He was sought by all the people in the Temple Luke 21: 38
'My Father's house' — Mat. 21: 12, 13 and John 2: 13-17
would suggest that the Lord Jesus Christ bridges the gap
in the minds of the spectators between the physical Temple
in which they were standing and the spiritual reality inherent
in the phrase, 'My Father's house'. It is noteworthy that the
words in Luke 1: 9, 'the Temple of the Lord' are found no-
where else in the New Testament. *M. Carruthers*

From Hamilton (Ontario): It is clear, and worthy of note,
that despite evil men and the many obvious discrepancies
that existed, the magnificent Temple built by Herod was
recognised by the Lord Jesus as 'My Father's house', and
was acknowledged as such by God the Father. It was known
to be the Centre, the place of divine sacrifice, worship and
prayer. In Luke 1: 9 it is called 'the Temple of the Lord'.

In an unprecedented vision the angel Gabriel (might of
God) revealed to Zacharias the good news that his son,
John (Jehovah is gracious), would be born. Zacharias was
engaged in Temple service when he was given this vision.
This again declares the Temple to be a place of communion
and of divine revelation.

It is evident that Israel had defiled and desecrated the
Temple by their actions, making it a den of robbers rather
than a house of prayer, a house of merchandise rather than
a place of worship. It is no wonder that, in His first recorded
public appearance and action in the Temple following the
Passover, the Lord showed His sore displeasure and also
His righteous zeal for God's house. So, as Son of God, He
exercised His authority by purging and cleansing the Temple.
(John 2: 13-16). It would seem from Luke's Gospel that the
Lord Jesus purged the Temple a second time, at the close
of His ministry; they had not rectified or repented of their
former evils.

It was more grievous still to God's heart when men dis-

honoured, despised, rejected and shamefully crucified the Saviour, and sought to destroy the holy temple of Christ's body (see John 2: 19). *Edward Bijons, Tom Ramage From Hayes*: Herod the Great (Mat. 2: 3), son of Antipater, initiated the construction of the Temple c. 19 B. C. on the site of the previous Temple on Mount Moriah, in an attempt to gain favour with the Jews. History records that its main structure was completed c. B. C. 9 sufficient to be functional, and the whole of the Temple was finally completed c. A. D. 64, only a short time before its total destruction in A. D. 70. It was still 'in building', therefore, during our Lord's ministry (John 2: 19). Doubt was expressed as to whether there was a complete rebuilding or whether it was an upgrading and beautifying of parts of the existing structure [Comment 1].

We noted that no mention is made of any of the furniture of the Temple. It was accepted that many items had been destroyed, and some assumed that replacements would have been made for the continuance of the service.

The predominant significance of this Temple is its direct association with the Son of God. He referred to it as:

- (a) My Father's house (John 2: 16; Luke 2: 49). This emphasised His claim as Son of God and also showed who should receive the worship in the house (cf. John 4: 23, lit. 'such doth the Father seek to worship Him').
- (b) A house of prayer (Mat. 21: 13). The mercy seat is an integral part of the service of the house. The quotation from Is. 56: 7 underlines that the Lord is merciful to all those who serve in the house and to their intercessions for others (cp. 1 Kin. 8: 29, 30).
- (c) God's dwelling place (Mat. 23: 21). This is true of all the expressions of the house of God.

The authority of the Son over God's house (Heb. 3: 6) is evident in the two cleansings of the Temple, firstly at the commencement of His ministry (John 2) and then towards the end (Luke 19). There was no resistance to His authority. Judgement should begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4: 17). The Temple was to be regarded as a sacred place.

It was while He was in the Temple that He referred to Himself as 'the Stone which the builders rejected' (Mat. 21: 42). He subsequently showed that by their rejection of Him, their unbelief, their unrighteousness and adherence to mere

BIBLE STUDIES

ritual, they had caused the glory of the house to depart and the God of the house to cease to dwell there, so that it became a building of no significance—your house desolate (Mat. 23: 38). This scripture was effective in so far as it described the intent at the time the Lord spoke, but it was fully effective a short time after at His crucifixion. Then the house of God under the old economy (Heb. 8: 13) ceased when the veil of the Temple was rent in twain (Mat. 27: 50, 51; Mark 15: 37, 38). The veil represented the way to God—when this ceased to exist God's house was left desolate.

D. Parker

From Lagos: Herod's Temple was the third erection to be built on the same site. It took the longest time to build (John 2: 20). It was a magnificent structure and much grander than Zerubbabel's Temple (Hag. 2: 3; Mark 13: 1, 2). The pattern of the house of God must have been observed for the building was apparently accepted.

The close of the dispensation of the law was at hand when the Lord suddenly came to His Temple (Mai. 3: 1). He was not recognised, however, except by the small band of the Godly remnant among whom were the aged Simeon and the widow Anna (Luke 2: 22-38). The amazed doctors of the law knew Him not despite His gracious bearing amidst them and the wisdom shown by His answers at the tender age of twelve (Luke 2: 46, 47).

The Lord never gave attendance at the altar while He was here below (Heb. 7: 13). While daily He sat in the Temple teaching He set forth authoritatively that One greater than the Temple was in their midst. By that same authority He spoke to the woman at Sychar's well (John 4: 21).

When by the hands of lawless men they destroyed the temple of His body 'the veil of the Temple was rent in twain' (Mat. 27: 51). God vacated the Temple of Herod, but in Christ He reconciled men unto Himself 'in the body of His flesh through death' (Col. 1: 21, 22). The living stones were thus being produced to be built up a spiritual house for God's habitation in the Spirit (Eph. 2: 22).

S. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: 'Every house is builded by someone; but He that built (established) all things is God' (Heb. 3: 4). In the will of God, this Temple was commenced by Herod in B. C. 20 and took 46 years to build (John 2: 20). It was destroyed

by the Romans in A. D. 70, but part of the wall remains to this present day.

Jesus entered into the Temple (*hieron*) which indicated the whole Temple area, the main building and its outside precincts, as distinct from the Sanctuary (the inner place of the Temple itself—*naos* into which only the priests could lawfully enter (Luke 1: 9, 21, 22). Christ came of the tribe of Judah and was not a priest whilst on earth (Heb. 7: 13, 14; 8: 4), therefore He did not enter into the inner Temple building (*naos*, the inner sanctuary) but only came into the outer precincts of the Temple where those who were buying and selling the animals and the money-changers were gathered.

The years of the Lord's life on earth were years of transition. Salvation was not only to the Jews, but, by the grace of God, to the Gentiles (Acts 28: 28): the material house (Temple) was to be forsaken by God (Mat. 23: 38) and a spiritual house was to come (John 4: 23, 24; 1 Peter 2: 5): the Old Covenant was to be superseded by the New Covenant (Luke 22: 20; Heb. 8: 13). Today we need to have a zeal for God's house, a zeal which was expressed by David (Ps. 69: 9) and by David's greater Son (John 2: 17).

H. Ft. Dodge

From Melbourne: We had no doubt that God accepted Herod's Temple as His house. It says in Luke 1: 8 that Zacharias executed the priest's office 'before God' and the writer uses the words 'the Temple of the Lord'. So God accepted the service of Zacharias just as He had accepted that of the priests in Old Testament times. In the building known as Herod's Temple, God gave the great revelation of the One who was to be the forerunner of the Messiah.

In this same building, a number of years later, the Lord Jesus Christ walked as a perfect Boy and then as a perfect Man. Thus the glory of the 'latter house' (Hag. 2: 9) was 'greater than the former', because the feet of the Redeemer trod its courts.

In John 2: 16, the Lord Jesus spoke of 'My Father's house', thus proving that the Temple was still acceptable to God. Some considered that the men who sold the animals were cheats because they probably robbed the people by overcharging them. But it was also felt, more importantly, that it was God who was robbed—of space in His house and of honour. One brother pointed out that the Temple had a

BIBLE STUDIES

special currency of its own and that is why money-changers were present.

When did Herod's Temple give God no further pleasure? When did it stop being God's dwelling-place? We all agreed that God forsook His house from the day the Lord Jesus said, 'Behold your house is left unto you desolate' (Mat. 23: 38) [see Comment 2]. Instead of calling the Temple 'My Father's house' He disowned it by saying 'your house'. As in Ps. 78: 60, in the case of Shiloh, God was again forced to forsake the dwelling-place which He loved. God gave proof of this when in the darkness at Calvary the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. The Temple was from then on indeed 'desolate'.
D. Mawhinney

From Methil: The Herods were wicked men; history bears record to their corrupt and cruel characters. At this time (Luke 1), there were in office High Priests who were also corrupt and had gained their position by intrigue and subterfuge. Yet God has always had His faithful ones in every dispensation, a remnant like those of whom we read in Mai. 3: 16. Such were Zacharias, Elizabeth his wife, Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna, and, we feel sure, others who were looking for the promised One.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him' (Ps. 25: 14). Simeon had it revealed to him that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luke 2: 26), and it is quite evident that Anna, too, had entered into the secret of the Lord, for how else could she speak 'of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem' (Luke 2: 38)? It is precious, too, to think of the ministry in which Zacharias was engaged; of the ascending incense, speaking of the preciousness and fragrance of our blessed Lord's Person and work; and the prayers ascending at the hour of prayer.

It is necessary to take into account that in the Scriptures we are considering we are approaching the time when God would disown that place which up till now He had been pleased to own as His house, because Israel as a nation had rejected the blessed One whom He had sent.

Concerning our Lord's words, 'your house is left unto you desolate' (Mat. 23: 38), we wondered when this actually took place. It was suggested that it was when 'the veil of

the Temple was rent in the midst' (Luke 23: 45) [Comment 2]. The three 'synoptic' Gospels refer to this, although John does not mention it. These words of our Lord would seem to be like some of the prophecies which, although spoken as if they had already been fulfilled, did not actually take place there and then, but at a future date. However, it did take place not long after. The judgement was passed, the execution of it being later.

Under the Old Covenant and the worship and service of the Temple associated with it which God had owned and accepted until the rejection of His beloved Son, God had established bonds which bound Him to His people and should have bound them to Him. But now, He has established new and even better bonds, based upon the once-for-all sacrifice of our blessed Lord, bonds for which the sacrifices of old could never have sufficed. See the Lord's words to the Samaritan woman (John 4: 20-26, especially v. 24).

A. McIlree, Senr.

From Nottingham: It is helpful to reflect upon the period between the days of Nehemiah and Malachi and the time of the birth of the Lord. The Scriptures are silent about the events of this period, but we can turn to secular history for some information, bearing in mind that in so doing we are handling the writings of men and not the inspired Scriptures. Over 400 years separate the days of Nehemiah and the prophecy of Malachi from the time of the appearance of the angel to Zacharias. During this period the Temple was subject to many violent attacks by different invading armies and was abused by them in many vile ways. History tells us that in 167 B. C. an altar to Zeus was erected in the sanctuary, and swine sacrificed upon it. The feast of the Greek nature-god Dionysus was celebrated in the Temple with Jews forced to participate in the licentious rites. During an attack in 39 B. C. the Temple avoided destruction but was badly damaged.

About this time Herod became interested in rebuilding what was now, in men's eyes, a damaged and shabby Temple. But it was not piety that prompted him. He had other motives. Firstly, he was a great builder and had built many great structures in many places, and, secondly, he was moved by the political instincts of an unpopular ruler who was seeking the esteem of his subjects. In 20 B. C. he set

BIBLE STUDIES

about rebuilding **the Temple**. **The structure itself was completed in 18 months but the entire Temple complex took 46 years to complete (see John 2: 20). This means that the building was finished about 26 A. D. [Comment 3], and it is interesting to realise that when the Lord visited it as a boy it is likely the whole complex was incomplete. It would be a very new building indeed during the manhood of the Lord (cp. Luke 21: 5). The building stood until its complete destruction by Titus in A. D. 70 (Luke 21: 6; 19: 43, 44).**

As we think of the Lord teaching in the Temple we are reminded that the house of God must be a place of teaching, that is of the doctrines which are of God. He threw out the money changers (John 2: 13-17), for the house of God is a place of divinely appointed discipline and of godly order.

There came a time when the Lord had to say 'your house is left unto you desolate' (Luke 13: 35). It was 'My Father's house' no longer; the glory had departed. The One who could say that the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up wept over the city (Luke 19: 41). As he gazed at the roof tops before Him He would see the huge Temple buildings. The massive stones were soon to be thrown to the ground (Luke 19: 43, 44). The kingdom was to be given to the little flock and the time was at hand when the material house was to give way to the spiritual. Soon the worship of God was not to be on 'this mountain' or in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth in association with the spiritual house of God of the present day (John 4: 21-24). ft. *Hickling*

From Paisley: Apart from Jewish tradition, we are wholly indebted to the historian Josephus for the fact that the Temple in operation during the days of the Lord, was the work of Herod the Great. But no good motive inspired him to build, such as had moved the remnant some five centuries before him. For though Herod was to distinguish himself for magnificence, he did not hesitate to build heathen temples as well as the Temple of the Lord. But though no friend of God, Herod seems to have been trying to gain the indulgence of the Jews, to whom he was a continual embarrassment through their knowing that there could be no King of the Jews save Christ. And so when the Magi came to Jerusalem seeking the One who was born King of the Jews, Herod was deeply troubled and sought to destroy the

infant Christ. By this, he revealed his Idumaeon origin and character.

Though Herod sought to imitate, or even to surpass, Solomon's magnificence, the Lord revealed that the Temple was under sentence of destruction. This He prophesied during the last week of His ministry, when He abandoned the Temple, never to enter it again. And so, as the disciples sought to show Him the buildings of the Temple, He told them that there would not be left one stone upon a stone which would not be overthrown (Mat. 24: 2). Thus, despite the tireless cycle of sacrifice and the continual ministrations of the priests, after Israel had crucified Messiah God had no regard for the nation's Christless devotions.

Apart from this, God was about to open the way for the inclusion of the Gentiles. This was because the Son of God 'broke down the middle wall of partition' (Eph. 2: 14). This seems to be an allusion to the barrier in the Temple, past which no Gentile dared venture except at the risk of death. Accordingly, Josephus describes it as 'a stone wall for the partition' (Antiquities XV. XI. 5).

Translating these points into practical lessons we may therefore say that:

- (a) Though the Temple built by Herod was a scaled-up version of that erected by the remnant, the size was not critical. Provided the pattern was acceptable to God, He could be served in a greater or a smaller house, i. e. among many or few.
- (b) The pattern of the Temple, though critical, could never augment the deficiencies of the worshippers, if their hearts were not right before God (Heb. 3: 6).
- (c) If the worshippers did not honour the Son, neither could they honour the Father, no matter how many their sacrifices.

T. Summerhill

COMMENTS

1. (Hayes): Most commentators agree that the Temple begun by Zerubbabel was spoiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, and restored by Judas Maccabeus. It was, however, in a state of considerable decay when Herod began the process of renovation. The work was so extensive as to be practically equivalent to a complete rebuilding exercise, although there

BIBLE STUDIES

is no evidence that the Temple had suffered complete destruction.

2. (Methil): I would agree with your suggestion. When the Lord Jesus said, 'Your house is left unto you desolate' He was speaking prospectively, even if only by a few days. The final departure was signified by the rent veil. *R. L*

I tend to agree with Melbourne, that the Lord's statement in Mat. 23: 38 was prescriptive. *P. L. H.*

3. (Nottingham): Some historical records suggest that in John 2: 20 the Temple was still being rebuilt, and that it was, in fact, only completed a few years before its final destruction in A. D. 70. *R. L*

4. (Galston): It showed that God's presence had departed from the earthly sanctuary; that place no longer had significance. *P. L. H.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From **Edinburgh:** Commenting on John 14: 2, 'In My Father's house are many abiding places'—it was suggested that since it was well known that many rooms for a multitude of purposes were attached to the Temple structure, the expression was deliberately chosen to point the attention of the disciples to what they knew on earth. It then allowed the Lord to extend this thought into provision made in heaven but the words used, 'My Father's house' did not refer directly to a heavenly Temple. What do others think?

The Greek word for house normally used with reference to the Temple' is *oikos*. In John 14: 2 the word for 'house' is *oikia*, which, according to Vine (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words) is never used of the Tabernacle or Temple. The reference is clearly to the heavenly abode which the Lord is preparing for His ransomed saints. He was leading them from the illustration of an earthly house to the anticipation of their heavenly home. *R. L*

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 June 1978

Our study this month brings us to the spiritual house of God of the present age. There is now no physical building which can be called the house of God, but the name refers to a spiritual edifice made up of 'living stones'. These are people who have been saved by God's grace through faith, have confessed that faith through baptism, and who are willing to conform to God's pattern for a dwelling place for Himself. These people are referred to collectively in several ways in Scripture, since they are as a body the present day expression of several different ideas in the Old Testament. There the people of God together constituted the kingdom of God, the holy nation, and had in their midst the house of God, in which God dwelled among them, which included the sanctuary, into which they could enter in the person of their representative. Today the ideas of nation and house converge on the same people, but the terms refer to different aspects of their relationship to God.

This study concentrates on the 'house' aspect; that is, the place in which God can dwell with an earthly people. The sanctuary associated with this house is a heavenly one, not an earthly one, and worship takes place there; the functions of worship and earthly divine presence are separated. It has been apparent throughout our studies that God specifies with care the details of the construction of a place He is to grace with His presence, and this is no less so in a spiritual house. It must be square with the corner-stone of Christ, and it must be built on the foundation of His teaching. Each living stone must have its irregularities knocked off to fit in with its neighbour, and the whole must befit its Inhabitant. Let us work and build that this may be so! *P. L. H.*

THE HOUSE OF GOD—(1) SOME BUILDING WORDS

The story of the two houses and their builders told by the Lord Jesus to illustrate the importance of hearing and doing

BIBLE STUDIES

His word is easily and universally understood **though** its message is often forgotten (Mat. 7: 24-27, Luke 6: 46-49). It appeals to a deep-rooted and universal human experience that begins with the building-blocks and games of childhood and ends with the adult struggle for shelter and home. So widespread is the experience that it readily lends itself to various metaphors especially involving mankind itself. For example in the language of both Old and New Testaments as well as in the English language the word 'house' may refer to a man's descendants as well as a building. Thus the house of David embraces the descendants of that monarch (1 Chr. 17: 24, Luke 1: 27). His house, however, was part of the house of Judah descended from the fourth son of Jacob or Israel which in turn embraces the descendants of that patriarch. (2 Sam. 2: 10, Heb. 8: 8). Thus this use of the word 'house' refers to a collection of people united by a common ancestry.

Again in English, Hebrew and Greek the word 'house' may refer to a group of people, including not only immediate family but also retainers, coming under the jurisdiction of one family head. Such a group, commonly called a 'household', may be exemplified by the households of Abraham and Cornelius (Gen. 14: 14, 15: 2-3, Acts 10: 1-8). Of necessity such a group must live contemporaneously and thus unlike 'house' as used of man's descendants, 'house' when used of a household has a limited extension in time. It is limited by the life of the head of the house. For example, the household of Abraham existed during his life but upon his death passed to Isaac. Similarly the household of Israel was dispersed into the households belonging to his heirs upon his death.

In addition to such relatively common similes, 'house' is used colloquially in the sense that the rings of the table of Shewbread 'housed' the staves (Ex. 25: 27) or boxes, perfume (Is. 3. 20, 'house of breath'—Young). Indeed its first use in the Scriptures describes the interior lining or 'housing' of the ark built by Noah (Gen. 6: 14) and it is similarly used to describe the golden lining of the Ark of God (Ex. 25: 11) which housed its contents. Though all of these have quite different associated teachings there is a similar root thought of 'containing' or separating that which is *within* from that which is *without*.

As well as such relatively straight-forward descriptive similes, 'house' and its associated building language are used in a number of specialised ways to describe spiritual things of the greatest importance. Unlike the uses outlined above, which can be understood by any one with a knowledge of language, the specialised uses can only be understood by those who are born again and who have divine enlightenment. But these things are themselves foreshadowed or typified by the conventional uses of the terminology and so it is necessary for the disciple to have the latter in mind while seeking to understand the deeper things of the Spirit. Unquestionably the most important related subject in the whole of the Scriptures is the house of God.

This distinction between natural and spiritual is clearly shown when Jacob first came to Bethel. To the natural man there was nothing in sight to which the term 'house' could be remotely applied. Yet to this apparently vacant place Jacob gave the name 'house of God' (Gen. 28: 17, 19). Nor did Jacob, a man of considerable experience of God, first recognize the place as such. He only did so when its nature had been divinely revealed to him. Here was a unique place, *within* limits defined by God, unknown to the natural man, where God dwelt. Again, Jacob called the stone 'the house of God'. Here was an action equally incomprehensible to the natural mind that symbolised to men, especially spiritually minded men, that this was the house of God, the gate of heaven.

I.

E. Penn

A SPIRITUAL HOUSE—ITS PATTERN, INAUGURATION, COMPOSITION AND GROWTH

From Derby: Inauguration was by the Spirit (John 14: 26, 1 Cor. 12: 8). Until the Holy Spirit of God came there could be no spiritual house, for He is the Teacher. What or who comprises the house? 1 Pet. 2: 5 answers 'Ye also...'. Peter could not write of a material building as 'Ye'. Paul wrote on similar lines: 'Ye also' (Eph. 2: 22). Writing to 'the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints', Paul said 'Ye are... God's building' (1 Cor. 1: 2; 3: 9).

BIBLE STUDIES

In the days of the Mosaic Tabernacle, God had a sanctuary made holy by His presence in it. It was made according to a divinely given pattern and was a copy of things in the heavens, which God in His grace condescended to show to His servant Moses. The Solomonic Temple was a further stage in the divine purpose. This wonderful structure ended eventually in failure because of the sinfulness of both kings and people. The sin of man has spoiled all God's gracious plans from the beginning [Comment 1]. Ps. 22 relates prophetically the tremendous cost, in terms of suffering, to be endured by the Son of God ere there could be born (spiritually born: see verse 31) a people that would become living stones, sanctified unto obedience and sprinkled by the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1: 2). Verse 31 of Ps. 22 ends with the words 'He hath done it', similar to the words cried with a loud voice by our blessed Redeemer, 'It is finished'. A people to be born of the Spirit (John 3: 5); born of God (John 1: 13); born from above (John 3: 7, **RVM**) and invited by God into His holy sanctuary above [Comment 2]. All this began on the day of Pentecost. God's spiritual house also began to be built at the same time. *L Foster*

From **Edinburgh**: The principles of Acts 2: 41, 42 were the fruits of the Holy Spirit given to men at Pentecost [Comment 10]. The initial work of the Spirit was in the Gospel message and the results were amazing as devout Jews and proselytes were converted to Christianity. Of course some despised the preaching saying, 'They are filled with new wine', but others 'were pricked in their heart', and asked 'Brethren, what shall we do?'. In his Spirit-filled preaching Peter put the responsibility of Christ's death on his hearers but also, most importantly, stressed the resurrection, quoting Scriptures from the Psalms well known to the Jews.

Those who received the word and were baptised were added to the original 120 disciples and the Lord added to them daily (v. 47). Although we have seven principles mentioned in Acts 2: 41, 42, the three steps mentioned in v. 41 are essentially very different from the four in v. 42. In v. 41 we have completed acts which are sequential and finalised. Salvation, baptism and addition are completed events in a believer's experience which follow upon one another and are not to be repeated. (It was God's will that

addition to His house should be an act not to be repeated. Of course, later some were excommunicated, and the principle of restoration is seen later in the Scriptures). In v. 42 we have acts which are continuing. They continued steadfastly in **the** apostles' teaching and in the Fellowship', i. e. continual and concurrent; and weekly the assembly met to break bread and at other times for prayer.

We were not unanimous on the teaching of Eph. 2: 19-22. The majority view was that these verses referred to the house of God although the previous verses and Ephesians as a book are largely 'body' teaching [Comment 11]. The Apostle uses building terms in illustrating the house, viz: the chief corner stone being Christ, the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets being their teaching of Christ (Acts 2: 42), each several building being individual churches of God growing into a Holy Temple, i. e. God's house. Peter identifies the believer in God's house with Christ when he says, 'Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house' (1 Pet. 2: 5). So we are built upon the foundation, according to the pattern.

L Burgoyne

From Hamilton, Scotland: It is important to keep in mind that the 'seven-point pattern for divine testimony' in Acts 2: 41, 42 referred primarily to the Church of God in Jerusalem at that time [but also to all churches of God since—*Eds.*], and furthermore that the Church of God in Jerusalem was the house of God. Paul in his letter to the Church of God in Ephesus emphasizes that 'each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2: 21). The point that Paul was making that day was that each and every Church of God in existence at that time formed together the house of God. This oneness is described by Paul as 'fitly framed together'.

It is helpful to compare Eph. 2: 20-21 with 1 Pet. 2: 4-7 and see how they complement each other.

Paul (Eph. 2: 20-21) Peter (1 Pet. 2: 4-7)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| (i) Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets | (i) Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house |
| (ii) Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone | (ii) Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone |

BIBLE STUDIES

- (iii) In whom **each several** building, **fityly** framed together, groweth into a holy **temple** in the Lord.
- (iii) Unto **whom** coming, a living stone... **elect** ... precious,

Paul views **the** spiritual house as many **buildings** forming one house. **Peter** peers closely and **sees the** component parts of **the** buildings **that** form **the spiritual** house as living stones.

Two beautiful words **are** found in Eph. **2: 21, 22** that highlight **the** centre of **the** Faith; **the** words **are**:

In whom

Eph. 1: 7 In whom **we have** our redemption through His blood

Eph. 1: 11 In whom also **we were made** a heritage

Eph. 1: 13 In whom ye also, having **heard the** word of **truth**

Eph. 1: 13 In whom having also believed, ye **were sealed**

Eph. 2: 21 In whom **each** several building, fityly **framed** together

Eph. 2: 22 In whom ye also **are** builded together.

Matthew Carruthers

From Hayes: **1 Pet. 2: 4-5** shows **that the** house of God proper to **New** Testament times is a spiritual house built of living stones, Christ Jesus Himself being **the** chief corner stone. The living stones **are** people like those to whom **Peter** wrote, chosen according to **the** foreknowledge of God **the Father** in sanctification of **the** Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of **the** blood of Jesus Christ: people who **had** been begotten again through **the** word of God [Comment **3**]. This obedience involved baptism, addition to a **church** of God and continuing stedfastly in **the** apostles' teaching and fellowship, in **the** breaking of **bread** and **the** prayers (Acts **2: 41-42**).

The living stones **at the** beginning **were** mostly Jews **but later there were** also many Gentiles. **At** first it comprised **the Church** of God in Jerusalem **but** as **the** word **spread** after Stephen's **death** churches of God **were** planted in other **places**. They **were** built on **the** same foundation, **the** foundation of **the** apostles and prophets, and according to **the** same pattern and carrying out **the** same service as **the Church** in Jerusalem. These churches together formed **the** house of God of **New** Testament times. **Its** growth was dependent on

BIBLE STUDIES

the operation of the holy Spirit through the disciples as they witnessed. As the Churches grew the house grew. As new churches were planted they became an integral part of the whole.

Eph. 2: 19-22, with the preceding verses, emphasizes the fact that in Christ Jesus believing Jews and Gentiles are one and equal. In the churches of God the Gentiles were builded together with the Jews for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

J. A. H. Robertson

From Leeds: *Pattern*—The pattern of the spiritual house of God is set out in Acts 2 and the seven steps outlined there are the first definitive statement of the pattern for God's house.

Baptism is seen as a public demonstration of obedience, but also as a type of death and resurrection: Christ's death for the believer (Rom. 6: 3). Addition appears to us to be a distinctly separate step, and in discussion the direct linking of baptism and addition was questioned [Comment 4].

The seventh step is continuing in fellowship. In studying the early chapters of Acts there is evidence of a strong spiritual and temporal bond of fellowship together. The temporal aspect of fellowship appears to weaken as we trace the history of the house, but the bond of fellowship in spiritual unity continues [Comment 5].

Inauguration—Our discussion centred on the timing of this inauguration. It was felt that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the outward sign of the end of the Old Covenant and the commencement of the New. The status of those who lived, believed and died, during the time of Christ's ministry was raised in our discussion. The situation would appear to be covered by Christ's words to the thief [Comment 6].

Composition—Comparison between old and new covenants shows that the magnificent Temple had given way to spiritual stones (1 Pet. 2). In the same way as the Temple had been perfect following God's pattern so the new House is seen to be perfect in its unity [Comment 7]. Different people with different gifts make up the House, but they are all united in relation to the Chief Corner Stone.

Philip Jefferson

BIBLE STUDIES

From Melbourne: In Acts 2 we find the inauguration of the New Covenant house of God, God's dwelling among His people, which was to replace the dwelling place of the Old Covenant.

It has been frequently stated that here we find the seven pillars of wisdom prophetically referred to in Prov. 9: 1, and defined here as: repentance, baptism, adding together, continuing stedfastly in the apostles' teaching, the fellowship (of churches of God, likewise to come into existence), the breaking of bread (in remembrance of the Lord), and the prayers (of the collective people of God) [Comment 8]. Here is the pattern given, and nothing less can constitute God's dwelling place under the New Covenant. The Acts of the apostles reveals how the servants of the Lord went from city to city with the same message, bringing together into one those who believed. Firstly Jews, then Samaritans, then Gentiles were embraced within the churches of God. All were linked together under the government and control of apostles and elders.

When we consider the first Epistle of Peter, written perhaps thirty years later we judge that quite possibly there were addressed in his letter, some of those who heard his message on the day of Pentecost. Be that as it may, in his epistle Peter emphasizes that they had been constituted a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. They would have had a knowledge of the priestly services of the Old Covenant, and the work of the high priest as he entered into the most holy place once in the year, but they had learned that the Great Priest of the New Covenant had entered by His own blood, appearing perpetually before the face of God on behalf of those whose sins He had borne, and offering continually their sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Those who were thus gathered were also a royal priesthood with the privilege of showing forth the excellencies of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

In the Ephesian letter the apostle addresses some who for the greater part were Gentiles. It is evident that the same pattern had been followed in all the churches of God. In Eph. 2: 21, 22, he draws an illustration from the Temple, which was composed of many buildings (see Mark 13: 1),

yet formed in their completeness one house. 'Every building (every church of God), fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also (the church of God at Ephesus) are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit'.
T. W. Fullerton, D. Mawhinney

From **Methil**: The Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were built to God's design. What was true of these physical houses of the past is true also for God's spiritual house in this dispensation. The stones for the building today are human beings who have trusted in the finished work of the Lord Jesus and so have become 'living stones'.

This house of God began on the day of Pentecost with the descent of the holy Spirit to indwell those who had gathered in obedience to the Lord's command. It began with a miracle: a sign for the unbelieving (1 Cor. 14: 22). The mass of people in the city heard the disciples speaking 'every man in his own language'. It is clear that at least fifteen known languages were spoken by the disciples.

The first gospel message resulted in some 3, 000 souls being saved, baptized without delay and added to the newly established church of God in Jerusalem. It is evident that the message must have included salvation, baptism, addition and continuing: a lesson for today's gospel preacher!

Each believer is a living stone, a potential priest, yet to function as God would have him, each one must be built together with other living stones to form a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2: 5). It is only in the clearly defined spiritual house that the holy priesthood can function.

For its foundation this house of God has the teaching of the Lord Jesus and subsequently of the apostles and prophets. Every living stone built into this structure is aligned with the chief corner stone (the Lord Jesus). Then each church of God is fitly framed together with all other churches of God to form a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2: 21).

Neville Coomer

From Nottingham: Our previous study brought us to the point where God forsook the material house of a past day and inaugurated the spiritual house of this dispensation. The worship of God was to be neither in Jerusalem nor in 'this mountain' but 'in spirit and truth' (John 4: 21-24, Luke 13: 35).

BIBLE STUDIES

Stone, **wood, gold,** silver and **such** like things **were** not required for **the** building of **the** spiritual house, for **the** building material is men and women, **saved** by sovereign **grace,** baptized and brought together to do **the will** of God. **The** pattern of **the** building is seen in **Acts 2.** **There were** about a hundred and twenty together (**Acts 1: 15**). **The** word '**together**' translates **here the phrase 'epi to auto';** literally, to or upon or for **the** same. They **had** one purpose of **heart,** to fulfil **the** will of God **as expressed** in **the** pattern given to **them** by **the** Son of God. The promised power **came** and in **the** holy Spirit **Peter** spoke on **the** day of Pentecost. Many **were** saved and, being **added** to those already together, **became the Church** of God in **Jerusalem,** **the** expression of **the** house of God **at that time (Acts 2).** Soon other **churches** of God **were** planted, linked with one another on **the** foundation of **the** teaching of **the** apostles, and together forming **the** house of God.

1 Pet. 2 presents **us** with a **further** picture of **the same** truth. Those who **had tasted** that **the** Lord is gracious, **that is** who **had accepted** the gospel of **the grace** of God, **are** seen **as** living stones. They were to **be built up** a spiritual house, **but** this could not **be** unless they conformed to **the** divine pattern. **As the** pattern **was** important in Moses' day so is it important today (Ex. 25: 8, 9; cf. Ezek. 45: 10-12).

The Lord **Jesus** Christ, **the** Living Stone, **was** and is **rejected** by many men, **but** God **has made** Him **the** Chief Corner Stone. The figure **here refers** to **the use** in ancient buildings of a certain stone of **perfect** shape. The **edges** of this stone **were** strictly **level** and **the** angles **true** right-angles. **It was** **placed** at one of **the** corners of **the** building and so determined **all the** building lines. In this way **the structure was** **made true** to **the** design of its architect. While **we** should never **be** apathetic in reaching out to men who **are** dying **let** us also **be careful** to hold **fast** the pattern of **truth** entrusted to **us** (2 Tim. 1: 13). R. **Hickling**

From Paisley: With **the** transference of **the** kingdom of God from **Israel** to another nation, derived from many nations, it **was** necessary **that the** material Temple and **its** sacrifices should cease. **It was** no longer God's intention to associate His presence with a material building during **the** dispensation of grace. Rather **He had** chosen to **dwell** through **the** Spirit

in a people who were in many parts of the inhabited earth.

Put into effect this meant that God had prepared a house composed of living stones, i. e. saints bound together in corporate testimony, and free to worship Him from every place where they gathered together in churches of God. The sacrifices of the true worshippers would be spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Thus, no longer would it be necessary to attend a Temple in Jerusalem, and so we read of the disciples at Troas, for example: 'And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread..' (Acts 20: 7).

Unlike the material building, the pattern of the spiritual house was not determined by dimension, substance or site. Rather, the specification was wholly spiritual, as determined by constitution, doctrine and manner of life. In this respect, the foundations were laid by apostles and prophets, with 'Christ Jesus Himself being the Chief Corner Stone' (Eph. 2: 20) [Comment 12]. That is to say, as the corner stone predetermines the alignment of the whole building, so the spiritual house took its form from the teaching and example of Christ, by whose authority also it came into being and was acceptable to God. Therefore, the apostles having been taught and commissioned by Christ, were able to act foundationally. But this action was twofold. First of all, churches of God were planted through the labours of the apostles. But thereafter, the apostles' teaching was committed to paper under the direction of the holy Spirit. By this means, the foundation remained after the apostles and the prophets had gone to be with their Lord. In this sense, the foundation became indestructible even though the superstructure (composed of obedient saints) could be destroyed by error or evil behaviour (Heb. 3: 6).

Because the house was comprised of living stones, who also constituted a holy priesthood, there was interdependence throughout the whole. It is for this reason that the apostles taught the same things in every place, that the churches of God might be bound together in united and uniform testimony. Thus Paul in the Spirit writing to the Ephesians states that 'each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2: 21).

Because the apostles' teaching was designed to be in action until the 'consummation of the age' (Mat. 28: 20

BIBLE STUDIES

RVM), all these matters are essential to the continuance of the house of God which has been rebuilt in our time.

T. Summerhill

From St. Helens: Before the Lord ascended into heaven, He instructed the apostles, whom He had chosen, to await in Jerusalem the fulfilment of the promise of His Father, when they would receive power by the coming of the holy Spirit. Then, and then only, would they be fitted to be His witnesses 'unto the uttermost parts of the earth'.

Occupied in fellowship, in consideration of the precious things which He had spoken to them concerning the kingdom of God, and continuing steadfastly in prayer, they waited, in obedience to His command. They were no longer cast down, but were expectant and eager to receive the gift of the Spirit. They were all filled with the Spirit, and the evidence of the Spirit's power was manifest immediately in the gift of tongues. Then, too, was inaugurated the house of God, not a material building as the Tabernacle in the wilderness or the Temple in Jerusalem, but a spiritual house, built of living stones, a habitation of God in the Spirit (1 Pet. 2: 5). It consisted of those who, believing Peter's message, believing in Christ, became spiritually alive, living stones, members of the body of Christ, who were also baptized and added to those already together in Jerusalem.

Peter's message was, 'Repent ye, and be baptized... unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'. This is at variance from the order pertaining today—believing, the indwelling of the Spirit, then baptism. It was suggested that these converts from Judaism were required to undergo baptism (in water) as a token of their genuine repentance before receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and were then baptized and added [Comment 9]. These then continued together, united in harmony with that teaching which the apostles had received from their Lord, and had communicated to them. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers—the divine pattern, then and now.

This was the pattern into which these living stones were built, a pattern from God. Just as Moses was given detailed instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle, the command is the same, to see that the pattern is strictly adhered to. Christ, the Living Stone, the life giver, the Stone

which the elders of Israel rejected, is become the head of the corner. All living stones should be tied into Him, bowing to His will and authority. This must be so, if the house of God, 'the pillar and ground of the truth', is to be maintained and function as 'a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'.

J. H. Raspin

From Birkenhead: The Tabernacle was to be constructed to the pattern laid down by God (Ex. 25), and when it was completed the glory of the Lord filled it, and it became His dwelling place on earth. In a similar way in this dispensation material was available for God's spiritual house in the nucleus of 120 gathered together in Jerusalem after the ascension of Christ (Acts 1: 15, 2: 1). These disciples had repented and believed in the Lord Jesus but did not constitute a church by virtue of these facts alone. It was not until the holy Spirit descended upon them that the Church of God in Jerusalem was inaugurated. These living stones were then built into a spiritual house.

The foundation and corner stone of the spiritual temple is Jesus Christ. There could be no spiritual temple without Him. He is the One on whom the whole faith is based and all belief is judged against His finished work. The growth of the Church of God in Jerusalem took place as those who believed followed those first steps of discipleship and were added by the Lord and builded into the church.

The doctrine was established on the basis laid down by the Lord (Acts 1: 3) and gradually revealed in the apostles' teaching and through the New Testament prophets under the guidance of the holy Spirit (Eph. 2: 20). Under this same guidance the Word spread abroad. Gradually, as the teaching was accepted in cities and countries throughout the eastern Mediterranean, more churches were established and the number of believers grew. Geographical separation and the customs of different countries did not cause any adaptation of the pattern to local needs. The pattern was quite clear and although doctrine developed with teaching (the epistles) the New Testament pattern laid down in Acts 2 was followed.

Times change, however, and although nowadays all believers may be accepted as being living stones, all are not

BIBLE STUDIES

built into a church of God. Indeed there have been times when none were so joined, but the rediscovery of this truth and the adherence to the New Testament pattern has resulted in the re-establishment of churches of God in many lands which are builded together to form the habitation of God in the Spirit.

R. C. Halpin

COMMENTS

1. **(Derby):** The sin of men has meant that they have not received many blessings which could have been theirs, but God's plans cannot be frustrated by man. He is sovereign over the whole of creation.

2. **(Derby):** This paragraph confuses the Church which is Christ's Body with the House of God. It is true that only those who have been born again can be living stones, to be built into a house for God, but the people are not born as a group, neither are men invited into the heavenly sanctuary on the basis of the new birth. I do not think that Ps. 22: 31 can properly be applied to the people of God, who owe their collective position to covenant relationship, not birth.

3. **(Hayes):** The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ refers back to Ex. 24: 8, where it relates to the people's acceptance of the obligations of God's covenant. It is not related to being born again.

4. **(Leeds):** Scripture usually links baptism with addition to a church of God, and addition is a logical consequence of baptism. If someone declares publicly that he intends to be a disciple, consistency demands that he should take the next step indicated in Scripture—addition to a church of God.

5. **(Leeds):** Acts 2: 42 refers to corporate activities, not individual ones, and there is some significance in the order in which they are given in the Scriptures. They adhered firmly to the body of teaching delivered by the apostles, and also identified themselves with the community (*koinonia*) to which they had been added. As a result of these, they carried

out the corporate acts of the breaking of the bread and the assembly prayer meeting. Private prayer is not dealt with here.

6. (Leeds): The building of the New Testament house of God began at Pentecost. Those who lived, believed and died during Christ's ministry were saved by their faith, but had no opportunity to form part of this house.

7. (Leeds): The house should indeed be united, but I do not think that it can be regarded as perfect in unity.

8. (Melbourne): I would not think it very likely that Prov. 9: 1 was intended as a prophecy of the actions of Acts 2: 41, 42.

9. (St. Helens): I do not think that these Jewish believers were baptized twice, as your statement implies.

P. L. H.

10. (Edinburgh): The principles laid down in Acts 2: 41, 42 are essential elements of the pattern that the Lord gave to His apostles when He was with them; particularly during the post-resurrection period of forty days, when He taught them 'the things concerning the kingdom of God', and gave them their commission (Acts 1: 1-9; Mat. 28: 19, 20). The holy Spirit empowered the apostles to carry out this work, and made men responsive to their teaching.

J. K. D. J.

11. (Edinburgh): The 'majority view' outlined in Edinburgh paper is supported by the fact that the term 'temple' is not elsewhere applied to believers as together forming the Church which is His Body, whereas it is applied to disciples together forming the house of God (1 Cor. 3: 9, 16, 17; 2 Cor. 6: 16). Moreover, the invisible unity of believers 'in one Body' (v. 16) is seen to be complementary to the outward, visible unity of obedient disciples brought together on the 'foundation of the apostles and prophets' (v. 20). This gives spiritual symmetry to the passage, and also a clear analogy with 'the commonwealth of Israel' (v. 12).

BIBLE STUDIES

12. (Paisley): Eph. 2: 20 speaks of the 'foundation (singular) of the apostles and prophets'. In my understanding this does not mean that the apostles and New Testament prophets themselves constituted the foundation, but refers to the foundation which they laid from place to place—as Paul in Corinth (1 Cor. 3: 10-11). The foundation was 'Jesus Christ' i. e. His authority as expressed through the apostles' teaching. Compare 'the firm foundation of God' (2 Tim 2: 19) i. e. the firm foundation established by God. *G.P.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From **Edinburgh:** Ephesians 2: 21—In what sense do Churches of God grow into a holy temple in the Lord? If it is growing numerically, how do we apply it to days of declining numbers?

I suggest that the words 'groweth into' have the sense of 'constitutes'. The analogy might be made with some of the ancient houses of England, where the original structure, begun perhaps in Tudor times, has been added to by successive generations to make a larger house. Sometimes, however, parts have become dilapidated due to lack of care, and have to be pulled down. Throughout the whole process there is one house, made up of the separate buildings. I do not think therefore, that the expression relates to numerical increase.

P. L. H.

ERRATUM

Editors regret that an inadvertent omission has led to a wrong date being given in sentence 2, para 1 of Edinburgh's paper in the May issue (p. 69). Please amend this to read as follows:

Work under his hand commenced about B. C. 20.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 July 1978

'If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou also shalt judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts' (Zech. 3: 7).

These words of encouragement to Joshua the high priest illustrate a central principle in regard to the house of God. For it is a divine requirement that God's earthly dwelling place should be governed in accordance with His word and ways. An expression which recurs in connection with Levitical service in the Book of Numbers is 'keeping the charge of the sanctuary' (e. g. 3: 28, 32; 31: 30). Responsibility was laid on priest and Levite to observe carefully the complex legislation as to ordinances, gifts and offerings. Witness Moses' displeasure when Eleazar and Ithamar were careless about the sin offering (Lev. 10: 16-20).

An appreciation of this principle will clarify the truth regarding God's house in our time. To attain and maintain their standing in the spiritual house of God, disciples of Christ must respond in obedience to His word and ways. The commonly held notion that all believers form part of the spiritual house by virtue of the new birth is then seen to be untenable. Nor can the scriptural concept of God's house be reconciled with the idea that different associations of believers, with differing doctrines and practices, are all seen to be part of a divine dwelling place. This privilege is reserved for disciples of Christ who submit their thoughts to the will of Him who is Son over God's house, thus walking in His ways and keeping His charge.

We are indebted to Dr. I. E. Penn for the series of articles on the house of God which commenced last month. This series offers fellow-students a thoughtful contribution regarding basic principles governing God's earthly dwelling-place in the present dispensation.

G. P.

THE HOUSE OF GOD: SOME BASIC BUILDING-BLOCKS

Both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures make the same

BIBLE STUDIES

distinction between rock (*tsur, sela* and *petra*) and stone (*'eben* and *lithos*) as may be found in any elementary textbook of geology. Rock refers to the *in situ*, solid, apparently permanent crags and bed-rock, whereas stone though also naturally produced is derived from the original and is separate and moveable. In addition, in Hebrew, brick (*lebenah*), as in modern English, refers to that which is man-made and not naturally occurring (Gen. 11: 3). These distinctions amongst natural things appear to be fairly consistently applied by the Spirit of God to spiritual things.

Thus numerous Old Testament Scriptures describe God as the Rock, the place of security and salvation, the source of life-giving streams or the immutably perfect One (e. g. Ex. 17: 6, Num. 20: 10-12, Deut. 8: 15, 32: 4, 15, 18, 1 Sam. 2: 2, 2 Sam. 22: 2-3, Neh. 9: 15, Ps. 18: 2, 31: 2-3, 71: 3, 78: 35, 95: 1). Likewise in the New Testament, e. g. Mat. 27: 51-60, and indeed Paul (1 Cor. 10: 4) refers to the life-giving and life-sustaining Rock, so identifying the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it speaks, as of the Godhead. Thus we may see that the house built by the wise man (Mat. 7: 24-25) refers initially to that obedience to the word of God that results in eternal salvation although, of course, the same principle applies to all who obey the word of God. Perhaps the most celebrated New Testament use of *Rock* is when the Lord Jesus referred to Himself in agreement with Peter's confession 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'. He immediately stated that this *Rock* was the One upon which He would build His church (Mat. 16: 13-20). Thus those who are in this Church are eternally secure for they are built upon the eternal, "unmoveable and impregnable bed-rock of Christ.

An entirely different teaching, however, is associated **with** the moveable stones. The first reference to them *per se* is to those occurring at the house of God or Bethel when one of them was set up to be a pillar of testimony and itself called the house of God (Gen. 28: 11, 18, 22, see also Gen. 35: 14). Elsewhere they are built up or aggregated to form pillars of testimony or witness (Gen. 31: 45, 46) or indeed to form the house of God as built by Solomon and others (2 Chr. 1-9, Lam. 4: 1, Ezra 5: 8, Hag. 2: 15, Zech. 4: 7) which was a testimony to all who saw or even heard of it that God dwelt among Israel. (A second principal kind of stone are the semi-precious stones worn by the high Priest of Israel and

associated with services, again, of the house of God. These tell of the people of God, that people associated with the house of God, and of God's valuation of them).

This connection between moveable stone and the Place is used metaphorically to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 118: 22; Is. 8: 14, 28: 14-18). Here again the Stone has to be set up, built up, or laid in its place as a standard to replace the corrupt standards set up by the rulers of Israel. These scriptures are interpreted for us in Acts 4: 11, Rom. 9: 33; Mat. 21: 42, Mark 12: 1-12, Luke 20: 9-18 and 1 Pet. 2: 6-8. It is shown to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ and His being laid in the heavenly Zion (Heb. 12: 22) in rejection of the leaders and builders of Israel who had rejected Him. In confirmation of the teaching of the 'Rock' as outlined above, in those scriptures which speak of the leaders' refusal of Him He is described as a '*rock of offence*' showing that their rejection of Him was not only disobedience as regards His status in Israel but was as deep-rooted as to stem from their rejection of Him as Saviour. Thus when spoken of as a '*stone*', a '*corner-stone*', a '*tried stone*' or a '*foundation stone*' the Lord Jesus is not viewed as illustrating the same position of impregnability and security that makes a certainty of eternal salvation, but as the ultimate divine standard to which God's spiritual dwelling place on earth must essentially be related. Else, as in a past day, the building will not stand.

The Lord Jesus is again spoken of as the foundation of God's building, that is the church of God in Corinth (1 Cor. 3: 9-11) where the context is the possible impermanence of that building. Similar language is used as regards Him and the church of God in Ephesus, and indeed the force of the word *also* (Eph. 2: 22) is that He is the '*chief corner-stone*' of the aggregate of all such buildings. Similar language is used by Peter (1 Pet. 2: 3-5) again in the context of the need for continual maintenance of the building where the individuals who need continually to refer to Him are appropriately described as '*living stones*'. Thus under the New Covenant, as elsewhere in the Old Testament Scriptures, the teaching associated with the '*stone*' has to do with the provision for human failure in building the house of God.

But, in following this line of instruction, '*stone*' is used in a number of different kinds of speech. In the scriptures in

BIBLE STUDIES

Genesis and in the building of the Temple, ordinary lithological stones are spoken of, whereas, in regard to Israel, the Lord Jesus is a 'stone' in metaphor. The living stones ~~of~~ the churches of God, also, are not lithological but metaphorically describe a spiritual reality, and denote the divine view of their spiritual position as part of a spiritual building in the present dispensation. Likewise when the Lord Jesus is spoken of as being '*laid in Zion*' this is also a metaphor, describing a spiritual reality enacted in heaven. We are at present content to rejoice in the close connection between Him and the churches of God today, and to acknowledge that in His being laid as the foundation of such churches or 'buildings' the will of God is being done on earth as it is in heaven.

As a postscript it can be seen, by contrast, that 'brick' which is entirely man-made was used at Babel (Gen. 11: 3) where it was a substitute for stone. It was also used in Egypt, the world-centre of its day (Ex. 5) and its use in divine service was a sore provocation to God (Is. 65: 3). In contrast to the divine centre it has always been the practice of the men of this world to bring and to build something 'man-made' in attempting to serve God. Like men of a past day because they seek 'not by faith, but as it were by works they stumbled at the stone of stumbling; even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame' (Rom. 9. 32-33). I. E. Penn

A SPIRITUAL HOUSE—ITS GOVERNMENT, DISCIPLINE AND DOCTRINE

From Galston: God in His wisdom has arranged that over His house there should be overseers to shepherd the flock. The responsibilities of an overseer are not to be looked on lightly, 'For they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account' (Heb. 13: 17). Their duties include feeding and tending the flock. Feeding the flock would take place, for example, when an overseer ministers to the assembly from God's word. Tending seems to indicate individual care and guidance.

1 Pet. 2: 21 tells us that Christ is the example. Overseers have to be an ensample (1 Pet. 5: 3). God states emphatically

what an overseer must be (1 Tim. 3: 2-7), a very demanding standard to achieve. This standard is necessary, for if an overseer failed to come up to the required standard how could he as an ensample give guidance to the flock?

Jesus said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation' (Mat. 12: 25); therefore the overseers must be united in all aspects of their work. Acts 15 tells us that the apostles and overseers were gathered at Jerusalem for the purpose of coming to oneness of mind on the matter of circumcision.

By linking Mat. 28: 18-20 and Acts 2: 41, 42 we find that a church of God consists of disciples, who are taught to observe all things which were commanded by the Lord. He who taught His disciples many things by word of mouth and example during His three and a half years of public ministry, said, 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments'. In time these disciples taught other disciples. God used certain to write the New Testament scriptures, which contain, among other things, His commandments for us today. Although God's nature is such that He cannot refuse a sinner who comes to Him seeking mercy through Jesus, He cannot tolerate disobedience. Failure to observe His commandments means that some form of discipline must be taken against the erring disciple, e. g. excommunication (1 Cor. 5: 9-13) or silencing (Tit. 1: 10-11).

Just as overseers must be united so also there must be unity of teaching in the churches of God. The house of God is composed of all the individual churches of God (Eph. 2: 21); therefore what is truth to one church of God must be truth to all churches of God.

D. Gillies

From Hamilton, Scotland: It is important in the study of the 'sacred writings' to remember that words can have areas of meaning rather than points of meaning. This can be illustrated by comparing the A. V. and R. V. translations of 1 Pet. 5: 2: Tend the flock of God. 'The Revisers have changed the restricted meaning of 'feed' and given us a wider area of meaning by their use of the word 'tend'. For the Greek term *poimaino* means much more than feeding; it carries the thought of guiding, guarding and governing, as well as providing food. It is helpful to compare *bosko* and *poimaino*,

BIBLE STUDIES

i. e. 'feed' and 'tend', in John 21: 15, 16, 17. A further helpful study is the use of *poimaino* in the Septuagint Version, e. g., Micah 7: 14, Jer. 23: 2, 1 Chr. 11: 2. In Ps. 23 we have a progression of thought onward from verse 1: 'The Lord is my shepherd' (*poimaino*). He leadeth, restoreth, guideth, His presence is known, His rod and staff comfort. He prepareth, He anointeth. What a lovely example of shepherd work! Then the Holy Spirit takes up this word and applies it to the work of spiritual shepherds of the flock in 1 Pet. 5: 2, and we have conveyed to us the vast area of service in which elders in the churches of God can function fruitfully.

There is a beautiful triad of thought directed to the flock in Heb. 13: 7, 17, 24, where elders are viewed as ruling,

- (i) Remember them that had the rule over you.
- (ii) Obey them that have the rule over you.
- (iii) Salute all them that have the rule over you.

But 1 Pet. 5: 3 warns of the danger of 'lording it over the charge allotted to you'. In Mat. 20: 25, 26 and Mark 10: 42 we have the warning words of the Lord Jesus: 'Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... not so shall it be among you'. In 1 Pet. 5: 3, however, the Holy Spirit gives a positive guideline 'making yourselves ensamples to the flock'. In Mat. 20: 26 (RVM) and Mark 10: 43 (RVM) the positive counsel of the Lord is: 'Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your servant'. Compare the usage of *katakurieno*, i. e. 'lord it over' in Acts 19: 16, Gen. (LXX) 1: 28 and Num. 32: 22 [Comment 1].

In 1 Tim. 3: 15 we noted that the definite article was omitted before 'house of God' and 'church of the living God'. This seemed to direct our thought to the character belonging to 'house of God' as though one assembly were a part possessing rules, privileges and features of the whole; the local expression of the universal. Furthermore, 'the pillar and ground of the truth' means not the foundation but the custodian of truth. Commensurate with revelation is responsibility. In the Scriptures we have the truth of God, and as forming the house of God we are intended to express that truth, including the truth of His holiness and righteousness.

Matthew Carruthers

From Kingston-upon-Thames: Just as the Law of Moses contained the building plans for the Tabernacle so the Apostles' Teaching is the blue-print for the spiritual house

of God of the present day. The former was also the law of God regulating the lives of Israel, the people of God, and, similarly, the Faith is no less than the commandments of the Lord to be obeyed by the present-day people of God. Unlike the past dispensation, however, the people of God and the house of God are co-extensive. So there is considerable structural comparison between the two. For example, just as assemblies are built together into successively larger groups forming the house of God so the elders of individual churches (Acts 14: 23), districts (Acts 11: 30) and collections of districts (1 Pet. 1: 1, 5: 1-4) form a united elderhood. It is this group of men who have the primary responsibility for carrying out the law of God (Heb. 13: 7, 17, 24). It therefore follows that overseers have a unique role to play in the exercise of judgement in the house of God.

As with all laws a subject may expect to suffer because of disobedience, but a feature of the Faith is that this may happen to its most diligent observer, for by so doing a believer will have become associated with the place of the Name: and that Name is Christ. It is in this context that the suffering of 1 Pet. 4: 16 has its place. It is entirely unmerited and occurs because the disciple has taken a separated place beside a Man who has been rejected by the men of this world. It is a blessing in disguise, however, for glory is to follow. In this situation the overseer assumes a pastoral role, tending the flock (1 Pet. 5: 2) and protecting them from the Devil (1 Pet. 5: 8).

The New Covenant laws differ from those of the Old in being written on the believer's heart (Heb. 10: 15-18). Consequently he is especially well placed for, and is expected to exercise, great self-judgement (Heb. 3: 7-19). He is therefore responsible for breaking the commandments of the Lord and may expect judgement to follow. Just as the transgression here takes place in the innermost recesses of the heart so the judgement may be carried out directly by God (e. g. 1 Cor. 11: 29-30). In this situation the role of the overseer is to be an ensample (Heb. 13: 7-8) to be imitated; that is to be teaching the commandments by practising them.

Transgression of the New Covenant law may affect not only the disciple's individual relationship with God but also his relationship with fellow-believers in the assembly. It is here that the instructions of Mat. 18: 15-20 are to be fol-

BIBLE STUDIES

lowed. **The transgression is to be treated like disease** and confined **as closely as possible**. In **this situation the overseers may have to act as judges** in bringing **the matter before the church for judgement for, just as the church receives a disciple into it, so it is the church that puts away**. (In the event of **the transgression spreading wider than a church then the wider hierarchy of overseers is well placed to deal with it in similar fashion as within a church**).

Transgression may even involve an **actual breach of the law** of an earthly kingdom. **Here the disciple can expect no special privilege for he professes higher standards. He must expect judgement to be not only certain but swift (1 Pet. 4: 15 & 17) as the earthly power acts on behalf of God (Rom. 13: 1-7).**
Ian E. Penn

From Lagos: The vision of **the Lord Jesus of the present spiritual house is that of one Flock under one Shepherd** (John 10: 16). Upon One revealed to **us as 'Son over God's house'** and also **described as 'the Chief Shepherd'** rests the final authority in **all matters** of government, discipline and doctrine in churches of God (**Heb. 3: 6 RVM; 1 Pet. 5: 4; Mat. 28: 18-20**). **His authority was given also to the apostles to whom He gave commandment (Acts 1: 2-5)**. On men of the spiritual character seen in Tit. **1: 5-9 the Holy Spirit laid the burden of caring for the flock (Acts 20: 28), and these were recognised to serve as elders in every Church of God. It is worth observing the emphasis on one church of God in every city, with a plural number of elders (or overseers). The unity of the elders is evident in Acts 15. The fact of the united elderhood may be seen in 1 Pet. 5: 1, where the apostle Peter describes himself as a fellow elder.**

The act of judgement in the exercise of discipline in the house of God may not be a welcome teaching among some believers. Howbeit, Scripture abounds **with examples** for our solemn consideration. In **the first church of God in Jerusalem we have the sad case of Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11)**. In **the church of God in Corinth we cite the judgement pronounced upon the brother in his sin of fornication (1 Cor. 5)**. For **the sanctity of the house of God, discipline and judgement are commanded, and the principles are clearly set forth (Ps. 89: 14; 1 Pet. 1: 15-17; 4: 17; Mat. 18: 15-17).**
S. O. Coker, E. Bassey

From Leeds: Peter refers to **the 'end time' (1 Pet. 4: 7)** and

to those who **walk after the flesh** and who **despise** government (**2 Pet. 2: 10** (A. V.)). It has **ever** been in man to rebel against authority and government, **but such things are** essential to **the** orderly manner and well-being of **all**. There **are** needed those who exercise government or control. **The** centurion (Mat. **8: 9**) **expressed** this **well**. Although **he was** a man **having** authority, **he** acknowledged **that he was** also a man **under** authority. In **the** spiritual house of God today (**1 Pet. 2: 5**), **as** in **the** past material house, **we have** those who govern and control.

We have no higher authority than God Himself, who gives us **the** doctrines relevant to His house. It is God's house (**Heb. 3: 6**) and Christ is Son over it. The **supreme** authority of God was manifest in Christ when **He was** on **earth** amongst men. **The** people **were** astonished at His teaching, for **He taught them** as one having authority' (Mat. **7: 28, 29**).

Christ governs today in **the** midst of **the** lampstands (**Rev. 1: 13**)—**the** churches (**1: 20**) together, **as** one (**1: 11**). Christ is seen **as** the Good **Shepherd**, the **Great Shepherd** (**Heb. 13: 20**) and **the** Chief **Shepherd** (**1 Pet. 5: 4**). His will is **that there should be** one flock, one **Shepherd** (John 10: 16). The Chief **Shepherd** Himself raised **up** those who serve **as** under-shepherds, **the** Holy Spirit marking **them** out and appointing **them** to exercise **the** oversight of **the** churches of God (**Acts 20: 28, 1 Pet. 5: 2**). **Overseers** do not **have** a flock of their own; it is God's flock. Those who 'look over', **care**, tend, and guide **the** flock of God, ensuring **that the** doctrines of God **are** carried out and **that** discipline is maintained, bear **much** responsibility. **If** they abide faithful, God in His graciousness promises **due reward** (**1 Pet. 5: 4**). Humility is **the** garment with which **all** who **are** in God's house should **be** adorned (**1 Pet. 5: 5**), together **with the** sisters, whose adornment is **a meek** and quiet spirit which is in **the** sight of God of **great** price (**1 Pet. 3: 4, 5**). *G Grierson, H. R. Dodge*

From Melbourne: Government is carried out through **elders** (or overseers) appointed by **the** Holy Spirit (**Acts 20: 28**). Their main function is to tend **the** flock in their care; to **feed the** flock; and to **be** ensamples to **the** flock. The flock should obey **the** elders (**Heb. 13: 17**) and **make** their function a joy **rather than** force **them** into **the** role of 'watchdog' or 'policeman' over **the** flock. **There must be** unity among **the** elders. **If there** is no unity, how can **the** flock **be expected** to remain

BIBLE STUDIES

united? The unity extends beyond the individual assembly to a unity throughout the whole fellowship of the churches of God.

Judgement begins at the house of God (1 Pet. 4: 17). We are God's chosen dwelling place and therefore are strictly judged by Him. There are various degrees of discipline. 1 Cor. 5: 9-13 states that transgressions such as fornication, railing or idolatry will not be tolerated, and the offender must be put away. This putting away is performed by the elders and is done to emphasize the sin of the brother and to allow him to seek forgiveness, repent and return [Comment 2].

Another degree of discipline is stated for a disorderly brother (or busybody). He must be admonished as a brother until repentance is shown. Mat. 18: 15-17 shows the course of action an individual must take against a brother who has offended him:

- (1) go to the brother in private, alone,
- (2) take one or more witnesses to the brother,
- (3) take the problem to the Church (elders).

If these principles were followed, perhaps ninety per cent of the misunderstandings in the house of God could be rectified without any other than the participating offenders ever knowing.

The house of God is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth (1 Tim. 3: 15). The doctrine (or truth) we hold is ordained of God and should be sweeter than honey to us and not a 'bind'. The doctrine of the house of God is taught in all the churches of God (1 Cor. 4: 17). There is no variation of doctrine from one church to another. The doctrine is scriptural and common to all).

D. Mawhinney, F. W. Atkinson

From Methil: God's government, in His spiritual house which is on earth at present, is carried out by men who have been made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20: 28). These should have shepherd-like qualities, knowing that they operate under the control of the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus. He calls Himself, and rightly so, The Good Shepherd', for He laid down His life for the sheep. Under God's guidance overseers should shepherd the flock under their care, feeding lambs, tending sheep, and feeding sheep (John 21, 1 Pet. 5).

Elders do not operate in isolation. In God's plan for His people each church of God should have at least two over-

seers to care for the saints. In the house of God there is a united elderhood. Elders meet to seek God's special guidance on matters of difficulty as in Acts **15**. Thus problems can be resolved and the unity preserved so that all the churches can teach and practise the same thing. God's house should be a house of order. Elders are also responsible for discipline in a church of God. Judgement begins at the house of God: it is where God's will should be done on earth, and this is accomplished by overseers carrying out their allotted task.

We would like to emphasize that such judgement resulting in excommunication is always with a view to that person's repentance and restoration, as in the case of the man with moral sin (1 Cor. 5) who was put away and later restored. After the investigation by overseers it is the entire church that puts away, even as the entire church receives. Not all judgement is effected by putting away; wise admonition when needed can save a soul from error. Moral sin, heretical teaching, or a persistently rebellious attitude demand excommunication. Elders are responsible for those within the house of God. It is God who judges those outside. Holiness and unity in the house of God must be preserved at all costs.

Neville Coomer

From Nottingham: If we were considering the truths of our study from the point of view of the kingdom of God we should think of its government as being carried out through the work of overseers, the translation of the Greek word *episkopoi* as used in such scriptures as Acts **20: 28**, 1 Tim. 3: 2. In viewing the matter of the government of the house of God we suggest that the emphasis is more on the thought of an elder. The Greek word here is *Presbuteros* and is used in such scriptures as 1 Tim. 5: 17, Tit. 1: 5, James 5: 14.

The word 'overseer' indicates the nature of the work while 'elder' would emphasise the spiritual maturity and experience of the one so called. Of course, both terms and the sphere of work they cover are inter-related and apply to the same men who carry out this service in the churches of God. Obviously there were those among the elders **who** had more gift and a longer experience than some of their fellows. Wise men would gladly give heed to and learn from such men.

The principle of government amongst the people of God of a past day is seen in Ex. **18: 13-26**. It was too much for Moses to shoulder alone the heavy responsibility of judging

BIBLE STUDIES

the people and dealing with their problems. So Moses chose out certain men to share in that responsibility in different spheres according to their abilities and there were rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens [Comment 3].

In the present spiritual house we see the care of the disciples vested, first of all, in the apostles. But they would not always be available and so we see them associating with themselves a group of men called elders. In Acts 15 we have the elders joined in council with the apostles over a matter of doctrine. In other scriptures in the Acts we have the elders acting together in responsibility, for example in Acts **11: 30** in respect of the churches in Judea, and in Acts 8: 14 over the matter of Samaria.

The purpose of government is to preserve law and order and to guide the people. In the house of God it is necessary for the elders to make sure that there is a unity of teaching and behaviour in accordance with the Scriptures. This is not limited to the local unit but extends to the whole; see Acts 16: 4 and compare 1 Pet. 1: 1 and 5: 1.

As we have seen, among the elders there must be those who will stand out above their fellows. So in the government of the house of God we read of those who were chief men among them (Acts 15: 22), men of repute (Gal. 2: 2), and pillars (Gal. 2: 9). *R. Hickling*

From Paisley: Initially the churches of God were administered by the apostles and their fellow-workers in the faith. But it was God's intention that the house of God should continue after the apostles had completed their labours. Thereafter, the churches of God would function through overseers, deacons and saints. Indeed, this structure was achieved during the time of the apostles, as seen in the maturity of the church in Philippi (see Phil. 1: 1). It was by this arrangement that the rule of heaven was to exist on the earth, through men and women conscious of the will of God and subject to the lordship of Christ. By this means, the word of Christ would be fulfilled, 'What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mat. 18: 18).

In order that the same things be taught in every church, it was necessary that there be a united elderhood. Ideally,

this would consist of overseers who under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and directed by the Scriptures, would confer and agree in spiritual matters relating to the house of God. For this reason, when there was division regarding the Judaeen heresy of salvation by circumcision, it was necessary to remit the matter to Jerusalem in the absence of local agreement.

Because the churches of God constituted the kingdom of God, there had to be rule and discipline. Only those of a clear testimony and a godly life could be received into fellowship and remain within it. But it was also possible to expel in cases of gross sin. Every church of God had the authority to deliver an offender to Satan upon confession or conviction. But—equally important—every church was likewise authorised to receive back an offender on his repentance and reformation.

In this respect, the spiritual house was meant to be an example to the world of the judgement of God against scandalous sin. Thus, though God in His longsuffering is deferring the judgement of the world, there should be no such deferment in respect of those who as living stones compose the spiritual house. Hence, in this sense, it is always time for judgement to begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4: 17).

T. *Summerhill*

From **Barrhead**: We compared Ezek. 9: 6 'Slay utterly... and begin at My sanctuary' with 1 Pet. 4: 17, 'For the time is come for judgement to begin at the house of God' and noted the consistency of divine principle in both Old and New Testaments. Judgement in God's house today appears to be closely related to cleansing.

Some time was also spent on the function of overseers and the way in which the oversight discharged its duty 'not lording it over the flock'. Will each overseer give account on his own or will it be done jointly in some way? [Comment 4]. This question was considered, but however it will be done, the responsibility for the flock must weigh heavily on the overseers. Some felt that the most precious and important thing an elder could do was to speak 'unto you the word of God'. Our attitude to past overseers is 'to remember them' but to present overseers it is 'to obey them'.

Throughout Paul's writings we get glimpses of the unity between individual churches: a ruling which applied to one

BIBLE STUDIES

church applied to **all**, and whatever truth **was taught** in one **was taught** in **all** (1 Cor. 4: 17, 7: 17). In this way **the** spiritual **house** would give stability to **the** Truth of God.

D. Fullerton

From Birkenhead: The government of **the** spiritual house is theocratic, i. e. **the** house is **ruled** by God, although this **rule** is exercised by **elders** who administer **the** legislation laid down in **the** Bible. 1 Pet. 5: 1-5 indicates **the** attitude in which this **rule** is to **be** undertaken, suggesting government by leadership **rather** than a dictatorial rule. **The elders or overseers are** responsible for **the** control of **the** policies and affairs of **the** churches and jointly and severally **have** responsibilities of service and leadership to individual **churches** and to **the** spiritual house itself. Obviously with **such** responsibilities it is a duty to which not everyone is suited, although 1 Tim. 3: 1 indicates **that** it is a worthy object to **seek the** office of **an** overseer [Comment 5]. **Several** scriptures are available to provide guidance **as to the** qualifications required and **the** attributes necessary to obtain recognition (1 Tim. 3: 1-7, Tit. 1: 5-9; Acts 20: 28). The duties of **overseers are** also clearly defined, laying down a very high standard, **as** also is **the** attitude to **be** adopted by **the** saints towards those **who have the rule over them**. Acts 11 and 15 disclose **the** important **aspect** of unity of **the** elderhood **as well as the** unity of **the** churches. Differences and difficulties can **be referred** to overseers at local level and matters can **be referred** through local and district oversight to **the** conference of **all** overseers if necessary.

One of **the** many duties falling to **those** in oversight is to exercise discipline in dealing with any disorder among individuals or groups within **the** church. The **degree of** discipline to **be** administered is decided by **the** overseers and imposed by **the** assembly, and should excommunication **be** necessary this involves being **put** out from among **the** assembly and not a banishment by **the** overseers alone. This **extreme**, however, is adopted with a view to impressing **the** seriousness of **the** wrongdoing on **the** saint and to producing repentance and restoration if possible to **the** assembly.

The foregoing is **part of the** doctrine of **the** spiritual house and comprises **part of the** body of instruction, **the** belief or **tenets** of **the** house. The doctrine is derived from **the**

apostles' teaching as recorded in the New Testament and is complete, having been delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The house of God is the place where this doctrine is expressed. The beliefs cannot be changed by popular demand as can the law of a country but since they are given by God they must stand firm. Not the least among these is the unity among the churches, leading to a unity of doctrine and teaching and providing a means for ensuring that this unity shall continue by virtue of the united elderhood which is charged with expounding the doctrine for the guidance of the saints.

R. C. Halpin, R. L. S.

From Derby: Doctrine is that which is taught. Discipline is that which is taught and related to behaviour. It includes self-discipline as set out in 1 Pet. 1: 15. Christians are to show the holy character of God. Self-discipline is needed to show the unity of believers and so to be a light for the world. Enforced discipline is needed in circumstances of misbehaviour. Government is that function in which some persons exert control over the behaviour of others, and involves a measure of acceptance by the governed, which is set aside in dictatorship.

Christian doctrine and discipleship spring from the Lord Jesus as seen throughout the gospels, and in Mat. 18 the Lord envisages the relationship between His disciples involving both self-discipline and corporate discipline. The Lord Jesus indicated the responsibility of the apostles to control in Mat. 28: 16-20; and in Acts 2: 42 there is 'the apostles' teaching'. In Acts 6 there is an illustration of government, with the twelve appointing men who had already been noticed by brethren as suited to a controlling function.

Next, in addition to the apostles, there appear elders as mentioned in Acts 11: 30; while 15: 22 shows the apostles and the elders with the whole church commissioning Paul and Barnabas. In 15: 23 the letter of commendation comes from the apostles and elders. Paul comments on this meeting in Gal. 2: 1-11 and mentions the special reputation of Peter, James and John. Acts 14: 23 shows that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

In 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13 the brethren are exhorted to acknowledge the care and admonition of those in authority. This acceptance of government is found also in Heb. 13: 7, 17

BIBLE STUDIES

along with reference to the character of those who govern. The importance of good character is set out in 1 Tim. 3 where are mentioned degrees of responsibility between bishops and deacons. The appointment of elders was required by Paul of Titus in Tit. 1: 5-9 and here both character and function are set out.

Rule has its unhappy aspects. This was seen in the Lord's teaching in Mat. 18. This is seen also in that Paul had to admonish the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 4: 18 and on into chapter 6. The church, no doubt through its elders, had to act. Happily 2 Cor. 2: 5-11 shows that even a hard judgement can have a beneficial result. *G. W. Conway, N. Bramfitt*

COMMENTS

1. (Hamilton): This word study is most interesting, but it should be remembered that the Septuagint is itself a translation, and the choice of words in it has no divine authority, except where specifically authenticated in the New Testament.

2. (Melbourne): As other papers point out, it is the assembly which puts away a man (1 Cor. 5: 13), following the advice and leadership of its elders.

3. (Nottingham): The judges of Ex. 18 do not seem to be exactly analogous with elders today; they were men appointed for a specific judicial purpose, in rather the same way as the men in Acts 6: 1-6 were appointed for a particular task. *P. L. H.*

4. (Barrhead): Most overseers would, I think, accept Heb. 13: 17 as an indication that they will one day give an individual account of their stewardship. This is in harmony with the general tenor of New Testament teaching on our future appearance before the Judgement Seat of Christ.

5. (Birkenhead): 1 Tim. 3: 1 says that the task which the man seeks is a good work, not that it is a good thing to seek it. *P. L. H.*

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 August 1978

Give unto the Lord, O ye sons of the mighty,
Give unto the Lord glory and strength,
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name;
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Ps. 29: 1

These lovely words from the pen of the 'sweet psalmist of Israel', spoken in relation to the material house, are relevant to the Godward service of the people of God today. The offering up of 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' is the highest form of service in which men can be engaged, and is the prime purpose for the existence of both house and holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2: 5). Considerable prominence is given to this high and holy service in the papers from our contributors, and due notice is also taken of the manward service of the people of God in testimony towards the world in royal priesthood capacity.

We must however, be ever mindful of the fact that such a privileged position demands a right spiritual condition. Failure to maintain conformity to the divine pattern enshrined in 'the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints' (Jude 3) resulted in the spiritual house established in the days of the apostles being forsaken by God as the material house that preceded it had been. *J. K. D. J.*

THE HOUSE OF GOD: SOME BUILDING BLUE-PRINTS

The commandments of the Lord given to Moses in the mount became known as the law of Moses and contained the pattern according to which the house of God, the tabernacle in the wilderness, was built. In the New Testament this pattern which was shown him in the mount is appropriately called a pattern or impression (*tupos*; Ex. 25: 9, Heb. 8: 5) for the law of Moses is always associated with the writing engraved or impressed on the tables of stone. The building constructed according to this plan transmitted by Moses to Israel was, in addition, itself a copy or pattern of things in the heavens (Heb. 9. 23).

BIBLE STUDIES

Today men and women are born again when they receive the word of God into the heart by faith and individually their bodies become 'temples of the Holy Spirit' as they are baptized in one Spirit into one Body (John 1: 12-13, 3: 1-21, 1 John 5: 1, 1 Cor. 12: 13, 1 Cor. 6: 19-20). This theme occurs at the end of 1 Peter 1 and is the pre-requisite to the building of the spiritual house (1 Pet. 2: 5). Thus here the words 'living stones' denote the eternal life possessed by those who come to the living Stone. Part and parcel of the new birth consists of the engraving on the newborn heart of the commandments of the Lord (Heb. 10: 16). Not only is the potential of expressing these so implanted within the believer, but also he is delivered from sin unto a 'form (*tupos*) of teaching' (Rom. 6: 17) to which he is to hold fast (2 Tim. 1: 13) so that he personally may be fashioned according to the word of God in his heart. In doing so, however, he is brought into contact with other people (1 John 5: 1-3).

Just such a series of events occurred in the early days of the dispensation (Acts 6: 7). The word of God increased as it found a place in an increasing number of hearts, certain of whom then became obedient to the teaching there called 'the faith', properly called 'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Jas. 2: 1) and, since He transmitted it to them, 'the apostles' teaching' (Acts 2: 42). Now Paul wrote (Gal. 1: 13, 23) that he made havoc of the church of God (in Jerusalem) and by so doing he made havoc of 'the faith'. From this it can be seen that obedience to the faith resulted in the construction of the church of God in Jerusalem and similarly elsewhere. Hence, just as the law of Moses was the blue-print for the construction of the Tabernacle, so the faith, the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles' teaching, is the blue-print for the construction of the house of God of the New Covenant. The one, impressed on stone, when obeyed created the material building of the past day: the other, impressed on the heart, when obeyed, creates the spiritual building of today.

It was in conformity to this pattern that the wise master-builder laid the foundation in Corinth (1 Cor. 3: 10-17) and it is to this pattern that other workmen must build (2 Tim. 2: 15). According to this plan believers or living stones are added to the Lord (Acts 5: 14, 11; 24), being laid on the foundation which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3: 11), and simul-

taneously built up together with other such living stones (Acts 2: 41, 47). In this way, by adhering to the plan, the apostles were faithful servants in the building of the house of God. It is to be noted, however, that although the Lord resembles Moses in transmitting the blue-print for the building to men, He is innately superior by virtue of His position in the Godhead. As such He is the builder of all things (Heb. 3: 4). Thus it is the measure of the value of the house of God today that a role formerly taken by Moses is today taken by no less a person than the Son of God: that the creator and originator of the blue-print personally transmitted it.

I. E. Penn

THE HOUSE OF GOD: BUILDING A BUILDING

The acquaintance of everyone with houses and building has a very characteristic early phase amongst all those brought up near to pencil and paper. A child soon learns to identify in a drawing the characteristic features of a house: its roof, its door, its windows. Furthermore it is soon learned that there is a proper order to assembling the components as indeed there is for building anything. For example a roof cannot be fitted before the walls are built; walls must precede doors and so on. It is just so with building an individual church. Such churches have characteristic features that allow them to be easily identified; features which have to be positioned in the proper order. Search of the New Testament Scriptures will show that these features are conveniently itemised in order in Acts 2: 41-42.

The first three items principally affect individuals and are items which should be closely linked together in the individual's experience whereas the last four are obviously things that can only be true of people closely linked together. Thus we may make a convenient distinction between 'things together' and 'together things'. Thus the former show that the person has to be saved first, then, when saved, baptised in water. Finally, when both saved and baptised, he or she is to be added to a number of disciples already gathered together. It is thus that a person enters a church of God. Not only are these experiences essential but the order in which they are to occur, the order of Acts 2: 41, is equally important. It is quite pointless in view of Rom. 6: 1-11 to baptise people who are unsaved and even worse in view of 2 Cor. 6: 14-18

BIBLE STUDIES

to **add such** people to **an** assembly. Similarly, **it is** clear from an **example such as Acts 19: 1-7**, that believers are to **be baptised** before being received into assemblies. Although, on occasion, one or other of **the items** may **be** omitted in **the** record of **the** events (**e. g. Acts 2: 47**), **it will** always **be** found in **the New Testament Scriptures** that **the** order given in **Acts 2: 41** is **the** correct order. **It** may therefore **be** regarded **as the** type succession of occurrence **as** regards **the** experience of **the individual with** God. **The** three **steps** are completely diagnostic of **the** experience of believers who **are built** together to form **a** church of God, **the** local expression of **the** house of God. Conversely **the** history of Christendom **will be** found to **be** littered **with the** debris of **feuds** in **which** **the** protagonists ignored or tried to change **the** order of **the** items. For **example** there **is** a well-known and fundamental **cleavage** between those who would **baptise** infants and those who **claim** (correctly) that only believers should **be** baptised.

Controversy **has** on occasion surrounded **the** four **items**, **the** 'together things', of **Acts 2: 42** and, since no translation **seems to be** consistent, **it is as well** to **set out** **the** words **as** recorded, in **e. g. the** Englishman's Greek **New Testament**, **as** follows:

te(i) didache(i) ton apostolon
in **the** teaching of **the** apostles
kai te(i) koinonia(i)
and in **the** fellowship
kai te(i) klasei tou artou
and in **the** breaking of bread
kai tais proseuchais
and in **the** prayers

Although there may **be** some doubt about **the** 'and' preceding 'in **the** fellowship', **it is** abundantly clear **that the** four **items** constitute **a** list, and **that each is** of equivalent status. Therefore **the** breaking of **bread** and **the** prayers are not, for **example**, particular expressions of **a** general activity 'fellowship' mentioned immediately previously. Further **the** repetition of **the** definite article shows **that each** of **the items is** **a** special case. **That is** to say **it is** not, for **example**, **the** everyday eating and drinking of **meals** and companying associated **with it that is** meant by '**the breaking** of bread' **but** rather

that most important divine service instituted by the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal, the Remembrance, that is meant. Similarly the first item does not mean that the Apostles taught nor does it refer to some aspect of their teaching but rather to the whole body of doctrine held by them which, as we have seen, is the New Testament counterpart to the Law of Moses. Again 'the prayers' does not refer to the everyday activity of the believers comparable to the thrice daily solitary praying of a Daniel before God, rather it refers to that activity of all the added believers, comparable in status to the divine service of the breaking of bread. It is the collective prayers of the assembly, the prayer-meeting, to which the last item refers. It will be seen, then, that the second item, the fellowship, cannot be that individual experience that a believer may have with Christ. Nor can it be the everyday goings in and out amongst companion pilgrims just as the breaking of bread does not refer to the disciples' everyday eating and drinking. Instead it refers to that fellowship which ranks in the divine estimation with the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread and the prayers. Just such a fellowship is that of 1 Cor. 1: 9 which refers to that total *'koinonia'* or community of people which the Lord Jesus owns and with which he desires all believers to be associated.

Confirmation of this may be seen in the fact that the four items fall naturally into two pairs. The last two items describe the service of the priesthood, firstly their Godward, and secondly their divine service on behalf of men. On the other hand, the first pair brings together, most naturally from what we have seen in the previous article, the blue-print, the apostles' teaching and what it constructs, the community of people: the spiritual house of God of the present dispensation. That is to say precisely the prerequisite for the service of the priesthood which is highlighted in the second pair.

It may then be seen that these four items are completely diagnostic of a church of God. No New Testament church can be without them. Although not all of the items may be on record in specific cases of the various assemblies mentioned in the New Testament, some or other of them are, and their correct relationships may only be understood by reference to the 'type succession' as given in Acts 2: 42. Conversely, an assembly not holding or professing to hold

BIBLE STUDIES

the apostles' teaching can hardly be said to be a Church of God. By the same token neither can one that does not keep the breaking of bread or the prayers, and, by the same token, an assembly which is not linked with others in a divine community cannot be regarded as being 'a Church of God'.

(to be continued)

I. E. Penn

A SPIRITUAL HOUSE—ITS FUNCTION AND CONDITION

From Hamilton (Scotland, /: How instructive are the words (Ps. 119: 140 RVM) Thy word is very tried or refined: therefore Thy servant loveth it. 'As each and every word from God is refined it is important to view clearly the area of meaning contained in the individual word, to consider context as well as New Testament usage. This can be illustrated by looking at the word 'boldness' (Heb. 10: 19). The underlying Greek term is the noun *parrhesia* which comes from *pas*, all, *rhesis*, speech and primarily denotes 'freedom of speech' (Vine) (cf. Acts 4: 29, 31; 2 Cor. 3: 12, 7: 4; Philemon 8). In other contexts, however, it conveys the meaning of confidence or boldness without any connection necessarily with speech [Comment 1]. It is translated 'boldness' in Heb. 3: 6, 4: 16. 10: 35. This confidence or boldness as seen in the context of the Hebrew epistle is based on the work of Christ revealed by divine revelation.

A difference in emphasis may be seen between the words 'to enter into the holy place' (Heb. 10: 19) and 'let us draw near' (v. 22). In the former it is *entering* into a place 'by ... a new and living way' whilst the latter phrase refers to a *drawing near* 'with a true (i. e. genuine) heart in fulness of faith'. It is important to keep in mind that the 'confidence' or 'boldness' of Heb. 10: 19 will never diminish the awe one experiences in the presence of God. The 'boldness' is necessary to enable us to come into the holy place; when we stand in the presence of God, awe floods our beings.

If Heb. 10: 19-22 highlights the entrance into the holy place and the drawing near of the people of God to their God, 1 Pet. 2: 5 emphasises the great collective terms of the 'Faith' i. e. spiritual house, holy priesthood, and directs our attention to the service of God. Brought into the presence of God for

a purpose, 'to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' this dispels our apprehension for now we consider the work of the Son of God and place aside our fears that stem from the knowledge of our 'limited spiritual discernment and power and the limitations of our tongues to express 'sacrifice of praise'. The call of God is clear (Heb. 13: 15) Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise . . . the fruit of lips . . . '. Also (Heb. 12. 28 RVM) 'Let us have thankfulness, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with godly fear and awe'.

Matthew Carruthers

From Lagos: In the new economy there functions a holy priesthood, in relation to the spiritual house, to whom is given the unique privilege of entering into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus to fill the hands of the great High Priest with spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2: 5; Heb. 10: 19-22). Psalm 45: 1 gives the basic explanation of what we mean by spiritual sacrifices—'My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter: I speak the things which I have made touching the King'. In that holy contemplation of the Lord of glory there are impressions made upon the heart and life which constitute 'things which I have made' my own, touching the King. The fire which came from the altar of burnt offering to consume the sweet incense laid upon the golden altar established the divine order, and linked the two altars in the Levitical priesthood service (Lev. 16: 12-13). Similarly, the Remembrance may not be separated from the service of worship in the beauty of holiness (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 11: 23-26; Psa. 29: 1-2). 'While I was musing' says the psalmist, 'the fire kindled: Then spake I with my tongue' (Psa. 39: 3). The ministering priest under Levitical priesthood departed from the presence of God fragrant with the sweet incense burnt. By life and words of their testimony the royal priesthood is the witness to the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2: 9). *S. Coker, E. Bassey*

From Leeds: 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? . . . He that hath clean hands and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, and hath not sworn deceitfully' (Psa. 24: 3-4).

In their approach Godward, the priests, under the Old

BIBLE STUDIES

Covenant, had to cleanse themselves from that which defiled, and they did so at the laver (Ex. 30: 17-21). However, not only was there this outward cleansing but that which was unseen, the inward man, the heart, had to be pure and undefiled. The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts'. (Mai. 2: 7). It is said concerning Ezra (Ezra 7: 10) 'Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments'. The Lord said that what defiles a man is not that which goes in but that which comes out of his mouth (Mat. 15: 11). 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways' (Ps. 119: 1-3 AV). There is ever the need to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7: 1), thus perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The invitation to draw near (Heb. 10: 22) is to those whose hearts are sprinkled as from evil conscience, and whose bodies are washed with pure water. We have been washed (1 Cor. 6: 11) and we are also sanctified. Together, as priests (Rev. 1: 6) we draw near. 'Having therefore, brethren (plural, together) boldness... let us draw near' (Heb. 10: 19, 22). This indicates a drawing near of people together and not individuals. Because the Lord, our Great High Priest has Himself already entered in, we have the boldness to draw near. The manner of our approach is with a sincere heart and in full assurance of faith, having experienced the washing of regeneration through the word (John 15: 3, Titus 3: 5).

We worship in the spirit (John 4: 23) and in a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2: 5), therefore our behaviour should be such that has spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2: 13, 14). 'Exercise thyself unto godliness:... Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come' (1 Tim. 4: 7-8). *H. R. Dodge*

From Melbourne: 1 Pet. 2: 5, 9 is really the epitome of our lives. The former verse deals with our function in service in God's house and the latter deals with our service before men. 'Let us draw near... ' (Heb. 10: 22). We must have

a 'true heart'. This means our hearts must be cleansed by prayer and confession and washed with the pure water of the word of God. So it is a complete preparation of oneself before coming to worship God. This is very much a vital part of the function and condition of a spiritual house. We must be prepared before coming to worship God in holy priesthood service. We noted the three men (1 Sam. 10: 3) who were 'going up to God to Bethel'. They were certainly ready and prepared. One man was carrying three kids, another had three loaves of bread while the third was carrying a bottle of wine. Thus we too should be ready to appear before God in worship. At home we should be exercised before the Lord and guided by the Holy Spirit about our spiritual offerings. If we are well prepared at home then we will be moved by the Spirit as we worship in the Holies. Shame on us if the hands of our Great High Priest have to go empty! His hands, once nailed on Calvary's cross, should be filled with the well-prepared spiritual sacrifices of God's people.

We felt that the consecration of the priests in Lev. 22 answers to Paul's words of 1 Cor. 11: 28 'Let a man examine himself... '. Humanly speaking we have no right to be in the Holies. Our boldness comes because of 'the blood of Jesus'.

We must 'hold fast' (Heb. 10: 23) to the teachings of the house of God or we will fail to function as God's dwelling place. What a contrast to our salvation and our eternal security through the work of Calvary! May we 'hold fast' in God's spiritual house until Jesus comes!

D. J. McFarlane, D. Mawhinney

From Methil: Under the old economy, worship towards God involved bringing sacrifices such as lambs, bulls and goats, but today God's house is a spiritual house, and we worship with spiritual sacrifices, presented through Christ, our Great Priest, to God. While Christ is referred to as 'Priest' or 'Great High Priest' elsewhere, we believe that Heb. 10: 21 is the only scripture in which He is described as 'Great Priest'. This we judge reveals the extent of His greatness.

It is evident from Heb. 8 that every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. The Lord Jesus is the one today who is our high Priest, and who offers our sacrifices

BIBLE STUDIES

to God. In Old Testament times, only the high priest, and that only once in the year, entered into the most holy place, but today, we have boldness, by the blood of Jesus, to draw near as a holy priesthood. The scripture says, 'Let us draw near' (Heb. 10: 22): we do so collectively.

It is as a royal priesthood we preach the gospel, and those in the church, who stand alongside the preacher in the open air, and sit among the audience during a gospel address, are all actively engaged in royal priesthood service—not only the speaker! The function of royal priesthood service is towards man and involves showing forth the excellencies of Christ. In so doing, man can be greatly benefited, and God also receives His portion for 'We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in theme that are perishing' (2 Cor. 2: 15).

God's spiritual house is built of living stones. Saints are eternally secure, based entirely on the finished work of Christ, but their place in the house of God is dependent upon their condition.

There are some sins that demand excommunication, such as immoral behaviour, false teaching or heresy and rebellion in all its forms. Paul wrote to Timothy, knowing that he was a young man, who would in turn minister faithfully to the saints, and Paul informed Timothy how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God. God is holy, His people should be holy, 'holiness becometh Thine House' (Ps. 93: 5).

A R. Smith, N. G. Coomer

From Nottingham: In the days of Solomon the house of God and the place of the Name stood in all their glory. Not only were these a source of light and truth to the people of God (Ps. 43: 3, 4), but it is evident that those who came from around saw the glories which belonged to God. The Queen of Sheba declared the report she had heard to be a true report (1 Kings 10: 1-9). Later, as we have seen in our studies, this glory departed (Lam. 2: 7-10), and the house that was built in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah lacked something of the glory of the early house (Ezra 3: 12, 13). There were those who despised it (Neh. 4: 1, 2), but it was honoured by God. In spite of the scoffing of some the very rebuilding was a testimony and witness among men.

In apostolic times the spiritual house expressed in the churches of God following the divine pattern must have

presented an impressive testimony to those outside; as for example, in the effect of the witness in such idolatrous cities as Corinth and Rome. Sin and the worship of false gods abounded, but there in the local church of God, were those who testified to the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The functions of the spiritual house are set out clearly in 1 Pet. 2. First we learn of the holy priesthood service, then that of the royal priesthood. We judge the divine order is seen in the way they are presented; first, service toward God, then service toward man.

The wonderful privilege of the people of God drawing near to God in a collective capacity to worship Him is taught in Heb. 10: 19-25. Let us draw near, says the scripture, and the use of the plural pronoun must be noted. Here is a people bringing worship to God. Alas, many born again persons know nothing of this: their experience is limited to the individual worship of God. This is one of the glorious truths recovered in comparatively recent years and to give expression to it brethren left other associations. We must be careful never to lose it. A perusal of many of the hymns in our hymn book is profitable where the use, again, of the plural pronoun should be noted.

The people of God offer up spiritual sacrifices. It is suggested that this term is defined in Heb. 13: 15 'through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God... the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name'. The offering of such spiritual sacrifices involves the use of our minds to form the words which will be used but the expressions employed will be the outpouring of an overflowing heart as we contemplate the great Sacrifice and all that is involved therein. Such worship demands frequent meditation on the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only does the house of God function in service Godward but we have a grave responsibility to testify to men. Such service is described in 1 Pet. 2 as that of a royal priesthood. We are to proclaim God's King to men. There is a lot of banner-waving by the nations of the world at the present time (seeking to draw attention to this or that cause) but we proclaim the One whom God has highly exalted and before whom, one day, every knee shall bow.

The conditional aspect of the house of God is brought

BIBLE STUDIES

before us in Heb. 3: 6. This is not a matter of 'holding fast' in respect of salvation but the 'we' of verse 6 shows it is the collective people to which reference is made and also demonstrates that it is possible for the house of God to crumble into ruins once more if the truth of God is not upheld. Our spiritual condition as individuals is of vital importance because an assembly will be what the individuals are who compose it, and the condition of the house will be determined by that of the assemblies of which it is built.

Ft. Hickling

From Paisley: When God gave Moses instructions to build the Tabernacle, He said, 'Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them' (Ex. 25: 8). These words indicate God's desire to dwell among an earthly people in a divinely constituted House. The same desire exists today and is fulfilled through God's dwelling in a spiritual House constructed of living stones. Therefore the scripture describes the saints in corporate testimony as 'a holy temple in the Lord' and 'a habitation of God in the Spirit' (Eph. 2: 21, 22). This is only reasonable in that it is impossible to have the house of God without God dwelling in it. There is, therefore, a special sense in which God dwells among His people distinct from the manner in which the Holy Spirit indwells every child of God.

In addition to forming a spiritual house, the living stones built together also function as a holy priesthood. In this respect, all those in the spiritual house function as priests, both male and female, though the man remains the head of the woman. Likewise, with Christ the end of the Law, the priests are no more derived from the tribe of Levi, but the holy priesthood may comprise men and women out of every tribe and tongue of the earth.

Consistent with the spiritual house, the priesthood also offers up spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God. In this capacity the priests in spirit enter through the Veil: that is to say, their place of worship is Heaven itself, which they enter spiritually during worship when they are in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. This remarkable and recurrent experience is one of the wonders of the new and better Covenant in which the people of God are privileged to find themselves.

In addition to the priests there is the high priest, namely

Jesus Christ who as a forerunner has entered the Sanctuary above. It is therefore through the Great Priest over the House of God that the priesthood offers the spiritual sacrifices, by which means they are 'acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 2: 5).

In parallel with the truth of the holy priesthood there is that of the royal priesthood. In general this distinction may be regarded as that between service towards God and witness towards men. The latter being related to the function of the royal priesthood, the world should discern the priestly traits of righteousness, sanctity and separation in the daily witness of the people of God. However, these characteristics are not only essential for witness, but also for survival. Unlike the Church which is the Body of Christ, the Churches of God can come to an end through evil doctrine or evil behaviour. The presence of God among His people is contingent upon their obedience to His will. God reserves the right to leave the spiritual House desolate in the same way as He abandoned the material House (Heb. 3: 6). This unfortunate fact has already been proved by the creeping apostasy which followed the passing of the apostles. Therefore, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?'

T. Summerhill

From **Birkenhead**: The function of the spiritual house is more simply stated as the purpose or activity for which it was established. This purpose is clearly defined (1 Pet. 2: 5) and our right and duty to follow it is stated (Heb. 10: 19-25). A major part of this function is the worship of God. Here a holy priesthood offers up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Our study brought out the following points:

Priesthood: in this context the word denotes a body of priests, i. e. a number of individuals gathered together, not the office of a priest.

Spiritual: indicates that the sacrifices offered are the promptings of the Holy Spirit (Phil. 3: 3).

Sacrifices: that which is offered to God (Heb. 13: 15).

The essence of worship is paying homage to God, not petitioning Him. When God's people are gathered together to keep the Remembrance their minds and hearts are focused on the excellencies of the Redeemer. It is on this occa-

BIBLE STUDIES

sion **that** thy **act as a** holy priesthood.

The way into **the** holy **place** (holies) **is stated to have** been dedicated for **us** by **the death** and resurrection of Christ. Within **the** holies is our Great High Priest who is in authority over God's house.

Two views were advanced in connection with **the** rending of **the** veil (Mat. 27: 51). **It was suggested that** this indicated **that** God no longer **dwelt** in **a temple made** with hands. **The place** of worship for God's **New Covenant people** would henceforth **be the** heavenly sanctuary where our Great High Priest has entered. The second view was **that the** rending of **the** veil of **the** Temple signified **the** removal of **a** barrier which **had** previously restricted entrance into **the** divine presence [Comment 2].

We understand **that** an important function of **the** royal priesthood **is** witness. This can **be effected** by **the churches** together **or** separately, or by individuals performing this responsibility. The word 'royal' indicates **regal** authority **and** this is given in **the preface to the Great Commission** (Mat. 28: 18). The duty to witness is **the** entrusted responsibility of God's house and extends to every aspect of **the** lives of **the saints** (1 Tim. 3: 15).

The spiritual condition of individual saints in **a church** of God **affects** its collective life. This can **result** in **the** lampstand **of a single church being** removed (Rev. 2: 5) [Comment 3]. **But** it is possible for **this to** occur without **God's** house being abandoned by Him. Heb. 3: 6 **gives the** prescription for **a healthy church**. The 'boldness' to which **we are** to hold fast includes our approach to God in **the** sanctuary (Heb. 10: 19) and our continuance in **a** life of faith (Heb. 10: 35).

R. C. Hal pin, T. M. H.

From Derby: In 1 Pet. 2: 5 there are two figures; namely **that** 'ye... **are...** a spiritual house' and 'to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices'. Emphasis is **placed** on priesthood in contrast to **the** individual priest. **The thought** is **that** of collective offering. **The other aspect of the** function of **the** house is **that** of 1 Tim. 3: 15 where **the** house is likened to a pillar sustaining **the truth** [Comment 4]. This truth is **the whole** body of doctrine. **But the** idea of condition is **also** developed from **the same** scripture by **the** mention of behaviour.

Heb. 3: 6 seems to contain a conditional relationship and Heb. 4: 14-16 suggest the means of maintenance of a right condition.

Heb. 10: 22, 23 implies a right attitude, while verses 24, 25 indicate the importance of a right relationship.

N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway

From Edinburgh: The boldness to enter (Heb. 10: 19) belongs only to those who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus and who are members of the Church of God in the capacity of priests [Comment 5].

The Great Priest has no equal (v. 21). There is none other to compare with Him, but drawing near (v. 22) involves individual proving and cleansing, then collectively drawing near [Comment 6].

In the connection of the pillar (1 Tim. 3: 15) we looked back to Jacob's experience in Gen. 28: 'Surely the Lord is in this place'. The pattern was also given to Moses (Heb. 3, Ex. 25: 8 & 9), to David (1 Chr. 28: 11-21), and to Ezekiel 43: 10-12.

The Lord was cast aside by the rulers of the Jews (1 Pet. 2: 4) just as He is rejected of men today. To God He is precious as He is to us who believe. We bring our spiritual sacrifices as a holy priesthood first, then as a royal priesthood, we show forth the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Anon

COMMENTS

1. (Hamilton): 'Boldness of speech' is most appropriate in this context because in our spiritual exercises we 'render as bullocks the offering of our lips' (Hos. 14: 2; Heb. 13: 15).

2. (Birkenhead): The significance of the rent veil has been the subject of editorial comment in previous issues (see B. S. May 1978, p. 80 comments 2, 4). The veil in the Tabernacle was not a barrier but a means of access as were the gate and the screen. The privilege of passing through the veil into the holy of holies was given only to the high priest and only on one day in the year, the day of atonement. The Lord Jesus is the veil in the heavenly sanctuary, our access to God is through Him (John 14: 6).

3. (Birkenhead): That is it would cease to be a church of God because the lampstand is the church (Rev. 1. 20).

BIBLE STUDIES

4. **(Derby):** It is a pillar of testimony or witness to the truth.

5. **(Edinburgh):** In New Testament usage the term 'membership' is not used in relation to a church of God, but it is used in relation to the Church the Body and in relation to the human body (1 Cor. 12: 12-17). Believers are described as being members of Christ (1 Cor. 6: 15), and of one another (Rom. 12: 5).

6. **(Edinburgh):** Heb. 10: 22 deals with the once for all cleansing that has been accomplished for us. The once for all sacrifice of Christ has cleansed the conscience, something that animal sacrifices could not do (Heb. 9: 9, 14). The washing referred to is that of the body, which is the once for all washing of regeneration (Lev. 8: 6, Titus 3: 5) not the washing of the hands and the feet which require frequent cleansing (John 13: 10). Those who draw near are, however, expected to do so 'with a true heart in fulness of faith'. The need for individual proving is, of course, dealt with in other scriptures.

J. K. D. J.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Derby:

(1) Is entering into the holies entering in to a particular plane of spiritual condition. Is it a mystical experience?

I understand it to be a collective spiritual experience. As to our bodies we are seated on earth around a table spread with emblems, bread and wine, but in spirit we rise into the very presence of God, and enter into the holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. It is an activity of our minds, through the spirit part of our beings as guided by the Holy Spirit.

(2) Is this experience only associated with the feast of Remembrance or does such worship apply to our other approaches to God ?

It is an experience exclusively confined to the occasion when we are gathered together for the breaking of the bread. It is then that we function collectively as a holy priesthood (see Extract from preface to first edition p. 3 PHSS Hymnbook).

J. K. D. J.

SIDLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 September 1978

It has been said that God always has His witnesses, and in the period between the Church the Body being taken and the coming of the Lord as Son of Man there is certainly evidence of this. But our special consideration this month is the new Temple to be built in Jerusalem and what goes on there. How long it will take to erect the Temple, with the necessary clearing of the site, is not told us, but the building of the Temple is the one great sign Christians are looking for. If this should take place before Christ's return for His Church, it would be a significant pointer towards the time of the end.

It is often said that the Jews are back in Israel in unbelief—and many are neither orthodox Jews nor professing Christians—but the rebuilding of the new Temple is hardly the activity of a people who do not acknowledge the God of the Old Testament. Perhaps as the nations increasingly oppress Israel Solomon's prayer concerning the house will be researched, and the Temple will be built as a focus and source of blessing for Israel and the stranger (2 Chron. 6). It will require world Jewry to finance such a project, and great minds and many skills will be used in the building, but the setting up of the priesthood and ordering the Temple services will come from the Old Testament. The research and the organisation in the setting up of the project will be immense, and the whole world will be amazed surely to see the priests, the Levites (with the singers and instruments perhaps), the sacrifices—all taking place under the ordinances of Moses' law. It will certainly attract the power-motivated Antichrist who so grossly overreaches himself in demanding that he be worshipped as God. A. B. R.

THE HOUSE OF GOD: BUILDING A BUILDING

(continued from August issue)

Unlike the first three items, the last four are not once-for-all events but practices in which the believers had to con-

BIBLE STUDIES

tinue steadfastly. Despite this, however, the order of the items is just as vital amongst the last four as it is amongst the first three. For example the apostles' teaching must precede the continuance of the community. The alternative is that the doctrine becomes subordinate to the continuance of the community. The alternative is precisely illustrated by the stand that Luther took and split the church of Rome when he maintained that the Scriptures were the sole authority for believers and could not be subordinated to the fiats of synods, church courts and councils. Similarly, the breaking of bread is not supposed to be kept by those not in the '*koinonia*'. Were it to precede the latter in Acts 2: 42 then it would be in order to admit all baptised believer to its service. But this will not be found to be the case in any New Testament Scripture. Thus it can be seen that the order of the last four items, like the order of the first three, is of such importance that the lamentable divisions of Christendom may be seen as arising from the failure to build for God in the correct order as laid down by Him.

In summary, the items of Acts 2: 41-42 are essentials in the building of the building that is the local assembly or church of God. They are diagnostic features by which all such buildings may be identified and correspondingly the buildings are incomplete without them. Not only so, but the order of the seven items is the one to be followed if the building is to be built in 'correct working order'. Failure to adhere to all of the items and to the order given has resulted and will result in a building which is not 'a Church of God'.

J. E. Penn

ANTICHRIST AND THE TEMPLE OF GOD

From Leeds: Satan ever has his counterpart to that which is of God. He is a deceiver ever. God, who is Spirit (unseen of men) came down to earth and appeared on earth as Man, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, who was seen of men (1 John 1: 1) [Comment 1]. Satan (unseen of men) will be represented on earth by the Antichrist (the Man of Sin, the Beast), who will be seen of men.

'Even now have there arisen *many* antichrists, whereby

we know that it is the last hour' (1 John 2: 18). Jesus said that many 'shall come in My Name, saying, I am the Christ, and shall lead many astray' (Mat. 24: 5). *The Anti-christ* (the Man of Sin) will eventually be revealed (2 Thes. 2: 3) and he will sit in the Temple of God and accept worship, setting himself forth as God (v. 4).

From Dan. 9: 22-26 we conclude that each week of the seventy weeks is represented by seven years so that we are to consider a period of 490 years. We also noted that possibly these prophetic years are actually periods of 360 days only (Rev. 11: 2, 3; 12: 6; 13: 5). Over this period, God deals specifically with Israel as a nation.

In Dan. 9: 25 the first period of seven weeks (forty-nine years) would appear to commence at the time of the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem in Neh. 2 and take us through to the close of Old Testament times in Malachi.

The following period of sixty-two weeks (434 years) continues forward from the end of Malachi and takes us through to the period of the Lord's life on earth and to the time of His death, when He was cut off and had nothing. Christ was cut off out of the land of the living (Is. 53: 8).

Until the Lord returns again we live in the dispensation of God's grace and God has temporarily suspended His dealings with Israel as a nation.

At the commencement of the final seventieth week (seven years) Israel will be deceived by the wicked one; 'God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie' (2 Thes. 2: 8-11).

The Man of Sin will make a firm covenant with many (Dan. 9: 27) but will break this covenant after three-and-a-half years (1260 days) and then follows the period of the abomination of desolation (Dan. 12: 11; Rev. 11: 2; 13: 5) and a time of great tribulation for all kindreds, tongues and nations (Rev. 13: 7). *P. J. Dodge, H. R. Dodge*

From Melbourne: Between Dan. 9: 26 and 9: 27 there is an unspecified gap. The clock of prophecy stopped for Israel [when they crucified their Messiah] and they were buried among the nations of the earth. In A. D. 70 the Temple was destroyed and the last week of this prophecy will not commence until the Temple has been rebuilt.

BIBLE STUDIES

The nations are looking for a world ruler, but it is not the Prince of Peace. They will get what they are looking for. The latter part of Dan. 9: 26 and the whole of v. 27 deal with this ruler—Antichrist—who will make a covenant with the Jewish people for one week (seven years), the final week of Daniel's prophecy. Israel will be a vassal state under him, but with their Temple rebuilt they will seek his favour to permit the service of the Temple to be restored [Comment 2]. He will make a covenant with them for one week (seven years) but in the middle of the week, that is after 1260 days, he will break his covenant and proclaim himself as the object of worship and will sit in the Temple as God. Rev. 13 deals with the trinity of evil, composed of Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet. The last named will do great signs to bring all men under his power. He will compel men to have the mark of the Beast (or Antichrist) in order to buy or sell.

Rev. 12 deals with a remnant of Israel who will flee from the city when the abomination of desolation is set up. This would seem to be an image of the Antichrist which will be enabled by the false prophet to speak and cause all who do not worship the Beast's image to be killed. A place will be prepared for the remnant of Jewish refugees who flee. This will be the lands and mountains of Edom, Ammon and Moab. In some way these areas will be preserved out of the hands of Antichrist.

Following these things will come Armageddon (Rev. 16) with the nations gathered into the Valley of Megiddo. In Rev. 19 the Lord Jesus is seen descending from heaven with the heavenly hosts following. The Antichrist and the False Prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire. Satan is bound for a thousand years. He will not deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished. At the end of these years he will share the same fate as the Antichrist and the false prophet.

Then will be ushered in the eternal scene and the New Jerusalem, the eternal abode of the redeemed.

T. W. Fullerton, D. Mawhinney

From Methil: The apostle John who, in the Revelation (chs. 13 and 17) gives us the description of the Antichrist, his origin, career, and subsequent destruction, has before-

hand in **his epistles** (1 John 2: 18-23; 4: 1-6, also 2 John) warned against **the spirit** of antichrist **which was** already working in **his** day, and **the fact that** already there **had** arisen many antichrists. Those who denied **that Jesus is the Christ**, and denied **the Father** and **the Son**; those who denied **that Jesus is** come in **the flesh**, and **is** coming again (2 John 7), **these** were antichrists.

The full development and **frightful** outworking of **that** spirit **will be** seen in **the** 'man of sin', **the** personal antichrist, **the** first '**beast**' of Rev. chs. 13 and 17.

Paul the apostle too in 2 Thes. 2 describes **this** person as '**the Man of Sin**', '**the Lawless One**', '**the Son of Perdition**', '**he that** opposeth and **exalteth himself** against **all that is** called God or **that is** worshipped; so **that he sitteth** in **the Temple** of God, setting **himself** forth as God'. **The** 'mystery of lawlessness' **was** already working when Paul wrote.

All this agrees with and authenticates **what had** been written in **the** Book of Daniel (9: 24-27; 11: 31; 12: 11) to **which** our Lord **Himself** in Matthew's Gospel 24: 15 also **gives His** own supreme authority.

It is evident from Scripture (Dan. 7: 4-7; Rev. 13: 1) **that** the Antichrist arises out of **the** revived Roman Empire, **which will** again **assume its final** form in **that** day. **The** term '**Beast**' is **applied**, in **the** first **place** to **that** revived Roman Empire **as a** system of world government arising out of **the sea, which speaks** of an unstable and unsettled **state** of **the** nations. **The** term **is** also **applied** to **the** 'Man of Sin', **the** Antichrist, **as** an individual who becomes **the head** of **the** revived Roman Empire. **There is** a remarkable prophecy (Ezek. 21: 24-27) **which** should **be** considered alongside Rev. 13: 3, 12 in **this** connection.

It must be remembered **that the bulk** of **the** nation of Israel **will at this time be** in extreme apostasy and departure from **the** covenant of God, and **the** world **at** large sunk in sin and corruption. However **there will be** witnesses for God during **this** seventieth **week** of prophecy; **the** two witnesses of Rev. 11, **we believe, will** prophesy **perhaps** during **the** first **half** of **the** **week**; and **there** are **the** 144, 000 of Rev. 14. **There will be a multitude** without number out of every nation before **the** throne of God and **the Lamb, a multitude which** **have** come through **the** 'great tribulation' of Daniel's seventieth **week**, otherwise **called the time** of 'Jacob's

BIBLE STUDIES

trouble'. Many will seal their testimony with their blood.

There will be set up in the very Temple of God that image of the Beast the Antichrist (Rev. 13: 14, 15) spoken of by Daniel and confirmed by the Lord (Mat. 24: 15) as being 'the abomination of desolation'. It will be a time of unparalleled suffering and persecution for those who will not receive the mark of the Beast or bow to his image. It will be brought to an end by the Lord Jesus, as Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, who shall slay the lawless one with 'the breath of His mouth' and with the 'outshining' or 'brightness' of His coming.

God's dealings with His ancient people have been suspended during this dispensation of grace which has been ushered in since the cross of our Lord Jesus, and His redemptive work, by which alone it has been made possible. But He will take up His people again. Israel's future depends on that same redemption and God's grace.

A. McIlree, Snr.

From Nottingham: During the earthly life of the Lord it is quite probable that the Temple building complex was still being completed. Yet He foretold that within a very short time this elaborate structure would be destroyed (see Luke 19: 44). This prophecy was fulfilled in A. D. 70 when the siege of Jerusalem took place. After four months Titus' forces broke into the city and the Temple was set on fire. Josephus records, 'The flames of fire were so violent and impetuous that the mountain on which the Temple stood resembled one large body of fire, even from its foundations'.

It is suggested that these forces are 'the people of the prince that shall come...' (Dan. 9: 26) and that the prince is the Antichrist who makes a covenant with Israel only to break it after three-and-a-half years. Israel, it seems, is deceived at first into accepting this person by lying wonders and deceits, and one is reminded of the Lord's words (see John 5: 43).

It is evident from Scripture that before the manifestation of the Antichrist, the Temple will be rebuilt and services of worship will be carried out (Dan. 9: 27). It seems these will be conducted by the Jews still in unbelief although God will surely be working in their hearts to bring about their repentance. God deserted His house in Jerusalem when the

Jews **rejected their Messiah** and they were not to **see Him** again until they were ready to say, **'Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord'** (Ps. 118: 26).

With present knowledge and circumstances **it is** not possible for **us** to determine when **the Temple will be rebuilt** **but** international events involving **Israel have** moved so **fast** in recent years and **have** been so significant **as** to show **that the** removal of **the** present structure and **the** rebuilding of **the Temple** could **take place** in **the** near future. No doubt many of **the** Jews could and **will make** substantial contributions to **the** enormous cost **such a** building **will** involve.

A contemporary writer on Israel and **the Temple** has written, **The** rebuilding of **the** Temple of Jerusalem nineteen hundred years after **it was** demolished **is** not a political reality'. **We** do not subscribe to **this view**, for God **has** declared otherwise. Many may **have** thought **that the** resurrection of **Israel as a nation was** 'not a political reality' **a few** years ago **but** events **have** proved otherwise.

After the three-and-a-half years **the** Antichrist **will break** **the** covenant **with the** Jews and **the climax** **will** come when **the** abomination of desolation **is set up** (Mat. 24: 15). **The** Man of Sin **will set himself up as** God and **sit** in **the Temple** of God (2 Thes. 2: 4).

Some **have** taken **this** scripture **as** referring to **the** events of December 167 B. C. when an altar to **Zeus was** erected in **the** sanctuary and swine sacrificed on **it**. **It is** likely an **image** to **Zeus was** also **set up**. **But a** consideration of **the** whole spectrum of prophecy shows 2 Thes. 2 to **be still** future.

The abomination of desolation **will** herald **the time** of Jacob's trouble. When **the** three-and-a-half years of **the** great tribulation **have passed** **the** Lord **will** come and **be received** by a repentant people. Then **will He** come to **his Temple**, **the** accepted Messiah.

R. Hickling

From Paisley: Prophecy indicates **that the Temple** destroyed in A. D. 70 **will rise** again. **This** reconstructed **Temple** which **the** apostle **Paul describes as the Temple** of God' (2 Thes. 2: 4) **will be accepted** by God **as** one of **the steps** towards reconciliation **with an erstwhile** estranged Israel. For though God **has set aside** Israel for **the** grafting in of **the wild** olive,

BIBLE STUDIES

the day is coming when God shall restore the natural branches (Rom. 11: 24). However, before this can be fully achieved, Israel will be forced to endure unprecedented tribulation (Mat. 24: 21). Meanwhile, in the absence of the Temple, Israel is prevented from pursuing sacrifice and offering. On the site of the Temple stands an elaborate mosque called The Dome of the Rock'. This has not only prevented Israel from rebuilding, but it has also served to seal the site where the Temple must be built. The Jews actually attempted to rebuild the Temple during the reign of 'Julian the Apostate (A. D. 331-363), but the work was overthrown by an earthquake, or similar occurrence (Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; Encyclopaedia Britannica 10. 332). Nonetheless the hour is coming when God will not only permit the nation to rebuild, but shall countenance the work.

In parallel with this event will be the appearing of the Beast and the False Prophet. By Satanic signs and wonders, these men will deceive the world, so that latterly the Beast will be worshipped as God as also will be the image of the Beast which by devilish power will be endued with breath (not life) (Rev. 13: 15). Even so, not all will be deceived by this universal and abominable religion. This is particularly true of Israel, who will continue to worship the one true God in the Temple of God. The Beast will make a firm covenant with Israel for one week (i. e. seven years). But in the middle of the week, after three-and-a-half years, he will break the covenant. The reason for this violent change will be the casting down to the earth of Satan and his angels by Michael and his angels. Thus the Devil in great wrath will turn against the daughter of Zion and seek to exterminate her (Rev. 12: 7-17).

At this point the Beast will suddenly appear in the Temple of God 'setting himself forth as God' before the gaze of the horrified worshippers. Furthermore, he will dare to set up his image in the Holy Place, which idol the Lord Jesus describes as 'the abomination of desolation' (Mat. 24: 15). Accordingly, the sight of this abomination will be the sign to Israel to flee at once from the persecution which is only a step away. For three-and-a-half years thereafter there will be a tribulation so intense that the Lord says 'except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved'

(Mat. 24: 22).

It is also during this period that the Beast will cause the continual burnt offering to cease, though it has been reinstated after so many centuries. However, no matter how powerful the Beast is, he cannot destroy the One of whom the burnt offering speaks. At the end of the tribulation the Son of Man will come with all His angels to rescue a repentant Israel from otherwise certain extermination and to execute vengeance against the enemies of God.

T. Summerhill

From St. Helens: Immediately after the overthrow of the Chaldean empire, Daniel, moved by the Holy Spirit and informed by his reading of Jeremiah's prophecy, discerned that the time of the deliverance of Israel was at hand; the seventy years of the desolation of Jerusalem had well nigh run their course. With deep humility associating himself with Israel's sins, penitently confessing iniquity, justifying God's severity in dealing with them, he pled for the speedy fulfilment of God's promises. God, by the angel Gabriel graciously assured him that his cry has been heard and that his request for Israel's deliverance would be granted. Gabriel indicated that a period of seventy weeks was determined by God 'upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city... to make an end of sin... make reconciliation for iniquity... and to anoint the most holy'. It is understood that the seventy weeks are weeks of years, ordained to commence from the time of the command to rebuild Jerusalem recorded in Nehemiah, and the first seven weeks of years, that is forty-nine years, mark the end of prophecy (Malachi). Then, after sixty-two weeks, four hundred and thirty-four years, shall Messiah be 'cut off'. This was understood to refer to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Subsequent to this, but at a time not specified in Scripture, the seventieth week of Daniel begins, when the 'prince that shall come', the Beast, the Antichrist, will make a covenant with many of Israel. A vile, contemptible person in God's eyes, nevertheless he claims the people's loyalty, perhaps adulation, by subtle flattery for half of the seventieth week; that is for three-and-a-half years, the period mentioned in Rev. 11: 2. Then, in the latter part of Daniel's seventieth week, this

BIBLE STUDIES

Antichrist the man of sin, will break his covenant, set up the abomination of desolation, and cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. It was accepted that this envisaged the termination of the Levitical offerings. A period of great tribulation will ensue. Antichrist will exalt himself above all that is called God, sitting in the Temple of God, 'setting himself forth as God'. Such a one will assume sovereign power over all, in opposition to all pertaining to Christ, introducing idolatry, assuming authority, and dispensing favours as though he were God himself.

Considering Paul's warning (2 Thes. 2: 4) that 'the mystery of lawlessness doth already work', may it be that the Antichrist is already stealthily at work, his presence to be revealed only at some time after the Church the Body is caught up to be with the Lord? [Comment 3]. Meanwhile, Paul tells us there is one that restraineth. Can we identify him? It was felt that this could not be the Holy Spirit who will never be 'taken out of the way'. Could it be the adversary, the Devil? [Comment 4].

J. H. R.

From Sydney: In speaking of the Antichrist John says it is the last hour (1 John 2: 18). That was about nineteen hundred years ago. We are now listening to the last few seconds tick away, and perhaps this Antichrist is already on the earth, biding his time.

Although maybe a Jew by race, he will be on a Gentile throne (Luke 21: 24) and his kingdom will be the last form of Gentile government.

The seventy weeks of Dan. 9: 24 (not to be confused with ch. 9: 2 which is speaking of the time of Israel in Babylon) is broken into three periods.

1. Seven weeks (forty-nine years) commence with the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem and end with the last of the prophetic scriptures. This time is from Nehemiah to Malachi.
2. Sixty-two weeks (four hundred and thirty-four years) take us from Malachi to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have, then, a period not recorded in Daniel's prophecy, between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week—approx. 2000 years—the day of grace [Comment 5].

The Jews are no longer the holy nation, although as individuals they can be part of God's chosen people today.

3. One week (seven years) is the period, yet to come, of tribulation for the Jewish nation [Comment 6]. At the beginning of this period the Antichrist (called 'the prince' in Dan. 9: 26 and also known as the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition) will make a covenant with the Jews, which he will break after three-and-a-half years (Dan. 9: 27) causing the sacrifices and oblations to cease. Then will the abomination of desolation be set up (Dan. 11: 31; Mat. 24: 15-22) which is the image of the (first) beast. This will be set up in the Holy Place for everyone to see (not in the sanctuary where the Man of Sin will sit), and the False Prophet (the second beast) will deceive them that dwell on the earth, saying that they should worship this image. Those that refuse shall be killed.

That which befell the Jewish nation and will yet come upon them is the result of disobedience. Dan. 9 clearly shows this.

The Sin

v. 5 We have rebelled, even turning aside from Thy precepts.

v. 6 Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets.

v. 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.

v. 11 All Israel have... turned aside, that they should not obey Thy voice.

The Result

v. 11 Therefore hath the curse been poured out upon us.

v. 12 He hath confirmed His words... bringing upon us a great evil.

v. 14 Therefore hath the Lord watched over the evil, and brought it upon us.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. We in God's house today need to observe these things, that we may know how we ought to behave in the house of God (1 Tim. 3: 15). D. C. *Kinghorne*

BIBLE STUDIES

From Vancouver, B. C.: The building of Solomon's Temple and also that built by the remnant as directed by Cyrus were both in the purposes of God. The Temple standing when the Lord was on earth was the remnant Temple repaired and beautified, and though authorized by Herod it was in large measure for his own glory. Nevertheless the Lord could refer to it as 'My Father's house'. Many Jews of the present day long to see a Temple built on the site where the Mosque of Omar stands. Reports have been circulated that wealthy Jews of the U. S. A. have much material purchased and stored, waiting for the site to be made available by the hand of the Lord. No doubt this will be the Temple standing during the seventieth week of Daniel. During the period of the first half of this seven years, services will be carried on in this Temple after the man of sin has made a covenant with Israel.

During the days when the Master was here, there was much to displease the Lord in relation to the high priestly family and those who served in the Temple. It will require much searching through the genealogies of Israel to determine who are of the Aaronic family and also of the Levites who will no doubt be the main ones who will participate in the Temple services.

Rev. 12 would indicate that about the middle of the seven years, the Devil will be cast out of heaven, when he will exert all his power through the Man of Sin and the False Prophet to suppress any who would worship or show devotion toward any but those who are confederate with the Devil. It is at this time that the Man of Sin boldly breaks his covenant and enters the Temple setting himself forth as God. His terms to all mankind will be to show allegiance to the beast or die a martyr's death.

Much has been written and spoken as to who is the 'restraining one' of 2 Thes. 2: 6 and 7. Some believe it is the Holy Spirit and others Satan. Others believe it is the power of Rome [see Comment 4]. However, we can rest assured that God will be in control and each step of revelation and restraining will conform to His predetermined will. God will determine when the Man of Sin will rise and how long he will exist in power.

Rev. 19: 11 shows the Lord will come as King of kings and

Lord of lords when the seventieth week of Daniel is over. Mat. 24 says the coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning in speed and world-wide manifestation. Yet **Rev. 19: 11** would indicate that the man of sin and his hordes will appear to have time to prepare for war. If this was their intention, the end will be over like a flash of lightning.

There is a sense in which the words of Ps. 2 would be very appropriate here. 'Ask of Me and I will give Thee the nations... Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'. The message to all is, 'Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,... for His wrath will soon be kindled'.

The Beast and the False Prophet exerted great power, but the power of God, which is much greater, will cast them down into the lake of fire for ever. *J. B.*

From Birkenhead: From beginning to end Scripture deals with the struggle of Satan against God, and near to the end of world history, after the rapture of the Church, this struggle crystallizes in the emergence of Antichrist. It is important to note that the name not only signifies 'against Christ' but also 'instead of Christ'.

The death of Christ occurred after sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy had run their course, and there is a pause (the present day of grace) in events before the commencement of the seventieth week. Antichrist will emerge from among ten kingdoms united in a form based on the Roman Empire. By flattery among other means he will win the confidence of nations as evidenced by a stable political, commercial, and religious union. In addition he enters into a covenant with the Jewish nation for a period of one week (seven years).

By the time these events come about the mosque which at present occupies the site of the Temple must be removed and a Temple of God (2 Thes. 2: 4) will be reconstructed on the site. Our discussion centred on whether God will own the Temple and the associated sacrifices as His. Although the Temple of the Jewish nation replaces God's spiritual house after the Rapture there can be difficulty when we understand that the Jews will still be worshipping in unbelief, although God will again have taken up His dealings with them as a chosen people in those future days.

BIBLE STUDIES

After the first three-and-a-half years of the covenant time, during which sacrifices will be offered in the Temple, Antichrist will break the agreement. In the eyes of the Jews he will adopt the most repugnant of all acts to achieve this, by entering the sanctuary of the Temple and causing the sacrifices and oblation to cease. Question was raised as to whether the Beast himself ('he' in Mark 13: 14 (RV) and 2 Thes. 2: 4) or the image of the Beast ('it' Mark 13: 14 (AV)) was standing in the Holy Place. At this point the normally shrewd Jewish nation will realise it has been deceived and the deceiver will bring upon them a period of great tribulation [Comment 7].

Worship is not suppressed but Mat. 24: 15 and 2 Thes. 2: 4 suggest that it is Antichrist who is then set up in the Temple to become the object of all worship. We discussed the difficulty raised by Rev. 13: 14, 15 which states that there is an image of the beast which is set up for worship, failing which the penalty will be death [see Comment 7].

The end of the seven-year period is marked by the gathering of the military might of all nations against the Jewish nation at Har-Magedon outside Jerusalem. This will be under the guidance of Antichrist, who works under the power of Satan, and will be the greatest gathering of military power on earth. In human terms it will be inevitable that Israel should succumb to such superior forces. As in Old Testament days they will turn to God, who at the critical time will provide deliverance. Christ at the head of the heavenly army will appear and destroy the forces of evil. The beast and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire. R. C. Halpin, R. D. W.

From Derby: The suggested scriptures take the study away from history and the present into the future of prophecy.

The Lord Jesus in Mat. 24 links His teaching to the prophecy of Daniel and shows that certain events on earth are inevitable. This prophecy of the Lord Himself starts from appreciation of the Temple of His day and its destruction.

The detail in the latter portion of Mat. 24 is more than can be accounted for by the events of A. D. 70 so we understand it to be still future and associated with a future Temple. We therefore have to see two lines of revealed truth. These are that for today, which is the gospel of the

grace of God; and that of earthly purpose, this being the gospel of the kingdom. It is in this latter that the prophetic events of Daniel and Mat. 24 occur.

Paul claims a special revelation from the Lord Jesus and in 1 Thes. 4: 15-17 he makes the unique prophecy of the dispensation of grace, namely the coming of the Lord Jesus for His own. He then goes on in 2 Thes. 2 to write of the day of the Lord—on earth—which is subsequent to the activities of the 'lawless one'. It is he whom we may describe as Antichrist and link with the prophecies of Daniel and of the Lord Jesus in Mat. 24.

There is another aspect of 'antichrist' set out in John's epistles. John uses the word antichrist several times but in the sense of an influence present even in the dispensation of grace as distinct from the individual person of both Mat. 24 and 2 Thes 2: 4. *N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

COMMENTS

1. (Leeds): Father and Son are separate Persons, and are so before the incarnation of the Son as Jesus of Nazareth. 'God sent His only begotten Son into the world' (1 John 4: 9). 2 Cor. 5: 9 is at first sight a difficulty but it does not mean God was in Christ. It says that God was reconciling the world and that Christ was in the world as the great reconciler.

2. (Melbourne): The Antichrist will certainly stop the sacrifices by profaning the sanctuary, but do the Jews need his permission to commence? Unless the time of the completion of the Temple coincides with the Antichrist making the covenant would not the Temple services have been set up already?

3. (St. Helens): It is not possible to say from Scripture how long will elapse between the rapture and the rising of the Antichrist.

BIBLE STUDIES

4. (St. Helens): 2 Thes. 2: 6, 7 will always be a point for discussion, and it seems impossible to be dogmatic. V. 6 may say that the Holy Spirit is restraining until it is time for the Antichrist to be revealed. Alternatively, Satan may be restraining until the time of Rev. 12: 12 when there will be a great increase in sin and wickedness on earth. V. 7 offers the same alternatives. The expression 'taken out of the way' may not mean 'taken away' (usually referring to the Church the Body) but may mean taken from among men, and applied to the Antichrist when he is **revealed** in power. Vancouver paper offers another suggestion—and there may be others!

5. (Sydney): There is nothing in Scripture to say how long the Day of Grace lasts.

6. (Sydney): It is the second half of the seven years which is the Tribulation. A. B. R.

7. (Birkenhead): I think 2 Thes. 2: 4 clearly shows that the Beast, in person, will sit in the Temple of God 'setting himself forth as God', but his image will also be set up in a 'holy place', not *the* holy place, probably in one of the Temple courts where it can be seen (Mat. 24: 15 **RVM**). This is the view taken by Mr. John Miller in his notes on Rev. 13. In these days of modern communications we have no difficulty in accepting that it will be possible for persons world-wide to see and hear this talking image in Jerusalem. J. K. D. J.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 October 1978

For Israel the Millennium will clearly be an era of unparalleled glory and blessing. The covenants which God made with Abraham and David will have their ultimate fulfilment. The land will enjoy the peace it has been denied over many centuries, and its fruitfulness will be beyond our present comprehension. There shall be abundance of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon' (Ps. 72: 16).

Our study for this month has been a happy experience. The contemplation of the house of God 'established in the top of the mountains, and . . . exalted above the hills' (Is. 2: 2) is choice. Happy, too, is the thought that not only Israel, but all nations, will joyfully make their way up to it, 'Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of the Lord' (Zech. 8: 22). R. L

THE HOUSE OF GOD: BUILDING BUILDINGS

When Jacob first visited Bethel he said of the place, when as yet there was no building in sight 'this is none other than the house of God'. He understood by faith that the omnipresent God had a place of His choice on earth. God needs no structure such as men need (Is. 66: 1-2, Acts 7: 48-50): it is His presence there which makes the one particular place the house of God. From amongst the stones lying loose he erected one as a silent testimony to his recognition of the place and called it 'the house of God' (Gen. 28: 22). Here the Holy Spirit draws attention to, in the first case, the intrinsic nature of the place, perceptible only by divine revelation and depending for its existence on the will of God alone. In the second case He draws our attention to that

BIBLE STUDIES

which is an outward testimony to its nature, perceptible by men and depending on their response in building a house of God. Both features are again seen at Mt. Sinai when God said 'Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them' (Ex. 25: 8). He had brought them to His dwelling-place at Sinai and, in order that He could continue to dwell among them on their wilderness journey and subsequently, they built the Tabernacle according to His pattern.

This Scripture is quoted by **Paul (2 Cor. 6: 16 RVM): 'We are a sanctuary of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them'**. Here is an unequivocal statement that the Tabernacle constructed in the wilderness has its **New Testament** counterpart in people. In confirmation of this, the quotation from **Ex. 25: 8** has been accurately changed by the Holy Spirit in **2 Cor. 6: 16** from 'among' to 'in', showing again that the house of God today consists of **people**, unlike the material buildings of the **Old Covenant**. But by saying 'we' Paul includes others besides the 'church of God in Corinth'. He included those in the Roman province of **Achaia** who were similarly gathered. He also included himself and by implication those who were similarly gathered in the Roman province of **Macedonia**, his most likely domicile at the time of writing (see **Needed Truth 1889** pp. 46-48).

On a previous occasion **Paul had written to the Church of God in Corinth alone and said 'ye are temple of God' (1 Cor. 3: 16). We therefore see that the house of God has a hierarchical structure: individual assemblies and aggregates of assemblies being so described. Thus we conclude that the whole constitutes the house of God and that individual assemblies are but local expressions of the same, in the same way that a local company is characteristically, but not the entire, Church which is His Body (1 Cor. 12: 27).**

In writing to the **Ephesians** a similar **hierarchical structure** is denoted by 'In whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (Eph. 2: 21-22). Here the last sentence

deals with the internal structure of that assembly: it was identical to the building that was the church of God in Corinth. But the force of the word 'also' means that the fitly framing of buildings of the first sentence refers to the mutual relationship of assemblies and not to their internal relationships which is the subject of the last sentence.

Thus individuals in assemblies and assemblies together constitute the house of God as may be seen by considering the parallel scriptures in 1 Cor. 3: 9 and 2 Cor. 6: 16. They are arranged in hierarchical order just as were the curtains which formed the house of God in the wilderness (Ex. 26: 1-14; see also *Needed Truth* 1899 pp. 242-252). And so, even in this detail, the Tabernacle of old is a parable for the time now present. But that Tabernacle was also a copy or shadow of things in the heavens and in particular its innermost sanctum, the holy of holies, was a shadow of the sanctuary (*hagion*) in heaven (Heb. 9). Thus as regards the house of God today we have to recognize it as a dwelling-place on earth, according to its nature which has not changed throughout the ages, but that it also stands in relation to the sanctuary or 'holies' in heaven itself.

J. E. Penn

THE HOUSE IN THE MILLENNIUM— THE WORLD CENTRE

From Melbourne: In Zion, that wonderful centre, which 'has ever been precious to God, will be established the perfect rule of the divine Ruler.

Never before in human history could it have been said that '... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord...' nor have perfect justice and righteous judgement been meted out to all of earth's inhabitants. Never since the fall of Adam has it been possible for natural enemies in the animal kingdom to walk, eat and play together. Under the sway of the Creator of all life, this will again be restored [Comment 6].

One of the most prominent aspects of this kingdom will be the supreme and righteous power of the Lord, from whose mouth goes forth a decree to all men. Strong

BIBLE STUDIES

nations, who today would scorn such commands, in that day will respond and obey. Thus weapons of war will be converted to agricultural implements to reap the previously unparalleled harvest which then will not be destroyed by drought or pest. Peace, which in the past has completely eluded man, will be ushered in by "the Prince of peace". Fear and mistrust will be absent (Mic. 4: 4).

We suggest that one of the results of 'the cleaving of the Mount of Olives' at the Lord's return will be the elevation of the area above that of today. Thus Micah 4: 1 will be fulfilled... in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills.... "

It will be a great delight to God to see the repentance of His people, their true response to their King and to experience the restoration of worship in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

T. L Fullerton, D. Mawhinney

From Methil: The House in the Millennium will come into existence when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back to this earth and begins His thousand-year reign. The beloved city will become *the* world centre because the Lord will make Jerusalem His seat of government. All nations shall flow to it, and it will be referred to as 'the mountain of the Lord (Is. 2: 3). In every area of life the Lord Jesus will have supreme authority. From Jerusalem will come God-given teaching that will affect the ways and walk of all who obey. 'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Is. 11: 9). For those nations who disobey, rain will be withheld; men will be compelled to give glory to God, whether they love Him or not.

During this period the remnant of the Jewish nation will have a special place as the people of God. Temple worship will be restored and the Jews will be highly esteemed among the nations (Zech. 8: 23).

At this very moment God is recovering His (ancient—Eds.) people, although they are returning in unbelief. Since 1948 there has been a state, but no king. In the Millennium they will be completely restored and cleansed; idolatry will be cut off, their King will be the Lord. They will then return to worship Him at Jerusalem (His holy mountain) where 'in that day there shall be a fountain

opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness' (Zech. 13: 1).

Instead of a spiritual house, as we have today, God's house will again take the form of a physical building. The Temple in Jerusalem will be the place of worship, not only for the Jews, but in the Millennium God's house will truly be 'a house of prayer for all nations'. Those willing to join themselves to the Lord will be able to minister to Him. For those who give themselves to the Lord and His ways there will be a continual state of peace, prosperity and happiness. But the Prince of Peace shall also judge between the nations; He shall reprove many nations.

The Lord will create such a state of harmony that the art of war will be forgotten; swords will be beaten into ploughshares, and peace will reign on earth for a thousand glorious years.

Jo Johnson

From Nottingham: That the nations of the world today are in a state of such chaos as to bewilder and baffle men must be clear to everyone. The so-called super-powers vie with one another for supremacy and delight to parade their ghastly collection of weapons before the world in general. Israel and the city of Jerusalem, that place of God's choice, are already burdensome stones (cf Zech. 12: 3) in international affairs.

All this is part of the build-up to the dreadful carnage that will be characteristic of the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16: 16). The holocaust will be fearful; the slaughter is dreadful to contemplate (Rev. 14: 20). Israel will be crushed between opposing forces. It is into this scene that the Lord will descend and stand again on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14: 3 and cf Mat. 24: 29-31).

The warring nations will be overthrown and the King of kings will take up His power and reign. God's chosen city will become the centre of the kingdom which will be the centre of the world.

The Kingdom

Zechariah 14: 6-11 shows the nature of the kingdom. Gloom will be replaced with brightness (v. 6); living waters will go out from Jerusalem (v. 8); the land will be restored (v. 10); the curse and threat removed (v. 11);

BIBLE STUDIES

and **Jerusalem shall dwell in safety**. Blessing will come **at last** to a repentant Israel. **Supreme in all the world will be the kingdom of the Great King** and before Him **shall men and nations bow**.

The King

Is. 11: 1-16 presents a **sweet** picture of **the King**. His lineage (**v. 1**), and qualities (**v. 2**) **are** pictured, and in vv. **3 and 4 we have presented the perfect** righteousness that will abound. His judgements will not **be** biased, **framed** and formed alone by **the** sight of His eyes or **the** hearing of His ears (**v. 3**). **The state** of **the** poor will not colour His judgements either **but** in absolute and **perfect** righteousness they will **be made**. **There will be a perfect balance** (**cf Proverbs 11: 1**) and **the reprovng of the meek shall be done with equity**.

Wickedness **and** sin will not go unpunished else would **the Judge not be** righteous (**Is. 11: 4**). **At present we may not know the full** significance of Zech. 14: 12-15 **but these** scriptures should **have** serious consideration [Comment 1].

Satan will **have** been **shut** away in **the** bottomless **pit** when **the** King reigns and while sin will still **be** in **the** hearts of men it seems its consequences in **the** curse that blights men's lives will **be** eased, **and** creatures naturally opposed to one another will live together in harmony (**Rom. 8: 19-22** and **Is. 11: 6-9**). The Lord will **be** **the** Supreme King in **all the earth**.

The Response

The root of Jesse shall stand for **an** ensign, i. e. **a flag** or standard. **Never will there have been** an Ensign like this! **The fame** of **the** King of kings will go out as did **the fame** of Solomon, and **the** nations of **the** world shall seek Him (**Is. 11: 10**). **The word 'seek'** should **be** noted. His **resting place** shall **be** glorious, and **who** would **want** to turn away **from a** resting place of glory?

Is. 2: 3 shows **the** reactions of 'many peoples' who will **seek the** Lord, learn of Him and **be** subject to His judgements. In verse 2 of **the** same chapter we have a very expressive word used—'flow'. So **eager** will people **be** to share in **the** joys and **peace** of **the** world centre they will **be** like a stream gliding on, without hesitation, to know

the King. There is a solemn word, however, in Zech. 14: 16. 'And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship'. As already observed the carnage before the King comes will have been terrible indeed and many will have perished. Those of Israel who have not been gathered will be brought together (Is. 11: 11-12) and so will they make their way to worship the King (Zech. 14: 16).

In the opening paragraph of our paper we thought of the valley experience, the time of decision and judgement (see Joel 3: 12-14). How refreshing to note the frequent references in Is. 2 to the mountains and the hills in reference to the Lord's house and the premier place it will occupy in the world.

R. Hickling

From Paisley: During the Millennium, the Temple in Mount Zion will be the centre of the kingdom of God which shall extend from 'sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth' (Zech. 9: 10). In that day Israel will be the head and not the tail, having been reconciled to the Messiah and having received the kingdom according to the promise of God through the prophet (Dan. 7: 22).

With the coming to earth of the Prince of Peace all wars shall cease. Nation will no more rise against nation, but the peoples will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks (Is. 2: 4). As for Jerusalem itself, the 'possession of peace' (Young), there will be peace between the wolf and lamb, the leopard and the kid for 'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain' (Is. 11: 9). To this desirable inheritance God will gather all the outcasts of His people Israel, destroying the tongue of the Egyptian sea and smiting the river into seven streams to make a way for the joyful repatriates (Is. 11: 15).

In order for Israel to be acceptable to God, the nation will have to undergo purification. Thus God speaks through Zechariah of a fountain being opened up for uncleanness (13: 1). In practical terms this means that Israel will purge herself of the idols and false prophets of the Antichrist era. Also with this purification there will be the dissolution of inter-tribal rivalries with Ephraim and Judah

BIBLE STUDIES

lovingly reconciled (Is. 11: 13, Zech. 13: 1-3).

Though Jerusalem will be the capital of divine blessing, the Gentiles will not be excluded from the blessings of Israel. Men and women of all nations will seek and find Israel's God. The nations will flow into Jerusalem and many strong nations will subject themselves to Christ (Is. 2: 2, Zech. 8: 22). In imitation of Israel the nations also shall free themselves from their age-old errors and evil practices. They will no longer be at enmity with Judah, neither shall they any more despise Israel's God, but Ruth-like shall confess Him as their own (Zech. 8: 23). Thus God's house shall become a house of prayer for all peoples.

Over and above all, the Son of God will rule the nations with a rod of iron. He will execute invincible and equitable judgement between all peoples. Because of this the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Is. 11: 9). As a result we have the thrilling concept of men and women from all parts of the world coming to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles together with Israel (Zech. 14: 16). The house of God in mount Zion will resound day and night with the praises of God as peoples of every tongue extol the One true God and glorify Christ in their united praises.

Such will be the result of the One whom Israel seeks having suddenly come to His Temple. And so, when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings, those who fear the Lord will 'gambol as calves of the stall' (Mai. 4: 2). *T. Summerhill*

From Sydney: But Zion said 'Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me' (Is. 49: 14). One wonders if this will again be the cry of God's people, the Jews, during the Tribulation period. What feelings of utter desolation must have been theirs the first time Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple desecrated and themselves taken into captivity! God had called them from the furnaces of Egypt into the Promised Land, to be His people, and then took them from the land to Assyria. Because of sin and unbelief God has on a number of occasions forsaken His people but never forgotten them. He cannot forget them. 'Behold I have graven thee on the palms of My hands/ Thus it was that in the days of Ezra God in

BIBLE STUDIES

mercy called out of Assyria a remnant of His people who came and rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple [Comment 2]. Does history repeat itself? It does when it is in the divine order and will. In the not too distant future Jerusalem shall yet again feel the onslaught of the enemy at its walls, when Antichrist shall break covenant with Israel during the Tribulation and shall thenceforth seek the destruction of all that call upon God. Of that period the Lord said: 'Let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains' (Mat. 24: 16) and 'If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth' (Rev. 13: 10). From these verses we see that at that time captives will be taken and those that escape the slaughter will disperse into the surrounding countries.

However, in Is. 11: 11-16 we see again God's mercy. The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall remain, from Assyria and from Egypt... and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ' We read in Is. 49: 22-25 that when God shall lift up His hand to the nations and set up His ensign to the peoples, they shall give safe escort to God's people, and even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered. During the Millennium such a time of peace and harmony will come into existence that we read of the Egyptians and Assyrians, long time enemies of Israel, worshipping together and 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth' (Is. 19: 24-25). Of God's people in that day Isaiah tells us that 'All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob' (Is. 49: 26), and Zechariah tells us: The Lord shall be king over all the earth. ' What a glorious time for God's remnant people in that day when God 'will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication'; when the veil of darkness and unbelief is lifted and they shall 'look unto Me whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for Him' (Zech. 12: 10); when 'the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life' (Rev. 7: 17).

George Greig

BIBLE STUDIES

From Birkenhead: The conclusion of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as recorded in Daniel, marks the destruction of the image and the growth of the stone that destroyed it until it fills all the earth. The parallel to this in future days will be the destruction of Antichrist and the establishment of the rule of the Lord throughout the world.

Satan will be bound for 1,000 years and the Lord acknowledged by the Jewish nation who, having had the veil of disbelief removed from their hearts, can now accept Him as the Messiah. Although God will now take up His dealings with the Jews again, Gentiles are included in those who own the Lord, since at the judgement of the living nations immediately prior to the commencement of the Millennium all disbelievers, even those in passive non-acceptance, will have been rejected.

Passages in Ezek. 43 and Zech. 14 reveal that the Lord will dwell in the midst of His people and that they will come to Jerusalem to worship. Isaiah 11: 12 clearly indicates the gathering of the 'outcasts of Israel' by their Lord. The Lord's rule is absolute and there will be no higher authority.

Gathering together year after year they will worship in Jerusalem. It is important to note that this worship will be entirely voluntary [Comment 3] and will be the result of the desire of the people to show their belief in and acceptance of their Messiah, who will dwell among them and rule over them in a regime of peace and understanding, a contrast to the three-and-a-half years of tribulation from which they will have just been delivered.

The house of the Lord will be established in the tops of the mountains, according to Isaiah, but the land may not be as we now know it, since it will be subject to enormous upheaval before that day shall come. Scripture refers to 'many peoples' (Is. 2: 3) 'strangers' (Is. 56: 6-8) and 'all peoples' (Mic. 4: 5) gathering at the house for worship, and to learn from the Lord. *R. C. Halpin*

From **Derby**: The Isaiah and Micah scriptures given in the **syllabus have** no certain connection with the Millennium. **This** latter is a time interval mentioned in the vision of John (Rev. 20: 4, 6). These verses do not have the confidence displayed by both Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 but show the violation of the peace of the Millennium.

John also has direct reference to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ for, though writing prophetically, he nevertheless has the benefit of previous personal contact with the Lord Jesus.

The prophecies of Isaiah and Micah are almost identical and Mic. 1: 1 taken with Is. 1: 1 shows that the two prophets were contemporary.

Both prophecies refer to the 'latter days' and claim pre-eminence for the mountain which bears the 'house of the God of Jacob'.

They claim also that many peoples will accept the teaching of God's Word from Jerusalem, and that 'He' shall judge between the nations. This might suggest the presence of the Lord Jesus as given in Rev. 20: 4, 6. However, there is finality in the end of Is. 2: 4 and Mic. 4: 3, for they both state that 'neither shall they learn war any more'.

If then it is thought that the Isaiah and Micah prophecies do not quite fit the millennium it may be possible to link them with Rev. 21 and 22. Again there is not complete correlation; but since the language of these latter chapters is much more figurative than that of Micah and Isaian, some connection may be envisaged [Comment 4].
N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway.

From Kingston-upon-Thames: The strategic importance of Jerusalem, increasingly appreciated by the world's political leaders of today, will be yet more amplified as the Lord's return to Olivet draws nigh. Scriptures concerning the rise and fall of the Man of Sin—and his counterfeit deity—will have their clear fulfilment (Dan. 11. 31, 45, 2 Thes. 2: 3, 4, 8, Rev. 13: 2, 7). Moreover the cleansing judgments of the Lord returning to His temple will have impact throughout the nations, although in accordance with divine principle they will begin at the house of God (Mai. 3: 1-3, Is. 1: 25-27, Zech. 13: 9, Mat. 25: 32) [Comment 7].

BIBLE STUDIES

We may usefully recall that when Jacob returned to Bethel (Gen. 35) the idols had first to be put away. To provide for cleansing, a prerequisite to worship, in the Millennial day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13: 1). What is more, the tribes of Israel and Judah will be reunited as a holy people (Is. 11: 13, 62: 12). They will be centrally 'among the nations, in the midst of many peoples' (Mic. 5: 8). This central position will be emphasized by the flow of the nations to Jerusalem for worship (Zech. 14: 16) and teaching (Is. 2: 2-4). There will be a material stimulus to such activity in the threat of drought to those who fail to go to Jerusalem (Zech. 14: 17-19), with additional punishment of a plague upon such offenders of the 'family of Egypt'.

In contrast to today's world, the overall picture of the Millennium is one of peace between men (Is. 9: 7) and, as illustrated in the holy mountain, animals also (Is. 11: 6-9). As in the days of Eden, plant life appears to be the main source of food and pure and purifying waters will be provided from the threshold of the house to effect major increases in agricultural production (Ez. 47: 1-12, Is. 35: 1-2) [Comment 8]. Additionally, fish will be extraordinarily plentiful. Clearly there will be significant topographical and climatic changes in the region of Jerusalem (Is. 2: 2, Ez. 47: 12), resulting in the physical exaltation of Zion.

From this centre, the Lord as King and Priest will 'rule with a rod of iron' (Ps. 2: 9, Rev. 2: 27, 19: 15) and all will obey. The total environment will be made conducive to holy living, even in the every-day things of life (Zech. 14: 20, 21). Associated with the instruction for such a life-style, and the rule of the King, will be resurrected saints of former dispensations (Is. 32: 1, Rev. 2: 26, 11: 18, 2 Tim. 2: 12). Furthermore, in days when the physical presence of the King of Jerusalem will be obvious to all, material sacrifices will be reintroduced—their clear and heart-searching detail pointing back to Calvary where this One was rejected and His rightful title ridiculed.

As we see days of Millennial glory approaching we can seek as a faithful and submissive remnant to make the house of God central to our thinking and actions. He who

will be owned as the King is even now Son over God's house and rightfully demands adherence to divine principles of worship and service.

G. M. Hydon

From Leeds: The sons of Korah sang of Mount Zion 'Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth' (Ps. 48: 2). The geographical situation of Mount Zion is such that it is set on the south-west hill of Jerusalem and on approaching it is necessary to go upwards to reach it. The city of Jerusalem is very much elevated, it is indeed a city set on a hill which cannot be hid (Mat. 5: 14). Whilst the geographical structures round about Jerusalem will be changed when the Lord comes again to the Mount of Olives, this will only further emphasise the elevation of the city, the mountain will split in two towards the east and the west, and the land round about will be turned into a plain (Zech. 14: 4, 10). The Temple of God will be again on Mount Zion, the King of Kings will reign, all nations shall flow unto Him, to do Him homage (Is. 2: 2, 3, 43: 9, 18, 21).

Many hold the view that the Temple which will be in being throughout the Millennium will be erected in the same area as Solomon's Temple and Herod's Temple. The Temple and its outer courts will occupy a very large area and will take some considerable time in preparation and building. We wondered whether those of us who are alive, and remain at the time of His coming (for the Church, the Body of Christ) (1 Thess. 4: 17) will see any evident signs of these preparations which would have to be made prior to the building of the Temple for use in the time of the Millennium? [Comment 5].

Whatever events have yet to be unfolded, God has declared: 'Yet I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion' (Ps. 2: 6). Despite kings of the earth setting themselves, and despite rulers taking counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed (Ps. 2: 3), which events are taking place in our day and time, the purposes of God will be fulfilled—'For He must reign' (1 Cor. 15: 25, Mic. 4: 7).

God is working His purpose out, as year succeeds to year,

BIBLE STUDIES

God is working His purpose out, and the time is drawing near.

Nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,

When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

A. C. Ainger (Is. 11: 9).

H. R. Dodge

COMMENTS

1. **(Nottingham):** Some students see in these verses (Zech. 14: 12-15) a reference back to Armageddon, and to the judgement which befell those 'that have warred against Jerusalem' (see v. 2).

2. (Sydney): Are not our friends referring to the captivity in Babylon? see 2 Kin. 24: 8-17; Ezra 2: 1.

3. **(Birkenhead):** Some peoples will however 'yield feigned obedience' (see Ps. 18: 43, 44; 66: 3—R. V. M.).

4. (Derby): The basic theme of this paper, i. e. that Is. 2: 2 and Micah 4: 1-5 refer, not to the Millennium, but to the New Heaven and New Earth, seems to me to be untenable. For example, both passages appear explicit in their emphasis that some nations will, during the Millennium, deservedly come under divine judgement. Other O. T. references (e. g. Ps. 18: 44, 66: 3—R. V. M.) suggest that these people may be yielding 'feigned obedience'. They will undoubtedly resent the firm, righteous rule of the Lord Jesus. I suggest, too, that He is clearly mentioned in Is. 2 and Mic. 4. With regard to the promise that the nations shall not learn war 'any more', does this phrase not imply 'during the course of this period?'

5. **(Leeds):** This suggestion raises interesting speculative possibilities, but Scripture seems clearly to indicate that the Lord Himself will rebuild the Temple at the commencement of His millennial reign (Zech. 6: 12, 13).

R. L.

6. (Melbourne): It is frequently assumed that animals became carnivorous at the Fall, but Scripture does not say so specifically.
P. L. H.

7. (Kingston-upon-Thames): The Lord will not, in my understanding, cleanse and use the Temple desecrated by Antichrist; He will build a new one (see Comment 5).

8. (Kingston-upon-Thames): Plant life has always been the main source of food. Perhaps our friends are thinking of the change in the nature and habits of predatory animals indicated in Is. 11: 6-9; 65: 25. The waters referred to contribute to the increased fruitfulness of the earth in the Millennium but there are also other factors having world-wide effects (see also Rom. 8: 19-21).

J. K. D. J.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Nottingham:

1. (a) Zech. 14: 8. '... in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea....'

(b) 11: 6-8.

Are the above scriptures to be understood literally or in a figurative sense?

Both scriptures will, in my understanding, have a literal fulfilment. Zech. 14: 10-11 indicates that the topography of the Holy Land will be transformed. The entire land will become a plain, except for the elevated area of Mt. Zion. Thus, the two-directional flow of the waters will be topographically feasible. Is. 11 provides a choice insight into the harmony which all nature will enjoy during the Millennial period. A further graphic description of this transformation in the animal world appears in Is. 65: 25.

BIBLE STUDIES

2. Zech. 14: 6-7. There is evidently some difficulty in translating the original here. Young's literal translation reads 'And it hath come to pass in that day the precious light is not, it is dense darkness, And there hath been one day, it is known to Jehovah, not day nor night, and it hath been at evening time there is light' We understand the Hebrew of v. 6 to be 'in that day there will not be light' Some commentators suggest that 'time will no longer be measured in days for night will never fall. '

Zech. 14: 1-7 deals with that climactic period in Israel's future in which, when the nations are gathered together against Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus will descend to the Mount of Olives, to 'fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. ' Based on the A. V. / R. V. Translations (supported by other reputable versions, e. g. R. S. V.) I would suggest that there will be at this period a manifestation of divine power in that the light of both sun and moon will be extremely bright so that 'at evening time there shall be light. ' This will facilitate the escape of the remnant 'by the valley of the mountains' created by the cleaving of the Mount of Olives. Is. 30: 26 may suggest a similar thought.

3. From Leeds: In the sequence of events in 1 Cor. 15: 20-28, would we correctly conclude that the millennial period would be between vv. 23-24?

1 Cor. 15: 23 refers to the Lord's coming to the air for His saints. Verse 24 deals with 'the end', when the Saviour will deliver a redeemed and subject creation to His Father. The Millennium thus comes between.

R. L

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 November 1978

The interpretation of Ezekiel's vision of a Temple has divided biblical scholars, and some expositors regard it as 'a true prediction of the kingdom of God given under the forms with which the prophet was familiar' (G. R. Beasley-Murray in the *New Bible Commentary*). They suggest that there can be no more sacrifices, now that the sacrifice of the Lord Himself has put away sin (Heb. 9: 26) and some do not see any restoration of the literal Israel nation, but regard references to Israel in future events to apply to 'the Israel of God' (Gal. 6: 16). However, our understanding of scriptural teaching is that God will resume His dealings with Israel after the Church, the Body of Christ, has been taken from the earth, and that there will be a Temple associated with the worship of God. What is the purpose of the sacrifices? The sacrifices of the Old Covenant had no intrinsic value (Heb. 10: 4) but they foreshadowed 'the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (Heb. 10: 10). Similarly, the millennial sacrifices will be retrospective, reminders of the finished work of Christ.

The placing in time of Ezekiel's Temple must be deductive. It is evident that God intended it to be built or He would not have given such a detailed pattern for its construction and service. He did not tell Ezra or Nehemiah to build after this pattern, and it has not yet been built, so its building must be in the future. It must take place while the Lord is personally present among His people, yet not in the eternal state, since sin is still committed and remembered (Ezek. 45: 20). The conclusion must be that this Temple is to be erected in the Millennium. It will be a fitting habitation for the Lord of Glory; the centre of the city named *Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is there*.

P. L. H.

THE HOUSE OF GOD: SOME BUILDERS

When Jacob first visited Bethel he was alone, was not

BIBLE STUDIES

commanded **to stay and did not** (Gen. 28). His second **visit**, however, followed **the** command to **dwell** there (Gen. 35: 1) and **he** took **his** entire family **with** him. There **is** no coincidence in **this** for **it is the** purpose of **the** house of God not only **that** God should **dwell** on earth **but that** men should **dwell with Him**. **This was** reiterated to Jacob's sons when they **had** become **a** people (Ex. 25: 8). **But that** people **was** not so honoured simply **because** they were Jacob's descendants. They **had** been delivered from Egypt, **baptised** in **the** cloud and in **the** sea (1 Cor. 10. 2) and **had pledged** obedience to **the** commandments of **the** Lord. They were **thus** separated to **the** Lord from **the** nations of **the** world and **as such** were 'an holy nation, **a** people for God's own possession'. Even though they occupied **such** an **exalted** position, they were **still** not **free** to approach **Him** other than through **the** intermediacy of their priests. Even **the** latter **had** most restricted **access** (Lev. 16). **This** priesthood belonged to **a** particular family **and** could not **be** exercised by another (even **the** Lord Jesus Himself). **A** particular **tribe**, **the Levites**, however, **was** chosen to render assistance to **them** apparently in **lieu** of **the** first-born sons. So central to **the** lives of **the** people **was** **this** distinct circle of men **that** **the** nation **was** described as **a** 'kingdom of priests, and **a** holy nation'.

These were **the** men who **built** **the** Tabernacle. They and **the** house they built for God were distinct entities yet **there** **was** a close relationship between them. For **example**, **as** God **dwelt** among **them**, so **the** people **had** their dwellings **fixed** in relation to **the** Tabernacle (Num. 2) and **as** God **walked** among **them** on their journey, **this** same order **was** **the** order of **their** walk (Num. 10). Now **the** circle of **Levites**, in **place** of **the** first-born, **themselves** surrounded by **the** people, **is** a **picture** of **the** Mt. Zion **that** **is** above **where** **there** **is** similarly an inner **circle** of **the** church of **the** first-born and **a** wider **circle**, **the** general assembly (Heb. 12: 22-23). Thus **the** people in **their** assembly **resembled** **the** building in **that** both **were** a copy of things in **the** heavens. Again in **their** encampment, **each** of **the** twelve tribes **was** grouped in four groups of **three**, yet **such** **was** **their** unity **that** **each** quartile **was** not only known by **its** own standard **but** also by **the** standard of one of **them** (e. g. Num. 2: 10-16). **That** **is**, **the** dwelling of **the**

people resembled the dwelling-place in that both they and the latter, in the arrangements of its curtains, were hierarchically structured.

Like the house of God which has its New Covenant, as we have seen, so the people of God, the holy nation and the priesthood have their New Covenant counterparts. Not only is the house of God today a spiritual entity composed of believers built together into churches of God according to the blueprint of the faith but it is also stated to be the priesthood (1 Pet. 2: 5). Thus two entities which were quite different under the Old Covenant are expressly stated to be coextensive under the New. Further, the priesthood is stated to be coextensive with the nation not only in 1 Pet. 2: 9 but also in Rev. 1: 6 where those in the churches in Asia were made 'a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father'. Under the New Covenant, therefore, those in churches of God forming the house of God are also the people of God, and the priesthood: a situation different from that obtaining under the Old Covenant. Conversely, the priesthood, and the people of God and the commandments of the Lord are primarily intended for those in churches of God.

Thus the spiritual realities of the present day that pertain to the house of God are simply foreshadowed in the building that was the house of God, the builders who were the people of God, and the principal figures in the approach of the people of God, the priesthood. Not only are they independently foreshadowed under the Old Covenant but there is also suggested, in their mutual resemblances, the coextensive nature of the house of God, the people of God and the priesthood of today. *I. E. Penn*

IMITATORS

While the AV does not use the words 'imitate' and 'imitators' and does not therefore show a difference between our English words 'follow' and 'imitate', the RV is careful to do so.

In the Gospels the word translated 'follow' is usually *akoloutheo* (from *keleuthos* meaning a road) and means to accompany, be in the same way with. But the word 'imitate', is *mimeomai*, from *mimos* from which our word

BIBLE STUDIES

'mimic' comes (Strong). It is therefore easily seen that there is a noteworthy difference in the respective meanings of these words, and it is the purpose of this essay to look especially at the places where 'imitate' and 'imitators' are used.

In our disciple relationship with our Lord we follow, or go in the same way with Him, but there is no thought in the word 'follow' that we should lose our identity. On the other hand to imitate is to copy, and the successful mimic will so reproduce the actions, words and ways of another that the mimic's own identity is lost—it is the subject copied we see and hear, not the imitator.

Perhaps in the story of Gideon we are shown a difference between followers and imitators. Of over 30,000 who were followers only 300 were at the battle to be His imitators—'Look to me, and do likewise... as I do, so shall ye do'—when they shouted 'For the Lord and for Gideon'. It is certainly harder to be an imitator.

The verb 'imitate' is used four times in the epistles. 7. 3 John 11—'... imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God....' 2. Heb. 13: 7—'Remember them that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith'. 3. 2 Thes. 3: 7—'... Imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you'; 4. 2 Thes. 3: 9—'... ye should imitate us... (working night and day, that we might not burden any of you—v. 8). These are exhortations to Christian living, and ask for study and practice.

The noun is used seven times. Once in the form 'imitators together' (Phil. 3: 17). 7. Heb. 6: 12—'... imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises'. The Hebrews were encouraged to 'show... diligence unto the fulness of hope even the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators....' This is an interesting juxtaposition of 'sluggish' and 'imitators'. Strong says this word for sluggish comes from the word for illegitimate, spurious, bastard, and the thought is that the illegitimate son had no legal expectations and this made him slow and unwilling to work at a matter that could never be his own. On the other hand the imitators here are sure to inherit the promises, and their

diligence should match that confidence.

2. 1 Cor. 4: 16—'... be ye imitators of me.' V. 15 tells the Corinthians that their attitude and responsibility to their 'father' Paul ('I begat you through the gospel') must be different from their response to 'ten thousands tutors in Christ'. How they treated knowledge gained from their tutors may be optional, but they should reproduce in their lives the life-style of their father. This would make for familial likeness to Paul and he specially sent Timothy 'my beloved and faithful child in the Lord; who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which be in Christ'. (v. 17)

3. 1 Cor. 11: 1—'Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ'. This verse concludes Paul's appeal in 10: 23-33 in which he pleads for things which edify, seeking your neighbour's good, giving no occasion of stumbling, and seeking the profit of the many that they may be saved. He wants the Corinthians to live for the benefit of others even if at the expense of their own feelings and advantage. If they would imitate Paul they would learn to reproduce in their attitude to others such graces of Christ as generosity and humility.

4 and 5. —1 Thes. 1: 16—'And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit'.

2: 14—'For ye, brethren, became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews'. The experiences of the Thessalonians, personal and collective, were similar to others, and produced in them such likeness that they could be called imitators. Similar trials had given them, under God's care, qualities first seen in others. In addition, the gospel had come to them 'in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance', and such influential disciples had they become that they 'became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia'.

6. Eph. 5: 1—'Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children'. 4: 17-5: 21 has to do with our walk and tells us what we should not do as well as what we should do. Those children who show Godlikeness will be beloved, but there are many whose way of life does not bring them into

BIBLE STUDIES

that happy relationship. We are to 'put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (cf Col. 3: 5-17). We are actively to 'put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man' and then consciously to 'put on the new man' and begin to imitate our Father and show those qualities He wishes to see in His children.

7. Phil. 3: 17—'Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample'. The influence of the worldly-minded is bad, and Paul is telling the Philippians that his citizenship is in heaven. This is an alien scene which had no claim on him and he made none on it. He was awaiting the Great Deliverer who will completely change us and take us to a far better country. All here is temporary, and disciples must learn to be heavenly-minded, as he was. His imitators will walk in this scene as foreign to it, and showing their expectation is something higher.

A. B. R.

THE HOUSE IN THE MILLENNIUM— EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

From Methil: Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied in the land before the captivity; Jeremiah long after Isaiah, with a much longer ministry, feeling deeply the sin of the people, admonishing up to the very last, when the Chaldeans destroyed the house of God and carried the king and the princes away to Babylon [Comment 3]. It was five years before this event that Ezekiel had been carried away with King Jehoiachin and five years after it he was given by God these visions which he records.

It was by the river Chebar, within the Chaldean empire, that God communicated with him and throughout the prophecy he is repeatedly addressed as 'son of man', which is significant when we remember that this is how our blessed Lord speaks of Himself. It is a title which only He uses of Himself. His proper title in relation to Israel was 'Messiah' the 'Anointed One', the 'Christ'. 'Son of man' is how the Lord speaks of Himself after He had forbidden His disciples to speak of Him as the Christ (Mat.

16: 20, Mark 8: 30; Luke 9: 21) [Comment 5]. The first time our Lord speaks of Himself as 'Son of man' in John's Gospel is in answer to Nathanael's assertion that Thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel' (John 1: 49-51). It would seem then that it is as having been rejected by His own people that the Lord speaks of Himself. He is seen as rejected from the beginning of John's gospel [Comment 4].

This will perhaps seem clearer when we see that, in the context of Ezekiel's prophecy, God Himself had been rejected by His people. God is speaking through His prophet as being outside His people, and the prophet is also in the same position, especially with regard to the messages of judgement from God which he has to make known to them. God is not, as in Jeremiah's day, still imploring His people with the tears and heart-yearnings which were characteristic of the sensitive Jeremiah; now He is announcing judgement and the sins which occasioned that judgement.

We have seen that God is speaking as outside Israel, His people being set aside by Him, and the government of the world handed over to the Gentiles, of whom Nebuchadnezzar was the first to rule as head of a Gentile power. This will go on until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled and God says 'I will overturn, overturn, overturn it . . . until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him' (Ezek. 21: 16, 27; see also Luke 21: 24).

Although in exile in Chaldea, it was given to Ezekiel to see in vision the glory of God departing from His house, now disowned (**10: 18-22**), but in the last twelve chapters God gives promise of better days for Israel, and the last eight chapters have to do with the dimensions of the Temple which is yet to be built in the Millennium, which is our distinctive study for the month. In ch. 43, 1-7 the prophet sees the glory of God return, the chief evidence that God was owning the house. He had seen the man with the measuring reed in his hand and the line of flax, so like what we read in Rev. 11: 1 and 21: 15, 16. Measuring an edifice is really taking account spiritually of what is owned of God today—His spiritual house.

In the day of which Ezekiel prophesies the remnant of Israel, having passed through the Great Tribulation, will bring literal sacrifices. The Lord Himself shall sit as King and Priest upon His throne. The house shall be in the

BIBLE STUDIES

Mount Zion which all along He has loved. There will be a greater appreciation and understanding of what these offerings stand for because the Blessed One whom they typify will be in the midst of His people. Hag. 2: 6-9 speaks, we believe, of that Temple of a future day. Israel will be the head of the nations instead of the tail (Psalm 2: Psalm 110). There will also be a great return to the recognition of God's sabbath, and the feasts of Jehovah which, as we see in Leviticus, stood in relation to the sabbath, the sabbath itself having the character of a solemn festival. All these things will be entered into with a greater measure of perfection by a repentant Israel. The feast of Pentecost, however, is omitted in Ezekiel's prophecy, perhaps because this feast speaks more of the present time and our connection with a heavenly Christ, and our being in the body of Christ, a heavenly position, and also our relationship with God as Father, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; whereas what we have been considering is an earthly scene, with our Lord on the earth. Pentecost has so much to do with the gift and descent of the Holy Spirit and although there will be manifestations of the Spirit in the Millennium they will not be the same as in this dispensation.

A. McIlree Senr.

From Nottingham: Ezekiel was given visions of God and charged to declare unto Israel all he had heard and seen in the visions. Generally speaking the visions were connected with the house of God. In chapter 8 we read of the vision Ezekiel saw of the sinful ways of Israel and then God revealed to him the judgements which were to fall as an inevitable result. This prophecy was fulfilled and the house of God was burnt by fire (2 Chr. 36: 19).

Yet, in spite of this, God revealed also His intention to regather the people and, in the second vision (Ezek. 40-48), fourteen years after the destruction of the Temple, he was shown the pattern and measurements of a remarkable house of God. To those who had known the heart-yearnings we read of in Ps. 137, Ezekiel's words must have come as a heart-warming message. Not only so, but it would also cause some heart-searching. The grandeur of the building as seen by Ezekiel would impress upon many the value

God places on His house and highlight the extent to which Israel had profaned it and departed from God.

Some have thought that Ezekiel's vision was symbolic only, others that it was a pattern for a Temple which God intended the returning remnant to build. Others believe that the house of Ezekiel's vision is yet future and belongs to the time of the Millennium. In our study of the subject there was a difference of opinion on this point but this paper supports the view that the vision of Ezekiel was that of the house of God of the Millennium. In support of this view the following comments are offered: —

(a) The vision of the house follows the prophecy of the restoration of Israel to the land (Ezek. 38, 39). This, in its entirety, is future and consequently the vision of the house which follows seems to point to an event or situation also future.

(b) God gave specific instructions to Moses and to David and Solomon concerning the building of the house of God. No such instructions were given to Ezra and Nehemiah to build a house conforming to the pattern of the vision. We do not accept that it is symbolic only because, for example, of the detailed instructions about the sacrifices. Therefore, the implementation of the pattern must be future.

(c) The house of God of millennial times will be established at the head of the mountains. This is not possible in the present geographical state of the land but Scripture seems to show that there will be physical changes before and at the time of the return of the Lord to earth and it is suggested that it is these changes which will allow the house to be built at the head of the mountains.

(d) We think the river flowing from the house is literal and, if so, as this was not true of the post-exilic house, nor could be true with the existing physical layout, it must point to a future time.

(e) The glory of the Lord entered into the Temple and the Tabernacle (Ex. 40: 34), but, so far as we know, there was no such manifestation with the rebuilt house of the days of the remnant's return; yet Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord entering in by the east gate.

One of the arguments put forward against the placing in the future of the house seen by Ezekiel is the detailed

BIBLE STUDIES

instruction given relating to sacrifice and offering. While we know from the Epistle to the Hebrews and other scriptures of the truth of the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ there seems to be no reason why these sacrifices cannot be memorial in character, pointing back to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Temple described by Ezekiel is similar to that erected by Solomon and while the dimensions of the most holy and holy places are the same in length and breadth as in Solomon's Temple, we note that no height is given (1 Kin. 6: 20; Ezek. 41: 4). May not this also be a pointer to the house being millennial and speak of the immeasurable majesty of the coming King? The design of the sanctuary again follows closely the pattern of the Solomonic temple but it seems significant that there is no mention of any adornment of gold or precious stones and we suggest that this may be because such symbolic representation will be unnecessary since the King will be there Himself in all His beauty.

We noted the references to "the prince". Who is this one? [See Answer to Question 2]. We would value comments, of course, on this question, but would suggest that this cannot be the Lord Himself. Our reasons for this are several, but we mention two. He is spoken of as a person who is distinct from Jehovah, before whom he is to sit and eat bread (Ezek. 44: 3); and the prince is to worship at the threshold of the gate (Ezek. 46: 2).

On the other hand we note with interest such scriptures as Ezek. 37: 25, 'David my servant shall be their prince for ever' and 'afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king...' (Hos. 3: 5). If we link these verses with Jer. 30: 9 and Isa. 55: 3, 4 it seems clear that David, raised with the righteous dead of Old Testament times, will have a leading part in the house and service of God in millennial days. We suggest therefore the prince may be David.

There are many points in the vision of Ezekiel concerning the house of God which are difficult to understand but it can certainly be said of that remarkable structure which he saw, that the glory of God's house is increased.

R. Hickling

From Paisley: In the earlier chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy,

God showed His priestly servant the many abominations which were being committed in the house of the Lord. In contrast, God gave Ezekiel another vision of the house as obtaining during the millennial reign of Christ. Thus in the concluding chapters of the prophecy, the prophet saw an enlarged and reconstructed house of ideal character, with due emphasis upon scrupulous purity and immutable holiness. The millennial house is also free of every encumbrance to service, such as the fear of an alien presence. Messiah and Israel are totally dominant, forbidding the intrusion of anything unholy or unclean. In harmony with this principle, Zechariah concludes his prophecy with the promise, 'there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts' (14: 21).

Such is the sacred, priestly and sacrificial nature of the house, that the whole area of its occupation, together with the inheritance of the priests, is called 'the holy oblation' (Ezek. 48: 10). Moreover, only the sons of Zadok will have priestly access to the sanctuary and communion with the altar, because they alone remained faithful during the pre-Captivity apostasy in Israel (Ezek. 44: 15-31). All this of course pre-supposes a restoration of the law of Moses, but with the notable exclusion of the Day of Atonement (Ezek. 45). Even so, sacrifice and offering are enjoined and shall persist; though in view of the Cross, animal sacrifice can only point back commemoratively to the finished work of Christ. But perhaps the reason for the restoration of the law will be of Israel's failure in all previous generations to observe it. During an age when the rule of Christ is supreme, it is perhaps fitting that Israel should not only be fully obedient, but that Messiah in the midst should empower Israel to keep the commandments now written upon their hearts.

Though the Law brought death and the house of the Lord was previously associated with bloodshed, the millennial house will issue forth life. A river shall issue forth from the sanctuary with trees growing on both sides of the river. Furthermore, these living waters shall flow with healing effect into the Dead Sea, such that it will teem with all the fish of the Mediterranean (Ezek. 47: 1-12).

Close to the city and the sanctuary, the twelve tribes of Israel shall dwell according to the several allotments of

BIBLE STUDIES

their inheritance. Also, the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat. 19: 28). It would also appear that David will reign as prince and will worship in the Temple in accordance with Ps. 23: 6 (See also Ezek. 37: 25, 46: 2). But above all, the blessed presence of the Son of God will make the latter house more glorious than all former houses. Similarly, because of the presence of Christ, Jerusalem shall also be called Jehovah-shammah, 'The Lord is there' (Ezek. 48: 35).

T. Summerhill

From Birkenhead: The prophet and priest Ezekiel disclosed what was revealed to him regarding the establishment of a Temple. The detail quoted, although complicated, is quite explicit and describes a building which as yet has not been built. There is no definite statement made to indicate that the building described is millennial and indeed marginal references in Ezekiel point to post-millennial times. Notwithstanding this, however, there was a consensus that the fulfilment of this prophecy was to be during the Millennium. With all the detailed measurements accounting for a large area of land there was a feeling that they are to be interpreted literally.

It is clear from the scriptures that were examined that during this period God will again accept sacrifices from His people as He did in Old Testament times. Detail is quoted as to the type of sacrifice but no reason is given for its acceptability in those days. As in His former dealings with Israel God accepted sacrifices looking forward to the coming of His Son, so in these coming days when dealings have again started with Israel it could be that animal sacrifices will be acceptable as a memorial.

R. C. Haplin, AM.

From Derby: We thought that Ezekiel's Temple was the same as the millennial temple. From Ezek. 40 we learn that Ezekiel was set down on a very high mountain, which we thought to be Mount Zion. He was given the responsibility of declaring all that he saw and heard to the house of Israel.

He was brought to the Temple, and we saw from Ezek. 40: 38-43 that there were places where the offerings were prepared. We thought that when the Israelites presented

their offerings they would look back to the work on Calvary and see the full significance of them, just as we in our day appreciate the work of the Lord when we keep the Feast of Remembrance. It is noticeable that the lamb was to be sacrificed morning by morning and not in the evening.

From Ezek. 44: 6 we see how the people had broken God's commands and allowed sin to come into His house. It seems the Levites will have to bear their iniquity, but they will be restored in a limited capacity. The sons of Zadok who kept the charge of the sanctuary will come near to minister because of their faithfulness. The golden gate which has been blocked up for centuries will be opened for the Lord (Ezek. 44: 2) [Comment 1]. In that day the glory of the Lord shall fill the house and sin shall not enter.

G. W. Conway, N. Bramfitt

From Lagos: About 572 B. C., in most depressing days for the precious sons of Zion in exile, the hope of return was still far in the future, and worse still, there was nothing of value left in the land to which to return. In such extremity Ezekiel observes, 'The hand of the Lord was upon me' (Ezek. 40: 1). As if through a telescope, the firm purpose of God is introduced, lying beyond two dispensations. The vision concerns 'the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth' (Ps. 25: 8). Ezekiel saw the profile of 'the place of My throne, and the place of the sole of My feet', the house of God in the Millennium (Ezek. 43: 6-7). The house is provided with walls and gates, enclosing an inner courtyard and the Temple building of about fifty by fifty metres lying to the west end of the courtyard, the whole Temple area covering some 250 by 250 metres. In spite of the fact that in the millennial time 'they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen... saying, 'know the Lord', the pattern of the house maintains a distinct separation between the holy and the common, in that there is a within and a without (Ezek. 42: 20; Heb. 8: 11). The beauty of the house is upheld by the holiness associated with the place and the sanctifying presence of the God of Bethel (Is. 60: 13, Ps. 93: 5, Ezek. 43: 2-7).

The awe-inspiring scene which brings the prophet upon his face is the Lord's glorious entry into His dwelling place. The earth shined with His glory and the glory of the Lord

BIBLE STUDIES

came into the house... and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house' (Ezek. 43: 2-5). The Lord in the midst is all that counts; to be satisfied with anything else is out of harmony with the desire of the faithful aspirant who could say, 'I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth' (Ps. 26: 8).

The sabbath is re-introduced, with its characteristic opportunity of relief from daily labours to find rest in God and in the service of His house. Some feasts of Jehovah, such as the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of tabernacles, are re-introduced (Ezek. 45: 16-25; Zech. 14: 16). The feast of trumpets (ingathering) is omitted because of its fulfilment in the regathering of Israel under their King (Isa. 27: 12-13). The continual burnt offering is re-introduced, but with a lamb of the first year without blemish for the morning oblation only (Ezek. 46: 13-15). Generally, the offerings associated with the house are memorial in character.

The serving priests in the house are considered in order of reward-merit. The sons of Zadok of the Levites have divine commendation to serve in the near place before the Lord. The rest of their brethren are charged with keeping the gates, sacrificing for the people, and are not permitted to come near any of the holy things of God's house (Ezek. 44: 9-16). *E. Basse, S. Coker*

From Leeds: Ezekiel was a priest and, although in captivity in Babylon, he prophesied to God's people there. His name implies 'the strength of God' and God's people, whilst in exile, would have received much strength from his words of prophecy relative to Israel, and to Jerusalem, the place of God's choice. It was in the 25th year of their captivity in Babylon that Ezekiel received the vision of God in which he was brought into the land of Israel, set upon a very high mountain and given the detailed description of a Temple.

We considered some of the various interpretations of this Temple as (1) Solomon's Temple; (2) a restoration of the Temple and Herod's Temple; (3) figurative of the spiritual house of God today; (4) an 'ideal' Temple which never actually came into being; (5) the Temple in the Millennium; (6) a Temple established in some period following the Millennium.

BIBLE STUDIES

Generally we felt that provided we accept that the visions of Ezekiel are in chronological sequence in the book, the introduction in chaps. 37-39 to the vision of the Temple would indicate that the Temple of the vision is the one established during the Millennium. The details and measurements so precisely given also seem to indicate a large overall area appropriate to the Millennium. Ezekiel as a priest would be greatly interested in the offerings he describes. It seems that in the time of the Millennium animal sacrifices will be offered. They will be a reminder to Israel of their forefathers who were redeemed from their bondage in Egypt by the blood of the Lamb, called together as a people into a covenant-relationship established through the shedding of blood, and as a people worshipping together, approached God through the shedding of blood. In the Millennium Israel will surely look upon the One whom they pierced who will be there, in the place of God's choice, the Lamb of God, the King of Kings, and the great High Priest over God's house [Comment 2].

We comfort ourselves with the final words of Ezekiel, The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there' (48: 35). *H. Ft. Dodge*

COMMENTS

1. Derby: Ezek. 44: 2 refers to the closing of the outer gate of the sanctuary after the Lord has entered in through it, symbolizing perhaps that no other shall enter to usurp His place, neither will His glory depart. It may be, however, that the existing gate will be incorporated in the new building.

2. Leeds: The sacrifices in the millennial Temple will be a reminder, not only to Israel, but to the whole world, that redemption has been achieved through the shedding of blood. Even in that day men will need to put faith in Christ, and this aspect of His work will always be paramount. *P. L. H.*

3. Methil: Both prophets ministered to the people of God over a long period of time—probably for about 40 years in each case.

BIBLE STUDIES

4. Methil: The Lord Jesus is the Son of God by divine generation (Heb. 1: 5). He became the Son of man by being born of Mary. This latter title relates to His humanity, and He delighted to speak of Himself in this way. The former title relates to His deity. I do not think He used the title 'Son of man' because He was rejected by His own.

J. K. D. J.

5. Methil: Did the Lord Jesus really forbid the disciples to use this name? Was it not rather that He forbade them to spread it abroad? R. L.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From Birkenhead: Is there any statement in the New Testament which would lead us to conclude that in the Millennium there will be a Temple of the dimensions outlined in Ezekiel?

No. The placing of Ezekiel's Temple in a millennial context is discussed in several papers this month, and it appears that it fits into the prophetic scheme at this period, when the Lord is reigning on the earth, but sin is not eradicated, as it is in the eternal state. However, New Testament Scripture makes no reference to it.

2. From Birkenhead: Who is the prince? (Ezek. 44: 3, 46: 2, 18).

I agree with the view expressed by Nottingham and Paisley that the prince will be David. Ezek. 37: 24, 25 mentions him by name, and this cannot be a figurative reference to the Lord Himself, since the prince has to _____ worship the Lord (Ezek. 46: 2) _____P. L. H_L

Issued by the Churches of God
Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,
Assembly Hall, Georgian Close, Bromley, Kent, BR2 7RA
Also from the Churches of God Literature Dept., Box No. 125, Brantford, Ontario.
Printed by Craftsman Press Ltd.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God'

EDITORIAL

Vol. 46 December, 1978

'My heart standeth in awe of Thy words' (Ps. 119: 16).

A similar sense of awe may often steal over the spirit of the modern student of Scripture. Possessed as we are of a far wider range of written revelation than the Psalmist enjoyed, we are privileged to consider majestic divine purposes as they are unfolded through succeeding dispensations. Our particular consideration has been God's purpose to dwell with men upon the earth. The final subject this month reveals a projection of this high purpose in its most remarkable form through a future eternity. The concepts introduced in Rev. 21 and 22 are 'past tracing out' in their fulness. Some aspects of the subject raise fascinating questions to which varying solutions may be proposed. The stimulating exchange of thought in such matters is one of the great benefits of our study together. Recognising our present limitations we are nevertheless left with a deep sense of awe and gratitude that Almighty God should find satisfaction and joy in the reclamation of sinful men to share immortal destiny.

Editors appreciate the interest of all who follow the monthly studies, and thank those who regularly send written papers on the subject. If the Lord will, still more written contributions on the 1979 subject would be warmly welcomed.

G. P.

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD—THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

From **Nottingham**: It has always been God's desire to dwell with men who are the creatures of His hand but this wish has been blighted by sin. God planted the garden for them in Eden but they sought their own way and found themselves outside. Over the years God has dwelt among men in Tabernacle and Temple as our previous studies have shown. It is important for us to realise that God's dwelling

BIBLE STUDIES

among men in **this way was** conditional upon their **observing His** commandments. When **we** come to **Rev. 21** we read again of God dwelling **with** men, **but the** difference **this** time is **that** sin **has** been done away and **that which has** so often spoilt **the** house of God will do so no more.

We should notice first of **all that the** heaven and **the** earth **flee** away before **the face of the great Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 20: 21)**. In our studies in Revelation **a few** years ago **we** noted **that the** events **as** detailed in **the** chapters do not always follow one another in chronological order; **there is a** certain amount of overlapping in places. **We suggest** however, **that the** events of **chapters 20** and **21** do follow one **after the** other [Agreed—Eds.].

The Great White Throne judgement **takes place** in eternity, those bodies which **measure** time having been dispensed **with (Rev. 21: 23)** [Comment 1]. **After the** end of **the** present heaven and **earth there is a** new heaven and **a new earth**, and **after** seeing this John **saw the** holy city coming down out of heaven from God.

What is this city? **We suggest** it is **that city referred** to as **the city which hath the** foundations, whose **builder (i. e.** architect) and **maker** is God (Heb. 11: 10). Again **we read (Heb. 13: 14)** **that we have** not **here** an abiding city, **but we seek after the** city which is to come. God **has** this city in preparation and one day will **reveal** it **that He** may **dwell** with men in it. This is **a** wonderful prospect. **It will then be the** 'day of God' and then will **be** realised in **the fullest** possible way **all that** God desired in **regard** to dwelling among men. **It seems possible that the 'Father's mansions' (Greek: abiding places)** about **which the** Lord spoke to His disciples in **the upper** room (John 14: 2-3) **are in this** city. **There is also the possibility that** when men and women **die** in Christ they go to **these** dwelling-places to await **the** day of resurrection [Comment 2].

When one thinks of **a city the** mental picture covers not merely **the** buildings and **streets but also the** men and women who live in it. So this city comprises not only **its structural** formation **but also** those who will **dwell** in it, **that** is those who form **the** Bride. **The city was made** ready **as a** bride adorned for **her** husband. Many Bible students believe **that it is the** saints of **the** present dispensation who comprise **the** Bride and **that** it is they who **will dwell** in **the** eternal

day in this city. Others are of the opinion that the Bride includes **the** redeemed of Israel and that they will also have a **place** in **this** city. It is at least certain that redeemed **Israel will be** very closely associated with it because the names of the twelve tribes are written on the gates [Comment 3]. The names of the twelve apostles are associated with the foundations. Which names these will be we cannot say now but will know one day [Comment 4].

R. Hickling

From Paisley: According to the sure word of prophecy, the present creation is under the sentence of divine destruction (2 Peter 3). This will be fulfilled at the end of the Millennium and prior to the descent of the New Jerusalem. Although after the thousand years the Son of God will have completed His earthly ministry of redemption and subjection, the abiding stigma of sin will render the continuation of the present creation impossible. Therefore God has promised 'new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Pet. 3: 13). This latter creation is associated with the eternal state called 'the day of God' as distinct from 'the day of the Lord' wherein shall occur 'the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men' (2 Pet. 3: 7).

In the new creation, the New Jerusalem will be the eternal dwelling-place of God, in contrast to the Tabernacle and Temples which were temporary. Even greater in concept, God Himself will be the Temple, with the worshippers dwelling in or having access to God's holy and immediate Presence. This condition will be unique, for God will now dwell personally among men (Rev. 21: 3). In the previous dwelling-places, the Father did not dwell between the cherubim by His personal departure from heaven (e. g. John 11: 41). Certainly there was a manifestation of the divine Presence making those material houses the house of the Lord, but in the absolute sense 'the Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands' (Acts 7: 48). For this reason it is also essential that God be the Builder and Maker of 'the city which hath the foundations', that the Triune God may dwell therein (Heb. 11: 10).

The Presence of the Godhead will emit a threefold and indivisible glory. First of all we read of the holy city that 'the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb' (Rev. 21: 23) with specific reference to the Father

BIBLE STUDIES

and the Son. But in the co-equality of the Godhead it is essential that the glory of the Holy Spirit be united with that of the One God. Accordingly the Holy Spirit is symbolised in the 'river of water of life, bright as crystal' (Rev. 22: 1) [Comment 5].

Another distinguishing feature of the eternal dwelling is that all parts of the New Jerusalem will be accessible to those who dwell in the city or come from the new earth to worship. As to those who dwell in the city, some will be established as pillars in the Temple of God and "shall go out thence no more' (Rev. 3: 12). Similarly the Overcomer is promised a portion in 'the tree of life', which is in the 'paradise of God' (Rev. 2: 7). These rewards suggest degrees of privilege and position in the holy city.

As to the substances of the city, we find that the street is of pure gold. This metal, which speaks of the glory of God, is of unique interest in that it is the one substance common to the architecture of all previous edifices recognised as God's house, whether Tabernacle or Temples [Comment 6]. Likewise the presence of other precious materials is consistent with the temporary foreshadowings of the eternal. However, the singular distinction between the old and the new is that the latter shall be adorned with precious materials both within and without, whereas in the Tabernacle, for example, the golden interior was concealed behind the less refined covering of the skins.

T. Summerhill

From Barrhead: The vision seen by John in Rev. 21 is clearly a glimpse of the Eternal State. The Millennium has ended with a final revolt by mankind (Rev. 20: 7-10). The Great White Throne judgement is over and the eternal destinies of men have been irrevocably decided (Rev. 20: 11-15).

It is pertinent to ask at this juncture what has happened to the old heaven and earth. The answer lies in 2 Peter 3. The earth and the entire universe (the heavens) are dissolved (loosed) in a fervent heat. The material universe is resolved into its basic elements; there is however no thought of annihilation in the word 'dissolve' but a loosing. Fire is a great cleanser which nothing can resist (e. g. our work at the Judgement Seat of Christ—1 Cor. 3: 13), there-

fore the fervent heat not only dissolves but also cleanses the old heaven and earth. From this cleansed and purified material God will make all things new (Rev. 21: 5) [Comment 7].

The Holy City which descended from God is the New Jerusalem and it comes to rest on the new earth so that God may now dwell amongst men (Rev. 21: 3). We could see no valid reason for supposing that the vision reverts back to the millennial period at v. 9. Rather, a fuller explanation and an interpretation are given to John as to what he has seen. The Holy City he saw was in fact the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (vv. 2 and 9). The Church the Body of Christ is obviously closely associated with and we judge will actually dwell within the city. We also considered that this city was the place of 'many mansions' (John 14: 2). This was also the city that Abraham looked for by faith (Heb. 11: 10).

The New Jerusalem, the Holy City or the Tabernacle of God is glorious in aspect (Ps. 29: 9), is constructed from many precious materials, and is cuboidal in shape [Comment 8] as was the holy of holies in the Tabernacle (Ex. 26) and the oracle in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6: 20). Other dwellers in the Holy City, in addition to the Church, are the redeemed of Israel symbolised by the twelve gates named after the twelve tribes. (See Nottingham paper and Comment 3).

In this city no Temple was seen (v. 22) nor was any required, since the Lord God and the Lamb were present. Furthermore no light from sun or moon was required, for the glory of God was its light (God is light—1 John 1: 5).

L de Ville

From Birkenhead: The final picture in our study is of the Eternal City taking its place on the New Earth, and a voice out of the throne declaring that the Tabernacle of God is with men. The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. A description of the city is given in Rev. 21 and 22 which is by some taken to be literal whilst others consider it to be figurative using imagery comprehensible by our finite minds [Comment 9].

The city is named the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. This makes it evident that those composing the Church which

BIBLE STUDIES

is Christ's Body will be dwelling therein, as will the O. T. redeemed of Israel [see Comment 3]. This seems to be confirmed on the ground that the names of the twelve tribes will be on the twelve gates. Around the city will be the nations of the world and their kings for there will be many of the redeemed not coming within the above two categories.

Because of the presence of the Lord God and the Lamb there is no need of sun or moon and no Temple. He will exert authority, and blessings will flow out to the nations. His servants shall do Him service. There will be no sin any more.

It was noted that the names of the twelve apostles were to be found on the foundations of the city. A parallel appears to lie in that which is precious to God today having as its foundation the teaching of the apostles and prophets.

Discussion on the force of the word 'new' relative to the heavens and earth took place. Points were brought forward to support the idea that it will be (a) completely new and (b) a re-formed earth. No firm conclusion was reached [Comment 10—see also Comment 7]. *R. D. Williams*

From Derby: Before considering Rev. 21 we noted the vision of Isaiah (65: 17-25) and the prophecy in which (2 Pet. 3: 8-13) Peter prophesied complete physical dissolution, prior to a new creation. Revelation 21 is in accord with both of the above [Comment 11]. Although it is a vision and symbolic it is not imaginary; there is something real even if not material to be considered. The presence of God with men is real and so is the final victory over suffering (Rev. 21: 3, 4).

We were inclined to view Rev. 21: 9-21 as entirely symbolic, the purpose of the symbolism being the expression of the perfect beauty of a new creation [see Comment 9]. The city is immense, namely a cube with an edge of 1, 500 miles [see Comment 8] and we see in this the expression of immensity and perfection of form.

There is reality in the presence of the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb; in the presence of nations and their praiseworthy activity (v. 24). Isaiah in chapter 60 has a vision of the perfection referred to above [Comment 12] and it was to such a city that Abraham could look (Heb.

11: 10). *N. Bramfitt, G. W. Conway*

From Kingston-upon-Thames: The city is of heavenly origin though belonging to the **New Earth**. It is described as being composed of substances pertaining to this earth though some have peculiar properties. Gold, for example, is not transparent, nor jasper clear as crystal. No oyster is known as big as the pearls of which each gate is made. Indeed the former would be completely unknown in an earth with 'no more sea'. Similarly the dimensions of the city indicate that it covers an area as big as that in which the New Testament churches were established and its height is about one-third the radius of the present earth. In addition, directional information is given yet there is no night nor apparent means by which it may be measured, though there would appear to be twelve months in the year.. Thus the structure of the city and the New Earth to which it pertains, though somewhat familiar, is largely beyond our comprehension.

The spiritual significance of the city is characterized by the same mixture of the familiar and the novel. That the city is the fulfilment in the New Earth of the truth that God desires to dwell with men is clearly shown by repeating (v. 3) the statement made in connection with the Tabernacle (Ex. 6: 7, 25: 8-9, 29: 45, Lev. 26: 11-13), the present day house of God (2 Cor. **6: 16**), and the house of God in the Millennium (Jer. **31: 33**, Ezek. 37: 27-28, Zech. 8: 8). The people of God will then include all men for, since all will be free from sin, there will be no need of a specially separated people [Comment 18]. Most distinctive of all, however, is that city, the eternal fulfilment of the place of the Name is specifically associated with the Church which is His Body. We therefore surmise that blessings today only associated with the people of God will then be shared by all men and especially those of the Church which is His Body. There would appear, however, to be an outer and inner circle of people ('all men' and 'the Church which is His Body') and we wonder if this is a counterpart to the concentric arrangement of people and servants encamped around the Tabernacle (Num. 2 and 3) itself depicting the similar arrangement in heaven (Heb. 12: 22-24).

Like Jerusalem of old, the city has walls, gates, streets and buildings but does not have the same focal point of the Temple. This is because the Lord God the Almighty and

BIBLE STUDIES

the **Lamb** are the **Temple** thereof. That is to say, all that the **Temple** meant, means and will mean on **this earth** are bound **up** in a personal way with the **Godhead** on the **New Earth**. They are completely and utterly **accessible** and **exercise** daily influence on the occupants [Comment 13]. Consequently it may be that **truths** associated with **part** of the **Temple** or **Tabernacle** in the **past** are common to the city as a whole in the **New Earth**. For example, in its shape [see Comment 8] and in its being all of gold, the city recalls the shape and shining gold of the holy of holies, in the holy city, however, the effulgence of **His** glory will not be reflected but will apparently permeate all, for we are told that the city is all of gold and that the gold is transparent.

Similarly there is no lampstand for we are told the 'lamp thereof is the **Lamb**'. There is no need of service in the **dark** for there is no darkness. That is to say there is no impediment to obtaining a knowledge of **Him**. In addition, since there is no sin, there is no need of **altar** or **laver**. There is, however, that of which the **altar** of incense and **table** of **Shewbread** speak; a continual offering to God and fellowship in **His** service.

The city functions as the city of God was always intended to. It is the **centre** of divine rule on the **New Earth** (22: 3). Its walls, **gates** and **street** show that, although the accessibility to the **Godhead** is the most intimate known to **man**, approach to God **must**, as always, be made in the proper manner. In the proper way the **kings** and **nations** of the **New Earth** bring to God their glory and honour and receive from **Him** renewed blessing (22: 2). Of these, evidently, a **special place** is reserved for Israel whose names are written on the **gates**.

Thus in its **structure** and function the city represents the **ultimate** fulfilment of **truths** whose present-day expression is conditional upon obedience of the **disciple** on the one hand, but also on the other hand represents the **ultimate** fulfilment of **truths** whose blessings are unconditionally bestowed at the present day. The greater blessings of divine **service** associated with those who today are obedient to **His** commandments will in that perfect day pass to all who are redeemed.

Ian E. Penn

From Leeds: God ever had a desire to dwell on earth amongst His own gathered together people. 'I will set My tabernacle among y o u . . . and will be your God, and ye shall be My people' (Lev. 26: 11, 12). With the establishing of the new heavens and the new earth, together with the New Jerusalem from above, God finds the consummate fulfilment of His desire. The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell (tabernacle) with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God' (Rev. 21: 3). In His prayer to His Father, the Lord said: 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do' (John 17: 4 AV), and from the Cross, with a loud voice of triumph, He proclaimed: 'It is finished' (John 19: 30). He who sits upon the throne, the Alpha and the Omega, and who made all things new, in this ultimate scene of joy, says: 'It is done' (Rev. 21: 6 AV). God said, through Isaiah (65: 17-19): 'I create new heavens and a new earth . . . I create Jerusalem . . . and her people'. There will be much rejoicing and great joy. Weeping and crying shall be no more, neither shall they hurt nor destroy. We can look forward to the time when *all things* are new (Rev. 21: 5). We shall have a new name (Rev. 2: 17), a name associated with the new places (Rev. 3: 12), and a new song (Rev. 5: 9), all according to His promise (2 Pet. 3: 13) [Comment 14]. Whether these things be completely new (*kainos*), the view which we favour, or former things made new, as some believe, it is the place wherein dwelleth righteousness. Nothing that defiles will ever enter into it (Rev. 21: 27); 'the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple thereof (Rev. 21: 22). They which be of faith, are blessed with the faithful Abraham' (Gal. 3: 9). Abraham was a man of faith, and in his day he 'looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God' (Heb. 11: 10). We, in our day, can look towards the same city and anticipate the place where all our joys will be complete. Surely eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love (wait for—Is. 64: 4) Him (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10); but God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit. 'O h . . . that Thou wouldest come down' (Is. 64: 1) 'Amen: come, Lord Jesus' (Rev. 22: 20).

H. R. Dodge

BIBLE STUDIES

From Melbourne: We have now reached the final scenes of time and the ushering in of eternity. The Eternal One had looked forward to this new scene from a past eternity. He had foreseen the fall of man and his alienation from God, but also saw the final restoration when man would at last be in perfect fellowship with Himself, and do Him the service for which He had longed. Through the succeeding ages service had been offered to Him through the High Priests of the house of Aaron and (under the New Covenant) through Him who is Son and Great Priest over His spiritual house. In the final chapters of the Revelation we see the great climax towards which the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, the remnant house, the New Testament house and the house in the millennial scene all pointed forward. All were shadows of that in which He will eternally rejoice, when the Tabernacle of God will be with men and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples.

We are aware of the differences of judgement as to where the book of Revelation chronologically ends. One view is that the final scenes of this world are brought before us from 20: 11 to 21: 8. In this portion we have the 'all things new', including the eternally abiding city, the New Jerusalem, when the Tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them and they shall be His peoples (not nations). In contrast to this is 21:: 24 where we are told that the nations shall walk in the light of the holy city, Jerusalem, not the *New Jerusalem* [Comment 15].

From 21: 9 to 22: 5 we have the description of the holy city, Jerusalem, and the *nations* shall walk amidst the light thereof, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it. Some believe that this city will be suspended in the heavens over the land of Israel and the earthly city, Jerusalem [Comment 16]. Over all the glory shall be spread a canopy (Is. 4: 5, 6) antitype of the cloud by day and fire by night over the camp of Israel as they passed through the desert.

Will 'the new heaven and new earth' be of entirely new substances or new in the sense of having been purged and purified by fire? Most if not all of us are in favour of the first [see Comment 10].

T. IV. Fullerton, D. Mawhinney

From Methil: Paradise lost in Genesis is replaced by the super-paradise for all eternity as promised by God in Revelation. Some 700 years before the birth of Christ God said through Isaiah that He would 'create new heavens and a new earth'. In this future paradise 'wherein dwelleth righteousness', former things shall not be remembered nor even come to mind. The first creation was planned and made by God, and the new heavens and new earth are similarly in accordance with His master plan. Yet the almighty God takes note of him who is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at His word. Such will populate the new earth. We believe on the basis of 2 Pet. 3 that it will be a completely new heaven and earth and not the old re-furbished in any way. Peter tells us that the 'elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up'. In the Revelation we are told that 'the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them' (Rev. 20: 11). In the new creation of God there will not be any sea (Rev. 21: 1). God's eternal purposes will find fruition in the eternal state 'the Day of God', when He will dwell with men. They shall be His peoples (plural), all peoples shall own Him as their God. The apostle John in describing the holy city, the tabernacle of God, speaks of things that will not be there. Pain, crying, tears, death will be no more; no sun, no moon, no night. This conveys to our limited understanding something of the remarkable change to a glorious sinless eternal state which is totally beyond the earthbound minds we presently have. The glory of God is the light of this celestial city.

As there was in Eden, so in the New Jerusalem there will be the tree of life which will be perpetually fruitful yielding twelve kinds of fruit. Overcomers will eat this fruit in the paradise of God (Rev. 2: 7). The leaves are for the healing of the nations. Why should the nations need healing in the eternal state? [Comment 17]. *Neville Coomer*

From Lagos: John's account of these things is severe in its simplicity, so that in it there is clarity of witness to what he sees and hears. 'I saw... the earth and the heaven fled away' (Rev. 20: 11). 'I saw... the first heaven and the first earth... passed away' (Rev. 21: 1). The former things

BIBLE STUDIES

shall not be remembered nor come into mind' (Is. 65:: 17); and **this is despite that fact that** 'then shall I know fully even as also I have been fully known.' (1 Cor. 13: 12 RVM).

'He that sitteth on the throne said: Behold, I make all things new' (Rev. 21: 5). 'A new heaven and a new earth ... the sea is no more... death shall be no more' (Rev. 21, 1-4). 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out I' (Rom. 11: 33).

In surpassing grandeur it is written: 'I saw the holy city, **New Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God' (Rev. 21: 2), 'the city which hath the foundations, whose **Builder and Maker is God**' (Heb. 11: 10). As it were from the height of a great mountain John witnessed the advent of the holy city Jerusalem coming out of heaven from God. Her light is the glory of God, there being no need of sun neither of the moon: for the **Lamb is the lamp** thereof (Rev. 21: 23 RVM). Israel, of whom is the Christ after the flesh, is seen in the names of the twelve tribes represented at the twelve gates; but this is significantly balanced by the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the twelve foundations (Rev. 21: 12-14). John describes the sight as yet to man unknown: 'the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass... and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass' (Rev. 21: 18-21 RVM). The glory of God is the light for discernment. There shall be no night there' (Rev. 21: 25).

The hallmark of the vision is announced by a great voice out of the throne: 'Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God' (Rev. 21: 3). Familiar as John was with the Mosaic Tabernacle, the Solomonic Temple and the rebuildings by Zerubbabel and Herod, and with 'the holy temple in the Lord', he observes: 'I saw no temple therein' (Rev. 21: 22). The perfection for the eternal state is nevertheless the consummating phase of God's temple constituted by Himself The Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb' (Rev. 21: 22). Cause of endless exultation, the subject of the eternal sinless worship is the Lamb in the midst. The wife, the Bride of the Lamb, shall dwell by Him within the city and around the wall will be the redeemed of Israel and in their relative

appointed places in the new earth will be the Gentile nations written in the Lamb's book of life.

E. Bassey, S. Coker

COMMENTS

1. (Nottingham): Our concepts of 'time' and 'eternity' are of course limited. The Great White Throne is seen in John's vision as operative at the juncture when heaven and earth 'flee away'. Whereas the sun and moon no longer measure time in relation to the new earth, Scripture does speak of 'the ages to come', as though there will be measurable phases of future divine purpose.

2. (Nottingham): The difficulty arises that the New Jerusalem will presumably be designed for saints in resurrection bodies. Would it not therefore seem an inappropriate environment for saints who are 'unclothed' (2 Cor. 5: 4) between death and resurrection?

3. (Nottingham, I): This seems to me a likelier explanation of Israel's place in relation to the New Jerusalem than to include all the redeemed of Israel in the Bride of the Lamb. Israelites who are saved in the present dispensation, 'a remnant according to the election of grace' (Rom. 11: 5), will of course be included as part of the Bride. Then the redeemed of Israel from other dispensations have their own sphere of blessing in association with the Eternal City.

4. (Nottingham): Having regard to the general analogy of Scripture may it not be that the term 'the twelve' so often repeated in the Gospels and elsewhere, identifies a particular group (later including Matthias), and is the key to the expression 'the twelve apostles of the Lamb'?

5. (Paisley): This interesting suggestion is commended for cautious consideration. The brightness of the water is presumably emphasised as a link with the brightness of light deriving from Father and Son. Certainly the Spirit is elsewhere likened to 'rivers of living water' (John 7: 38, 39). Whether the glory of the Holy Spirit need necessarily be distinguished in the description of the new eternal order may of course be questioned.

BIBLE STUDIES

6. (Paisley): Despite the difference in the *kind* of gold (see Kingston paper) this is a thoughtful parallel with the house of God in previous eras.

7. (Barrhead): It is extremely difficult to conceive of the material universe being 'resolved into its base elements' and yet not being utterly destroyed. W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary comments on the use of *luo* in 2 Pet. 3: 10, 11, 12 —'used of the future demolition of the elements or heavenly bodies'. *Katakaiō* in 2 Pet. 3: 10 is said to signify 'to burn up, burn utterly, as of chaff'. The suggested parallel with the believer's works at the Judgement Seat of Christ is obscure, for the gold, silver and precious stones endure the fire, their elements are not dissolved. Nor does Scripture say that from 'cleansed and purified material God will make all things new'. Indeed there is a case for proposing that the Lord Jesus already has the New Jerusalem in an advanced stage of preparation, long before the present earth is dissolved with fervent heat—see suggestion from John 14: 2, 3 in Barrhead and Nottingham papers. Scripture gives the strong impression that the present heaven and earth will no longer exist—the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them' (Rev. 20: 11).

8. (Barrhead): Several contributors have envisaged the New Jerusalem as a vast cube. But does Scripture really say this? Our English words 'four-square' is defined as 'square-shaped' (O. E. D.). An area may be four-square; the third dimension is not essential. For instance, Ezek. 40: 47 describes a court one hundred yards long and broad as being four square. The word *tetragonos* translated four square in Rev. 21: 16 literally means four cornered (from *tetra*, four and *gonia*, a corner or angle). May the city not therefore be pyramidal in structure, the base being four-square, and the height at the apex being twelve thousand furlongs, i. e. equal to each side of the four-square base? In relation to our present structural concepts this would seem more feasible than the idea of a city in the form of a cube.

9. (Birkenhead): The Tabernacle was both literal and figurative, i. e. it literally existed, but it also foreshadowed figuratively much about Christ and God's spiritual purposes. We should be in no doubt that the New Jerusalem will literally exist in the New Earth of the Eternal State. It may be open to discussion whether some of the concepts used are to

convey an impression of things at present beyond our understanding. For example, as Kingston's paper points out, certain materials referred to are not identical in their properties with the materials as we know them today. **But that** there will be a vast city, all-glorious, the divine centre of the **New Earth**, should be beyond question.

10. (Birkenhead): Doubtless the inconclusive discussion referred to would take into account the viewpoint ably outlined on pp. 91-95 of the 'Finger of Prophecy'. I would personally advocate that the use of the Greek adjective *kainos* (as distinct from *neos*) in 2 Pet. 3: 12 and Rev. 21: 1 should be considered in the light of the clear impression given to the ordinary reader that the present heaven and earth will flee away, no place being found for them (Rev. 20: 11), 'shall pass away with a great noise... the elements ... dissolved with fervent heat... burned up' (2 Pet. 3: 10). We should therefore ask ourselves whether the use of *kainos* is incompatible with the impression that the new heaven and earth are distinct from and unrelated to those which will be destroyed. W. E. Vine includes in his note on *kainos* that it denotes 'new, of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality, a different nature from what is contrasted as old'. **Behm** states that *neos* 'is new in time or origin, i. e. young, with a suggestion of immaturity. *Kainos* is what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attention'. It does seem to me that all these two authorities consider to be implied in the use of *kainos* is appropriate to the new heaven and earth, as for instance that they will be essentially different in quality and nature from the present order. Indeed, *neos* could hardly be appropriate with its suggestion of immaturity, for the new order will be introduced in full perfection. Then from the divine viewpoint it would seem that the new heaven and earth, including the New Jerusalem, may well have been in preparation over a long period—cf. suggestion in Barrhead and Nottingham papers that the Lord was referring to the New Jerusalem when He said: 'I go to prepare a place for you' (John 14: 2, 3).

11. (Derby, I): I would understand that Is. 65: 17-25 describes a millennial situation which is prior to and distinct from the new order revealed in Rev. 21.

BIBLE STUDIES

12. (Derby): It does seem to me that Is. 60 must refer to millennial conditions rather than to the perfection of the Eternal State which is the subject of Rev. 21: 1-22: 5. The ships of Tarshish' (Is. 60: 9) indicate that maritime traffic is continuing, so the sea is still there. The whole chapter centres on the hegemony of Israel in Messiah's earthly kingdom, whereas the perspectives of the Revelation passages are so different.

13. (Kingston): This degree of accessibility may be implied, but should be linked with the balancing thought expressed two paragraphs later—all our studies regarding God's dwelling among men have impressed the lesson that approach to His presence must be according to a divinely revealed order.

14. (Leeds): Certain of these blessings are of course reserved for the Overcomer.

15. (Melbourne): Attention is drawn to 'Finger of Prophecy' Appendix 3 pages 96-98, where these points are discussed. I also am of the opinion that Rev. 21: 9 to 22: 5 refers to the eternal state and not to the millennial era.

16. (Melbourne): The concept of the New Jerusalem in suspension over the earth during the Millennium would presumably imply two houses of God at the same time. Our Bible-wide study of this subject has taught us that God never had more than one dwelling place among men in any dispensation. On this ground alone it is difficult to accept the 'suspension theory'. In addition there is such pronounced contrast between the millennial Temple described by Ezekiel and the concepts of Rev. 21 and 22.

17. (Methil): Para. 2, page 86, of The Finger of Prophecy' offers helpful suggestions on this point. *G. P.*

18. (Kingston-upon-Thames): It is significant that in relation to that day God is said to have 'peoples' (Rev. 21: 3). In each of the preceding dispensations God had only one people; Israel in relation to the Old Covenant, and the present day people of God in relation to the New Covenant.

J. K. D. J.