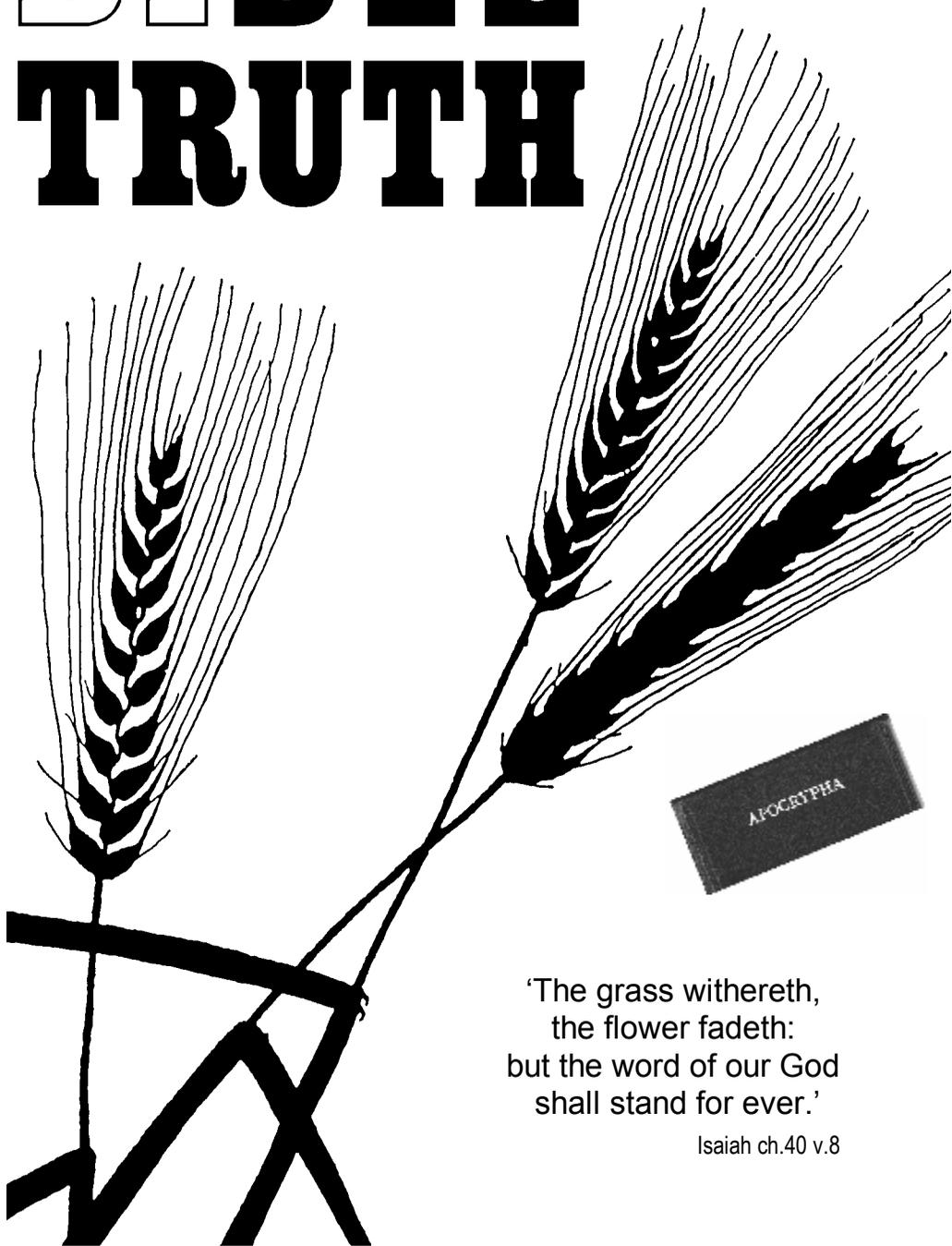


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'The grass withereth,  
the flower fadeth:  
but the word of our God  
shall stand for ever.'

Isaiah ch.40 v.8



# THE EGYPTIAN ENIGMA

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A fascinating and enigmatic statement is made by the Apostle John in Revelation ch.11 v.8, which speaks of ‘... the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified’. Here Jerusalem, the city where Christ suffered death, is likened to Egypt. *The New International Version* of the Bible translates this as, ‘... which figuratively is called Sodom and Egypt’. Why is Jerusalem figuratively called Egypt?

## **Egyptian Influence**

Professor E. Ball of Cambridge wrote concerning

‘... the contribution made by Egyptian civilization to that of Israel during the Old Testament period, particularly during the period of the early monarchy. This contribution has been illustrated in many areas – literature and thought, civil administration, royal ritual and ideology ... Of particular interest in this connection are the suggestions of [ancient-Mid-east scholar] Gerhard von Rad regarding possible Egyptian influence on the Judean coronation ritual’.

Professor Ball continued,

‘... the modelling of Israelite high official positions on supposed Egyptian counterparts ... [and] close contacts in lower administrative spheres, in particular the Solomonic taxation system ... certainly Egypt gives us a better parallel than any which Mesopotamia or any other of Israel’s neighbors afford ... we may see here further evidence for a direct Egyptian influence on Israelite civilization ...’.

*Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 27-3, 1978, pp. 268-9

However, not all of Israel followed the Egyptian model. In many ways and customs, there were definite and distinct differences between the two Israelite houses – Ephraim (the northern ten tribes) and Judah (the southern two tribes). One such custom, for example, was co-regency. Professor Ball defined co-regency, stating,

‘By co-regency we mean that situation in which the reigning Pharaoh exalts some other person, usually his son, to a more-or-less full co-kingship with himself during his lifetime’.  
ibid., p.271

However, Professor William H. Shea of Andrews University pointed out that while the kings of the House of Judah practiced co-regency, the House of Israel (Ephraim) did not,

‘... the pattern of the Northern Kingdom is consistent with that in western Asia in general, where co-regency was not practiced, while on the other hand Judah followed the Egyptian custom in this matter’.

Andrews University Seminary Studies, vol. 20, 1982, p.148

This is but one of a number of important examples showing that the House of Israel followed the Aramaic customs of western Asia, while the House of Judah was heavily influenced by Egyptian customs. Such was true not only concerning co-regency, but in many other areas of national life.

The important point is that the term ‘Egypt’ figuratively fits the House of Judah very well, while on the other hand Egypt had essentially no influential relationship over Ephraim, the ten tribes of the House of Israel. This is undoubtedly why the Apostle John very specifically likened Egypt to ‘Jerusalem’, capital of the House of Judah, and did not use the word, ‘Israel’, which latter term certainly could have been interpreted as including Ephraim, the ten tribes.

### **The Old Testament Pattern**

Our opening text, Revelation ch.11 v.8, spoke of Jerusalem, the city ‘where also our Lord was crucified’, as ‘the great city’. This same term is used again in Revelation ch.16 v.19a, in the important passage concerning the latter-day seven last plagues, which states, ‘And the great city was divided into three parts ...’. Bible commentaries tie in this great city with ‘Mystery’ Babylon in the second half of this verse, and interpret it figuratively as Rome, either pagan or papal or both. However, the specific term, ‘the great city’ defines it as Jerusalem.

Interestingly, Rome is not divided into three parts, instead being known as the city on seven hills. Jerusalem indeed has a well-known division into three parts: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. In fact, this threefold division of Jerusalem is not only religious.

According to several Internet sites, 'Jerusalem is divided into three sections, the Old City, New City (West Jerusalem) and East Jerusalem'.

A crucial point in understanding this sixteenth chapter of Revelation is that it is connected in prophetic symbolism with the ten plagues of Exodus ch.8 that occurred during the Egyptian captivity. The first three plagues—blood, frogs, and lice—affected everyone, '... throughout all the land ...' (Exodus ch.8 v.17). However, the last seven plagues, the theme of Revelation ch.16, plagued only the Egyptians. (An important point, as we shall see).

The question becomes one of Old Testament type and New Testament anti-type: who or what represents the New Covenant 'Egypt' in Revelation symbolism? The answer seems to be revealed in our opening text of Revelation ch.11 v.8 – Jerusalem,

'... the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified'.

It is interesting and instructive to notice the definite parallels between the ten plagues on Egypt in Exodus ch.8, and the last seven plagues of Revelation ch.16. We will mention one or two here. The word, 'sores' (King James Version) or 'ulcers' (Concordant Literal New Testament) in Revelation ch.16 v.11 is translated from the Greek word, 'helkon', the same word as used in the Greek Septuagint version of Exodus ch.9 v.9, translated 'boils'.

The first three plagues of Exodus ch.8 parallel the three 'unclean spirits' of Revelation ch.16 v.13, who are 'like frogs'. In fact, in Exodus ch.8 v.2 we read of the second plague,

'... behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs'.

### **The Command To Flee Egypt**

The theme of Exodus ch.8 is for Egypt to '... Let my people go, that they may serve me'. (ch.8 v.1) God's people were to leave Egypt so that they could serve the Lord, because they could not properly worship Him in Egypt. In Revelation ch.18 v.4 the similar theme is,

'... another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues'.

Here God's people are again asked to leave a figurative 'Egypt' or they would be subject to the seven last plagues that were to afflict only those in 'Egypt'. How did the early church interpret this message of warning?

In a Spiritual sense, the early church was told to flee from Judaism into Christianity, and multitudes did. But in a literal, physical sense, Christ warned,

'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened'.

Matthew ch.24 vv.15-22, cf. Mark ch.13 v.14 ff. Luke ch.21 v.21 ff

Judea was the figurative 'Egypt' from which God's New Covenant people were to flee. History records that when the Roman armies approached Jerusalem in AD 70, the Christians saw the warning and fled to safety. Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, in his book, *The Jewish War*, recorded that over a million Jews died in the Roman onslaught. The Temple was desolated and destroyed—an abomination! Unbelieving Jews who remained and fought suffered great tribulation, dying in great numbers, or were taken into slavery to foreign lands. For many centuries afterward, Judea was a barren waste. Even so, not all of the features of the seven plagues were fulfilled during the Roman holocaust. Was this only a fore-type of events to occur again at the end of this age?

If so, how ironic it is that a growing number of Christian evangelicals want to move to Palestine, either 'to help the Jews' or to be present at our Lord's return. As we enter the end time, they may instead find themselves personally enduring the horrible seven last plagues. Let us heed our Lord's warning!

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