

The Day of the Covenant

Written by Peter Hammond

Tuesday, 16 December 2008 06:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 14 February 2009 23:32

"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps Covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."
Deuteronomy 7:9

For over a century and a half, throughout South Africa, 16 December has been observed as The Day of the Covenant. Marking the decisive Battle of Blood River, the Day of the Covenant has been recognised by many, not only as a victory for the Voortrekkers, but as a triumph for Western civilization and Christianity in Africa.

It should be noted that before the Battle of Blood River, 16 December 1838, there were no known Christians amongst the Zulu nation. Despite the dedicated spiritual labours of British and American missionaries amongst the Zulus for 18 years previously, so great was the hold of superstition, the reign of terror of the Zulu kings, and fear of the witchdoctors, that no Zulus were known to have responded to the preaching of the Gospel before the defeat of Dingaan's Impis at Blood River.

One could similarly note that despite the strenuous labours of famous British missionary Robert Moffat, and others, amongst the Matabele, in what became Rhodesia, there were no baptised Matabele converts to Christianity before the defeat of Lobengula's Impis in the Matabele War of 1893.

The Spiritual Liberation of the Zulu

Observing the significance of The Day of the Covenant is not in any sense anti-Zulu. I have many precious friends amongst the Zulu. Having read extensively on their history, and visited many of the strategic battle sites and museums in Zululand, I have to regard the Covenant made by the Boers, and The Battle of Blood River, as the beginning of the spiritual liberation of Zululand. Only after The Battle of Blood River did hundreds, and then thousands, of Zulus come to Christ.

It needs to be noted that after their victory over Dingaan's forces the Afrikaans Christians built a magnificent mission station and church at Mgundgundlovu (Dingaanstad) within sight of the massacre of the Trek leader Piet Retief and his 100 followers who were brutally tortured and massacred. The Afrikaans missionaries built a school for the blind, an evangelists training college, and many other expressions of Christian love for their former enemies.

After the final defeat of the Zulu military, in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, Zulus came to Christ by the hundreds of thousands. Today there are millions of Zulu Christians.

As a descendant of the Vikings, I look to our former enemy, King Alfred the Great, as one of my Spiritual forefathers. Although the original Hammonds would have been among the Viking invaders of England, I recognise that the conversion and discipling of the once brutal Vikings

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began with the military victory of King Alfred the Great and his Saxon armies over the Vikings. Similarly, I believe that our Zulu brothers and sisters in Christ can rejoice in the Spiritual liberation of the Zulu nation that began with the original Day of the Covenant.

Possessing the Gates of their Enemies

Those who have been justified by Faith are known as children of Abraham. The Father of the Faithful was tested by the Lord when he was required to prepare his own son, Isaac, for sacrifice. Abraham foresaw the coming of Jesus Christ when he declared: "God will Himself provide the Lamb..." Genesis 22:8

God sent His angel to stop Abraham: "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him: for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Genesis 22:11

The Word of the Lord was revealed to Abraham: "In blessing I will bless thee, in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies." Genesis 22:17

Blessing the Nations

In Christ, the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12 and Genesis 22 are fulfilled. In Matthew 16 Christ declares that He is building His Church and the gates of Hell cannot prevail against His Church. (Matthew 16:18). The Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28), and The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) are fulfilled as the children of Abraham are faithful in living and proclaiming the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, applying the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. Entire nations will be blessed as they are brought under the whole counsel of God's Word.

As God's people, we need to know God and to make Him known. We need to understand our history in order to build for a better future. We need to "understand the times" and know what God wants us to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Shaka and the Mfekane

Shaka had built the Zulu into a great warlike nation. He unleashed waves of destruction impi ebomvu (total war) that left enormous stretches of country uninhabited by people. The Mfekane unleashed by Shaka had led to the annihilation of literally hundreds of tribes. Known as "the Black Napoleon", Shaka had soaked Southern Africa in blood, devastating countless kraals, particularly between 1820 and 1824. Shaka was described as tall, handsome and a military genius. He moulded the previously insignificant Zulu tribe into a mighty war machine. He introduced new systems of fighting, abandoning the long throwing spears, and introducing the far more lethal short handled broad-bladed assegai. He compelled his men to throw away their sandals and to harden their feet. His regiments (Impis) would be compelled to dance on thorns

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and if anyone showed pain they were immediately executed. Instead of standing at a distance singing, and taunting the enemy, and ineffectually throwing their spears, Shaka trained his men to fight as a cohesive unit, in the shape of cattle horns. The most experienced troops were at the head to gore, and the younger warriors were put on the horns to encircle the enemy. The Zulu were trained to rush straight in for the kill. They overwhelmed every tribe they came across and annihilated them. Many of the young women and young boys from these defeated tribes were amalgamated into the Zulu tribe, but the older people and warriors were exterminated.

Mzilikazi's Path of Blood

One of Shaka's most effective generals, Mzilikazi, was a dynamic, and ambitious, man. (Mzilikazi was born in 1790, making him slightly the junior of Shaka who was born in 1787.) Mzilikazi was 34 when he fled Zululand with his Impi and founded Matebele nation. To avoid retribution at the hands of his king, Shaka, Mzilikazi led his men on a devastating path of blood through the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and Botswana, later settling in what became Rhodesia. Mzilikazi spared the most promising of the vanquished tribes to be incorporated into his army and tribe. He moulded his heterogeneous horde into a great nation using the best of Zulu military tactics. His path through the interior of Southern Africa was as devastating as a veld fire, as he slaughtered, captured, plundered and left destruction in his wake. Until his defeat at the hands of the Boers at Vegkop, the Matabele were operating out of Western Transvaal. Their defeat at the hands of Hendrik Potgieter's trekkers led Mzilikazi's men to flee across the Limpopo River to settle in Matabeleland (in what later became Rhodesia, and ultimately Zimbabwe).

Dingaan's Treachery

On 22 September 1828, Shaka, the founder and King of the Zulus, was stabbed to death by his half-brothers, Princes Dingaan and Mhlangana. Missionaries and English traders who visited Zululand described Dingaan as "astute", "sly", "cruel", "temperamental", "brutal", "charming", "diplomatic" and "treacherous".

Shortly after murdering his half-brother, Dingaan quickly arranged the assassination of his co-conspirator Mhlangana, and then systematically executed all aristocratic rivals and anyone else who could possibly be a danger to him, including the commander-in-chief of Shaka's army, Ndlaka, who he had strangled.

Dingaan was about 30 years old when he seized power. He began to build himself a new capital in Mgungundlovu (the place of the great elephant).

Dingaan quickly accumulated over 300 wives and concubines. Traders and missionaries described Dingaan's appetite as "voracious, sexually and otherwise" and he soon became extremely obese.

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Unlike his brother Shaka, Dingaan preferred to stay at his palace. He was not a warrior like Shaka. Instead of leading military campaigns, he sent out his Impis and remained at Mgungundlovu surrounded by a continual programme of feasting and dancing.

The Gullibility of Piet Retief

When the Trek leader Piet Retief came to Dingaan to negotiate the right for the Voortrekkers to settle in the depopulated territory between the Tugela and the Bushmans River (present day Natal) he was warned by the missionaries that one of the principle objectives of Shaka had been to totally depopulate all the surrounding territory as far as his soldiers could penetrate so that his followers, over whom he held such despotic sway, might have no asylum or refuge if they attempted to escape his murderous rule. Retief was also warned that the defeat of the renegade Zulu general Mzilikazi at the hands of the Boers in the Transvaal had sent shockwaves through Zululand. As Dingaan's military expeditions against Mzilikazi had all been indecisive, he feared the power of the Boers. Yet, Piet Retief seemed supremely self-confident and brushed aside every warning about the danger of the dictator with whom he was attempting to negotiate.

Mgungundlovu

Dingaan's capital, Mgungundlovu, was described as an efficient military camp entirely fenced in with thorn bushes. The king's quarters dominated the high ground, overlooking the two thousand huts to the sides of the main entrance and open arena. Each hut accommodated twenty warriors. Within the lines of the military huts were four strongly fenced in cattle kraals. Dingaan's own quarters consisted of hundreds of beehive huts including huts for his enormous harem, and his counsel house and reception hall, both some 20 feet in height, with the roof supported by 22 pillars entirely covered in bead work. The floors were made of mud and dung, polished with blood and fat until they shone like a mirror. Mgungundlovu as a whole was arranged in ovals, circles and semi-circles, with thousands of beehive huts appearing like beads in a necklace. Facing the capital, on the other side of the stream below was the hill of execution (KwaMatiwane).

In the Presence of Dingaan

Dingaan required his subjects to throw themselves to the ground and crawl forward in the dust for about two hundred metres before coming to a halt a good distance from his throne. Piet Retief and the other white visitors refused to succumb to such an indignity, and stood in the presence of the king. They noted that Dingaan was entirely hairless. He was shaved every day and was described as having an abhorrence of human hair. He wore many ornaments on his head and his body was rubbed daily with fat to make him appear like polished ebony.

Warnings from the Missionaries

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Acting as the king's secretary was Rev. Francis Owen of the Church Missionary Society. Most of what we know concerning the meetings of Piet Retief with Dingaan come from Owen's diary.

Piet Retief first reached Mgundgundlovu on 5 November 1837. The king entertained him with war dances by thousands of his warriors. Owen warned him of the countless cruelties, tortures and executions that he had been forced to witness. However, Piet Retief seemed most impressed with the "sincerity", "graciousness", "intelligence", and "goodwill" of Dingaan.

After seeking to impress Retief for two days with parades of his regiments and herds, Dingaan informed Retief that he was willing to grant the Trekkers the territory his armies had depopulated across the Tugela, and around Port Natal - on condition that Piet Retief should return the cattle which had been taken by Sikonyela and his Batlokoa people. As they had come on horseback and dressed in clothes, Sikonyela's people had been assumed to be Boers. To prove that the trekkers were not in any way responsible for Sikonyela's cattle raid, he required them to deal with this chief.

The CMS missionary, Francis Owen, warned Piet Retief that he was wasting his time, for Dingaan was utterly inconsistent and had already granted the desired territory to the English government through John Gardiner. However, Piet Retief regarded the expedition against Sikonyela as necessary for the vindication of their honour. Owen questioned how a man of Retief's intelligence could attach any value to any promise made by a tyrant like Dingaan.

When Piet Retief later gave an enthusiastic account of the splendours of Dingaan, his kindness and boundless hospitality, American missionary Rev. George Champion declared: "I have known Dingaan for two years Mr Retief, and I know full well what a dangerous character he is. I can only see disaster should you visit him again." Rev. Kirkwood also warned Retief of Dingaan's intention to have him put to death as "a wizard." But Retief brushed all their warnings aside declaring: "Have no apprehension on my account!"

Sikonyela and the Batlokoa

Chief Sikonyela was described as a man who always caused trouble. He was the son of a famous warrior queen Ma Ntatisa. He had done his share of devastating the country along the Caledon River. The remnants of the devastated tribes he moulded into the Batlokoa. Cattle raids were part of the African way of life and both Sikonyela and many of the trekkers questioned Retief's actions as contrary to his own code of behaviour by interfering in inter-tribal affairs. However, Retief felt himself justified in taking action, if these people had indeed posed as Boers. Retief managed to avoid bloodshed by using a pair of handcuffs to restrain Sikonyela and then declaring that he was "under arrest" and they would only take the handcuffs off if he returned the stolen cattle. Sikonyela was kept prisoner for three days while the seven hundred cattle were rounded up and identified by the accompanying Zulus.

Failing to Heed Advice

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A passing trader warned Piet Retief of Dingaan's planned treachery against him upon his return. Fellow trek leader Gert Maritz repeatedly warned Piet Retief not to return to Dingaan declaring: "I do not trust Dingaan!" But, every attempt to dissuade Piet Retief was brushed aside. Maritz reminded him of the murder of Anders Stockenstrom in 1811 while having friendly talks with a band of Xhosas.

Gullible's Travels

Piet Retief, with almost a hundred followers, arrived at Mgundgundlovu on Saturday 3 February. He was rebuked by Dingaan for having released Sikonyela unharmed. Dingaan was shocked that Retief had not executed him, or at least brought him to the Zulu capital for execution.

He then requested the Boers to make a demonstration of their war dances on their horses. The trekkers staged an impromptu charge on horseback in the royal arena, making the air resound with the sound of their muskets. Dingaan and his subjects had never seen anything like it and were plainly shocked at the speed and agility of the Boers on horseback and the deafening sound of their muskets. The missionary warned Retief that his display was entrenching the fear of Dingaan that he was a wizard and a threat that must be eradicated.

However, when Dingaan agreed to sign the document drawn up by Retief to cede the territory between the Tugela and Umzimvubu Rivers to the trekkers, Retief felt that all of his trust in the word of Dingaan was fulfilled. This document was placed in his leather briefcase with great relief.

However, the CMS missionary, Rev. Owen, was most disturbed that Retief and his followers had missed the Sunday morning church service on 4 February, for these formalities for the king. Retief later said that he had forgotten what day of the week it was.

On Monday the trekkers were treated to an endless display of war dances and military manouvres by Dingaan's Impis. Dingaan was described as "a master showman" with his entertainment the most spectacular ever seen in the sub-continent. Dingaan again asked for a display of the Boers war tactics on horseback. The Zulus sat stunned at the speed and perfect control of the men with their rifles on horseback.

Defenceless Before Dingaan

On Tuesday morning William Wood, a young English trader fluent in Zulu, who was visiting the Owens, warned Retief that "your entire party will be massacred before the day is out." As the Retief party struck camp and were preparing to leave, they were invited to a final farewell display. For this they were requested to leave their firearms, bandoleers and powder horns outside the gates of the kraal. Incredibly they asceeded to this demand. Leaving their firearms outside the kraal, they walked defenseless into the arena of Dingaan's kraal. After ominous war dances which increased in volume and intensity, Dingaan stood up and shouted "Babulaleni

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abathakathi!" ("kill the wizards!").

Cold-Blooded Murder

From across the stream on the opposite hillside, Francis Owen was reading the New Testament when a messenger rushed up to inform him that Dingaan had decided to kill the Boers but he was not to be concerned. Owen looked with horror as he saw an immense multitude, "about nine or ten Zulus to each Boer were dragging the helpless unarmed victims to the fatal spot" on the hill of execution. Many of the Boers were impaled on assagais, and they were all clubbed to death. Piet Retief's young son was killed before his eyes. Amongst the dead was their interpreter, Thomas Halstead, the only Englishman of the party. The various missionaries and traders who had warned Piet Retief repeatedly questioned how such an intelligent and experienced man as Piet Retief could have been so thoroughly deceived, even mesmerized, by the tyrant Dingaan. Soon, the sky above the hill of execution was black with vultures. The heart and liver of Piet Retief was brought to Dingaan, but the rest of the corpses were left out in the open on the hill of execution to later be discovered along with Retiefs' bloodstained leather case containing the signed treaty with Dingaan.

It was almost ten years since Dingaan had murdered his half-brother Shaka to assume the chieftainship.

Massacre at Midnight

About noon on that fateful Tuesday, 6 February, Rev. Owen saw Dingaan send out a huge army in the direction from where the Boers had come. There was no doubt that even worse was to come. In the early hours of 17 February, ten thousand Zulu warriors attacked the sleeping Voortrekkers between the Bushman's the Blaauwkrants Rivers. There was no moon that night and it was pitch dark. Trekkers awoke to the sounds of their dogs barking. Wave after wave of Zulu warriors were stabbing men, women and children, wiping out whole families.

The followers of Gert Maritz were more cautiously laagered and better prepared to defend themselves. However, the followers of Piet Retief were spread out and most vulnerable. Sarel Cilliers and Gert Maritz led charges to rescue fleeing trekkers. Women and children, even as young as ten years old, fought tenaciously, selling their lives dearly. Marthinus Oosthuizen charged through the mass of Zulus to a wagon for ammunition and then back again to re-supply the beleaguered Van Rensburgs surrounded on a hill.

Fighting continue until the afternoon of the 17th when the Zulu army retreated, taking over 25,000 cattle, and many horses and sheep, with them. Many hundreds of the Zulu attackers had been killed in the fierce fighting. As the Voortrekkers began to count up their own dead, they grieved over the loss of 185 of their children murdered. Of the women 56 were dead - this included even grandmothers - many with multiple assagai wounds. The murdered men numbered 40. Incredibly, some women who had been horribly stabbed were found alive amongst the piles of dead. Johanna van der Merwe and Margarita Prinsloo had each survived

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despite 20 assagai wounds, and Klasina Le Roux with 17 stab wounds.

As Gert Maritz organized a mass burial of the slain trekkers, the sky was full of circling vultures and the sounds of weeping could be heard throughout the area. The Boers later founded a town at the site of the massacre which was named Weenen (The Place of Weeping).

Ambushed at the Buffalo River

On 6 April a counter-attack by a Boer commander led by the two rival leaders Piet Uys and Andries Potgieter was ambushed across the Buffalo River at Italeni. A British expedition from Port Natal rushed to assist the beleaguered trekkers, but ten of the commando were killed, including Piet Uys and his brave son Dirkie who kept fighting by his father's side to the very end. As this commando retreated it became known as the Vlugcommando (the fleeing commando).

It was the darkest time of despair for the Voortrekkers. Death, disaster and dissention seemed to doom their ambitious enterprise.

Andries Pretorius Comes from the Transvaal

With the arrival of Andries Pretorius from the Transvaal, there was fresh hope. The widow of Piet Retief declared of Andries Pretorius: "This man has been sent by God. He will help us obtain justice." Andries Pretorius was a dynamic pistol packing farmer from Graaf Reinet. He was described as a tall, imposing figure in a well cut suit, with a pistol and a cutlass at his belt. He also came with 60 Transvaal volunteers for the Wencommando that he intended to organize. At an assembly of the Volksraad, Pretorius was elected Commandant General.

The Wencommando

Within a couple of days, he was heading out with 464 men, and 64 wagons, to engage the Zulus. Pretorius adopted the motto Eendragt Maakt Magt (unity is strength). (These words were to become the motto of the Transvaal Republic.) All in the Wencommando (The Victory Commando) were lectured on discipline, Christian conduct, decency, integrity, compassion and courage. As God's soldiers their conduct had to be of a high standard. The chaplain, Sarel Cilliers, who was widely respected as a man of God, and who had proved himself in battle at Vegkop, ensured strict religious observance with daily devotions and prayer times where the men were required to kneel.

On the move the 64 wagons travelled in four rows so as not to make the column too long for the vanguards and rearguards to protect from ambush. Every night their laager was drawn up, sentries posted, inspections held, and defensive drills practiced. Scouting patrols were sent out every day to ascertain the whereabouts of the Zulu army, and to identify any potential threats.

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The Covenant

As the Tugela River was flood, the Wencommando crossed near Spioenkop. At Waschbank, on Sunday 9 December, Sarel Cilliers stood on a gun carriage before the men had who assembled for worship and he proposed a solemn vow: "My brethren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we stand before the Holy God of Heaven and earth to make a promise. If He will be with us and protect us and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we may observe the day and the date as an anniversary in each year and a day of Thanksgiving like the Sabbath, in His honour; and that we shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for remembrance even for our posterity; and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let them return from this place. For the honour of His Name shall be joyfully exalted, and to Him the fame and the honour of the victory must be given."

All the English volunteers joined with the Afrikaans Voortrekkers in taking this Vow. From 9 December the Vow was repeated every evening, up until the night of the 15th, during evening services when Psalms were sung and prayers were offered.

Confronting the Zulu

There was a calm deliberation amongst the men of the Wencommando. They knew that they were going up against the most formidable force in Africa at that time. Up to that point, the Zulu Impis had never been beaten. They knew that Dingaan had over 20,000 warriors that he could throw at them. They were only 464, and this being 1838, they only had smooth ball muskets, which required 30 to 40 seconds to reload. And they knew charging Zulu warriors could cover a lot of ground in that time.

To the Ncome River

On Saturday the 15th of December the Commando crossed the Buffalo River and outspanned between the Buffalo River and the Ncome River. Two scouts reported that they had seen a huge Zulu army only half an hour ride away. Pretorius inspected the terrain for a suitable laager site and he sensed God's guidance for there was a perfect spot on the other side of the Ncome. On its western bank there was a deep hippopotamus pool and a large donga, or gully. The laager was set up making use of these natural defensive features on two sides. The 64 wagons were firmly lashed together with two battle gates secured at the two openings where the canon were placed. The back of the D-formation was set against the donga, and the semi-circle faced towards the open plain. Candles were set out everywhere and lanterns suspended over the wagons on the long whip handles, to prevent the Zulus from approaching the laager unseen in the night. As Sarel Cilliers led the Commando in repeating the Vow for the last time, and then in singing the Psalms, the Zulus had moved within earshot and could hear their strange singing and see the eerily lit laager.

To Beat the Unbeatable Foe

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It was a suspenseful moonless night. Two hours before dawn the trekkers were at their posts. A veil of mist lifted and a perfect day broke. There was not a cloud in the vivid blue sky and there was no wind. It was a day of crystal clarity. As the mist lifted the Boers saw the entire Zulu army seated facing them with their shields in front. The front row of the Zulus was only 40 paces away from the half moon of wagons. Row after row of Zulu regiments were grouped according to the colour of their shields. There were between 12,000 and 15,000 Zulus surrounding the laager.

"Do not fear their numbers, we can deal with them", shouted Pretorius. As warriors were moving into position to attack from the donga in the rear, Commandant Pretorius decided to seize the initiative and he ordered his men to open fire immediately. Before the Zulus could even begin their intimidating war dances the roar of gunfire shattered the early morning peace. The day began in furious battle with Zulus yelling, hissing, smashing their assagais against their shields, thunderously stamping the ground with their feet, charging the laager at full speed. The two little canon cut swathes through the Zulu ranks, and the deadly aim of the Boer Commandos took their toll. As a mass of Zulus tried to scale the donga and assault the rear of the laager, Sarel Cilliers led his men to cut them down.

Taunting the Enemy

As the Zulus retreated out of range to about 500 metres, Pretorius sent out his brother and an interpreter to taunt the Zulus: "What are you doing, men of Dingaan? We have come to fight men, not women and children! Why don't you attack?"

Facing the Zulu Tidal Wave

The Zulus leapt up to attack, drumming their shields, yelling, whistling, hissing and swept in a black wave down upon the wagons. This was the longest charge of the two hour battle. Muzzles were becoming dangerously hot, wagons bristled with assagais, but the strategic positioning of the laager was frustrating the assaults of the Zulus. The closer they got to the wagons, the more they were funneled and compressed by the river and the donga until they were tripping into one another and stumbling over their earlier casualties. Their losses were becoming enormous, yet without achieving anything. Never in the experience of their warrior nation had anything like this happened to them before.

Charging the Enemy

Andries Pretorius sensed a change in the tempo of the battle and ordered a charge from the laager. He had the two canon dragged out and fired from the front. Then he led a charge into the middle of the Zulu Impi. For the first time in history a Zulu Impi broke and fled. The cohesion on which the Zulu Impi was based was shattered. The Zulus began to flee across the Ncome River, many drowning in the process. As Pretorius fired on one Zulu his horse reared and threw him off. A Zulu lunged at him and Pretorius managed to ward off the assagai

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with his rifle. As the Zulu struck again Pretorius was thrust through his left hand. He pinned the Zulu to the ground and grappled hand to hand until the warrior was stabbed with his own assagai.

Pursuing the Enemy

On the other side Sarel Cilliers led a commando charge that put to flight the other section of the Zulu army.

The mounted Boers pursued the fleeing Zulus, shooting at them as long as their bullets lasted, and firing pebbles when all their bullets were exhausted. Over 3000 Zulu dead were counted around the laager. Yet not one Voortrekker had been killed, although several were wounded.

Thanksgiving

As the Sun set the exhausted Commando members returned for a service of Thanksgiving and for their first meal of the day. Then they had to clean their muskets and cast bullets for the final push to track down Dingaan at Mgundgundlovu.

The Remains of Retief

By the 20th December the Zulu capital was sighted. It was ablaze from one end to the other. Dingaan had fled and set fire to his own capital. When the grizzly remains of Piet Retief and his 100 followers was discovered on KwaMatiwane they saw the legs and arms still tied with thongs, the impaling sticks still visible. Next to the remains of Piet Retief lay his water bottle and leather satchel which still contained Dingaan's signed and witnessed agreement for the cession of Natal.

On Christmas Day the remains of these victims were all gathered and buried in a communal grave at the foot of the koppie.

The Zulu kingdom fell into a civil war and Dingaan was overthrown by his half-brother Mpande.

Loving their Enemies

It is remarkable that, despite the treachery that the Boers had endured at the hands of the Zulu, and the massacres of so many unsuspecting women and children on the banks of the Blaauwkrans River, that no atrocities were committed by the Boers in retaliation. Instead, the Biblical injunction to love their enemies was fulfilled by the vigorous missionary work which was established by the Reformed Church in Zululand, establishing schools, hospitals, churches and orphanages, even within sight of where Piet Retief and his followers were so brutally murdered. In the century and a half since that original Day of the Covenant, many millions of Zulus have come to Christ and Zululand has been blessed by Revival. In a very real sense all of that began

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with the Covenant proposed by Sarel Cilliers, and enthusiastically adopted by the Wencommando.

Set Free to Serve Christ

Just as the descendants of the Vikings can look back to their one time enemy King Alfred the Great as their Spiritual father who brought the first Vikings to the Lord after defeating them in battle, so the Zulus and the Afrikaners and English, with whom they had once been locked in deadly battle, are now united in Christ. With the defeat of Dingaan, and later Ceteswayo, the power of the witchdoctors was also broken and the Spiritual liberation of the Zulu people began. As the Lord promised in Genesis 22:17: "...thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies..." Jesus Christ is building His church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Blessed in Order to be a Blessing

God's promise to Abraham is being fulfilled to this day: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and ye shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3

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