

The Nazarene Circular Letter No. 130

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Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Can anyone read the prophecy of Joel and not be moved by it? Israel will be the first nation to become aware of God's direct intervention in human affairs when their land is overrun.

Their present great self confidence in their own ability to withstand the military advances of their enemies will disappear and their defences will be futile; they will be forced to turn to their Creator. Joel 2:17, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" And the exhortation of God is in verse 12, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil..."

It is at this point in time, I believe, that Elijah will have appeared to the Jewish religious leaders to give them this exhortation and encouragement and it will be at his word that they "blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly..." (verse 15). And in response to their accepting Elijah's message and the rekindling of their faith in their God, He will answer their call for, "Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea..." (verses 18-20). Then follows the promises of great blessings upon the people of Israel as they look forward to the Kingdom age and the coming of their Messiah.

But as I see it, all is not yet over for the rest of the nations for in the prophecy of Zephaniah, chapter 3 verse 8, we read, "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." This I believe is the time referred to by Daniel (chapter 12, verse 1), "...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time..."

How we earnestly desire for an end to these troubles and pray "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on the earth as it is now done in heaven. Amen.

Brother Geoff Hampton went into hospital on the 22nd April for a few days in order to have an implant in his eye. We understand he is making good progress after an initial setback with stitch coming loose.

We would like to hear from readers their thoughts upon the subject of the Holy Spirit.

With Sincere Love to all, your Brother in the Master's service,

Russell Gregory.

TOO LATE

We know that God is merciful, as well as all powerful. And when we read how He manifested Himself to Moses just after the children of Israel had committed that grave sin of worshipping the golden calf. He said (Exodus 34:6) "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth..." So we read that in spite of the gravity of their sin. He still put mercy first. Come to think of it. God's patience is really beyond imagination considering how often His name is taken in vain, and that it is in His power to destroy us all in a moment. But there comes a time when it is too late. And we want to consider a few such examples.

The first is Noah. None of us, I am sure, would have liked to be in his shoes while he was building that ark. How the people must have mocked him. After all while the construction was in progress there was no sign of any deluge. They made the mistake which so many make to our day, of thinking that things just continue as they are. And then, remember Noah was also a preacher of righteousness. So they all had their warning of what was to come. And just think of how brave and courageous Noah must have been to plod steadily on with this ark building project. Among taunts, no doubt ranging from little leg-pulls, good-hearted at the surface but with a sting, to more serious sneering remarks. But they changed their tune, no doubt, when they were beginning to drown, clinging to any floating object they could find, and gazing at the floating ark. But they could not get in. The ark was shut by God. So we are quite sure that it was fastened securely, no entrance through any backdoor way.

Next we come to Pharaoh's defiant attitude, the way he tempted God, just trying how far he could go. It took ten plagues before he finally let the children of Israel go. God gave him plenty of chances to repent. And even after their departure he still defiantly chased them. But then came the moment when it was finally too late for him to change his mind. It ended with the drowning in the Red Sea of Pharaoh and his army.

We now move on a few centuries to the time of the destruction of the temple and Judah's captivity by the Babylonians. By that time, Judah, like Israel before, completely forsook God. Idol worship took its place. As on so many previous occasions God gave them ample warning through the prophet Jeremiah. But like so many before him, he was ill-treated, spoken against, and even imprisoned. Again the same mistake; misjudging God's patience and long-suffering for slackness and failure to keep His promise. Again their was disbelief and defiance to the last. As in the days of Noah, things continued as before. Idol worship was the established mode of the day. They got away with it, only apparently all that time while God patiently waited for a change of heart. It did not materialize. And even when Jerusalem was besieged they still thought there would be a last minute divine deliverance, as though God was just at their beck and call, at their convenience, never mind the provocation of Him by their sinful conduct. Even at their moment of greatest crisis they had Jeremiah, the very prophet who sounded the repeated warnings, imprisoned in a dungeon. But then, once more, too late. Judah was taken captive, Jerusalem burned, the temple destroyed, their national pride vanished.

We next want to consider the time of the end of the second temple and with it Israel as a nation, at the time of Christ's ministry. By that time Greek false religion found its way into Jewish life. This included the immortality of the soul, the lie of the serpent revived, and the Pharisees, the supposed keepers and guardians of God's law were themselves steeped in false doctrine, and so immersed in tradition, taking

simple commandments to ridiculous extremes. Some of these are prevalent to this day. Orthodox Jews don't switch on a light on the Sabbath day, as this constitutes "kindling a fire" because of the tiny electric spark when operating a switch. They do not drive a car on the Sabbath for a similar reason, the spark of the ignition. They have two sets of crockery, one for meaty dishes, the other for milky ones such as custard, etc, all because of the law that forbids seething a kid in its mother's milk. And there are many more such tedious rules. There was a great desire for the promised Messiah to appear. But their main concern was liberation from the Roman yoke, so that they could carry out their traditions in peace. Getting right with God as a first priority was of lesser importance to them. They thought because they were Abraham's children by birth they had an indisputable right to the land of Palestine. They thought of themselves as a sort of "master race," superior to all other nations by divine privilege. But, at least their rulers, entirely lost sight of their duties towards God. No privilege without its responsibilities. And of these duties, and their neglect of them, Jesus put them in remembrance. But, just as so many of their prophets, He suffered the same fate, and worse, He was mocked and crucified. Even so, God gave them some further thirty to forty years to repent during the preaching of the apostles. But even this was to no avail. Once again it was too late when Jerusalem and the second temple were destroyed, Judah taken into captivity, and their dispersion among all nations began, which is with us to this day and only just now coming to an end.

And now to our day. It is the time of the end, and this the final one. We are blessed in understanding the many signs of the age. I would mention just the one recorded in 2 Peter 3:3, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying. Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." How true. How often when we try to introduce the truth to someone, do we meet with the disinterested reply: "Well, let us see when it comes," or some similar remark.

And what of our own understanding? Well, we who have accepted the truth let us hold fast to the end. Let us walk humbly before God, never forgetting the extreme suffering Jesus underwent out of sheer love for us. Let us not fall into the error of the Pharisees who were so sure of their divine blessings just because they were Abraham's children that they looked down on, and despised all not of themselves. Let us beware against being unequally yoked with the unbeliever in business partnerships or marriage. And let us hold fast to the end and be ready always to give an answer to everyone that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). And above all, let us guard against forsaking the truth, or else we also shall be among those for whom it is too late when the Lord returns, and worse, because one thing God hates is deliberately turning one's back after accepting God's ways. As we read in the epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 10:38-39), "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Chapter Three

The apostle Paul had a number of reasons to write to the ecclesia at Philippi. In chapter one we read of his great joy and pleasure in his recollection of them; he recalls their acceptance of the gospel message that he, Silas, Timothy and possibly Luke had brought them some ten years earlier.

In Acts 16: 9-15 we read the account that first brought them to that part of Macedonia: - "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying. Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of

purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying. If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul thanks them for the gifts they had sent by Epaphroditus, and he also wanted to reassure them of his circumstances and take away any concern they had had for his imprisonment; but above all, he wanted to exhort them to live and work together in the unity of the spirit. He wrote: - “Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.” He was aware, too, of the danger of their being influenced by the Judaizers and needed to remind them that their hope was not through a legalistic philosophy of observance, but by the grace of God; and that through faith in Christ Jesus - their hope lay in redemption and forgiveness of sins.

In chapter three Paul appears to be concluding his letter, he writes: - “Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same thing to you to me indeed is not grievous.” That is, not irksome, it is no trouble at all, in fact, he is saying, ‘I want to say this to you, it is indeed something I must say – Rejoice in the Lord.’

Sixteen times in this letter the words joy or rejoice are used; it sets the tone of a wholehearted appreciation of an ecclesia he has loved from its very beginning, and he exhorts them to be glad together and to boast, or glory in the Lord.

Chapter 1, verses 3 to 5:- “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Chapter three repeats this message and confirms “for you it is safe,” meaning, in the Greek, it is secure, firm and certain; joy is an essential part of praise and worship.

The apostle Peter, in his first letter, at verse eight, wrote:- “Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from David’s Psalm concerning Jesus, and his hope; Acts 2:25-27:- “I foresaw the Lord always before my face; he is on my right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad: moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope: because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life: Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance (or presence).

It is our privilege to rejoice, because in the Lord Jesus Christ we have our hearts desire; peace with God, a love and appreciation of all the attributes of our heavenly Father as made manifest or revealed in His Son; His steadfastness, His faithfulness, His compassion, His mercy, and His love - a love which in our Lord enabled Him to go to the cross for us, to redeem us from the dominion of sin, and bring us to His own house and the house of His Father.

Up till now throughout this epistle the message is of rejoicing in hope. The next verse, verse 2 has been described as the great digression, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” A strong warning against the introduction of a doctrine which undermines the true “Good News,” a teaching which would undermine their confidence and faith in the doctrine of redemption, which is based entirely on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

This doctrine of the Judaizer’s sought to introduce some other conditions for salvation, which Paul calls “the concision.” It is a term used only this once, it implies a mutilation or cutting off; just as may be used by the heathen, i.e., without a true purpose or understanding. By the use of this expression, Paul relegates it to the practice of those who in ignorance add doctrine and burdens, as did the Pharisees, hard to be borne, making conditions which have no relevance to the true gospel of salvation. They were described as evil workers because they did not know or understand that salvation was wholly dependant upon one’s faith in the efficacy of the shed blood of their Redeemer.

Verse 3:- “For we are the circumcision,” we who are Christians; we have, and we hold the true doctrine of circumcision, we now have what was intended to be secured by this rite, “a covenant with God.” We “who worship God in Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus;” a covenant of redemption in Christ Jesus, typified and witnessed in the ordinance of baptism: the new covenant which brings us into the way of the spirit, “...and we have no confidence in the flesh,” that is, in the ordinances under the law and the keeping of the law in which Paul had previously trusted. Paul wrote to the Romans (in chapter 8) explaining that to trust in the flesh, or our ability to justify ourselves was impossible.

Romans 8:8:- “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body (or flesh) is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

In the next verse (Philippians 3:4), Paul writes, “Though I might also have Confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:” Then follows in verses 5 & 6, seven assets to his credit, if he were to make any claim for his own justification. He could claim - “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

All the things which he could count on, to his favour, he could now see counted for nothing when held alongside what his Lord had done for him; they did not form any part of his redemption, they could be seen as a hindrance to him in accepting wholeheartedly and without reservation the provision God had made in giving His only Son as a Redeemer, as the Lamb to take away the sin of the world. Now only his faith in his Lord, and the only righteousness available to him, was that imputed to him by God through faith.

Verse 8:- “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” In fact, he saw everything he had done as counting for nothing - and less than nothing in the stakes for the Kingdom of God; because only by the virtue of Christ’s sacrifice had he any hope at all. “To win Christ and be found in him,” verse 9, “not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

In verse 8 we read of “the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord:” in this verse Paul exchanges everything for the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus had said, “This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” Paul knew precisely where his path lay and he wanted to encourage his brethren in Philippi in the same way, and proceeds to put before them the means whereby he and they may come to the glory of the resurrection. “Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” His own righteousness he now discards and looks to the righteousness which faith in Christ Jesus can bring him, the righteousness which is the gift of God.

This righteousness has become available to us by “the faith of Christ.” We rarely speak of the faith of our Lord, but consider, it was His faith in His Father’s plan of salvation. His faith in what He was about to achieve. His faith in His resurrection. His faith in His vision of the redeemed, and His faith in that the whole earth would be filled with the glory of God: and much, much more besides.

We know He had visions which strengthened Him, but it still all depended on Him and His faith. Where His faith excels, perhaps, is that it was all a matter of Love as far as He was concerned, for He said “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends...” and the knowledge that His Father loved Him for it. Jesus said (John 10:17), “Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life.”

It is through faith that our Lord, in offering Himself, obtained eternal redemption, and enabled our heavenly Father to give us that righteousness “which is of God by faith.”

Chapter 3 verse 10:- “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death.”

“That I may know him,” Paul’s desire is more than to know about Jesus: it is to know all about His feelings. His mind, to share as one should in true fellowship. to be alongside Jesus in His life, in His sufferings, in His death and in His resurrection; so that if he could share some of this with Christ it would enable him to reach his goal, his resurrection, where he could be ever with his Lord. Paul wrote, in verse 11, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” In verse 12, he continues, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

Paul knew there was some way to go in this life as yet and could not rest; there was much to do, he had all the brethren and sisters he knew in many ecclesias to keep in touch with, he had every day problems regarding his imprisonment, he had his trial to look forward to and was occupied with many things; he could not say he had already attained his goal because it was yet some way off; he could not say he was perfect or complete, but he could press on towards the goal.

Verses 13 and 14:- “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul’s advice is to look ahead and to look up. He wrote the same advice to the Colossians (Chapter 3 verse 1 to 4), “If ye then be risen with Christ,” i.e., raised to the new life in Christ from the waters of baptism, “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

This is Paul’s vision and ambition, and in verses 15 onwards he calls for fellow travellers, those who are mature in their beliefs, with the same desire; but if they felt they lacked anything they were not to hesitate to join him in the way: God would reveal all that was required. Here we see Paul’s concern for the faint hearted, for the less mature and perhaps the modest, to walk in hope always desiring to know more of their God and Saviour. “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded. God shall reveal even this to you.” Verse 16, “Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule; let us mind the same thing.” A call for unity and a common purpose follows in verse 17, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

In the last few verses, Paul shows his concern for his lesser brethren; as we saw in verse 15, if there were those among them who had not these ambitions, and lacked motivation through ignorance, he was confident God would make up their lack of understanding by revealing to them a more complete knowledge of Christ Jesus, which would make them respond to His love; in fact, “the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

Now Paul, after encouraging and lifting his brethren to new heights and endeavours, has to face the fact that all is not perfect in the ecclesia, the will of some is still carnal, the natural man has not been eliminated, worldly ambitions and desires are still evident in the behaviour of some - and their end is destruction. Paul’s distress is also his reaction to the “concision” which would explain their being enemies of the cross of Christ. Those who denied the full self-sacrifice of Christ and the complete efficacy of His shed blood in redemption, are the enemies of the cross; this would cause Paul to weep, because it threatened the whole of the work of God in Christ; it stood as a challenge to the faith of those who desire the gift of God by faith. The enemies of the cross of Christ are those who do not discern in the Lord Jesus their need and their opportunity of redemption.

Verse 20:- “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, (i.e., the body of our humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

The prospect is now that the problems of the flesh will be done away with, when the Lord Jesus raises us up with bodies fashioned like unto His glorious body. Jesus has the power given Him of God, for He said "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The power to subdue all things unto Himself, the power to change our bodies in the twinkling of an eye; and to raise the dead. In Psalm 17 David wrote, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." And Paul wrote a similar message to the Corinthians (15:35 & 44), "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?... It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." And in the letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

"Wherefore, (because of this) comfort one another with these words."

Brother Ray Gregory.

"CHAT SECTION"

Brother Phil Parry writes: - "The Circular Letter raises many interesting points, some of which have appeared in previous editions and brought out some diversities of views on the meaning of the parables, especially the one on 'Leaven.' I am not personally upset by the rejection of my view but would prefer that we all held to the correct interpretation which would amount to a leaning towards the Heavenly concept of doctrine rather than the false.

Thus, on page 9 (C/L 129), in dealing with Brother Leo's query of the wedding garment it commences with the well known saying, "A parable, of course, is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, and the vital link is that Paul did go to the Gentiles, and to them conveyed the "Good News of the Kingdom of God." He taught about the atoning work and mission of Jesus Christ, etc." Does not this "earthly act" of putting leaven in meal denote an earthly story of what is commonly done by women, and point to the Heavenly outcome of what you describe as the "Good News" of the Kingdom of God? Can an Apostate Church be an Heavenly meaning? While on the foot of page 9, I should correct your statement that "we earned death forever from Adam," - the teaching of Paul to the Romans, in chapter 5, shows that we never earned anything in service to Adam but that his disobedience made us the servants of sin and that release was only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ. With the exception of this unintentional mistake, I accept what is said about the "Wedding Garment" parable, but I would not think any guest would be noticed by a dirty and dusty appearance, but by the fact he had not on a wedding garment and must have entered through an unauthorised way where no wedding garment was available or handed out, so getting past the door-keepers and stewards but not able to evade the scrutiny of the king. Of course it does refer to the Jewish hierarchy who refused the Messiah and lost the privileges offered to them and consequently caused the destruction of themselves and their city. It could be that they thought the Law of Moses of itself would be sufficient to cover their spiritual nakedness, like Adam with his fig-leaves. There is also the lesson here of two classes of people being called to the feast but it does not say that all those from the highways and byways were chosen, but only those who had on a "wedding garment." (See Matthew 22:14).

This brings me to another point, at the foot of page 10, in reference to the parables of Jesus of which Sister Linggood makes certain remarks on what Brother Russell said in the previous Circular Letter concerning the kingdom of Israel being the Kingdom of God which had declined to a corrupted state in the days of Jesus, and I quote her words, -

"Brother Russell's point, too, about the nation of Israel being the first Kingdom of Heaven is true being established by God and under His law, and Jesus said to the religious leaders, 'The Kingdom of Heaven should be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,' but after a righteous beginning this also for the most part fell into corruption."

Taking into account the views that the leaven in the parable was a doctrine of corrupting influence, this would be expected, but the question arises, 'Where is the point in taking a Kingdom from one nation who had corrupted it, and giving it to another nation to corrupt it in the same way through the working of the leaven of false doctrine?' How can the latter, wholly leavened of false doctrine be bringing forth the good fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven? The nation expected to do this, and capable of it, are the subjects of God's word in Exodus 19:5. The promise was that if they kept the covenant they would be a holy nation and a Kingdom of priests, but it was taken from those who failed to rise to the standard required, yet Peter realised there was a remnant whom he considered part of the nation bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven and he addresses them in his first epistle chapter 2, verse 9 and 10. I would not myself readily accept that a leaven of false doctrine and tradition brought this Holy Nation and Peculiar People to the state of the first corrupted Kingdom of Israel as Brother Russell suggested did happen, for there has always been a remnant according to the Election of Grace, known to God, but unknown to us in the course of history. It is for us also to endeavour to bring forth the fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven, or it will be taken from us.

Reverting to Brother Leo's query on immortality and Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 6:16, "God only hath immortality;" according to Luke 20:36, the angels don't die, so they must be immortal." I'm not wholly convinced with your reply to this difficult subject because I do not read in scripture a direct statement that the angels are immortal, though it is inferred by Jesus that the children of the resurrection, the blessed and holy, cannot die anymore but are as the angels. Some believe that incorruptible and immortal are interchangeable terms but if this were true why does not Paul use one term instead of the two in 1 Corinthians 15: 53-54? I have tried to reason this out before and can only conclude that "this corruptible" is a lifeless corrupting body in the earth and "this mortal" is the present living body in Christ, reckoned to be dead indeed unto Sin, for does he not say, "Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in the lust thereof"? Sin cannot reign in a body corrupting in the earth, but it can reign in a mortal body. Thus Paul qualifies the one in the grave as "corruptible," which must put on incorruption, and the latter "mortal" and alive and remaining in Christ at His coming, and must put on immortality. The former is raised after putting on incorruption, the latter is not raised incorruptible but is changed by putting on immortality, or as the apostle puts it in another place, "Clothed upon with the house from Heaven." As I understand it, the word "mortal" relates to death in the general sense, but as used in scripture it means 'subject to death by law' therefore, as in the case of Adam when created, he was corruptible, that is, capable of dying by reason of his physical nature, but not subject to death by violation of God's moral law, therefore not mortal until he sinned. God has never been in either of these positions, but Jesus has been in the former but not in the latter, for though in our identical nature he remained sinless. But can this be also applied to the Angels? Is it not possible that they could have graduated from a similar position to Adam's, under moral law to God in a previous creation on earth and after its destruction under water, by reason of their obedience, have been glorified to become ministering Spirits for those who shall be heirs of salvation of the Adamic creation? In this sense they also could have been mortal or subject to death by law, so that it remains that the Creator alone can rightfully claim to the words of Paul to Timothy, "Who only hath Immortality" because He is uncreate and Eternal - never bestowed with - but capable of bestowing, as you rightly explain. If scripture does not contradict this must be the nearest explanation unless someone can improve on it. I conclude therefore with Paul's words, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever." 1 Timothy 1:17 Amen.

Brother Phil Parry.

* * *

Brother Russell Gregory writes upon the question raised by Brother Leo in the last issue of the C.L. regarding the Wedding Garment:-

Dear Brother Harold, While agreeing with your reply to Brother Leo's query, I wonder if the Wedding Garment represents baptism merely, or even baptism and faith (see C.L. 129, page 10). Would it not rather be "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe"? Romans 3:22.

Upon the subject of the parable of the leaven there are three points I wish to respond to in Brother Phil Parry's letters.

The first is in C.L. 128, on page 5, where Brother Phil writes:

“The parable of the leaven is quite clear to me providing I accept the key Jesus supplies. This key is the statement He makes, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven.”

But Jesus did not say this as if there was a full stop after the word leaven. Neither did Jesus say, “The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man.” Matthew 13:24. Nor “The Kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed. Verse 31. Nor “The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure.” Verse 44. And so on in verses 45 and 47. It is important to take the whole of the parable as a word picture, not just the first noun, and having looked at the picture as a whole, see how it applies to an aspect of the Kingdom of heaven. The picture in this case is made by the words “like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.” I see this as Christendom which has gone astray from Bible teaching except for the very small remnant who seek to be influenced and guided by the Spirit of Christ. It is my opinion that the three measures of meal do not represent this remnant but I believe it represents the teaching of Christ - to which has been added the ‘leaven of corruption’ by false teachers, adding man’s doctrines to the Gospel.

Secondly, I wish to enlarge upon my view by observing that the first Kingdom of God was a political Kingdom, and this failed through man’s selfishness and lack of faith. Corruption and false teaching entered into their midst and eventually, when there was no more cure, God rejected Israel as His people, yet there were always a few, a remnant, here and there amongst the people who followed in Abraham’s footsteps, keeping to their faith in God; those such as Mary and Joseph; Zacharias and Elizabeth; the shepherds; the three wise men; Simeon and Anna, and then the disciples.

Following on from the preaching of the gospel by Jesus He introduced the new covenant in His blood so setting up the kingdom of God again for all who will to come into that covenant relationship. This kingdom was more of a spiritual nature rather than political, but again it was not long before corrupting influences were at work adding to and taking away from the Gospel, spreading false doctrines, deceiving the people. Paul in writing to Timothy warns “for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” So this Kingdom too, I believe has failed because of man’s lack of faith. Yet I again see a remnant that will be saved from out of it. However, the future and third Kingdom of God will combine both political and spiritual aspects and will succeed because Jesus will be King reigning from Jerusalem with the saints in positions of authority.

This I believe goes some way to answering Brother Phil’s query in this issue, in the third paragraph of his letter. Exodus 19:6 refers to this future Kingdom. The remnant of today is not at present a Kingdom of priests; this is future work and will ensure the Kingdom does not fail for these priests will have been endowed with power from on high and their King will be with them.

Thirdly, I wish to make reference to Brother Phil’s quotation on page 5 of C.L. No. 128 where he writes with reference to 1 Corinthians 5:7,8,

“The apostle exhorts the believers to purge out the old leaven that they may be a new lump.”

Why? What is this new lump? Let us quote the whole sentence - “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.” And on to verse 8 - “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread (or principles) of sincerity and truth.”

It seems unlikely to me that Jesus Christ should wish us to be leavened and the apostle Paul says we should not.

Brother Russell Gregory

THE TWO SONS OF GOD

Chapter Twelve

“The Son of Perdition”

The “Son of Perdition” is the title chosen by the Eternal Spirit, and put into the mouth of the apostle Paul, to denote a certain “man,” whose characteristics are presented in the following summary:-

1. The man of sin. 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
2. He opposeth and exalteth himself above all, being called a god, or an object of veneration.
3. He sits in the temple of the god, demonstrating that he is a god.
4. The lawless one.
5. With all power and signs and lying wonders.
6. With all deceit of injustice.

Equally plain and striking is the remarkable delineation of the features of this official man. If such an official personage has ever appeared in this mundane kosmos of ours, the foregoing “hue and cry” is surely precise enough to enable any one of ordinary powers of observation and comparison to identify him with unerring accuracy.

But other prophets were favoured with a glimpse of the same man, and in the Scriptures of Truth have “noted” what they beheld. Daniel recorded the subsequent items. He described:-

1. A little horn having eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking very great things.
2. I beheld, then, because of the great words which the horn spake.
3. His looks was more stout than his fellows.
4. The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.
5. Before this horn three of ten horns were plucked up by the roots.
6. He shall be diverse from the first horns.

The student will mark the close resemblance between the sketches given by Daniel and Paul; by the former, five hundred years before the latter wrote on the theme of this wonderful man to his watchful brethren in the city of Thessalonica. It seems to be the pleasure of the Eternal Spirit to develop His mind more fully upon a subject as time advances; hence, we may observe that the same lines in the portraiture by Paul are sharper and clearer than those traced by Daniel in his penograph. The symbolic “horn” of Daniel “dissolves,” as it were and re-appears in “the man” seen by Paul. The “stout look” of the interloper mentioned by Daniel comes out fully in the self-exalted god of the Pauline vision; the diversity from the companion horns discerned by Daniel is disclosed in the lawless peculiarity of the god-man depicted by the apostle, and so forth

A very brief consideration of the “horns” will suggest that “the little horn” could not be intended to represent one individual, for the horns - namely, the ten - are explained to Daniel by the angel interpreter to signify kingdoms. This is evident, from a comparison of the vision of the image with the vision of the four beasts. Chapter 2, verse 39 and 40, and chapter 7. This being the case, “the man of sin” must be a figure

denoting a class of official agents pertaining to the same system, which is made plain by the circumstances of “the man,” or “little horn,” being contemporary with, and lifted up above, the ten horns, even exacting the obedience of them all. Analogical proof is also found in the fact that the Man Christ (Jesus) is not one person, but many in one, in which the man anti-Christ agrees. There is also a singular compactness in the affairs and elements of the latter, running parallel with the oneness and unity demanded of the constituents of the former.

Certain Papist writers have held that the Arabian prophet was the man of sin, probably because from their stand-point no other phenomenon having any likeness to the description could be perceived between themselves and the political horizon. The identity, however, of the Mahometan system with Paul’s “Son of Perdition” is effaced the moment we come to the details of the figure. It cannot be maintained that the leaders of Islamism placed themselves above the laws of their empire; it-rather appears that they were on the whole, as scrupulous in keeping the laws as anxious to enforce their obedience. It was not at all incident to their constitution to exhibit themselves as gods, nor to claim that kind of adoration usually paid to the Divine Being. There is nothing in Saracen annals like a special and continued “war with the saints,” unless it be admitted that the saints are the worshippers of the beast in whose vitals “the sword of God” so deeply fleshed itself. Failure in these primary points being manifest, we need not multiply negative evidence, beyond the remark that “the Son of Perdition” was to be reserved for capture and destruction by the Sun of Righteousness, by whose fiery rays he will be consumed at His ascent from the East; whereas that order of things which issued from the Arabian pit has long since been abolished. The locusts rose up out of the smoke, and in the smoke they have been lost for ever.

There has been no institution in all the Eastern Hemisphere answering to the prophetic photograph of “the man of sin.” This “man,” or “horn,” started up among “the horns” of Western Europe, audaciously shouting “surrender!” The prophetic-historic tide rolls from East to West, and the political navigator finds himself tossed amid the billows of “the great sea,” lashed into a fury astoundingly prolific of political “mire and dirt.” This is the habitat of the eleven amphibious monsters of the Hebrew prophetic bards. Nothing has escaped the “teeth” and “claws” of these savage “beasts.” They have preyed upon each other, and all of them upon “the flock of God.” The student will not fail to recognise, sometimes prowling craftily, at others loudly roaring above the rest, that singular brute which so much attracted the eye of the ancient seer as he “considered the horns.”

“The man” before us consists, up to the present time, if we are to accept his own account of himself, of two hundred and fifty-nine Popes, from the apostle Peter to Pius IX, who was elected out of five cardinals on June 11th 1846, and crowned on the 21st of the same month. His family name is John Maria Mastai Ferretti: he was born at Sinigaglia, in the Legation of Urbino and Persaro, on the 13th May 1792, and will consequently be 83 years old if he lives till the 13th of May next. The French Revolution of 1848 made the Pope very unpopular, and he was obliged to leave Rome. He remained at Gaeta and Portici, in the Neapolitan territory, about a year and a half. Only a few days ago the Pope, speaking upon the present situation of the Holy See, said that the troubles of his house dated from 1848. There is no doubt of it. A new spirit was then let loose among the peoples of the West utterly irreconcilable with the policy of “the Man of sin;” it was a spirit inaugurating the very “perdition” of which the Eternal Spirit, 1800 years before, had declared him to be “the son.” The workings of this spirit ought to be of profound interest to every disciple of Christ, for each is, even now, a constituent of the wondrous “Name,” and soon, in a new and astonishing phase, will be a visible element of the other Son, who will consummate the irremediable “perdition” already begun. It is the spirit of Republicanism, of the Commune, of the International, of Fenianism, and its vibrations are strongly felt in the present struggle between capital and labour; in a word, it is that spirit of unrest which will shake the ancient foundations of Nimrodian society, and hurl all their superstructures into the abyss of oblivion.

“The man of Sin” is specially obnoxious to its attacks. He means eternity of despotism; it proclaims radical change. Such a spirit, emanating whence none can tell, flowing and circulating with an incomprehensible subtlety, uncontrollable as the air we breathe, seems to be an unrevealed item of the Divine plan Indispensable to the disruption of human government: it distils upon all peoples, but particularly upon those of the prophetic “earth” with the occult miasmatic power. It is volcanic, disintegrating, and dissolving in its action; stratifying, as it were, the vast overgrown fauna and flora of a

steamy carboniferous age, utilizing, or rather, preparing, almost exhaustless magazines of solid wealth for the calm enjoyment of a golden and protracted aeon.

But ere it has devastated “the house of the wicked,” demolishing “the wood, hay, and stubble,” and purifying what there may be of “silver and gold,” let us glance at the historic counterpart of some of the lineaments of “the Son of Perdition.” His present features indicate extreme age; dotage is indelibly chiselled upon that once terrible countenance; memory fitfully recalls the days of youth and vigour, and the attenuated and decrepit “man” displays a transient peevishness at the prospect of dire fate looming in the not far distant horizon; then, like a murderer, lapses into a stupor of resignation, awaiting the hour of doom.

There is a time for all things, and we may rejoice that we are living witnesses of the declining age of this monster man. He is powerless to harm those who stand and mock him to his face. Few, comparatively, are willing to do his cruel bidding, and those who are dare not. He is a grey,-clawless, toothless, old lion, muzzled; pitiable enough for the remembrance of his former habits of ravening among the helpless flock. He is, as we sometimes say, but “the shadow of his former self.” It will be understood that we are speaking of the collective, not the individual “man.”

In middle life his mien was “dreadful and terrible,” and his voice like the roll of thunder. On the 25th of March, in the year 1514, one Tristano Cugna was sent as ambassador from the King of Portugal to the Court of Leo X., the then reigning Pontifex Maximus. The envoy had with him rich presents of wild animals brought by the Portuguese from the far Indies, and among them a tolerably well-trained elephant, for on approaching Leo the creature stopped and bowed himself three times. This was regarded by the lookers-on as a sign that the Divine supremacy of the Pope was instinctively felt even amongst the beasts of the forest. But the reader will be more struck with the address of the ambassador than the submissive performance of the elephant. At the sight of Leo, the general exclaimed, “Fear and trembling have come over me, and a horrible darkness;” whereupon the Pope signified by his gracious manner that the envoy was received with favour. The latter then ventured to add, “That Divine countenance which, shining as the sun, has dispersed the mists of the mind.” He then proceeded to narrate to Leo the splendid conquests in the East, and acknowledging him as the Supreme Lord, ascribed to him all the glory thereof, considering the work as a fulfilment of prophecy, “Thou shall rule from sea to sea and from the river (Tiber at Rome) to the world’s end; the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts to thee; yea, all princes shall worship thee;” and under thee “there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” In this scene the reader is presented with a clear fulfilment of Paul’s prediction, “He exalteth himself above all, being called a god, or an object of veneration.”

On the occasion of the coronation of Henry VI., Baronius the Papal historian, writes, “But our Lord the Pope sate in the Pontifical chair, holding the imperial crown between his feet, and the Emperor, bending his head, received the crown, and the Empress, in the same manner, from the feet of our Lord the Pope. But our Lord the Pope instantly struck with his foot the Emperor’s crown, and cast it upon the ground, signifying that he had the power of deposing him from the Empire if he were undeserving of it. The Cardinals, however, lifted up the crown, and placed it on the Emperor’s head.” This was Pope Celestine III., who was elected in his 85th year, A.D.1191, and died at the age of 92, on January 8th 1198.

Boniface XIII., in excommunicating Philip, King of France, informed him that “He was set as prince over all nations, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to build.” This was A.D.1294.

But we obtain, perhaps, the best idea of the vast authority assumed by “the Man of Sin” from a decree of Hildebrand, which Gregory VII issued against Henry IV of Germany, when he excommunicated him the second time. Henry had crossed the Alps into Italy, in the depth of winter, to beg the Pope’s forgiveness. The Pope was then spending his time with the Countess Matilda, at the Castle of Canusium. Henry informed him of his approach, but the Pope treated him most barbarously, compelling him to stand barefoot three whole days, fasting from morning till night, in the month of January, with very little clothing, except a coarse woollen tunic.

As to the plucking up by the roots of the three horns, the only feature, perhaps remaining to be spoken of, there are several things set down by expositors; so that there is no scarcity of the facts resembling the prediction; the question for decision seems rather one of selection. Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, and

many others, understood the three horns to stand for the Lombard power, the Greek Exarchate, and the Dukedom of Rome, under the Exarchate. Brooks thought that “the three horns plucked up are with tolerable unanimity declared to be Rome, Lombardy, and Ravenna, which formed the Papal territories for more than a thousand years.” Peyrani, the Vaudois minister, marked the Herulian, Ostrogoths and Lombards as the three. But, without entering here into the various arguments in support of different threes, the three which, to our mind, appear best sustained are the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and Lombards. In 533, the Vandal horn in Africa, Corsica, and Sardinia, as well as the Ostrogoth horn, in Italy, was “plucked up by the roots,” by the strength of Justinian’s general, Belisarius... The Vandals were Arians, and consequently very hateful to the Pope. At this epoch the Longobards, or Lombards, were far away in Pannonia, but about 40 years later they conquered Lombardy, and extended their conquests to the neighbourhood of Rome itself. They grew rapidly, and during the eighth century became so formidable that the Popes Stephen II and Adrian I appealed to the Franks for assistance. This appeal was responded to by Pepin and Charlemagne, whose force “plucked up” this third horn also, never to take root any more among the Powers. The Man of Sin was now predominant, lord temporal and spiritual. The temporal power has departed, perhaps never to return, but that long career of spiritual domination which is marvellously strong, has yet some considerable time to run before the predicted “perdition” is consummated. If Daniel’s time, times, and a half be lunar, something short of two ordinary life times will suffice to fulfil the prophecy; and, as far as conjecture is worth anything, it would seem that such a period would allow of several great political changes among Jews and Gentiles, corresponding with the requirements of the prophetic word. Another generation, then, may be laid in the dust; the next may be living at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. To those who sleep the event is always at the door and to those who wake it approaches stealthily; may we not, even now, liken it to the points of the tall masts rising, as it were, out of the sea, and nearing as they rise. Let us always be ready.

The Sun of Righteousness.

“But unto you that fear my name shall ‘the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.’ Malachi 4:2.

Our last thoughts were running upon “the Son of Perdition.” The evidence adduced for his identification showed that he was not one person, but many; each successively the chief of a gigantic system of spiritual and political fraud; the very god-head of black deceit clothed in snow-white raiment of purity and peace. We now turn to a pleasanter theme. The Sun of Righteousness rises on the scene. The prophets of old have heralded His approach, and sung beforehand His universal praise. The celestial hosts wonder and admire. They fill His train to earth, and glory in His warming healing power among the wrongs and woes of mortal men. The trumpet’s blast proclaims from the mountains and the little hills, peace by righteousness! (Psalm 72:3) The slave casts down “his broken chain, the tyrant lord his crown, the conqueror his wreath, the priest his book” to list “the mighty breath” from the lips of Him who is the truth, scattering all “human mockeries,” and speaking rest to a way-worn world. His presence unlocks every secret, dissolves every doubt; false science and matter-deifying wisdom cower in shame and dread; the people are now near to God, they see His form and hear His voice. With this in view, each rapid hour seems long. We have faith, but our utterance is feeble. We wish for Emmanuel’s presence to silence the “scoffers,” and could die satisfied to know His Advent “no longer is delayed.” How much hangs on this event! History, prophecy, Christianity! The whole history of man, past, present, and future, went down into the rich man’s grave in the olive garden at the foot of Mount Olivet. The word of truth declares He rose and lived again; we therefore say to our soul, “Peace be still” and wait in patience till we see Him for ourself and not another.

Till He come let us remember Him. Let us think of all the glad things recorded in ancient times; the songs and the visions of our rising Day-star, and feel, as poet and prophet felt of old, as with “fire shut up in our bones,” enrapt, and “our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.” Yonder He stands “binding His foal to the vine, and His ass’s colt unto the choice vine; He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are red with wine, and His teeth white with milk;—” He sits as the “law-giver,” and “unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” “The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His anointed.” “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall

bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.”

The sun is the grandest figure in universal nature. From him the moon borrows her pale soft light; the stars fade at his presence; the ice and snow vanish before his beams- “his going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” We may call him the heart of the universe. The Papal sun has scorched and withered the world of spiritual thought for more than a thousand years, and scathes it still. We wait the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His rays, to chase away the night, to resuscitate the world’s mind, to cause -truth to spring out of the earth, and righteousness to look down from heaven. This is the True Light, for fifteen centuries and more it has been hidden from men. The expected speedy return of the Lord was not realised. The heart grew sick, hope declined, and aspirations, wrong only as to time, gradually gave place to the unpromised, and the unreal. Vain man imagined and sought a distant rest, spurning this proffered sublunary home, coupled with the deathlessness of his real bodily self; and now, like a rudderless ship, without chart or compass, he knows not where he stands nor whither he is tending on this restless ocean of mortal existence. It requires that He who walked upon the sea should step on board this frail and wildered bark, and repeat the tranquillizing words, “Peace, be still.”

We understand this long absence: it is needful: it is a time of solemn preparation. The brethren of the lost Joseph must be moved to wonder and desire by new and providential circumstances, as a necessary prelude to His appearance in their midst. “A little while,” and He shall be known to them. The twelve stars of Israel shall yet make their obeisance before Him; then will there be weeping and joy - a mournful retracing of all the chequered past, and a fresh irradiation of the many gracious promises of their covenant-keeping God. But this great work is small by comparison, for the prophet saith, “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

Edward Turney

To be continued...

Jesus said.....

No. 17.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” John 11:11.

Here Jesus Christ makes the great distinction between perishing in death and sleeping in death. Those sleeping in death will be awakened to a more abundant life. While those perishing in death receive the wages of sin. These are the alternatives open to all who hear the gospel message.

In Romans 6:23, Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,” illustrating, on the one hand, the finality of death as the wages of sin, and on the other, life eternal; spiritual life through Jesus Christ.

There are some who do not see these as alternatives but believe they follow on one another; that all who receive the gift of God must first receive the wages of sin - that all must die, albeit within the twinkling of an eye for some, before being made immortal. The reason for this belief stems from the idea that Adam received death as the wages of sin.

However, Adam forfeited any hope of eternal life when he sinned and death was his only expectation. But God graciously intervened with the promise of the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head. Adam’s hope was revived and confirmed by God’s provision of the covering for sin in the slaying of the animal, typifying the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, who should take away the sin of the world. Adam’s natural death which followed many years later was but a sleep as it is to all the

elect. This sleep of death is neither wages nor punishment, and the only reason we die is because Jesus Christ has not yet returned.

The angel told Daniel he should rest from his labours until the end, and that is how it is for all of like precious faith; it is a rest and release from the trials and tribulations of this present world.

If we sleep in death we shall do well, for Jesus Christ our Lord will come that He may awake us out of sleep.

Brother Russell Gregory

26 MAY 1991 • THE SUNDAY TIMES

Israel flies 15,000 Falashas to safety

ISRAEL yesterday-airlifted 15,000 Ethiopian Jews out of Addis Ababa in a 30-hour evacuation codenamed Operation Solomon, the most dramatic of its kind in the country's history.

A fleet of 34 planes including Boeing 747 cargo aircraft from El Al, the national airline, 'Israeli air force C-130 Hercules and one Ethiopian Airlines plane, ferried the Jews, known as Falashas, from the Ethiopian capital to Tel Aviv. El Al, which has been prohibited from working on the Sabbath for years, was granted dispensation by the rabbis to participate.

The operation was a miracle of logistics. At one stage late on Friday night, 28 planes were in the air flying between Ethiopia and Israel. About 1,000 Falashas arrived hourly at Ben Gurion international airport throughout Friday and yesterday morning.

Four babies were born during the flight and six more in the Israeli embassy in Addis while the Falashas were waiting for the airlift to begin. Israeli officials said two-thirds of the refugees were children.

Several of the El Al planes had been stripped of their seats to accommodate extra passengers. Mattresses were put on the floor for use during the 3½ hour flight. Nobody was permitted to carry personal possessions; 95 Falashas who went home to pack clothes missed the flights and were stranded in Addis last night. Officials said they would be taken to Israel as soon as possible.

The aircraft carried armed guards, medics and Ethiopians recruited as interpreters. Doctors said many of the Falashas were suffering serious illnesses, including tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis and meningitis. One Boeing 74 carried 1,087 people, more than double the normal capacity of a jumbo jet. The captain said: "I think; we just set a record in aviation history."

Once in Tel Aviv, the Ethiopians were taken by bus to hotels, which had been vacated over the passed three days, in the north of the country. Many looked tired and bewildered. Some were dressed in Western clothes; others in traditional white robes and shawls. "It was very quick," Yeshayahu Bagu said. "I'm looking forward to seeing my family in Israel." Many still had tags with numbers pinned to their clothes or stickers on their foreheads. The numbers, distributed to them in Addis, represented the busses that would carry them from the Israeli embassy to the airport and the planes that would take them to Israel.

Israeli authorities imposed strict censorship during the operation, which began on Friday morning with the full co-operation of the Ethiopian authorities and rebel forces. It was organised within days, after the flight of President Mengistu. The rescue was approved by the new Ethiopian regime after the intercession of President George Bush. Speed was considered essential as the rebels threatened the capital.

The airlift was the biggest to be carried out so quickly. In 1984, as airlift called Operation Moses transported 12,000 Falashas to Israel through Sudan until premature publicity in early 1985 led to it being halted. More than 40 years ago, some 43,000 Yemeni Jews were airlifted to Israel over a period of months.

Yitzhak Shamir, the prime minister, said: "It's a great moment for all our people."

Officials said Operation Solomon would cost Israel \$127m - \$7m for the flights and the rest to settle the Falashas, working out at almost £8,500 a head. Israel also paid the Ethiopian authorities \$35m to facilitate the operation. Falashas are the legendary descendants of Menelik 1, son of King Solomon, a 10th century king of Israel, and the Queen of Sheba. Falasha means foreigners in Ge'ez, the sacred Ethiopian dialect. About 7,000 Falashas have chosen to remain in Ethiopia.

Reported by Roy Isacowitz – Tel Aviv and Sam Kiley – Addis Ababa.