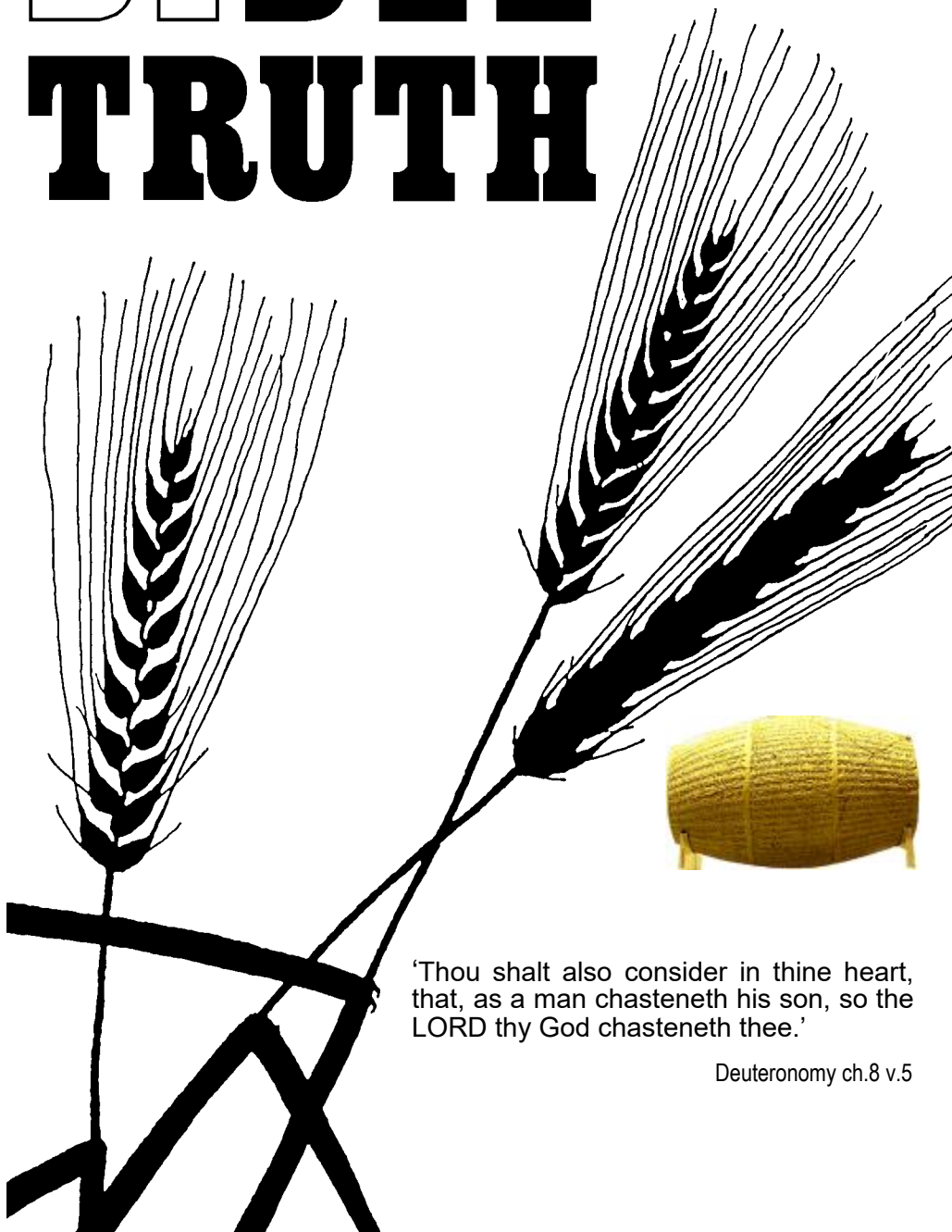


# BIBLE TRUTH

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‘Thou shalt also consider in thine heart,  
that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the  
LORD thy God chasteneth thee.’

Deuteronomy ch.8 v.5

# ‘Come Out to Come Into’

By Paul Boyd-Lee



*‘And I heard 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.**’*

Revelation ch.18 v.4

*‘**Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.**’* Isaiah ch.26 v.20

These two texts have caught the imagination of many people particularly since the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus. In four words, ‘plague’ and ‘into thy chambers’, have summed up the scene across the world since 2020 began and thus Bible students have grasped these texts as showing where mankind currently is within the time span of God’s plan. To be more correct, this interest is not new and the texts were being watched closely as time approached the twenty-first century and certainly since it was entered because of the increase of unusual events that have occurred during this time. Be they exploits in space, communications, world population growth, peace yet no world peace, as well as records being broken in all sorts of achievements. ‘Where will it all end?’ has been the question on so many lips. ‘It will come to a climax with the return of Jesus Christ, a Second Coming,’ say some. This is inasmuch as the ‘Come out of’ and the ‘Come into’ precede the return of the Saviour, then fulfilment of these things is closely observed.

At first glance and provoked further by the prevailing Corona virus it appears to some people that we have reached an unique place in the prophetic timeline, but is that valid? It is true that the virus is a global pandemic, the mortality rate from it is worrying, whole nations are being ordered into isolation, to lock-down, but is this unique? No, the world, empires and Israel, have been this way before.

The prophet Isaiah in his twenty-sixth chapter writes about calling God's people into their chambers to hide themselves from God's action against 'the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity' (v.21). Just a year later Isaiah records in his thirty-seventh chapter,

'Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses'.

v.36

When writing this article the world count of Corona virus deaths stood at two hundred and eight thousand. So just a little more than the Assyrian fatality figure that day and yet the latter was not world-wide.

Moving forward many centuries to a millennium and a half after this prophecy of John the Divine's was given.

'... **Come out of her, my people,** that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'

Revelation ch.18 v.4

Again, a prophecy about calling God's people away from a mortal judgement.

The period I am referring to is towards the end of what is generally called 'The Middle Ages', that is from about AD 1400 onwards. This was the time of the 'Black Death' (the Bubonic Plague) which is said to have killed some 20 million people in Europe - 30 per cent of the continental population! That is a frightening figure when compared with the much smaller current Corona Virus outbreak. As it happened, the Black Death rumbled on for more than a couple of centuries and at times became impossible to prevent from being passed on from one person to another.

The Black Death was said to have originated in Asia, even China and the way that it was finally conquered was to isolate people. Certainly people came into their chambers, be they individual houses or whole villages, as in the case of historic Eyam in the English Derbyshire Dales. Interestingly the church there contains mediaeval wall paintings representing all the twelve tribes of Israel. The 'Plague', as it became known, ravaged London in 1665 when a quarter of the population succumbed to it but was finally curtailed by the Great Fire of 1666 which took with it 400 streets, 13,200 dwelling-houses and 89 churches including St Paul's cathedral.

So apologies for labouring the point about whether the present outbreak of a virus is the one to trump all others, because from these reflections of the past, you might now say, *Vous n'avez encore rien vu (You ain't seen nothin' yet)*.

In both these examples people were isolated one from another, in their chambers; for example during Hezekiah's day.

'The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in.'

Isaiah ch. 24 v.10

At the time of the Black Death people confined themselves to their houses or towns to avoid it or stop it spreading elsewhere. Truly of their own volition they came into their chambers.

Today though, it could be argued that we live in a much more sophisticated age, full of medicines and cures that previous generations never had access to. Thus the fact that Covid-19 has reached such a magnitude in this sophisticated age is in itself unique - a final fulfilment of these Isaiah and Revelation prophecies perhaps.

Maybe, because if nothing else, it just shows how fragile life and its environment is whatever man proposes for it. Verily, 'Man Proposes, God Disposes' as Edwin Landseer's 1864 oil painting depicts when inspired by the search for Franklin's lost expedition which disappeared in the Arctic. Actually the same phrase was used earlier by Thomas A. Kempis in his *Of the Imitation of Christ*, Bk 1 ch.19 v.2 but neither are direct quotes from scripture which actually reads as follows.

'A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.'

Proverbs 16 v.9

'There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.'

Proverbs 19 v.21

It is worth noting that both the demise of the Assyrian army and the cessation of the 1665 plague in London were not brought about by man's design but rather by 'the angel of the Lord' in the first instance and man's error in the other. Both cases were preceded by earnest prayer and it is worth repeating how the king of the nation, Hezekiah, led the first.

'And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear ...

Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.'

Isaiah ch.37 vv 14-17 & 20

Having given the background to some past plagues, their magnitude and consequences, then parallels can certainly be seen with the present virus sweeping the earth. Also, the aforementioned prophecies of Isaiah and Revelation may well have some relevance to the past events, but should this current viral occurrence be better applied to the twenty-first century AD as being a precursor to the Second Coming of Christ? To understand this, one needs to look at the background to the prophecies.

### **The Isaiah prophecy - Come into, ch.26 v.20**

The Bible shows how the prophet Isaiah addressed situations both in his lifetime and the distant future. Chapters thirty-six to thirty-nine are pure history relating to when King Hezekiah reigned but they lead into prophecy. The king had just received a letter and present from Merodach-baladan son of the King of Babylon and following this the King displayed the treasures of the kingdom to his postmen. Isaiah was not pleased because he foresaw and prophesied the future pilfering and transit of them to Babylon. That indeed happened and can be seen as a short term fulfilment.

However, this historical piece is sandwiched between sheer prophecy of his lifetime and events way ahead, some of them being millennia away. For example, Handel's *Messiah* echoes the words of Isaiah ch.40 vv 1-5.

‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.’

These words would indeed have been of comfort to king Hezekiah and colleagues when provoked by the superpowers of his day. But it was, a ‘now, but not yet’, promise to them, for though it had relevance to his lifetime its greater fulfilment pointed to something on the horizon to which they journeyed, not something on the horizon coming towards them.

As it happens, the ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers’ declaration precedes what Hezekiah later endured but also clearly points to the End Times preceding the LORD coming in judgment. The following verses confirm this.

‘For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: ...

In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.’

Isaiah ch.26 v.21 - ch.27 v.1

It strongly suggests that the theme of this section of scripture refers to a time yet ahead of both Hezekiah and us, even though the prophecy was uttered thousands of years ago; it hasn’t happened yet. Prior to the, Come into thy chambers, text, Isaiah’s discourse was about Judah’s backsliding. In fact his opening chapter exclaims,

‘Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward’.

Isaiah ch.1 v.4

What an indictment! Yet is that not why they were taken into captivity and scattered around the earth to suffer punishment for misdoing? Sadly many amongst the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples today, who are seen as ancient Israel's descendants, still do likewise. Even so, God is merciful and promises them restoration, albeit in the future.

This calling to come into chambers is for separation from the other 'inhabitants of the earth' which are also iniquitous but who the prophets say are yet to be punished. What is their iniquity? Apostasy and breaking the Commandments of God obviously come to mind but there is something else which both Isaiah and Revelation address, namely Babylon. Though this is an age-old word it surfaces in the book of Isaiah under the appellation of 'Chaldean' and Isaiah puts it this way whilst pointing towards its end.

'Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin.'

Isaiah ch.23 v.13

'Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.'

Isaiah ch.47 v.1

So for future reference this means that in some instances prophecies relating to Babylon may also come under the subject of Chaldea and that needs to be borne in mind when studying its fall described in the book of Revelation. For the moment though, let us concentrate more deeply on the words of,

**'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,** and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast'.

Isaiah ch.26 v.20

- ♦ 'My people' - Initially this would be seen as referring to the people of Israel; after all, scripture abounds with references to God calling them that. Though that concept continues into the New Testament, those that come to accept Christ need to be added to this category as well. The Apostle Paul's discourse about the Olive tree (see Romans ch.11) makes it clear that believing non-Israelites are grafted into it. So in essence, God's people who heed the prophet's call will be within the chambers and those who ignore it will be without.

- ◆ ‘Chambers’ - Note that this is plural. In Noah’s time there was one chamber, to wit, one ark, though of course it could have been comprised of sub-chambers. But in the Isaiah prophecy one concludes that this will not be a gathering of all into one place or even one country but several of them. In passing it is worth mentioning that the word ‘chamber’ is translated from the Hebrew word commonly spelt ‘*Cheder*’ which could equally be spelt ‘Cheddar’ since it is the consonants rather than vowels that matter in Hebrew. English people should immediately think of Somerset’s Cheddar Gorge, where the sides are full of chambers (caves) thus reminding us of the link between the early Hebrew/Phoenicians with that area.
- ◆ ‘Shut thy doors’ - Again, it differs from the Ark, the previous refuge, for on that occasion God closed the door. In the future one, God’s people are to do the door closing. Thus it is they who will decide to separate themselves.
- ◆ ‘hide thyself’ - the advice for people living at this time is to be discrete and unobserved which in one way might seem odd because a disciple’s calling is to proclaim their faith aloud but there could be good reason for this.
- ◆ ‘as it were for a little moment’ - Precise duration of hiding is not given but it seems it will have the appearance of being short.
- ◆ ‘until the indignation be overpast.’ - It is this phrase which has caused much speculation. People have questioned what exactly does it mean? In short, it is translated from the Hebrew word ‘*zaam*’ and of the twenty-two times the word occurs in the Old Testament in all but a couple, ‘indignation’ is the word that the translators used. The other two times, ‘anger’ and ‘rage’ are used and these words do add to the understanding of what is intended.

The other thing that perturbs a few people is where the indignation might come from? In fact this is a non-starter as made clear by the verse that follows it.

‘For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: ... .’

Isaiah ch.26 v 21

So, from this text may be gleaned that the LORD is the source of indignation and His people are warned to shield themselves from that rather than other sources of indignation that may come to mind.



## **The Revelation prophecy, ch 18**

Both the Isaiah and Revelation prophecies share common factors, not least of which being they speak of end times; not just any end time but an end to an era. Revelation though centres on the aspect of Babylon as the chapter's opening verses succinctly put it.

'And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, ... .'

Revelation ch.18 vv 1-2

This now begins to tie in with Isaiah's '... enter thou into thy chambers, ...' since later in his prophecy he writes of Israel,

'Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob'.

Isaiah ch.48 v.20

Hence, not only are the Chaldeans of this period of history equated with Babylon, but it confirms that Babylon is where God's people are fleeing to their chambers from. When this prophecy was uttered, not only was Babel in ancient times that place where people of the known world had challenged heaven with their own efforts, but it was a rising power again, later to become the first of a series of world empires. King Nebuchadnezzar first headed up that empire and it was he whose dream was interpreted to show how the sequence of empires would evolve out of that origin right up to the end times prior to the return of the Lord Jesus in glory.

Although the empires' successors went under different names, Chaldean, Greek and Roman, they all bear Babylon's hallmark. The final crushing of this system is what Revelation chapter eighteen is about and the verse that is this article's subject, calls God's people to come out of this system to avoid being involved with its collapse.

Much could be written about the features and inferiorities of the Babylonian system but space precludes that in this article. Nonetheless, it is notable that the last Babylonian entity was based on Rome and that city still stands today. In fact our subject verse, number forty-eight of Revelation chapter eighteen is what largely inspired the Reformers to separate themselves politically and

spiritually from the Church of Rome. In this present decade with Britain's departure from the European Union it has prompted some individuals to see it as a 'Come out of her, my people' and into their chambers which in this case are seen to be the four component countries of the United Kingdom.

At first glance it might appear that this 'Come out of her, my people' is the only direct biblical reference to removing from the plight of Babylon but the Bible has many other passages supporting this idea. For example the prophet Jeremiah also majors on the subject when warning 'my people'.

'Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, ... '

Jeremiah ch.50 v.8

'Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.'

Jeremiah ch.51 v.6

It now turns to us to analyse more closely the words of the prophetic verse.

'And I heard 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.'

Revelation ch. 18 v.4

- ♦ 'I heard another voice from heaven' - It is important to realise that what is being observed is a whole sequence of events where just one of them cannot be seen in isolation from the others. That means that if one asks if the present day situation of people across the world going into isolation fulfils the two prophetic utterances that are the subject of this article, then the answer must be another question. Are other related prophecies also being fulfilled? The answer probably is, yes some of them, but not all of them yet.
- ♦ 'Come out of her, my people' - This phrase was largely dealt with in the analysis of the Isaiah key verse. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that in this latter verse, even though it was prophesied in New Testament times, God's people still remain those whom He called 'my people' in the Old Testament, with others defined as believers added along the way of course.

- ♦ ‘that ye be not partakers of her sins’ - There is a clear difference here between hiding from the judgment mentioned in the Isaiah text and a decisive action not to be involved with ungodly practice. The latter is what John the Divine’s Revelation is pleading for in order that those alive will escape the judgment.
- ♦ ‘that ye receive not of her plagues.’ - This is the really sinister part of the prophecy and what has largely prompted people of the current time to ask whether Covid-19 is the plague referred to? Well, it might be, but do not be misled because the word is plural; it indicates that there will be more than one plague. Remember that this article previously said, ‘*Vous n’avez encore rien vu*’. In other words the big question arises as to what is yet to come?

## Conclusion

The article started by posing the question, whether the ‘Come out and Come in’ prophecies are being fulfilled by the recent Corona virus outbreak. The virus is indeed a significant global threat compared with the last half century or so and commentators have likened some of its attributes, the lock-down, food shortages and so on, to the time of the last World War. Be that as it may, much larger fatalities have resulted from plagues several times in the past; this is not an unique occurrence therefore.

The isolation of people, their coming apart from others, is a significant matter that the biblical prophets have consistently cried out for in order that God’s people are shielded from His wrath that is to fall upon the ungodly.

The crying out of the prophet’s message to come out and to enter in, both Isaiah’s and John’s in Revelation, are connected with the same reasoning of avoiding the punishment due to others. Both texts refer to the same ‘my people’ and it is possible that the two movements of the people the coming out and coming in are directly related. That is, the former might well precede the latter. Indeed, some people have said that Britain leaving the European Union has now been followed by them coming into their chambers to curtail the Covid-19 virus.

That idea has flaws, because people across the world, not just Britain, have become housebound as a result.

What the onslaught of this virus has shown is how fragile life is, we are dependent upon our creator to survive safely. That also is the message of the prophets. How true is Henry Francis Lyte's hymn.

*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide,  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

These words well reflect the state of play for all those involved with trying to contain the virus, trying to care for those with it and those affected by it. Revelation speaks of plagues in the plural, it is likely that there are more to come. Even so, Almighty God in His mercy graciously warns His people to conceal themselves at a time when they could come to harm.

That comes to the leading question, if these Isaiah and Revelation prophecies are not being fulfilled at the present time, when will they be? More importantly though, how will we know when they will be, in order that the warnings can be heeded? Unfortunately for this article space precludes lengthy answers being given and in any case only a couple of verses from that whole gamut of prophecy relating to the reappearance of Christ have been looked at. It all shows though the importance of further learning, precept upon precept as the Word of God puts it, to glean further knowledge of where we should be, when and so on. The learning does not all have to come at once, but be assured our loving God cares for those people that care for Him and knowledge will be measured out to each of them as they have need of it.

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