

# Light

...on a New World



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Cover picture: Children's hands on globe with EU flag

# Signs of the Times

## Europe in Bible Prophecy

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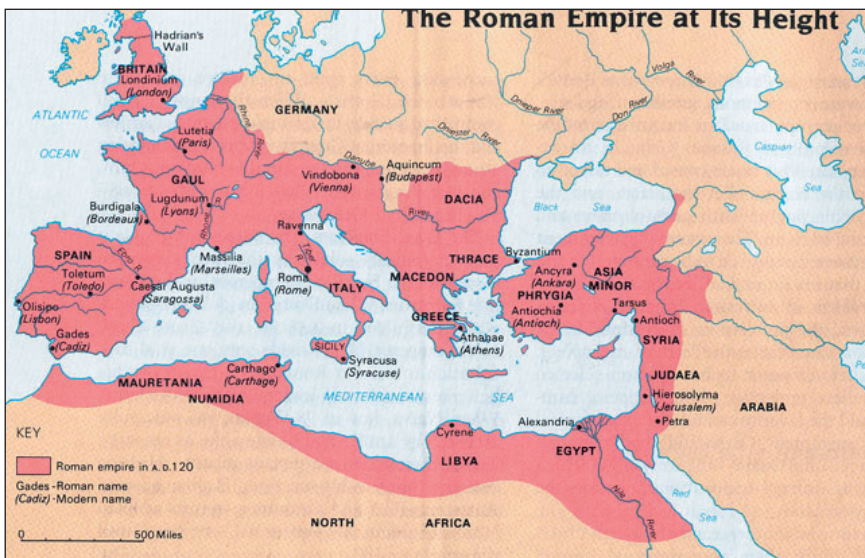
ALTHOUGH MUCH OF Bible prophecy is concerned with Israel and the countries of the Middle East, the nations of Europe also figure in prophecies of ‘the time of the end’. This is set out for us in that well known dream of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was shown a vision which represented the future of ‘the kingdom of men’ (see page 2). A succession of world empires was to follow Babylon. The last world empire was to be Rome which in turn was to be succeeded by a mixture of nations. The vision was explained to Nebuchadnezzar by the prophet Daniel in these words:

‘You, O king, are a king of kings...you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron...and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potters’ clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided...And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. And as you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay’ [*Daniel 2.37-43*].



*The vision seen by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon*

The feet and the toes of the image shown in the vision clearly have reference to Europe because the European nations were founded on the ruins of the Roman Empire (see map below). According to the vision these would retain some of the characteristics of the Roman Empire but would not form a harmonious whole. This has historically been the case in Europe. Europe has retained the religion of the late Roman Empire and much of Europe is subject to Roman law. This incidentally does not include the UK which has a system of ‘common law’. Thus we see Europe represented as the final phase of the ‘kingdom of men’.



The modern bringing together of European nations into the European Union is therefore a significant development of the signs of the times. Daniel chapter two represents the kingdom of men as beginning with Babylon and ending with Europe. This is interesting when compared with modern Europe because the European Union has described itself in similar terms.



The tower of Babel is represented in the Bible as the foundation of the kingdom of Babylon [Genesis 10.10]. According to the book of Genesis it was the place from which the nations were divided and scattered abroad. The European Union sees itself as working in the other direction. It is all about uniting the countries of a divided and formerly war torn Europe.

To this end the European parliament building in Strasbourg is modelled on the famous painting by Breugel of the Tower of Babel. Furthermore a pamphlet was published in the early 1990's making just this point.



*Above: Breugel's painting of the  
Tower of Babel*

*Left: HQ of European Parliament in  
Strasbourg*

#### EUROPE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The flag of Europe is an example of the continuing influence of Rome. Consisting of twelve stars on a blue background, this was adopted when there were twelve nations in the European Union. Despite the subsequent enlargement of the grouping, the number of stars is to remain twelve. This is because of the symbolism which is derived from the Bible in the book of Revelation: *'And there appeared*

*a great sign in the heavens, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, **and a crown of twelve stars on her head*** [Revelation 12.1]. The woman in this vision is held to represent the church (as dedicated to the Virgin Mary). The symbolism of the flag (see below) is therefore that of the Roman Catholic church as the foundation of modern Europe.



*Image of the Virgin Mary*



*EU Flag*

The book of Revelation has much to say about the development of Europe in ‘the time of the end’. It uses symbols which were well known at the time to represent Europe, as well as using the symbols in the visions of Daniel. In Revelation chapter 17 we read:

‘...And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup which was full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.’

*[Revelation 17.3-5]*

The figure of the woman riding the beast would have been easily understood by the original readers of Revelation in the first century AD when it was written. People of those times were familiar with Greek traditional tales. Europa was a Phoenician woman in Greek and Roman mythology, from whom the name of the continent of Europe has ultimately been taken. This woman riding the beast relates to the myth of 'Europa' about whom we read these words:

*'Europa was the beautiful daughter of the Phoenician king of Tyre. Zeus, the King of the gods, saw Europa as she was gathering flowers by the sea and immediately fell in love with her. Overwhelmed by love for Europa, Zeus transformed himself into the form of a magnificent white bull and appeared on the sea shore where Europa was playing with her maidens. The great bull walked gently over to where Europa stood and knelt at her feet. The appearance and movements of the bull were so gentle that Europa spread flowers about his neck and dared to climb upon his back overcoming her natural fear of the great animal. But suddenly, the bull rushed over the sea abducting Europa. Only then the bull revealed its true identity and took Europa to the Mediterranean island of Crete. There, Zeus cast off the shape of the white bull, and back into his human form, made Europa his lover beneath a simple cypress tree.'*(Source: *Windows on the Universe – University Corporation of Atmospheric Research (UCAR)*)

This according to Greek mythology represented the foundation of Europe. It was well known at the time as a third century mosaic floor from the island of Kos shows. This second century Greek vase illustrates the same myth.





The story about Europa was used as the basis of a UK postage stamp commemorating pan European elections and appears on the obverse of the Greek two euro coin. (see below)



The prophecy in Revelation chapter 17 is giving more detail about what was already foretold in the book of Daniel concerning Europe in ‘the last days’. In symbolic language it is showing how the nations of Europe combine their power and at last are defeated by Divine intervention. What appears in Daniel’s vision as the striking of the image on the feet and the crushing of it to powder is spoken of in Revelation in these words:

‘And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings...’ [Revelation 17.12-14].

The destiny of Europe as predicted in both the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation is to oppose the setting up of God's Kingdom at 'the time of the end'.

#### EUROPE IN EZEKIEL CHAPTER 38

Ezekiel chapter 38 sheds further light on the events involving Europe at 'the time of the end'. It describes a confederation of European nations together with 'Persia, Ethiopia and Libya' (see Ezekiel chapter 38 verses 2 to 6) as coming down 'on the mountains of Israel' (see map below).



The invasion of Israel is described by Ezekiel like this:

‘...In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people, on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; They were brought out of the nations and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you. Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts shall arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan. You will say, I will go up against a land of unwallled villages. I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates - to take plunder, and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.

*[Ezekiel 38.8-12]*

The emergence on Israel's Northern border of a European led United Nations peacekeeping force may be hugely significant in terms of this end time prophecy. In the aftermath of this summer's Middle East war the international force being assembled to keep the warring factions apart has the potential to fulfil a vital role in the events which lead up to the final conflict of the nations as predicted by Ezekiel.



*French UN Peacekeepers in  
The Lebanon*

If a comprehensive peace is established as envisaged in the Security Council resolution 1701 then we could be witnessing the build up for this long expected descent of Gog and his forces on the land of Israel.

The coming of Gog at the head of a European confederacy is an event which will mark the final phase of the Kingdom of men. This is no mere passing phase after which things continue as before. The Bible portrays this as the final conflict of the nations. We are to expect an end to the present world order and the setting up of a new one. God will intervene, sending his Son to defend his people as '*the lion of the tribe of Judah*' [Revelation 5.5]. The return of Jesus Christ will result in the defeat of Gog and the peace that will follow will be a permanent one, in the form of the Kingdom of God on earth.

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# Bible teaching about...

## The Devil and Satan

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WHEN WRITING TO the early Christians, the Apostle John summed up the mission of Jesus in these words:

‘... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested,  
that he might destroy the works of the devil’

*[1 John 3.8].*

The Apostle Paul wrote similar words saying that Jesus died to

‘... destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil’  
*[Hebrews 2.14].*

These words alone show how important it is that we understand what the Bible means when it refers to the devil. We cannot even begin to appreciate Jesus’ great work of salvation unless we know what is meant by the devil he came to destroy.

### OUR ENEMY

In the Bible the devil is presented to us as the enemy of mankind. For example, Peter warned the believers of the first century: *‘Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour’* [1 Peter 5.8]. Paul also appealed to them: *‘Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil’* [Ephesians 6.11].

The devil is a reality – a power to be reckoned with. It is obviously important that we understand who or what this power is.

You may immediately think of an evil spirit being; an angel who has rebelled against God and whose aim now is to hold men and women in his power and turn them against God. This is the concept of the devil taught for centuries in the name of Christianity. Some still hold to those beliefs and claim to base them on the Bible. Others have rejected these ideas but have failed to put a correct understanding in their place.

In this article we hope to show that the Bible knows nothing of a supernatural monster of evil, but uses the word ‘devil’ and also the word ‘satan’ to describe that characteristic of human nature which leads us to rebel against God and His laws. This is responsible, directly or indirectly, for all the ills of mankind including death. The Apostle Paul described in graphic words his personal experience of this inborn characteristic:

‘I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the person who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members’ [*Romans 7.21-23*].

We are going to suggest that this ‘*law of sin which is in my members*’ is in fact the Bible devil. Elsewhere it is described as ‘*the carnal mind*’ which is ‘*enmity against God.*’ [*Romans 8.7*]

#### A BRIEF STUDY OF WORDS

The word ‘*devil*’ as used in the New Testament is derived from a Greek word ‘*diabolos*’. It means literally to ‘*dart*’ or ‘*strike through*’. An accurate translation would be ‘slanderer’ or ‘false accuser’ and it has been so translated occasionally in the New Testament [*e.g. 1 Timothy 3.11*]. On all other occasions it is translated as ‘devil’ and we can decide what it refers to only by looking at the immediate context and the general teaching of the Bible. There is another Greek word



used in the New Testament and translated ‘devils’ in the Authorised Version. This would be better rendered as ‘demons’ as in more recent translations. However this does not come within the scope of our present consideration.

The devil is often identified with Satan. Here we have another word which is not an English word at all. It has been taken into the English language from the original Hebrew of the Old Testament. It simply means ‘adversary’ and there are examples of its being so translated [*e.g. 1 Kings 11.23 and Psalm 38.20*].

It is important to note that, apart from the first two chapters of the book of Job, there are three references only to satan in the whole of the Old Testament and no references to the devil. This is very remarkable if this devil or satan is really an angel who fell from grace in the very beginning and who has since been responsible for all the evil in the world. The word ‘*devils*’ is found four times in the Authorised Version but comes from a different Hebrew word. It clearly refers to false gods to whom Israel turned [*e.g. Deuteronomy 32.15-17*].

### THE WORK OF JESUS

Having said this, the fact remains that in the Bible both titles, the ‘devil’ and ‘satan’, are frequently used of one particular power, a power which is the enemy of God and man, which is directly responsible for all the sin and wickedness in the world; what we might call the moral evil. This power is also held to be responsible – directly or indirectly – for physical evil, suffering and death. So who or what is this power?

Look again at those words quoted at the beginning of this article. Jesus came ‘*...that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*’ [*Hebrews 2.14*].

This statement establishes three very important facts:

- The devil has the power of death.

- Jesus came to destroy the power.
- Jesus achieved this great victory through his own death.

From other parts of the Bible it is very easy to find out what has the power of death, and what it is that Jesus came to destroy. Consider these Biblical statements:

‘... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin’ [*Romans 5.12*].

‘...the wages of sin is death ...’ [*Romans 6.23*].

‘...sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death’ [*James 1.15*].

These statements tell us that sin has the power of death, and death is the consequence of sin. Christ came to destroy the power of sin. His death on the cross was the means by which he achieved this. Consider these words:

‘... he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself’ [*Hebrews 9.26 NIV*].

‘who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree ...’ [*1 Peter 2.24*].

‘...Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ [*John 1.29*].

By his death on the cross, Jesus put away sin, the cause of death. This is the way in which he destroyed ‘*him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*’ [*Hebrews 2.14*].

You might be forgiven for asking the question – if the devil is the powerful angelic being which some imagine him to be, how could the

death of a righteous man destroy him? If, on the other hand, the devil is that strong impulse to sin which exists in every one of us, '*the carnal mind*', then it is not so difficult to see that in Jesus who himself overcame that mind completely and '*committed no sin*' [1 Peter 2.22], there could be opened up a way of hope for the rest of mankind to be delivered from sin and death.

### THE ORIGIN OF SIN

To understand more about the devil we need to know more about sin. What is sin? How did it originate? One thing stands out very clearly in the Bible. Man was responsible for introducing sin into the world; he must take full responsibility for maintaining it.

‘...through **one man** sin entered the world...’  
[Romans 5.12].

Here is the origin of sin. How is it kept in being?

‘...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death’ [James 1.14,15 NIV].

‘...from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders... All these evil things come from within, and defile a man’  
[Mark 7.21-23].

Our own experience agrees with such statements. We need no external tempter; our own hearts and minds, our own desires are more than sufficient to lead us into sin. We saw earlier that the Apostle Paul was aware of a tremendous conflict going on, not between himself and an evil being, but between the law of God which he wanted to keep and a powerful inclination within himself to disobey that law.

It is worth emphasising that, in the first ten chapters of his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul deals exhaustively with sin, its origin, its effect on mankind, the mission of Christ to overcome it and the results of his great victory. Yet there is not one reference to the ‘devil’ or to ‘satan’. The whole emphasis is on ‘*sin that dwells in me*’, ‘*the carnal mind*’ [Romans 7.20; 8.7].

Here then is a great power operating in the minds of all men and women, a great adversary, a slanderer, a deceiver. It is part of their very nature and they are powerless to overcome it. ‘...*There is no one righteous, no, not one*’ [Romans 3.10].

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that, throughout the Bible, full responsibility for sin and its consequences is placed fairly and squarely on man’s shoulders. Thus the Old Testament is full of allusions to the sins of God’s people, the Jews and their consequent sufferings. Nowhere are these attributed to any external power. ‘*Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart ...*’ [Jeremiah 7.24]. Their sufferings came from God as a punishment for their sins: ‘*Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*’ [Amos 3.6.AV].

#### THE SERPENT IN EDEN

There would appear to be one exception to this general rule that all temptation to sin arises from within our own hearts and minds. We refer to the tempting of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Here truly was an external tempter, a deceiver, the serpent. As Eve explained when God challenged her: ‘...*The serpent deceived me, and I ate*’ [Genesis 3.13 NIV]. Who or what was this serpent? Was it an incarnation of an evil spirit being?

There is not the slightest evidence that it was. Throughout the Bible account of what happened in Eden, the serpent is treated simply as a creature, as the record states, a ‘*beast of the field which the LORD God had made*’ [Genesis 3.1]. All we are told about it is that it was

more cunning than any other creature and that it had the power of speech. The only difference between the serpent and the other creatures was that it had greater reasoning power and was able to express itself in words which were intelligible to the woman.

It might be asked, why did God introduce such a creature into the garden, knowing that it would tempt the woman to disobey Him? The answer is, that Adam and Eve had to be tested. They were not created to be mere robots; they had to learn to use their free-will to the glory of their Creator and not merely to gratify their own desires. The suggestion that disobedience might be to their advantage came from a creature with no moral sense or responsibility. Adam and Eve failed the test. They sowed the seeds of rebellion against God. The temptation which came originally from the serpent, now comes from within ourselves from our '*carnal mind*', or, as John describes it, '*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*' [1 John 2.16].

#### THE BOOK OF REVELATION

It is for this reason that in the last book of the Bible, the 'devil' and 'satan' are associated with the serpent. There can be no doubt that many of the traditional beliefs about the devil have been derived from just three verses in the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation [Revelation 12.7-9]. Reading those verses as a piece of literal history would seem to provide a basis for the idea that the devil is a fallen angel. But these words were never meant to be taken literally.

The opening verses of the book of Revelation tell us that it was designed primarily to show to God's servants things which were to happen after the days of the Apostle John, and to do this in language which was highly figurative [Revelation 1.1-3; 4.1]. You have only to read the whole of chapter twelve, to see that none of it can possibly be a literal description of events which actually happened thousands of years ago.

The book of Revelation describes in highly figurative language, a conflict between the true servants of God and the power of sin, variously represented by ferocious beasts and other symbols. In many cases these refer to governments and ecclesiastical authorities which, down the centuries, have persecuted God's servants. These powers became *'the false accuser'* (devil) and *'adversary'* (satan) of the true church. For example, when the early church was warned *'the devil shall cast some of you into prison,'* [Revelation 2.10] this could only have been a reference to the Roman authorities. Peter's reference to *'your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion' - 'seeking whom he may devour'* [1 Peter 5.8] may well have included the Jewish authorities. This was exactly how the Apostle Paul behaved before his conversion to Christianity.

In all such powers we see outward manifestations of those evil qualities which are inherent in our natures: *'greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly'* [Mark 7.22 NIV]. To find this great deceiver we do not need to go outside our own hearts and minds. *'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?'* [Jeremiah 17.9]

#### THE WORK OF JESUS

Here is the devil we all have to fight against. Yet we lack the power to overcome the *'carnal mind'* completely. So we come back to the work of Jesus. He *'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'* [Hebrews 4.15]. He overcame the devil within himself completely and now enjoys a perfect life free from all temptation. He has overcome sin and death. Through belief and baptism you too can be associated with Christ and his great work of salvation. You can share in his victory and look forward to the day when these sin stricken bodies will be transformed and no longer subject to sin and death.

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# What did Jesus mean?

## ‘Have salt in yourselves’

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SALT IS A substance most of us use every day but hardly think about. To give it its proper name, Sodium Chloride is a mineral which many of us sprinkle on our food for added flavour. Job mentions its use in this way, *‘Can flavourless food be eaten without salt?’ [Job 6.6]*.

Apart from this, we naturally have to **have salt in ourselves**. If we don’t sprinkle it on our food, then it must be added to our bodies in some way, as it is essential to maintain the chloride balance in our bodies. It is sometimes given to people in cases of heat exhaustion.

From ancient times salt has been used as a food preservative. It is still used as a fertilizer and in the ceramic, pottery and brick industries for glazing and for the curing of hides. It is also used in water softeners and in our scientific age in nuclear reactors.

Salt is mentioned a number of times in the Scriptures, sometimes to describe its uses and at other times as a symbol of something else. Both uses are found in those words of Jesus that form the title of this article:

‘Salt is good, but if the salt loses its taste, how will you season it? **Have salt in yourselves** and have peace one with another’ *[Mark 9.50]*.

What did Jesus mean by these words? Was he just talking about the necessity of salt in our diet, or something with a deeper meaning? With all the sayings of Jesus there is always a deeper meaning and to

find it we have to look at the uses of salt by the Jews in Bible times – particularly under the Law of Moses.

The prophet Ezekiel describes one use of salt that could have a bearing on the subject, *‘When you were born...you were not bathed in water...you were not salted as you should have been.’ [Ezekiel 16.4 NEB]* Here Ezekiel is referring to salt being used as a cleansing agent.

Another point to mention is that the Jews had access to plentiful supplies of salt in the Dead Sea and adjacent areas. It is called the Salt Sea in the Bible and salt was easily obtained by evaporation in shallow pans as still can be seen in other parts of the world. So there was no shortage of salt in Israel and we find it was used liberally in the sacrificial rituals of the Mosaic Law. It is there we have an interesting connection with the words of Jesus. In the book of Leviticus we find this commandment concerning the use of salt:

‘..you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking .. With all your offerings you shall offer salt’ *[Leviticus 2.13]*.

Every offering was seasoned with salt. In the book of Numbers we find the priests’ portion referred to:

‘All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance for ever; it is **a covenant of salt** for ever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you’ *[Numbers 18.19]*.

Salt wasn’t put on the sacrifices to preserve them, it was to cleanse them or to purify them before they were offered to God. But there was obviously a further meaning to what is referred to as this *‘covenant of*

*salt*'. This point comes out later in Israel's history. Trouble was brewing between the kings of Judah and Israel and Abijah interestingly reminds Jeroboam: *'Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David for ever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?'* [2 Chronicles 13.5]

When David was anointed as the future king of Israel we learn that Samuel offered a sacrifice – the salt would be with the sacrifice (*1 Samuel 16.1-5*). So the salt symbolised something much more than a cleansing agent. Used properly, it stops meats (flesh) from decaying and perishing. In other words, it is an antidote to decay. Therefore salt was a symbol of performance, a symbol of life, as opposed to corruption and death.

So when the law refers to '*a covenant of salt*', it means a covenant that will not decay, a covenant that will not perish, it is a covenant preserved by the pure words of God. The covenant of salt to David is also valid in perpetuity as every sacrifice pointed forward to Christ. In this way the salt on the sacrifice confirmed the irrevocable character and permanence of God's covenant – the life-preserving nature of the covenant, the fact surely that it would save flesh from corruption ultimately through Christ.

With these thoughts in mind then, we go back to those words of Jesus recorded by Mark: *'For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its taste, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another'* [Mark 9.49,50]. Jesus in his teaching, makes a clear reference back to the Mosaic Law and the sacrifices but why did he mention this here?

Now, as always, we have to take his words in their context. If we study the preceding verses we find Jesus talking about the corruption of the flesh and its destruction. He is using as an illustration the fires that burned in the rubbish dumps in the Valley of Hinnom outside

Jerusalem called Gehenna in New Testament times. This was the place where the bodies of executed criminals were dumped with the rubbish of daily life. It was a place of filthiness and corruption which Jesus uses here as a symbol of the complete destruction of the whole being – an event that will overtake all of us unless we take the necessary steps to avail ourselves of the Divine offer of salvation. To escape this utter destruction, Jesus is saying that everyone must be ‘**salted with fire.**’

All this is highly figurative language. Perhaps it will help our readers to see what Jesus is teaching by looking at Paul’s teaching in the letter to the Romans:

‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’ [*Romans 12.1,2*]

Our ‘*bodies*’, or our lives - our offering of ourselves, as a ‘*living sacrifice*’, must be ‘*good*’ and ‘*acceptable*’ to God. As the sacrifices under the law were without blemish, properly prepared – **salted** and cleansed and then subjected to the **fire** on the altar, – so we too have to prepare ourselves as living sacrifices to our God.

Fire is used to represent cleansing from all filth and corruption. Salt is also a wonderful cleansing agent. It is by thinking of the symbolic or figurative use of these things that we see the meaning. Fire is also a figure of trials and hardship, pain and suffering, mental and physical.

Salt is a cleansing and purifying agent and can if used properly, prevent decay and corruption. Perhaps we can begin to see why Jesus said ‘*Have salt in yourselves*’ and ‘*Salt is good.*’

The figure we remember is of purifying, of cleansing, of keeping from corruption. This is the result of using salt – as Jesus put it: *‘have salt in yourselves’*.

In his letter to the Colossian believers, Paul instructs them: *‘Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.’*[Colossians 4.6]. Paul also instructed the believers at Ephesus: *‘Let no corrupt (salt prevents corruption) communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good (salt is good) to the use of edifying, that it may impart grace to the hearers’* [Ephesians 4.29].

The followers of Jesus must heed this teaching. Our speech must always be with grace, *‘seasoned with salt’*, that no corrupt communication may proceed from our mouths. We must have *‘salt in ourselves’* or within us a living principle gained from the purifying Word of God which helps to overcome the corrupt disposition of the mind.

It is a figure or symbol of self-purification – we have to find the salt. There are ample supplies of it in God’s Word and we have to use it properly. If we do in a figure – *‘have salt in ourselves’*, we give our thoughts and speech a savour, which not only is a benefit to us but to those who are listening also.

Jesus also said: *‘But if the salt loses its taste, how will you season it?’*[Mark 9.50] This is perhaps better rendered in another version, *‘Salt is good; but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?’* [Mark 9.50 NIV]. The teaching here is that if our salt is neglected, it becomes useless; it loses its quality, it becomes insipid and is no good as a purifying agent or for seasoning. The other gospel records help to show this more clearly because they add to these words of Jesus about salt, *‘...if the salt has lost its taste...It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out’*[Luke 14.34,35]. Matthew records that Jesus also said, *‘You are the salt of the earth; but*

*if the salt loses its taste, how shall it be seasoned ? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men* [Matthew 5.13].

It is interesting to note in these words of Jesus the phrases '*thrown out*' and '*trampled underfoot*'. It is recorded in ancient Jewish writings that in Herod's temple, there was a salt chamber for storage of the salt used with the sacrifices. Large quantities were required for use by the priests. But obviously when large quantities of salt are stored, some gets spoiled and loses its savour. This spoilt salt the priests used to sprinkle over the pavement of the temple to prevent their feet slipping and it was this use of spoilt salt that Jesus was referring to when He taught those around Him and who knew what happened to the useless salt. The salt that was no good was '*thrown out*' and '*trampled underfoot by men*'

The lesson is obvious to all of us and perhaps it was more so to those fishermen disciples, there at the time, listening to Jesus, who would have used salt a great deal to preserve their catches from going rotten – they well knew the value of good salt and the uselessness of spoilt salt. The figure is as important to us as it was to them!

Our sinful flesh has to in some way be '*salted with salt*', to make us an acceptable living sacrifice to our God. This salt can only be found in the Bible which is the Word of God. How much we use it is in our hands alone. How much we relish and savour of the Word of God will be reflected in our speech and how much life and vitality there is in the application of Christ's words in our lives. The question for you the reader is - Do you savour the things of God or is your outlook insipid and without flavour?

The true followers of Jesus will respond to the teaching of their Master - '***Have salt in yourselves***'

Ken Dennis  
Kent, UK





## ***From our Mail Bag***

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A QUESTION HAS been asked – who or what is **Lucifer**? The name ‘*Lucifer*’ only occurs once in the Bible, in the words of the prophet Isaiah. Many people say that this is a reference to the devil being literally cast out of heaven as a ‘fallen angel’ but does this passage actually teach that? The passage is as follows:

‘How you are fallen from heaven, O **Lucifer**, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!’ [*Isaiah 14.12*].

What is the context of this verse and who is it talking about? Looking at the chapter as a whole, the prophet is speaking against Israel’s oppressor to come, the empire of Babylon which invaded the kingdom of Judah and took the Jews into captivity around 600 BC. The Babylonian empire swallowed up many other countries in its expansion, leaving them weak subject peoples. The prophet goes on to make a prediction concerning a day to come when God’s people the Jews, would be free from the grip of this hostile power, and its tyrant king. It was king Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty who was to be the king spoken about in verse 4 of this chapter:

‘...you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: “How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers; he who

struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke,  
he who ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted and  
no one hinders” [Isaiah 14.4-6].

The tables were to be turned and the king of Babylon would fall from power. Thus in context, in the poetic metaphor which the prophet uses in verse 12, he likens the king of Babylon to one who had been exalted like a star in the heavens but would be ‘*cut down to the ground*’.

We learn from the Biblical record, as confirmed by history, that Cyrus the Persian conquered the city of Babylon and the Medo-Persian empire in turn swallowed up the Babylonian empire. Belshazzar the king of Babylon was slain and Darius the Mede took the kingdom (see Daniel chapter 5 verses 30 and 31).

The name ‘**Lucifer**’ means ‘*morning star*’. The passage in Isaiah concerning ‘**Lucifer**’ is an allusion to a man who exalted himself in grandeur and god-like status. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is an example of a proud despot who did just this (See Daniel chapter 4 verses 29 and 30).

Often in Scripture the word ‘*heaven*’ is used as a symbol for rulers of nations. Isaiah addresses the rulers of Israel in this way: ‘*Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth...*’ [Isaiah 1.2]. The prophet was not literally addressing the sky, because the prophet continues: ‘*Hear the word of the LORD you **rulers** of Sodom...*’ [Isaiah 1.10]. Thus the idea of the king of Babylon exalting himself to the status of a star in heaven, can simply be taken as a metaphor for the self aggrandisement of a mighty ruler who like a tree was ‘*cut down*’ from his lofty and exalted position.

Justin Giles  
Kent, UK

# Plants of the Bible

## Frankincense

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THERE ARE SEVERAL species of Frankincense which grow in northern India, northern Arabia and Somalia. The tree grows about 25 feet high and has clear green leaves shaped like those of the mountain ash. The flowers are pink with yellow centres. Young plants are sometimes used as camel food. The roots are stripped of bark and eaten raw or used in beverages.

The inner bark of older plants is used to make a brown dye and can even be used as fish bait. The resin is used in wine as an additive. Some of the resin exudates are used as fuel and as poison to control pests. The wood is used in a variety of craft products.

The best-known and most important use of frankincense is the use of the gummy resin in incense and perfumes and for medicinal purposes. The gum, obtained by making deep gashes in the trunk and branches of mature frankincense trees and peeling back a few inches of bark below each cut, oozes in large white or amber ‘tears’ which harden to produce a glittering bitter-tasting resin. It has long been regarded as one of the finest-burning and most pleasant-smelling resins (incense) in the world. One explanation of the name ‘frankincense’ is

‘free lighting’, because once ignited it burns easily with a clear white flame.

Frankincense is mentioned in the Scriptures in connection with the tabernacle where it was burnt with some of the sacrifices. We read in the book of Leviticus: *‘When anyone offers a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it’* [Leviticus. 2.1]. It was also laid on the Table of Shewbread as God commanded Moses: *‘And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD’* [Leviticus 24.7].

The offering of incense stands for praise and prayer. David, whose life was characterised by prayer and praise to God wrote: *‘Let my prayer be set before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice’* [Psalm 141.2]. Also we read in the last book of the Bible that the angel which had a golden censer *‘was given much incense ,that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints’* [Revelation 8.3].

Just as the burning of frankincense produces a sweet smell, so prayer or indeed acceptable service of any kind is like a sweet smell to God. Paul alludes to this in his letter to the believers at Philippi: *‘I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God’* [Philippians 4.18].

The most famous reference to frankincense is undoubtedly as one of the gifts brought to the infant Jesus by the wise men: *‘...when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.’* [Matthew 2.11]. Here we are reminded of the constant communion with his Father in prayer that was to be hallmark of Jesus’ life, as it should be the hallmark of the lives of his followers.

Clifford Wharton  
Surrey, UK

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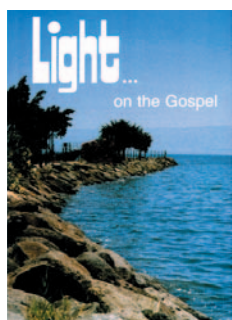


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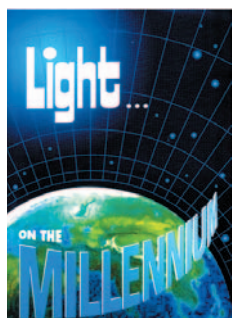


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