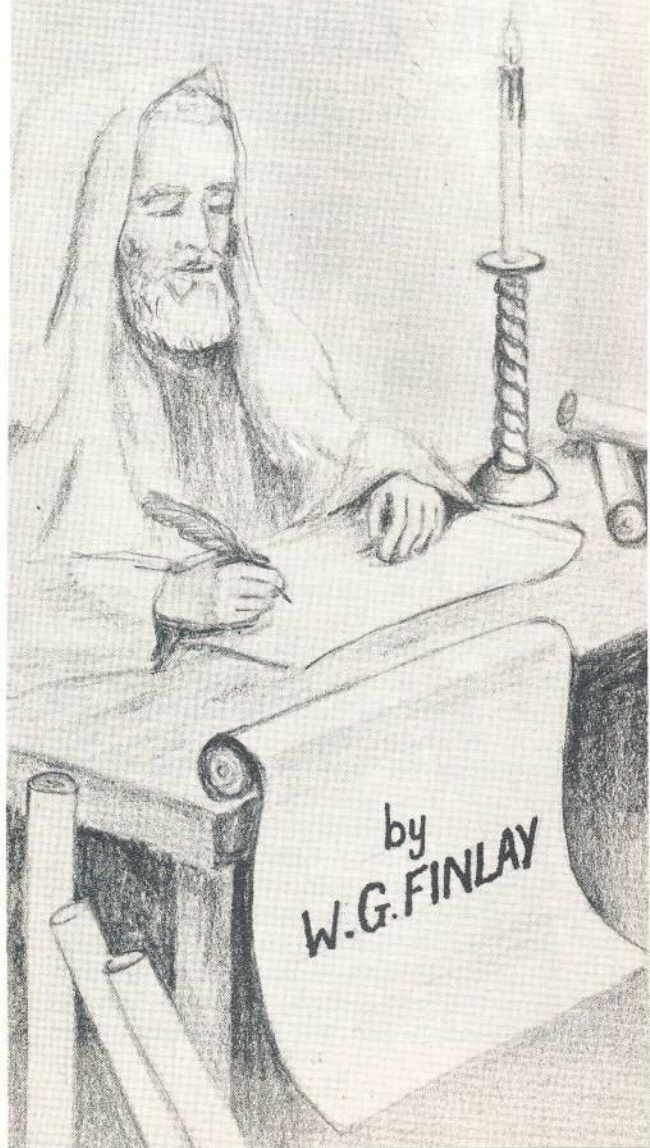


THE WORD— AN ENIGMA



The Word— An Enigma

by W.G. Finlay

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God”
(Rev. 19:11-13).

While the Book of The Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ is not the main theme here, it does serve to introduce a subject which many choose to overlook today. In the above quotation — and notwithstanding the highly symbolic language which is used — one is confronted by a situation which would appear to have no meaning in the present day. The Bible, as such, is available in virtually every language spoken by modern man and to keep pace with the ever-changing vocabularies, it is continually revised so that men's perception of the Bible is not clouded by language difficulties. On the surface, revisions would appear to be a good thing for none will surely deny that — insofar as English is concerned — the language spoken

today is a very far cry from the English spoken in the days when the Authorised Version made its appearance. This, of course, is no new development for if one thinks back to the days just prior to the canonisation of the present sixty-six Books of the Bible, one finds Jerome faced with a similar, although more complex problem.

The *Dictionary of the Bible* which was edited by James Hastings D.D. and compiled with the assistance of four other Doctors of Divinity, relates that in the Western Church, the various documents which recorded Biblical matters such as the Old Testament plus whatever existed of the New, were recorded in Old Latin whereas in the Eastern Church, the Septuagint — the Greek Version of the Old Testament scriptures — plus Greek Versions of New Testament writings were in use. Jerome therefore undertook the revision of the Old Latin so as to provide a more understandable version of existing texts for the Western Church. As is stated in Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, “The Latin Bible, which we know as the Vulgate was not wholly Jerome's work, still less did it represent his full and final views on the textual criticism of the Bible; and naturally, it did not for a long time acquire the name “Vulgate”. The “vulgate editio” of which Jerome himself speaks, is primarily the Greek Septuagint and secondarily the Old Latin as a translation of it . . .”

If one continues to research the development of the Bible as such, it will be seen that theological text books provide the picture of revision after revision — some based on changes in the vernacular while others were based on what was felt as the need for artistic merit in presentation as was the case of the Gospels and Service

books produced at Winchester in England between 960 and 1060 A.D. However, in all these changes — it has been estimated that between Jerome's revision and the *Textus Receptus* which was the basis of the Authorised Version some fifteen other revisions were made — one wonders how much abuse the originals suffered. In returning to the present time in which some thirty-six different versions or translations are currently available (in English alone), one is surely tempted to ask how much of the original Jerome revision remains and as new versions and translations appear almost annually, how long will it be before most of the original is lost altogether? Is this perhaps why, as stated by the Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes again He will have a name written that no man knew but He Himself — that Name being, The WORD OF GOD?

However, as was stated earlier, the quotation from the Book of the Revelation serves to introduce — not only the dangers inherent in a multiplicity of revisions — but a situation in which the Apostle John figures very prominently. John, as all will surely know, was not only the recorder of the Revelation but the author of the Gospel which bears his name as well as the Epistles which too bear his name. It must be admitted that John was singled out for some specific purpose by the Lord for if the last chapter of his Gospel account is considered, it will be noted that Peter, sensing that John's mission was in some way different, asked the Lord: "...and what shall this man do?" To which the Lord replied: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?" (John 21:21,22). Thus, in the Lord's reply, one is given to understand that John's real mission had to do with the then future

troubled times and while Peter was not told specifically what John's role in those times would be, as one looks back and searches John's writing, the Lord's purpose becomes very clear.

The Background and History of John's Work

A strange feature about the work of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20) is that his Gospel account was the last to be written — written so it is generally claimed, some time between A.D. 85 and 90. This being so, one naturally wonders why he left it so long to record his account of the Life of the Lord and why, when one analyses his history, it is found to be so different from what others had written? In order to provide an answer to the two questions, one is directed to the unique education which John, together with Peter and James, received from the Lord which, in all probability, is the reason why he wrote of the qualifications for apostleship. He wrote that the Lord said: "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27) — and who better was qualified to teach the things which the Lord taught than those who had been with Him?

However, when one looks at John's qualifications, it will be noted that this was left to others to write and they certainly recorded a series of events in which Peter, James and John shared a unique experience. Matthew, for instance, recorded that Peter, James and John were taken up on to a mountain and there witnessed the Transfiguration — the fulfilment of the words spoken by the Lord when He told His disciples that: "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till

they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:28). In passing to Mark’s Gospel, it will be noted that the same three men – Peter, James and John – were, by the Lord’s specific command, the only ones to witness the raising of Jarius’ daughter (Mark 5:37) and, again according to Mark, these three are specifically mentioned as being present during the Lord’s private Discourse on the fall of Jerusalem (Mark 13:3). Thus, from these statements, it is patently obvious that Peter, James and John are singled out as living in close intimacy with the Lord and were obviously well equipped to be able to both tell and write of the things which He both did and said.

James of course, was John’s elder brother (Mark 1:19) and if one is to understand why John left the writing of his Gospel account so late, one must consider James, what he wrote and what happened to him because of it. Unlike Paul’s Epistles, James never wrote to any church or assembly – he simply addressed what he had to say to “...the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad” (James 1:1) and throughout one may read of his total opposition to Pharisaic doctrines which centred on priestly interpretations of both the purpose of the LORD God of Israel and His Law. He wrote of the consistency of the Father (James 1:17) Who, “Of his own will begat he us” (the twelve tribes) and exhorted the same twelve tribes to “be doers of the word and not hearers only” – stressing that “...faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). So then, James, who was specially equipped with Peter and John to be able to relate what the Lord Jesus Christ had taught, wrote his Epistle in what can only be called

“a national context”. One cannot of course, be sure *when* James wrote his Epistle for although it is generally contended that it was written in A.D. 60, there is evidence that a date some fifteen years earlier would be more appropriate. According to Acts 12:2, James was killed by Herod Agrippa 1 and while the reason for this is given as being Herod’s “vexing” the church, it is more than probable that James himself and his qualifications plus the content of his messages had a lot to do with his murder.

This contention is certainly supported when one considers the identity of the man who was responsible for the death of James. Herod Agrippa was the son of Bernice and Aristobulus, a son of Herod the Great – the latter being an Idumean or Edomite descended from Esau and according to Malachi, the only people in the Bible, whom the LORD said He hated (Mal. 1:3). Herod Agrippa was the child of two first cousins and was himself married to another cousin who was the daughter of his aunt who again, was married to an uncle (Josephus: *Wars* and *Antiquities*). Thus, while being under Roman overlordship, Judaea was ruled over by one whose Esau-Edomite lineage had been carefully preserved. *The Edomites were not Israelites – nor were the people over whom this Edomite line ruled.*

With James writing his Epistle to the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”, the Apostle was giving the lie to the image being projected by both Herod Agrippa and the people over whom he ruled for if the *twelve tribes* were scattered abroad at that time (A.D. 45), who were those masquerading as the Covenant People in Judaea? It should be noted that James did not write to “*those* of the twelve tribes” which were

scattered abroad, thus making allowance for *some* in Judaea to be of Israel — his writing was simply addressed to the “twelve tribes” in dispersion which makes absolutely no provision whereby the Judaeans could intrude themselves and make themselves part of twelve-tribed Israel. This being so, the letter written by James constituted a threat to the continuity of the Judaeans masquerade and in characteristic form, he was silenced — the record of which is found in Acts 12:2.

Having seen what had happened to his elder brother, John became cautious. It should not be thought that he was fearful for his own life — his imprisonment on Patmos indicates that he was prepared to do anything for the “testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:9). However, John recognised the signs of the times and knew that in addition to the persistence of Pharisaism with its “traditionalism”, a new dimension of confusion was creeping in, in that the warning words of the Lord, spoken to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, were beginning to take effect. He had said: “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am (the) Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:4,5) — and John saw this in action. He had been present when the Lord had said: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24) and he had heard and been obedient to the Lord’s commission to the disciples: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . .” (Matt. 10:5,6). He now saw a new development taking place — an emphasis on the total exclusion of Israel,

the Covenant People, their absolute redundancy and replacement by all and sundry who *claimed* to be motivated by the Holy Spirit and who preached in the Name of Jesus Christ but whose preaching was other than that which John had heard.

The main theme now being proclaimed was proselytism — everything had to be done to “save” the world and to bring all people, irrespective of who they were, into the fold. The words which had been spoken by the Lord on the Mount were totally ignored in the new euphoria and John would sadly reflect on the multiplicity of languages and cultures which were now being brought into the “church” and recall that the Lord had said: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matt. 7:6). If one looks at this account as it appears in the Greek text, it will be noted that the phrase “turn again” is taken from the word *strepho* which literally means to “revert” while the word “rend” is taken from the Greek *rhegnumi* or its strengthened form *agnumi* which means to “break, wreck or crack, shatter or disrupt”. Thus, as John watched the developments, the words of the Lord would surely pass through his mind and he knew that what he had to write concerning the Truth of the Advent of the Lord would be howled down and labelled “heresy” by those who were using the Name of Christ to promulgate *their* doctrines about Him.

John waited until Jerusalem fell — as the Lord had foretold it would fall — and even then, although the power of the priests and the Pharisees was broken, he still waited before beginning to write his Gospel account,

his Epistles and finally the Revelation. As one reads through his writings, one finds that they bear the unmistakable mark of one who was saying something but who was somewhat fearful of what others would make of what he wrote. Thus, John's writings may be said to have been couched in cryptic terms — a method designed to preserve what he said from perversion and manipulations by later transcribers.

This Method Not New

John would recall that living in the region south-east of Jerusalem — indeed had been living there for nigh on two hundred years — was a community which had been a thorn in the side of the priests and the Pharisees. This community lost no opportunity to accuse the priests and the Pharisees of making the Word of God of none effect — accusing the priests of ritualistic perversions and the Pharisees of distorting the Law to their own ends. This community finally recognised the futility of trying to change the rulers of Judaea and so created their own school of scribes who were commissioned to write their scriptures and the *Manual of Discipline* so that the future generations could have access to something more than that which the Judæan scribes had recorded. Some two thousand years later, their writings would be discovered and today, although portions of their writings have been deciphered, the Israeli takeover of Jerusalem in 1967 has ended Western research into their true meaning.

What little information is available, strengthens the conviction that the Judæan scribes were guilty of falsification of the records for that early Qumran community

used an ancient Hebrew form of cypher in which key words were deliberately obscured by the use of this. What, in fact, they did was simply to replace the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *aleph* with the last letter *tau*; the second letter *bet* with the penultimate letter *shin* and so on and so the *fact* that they used this cypner is a clear indication of the need for such processes in and about the time of the First Advent.

א	=	ט
ב	=	ש
ג	=	ר
ד	=	ק
ה	=	א
ו	=	פ
ז	=	צ
ח	=	ס
ט	=	נ
י	=	ע
כ	=	פ

THE ANCIENT ALPHABETICAL
CYPHER.

However, while John may have known that the Qumran scribes had used the ancient Hebrew form of cypher so as to confound the prevailing Judaeian hierarchy, he would dismiss this as being impracticable for his purpose. Being part of that company of Apostles whose understanding of the Old Testament scriptures had been opened (Luke 24:45), John would recognise the futility of using the cypher for, according to Isaiah, the very people to whom his writings were directed – Israel – would not speak Hebrew but some other language (Isa. 28:11). Faced with this dilemma, John no doubt thought back to the way in which the Lord had handled a situation similar to this for He too had been faced with a mixed bag of people, some of whom were genuine in their quest for Truth while others were present merely to trap Him and make His teaching appear ridiculous in the sight of the people. John remembered that on these occasions, the Lord resorted to parables and, as Mark wrote: “But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples” (Mark 4:34). John therefore, decided to use a form of parable in which to write his messages to Israel.

Evidence of This

Some may, of course, strongly oppose this contention claiming that John had no need to resort to this in writing his messages. However, one should bear in mind that when John finally began to write, the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3)

was in jeopardy – this being the result of unnamed persons who had crept in unawares and who were jeopardising the Truth (Jude 4). Thus, according to Jude, there was a need to be watchful and to “earnestly contend” for the faith which was being threatened by those who used subtlety in their approach.

Bearing in mind that James had been murdered for writing to the “twelve tribes scattered abroad”, John, it will be noted, did no such thing in his Epistles but, if one looks at what he *did* write, his message will be seen as directed to the same people but hidden in parable. It will be noted that John begins his second Epistle with these words: “The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth . . .” while he ends the Epistle with the words: “The children of thy elect sister greet thee.” Unless one rejects the Old Testament, it is an undoubted *fact* that *Israel* is the LORD’S “elect” (Isa. 45:4) and again, unless one rejects the Old Testament, it is equally undoubted that the family of Israel was divided into two sections who are called “sisters” (Jer. 3:8). The names of these “elect sisters” are Aholah (10 tribed Israel) and Aholibah (2 tribed Judah) and if one considers the message directed to these “sisters” one finds that it directs attention to the Law of the Lord in which the “Love thy neighbour (brother)” dominates (Lev. 19:15-18).

“Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2nd

John 9,10). In a nutshell, John was writing to Israel exhorting them to stand exclusively on the "doctrine of Christ" i.e. that which Christ taught, and if any come with some other doctrine, this should be spurned — a very logical statement in view of what others were teaching "in the name of Christ".

In passing to John's third Epistle — again written in the same vein — it will be noted that it is addressed to "... the wellbeloved Gaius" — a Roman name which was extensively used at marriage festivals when both the bride and bridegroom were joined together. Here, as with the second Epistle, John was writing to Israel for in both Old Testament and New Testament prophecy, *Israel* was said to be the "bride of Christ" — those who are to be united — GAIUS.

As with his second Epistle, John warns true Israel and again his warning is cryptic although in this instance, he presumes that Israelites had not succumbed to the pernicious "leaven of the Pharisees" and were still able to reason for themselves. "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John vv. 9,10). Throughout the three Epistles, John warns against the "anti-Christ" which he said was active at that time, he warns against "any" who do not hold the doctrine of Christ and finally, in his third Epistle, he names the one who was mainly responsible for Israel's problems. WHO THEN WAS DIOTREPHE'S?

Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible* has

this to say. "A person otherwise unknown, who is introduced in 3 John, vv. 9,10 as ambitious, resisting the writer's authority, and standing in the way of the hospitable reception of the brethren who visited the church." Funk & Wagnall's *New Standard Bible Dictionary*, explains *Diotrephes* in these words. "Described in 3 John 9, as one 'who loved to have the preeminence among them'. He had evidently refused to heed the Elder's written instructions to 'receive' the brethren. From the fact that he 'forbids' and 'casts out' of the church, it is evident that he occupied some position of authority which might bring him into conflict with his brethren and the Elder." Dr. William Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* has this bald statement: "A Christian mentioned in 3 John 9, but of whom nothing is known." All this should surely provoke a question from those who are not mentally anaesthetised — who was this man who exercised so much authority in the church generally and who could place an embargo on the Apostles and even victimise those who received them? He was surely more than just "an unknown Christian."

Just as John had used the name "Gaius" as the cryptic form of addressing his Epistle, so too this name *Diotrephes* was the cryptic form of naming the person whose authority in the church and among the congregations was prodigious. John was not prepared to have the Truth of what he had written in his Gospel and in his Epistles labelled as the work of a "heretic" — as would be the case if he named the man outright and so in order to retain credibility for his writings he used a name which could be analysed and identified. *Diotrephes*, according to Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, means "cherished by

Zeus" — which of course, leads the researcher into the realm of Greek fable and legend — a strange directive from the "disciple whom Jesus loved". However, as one proceeds, one asks *who* was cherished by Zeus and the answer is provided in Greek mythology — Hermes, his son. So then, *Hermes* appears to be identified with John's *Diotrephes*.

As was stated earlier, while the Eastern church retained the use of the Greek language, in Rome, the Western church had translated the Greek into the Old Latin and in this process, the Greek *Zeus* and *Hermes* were Romanised into *Jupiter* and *Mercurius*. John's accusing finger was therefore pointed at one who in the Greek was called *Hermes* but in Latin was referred to as *Mercurius* and all that is needed to unravel John's parable in his third Epistle, is to consider who, within the Christian community was called by this name. "And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas *Jupiter* and Paul *Mercurius*, because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11,12). Thus, John is shown to be very mindful of preserving the Truth against the popular appeal of emotional doctrines other than those taught by the Lord Who was THE WORD Incarnate in the flesh.

John's Gospel

"In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God... And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (John 1:1,14). This unique beginning to John's Gospel —

centering as it does on the Identity of the Lord Jesus Christ — speaks volumes to those who have ears to hear and establishes, without any equivocation, the need for the Living WORD to be manifest. At that time, the Judaeian *Mishna* dominated — a revised code of rabbinical decisions on the subject of ritualistic sacrifice. Insofar as Israel's history was concerned, the *Gemara* was the vogue in which revisions and enlargement of purpose was said to have been the expanding revelation of the LORD. In addition, the *Kabala* was becoming very popular in which mystical and uninhibited interpretations were said to be contained in the plain recorded facts of Israel's history — a feature which in the present day may be seen in "spiritualising" the whole Old Testament story. And so the WORD was made flesh and the Word of God was again spoken to the Apostles (John 17:8) who, as John records, were sent on the same mission and in the same context as had characterised the Lord's own statement concerning His Advent (Matt. 15:24) — "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

According to John's Gospel account — so different from the other three — one finds a consistent theme which, while exposing the doctrines propagated by the priests and Pharisees, also exposes the fallacy that the heterogeneous population of Judaea were indeed the Israel people of God (John 8:31-47 and 10:26). However, despite the care taken in penning his Gospel, John's fears were realised when at some later stage, an over-zealous scribe added to what he wrote and inadvertently presented John as writing something derogatory about the Lord.

In the *New English Bible* translation of John 7:4 it reads: "If you really are doing such things as these, show yourself to the world. For even his brothers had no faith in him. Jesus said to them, 'The right time for me has not yet come, but any time is right for you. The world cannot hate you; but it hates me for exposing the wickedness of its ways. Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going up to this festival because the right time for me has not yet come'. With this answer he stayed behind in Galilee. Later, when his brothers had gone to the festival, he went up himself, not publicly, but almost in secret . . ." In this, the Lord is said to be saying one thing and then doing the very opposite and to those who believe the Lord, this is evidence of scribal interpolations.

What Happened to Those Apostles?

When one thinks of the special education which the Lord had given to the twelve Apostles, one surely wonders what happened to them, for apart from the writing of Peter, James, John and Jude, nothing is heard of them. The Ecclesiastical historian Eusebius (A.D. 254-340) wrote in *De Demonstratione Evangelii*: "The Apostles passed beyond the ocean, to the isles called the Britannic Isles" while the British historian, Gildas (A.D. 516-570) wrote: "Meanwhile, these islands . . . received the beams of light, that is, the Holy Precepts of Christ, the true Sun . . . at the latter part, as we know, of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (A.D. 14-37). There appears to be no reason to doubt the accuracy of these reports for in the Church Councils of Pisa (A.D. 1417),

Constance (1419), Sena (1423) and Basle (1431) all ruled that the British Church took precedence over all others being founded, so it is claimed by Joseph of Arimathea. This being so, it would appear that Christianity in Britain was established on the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and not that which permeated through the Middle East after the Ascension of the Lord. This latter teaching was adopted by Rome in 313 and when the Papal faith dominated the civilised world, it was this, and not Christ's teaching, that was propagated. In A.D. 597, Pope Gregory sent Augustine to Kent in England and during the ensuing ninety years, the Saxon kingdoms gradually rejected the teaching of the older British Church and accepted the Roman faith. When all England became subject to the Papacy in Rome one may see that the work of the Apostles who were taught by the Lord Himself was brought to nought and the same doctrines which held sway in Judaea and subsequently transmitted to Rome, overshadowed and obliterated the Truth.

Notwithstanding the Reformation which provided the Opened Book – this Book was merely another translation added to the many which had preceded it and which contained the same "tares". Since that time, many other translations have been made and in a world situation which deteriorated to the position of anarchy and in an Anglo-Saxon situation which rose to great heights and is slipping into unprecedented depths, no new translation appears to be bringing light to bear on the situation. In the light of all this, one can perhaps understand why it is that the Lord revealed that at His Coming again – the need for this is becoming more imperative as the days pass – His

Name, The WORD of God, is unknown. However — and thanks be — He IS Coming again and as Moses wrote so long ago: "...unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). In the First Advent, the WORD was again given against the background of perversions of the Truth and yet, such was the power of the "prince of this world", that despite the re-giving of the WORD it has again been perverted requiring a Second Advent so that the LORD'S Covenant People will know the Truth that shall indeed free them from the activity of delusion and deception which the Lord warned would come.

With another year coming to an end and with memories of the true significance of the First Advent fresh in the mind through the writing of John, Israel, now become the "tail" among the nations of the world, can think again on the promise of Redemption when the Word — not interpretations or translations of it — will motivate God's People along the lines prescribed by their Maker.

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