

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
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Consecration

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Consecration is a term well known among the Bible Student Fellowship. It was also used freely in the Adventist Movement, led by Bro. William Miller of the early 1800s, which preceded the Truth Movement. But in much of the Christian world the term is seldom heard and its meaning seldom appreciated.

One reason for this is a misunderstanding among many Christians about the purpose of the Christian call. Some mistakenly suppose it is merely a means of escaping horrible punishment in the afterlife. Thus a simple profession of faith, and reasonably moral conduct, are supposed sufficient to avoid the jeopardy and secure a place in heaven.

However, this seriously misapprehends God's purpose. God is not merely saving a few before He destroys (or worse) the vast majority. Rather, God is selecting from among men and women of faith an elect class for a special honor during the coming Millennium. That honor will be to reign with Christ in heaven, as spiritual rulers of the world. Their purpose will be to lead the remainder of the world into an era of righteousness, teaching them godliness and truth.

This program of deliverance for the world will include all the dead of past ages, for they will be resurrected back to life during the Millennium in order to learn righteousness. As Satan and his demons now lead the world into sin and ignorance, then Christ and his saints will lead the world into obedience and understanding. (See Revelation 20:1-3, 6.)

High Standards

When we understand the high honor to which the saints are called, we can better appreciate the high standards which are expected of them. These standards may be considered in four parts. (1) Godly conduct, (2) Character Development, (3) Study of the Truth, (4) Service and Sacrifice.

Godly Conduct. When the Apostle Paul wrote his first epistle to the new ecclesia in Corinth, Greece, he knew some of them had practiced the darker sins of the world. He listed these in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 — fornication, idolatry, adultery (and worse), thievery, coveting, intoxication, railing. He warned them, "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (verse 9). Those brethren were not then committing these deeds, but some of them had previously. "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11). Having been washed, they should not return to the former conduct, nor should any of the consecrated. Repentance from sin is a prerequisite for consecration.

The attitudes and conduct which should characterize all Christians, specially those who have consecrated their life to God, were described by Jesus himself in his "Sermon on the Mount." They are humility, sorrow for sin, meekness, holiness, expressing mercy to others, purity of heart, making peace, and suffering for doing good (Matthew 5:1-11).

Character Development. Christian character is the inward quality that produces holy Christian conduct. Our character is the sum of the principles and qualities that are in our heart and mind.

Our character is expressed outwardly by our conduct. However, God knows the intent of our heart even when our conduct does not express our intents, or when our conduct is misunderstood or misrepresented by others. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

It is the easiest thing possible to simply drift with the tide of the world. But one who has consecrated their life to God will resist this, knowing the spirit of the world leads contrary to the spirit of God. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"

(James 4:4). We develop Christian character by applying spiritual values to the daily experiences we encounter.

There are two well known lists of Christian character. One is by the Apostle Paul, the other by the Apostle Peter. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22, 23). “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. For if these things be in you, and abound ... an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:5-12, condensed).

Let all those who have consecrated their lives to God “set your affection on things above,” and seek daily to grow their characters in these qualities (Colossians 3:2).

Study of the Truth. If we are consecrated to God, we want to know the plan of God, so that we can be in harmony with Him, and work in sympathy with Him. In the days of the Apostle Paul many of his fellow Jews had “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2). We should be zealous as they, but our zeal should be directed by an accurate knowledge of the Divine Plan.

One of the central features of truth Paul labored to explain to brethren in his day was the change from the old Jewish Age to the new Gospel Age. When we observe how Paul reasoned on the subject, it teaches us how we can reason on scripture. One method was understanding the types, or pictures, used in the Old Testament. For example, Paul cited the spiritual meaning of the wives of Abraham (see Galatians 4:21-31), the meaning of Israel’s Day of Atonement (Hebrews 9:1-14, 10:1-10), and the meaning of Melchizedek as a figure of Christ (Hebrews chapters 5, 7). Another method was drawing lessons from the prophets (see Romans 9:23-33 for example).

Those who have consecrated themselves to God will also want to know the plans and purposes of God which are maturing now. This can only be done through a study of the Scriptures, with the various helpful teachers God provides through the holy Spirit.

Thus we urge all the consecrated, and even those newly interested in God’s Plan, to think carefully about what is true respecting God’s plan. Study the presentations made here, and in other Bible Student helps, with Bible in hand. This means taking time from our daily lives to read and think through the issues of Truth.

“Walk worthy of the Lord ... increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10). “This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Philippians 1:9). “No work is more noble and ennobling than the reverent study of the revealed purposes of God” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 13).



*The High Priest, Consecrated to his office
(From "Tabernacle Shadows," page 31).*

Service and Sacrifice. Part of a consecrated life is active service in the cause of Christ, which means sacrificing our earthly interests for our spiritual work. This may mean expending our time, strength, energy, talents, or means for the Lord’s cause. Opening our home for fellowship with the brethren. Attending meetings of the Lord’s people rather than spending time on ourselves, pursuing hobbies and things of this world. For the Apostle Paul it meant travelling to serve the brethren, preach the Truth, accepting physical abuse and imprisonment, and finally martyrdom.

The circumstances of consecrated brothers and sisters in Christ will vary, but each should look for some opportunity to serve the Truth and assist the brethren. The apostles of our Lord admonished us to do this, and gave examples of this in their own lives.

“I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me” (Philippians 2:17).

“Ye know the house of Stephanas ... that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints ... submit

yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth” (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16).

“It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:25, 26).

The Word “Consecration”

This term, used so freely among Bible Students, is drawn primarily from the Old Testament. There are eight different Hebrew words in the Old Testament which are rendered consecrate, consecrated, consecration, or consecrations.

5144 — *nazar*, to set apart (for sacred purposes), Numbers 6:12. This text refers to the Nazarite vow, which is a picture of the consecration of Christians to God. We may treat this passage separately, on another occasion. Here we merely note that the worshipper taking this vow was to “consecrate [*nazar*, set apart] unto Jehovah the days of his separation.” So should we set apart the days of our earthly life for the sacred purpose of devotion to God.

5145 — *nezer*, something set apart. Numbers 6:7, “the consecration [separation] of his God is upon his head.” This also refers to those taking the Nazarite vow.

2763 — *charam*, to seclude, by a ban, to devote to religious use. Micah 4:13, “I will consecrate their gain unto Jehovah.” This refers to the wealth of gentile nations after the judgments of God. It is not directly relevant to our present study.

6944 — *qodesh*, a sacred place or thing. Joshua 6:19, “all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto Jehovah.” This refers to the precious things of the gentile nations conquered by Joshua which would “come into the treasury of Jehovah.” These precious things taken from the world might represent the Church Class (the elect of the Gospel Age). Compare Haggai 2:7, 8, where God will shake the nations, and the silver and gold, representing the saints of God, will glorify his spiritual temple.

6942 — *qadash*, to make, pronounce, or observe as clean. This is used three times of the priests. “Make Aaron’s garments [in which] to consecrate him” (Exodus 28:3). “Anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them” for the ministry (Exodus 30:30). “The priests, the sons of Aaron ... are consecrated to burn incense” (2 Chronicles 26:18).

The most frequent Hebrew term rendered “consecrate” is actually a pair of words used together, 4390 (*mala*, to fill) and 3027 (*yad*, open hand). To fill an open hand, in this context, means for the priests to be devoted to their sacred duty to God and ministering to others. In English there is an expression, “my hands are full,” meaning one is fully occupied. So it should be with those consecrated to God during this age. We should have our “hands full” in the sacred service which is our privilege.

4394 — *millu*, from 4390, a filling, or consecration. This word is used of the offerings by which the priests were consecrated to their office. It appears six times in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, referring to the “ram of consecration.” Once it refers to the days of consecration of the priests (Leviticus 8:33).

These uses of “consecration” respecting priests are fitting to us, since we are called to be priests of God to reconcile the world back to God during the Kingdom. So we should be consecrated to God as those priests were, and even more deeply so.

The New Testament

The term is also found twice in the New Testament in a different form, namely “consecrated.” The most relevant case appears in Hebrews 7:28, which speaks of Jesus consecrated as a priest to serve God. “The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated¹ for evermore.”

The “oath” refers to the oath given by God to King David in Psalms 110:4, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Prophetically, this refers to Jesus Christ, who was descended from the line of David. Melchizedek was a king of Jerusalem who was also a priest (see Genesis 14:18). Paul says Melchizedek was a picture of Jesus, who in heaven, after his glorification, is also a King and Priest.

Even the name of Melchizedek, and the title of Melchizedek, fit our Lord Jesus. His name is composed of two parts, *Melchi*, which means king, and *zedek*, which means righteousness. His title was king of Salem, which means king of Peace. “King of Righteousness” and “King of Peace” are both good descriptors of our Lord Jesus. (See Hebrews 7:2, where Paul applies these meanings to Jesus.)

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Jesus is now our high priest, but during the Millennium we will join with him as priests for the world. “They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him [Christ] a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). So let us now consecrate our lives to God, in order later to serve with him to uplift the world.

Second Instance. The second instance of “consecrated” in the New Testament is from a different word in the original Greek, and has a different meaning. It is from word number 1457 in Strong’s Concordance, and means “to renew, that is, inaugurate.” The text is Hebrews 10:20 and refers to the “new and living way which he [Christ] hath consecrated [inaugurated] for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

In this passage Paul calls to mind that when Jesus died on the cross, remarkably, the thick veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). In the Old Testament the veil separated the Holy from the Most Holy, and presumably the veil in the temple did the same. Thus the death of Christ opens up the way for us to approach the presence of God, through Christ. The present call of the Gospel Age to consecrate our lives to God, and embrace the heavenly call, was never extended to people of past ages, not even to the righteous of those ages. This call is unique, and was opened up — inaugurated — through Christ’s death on the cross.

The same Greek word, Strong’s word number 1457, *egkainizo*, is used only one other time in the New Testament. This is Hebrews 9:18, “whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated [inaugurated, consecrated, *egkainizo*] without blood.” By using this word for the inauguration of the Old Covenant with Israel, and with the New Call for the Church, Paul shows that the former was a type, figure, or representation, of the latter. In both cases blood offerings were necessary. At the establishment of the Law these blood offerings were animal sacrifices (Exodus 24:5). At the establishment of our Heavenly Call, the blood offering was the sacrifice of Jesus himself, crucified on the cross of Calvary (Hebrews 9:15).²

By this means Jesus provided the price of Ransom for Adam’s race. Those who consecrate their lives to God now receive the redemption provided by this ransom now, whereas the world will receive the redemption later, during the Millennial Age.

Are All Christians Consecrated?

It would be good if they were. But not all are. Many believe in God, believe in Jesus as their savior, and appreciate what God has provided. They may (and should) refrain from sin and evil as best they can. But they do not express their thanks by committing themselves personally. Others give of their time to attend worship services, some express their goodness by works of kindness and charity. All of this is commendable.

But there is a further step necessary for those who would join the cause of Christ and become his — namely, a thoughtful consecration to God of their lives.

If this step is taken, then it is proper to symbolize that decision with water baptism, as a testimony to others that you have decided upon this commitment to God for your life.

If you have not considered the matter of consecration, take time to do so. In this case, it would be good to read our Lord’s words about making this decision, in Luke 14, verses 26 through the end of the chapter. Spend some time on this, read it thoughtfully, perhaps twice.

Mentally, put yourself in the scene if you can. Jesus was sitting in “the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day” (verse 1). Some in the home were friends, some were not, but all watched him, and listened to his advice. He spoke of humility (verse 11), and of giving without thought of getting back in turn (verse 14).

A friend remarked, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Hearing this, Jesus gave a parable about a great supper prepared by a good man, who sent his servants to invite his guests. It represents the invitation which God extended, through Christ, to come into the spiritual kingdom of God. Most of those invited declined, giving one excuse or another. So the man decided to open the invitation wider, to any who would be interested — for he insisted, “my house [will] be filled” (verse 23).

Afterward Jesus departed, but “there went great multitudes” with him (verse 25). He turned, and addressed them. There we find the words of verses 26-35. Take up your Bible, and read them through. If you have already, thoughtfully, given your life in consecration to God, you have responded to his invitation. If you have not, consider the benefits of doing so.

As you read, keep in mind the blessings promised, and the conditions for them: “by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality” (Romans 2:7). Remember the privilege you will secure of being together with Christ, in heaven, to bless “all the families of the earth” during the Millennium. The call is extended, because God wishes us to respond favorably. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

(1) The Greek word in this case is Strong’s number 5048, *teleioo*, “to complete, accomplish, or consummate.” This Greek word is used 23 other times, rendered fulfilled, perfect, perfected, or finish.

(2) Hebrews 9:18 and 10:20, the only scriptures which use *egkainizo*, are further linked by the text which follows in each case. Hebrews 9:19 speaks of the sprinkling of the Israelites with the blood which established the Law Covenant. Hebrews 10:21 refers to us “having our hearts sprinkled” by the blood of Christ. The parallel Paul makes is between the establishment of the Law Covenant with Israel in the Jewish Age, and the better covenant applied to Christians during this Gospel Age.

Daniel Chapter Two

"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44).

The text above speaks of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, which will rule worldwide. It is the same Kingdom spoken of by John the Apostle on the isle of Patmos, recorded in Revelation 20:1-6, more than half a millennium after Daniel's day. It is the establishment of that Kingdom, on the ruins of four world empires which precede it, which is the subject of chapter two of Daniel.

This chapter begins by noting the year of a famous dream of Nebuchadnezzar: "The second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar" (verse 1). The date of that year is 603 BC, and it was an auspicious year. Nebuchadnezzar had recently completed the conquest of "Hattu," which includes all the land of Israel.

Seven years earlier, in 610 BC, the armies of Babylon successfully took the last stronghold of the Assyrian empire, namely the city of Haran, which was probably the same city where Abraham stopped on his way to Canaan more than 1200 years earlier (Genesis 11:31).

Conquering the Land of Israel

Midway through those seven years, in the year 607 BC, the armies of Babylon crossed the Euphrates and began a campaign which four years later saw all of the land of Israel conquered by Babylon, right down to Israel's ancient southwestern border at the River of Egypt. About this campaign, the Scriptures record the following. "And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt" (2 Kings 24:7).

Here is the record of the beginning of this campaign from the archives of the Babylonian Empire. "The nineteenth year [of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, 607 BC] ... In the month Tishri the king of Akkad [Babylon] mustered his army and marched to Kimuhu which is on the bank of the Euphrates. He crossed the river, did battle against the city, and in the month Kislev he captured the city. He sacked it (and) stationed a garrison of his in it. In the month Shebat he went home."¹

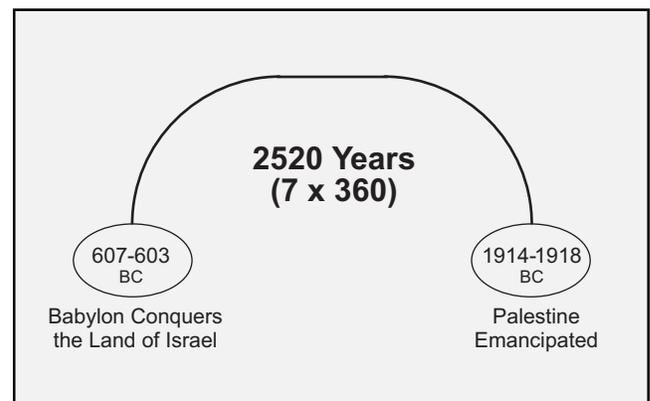
This scrap of history is relevant to prophecy, because 2520 years later brings us to the prophetic marker 1914 AD. This year introduced the First World War, which broke the nations of Christendom, and freed Israel from the Ottoman Empire — two major events in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Bible Students everywhere know the time prophecy involved in this, namely seven prophetic periods of 360 years each, which span the period from the conquest of Israel to the liberation of Israel. During this period God permitted four world empires to hold sway over his

people — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. These are the very kingdoms which Daniel Chapter Two speaks of, as we will see.

By the year 603 BC, the year introduced in verse one of our study, the four year conquest of Nebuchadnezzar was complete. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (verse 37).

The parallel date 2520 years later is 1918 AD. In that year, the four year war which released the oppression of the land of Israel came to an end. The new master of Palestine was Britain, who declared their intent to make it a national homeland for the Jewish people. We will speak more of this period of time when we treat chapter four.



The Dream of Nebuchadnezzar

The subject of this chapter is the well known dream of Nebuchadnezzar. He told the wise men of his realm that he could not remember the dream and asked them both to recall the dream to him, and give the interpretation of the dream. They could do neither, and the king ordered their execution.

By this time Daniel and his three Hebrew friends were counted among the offending group, and when they learned of the crisis they asked for time and prayed to God. Then Daniel went before the king, rehearsed the dream, and gave its meaning. All of this was of God. The heathen wise men and their invocations had failed.

When Daniel stood before the king, he did not seek personal honor, but humbly gave all the glory to God, as we should also for our knowledge of Truth. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these" (verse 28).

The dream is recounted in verses 29-35. If the reader is new to this dream, it would be good to take your Bible, read these texts, and get it clearly in mind. This will help grasp the meaning of the dream, which traces world history from the days of Daniel to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

The dream was of a large image made of four metals — gold, silver, copper and iron. The head of gold represented the empire of Nebuchadnezzar, namely Babylon (verse 38).² The arms and chest of silver represented the kingdom of the Medes and Persians which began their reign as an empire when Babylon fell to Cyrus, who was Median on his mother’s side, and Persian on his father’s side.

The belly and thighs of brass represented the kingdom of Greece founded by Alexander the Great, who defeated Darius III, known as Darius Codomannus, in 332 BC. After Alexander died his empire divided into four parts, and all four parts ultimately were taken by Rome. In the box below are the four empires, the famous first emperor of each, and the year they began to rule an empire. (We begin Babylon’s rule in 610 BC when they superseded Assyria).

Four World Empires		
Babylon	610 BC	Nebuchadnezzar
Medo-Persia	539 BC	Cyrus
Greece	332 BC	Alexander
Rome	48 BC ³	Julius Caesar

The Last Part of the Image

The two iron legs represent the Roman Empire. It is worthy of noting that the two arms represent a kingdom of two parts — the Medes and Persians — and the two legs represent a kingdom that became divided into two parts, the Eastern empire and the Western empire.

The last part of the image deserves special attention. The legs of iron terminated in feet which were a mixture of iron and clay. The iron represents the strength of the Roman government, but the clay represents something less strong, and brittle. “Whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron [the strength of civil government], forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly brittle” (Daniel 2:41-43).

Notice that the toes are mentioned twice. There would be 10 toes of course, and this matches the picture in Daniel 7:7, where the Roman empire is represented by a great beast having 10 horns. In both cases the 10 parts (toes or horns) represent the kingdoms of Europe which materialized as the Roman Empire ceased being a single monolithic power and fragmented into various countries.

In the beginning, these 10 parts were 10 Germanic tribes which descended from the north and spread through the empire. The specific tribes which constituted the original 10 may be the following: Ostrogoths, Lombards, Herules, Visigoths, Sueves, Vandals, Franks, Burgundians, Alemans, Anglo-Saxons. (For more information on these 10, their coins, rulers, and dates, see “A Foundation for Understanding Prophecy,” James Parkinson, in the July/August 2005 issue of *The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*.)

All of these tribes became nominally Christianized. As time passed, and Christianity became the prevailing religion of the empire, it lost its purity and coalesced into the Roman Catholic Church. There were faithful ones who resisted this decay, “even in those days wherein Antipas [anti-papacy] was my faithful martyr” (Revelation 2:13). Politically, Europe became a mixture of political (iron) and religious (clay) rulerships, which in time became known as the “Holy Roman Empire.”

The church was never intended to reign over the nations during this age. But Papacy aspired to rulership and became the dominant power over the Christian world for centuries. The time when the true Church is to rule the world is during the Millennium, following their marriage to Jesus, who receives his appointment to regal authority by God himself (see Daniel 7:14). The true Church are the chaste “Bride” of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 19:7).

By contrast, the false church which allied itself with the kings of earth is symbolized as a harlot. Revelation 17:4-6 depicts the Roman Catholic Church with just this symbol. Daniel 2:43 refers to this also, with the following language: “they [the clay, the false religious systems of Christianity] shall mingle themselves with the seed of men.”⁴

Thus the feet of the image represent Europe as it existed during the centuries when Papacy dominated the Christian world. In our last issue we noted that chapter one had lessons about the persecution of the Church by pagan Rome. Now we see that chapter two symbolizes the foe of the True Church as Papal Rome. We will see yet another persecuting agent when we later examine chapter three.

The End of the Image

Verse 34 recounts how this great image, representing the kingdoms of this world, finally falls. “A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.”

The stone represents the true Church, who are “cut out” of this world through the unseen power of the holy Spirit. The saints who died through the age have been raised to life already (since we have entered the Harvest of the age). Thus part of the body of Christ has already been raised to power in heaven. This is the power which smites the image at its feet, and causes its collapse.



The metallic image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two, with the beasts of chapter seven for comparison. Both visions show the same four Universal Kingdoms, from two different views. The image from Nebuchadnezzar's dream shows how the kings of earth view their empires. The dreadful beasts from Daniel's dream shows how God sees them.

Some feel that this blow represents the Armageddon blow, yet future. However, many other brethren hold that the smiting of the image refers to the great impact the Kingdoms of Christendom received in World War I, continuing in World War II, which broke apart the rule of kings. In this case the dream includes the entire breaking process, which has been progressing since 1914.

In support of this view is verse 35. "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloor; and the wind carried them away." There is a progression here. The initial impact breaks up the image. It then becomes like the chaff in "summer," subsequently to be blown away by the wind.

In the Scriptures, "summer" is the time of harvest, which is the closing period of the Gospel Age (see the article "The Gospel Age Harvest" in this issue.) So the image is being broken now, during the harvest, before its final disposal during the later stages of trouble which conclude the harvest.

As the saints still living in the flesh finish their lives here, and are resurrected as spirit beings, we join those who have preceded us. Thus all of the elect, "all his saints," will have some part in bringing to pass the "judgment written" (see Psalm 149:9) before the close of the time of trouble.

The Stone Grows

Verse 35 says, "and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." The Kingdom of God initially is composed of Christ and his saints. Then the Ancient Worthies will be raised to life as human leaders for Israel and the world. Gradually the rule of the kingdom will extend outward, and as it does it will fulfill the symbolism of the stone growing into a mountain. At last the entire world will succumb to the blessed influence of that Kingdom — "and filled the whole earth."

Verse 44 says, "In the days of these kings [the gentile kingdoms] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and [unlike the other kingdoms which were succeeded by another power] the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Thus the Kingdom of God will be both universal, and everlasting.

The Response of Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar was an autocrat. He could and would command the death of persons at his will, as for example his decree to destroy all the wise men.

But in his conduct, though rash and unyielding, there was a thread of sense and responsibility. When he recognized Daniel's true spirit of godly wisdom, he honored it as ardently as he was willing to punish others.

"Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation, and sweet odours unto him ... and said, Of a truth ... your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings" (Daniel 2:46, 47). By honoring Daniel he honored God whom Daniel served.

So in the Kingdom, when the world comes to recognize the Daniel class as representatives of Jehovah, those of the proper disposition will honor their new rulers as representatives of Jehovah. "Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Revelation 3:9).

Daniel was given "many great gifts, and made ... ruler over the whole province ... and chief of the governors" (Daniel 2:48). So will the Church be set over the world, to rule and judge and bless them during the Millennium.

(1) *Texts from Cuneiform Sources*, Volume V, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, Albert Grayson, 1975). This closed Babylon's annual campaign, which was renewed in successive years.

(2) Daniel 2:38 says of Nebuchadnezzar, "thou art this head of gold." Some of our readers will recognize the importance of this declaration in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, for it establishes that the "image" of Gentile Power had already begun its rulership 16 years before the fall of the Kingdom of Zedekiah. If the nations represented in that image ruled for 2520 years, the period often termed the "Times of the Gentiles," then those 2520 years had already begun in year two of Nebuchadnezzar.

The prophet Jeremiah told Israel that if they would submit to this punishment, they would suffer comparatively less. But if they rebelled against this divinely imposed punishment, then God would take the further step of destroying the kingdom and burning the city (Jeremiah 38:17, 18). They did rebel, and God did destroy the kingdom. Zedekiah was removed from his throne, without a replacement, in 587 BC.

(3) In the December issue we used the date 31 BC, which was the year of the Battle of Actium, between Rome and Egypt. Rome won, and thereafter Egypt was a subject power. In this case we chose to use the year 48 BC because it coincides with the first empire ruler of Rome, Julius Caesar. At the Battle of Actium which followed, Augustus Caesar was the victor.

Julius Caesar defeated his rival Pompey in the summer of 48 BC and pursued him to Egypt. Pompey was killed by the Egyptians, but soon Caesar found himself pressed in war against the Egyptians, in which he was victorious just barely. After a liaison with Cleopatra, he arranged for the joint rule of Egypt by Cleopatra and her brother before leaving the country.

(4) Sometimes there is confusion whether the "they" in verse 43 refers to the iron or the clay. Notice that verse 41 says the feet and toes were "part of potters clay, and part of iron," making the clay the leading subject. Verse 43 then says that iron was mixed with the "miry clay," and the following pronoun "they" evidently refers to this leading element, clay. So Papacy has been unfaithful to Christ, by mixing themselves with the seed of men in spiritual fornication. Papacy taught her subjects to do the same, that is, aspire to earthly rule and power rather than keeping themselves chaste for their heavenly bridegroom. See Revelation 2:20 where "Jezebel" (Papacy) teaches God's servants this very sin.

The symbology is even more lurid when one recognizes that the kingdoms of this world are represented as beasts in Daniel chapter 7. Compare the name "Babylon" applied to Papacy in Revelation 17:5, which means confusion, to Leviticus 18:23.

The Gospel Age Harvest

"Behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" (Revelation 14:14-16).

Thus Revelation speaks in symbol about the Harvest of the Gospel Age. That is the period of time we are in today. In this respect, our lesson today about the Harvest is one of the most important in our series on the Chart of the Ages.

In our last issue we spoke of the Jewish Age Harvest, which in one sense ended with the burning of the temple in 70 AD, and the fall of Masada in 73 AD. This episode closed seven years of war between Judea and Rome.

In another sense one might say the judgments of God upon Judaism extended until 135 AD, when Rome crushed another Jewish revolt led by Simon Bar-Kochba. The loss of life was great. Jerusalem fell again to the Romans. Thereafter it was rededicated as a Roman city, renamed Aeolia Capitolina, and was made off limits to Jews on penalty of death. In this sense the Harvest of the Jewish Age lasted 106 years from Jesus' baptism in 29 AD, or 102 years from Jesus death in 33 AD.

The Gospel Age Harvest is more important, more significant, and correspondingly more lengthy. From the return of Christ in 1874, until the end of 6000 years from Adam which we anticipate in 2043, yields a harvest period of 169 years.

But what is the Gospel Age Harvest? What precipitated it? What is its purpose? How does it affect our conduct as followers of Christ?

Description

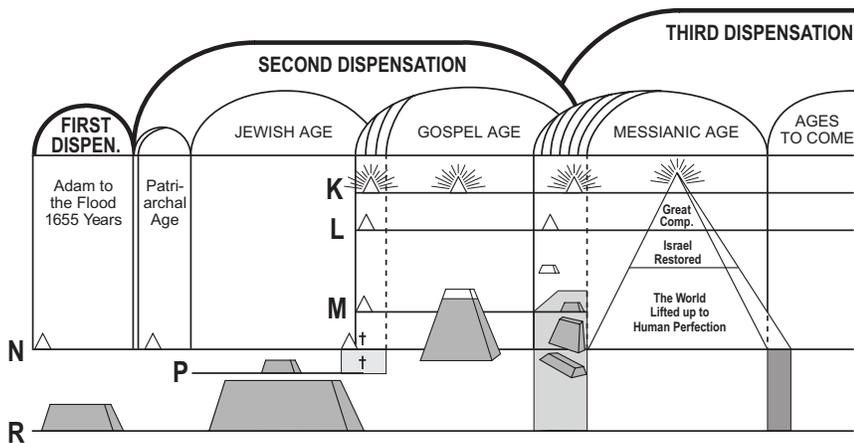
Following is an explanation of the present Harvest period from the pen of Pastor Russell, who was raised up by our Lord to give direction to the Lord's people during this seventh and last period of the Church.

"The Harvest is the end¹ of the age' (Matthew 13:39). This brief period is the most momentous and eventful period of the entire age; for in it all the fruitage of the age must be gathered and disposed of, and the field, which is the world (Matthew 13:38), must be cleared, plowed and prepared for another sowing and reaping time — the Millennial age."

"The importance of the events of this harvest period can scarcely be overestimated; and yet the world will not be aware of it, until its potent though unrecognized agencies have accomplished their appointed work. Indeed, it is well to remember that this is not a harvesting of the whole world, but of the Christian Church; and it affects not Mohammedans, Brahmins, Buddhists, etc., but only the true Church of Christ, and such as are more or less associated with it — 'Christendom.' "

"But while the world during the entire period will be in total ignorance of its character, yet in dread and fear of the outcome of its strange events (Isaiah 28:21), the Lord's little flock of consecrated followers, now living, enjoy greater enlightenment than was ever the privilege of any of their forerunners; for in this period all the rays of prophetic testimony reach a grand focus, illuminating to the eye of faith the plan of God, including its developments, past, present and future."

*(Studies in the Scriptures,
Volume Three, The Kingdom of God,
pages 121, 122)*



Parable of the Wheat and Tares

Matthew 13:24 and forward contains the parable of the Wheat and Tares, given by our Lord Jesus to explain the work of the Gospel Age, and the work of Harvest. In this parable a man sowed wheat in his field, a picture of God's work to sow, grow, and gather a crop of Christians, the elect Church class, who will reign with Jesus in heaven during the Millennium.

The seed sown represents the Truth preached by Jesus and his apostles at the beginning of the age. However, "while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat" (verse 25). This represents that after the apostles fell asleep in death, Satan sowed false doctrines which developed a crop of tares — false wheat — in the field intended for the wheat.

So the Christian world has been overrun with imitation Christians. That is, those who represent themselves as Christians, but are not consecrated to God, and are not true at heart to the teachings or conduct of our Master. History is replete with the testimony of what happened. False doctrines borrowed from Grecian philosophy quickly permeated Christian thought. This began a falling away from the true faith. Also the spirit of Lordship sprung up and developed political thinking among church leaders, rather than devoted attention to the spiritual needs of the flock.

Paul knew this would occur, because the prophecies in the book of Daniel spoke of this. So Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "there [shall] come a falling away" from the true Christian faith. The Apostle John, who wrote after the other apostles had passed away, said, "as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists" with doctrines antithetical to the Christian faith (1 John 2:18). Ultimately, the number of faithful disciples of Christ were vastly outnumbered by "tares."

In the parable, as time passed, it became apparent tares were growing where wheat should be. The servants asked their master whether they should uproot the tares. He replied no, because in uprooting the tares, the

wheat might also be injured. So during the bulk of the Gospel Age Jesus did not command a separation. He let both grow together in the Christian world, side by side, for many centuries. There have been divisions, persecutions, etc., but never a thorough separation of wheat from tares.

During the dark days when Papacy hunted heretics and caused the death of millions, those who fled were a mixture of devoted saints and others attached to them. During the Reformation in the time of Martin Luther, many of the Lord's people saw the

abuses of Papacy and separated from that system, but many joined this movement who were not of the same devoted spirit. Sometimes the separation depended upon the political region in which one lived, rather than an individual decision.

When the New World opened up for an escape from religious persecution in Europe, many of the Lord's people fled to North America, but many others also came who did not have a close personal faith and commitment. When the Adventist Movement of the early 1800s moved through the Churches, Bro. William Miller advised against a general separation from the Churches, unless of course they were asked to leave for their faith.

During all those years since the Reformation, the cleansing of the Sanctuary class from the defiling errors which accumulated over centuries past continued. But it did not effect a clean separation of "wheat" from "tares."

But such a time of separation was to come at some time — and that time is now upon us. "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30).

Our Lord's Explanation

A little while later, Jesus' disciples asked him to explain more the meaning of this parable. "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field" (Matthew 13:36). So Jesus explained: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man," a term Jesus often used to refer to himself. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age;² and the reapers are the angels" (verses 36-39).

What does this mean to us? In the present Harvest time, those who are devoted to Christ should seek fellowship with Christians who are consecrated to God, and who study and fellowship in the Truth. That which separates us should be the "sickle" which our Lord uses to gather his wheat — and that "sickle" represents the

Truth. Thus the purpose of this Journal, and other Bible Student literature, is to distribute the Truth of the Divine Plan, to assist the Lord's people in understanding the purposes of God, and encourage them to study and meet with others of "like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1).

In the previous issue, when we discussed the Jewish Age Harvest, we found from John 4:35-38 that that harvest was a time of separation of Jewish worshippers into an understanding of the Gospel Message which was brought by our Lord Jesus and his disciples. The "reapers" were those who preached the good news and taught others the Truth. The "wheat" were those who were sincere in their worship of God.

So it is in the present time. All who come to appreciate the wonderful Plan of God, which includes two ages of redemption, help "gather" the wheat from the tares by preaching the sweet doctrines of Scripture. This encourages faith, study, and devotion of sincere Christians. The "angels" or messengers which the Lord uses during this harvest to reap the wheat, are the consecrated Christians who preach the Truth to others.³

The gathering of the saints through the "sickle" of Truth first separates the true wheat into association with one another, whereas the "tares" who are not attracted to the Truth are, "bound" by sectarian cords. But ultimately both classes proceed to another condition by the close of the harvest.

As they individually complete their lives in death, the wheat class are resurrected to their heavenly reward to be with our Lord Jesus in glory. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). This is the "barn" into which the saints are finally gathered (Matthew 13:30).

As for the tares, they are bound in bundles "to burn them" (verse 30). "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this age ... [they] shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (verses 40-42).

Remember that this is a parable. The language used is symbolic. There is no literal "furnace" or literal "fire." Jesus used these symbols like the prophets of old did. "The whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his [God's] jealousy" (Zephaniah 1:18). Fire represents destruction, and this fire shows that all Christian institutions which are only "nominal" — in name, but not in spirit — will be removed in the judgments to come. The individuals who claimed to be Christian, but were never actually committed to God, will realize they have entertained false hopes. As "tares" they will cease to be — that is, they will no longer claim to be of the wheat class who will be with Christ in heaven.

So what does happen to people who now are "tares"? They will have their opportunity with the remainder of the world, during the Millennium. Then they can embrace the call which God will open to the entire world, to become obedient, repentant, and receive the blessings of

everlasting life as human beings, on Earth, as God offered Adam and Eve originally in the Garden.

Remember, the heavenly call so graciously offered to the saints is the exception, not the rule. The present heavenly call is the most wonderful opportunity ever offered to believers. But this call closes with the end of this age. The call that then opens will be an opportunity for perfect earthly life, but not to a spiritual nature. Perfect human life will be a wonderful blessing. But it will not be as wonderful as the call to spirit life now offered to those who consecrate their life to God.

The Gospel Age Harvest on the Chart

Please locate the Harvest period on the Chart of the Ages. Do you see the seven arcs which touch one point or another of this harvest period? Each of these represents a date and event which has something to do with closing down the Gospel Age, and opening up the Messianic Age.⁴ There are many activities which might qualify as markers in this overlapping period. The specific seven dates we intend by these arcs are ...

1874 — End of the 1335 days of Daniel 12:12, which mark the return of Christ as an invisible spirit being.

1878 — A time of judgment for Christendom, but a time of release for Israel. From this date marks Israel's return to resettle their ancient homeland.

1914 — World War I begins the "Time of Trouble."

1918 — WWI ends, parallels Masada's fall in 73 AD.

1948 — The reestablishment of Israel as a nation.

1980 — Jerusalem again became the capital of Israel.

2043 — Judgments climax, Millennium begins.

The Pyramids During the Harvest

There are six pyramids, or pyramid segments, on the Chart during the Harvest period. The bottom three are shown shaded, which represents passing through a period of trouble or judgment. The bottom piece represents the "tare" class who fall back to the world.

The next segment above that represents believers in Christ, who live noble lives, but are not consecrated to God. These also have their opportunity for life during the Millennium. The next higher, small segment, represents the Great Company class. These Christians are consecrated to God, but fail to give sufficient effort to become part of the Bride class. As Revelation 7:14 says, they pass through the tribulation, but are afterward resurrected into heaven. They receive a spiritual nature, but miss the higher reward of the Bride class.

The three pyramids and segments above that, which are not in the shaded area, represent the saints, Christ, and both together, respectively. The lowest one represents the saints during the Harvest, who as they complete their lives here are raised to be with Christ. The small but complete pyramid above that represents Christ

Jesus. He is shown on Plane **L**, rather than plane **K**, as a visual way of representing his “return” for his saints. (This is also how Jesus was shown during the Jewish Age Harvest, that is, on Plane **L**, while present with his disciples for 40 days following his resurrection.) Then Christ and his saints ascend to Plane **K**, representing the Glory of Office.

Thereafter the Millennium commences. Then, for a thousand years, Satan will be bound, unable to deceive the nations until the Millennium is complete. The Ancient Worthies of old will be raised back to life and lead Israel into the Kingdom. Gradually, as other nations of the earth recognize the hand of God at Israel, and their disbelief melts away, the blessings of God through that Kingdom will begin to flow outward to all people.

In time, as the nations come into harmony with that Kingdom, their societies will be reformed and transformed for the betterment of all their citizens. By exercising obedience and godliness, the people of the world will be rewarded with increased vigor, health, and temporal blessings. As they cooperate with that Kingdom to help one another, their progress will multiply. In time the resurrection of the dead of past ages will commence, as people become prepared to welcome back, teach, and help those who return to life.

By the end of the Millennium the entire world — every man, woman and child who has ever lived — if they cooperate during the Kingdom — will be restored to the health and vigor enjoyed by Adam and Eve in the garden. Then they will be prepared for a last test upon the world. Following a “Little Season” of testing, the teeming billions of faithful ones will be ushered into the “Ages to Come,” and enjoy everlasting life.

(1) The word “end” is from the Greek word *sunteleia*, which “signifies a bringing to completion together ... marking the completion or consummation of the various parts of a scheme ... The word does not denote a termination, but the heading up of events to the appointed climax” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

(2) The word in the common English version is “world,” but the Greek word is *aiōnos*, which means age. The Harvest is a period of time which brings this age to a close.

(3) The Greek word rendered “angel” is *aggelos*, and means “messenger.” Sometimes earthly messengers are intended by this word, and sometimes spiritual messengers are intended. Hebrews 1:14 says the angels are “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” In this way the spiritual angels are involved in the harvest. However, the parallel to the reapers of John 4:38 suggests that the consecrated brethren who preach the Truth may be the “reapers” of this parable also.

(4) We use the term “Messianic Age” broadly as the time beginning with the return of Christ in 1874, going through the Kingdom. All during this time Jesus, the anointed of God, the Messiah, is the controlling power involved in the world. We use the term “Millennial Age” more narrowly, to refer to the Millennium of Revelation 20:1-6. This we understand to be the Seventh Millennium from Adam. As the reader will know by now, we believe this commences with the year 2043 AD, because Bible Chronology seems to teach that 6000 years from Adam close with that date.

Abraham to Exodus

Bible Chronology, Part Four

Previous articles in this series explained that from Adam to the end of the flood was 1656 years, based on the ages given in Genesis chapter five. Thence to the passing of Terah, the father of Abraham, was 427 years, based on the ages in Genesis chapter 11.

At that time Abraham went to Shechem and received God’s covenant. The Exodus and giving of the Law to Israel at Mount Sinai followed 430 years later (Galatians 3:17). From the Exodus to the beginning of Solomon’s Temple in the spring of 966 BC was 479 years more (1 Kings 6:1). In list form ...

Periods	
1656 years	Adam to end of Flood
427 years	to Covenant with Abraham
430 years	to Exodus and Law Covenant
479 years	to founding of Temple (966 BC)

Using these figures, we can compute the date of Adam’s creation according to the scriptures: 966 BC + 479 + 430 + 427 + 1656 = 3958 BC. Six thousand years forward from that date terminate in 2043 AD, the beginning of the seventh Millennium, the thousand years of the reign of Christ. We can also now assign specific dates to these events, as in the following list.

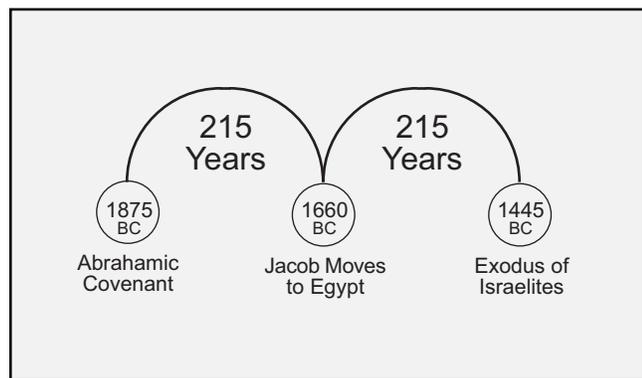
Dates	
3958 BC	Creation of Adam
2303 BC	End of Flood
1875 BC	Covenant with Abraham
1445 BC	Exodus, giving of Law
966 BC	Founding of Solomon’s Temple
2043 AD	Beginning of Seventh Millennium

These conclusions are clear. But in the centuries since Christian people have been studying this subject, some subtle questions have arisen. In this article we discuss questions about the third period of time in the first list above — namely, the 430 years between the two covenants.

430 Years

Galatians 3:17 seems clear on 430 years between the two covenants. But some suppose Exodus 12:40, 41 teaches otherwise. “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years ... that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:40, 41). Does this text mean Israel was in Egypt for the full 430 years?

Some people believe so, and some translations give that opinion. However, there is good evidence against this view.



From the covenant with Abraham, until Jacob and his family moved to Egypt, was 215 years. This we know from the ages given in Genesis. Abraham was 75 when he entered Canaan, Isaac was born 25 years later when Abraham was 100, Jacob was born 60 years later, and Jacob was 130 when he moved to Egypt (Genesis 12:4, 21:5, 25:26, 47:9). The total of 25, 60 and 130 is 215 years — from Abraham entering Canaan until Jacob entering Egypt.

Of the 430 years from the Abrahamic Covenant to the Exodus, this leaves a remaining 215 years in Egypt before the Israelites departed under Moses. So the 430 years was split into two even parts — 215 years before entering Egypt, and 215 within Egypt until the Exodus.

This even division of time is more than coincidence. It was part of God’s design to teach a lesson about the Divine Plan. When the patriarch Jacob entered Egypt, the aggregate number is given as 70 persons of his family line (Exodus 1:5). But this count does not include the wives of his 12 sons, which would augment the total number to 70 plus 12. Egypt in scripture is a symbol of the nominal Christian world. For example, the plagues on Egypt which resulted in the Exodus picture the plagues on Christendom in Revelation chapter 16.

So, if coming out of Egypt represents the end of the Gospel Age, coming into Egypt represents the beginning of the Gospel Age. During the Gospel Age spiritual Israel, the Church, “sojourns” in this world before they are

delivered. The 70 and 12, which were the nucleus of Israel at the beginning, expanded into the nation of Israel. They remind us of the 70 disciples and 12 apostles who served our Lord Jesus, which expanded into the Church Class. (See Exodus 15:27 for another spiritual lesson about the 70 disciples and 12 apostles.)

Thus the second period of 215 years represents the Gospel Age. So the first period of 215 years represents the age before this, namely the Jewish Age. In many ways the Jewish Age was a shadow, type, or figure of the greater spiritual realities of the Gospel Age (see Hebrews 8:5 for example). As “twin” ages, one depicting in types and pictures the spiritual realities of the other, they are represented here as equal divisions in God’s Plan.

The Evidence

These observations about type and antitype, picture and substance, are interesting, and support the conclusion that only 215 years were spent in Egypt, rather than an entire 430. But pictures themselves do not establish the facts. For this we need to examine the actual evidence at hand. So let us return to the record.

As evidence that the Israelites were not in Egypt for 430 years, we have the family line of Moses. Exodus 6:16-20 gives us the following line of descent — Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. Genesis 46:11 lists Kohath among the Israelites who came to Egypt with Jacob. Moses was 80 at the Exodus.

So if the Israelites were 430 years in Egypt — and even if Kohath was only a newborn when he came into Egypt — then the two generations Kohath and Amram must span 350 years. (That is, 430 total, minus 80 years gives 350 from the move to Egypt until the birth of Moses.) This means Kohath and Amram must average 175 years each at the very minimum. Yet Exodus 6:18, 20 tell us they lived only 133 and 137 years respectively. In other words, 430 years is too long for the Israelite stay in Egypt.

This kind of evidence is even more specific as it applies to the mother of Moses, whose name was Jochebed. Numbers 26:59 says she was a daughter of Levi, born to him in Egypt. Levi lived 137 years total (Exodus 6:16). He was more than 40 years old when he moved to Egypt, so he could not have lived in Egypt more than 97 years. Suppose Jochebed was born as late as the last year of Levi’s life (which is unlikely). If the Israelites were in Egypt 430 years, Jochebed would be 253 years old at the birth of Moses — which is impossibly old (430 - 97 - 80 = 253).

— To be Continued

In the Next Issue ...

- *The Firstborn of Every Creature*
- *Daniel, Chapter Three*
- *Expanded Symmetry*