



Light

...on a New World

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Cover picture: Light passing through a Prism



Editorial

THE BEAUTY OF a rainbow is one of the wonders of our natural world. The strange thing is that a rainbow does not actually exist at a particular location in the sky. It is in fact an optical illusion whose apparent position depends on the observer's location and the position of the sun.

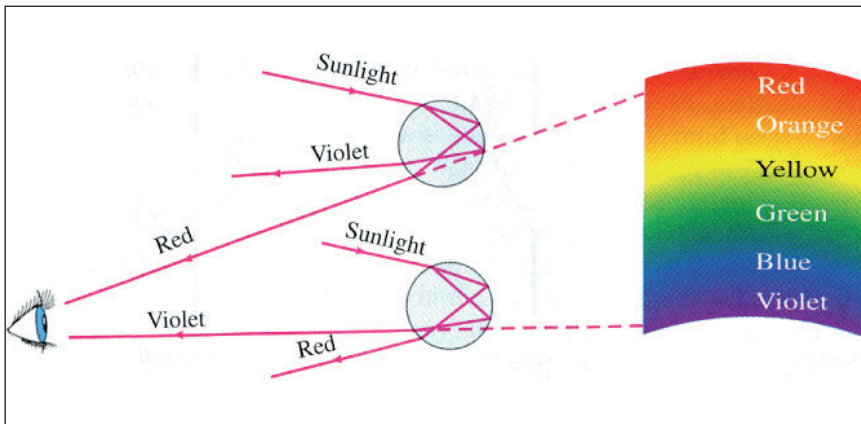
It is usually seen in the sky against a backdrop of dark clouds opposite the Sun during a shower of rain. We understand that it is formed by the action of sunlight entering raindrops as they fall through the air. When sunlight enters the raindrops it is refracted or bent in such a way that the light appears as a spectrum of colour as shown on our cover picture. The colours can only be seen however, when the angle of reflection between the Sun, the drop of water and the observer's line of vision is between 40 and 42 degrees.

Without the light of the Sun there could be no rainbows in the sky. The first article in this issue reminds us that God created light in the first place to enable life to exist on this planet. But more important than natural light, we can be enlightened by the Word of God which the Psalmist David tells us *'is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path'* [Psalm 119.105] and *'the entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple'* [Psalm 119.130].

Without the wisdom that comes from God's Word we will be spiritually blind – unable to see the realities of our present existence and avail ourselves of the Bible's wonderful offer of salvation from death. Jesus reassured his disciples with these well-known words: *'I*

am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life' [John 8.12].

What is not appreciated by many people is that God ordained the rainbow as a symbol of a Divine covenant or promise. As we learn from the article about Noah in this issue (see page 15), the rainbow was a token of God's promise to faithful Noah. God said to him: *'It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant... the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.'* [Genesis 9.14, 15]



So when you next see a rainbow, think about God's covenant with Noah. This is just one of God's promises that has stood the test of time. We can then be confident that all of the Divine promises which the Bible tells us about, will also come true. The rainbow is a reminder to us that God's promises never fail.

God has promised that the whole world will eventually be renewed. A fresh start will again be made and the present state of spiritual darkness will be turned to light. It is our hope that you the reader will avail yourself of God's gracious offer of salvation, to live your life by the light of God's Word and prepare now for that glorious day of our Lord's second coming.

Editor

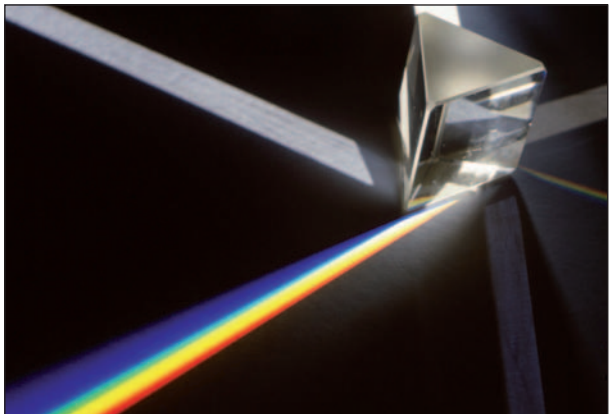
Important Bible Words

Light

LIGHT IS A natural phenomenon which we take for granted. However, without light we are unable to see and soon we would become permanently blind if it was not for light. Total darkness is not a normal experience, since even at night the moon and stars give a subdued light and there is never total darkness, even in the countryside away from artificial light sources.

The writer had the experience of going down into some deep caves in Derbyshire, UK. When the artificial lights in the caves are turned off, there is total blackness. The human body is not accustomed to such conditions which produce the same results as total blindness. Such was one of the plagues that God brought on the Egyptians - *'darkness which may even be felt'* [Exodus 10.21].

Sunlight can be split into its various colours, and the picture of the prism shows how light is comprised of the seven different colours of the rainbow. However, in its pure, concentrated form, light is white.



The beauties of creation and the qualities of life around us all can

be appreciated because of the presence of light and the differing wavelengths of the various colours. The colours and hues, the glorious sunrises and sunsets, the plants, the trees and the flowers owe their beauty to the existence of light.

From a purely scientific point of view, light is electromagnetic radiation with a wavelength that is visible to the eyes. Light travels at a speed of 186,000 miles (300,000 km) per second. This seems very fast and yet it takes years for the light from the stars to reach the earth owing to the great distances involved, hence the term 'light years' is used to measure such distances. Our nearest star for example is four light years from earth, a vast distance calculated by multiplying the speed of light by the time taken for it to reach us.

'IN THE BEGINNING'

The Bible teaches us that before the creation of life on earth by God, there was no light, and the very first verses of the Scriptures introduce us to light. God's first act in turning a lifeless planet, covered in water, into a habitable place for the human race, was the bringing of light to a dark world.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and **darkness was on the face of the deep**. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **Then God said, "Let there be light"**; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day' [*Genesis 1.1-5*].

There are a number of important points which should be noted from this record, for not only does it deal with the natural creation

from a dark lifeless world which existed about 6,000 years ago, but it involves principles which we find throughout the Scriptures:

- Without light all is dark and lifeless;
- God's Word gives light;
- There is a division between darkness and light
– like night and day;
- God saw that light was good;

Both Jesus and the apostles endorsed the Genesis record of creation, and the Apostle Paul used the creation of light to show how God had enlightened him personally, when he wrote to the Corinthians: *'For it is the God, **who commanded light to shine out of darkness** who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' [2 Corinthians 4.6].*

GOD IS LIGHT

God reveals himself as the God of light, who dwells in light unapproachable by mortal man. Moses and the nation of Israel were shown by God that man cannot look upon God and live. Moses asked God on one occasion to show him His glory and God needed to shield Himself from Moses in order for him to glimpse God's glory. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai his face shone so brightly that Israel was not able to look upon Moses' face [Exodus 34.29, 30].

The Apostle John spoke of God's glory, when he wrote: *'This is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you, **that God is light** and in him is no darkness at all' [1 John 1.5].* David in the Psalms wrote concerning God: *'The LORD is **my light** and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?' [Psalm 27.1].* It is therefore possible that God can impart to man His light, through His Word, the Bible. Just as God spoke and light was created, so He can speak to us through His Word, and this will enlighten us, so that we can walk in light.

GOD'S WORD IS LIGHT AND BRINGS LIFE

The Apostle Peter wrote that we should take heed to God's Word, and particularly to prophecy when he wrote *'We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as to a **light that shines in a dark place**, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'* [2 Peter 1.19-21]. God's light therefore reaches us today through the Bible and we would do well, as Peter counseled, to take heed to it. Without that Word we remain in darkness, and darkness brings death.

David the Psalmist recognized his need for God's light and the Word of Truth when he wrote: *'Oh, send out **your light and your truth!** Let them lead me; Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your tabernacle. Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise you, O God, my God'* [Psalm 43.3-4].

There is no source of true light but God. All other sources of light are man-made and impure and the light is not that brilliant light which brings life. There are no other gods, and there is no other revelation apart from what God has committed to us through His Word, which brings light and life. The nation of Israel were taught this lesson and were warned against relying on any other form of light. Today man would rather rely on the artificial sources of spiritual light, which is in fact darkness. God said to Israel *'I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides me. I will gird you, though you have not known me, That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; **I form the light**, and create darkness, I make peace, and create calamity; I the LORD do all these things'* [Isaiah 45.5-7].

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

During his ministry, Jesus told the disciples that they had a special place in the world in which they lived. They were lights in a dark place. *'You are the **light of the world**. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'* [Matthew 5.14-16].

They, like all of Christ's disciples down the ages have the duty to let the light of the gospel message shine to all about them. The Apostle Paul re-enforced Jesus' words when he wrote to the Ephesian believers *'For you were once darkness, but now you are **light in the Lord**. Walk as children of light'* [Ephesians 5.8]. Such walking in light also involves abstaining from the unfruitful works of darkness, which are listed in the Scriptures. Paul wrote to the Romans *'The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the **armour of light**.'* [Romans 13.12].

Light is compared here to a suit of '**armour**', and it should be put on by the believer for protection against the powers of darkness - the works of sin. The light of God is therefore a protection and will save a servant of God from walking in the ways of darkness, which will only lead to death - eternal oblivion and eternal darkness.

In one of his parables Jesus said: *'Can the blind lead the blind? will they not both fall into the ditch?'* [Luke 6.39]. Rather the servant of God should rejoice in the light which comes through a knowledge of His Word. The Apostle Peter recognized what a privileged position the servants of God enjoy: *'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into **his marvellous light**.'* [1Peter 2.9].

NATIONS ARE IN DARKNESS

Mankind in general loves darkness and will not naturally come to

the ‘*marvellous light*’ of God’s Word. Jesus said that they loved darkness so that their evil deeds should not be made manifest. They live and work in spiritual darkness and in general they love to do so. As Job put it: *‘They grope in the dark **without light**, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man’* [Job 12.25].

Yet it did not prevent God sending His Son as a light into the dark world 2,000 years ago. One of the best-known verses of Scripture tells us:

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved...And this is the condemnation, that **light has come into the world**, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practising evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God’ [John 3.16-21].

‘*Men loved darkness*’, said Jesus, ‘*rather than light*’; and such is the state of the world today. Yet it will not always be so, for God declares: ‘*but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*’ [Numbers 14.21]. Jesus is to return and together with his immortalized saints he is to bring light, joy and peace to the earth.

JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT

As the Son of God, Jesus is the true light, sent by God into the world. The prophets of Israel foretold his coming as the appearance of a ‘*great light*’ in a dark world. ***The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light: those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.***’ [Isaiah 9.2] *‘I the LORD have*

*called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, **for a light** to the Gentiles;'* [Isaiah 42.6].

In John's gospel record, we read about John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Jesus, and who himself was to bring light and repentance to Israel. Of the Baptist, he wrote:

'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, **to bear witness of the Light**, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was **the true Light**, which gives light to every man who comes into the world...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

[John 1.6-9, 14].

Jesus himself said: ***I am the light of the world.*** *He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'* [John 8.12]. They would have his example, and if they followed that example then his followers would walk in light, and have the light of life. '***I have come as a light into the world***, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness' [John 12.46].

JESUS AS THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus is to return to the earth, and this is likened to the rising of the sun - a glorious sunrise which will bring healing in its beams [Malachi 4.2]. Such a new day will bring a fresh start for the earth and wickedness will gradually be eradicated in the Kingdom of God - that kingdom for which Christ said we should pray. '*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth*'.

After the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Apostles, preached '*That the Christ should suffer; that he would be the first to*

*rise from the dead, and should proclaim **light to the Jewish people, and to the Gentiles*** [Acts 26.23].

NATIONS WILL WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD

Some 700 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the effects of the coming of Christ and the setting up of the Kingdom of God. In that day the nations will learn righteousness. There will be no more strife of nations, no more warfare, no more greed and wickedness. All the nations of the earth, now enlightened, will come up to worship God at Jerusalem, which will be the centre of worship and of world government. From here will radiate the light of God, and the world will come to that light, and will enjoy true enlightenment [Isaiah 2.2-5].

The same prophet Isaiah contrasts the darkness that prevails in this ungodly world with the light of God's glory that will fill the earth in the age to come:

“Arise, shine; For your light has come! and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, and his glory will be seen upon you. **The Gentiles shall come to your light**, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” [Isaiah 60.1-3].

This is the glorious prospect in store for those who come to the light and prepare now for the coming of Jesus. Will you be ready for it?

Light is good – without it all is darkness. Follow Jesus, walk in light, and you will be among those who will be granted the light of unending life in the coming kingdom of God.

Clive Brooks
Sussex, UK

Bible Characters

Noah

WE LIVE IN changing times. Progress in technology seems to constantly overtake us, so that with instant world wide communication we are aware of turmoil, famines, catastrophes and Governmental changes without ceasing. Pollution, population and political strife are on the increase. Will there ever be a time of change for the better – a time of peace and tranquillity?

Although we know from history that there have been dramatic changes in the affairs of men it is comforting to think that we control our own destiny. Scientists take this false philosophy to extremes and extrapolate present conditions back to the ‘Big Bang’ or forward to the collapse of the Universe. This is done in spite of the fact that the Bible has specifically stated that:

‘...scoffers will come in the last days saying,
“Where is the promise of his coming? For since
the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they
were from the beginning of creation.”’

[2 Peter 3.3,4]

The Creation itself, the Flood and the rise and fall of great empires all demonstrate that God does not leave mankind to work out his own destiny. On the contrary, the Almighty has a great and wondrous plan for His Creation and only the foolish think they can ignore it. It is human nature that does not change. Humans are generally perverse and ‘the heart of man is *‘deceitful...and desperately wicked’* [Jeremiah 17.9]. No wonder the affairs of men tend towards chaos. But we need not despair, God’s plan does include a time of peace and prosperity on the earth before very long and we can take

LIGHT ON A NEW WORLD

comfort from the examples of great men and women of faith who also faced times of frightening change.

DISTINCT EPOCHS IN GOD'S PLAN

Over the 6,000 years of recorded history, there have been three distinct epochs of 2,000 years each. In each epoch God has demonstrated that His plan includes a selection process involving men and women who gave Him glory. In the first 2,000 year period, God chose Noah and his family and destroyed all the others with a flood.

In the second 2,000 year period, God chose Abraham and from his descendants produced the Jewish nation – now called Israel. They were God's specially selected people and from their history in the Old Testament we learn about God's purpose.

Finally in the last 2,000 years, God chose his Son, Jesus Christ, who expanded the knowledge of God to include the Gentiles (i.e. to those who were not Jews by birth). In each case we can see that God requires faith and obedience as the main requisites for a part in His plan for the world.

As the second millennium after the birth of Christ is drawing to its close, we perceive not only a world that needs God's intervention, but a time that needs another man of faith to direct His plan.

THE REASONS FOR THE FLOOD

There was never quite such a change as that experienced by Noah. At that time God saw, *'that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually...and the earth was filled with violence.'* [Genesis 6.5,11]

Surely one of the major characteristics of the present world is violence. We see it at every level, internationally, locally and individually, so we can appreciate how Noah felt. Yet Noah, *'found grace in the eyes of the LORD'* [Genesis 6.8]

What an indication of the control of the Almighty that is. God was aware of one family out of the whole world that gave Him glory through their faith. The parallel with today is no idle fancy. Jesus himself tells us that the latter days would be like the time of Noah:

‘As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.’ *[Luke 17.26, 27]*

Perhaps what is really surprising is that there was still one family left that feared and worshipped God. Jesus continued:

‘Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.’

[Luke 17.28-30]

Again we see a similarity today with world wide tolerance of promiscuity and homosexuality. In both cases God appointed a set time and then came a dramatic change. It will be the same when Christ returns.

FAITH MAINTAINED IN ISOLATION

Noah and his family were pretty isolated in their beliefs. Only eight people were saved through their faith. It must have come as a great surprise when God told them to build an ark. Not only were they far from the sea, but they had never experienced rain. Apart from that, the undertaking was a huge one as the ark was about the size of a modern cruise ship and Noah and his sons were a long time in building it.

They needed to sustain their faith in God over a long time in the

face of much ridicule and hostility by the pleasure seekers around them. No doubt they endured much privation and hardship as well, as all their efforts were directed into this seemingly hopeless task. Noah proclaimed God's message to his neighbours as well, with no response over the years. We expect they were beset with doubts and worries about how they were going to get the animals into the ark and how they would be able to control them and feed them. But we know as they knew, that what God says, he is also able to perform. They trusted in God to save them from an evil generation, and he did. The letter to the Hebrews puts it this way;

‘By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith’

[Hebrews 11.7].

So here we see an important principle established years before the birth of Abraham, who was the ‘father of the faithful’ and whose faith was ‘*accounted to him for righteousness*’ [Galatians 3.6]. Justification by faith was a principle from the Creation. Adam and Eve were cursed because of their lack of faith. The faith exhibited by Noah however was so incredible that it certainly marked a turning point in the affairs of men.

A NEW ORDER ESTABLISHED

Here we have a new beginning, a new order and a new covenant with God. The Lord God made a promise that still remains to us today:

‘.. Then the LORD said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.’ [Genesis 8.21,22]

God gave Noah the visible sign of the rainbow as a token of this promise or everlasting covenant. He also gave all living things into the hands of Noah and his descendants for food and as their responsibility to replenish the earth.

One would perhaps be forgiven for thinking this all happened a long time ago and is of little relevance to us today. However it is the Apostle Peter who explains this is much more than a simple historical account. He explains how the long suffering nature of God was demonstrated in His waiting for Noah and his family to get into the ark and that it is an allegory of the salvation in Christ:

‘ .. when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. (this water is) an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ’ [1 Peter 3.20, 21].

Salvation from death then, follows the same principle as the saving of Noah. It requires belief in God’s word, baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (our ark) and obedience to God’s commandments even in the face of long term waiting for God to act, just like Noah.

One final point is worth mentioning, particularly at this turning point in history. God waited patiently for Noah to give him the opportunity to be saved from death but then at the appointed time Noah was told in no uncertain terms to get into the ark. At that point we read that ‘ *the LORD shut him in* ’ [Genesis 7.16].

Once God had shut the door, the opportunity for salvation had gone for the evil people on the earth. In the same way we need to take action:

‘Because he (God) has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man

whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him from the dead' [Acts 17.31].

When that day arrives it will be too late to get into our ark, the Lord Jesus Christ. That will be another time of great change on the earth.

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From our Mail Bag

The following question has been asked by a reader: ‘Was the devil or satan disguised as the serpent in the garden of Eden?’

This is the popular idea which is taught by many churches believing in a personal devil, but what does the Scripture actually say? If you read Genesis chapters one and two, there is no reference at all to the creation of a devil, a satan, or an angel who fell from grace or anything which could be mistaken for such theories.

There is a reference to ‘*war in heaven*’ which should not be taken literally as it appears in the book of Revelation and refers to events more than 4,000 years after Eden! [*Revelation 12.7-9*] These words do not refer back to Eden, but to historical events after 100 AD recorded in highly figurative language. Revelation is a book of symbols and great care should be made when comparing it with other parts of Scripture.

The serpent who was responsible for the temptation of Eve is introduced in Genesis chapter 3: ‘*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made*’ [*Genesis 3.1*]. Consider carefully the following points:

- The serpent was counted as a beast of the field, along with all the other creatures God had made i.e. God made the serpent too!
- Why compare a powerful spirit being with an animal? They are not in the same category at all.

- If the serpent was an angel in disguise, then why are we not told right here?
- The clear inference is that the snake was simply an animal, but at that time had greater intelligence.

We conclude that from this important verse, there is no support for the theory that a powerful spirit being took on the form of a serpent.

The next point however is important to understand. The serpent lied to Eve and misrepresented what God had said. It was an adversary to Eve and she disobeyed God. The original Hebrew word has been translated as ‘devil’. It really means *a liar or false accuser*, and the word translated ‘satan’ means an *adversary*. The serpent was both of these things to Eve, and so is anything which causes men and women to disobey God.

In Scripture the words ‘devil’ and ‘satan’ are used in many different contexts, usually referring to people, powers or influences for evil. The greatest manifestation of the ‘devil’ since Eden, (and indeed the ‘devil’ which Jesus came to destroy), is **sin in human nature**, called in Scripture ‘*sin in the flesh*’ (see for example Romans 7.18 and 8.3). Only faith in the work of Jesus Christ can save us from sin in human nature and eternal death which comes as a consequence.

[Editor’s Note: For a fuller explanation of the meaning of the devil and satan as they appear in the Bible please see article entitled ‘The Devil and Satan’ – Volume 19.12 page 11. If you would like a copy of this article, write to the Correspondence Secretary – address on inside back cover.]

THE ROSETTA STONE

IN THE BRITISH Museum in London there is a slab of black stone called 'The Rosetta Stone' that is famous worldwide. What is it that makes this piece of stone so famous? The story of the 'Rosetta Stone' starts in Ancient Egypt in 196 BC, in the times of the later Egyptian kings. It is a block of black basalt stone that had lain hidden in the sands of Egypt for many centuries until just over 200 years ago, in the late 18th century, when the French and British were battling for power in Europe.

In May 1798 an expedition under Napoleon Bonaparte sailed from Toulon in southern France, heading for Egypt. It was really a military expedition that was specifically connected with the war against Britain, although of course, Napoleon said he had come to help the Egyptian people!

World politics don't change do they?

Actually, Napoleon, because of setbacks in his campaigns to dominate Europe, had decided against an invasion of England, but now he hoped that by occupying Egypt, he could damage British trade and its growing empire, especially to threaten British connections with India. Napoleon's expedition to Egypt was however accompanied by a team of scholars, and it was this French occupation of Egypt that led to the finding of more than one important archaeological artifact.

But the British knew what Napoleon was up to and Nelson's fleet attacked and totally destroyed his fleet at Aboukir Bay, in what has gone down in history as the Battle of the Nile, leaving Napoleon himself and the French forces cut off in Egypt! The French were now

in a state of siege and they could see the British warships out at sea, so they set about building defensive positions to combat a possible landing of British troops.



The Battle of the Nile

The year was now 1799 and we go to a small Egyptian town, named Rashid (or Rosetta), situated on a north-west branch of the River Nile, eight miles (13 km) southeast of its entrance into the Mediterranean. Just north of Rosetta, an officer of the French forces, Lieutenant Bouchard was in charge of squads of soldiers building what became known as Fort Saint-Julien.



As they demolished existing buildings and dug new foundations for their fort, saving what materials they found for re-use, the soldiers

started to attack a black slab of stone that was perhaps the doorstep or plinth of an ancient building. As they freed it and levered it over and let it drop, they noticed through the dirt on the other side of the stone – that it was covered in strange writing.

The officer, Bouchard, was near enough to stop the soldiers smashing it up and brushing away the dust, he could see three forms of writing carefully carved into the slab! It was an irregularly shaped stone of black basalt 114 cm long and 72 cm wide and quite heavy – the stone had obviously been misused and bits broken off during the time that had passed from when the lettering had been carved on it. It had been used and possibly re-used a number of times in building works.



The Rosetta Stone

Black Basalt, by the way is a fine grained volcanic rock, in some cases so fine the mineral grains cannot be seen and it can be polished up to give a smooth attractive surface. This piece of stone became named after the Egyptian village near where it was found - The 'Rosetta Stone'!

This French officer was astute enough to realise that they had found something worth preserving. But without knowing it, he and his soldiers had found a relic that was to unravel a mystery that had taxed the minds of scholars for centuries!

It wasn't long before the French scholars that had come with Napoleon's army came hurrying to Rosetta to have a good look at this

find but it wasn't long either before events stopped them in their studies of this artefact!

In 1801 the British forces landed and the French forces, weakened by disease surrendered. Napoleon himself somehow managed to evade the British troops and ships and escape back to France. After the French surrender, and under the terms of the Treaty of Capitulation, the British made the defeated armies and scholars hand over all the objects they had found and at first they demanded all their notebooks and sketchbooks as well! But when the French scholars threatened to burn them, the British allowed them to keep their paper work, but all the objects were to be handed over.

In an act of generosity, the British did allow the French to take plaster casts of many of the objects, including the 'Rosetta Stone'. The 'Rosetta Stone' itself and other items were duly handed to the British authorities, shipped to England, and given into the care of the British Museum in 1802. So now the British had the real stone and the French had the plaster cast impressions of this writing on the 'Rosetta Stone', and the scholars on both sides of the Channel got busy studying the wording.

This ancient Egyptian stone had a number of inscriptions on it of three types but what did all those strange pictures and symbols in the top section mean ? The script at the top is 'Hieroglyphic' writing. The word 'Hieroglyphic' is made up of two Greek words, meaning 'sacred' and 'carving'. The 'Hieroglyphic writing' is a system that employs characters in the form of pictures that may be read as pictures, as symbols of pictures or as symbols for sounds! Hieroglyphic writing had been seen and copied by visitors to Egypt previously, but no one had got anywhere in trying to understand it.

The second language on the stone, is an Egyptian script known as 'Demotic', that's from another Greek word 'Demotikos', meaning 'for the people' or 'common use'. The word 'Democracy' comes from the

same Greek word. This ‘Demotic’ script is a cursive form of the hieroglyphic writing. Cursive means ‘flowing writing, running or coursing, as most of us do when we are handwriting today, flowing the strokes of successive characters, joining them up and rounding them.

This ‘Demotic’ script was used in Egypt in handwritten texts from the early 7th century BC and by the 5th century BC, was in use everywhere in Egypt for business and literary purposes. This style of writing though began to be replaced by the last section of writing on the ‘Rosetta Stone’, Greek. This section of writing is in Greek Uncial letters or capitals.

This change to the use of Greek writing came about following the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great but it was later, after Alexander’s death in 323 BC, when his empire eventually broke up into four parts with each area ruled by the most powerful of his military commanders.

In Egypt, this allowed the setting up in 308 BC of a new ruling dynasty by one of those generals, named Ptolemy. He became King Ptolemy I (Soter). That strangely is what the writing carved on this ‘Rosetta Stone’ is about. It is about one ruler in this Ptolemaic dynasty. It turns out that it is a copy of a decree issued by an assembly of Egyptian priests in Memphis, to celebrate the anniversary of the coronation of one of the kings of this dynasty, Ptolemy V (Epiphanes – 204 - 180 BC)

In Britain and France in the early 19th century, there were plenty of scholars who could read Greek, so it didn’t take long to find the reason for the existence of the ‘Rosetta Stone’ and what it meant. It proved to be a commemorative memorial, carved on stone, as a means to remember something for posterity, just as memorials are still carved in stone nowadays.

But even with those other two types of writing on the stone,

nobody knew yet what the Hieroglyphics meant. These on the ‘Rosetta Stone’ weren’t the first hieroglyphics to be seen, as we have already noted. Samples had been copied and passed to scholars in many countries – but nobody had been able to crack the code, you might say!

But now with these two other languages beside the hieroglyphics, together on the same stone, you would think it would now be easy to see what this mystery Egyptian ‘picture writing’ meant! Some had tried to work it out, but didn’t get very far, most gave up, but two men didn’t.

In England there was a renowned physician and physicist named Thomas Young (famous for establishing the principle of interference of light). Young was also an Egyptologist and in 1814, with the ‘Rosetta Stone’ readily available to him, he was able to study the texts. After obtaining additional hieroglyphic writings from other sources, he succeeded in providing a nearly accurate translation within a few years and so contributed greatly to deciphering the ancient Egyptian language.

Young noticed that the hieroglyphic text on the ‘Rosetta Stone’ contained six identical cartouches (oval figures enclosing hieroglyphs) and he deciphered the cartouche as the name of Ptolemy and proved his long held assumption that the cartouches found in other inscriptions were the names of royalty. By noting the direction in which the bird and animal characters faced, Young discovered the way in which hieroglyphic signs were to be read. Unfortunately he never officially published his findings.

On the other side of the English Channel, the other man, a distinguished French scholar named Jean-François Champollion, who it is said, could read six Oriental languages by the age of sixteen, was also one of those who had been trying to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphic writing for some time. Even though the ‘Rosetta Stone’ had been handed to the British Museum, Champollion managed to use those plaster cast impressions of the writing on the ‘Rosetta Stone’, to get to work on interpreting the whole thing.

In 1821, Champollion, starting where Young left off, began to publish papers on the decipherment of 'hieratic' and 'hieroglyphic' writing based on his study of the 'Rosetta Stone'. Eventually, Champollion managed to work out and publish an entire list of hieroglyphic signs with their Greek equivalents. He was the first Egyptologist to realize that some of the signs were alphabetic, some syllabic, and some determinative, standing for the whole idea or object previously expressed. He also established that the hieroglyphic text of the 'Rosetta Stone' was a translation from the Greek, not, as had been thought, the reverse.

It took him fourteen years, but he did it without ever seeing the stone itself! So by 1822, Champollion published papers that completed the work on the 'Rosetta Stone' started by Young some years earlier. The work of these two men established the basis for the translation of all future Egyptian hieroglyphic texts.

Twenty three years after it was found, the 'Rosetta Stone' at last revealed its secrets! The successful decipherment was the key which then led to the understanding of hieroglyphic writing – which was also found in abundance on many of the Egyptian temples, statues, obelisks and papyri.

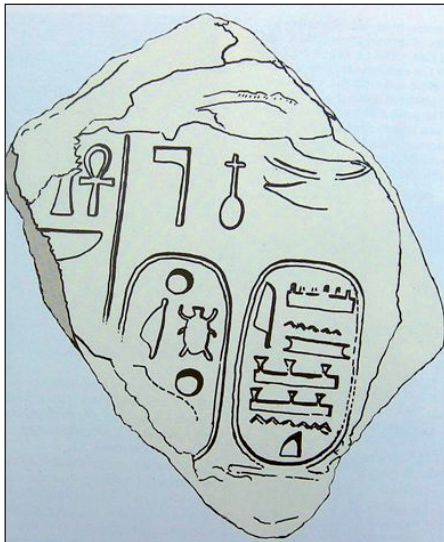
And this is what it was, that made this piece of black basalt stone so exciting to Biblical scholars, even though at first it had no seeming connection to the Bible at all! It meant that it was now possible to go back to all those other samples of Hieroglyphic writing in Egypt and interpret what they meant. That now gave the 'Rosetta Stone' a valuable connection to the Bible. It meant that some parts of the Biblical record would now be compared with the Egyptian hieroglyphic records and in some cases confirm the accuracy of the biblical statements.

For example, on the great Egyptian temple at Karnak some of the hieroglyphic writing carved in the stone structures could now be read.

On one section the carvings were found to describe the invasion of the land of Judea by one of the Pharaoh's in the reign of King Rehoboam. Remarkably it describes the same incident that the Bible records, in these words;

‘And it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem...with twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and people without number...And he took the fortified cities of Judah and came to Jerusalem...So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. He also carried away the gold shields which Solomon had made.’[2 *Chronicles* 12. 2-4, 9]

These verses and the hieroglyphics carved on the Karnak Temple tell us of the same event, the story of Shishak king of Egypt (Sheshonq I. 945-924 BC) who attacked Israel in 925 BC, taking all the fortified cities, then taking Jerusalem, stripping the temple and the King's palace of their treasures.



The invasion of Israel by this Pharaoh is also confirmed by the finding of another smaller piece of stone at Meggido, one of the cities he conquered. On the stone is a triumphal inscription with the name of Shishak in hieroglyphic symbols carved on it.

As an aside, this invasion happened not too long after the death of Solomon, and it has been suggested that all the gold the Bible tells us about that Solomon had accumulated during his reign, was now taken down to Egypt, and this could account for the abundance of gold that was used so liberally in Egypt.

But the important part is that the record in hieroglyphic writing, that was indecipherable before, was now as a result of finding the 'Rosetta Stone', able to verify absolutely a record of the same historical event written in the Bible. This has confirmed the confidence that true Biblical scholars have always had in the Bible's authenticity.

Other examples on Egyptian buildings and memorials are still being interpreted. Recently Professor Kenneth Kitchen, a renowned Egyptologist, claimed that another sample of hieroglyphic writing at Karnak has also been identified as having the name of King David carved on it. That is being disputed by the Bible's critics, but who knows what else may yet be found among the Egyptian hieroglyphics to further confirm the accuracy of God's Word ?

As a final point, it is quite possible that there are Israelites mentioned in the Bible, who in their time, could read and understand hieroglyphic writing, one was probably Joseph, who was second only to the Pharaoh of his time, but perhaps more so, Moses. He was, we are told, *'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians'* [Acts 7.22]. One could reasonably conclude that his learning and wisdom included a knowledge of hieroglyphic writing.

Ken Dennis
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- **The Bible is the inspired Word of God**
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- **Bodily resurrection is the true hope of believers**
- **Salvation is only possible through Jesus**
- **Belief and baptism are essential for salvation**
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- **The Gospel was preached to Abraham**
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