

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
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Resurrection

"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15).

The doctrine of Resurrection is fundamental to Christianity. In this lies the great hope for the entire world. The curse of death imposed by God in Eden gradually claims every person born into the world. Without the hope of a resurrection from the dead, we would have no hope at all for everlasting life.

God imposed the curse of death upon mankind because of disobedience — the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. The reason people will be raised back to life again is that Jesus took our penalty upon himself, by dying on the cross of Calvary. The debt being paid, the curse can be remitted, and Adam (and his race) can go free. Thus Christ, as the agent of God, will raise mankind back to life during the Millennium.

Thus the hope of Resurrection flows as a natural consequence of the Ransom. Jesus died as a ransom for all, therefore all may be released. This release does not automatically grant the recipient everlasting life — but it gives them an opportunity to secure everlasting life.

Of course there is more to this than merely releasing people from the curse. 6000 years of inbred sin have left a deep stain upon the human race. Thus God's plan of Atonement not only supplies a ransom from the curse, but also a Millennial Age for the race to unlearn the evil of their former life, and learn righteousness in a Kingdom ruled from heaven. Our Lord Jesus, together with his elect Church with him in heaven, will be appointed by God for this work of uplifting the world from the effects of sin, unrighteousness, and death.

What will remain with mankind will be the lesson of sin, deeply engraved upon their memories. They will know by experience sin's influence, and its consequences — despair, difficulty, death. This will aid them to appreciate their opportunity for life, and make proper choices during the Millennium for God and principle.

The Church Raised First

We have been speaking of the world, who will be raised to life during the Millennium. This will include

even the most ungodly, for in Ezekiel 16:46-53 we have explicit mention of Sodom and her wicked sister cities. "When I shall bring again their captivity [out of death where they all went], the captivity of Sodom and her daughters ... then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them" (verse 54). As the remaining verses of the chapter show, all of them will be extended mercy, granted reformation, and be reclaimed.

They all will be released from the death penalty and live again. Jesus stated emphatically, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29).

However, before the Millennium commences, the saints who consecrate their lives to God during the present time and prove "faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10) will be raised to glory. Even now, since the return of Christ, the saints who passed into death in former years have been raised to be with Christ. The faithful who die now are raised immediately to be with Christ in glory. Thus the First Resurrection — the resurrection of the saints — has been proceeding ever since the Harvest of the Gospel Age commenced, more than a century ago. When this work is complete, then the Millennial Kingdom of Christ will come.

The resurrection of the saints is to heaven as spiritual beings like our Lord Jesus, whereas the world will be raised human beings on earth, and live here forever as Adam and Eve would have, if they had remained obedient to God. Of course Adam and Eve will have that opportunity again, along with all others during the Millennium. Adam and Eve also learned a deep lesson from the permission of evil. No doubt they will appreciate the second opportunity afforded them by the ransom for their sins, become obedient in the next opportunity, and secure everlasting life as perfect human beings forever.

The Ancient Worthies Next

After the Church is raised to be with Christ, the Ancient Worthies will next be raised. The Ancient Worthies are those of Old Testament times who were faithful to God before the coming of Christ. They will be raised to

life to guide Israel through the pressing experiences which will bring Israel to God. The Ancient Worthies will show Israel that Christ was their Messiah, and a national conversion will follow, with weeping as described in Zechariah 12:10.

Meanwhile the Great Company class, lingering in the flesh after the faithful Bride class have been raised to heaven, will pass through some cleansing experiences, and then be gathered to heaven where they will serve God in His heavenly temple. They will be delivered, but “so as by fire” — the fire of trial (1 Corinthians 3:15).

This contrast between the 144,000 faithful saints, who constitute the Bride class, and the “Great Multitude” of other consecrated saints who have been less zealous for the Lord, is seen also in Revelation chapter seven. As the first eight verses show, the “four winds” of final trouble upon this world are held in check until the 144,000 class are “sealed.” This sealing process continues even today. We are being sealed in our “foreheads” by the Harvest Truth, and its influence permeates to our hearts and characters.

When this class have all been sealed, developed, and raised to life in the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:6), then the final blows upon the world will be allowed. About this time Israel will pass through their last experiences. Meanwhile the Great Company class will pass through their closing trials, and thereafter receive their reward in heaven.

A Delay in the General Resurrection

Even after the Millennial Kingdom begins, the resurrection of the world will wait for a time. After the Kingdom begins at Israel, and the sweet voice of peace and blessing calls from them to the world, it will take time for the nations to discern and believe what is occurring. Thus there will be a delay before the nations of the world subdue their pride and turn their attention to our Lord Jesus. His rule will be exhibited through the Ancient Worthies. They will be the acclaimed leaders of Israel, and later their leadership will be accepted by the world.

Zechariah 14:3 speaks of God fighting for Israel, bringing them a great deliverance against their invading enemies. Verse four describes the establishment of the Kingdom, which is represented by the Mount of Olives. Olives are used for food, and olive oil for light. So the Mount of Olives is a good symbol for the Kingdom of Christ which will bring nourishment and enlightenment, first for Israel, and then for the remainder of the world.

Verse seven indicates the enlightenment will occur gradually. When God introduces the Kingdom through the deliverance of Israel, it will be “not day nor night” — the world will be neither fully light nor fully dark — but a mixture. But by the end, light will prevail everywhere.



Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus — an illustration of the Resurrection of all, during the Millennium.

“It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.”

Verses 8 and 9 say — “In that day, living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ... And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

But verse 17 shows the reception by the nations will not necessarily be immediate. “Whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain” — no blessings.

Verse 18 describes difficulties that will come if the mere withholding of blessing does not induce their cooperation. God is intent that the world turn to righteousness, and experience what is good and holy. At the end of the Millennium, they must be prepared for a test for everlasting life again. Thus it is imperative, for their own good, that the world be forcibly drawn to righteousness. As a loving parent directs his children in godly ways, so God will direct mankind for their best interests.

Not until the living generations are in accord with God, will they be prepared to receive the dead of past times back again. Thus the resurrection of the world will

wait for a time even after the Kingdom begins. But the Kingdom is a thousand years long. There will be ample time for every one of the dead of past ages to be raised, instructed in godliness, and experience God's goodness for centuries, before the testing in the "little season" which follows the Millennium (Revelation 20:3).

Resurrection Little Appreciated

None of God's planned blessings can influence the dead until they are raised to life again. The Resurrection is the key to it all. Yet this doctrine receives relatively little attention from most Christians. When pressed, they will recognize it as true doctrine, as a Christian doctrine. But it is unclear to most Christians, because of a basic misunderstanding which crept into the Church after the apostles died centuries ago.

The chief problem is a misconception of what it means to die. Without clarity on this, it is not possible to have clarity on the Resurrection.

Death is the cessation of life. When a person dies, they cease to exist as a thinking, living person in any — respect. "In that very day, his thoughts perish" (Psalms 146:4). "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). There is no lingering consciousness at all after death. When Lazarus was dead for four days, he was really dead. He did not think, see, eat, speak, travel ... he was dead. His body began to decompose, his mind was gone. He was dead in every respect.

But when our Lord Jesus called for him, "He that was dead came forth" (John 11:44). So it will be in the resurrection. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29). They will live again, for the first time since they died. They will think again for the first time since they died. They will breathe again, feel again, speak again. The resurrection is just as it seems to be — life restored from the dead.

It is a remarkable promise. A remarkable miracle. Every thought a person has thought, every memory of the mind, every bent of personality, every trait of habit, will be reproduced in a regeneration of each individual as they were when they died.

Of course there will be some improvements immediately. People will naturally be raised from the dead whole, with reasonable health, without debilitating physical or mental weaknesses. Otherwise they might succumb again, or at least be impaired from making progress. But their characters and dispositions will be as they were when they died. No change takes place in the grave, and people will be restored as the people they were when they died.

This lesson seems to be expressed in another passage of Ecclesiastes. Men are sometimes represented by trees (Mark 8:24), and Ecclesiastes 11:3 is an example of this. Solomon wrote this respecting the death of a person. "If the tree fall toward the south [earthly], or toward

the north [heavenly], in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." In other words, when a man falls into death, no change takes place, until he is raised again in the resurrection. Whether that person had a heavenly hope (north), as the consecrated of the Gospel Age do, or whether he is bound for earth (south) in the kingdom, as most of the world, it is the same. No change until the resurrection.

Long ago, God's servant Job expressed his hope for the resurrection. "Hide me in the grave ... until thy wrath be past ... appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come" (Job 14:13-15). But meanwhile, until the Millennial Kingdom arrives, Job continues to sleep in death.

Some Already

When the apostles died so long ago, they, like Job, remained unaware, unconscious, unalive — dead. Not until after our Lord Jesus returned in 1874 did the apostles and other saints receive their resurrection reward. Now, as we are in the Harvest period closing the Gospel Age, they have been raised to life as glorious spirit beings of the highest order, in fellowship with our Lord Jesus and even with God most high. Now, as the faithful pass into death, they are raised to their reward immediately. On this point, please see the article "Alive and Remain" in the March 2006 issue, which treats this matter at length.

Of course the resurrected saints are invisible to the human eye, as all spirit beings are. They will continue to be invisible during the Millennium, even though they will be the spiritual rulers and directors of that kingdom. The remainder of the world await their blessing until the establishment of the Kingdom — less than four decades future, as we judge the time line of Scripture.

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Christlikeness the Evidence of Sonship

“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

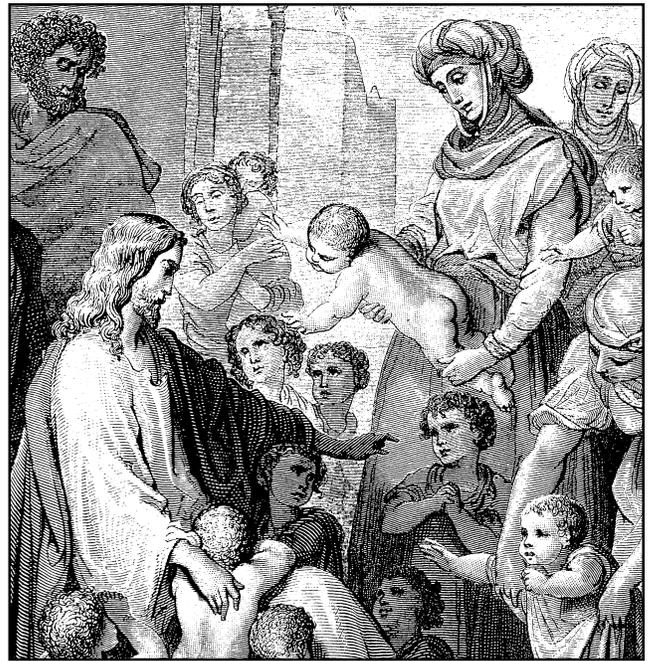
To abide in Christ implies that one has first come into him. This gives us the thought of a body. The Scriptures everywhere represent the Church as being this body, with Jesus as the head. “God gave him to be head over the Church, which is his body.” During the Gospel Age an invitation has been given to certain persons to be of this Body of Christ. There is only one door by which these may come into the body. It is the door of sacrifice, baptism into Christ’s death. We are accepted only by giving up our own will, and taking instead the will of God. We pledge ourselves to walk in Jesus’ steps, to become His followers, His disciples. We are buried with him and rise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

But it is not sufficient that we take these steps, not sufficient that we have received the holy Spirit, and have been accepted of the Father. We should be sure that we continue to abide in Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we having the experiences common to all who are associated with Jesus? One of the ways to be sure that we are abiding in him is to realize that we still love him. Another is to know that we are still in harmony with God’s word. A third way is that we have no will but the Lord’s will. Still another is to have His peace in our hearts and lives as the ruling and controlling influence.

Profession Alone Insufficient

Many have made a profession of being members of the Body of Christ who do not give evidence of being his. Our text says that any one who professes to be in Christ ought so to walk even as the Master walked. And how did the Master walk? He lived daily in harmony with the will of the Heavenly Father. He was fully submissive to the Father’s will. And this meant sacrifice unto death — the cruel death of the cross.

Whoever has our Lord’s spirit, and is controlled by the same will, is a member of the Body of Christ, and will seek to walk after this fashion, to do the will of God in all things. This will mean a walk of holiness, of full devotion to God, and of opposition to sin. Whoever is consecrated to God is opposed to every sinful thing; for God and sin are in antagonism. God stands for His own righteousness, and sin is a violation of that righteousness (1 John 3:4). Whoever walks as Jesus walked is in harmony with the divine word and will. We are not to trust to our impressions, our own conceptions of what is right and advantageous, as many others do; but the Word of the Lord is to abide in us, and to govern our lives. Jesus said, “I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me” — “everything written in the Book.” And so it



“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:4).

is to be with us. We must abide in him, walk in him, and be willing to do “everything written in the Book” — not merely forcing ourselves to it, saying, I will take this course; but saying, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy law is written in my heart” (Psalms 40:7, 8).

Proofs of Sonship

All who have accepted Christ claim, in a general way at least, to be sons of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, and that they belong to this great family that God is selecting from the sons of men. They consider themselves heirs with Christ to the great Kingdom to come. But not all who claim to be sons of God are such. A great many are making this claim. Statistics tell us that there are four hundred millions of professed Christians; but we cannot think that many of these four hundred millions are sons of God. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the fact that since we cannot read the hearts we must go by the professions which others make by mouth and by conduct. But professions of the mouth are not to be taken as final. We know that those who are sons of God will be led by His Spirit. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

But what is the Spirit of God? Primarily it is the spirit of Truth, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of justice, the spirit of love. And as many as are God’s children, begotten of His holy Spirit, will make some manifestation of their harmony with this general Spirit of God. If they are, therefore, walking in unrighteousness, making no endeavor to stem the tendencies of sin in themselves, if they prefer error rather than Truth, their fruits condemn them; for God stands for Truth, and was exemplified in our Lord Jesus.

Whoever, therefore, has the Spirit of God, is willing to sacrifice himself that he may serve the Truth. He loves the Truth, and will manifest this by the spirit of love and zeal. Satan is the personification of sin, envy, hatred, malice, strife. Righteousness, love, joy, peace, are fruits of the holy Spirit. Wherever we see the works of the devil manifested we have reason to question that such a one is a child of God. The spirit of envy, the spirit of hatred, the spirit of malice, the spirit of opposition to the Truth, the spirit of unrighteousness — these are to be repudiated and overcome by all who would be sons of God.

Yet despite one's best efforts, he might still find in his flesh tendencies to sin which would give him a great deal of trouble. He may take courage from the assurances of the Scriptures that the Lord looketh on the heart. Likewise in regard to others, we should judge according to the endeavor, the intention. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the spirit of love. And this spirit will make one wish to make reparation, if he has done wrong or been in error. To do so shows that it was not his spirit, his will to do wrong, but that he was merely entrapped for a time. But one who continues to do according to his natural tendencies, with no evidence of going in the right direction and of serving the Truth, has reason to doubt that he is a child of God.

How We Can Walk As He Walked

The Apostle's thought seems to be that those who profess to be the Lord's followers, profess to be Christians, should see to it that their walk in life is in harmony with their profession. The word disciple signifies one who follows — as a pupil follows his teacher. We recognize Christ as our Redeemer and also as our pattern, our instructor, in the glorious things which the Father has invited us to share with our Savior. If, therefore, we say that we are in him, this profession should be borne out by our walk in life. We should walk as he walked.

But we are not perfect — how can this be done? The answer is that we “are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.” God does not look upon our imperfect flesh. As New Creatures we are not fleshly beings, but spiritual. The Apostle in our text is speaking of that walk that the master had after He made a consecration. He walked in this way three and a half years. It was a walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so with us. We are walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the New Creature. We reckon ourselves dead according to the flesh, and the Lord so reckons us. If, then, we are dead to the flesh, we are not to walk according to the desires of the flesh.

We are to walk as our Lord walked, in our general deportment. We are to love everything that is good and to avoid everything that is evil. We are to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our Lord and Exemplar. We cannot in an imperfect body walk up to all the perfection of Jesus, who was perfect in his flesh as well as in his

spirit. But we are to walk as he walked — in the same path, in the same direction, toward the same glorious goal toward which he walked. And so doing, faithful day by day, we shall by his grace attain the same exceeding great reward.

— *Pastor Charles Russell, April, 1914*

The Last King of Babylon

A Study of Daniel, Chapter Five

“They brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem, and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them ... and praised the gods of gold and of silver ... In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace ... **Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin**” (Daniel 5:3-5, 25).

As we saw in our previous studies, King Nebuchadnezzar thrice praised the God of Heaven and announced it to all his realm. But the last king of Babylon, Belshazzar, had a different character. “Thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven” (Daniel 5:22, 23). This king lost his life that very night to the invading armies of Cyrus.¹

The fifth chapter of the Book of Daniel describes the night Babylon fell, and Persia assumed the empire. God's prophet, the aged and noble statesman Daniel, was an eyewitness of the events. His record makes it clear that the hand of God was in the matter. Babylon's seventy years had expired. Jeremiah had predicted that after all nations would drink of God's judgment through Babylon, then “the king of Sheshach [Babylon]² shall drink after them” (Jeremiah 25:26) — and they did.

Belshazzar

There was a time, not so long ago, when men of learning questioned the very existence of this king. History knows, and has known for many years, who were the kings of the Babylonian Empire founded during the latter years of Nabopolassar. They were ...

(Neo) Babylonian Kings

Nabopolassar (21 years)

Nebuchadnezzar (43 years)

Amel-Marduk (2 years)

Neriglissar (4 years)

Nabonidus (17 years)

So who was Belshazzar? For many years this question lay as a charge against the integrity of the book of Daniel, for history evidently lost the memory of Belshazzar. Critics charged that the apparent mistake in Daniel proved the book was not written by a prophet contemporary with the events, else it would not contain such an egregious error as to misname the last king of Babylon.

However, the matter has long since been resolved. When archaeologists recovered some of the tablet records of ancient Babylon, in the mid 1800s, they found that Nabonidus had a son named Bel-sar-usur — the Belshazzar of the Book of Daniel. He is called “son of the king” in several records,³ and was the firstborn son of Nabonidus. To him the aged emperor committed the daily governance of Babylon. Here is a translation of an old cuneiform tablet respecting this.

“In the beginning of the third year, he (Nabonidus) entrusted the military camp to his first born (son). He put under his command the army of all the lands. He let everything go and entrusted the kingship to him and, as for himself, he took the path to distant regions. The military forces of Akkad (Babylon) taking the field with [him], he set out towards the city Teima, in the midst of Amurru” (*The Reign of Nabonidus*, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, 1989).

Thus from the third year of the emperor Nabonidus forward, his son Belshazzar was the sitting monarch in Babylon, ruling on behalf of his father. When the fateful day of God’s judgment came, it fell upon the profligate Belshazzar. Before the fall of the city the elderly Nabonidus led his army in the field of battle against the armies of Cyrus, but could not prevail. After the fall of Babylon Nabonidus returned to the city, presented himself to Cyrus, and received kindly treatment from the new ruler.

More About Belshazzar

With this identification of Belshazzar, we can now better interpret a trace history did record pertaining to this person. The Greek historian Herodotus speaks of a queen Nitocris, described as a woman of great intelligence, and he details her accomplishments. Then he says, “The expedition of Cyrus was directed against her son, who, like his father, was called Labynetus and was king [of Babylon].”⁴ Evidently Labynetus is Herodotus’ version of the name Nabonidus, who according to this was the husband of Nitocris, and had a son also sometimes called Labynetus — the Belshazzar of Daniel.⁵

Nitocris is thought to be an Egyptian name. Philip Raymond Dougherty reasoned that Nitocris may have been a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, from a secondary wife obtained in a marriage agreement with Egypt early in his reign.⁶ If so, this would make Belshazzar the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, consistent with his description as son (grandson) of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:22). Verses 11, 13, 18 all refer to Nebuchadnezzar as father (grandfather) of Belshazzar.

Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin

These were the words supernaturally inscribed on the wall of the otherwise festive hall. They were inscribed by the fingers of a hand that had no arm or body attached. Probably they were written in large letters visible to all. A hush would have descended quickly upon the riotous assembly, as one by one the celebrants recognized a message from on high was being delivered. The boisterous mirth was at an end. A sense of foreboding spread across the hall.

They did not yet apprehend the meaning, but the conscience of the king and other revellers correctly sensed that a message to them from the divine courts, intruding on their reckless carousing, would not be a commendation. “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another” (Daniel 5:6).

Outside the city gathered the armies of Cyrus. The impregnable walls of Babylon gave Belshazzar a false sense of security, until this moment. Now dread seized him — and properly so. He cried aloud an order, “Bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.” The order was urgent, and the king offered the highest inducements — “Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:7).

Notice the offer of “third ruler.” Belshazzar could offer no higher, since he himself was second ruler. This detail again shows the accuracy of Daniel’s report.



Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin — weighed in the balances, found wanting, kingdom divided to Medes and Persians.

“Then came in all the king’s wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof” (Daniel 5:8). The words Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, are apparently Aramaic words. Certainly the king’s advisors could read the words. But they could not perceive the sense of the words — the cryptic message intended by them.

“Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled ... and his lords were astonished” (Daniel 5:9). Verse one says “a thousand of his lords” were present. The handwriting on the wall was against them as well, for they were the leadership of the empire then collapsing.

At this point the “Queen” advised Belshazzar of the prophet Daniel. “There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom ... was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father [exalted]” (Daniel 5:11). This queen is supposed by many to be the Queen mother, that is, mother of Belshazzar and wife of Nabonidus, namely Nitocris referred to earlier. She had witnessed the wisdom of Daniel during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who had died 23 years before. Belshazzar readily received the advice of his elderly and experienced mother.

Daniel was summoned. “Are you that Daniel, of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father [grandfather] brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that ... excellent wisdom is found in thee” (Daniel 5:14). Then the gifts were offered, but Daniel did not require them. He would give the meaning as a servant of God, “not for filthy lucre” (1 Peter 5:2). All the servants of God should have the same attitude.

First Daniel reminded Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar learned humility under the hand of God, but Belshazzar, who knew this, had “not humbled thine heart ... but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven” (Daniel 5:22, 23). Then he gave the meaning.

“Mene” means numbered. “Tekel” means weighed. “Peres,” the root of Upharsin, means “divided.” Thus the message was, “numbered, numbered, weighed, divided.” And the meaning? “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:26-28). It was doom indeed, and it was executed that very night.

Now Belshazzar was humbled — but too late to avoid the judgment. He gave Daniel the promised rewards, even though Daniel did not require them. “And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about 62 years old.” Thus closed the history of the Babylonian Empire.

Darius the Mede

Because history does not speak of “Darius the Mede” — or any Darius who took the throne of Babylon from Nabonidus or Belshazzar — the identification of this person has been a puzzle. Once it was supposed that his rule

of the empire preceded Cyrus, but this view has been laid to rest. Cyrus was the master of the Medes and Persians before, during, and after the fall of Babylon. Only some days after the taking of Babylon, Cyrus rode into the city as the acknowledged master of the empire. This is the testimony of scripture also, for Isaiah 45:1, 2 tell us Cyrus was the ruler anointed of God to conquer Babylon and free the Jewish people to return to Israel.

Here is a translation of a text known as the Nabonidus Chronicle, a record contemporary with those times, which parallels and augments the record in Daniel. Our comments are in {braces}, and the bold words are our emphasis.

“In the month Tasritu {Tishri}, when Cyrus did battle at Opis on the [bank of] the Tigris against the army of Akkad {Babylon}, the people of Akkad retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people. On the fourteenth day (of Tasritu), Sippar was captured without a battle. Nabonidus fled. On the **sixteenth day** (of Tasritu), Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, and the army of Cyrus, entered Babylon without a battle. Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the month (of Tasritu), the shield-(bearers) of Gutium surrounded the gates of the Esagil (a temple in Babylon). There was no interruption of whatever (rites) in the Esagil and the (other) temples, and no (ritual) date was missed. **On the third day of the month Arahsamnu, Cyrus entered Babylon.** The drinking tubes were filled in his presence. There was peace in the city when Cyrus spoke greetings to all of Babylon. He (Cyrus), appointed Gubaru governor of all the governors in Babylon. From the month Kislimu to the month Addaru, the gods of Akkad that Nabonidus had brought to Babylon returned to their cult places. On the night of the eleventh day of the month Arahsamnu, Ugbaru died” (*The Reign of Nabonidus*, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, 1989, pages 224, 225).

Who, then, was Darius the Mede? There are two credible options for this. Perhaps he was Gubaru, appointed by Cyrus to govern the city. This view is ably supported in the study titled *Darius the Mede*, by John Whitcomb, 1963. In this case Darius was a subordinate of Cyrus, appointed by Cyrus.

Another view has been promoted by D. J. Wiseman, formerly keeper of antiquities in the British Museum. His view is that Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian are the same person. The father of Cyrus was Persian, the mother of Cyrus was Median, and “Darius the Mede” would be the Median designation of this conqueror.

This view is supported by Daniel 6:28, translating the Hebrew *waw* as “even” rather than “and.” “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Compare this to a similar construction in 1 Chronicles 5:26, which identifies one king with two separate names. Here is that text in the NASB version. “So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul,

king of Assyria, **even** the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria.”

Our view is the second one — Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian are the same person — but in either case it makes no difference in the dates assigned the fall of Babylon, or the release of the Jews. Babylon fell to the armies of Cyrus on the Julian date October 12, 539 BC. Cyrus rode into the city October 29 the same year. This year of conquest was counted the accession year of Cyrus as “King of Lands.” The famous decree issued by Cyrus freeing the Jewish people to return to Israel and rebuild their temple came during the first regnal year of Cyrus, which began in the spring of 538 BC.

The Night of Revelry

It seems fitting that the precipitous doom of Babylon fell on a night of revelry, for it links the punishment to the arrogant disregard for the hand of God. Remember that on this night they were sacrilegiously using the precious vessels from God’s temple for common use, evidently to imbibe alcohol.

Tasritu 16, a Night of Revelry

Daniel, “A great feast to a thousand of his lords.”

Herodotus, “There was a festival going on ... until they learned the news.”

Xenophon, “this night the whole city is given over to revelry.”

Beaulieu, “Babylon was taken on the sixteenth of Tasritu ... the festivities ... may have been those of the Harran akitu festival.”

But though fitting, it seems peculiar that with the armies of Cyrus gathered about the city, Belshazzar would be so careless as to be carousing with his nobles inside, rather than attending to the crisis. But this record also is a mark of the accuracy of the testimony, for the same fact is noted by two other records. It is noted by the Greek historian Herodotus. “There was a festival going on, and they continued to dance and enjoy themselves, until they learned the news the hard way. That, then, is the story of the first capture of Babylon” (*The Histories* I, 191). It is also noted by the Greek writer Xenophon. He writes that an attacking general said, “it would not surprise us to find the palace-gates unbarred, for this night the whole city is given over to revelry” (*Cryopaedia* VII, 5, 25).

Belshazzar was confident of his defenses, but there was more to this party than simple foolishness. The date the city fell was the usual time scheduled for a festival in honor of the moon God. Notice in the Nabonidus

Chronicle cited above, the date the armies of Cyrus took the city was the 16th of Tasritu. “According to the chronicle, Babylon was taken on the sixteenth of Tasritu. Accepting that Nabonidus imposed new features of the cult of Sin {the moon god} in the capital after his return from Teima, it is conceivable that festivals linked with the cult of Sin at Harran were transplanted to Babylon, perhaps even the akitu festival. This festival started on the seventeenth of Tasritu. As Babylon was captured on the eve of the seventeenth, the festivities mentioned by Herodotus {and Xenophon} and the Book of Daniel may have been those of the Harran akitu festival, as celebrated in the capital by the supporters of Nabonidus” (*The Reign of Nabonidus*, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, 1989).

Note the Lessons

In all of this there are lessons for the New Creation, to avoid anything akin to a spirit of unholiness, following the world in their licentious practices, or reflecting by our conduct any lack of respect or reverence for things godly. Probably all Christians who live Christian principles have experienced something of loss for the sake of conscience, if only the disesteem of the world. If this is our privilege, let us recognize it as a mark of devotion and faith toward God, and be pleased to have our faith demonstrated in any way which God chooses.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution [small or great]” (2 Timothy 3:12). “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:11). “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Deeper Meaning in the Message of Doom

There is a deeper meaning in the message of doom which carries down to our day. Babylon, which took the Israelites captive for so long, was a type, picture, or illustration of Papacy which ruled Europe from Rome and held the true Church, spiritual Israelites, captive so long during the dark ages. This application has a long history in Protestant interpretation, and is rooted soundly in the symbols of Revelation (chapters 17, 18).

There Papacy is an unholy woman, given over to the political powers, and thus styled a harlot in the intense symbolism used respecting her in scripture. The great Reformation of the 16th century was a blow to her prestige and authority, and the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars which followed were a further mighty blow. But the 2520 years allotted for Gentile Dominion would close with 1914, and the outbreak of World War I. The kings of Europe, joined with Papacy, fell under the Lord’s judgment, which continued through World War II.

2520 Years

- Mena, 1000 gerahs
- Mena, 1000 gerahs
- Tekel, 20 gerhas
- Peres, 500 gerahs (mena divided)

TOTAL — 2520 (years from 607 BC to 1914 AD)

Some expositors note that the words of judgment against Belshazzar contain a count of 2520, the number of years the Gentile kingdoms would exercise power until their judgment began. Mene and tekem are close to units of weight used for gold and silver, namely the mena and shekel. Using a mena of 50 shekels, and a shekel of 20 gerahs (Exodus 30:13), the total gerahs in mena, mena, shekel, division (of mena), would be 1000, 1000, 20, 500. The sum of these, 2520, is the number of years from Babylon's conquest of Israel (beginning in 607 BC), until World War I (beginning in 1914).

Notice the connection elsewhere between shekels of silver and numbers of years, in the purchase price Abraham paid for the burial plot for Sarah. The price was 400 shekels. This payment represented that Abraham would not receive the land for a gift, until after 400 years, which God said would pass before Abraham's seed would receive from God. (See Genesis 15:13, 23:15, 16).

Thus by many varied and thoughtful ways does God intertwine His plans into the prophetic narratives. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).

Daniel the Prophet

In all of these experiences, Daniel represented the Lord's people. He was the one gifted by God with an insight into the meaning of the "handwriting on the wall." So the Lord's people today, those called to reign with Christ in glory, are graciously informed of God about His plans and purposes. Others may see the signs, perhaps tremble as Belshazzar, "hearts failing them for fear ... looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26). But we see the meaning.

The present heavens (spiritual institutions, false churches) and earth (political rulership) will pass away. But the Kingdom of Christ will replace them and be far superior. As Cyrus was later received by the crowds, so Christ the conquering king will be received by the world.

But what of Daniel? He received the gifts promised for his service — a gold chain, scarlet robe, and third place in the kingdom. So the Lord's people — if we are faithful to God — will receive the "gold" of immortality, the "scarlet robe" of kingly authority, and "third place in the kingdom" following God and His son, Jesus Christ.

With such a remarkable privilege, shall we not bend every effort to please our Heavenly Father, and be faithful to him? Let our lights shine, let us be noble as Daniel, and speak what we know of God's coming kingdom.

Daniel Represents the Church

We noted in our studies of the previous chapters that Daniel represents the Church through their afflictions in the Gospel Age. The first three chapters represent three persecuting powers — the Dragon (civil power), Beast (Papacy), and False Prophet (Protestant Powers).

Chapters four, five and six show these powers coming to a close. In Chapter four Nebuchadnezzar, representing civil power, lost his dominion. Here Babylon, representing Papacy in Revelation, loses its dominion. In the next chapter we will see a picture of the fall of the last power.

(1) The unrighteous character of Belshazzar is also indicated by a story told by the Greek writer Xenophon, in his work *Cryopaedia*. His work is not a strictly historical account, but may reflect history. He writes that the general of Cyrus who took the city had formerly been an ally and servant of Belshazzar. This servant of Belshazzar was called Gobryas by Xenophon, but evidently refers to the general named Ugbaru who led the forces of Cyrus into Babylon (not to be confused with Gubaru, who was later appointed governor of governors by Cyrus — whereas Ugbaru died a few weeks after the fall of Babylon).

On a hunting expedition, Belshazzar slew the son of "Gobryas" out of jealousy, if Xenophon here recounts something historical. Gobryas subsequently shifted his allegiance, and took his revenge upon Belshazzar at the fall of the city. "Gobryas and Gadatas and their troops found the gates leading to the palace ... dealing blows right and left they came into the presence of the king; and they found him already risen with his dagger in his hand. And Gadatas and Gobryas and their followers overpowered him; and those about the king perished also" (Xenophon, *Cryopaedia* VII, 5, 27-30, cited by Whitcomb, page 77).

(2) Sheshach is sometimes considered a cryptogram for Babylon. As is commonly known, the Hebrew alphabet of 22 letters are mostly consonants. In ancient times the vowels were supplied by familiarity with the word, but not expressed in writing. Later a system of pointings was developed to indicate the vowel sounds. So the word Sheshach is composed in Hebrew of the three letters SSK, and Babylon of the three letters BBL (for Babel). These two words are related as explained in a comment in the NIV Study Bible. "The cryptogram is formed by substituting the first consonant of the Hebrew alphabet for the last, the second for the next-to-last, etc."

(3) See *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, by Raymond Philip Dougherty, 1929, pages 82 to 87, for several examples.

(4) Herodotus says "Assyria," but he and other authors use this designation for what we know as the empire of Babylon, presumably because the empire of Babylon ruled what had formerly been the empire of Assyria. The reference is Herodotus, Book I, section 188.

(5) This is the evident meaning if there is to be any consistency between Herodotus and Daniel. This is also supported by the thoughtful and scholarly work of Philip Raymond Dougherty of Yale University, in his 1929 book, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pages 38-42 — and by Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus*, 1989, page 80, last paragraph.

(6) *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pages 42-63. His position is reasoned at length, but the evidence is insufficient to be conclusive.

Exodus to Solomon

(Continued from previous issue)

In the previous issue, we discussed the apparent conflict of two texts, namely 1 Kings 6:1 and Acts 13:20. The first text yields 349 years for the period of Judges, and the second is sometimes thought to yield 450 years for the same period. How is this conflict resolved?

The article in our last issue explained that both texts are actually correct, once we understand what the writers intended. 1 Kings 6:1 gives a period of 479 years from the Exodus to the spring of the fourth year of Solomon. When we subtract from this 46 years from the Exodus to the Division of Canaan by Joshua, which precedes the period of Judges, and from the backside the 40 years of Saul, 40 of David, and 4 of Solomon, the remaining 349 years define the length of the “Period of Judges.”

Acts 13:20, on the other hand, simply reports the sum of 19 periods of time mentioned in Judges and 1 Samuel. It accurately reports the sum as 450 years. These 19 periods of time do not take us to King Saul, but rather to the Prophet Samuel, so the period referred to here is not quite the same period as referred to by the 349 years mentioned above. Also, within those 19 periods there are considerable overlaps. It is these overlaps which allow this text to accord with the testimony of 1 Kings 6:1. Thus one inspired text accords with another inspired text.

Could the Judges Have Lasted 450 Years?

However, in spite of the evidence we have examined, some of the dear brethren are attracted to the view that the Period of Judges, rather than lasting but 349 years until the first year of king Saul, instead endured for 450 years. Thus we renew the question, left over from last issue. Could the period of Judges have lasted 450 years? Other than 1 Kings 6:1, is there any other specific evidence in the Old Testament which shows this length to be too great for the period?

Yes. There are two areas of evidence on this question which agree that 450 years are too many. One is from genealogy, and the other is from the narrative of the Book of Judges itself.

Evidence from Genealogy

In the closing verses of the Book of Ruth appears a genealogy of King David, traced back to Pharez, son of Judah, son of Jacob.

The reason for specifying this genealogy is clear. David was appointed by God as King of Israel to succeed Saul. David’s posterity was to hold the right of rulership until Christ would come. It was important to show that David descended from Judah, for Jacob predicted in his closing years that the line of kings leading to Christ would come from Judah. “The sceptre shall not depart

from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [Jesus] come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be [as people gather to a king]” (Genesis 49:10).

Here is that genealogy from Ruth 4:18-22. “Now these are the generations of Pharez:

(Ten Generations)

“Pharez begat Hezron,
and Hezron begat Ram,
and Ram begat Amminadab,
and Amminadab begat Nahshon,
and Nahshon begat Salmon,
and Salmon begat Boaz,
and Boaz begat Obed,
and Obed begat Jesse,
and Jesse begat David.”

Evidently this is a complete and unabridged line of descent. This is important to its purpose, namely, showing an uninterrupted testimony of King David’s lineage from Judah, thus qualifying him to have the office he held. Also, this lineage agrees with the testimony of 1 Chronicles 2:5-12.

The completeness of the lineage is also suggested by the number of generations involved. Some of our readers will be aware of the peculiar circumstances by which Judah fathered the twins, Pharez and Zerah. The account is in Genesis chapter 38. It is not complimentary of Judah. Nevertheless, it honestly records the incident because it is a necessary link from Judah to David. The matter seems to fall under the ban of Deuteronomy 23:2, “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.”

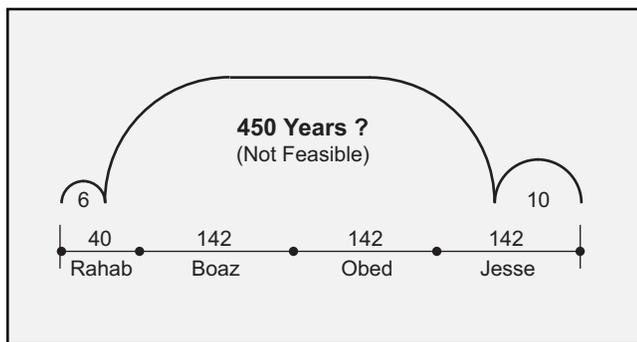
Counting from Pharez forward, as the genealogy contained in Ruth does, we have these generations — Pharez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David — 10 in all. If Deuteronomy 23:2 means an illegitimate child and his descendants do not enter into the congregation of the Lord until¹ the 10th generation, then David, being the 10th generation from Pharez would be qualified for the anointing of God. This is an additional evidence that the 10 generations are a complete and unabridged genealogy from Judah’s son Pharez, to and including King David.

Why are These Ten Generations Important?

The reason this genealogy is important to our subject, is the part of the genealogy from Salmon through David

— Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David. Salmon was one of the Israelites who participated in crossing the Jordan, taking Jericho, and conquering the land of Canaan. He actually married Rahab, the woman of faith who spared the spies Israel sent to spy out Jericho before that city was destroyed.

Therefore these five generations, Salmon through David, span the Period of Judges, and onward into the reigns of Saul and David. This shows that the period of Judges could not have lasted for 450 years, for there are not enough generations to span the time. Indeed, there are barely enough to allow 349 years for the Period of Judges — and even at that, the fathers in each case must have been very elderly at the birth of the next link in the genealogy.



Here are the specifics. Rahab was an adult woman when Jericho was conquered. She was contemporary with Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, who we know lived to the ages of 120, 123, 110 years respectively, so people were living longer then than now. How old might Rahab have been when she became the mother of Boaz? (Matthew 1:5). Suppose she was 20 when the Israelites took Jericho, and 60 when she gave birth to Boaz. That means 40 years after the taking of Jericho, or 34 years into the Period of Judges.

Since King David was 30 when he began to reign after the death of King Saul, and since Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21), David was born 10 years after the Period of Judges. Now suppose that the Period of Judges was indeed 450 years as some suppose. That means from the birth of Boaz, until the birth of David, would be — 450 years, less 34 years, plus 10 years — 426 years.

These 426 years would be spanned by three persons — Boaz until the birth of Obed, Obed until the birth of Jesse, and Jesse until the birth of David. Is this possible? Really it is not. 426 years, divided into three parts, is 142 years each. Which means Boaz, Obed, Jesse, must have averaged 142 years each when their son was born. At this period of history, people were not living long enough. This disproves that the Period of Judges was 450 years long.

Unless ... unless there were missing generations in the genealogy. Is this possible?

Let us examine this possibility. Was Salmon the actual father of Boaz? Matthew 1:5, 6 says, “And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.” In three cases the mother is mentioned, because of the peculiar circumstances (Rahab was of Jericho, Ruth was of Moab, and Urias’ wife Bathsheba was taken by David). Apparently Matthew believed that Boaz (Booz) was the actual son of Rahab and Salmon.

We know from the story of Ruth that Obed was the actual son of Boaz.

We know from the story of King David that he was the actual son of Jesse.

The only link left is from Obed to Jesse. Was Obed the actual father of Jesse, or merely a forefather of Jesse? We judge that he was the actual father, for three reasons. (a) There is no evidence from any other source to suggest otherwise. (b) Ruth 4:17 explicitly says of Obed, “he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.” (c) Probably the genealogy closing the book of Ruth was added by Samuel, the apparent author of the following books we know as first and second Samuel. Samuel would have known the name of the father of Jesse, because Samuel was contemporary with Jesse, he knew Jesse, he spoke with Jesse, and he knew Jesse was the father of God’s appointment for king. To pass over the name of Jesse’s actual father in the sacred record, when it was readily available to Samuel, would be improbable.

Thus we conclude again that the genealogy closing the book of Ruth is complete. Which means the Period of Judges was not as long as 450 years.

But What of 349 Years?

If the Period of Judges was 349 years, then the average age of Boaz, Obed and Jesse when the next link of descent was born would be 108 years. This also seems very old — but was it possible? Yes, it is possible. Jehoiada lived for 130 years, somewhere during mid part of the period of Kings — this was extraordinary, but also much later than Salmon, Boaz, and Jesse. Moses, Aaron and Miriam all lived past 120, and Moses was not yet dimmed in strength or eye at the time. The generation after them could have lived equally long. Levi, the father of Moses, was perhaps 118 when his daughter Jochebed was born, who was the mother of Moses.²

Jesse had eight sons, and was esteemed “an old man in the days of Saul” when David, the last born, was still young (1 Samuel 17:12-14). Apparently Boaz was old when he married Ruth, for he was a man of substance and stature, and commended Ruth for not following the young men (Ruth 3:10). We do not know about Obed, but since the facts seem to require it, perhaps he also was old when Jesse was born. Thus, if the genealogy is complete, 349 years for the Period of Judges is possible. But 450 would not be credible.

This is one line of evidence — the genealogy of David. There is a second line of evidence, internal to the Book of Judges, which is consistent with 349 years for the Judges, but not with 450 years. This second line of evidence we hold for the next issue.

Not a Trifling Matter

It is rare for a Christian publication to spend as much time, space, and thought on the subject of Bible Chronology as we do here. The reason we do is because we are at the very threshold of the Millennium — only 37 years distant, if we apprehend the divine word correctly. The importance of this matter to the closing work of this age should be apparent to all thoughtful Christians.

(1) We seek the mind of the Lord on this, as every verse we study (Proverbs 25:2, Matthew 13:52). The connection of 10 generations in Deuteronomy 23:2, and 10 generations in the genealogy of David, lead us to embrace the connection between the two. (This connection is not original with us.) If the proscription of Deuteronomy 23:2 means the 10th generation is itself still debarred, then our point does not hold. Thus we are inclined to suppose the intent of the text is until the 10th generation. The word “to” appearing in many translation is not an independent word in the Hebrew text. Evidently it is inferred by the translators. We suppose the inference of “until” rather than “to” is equally feasible.

(2) Joseph was 39 when Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt. Levi was perhaps four years older than Joseph, so about 43 at the time. From then until the Exodus was 215 years. Of that period, Moses was born 80 years before the end. If we suppose Jochebed was 60 years old when she gave birth to Moses, then this was 75 years after her father Levi entered Egypt. Thus Levi would have been 43 plus 75, or 118 years of age, when his daughter Jochebed was born.

Times of the Gentiles

Many of our readers are familiar with the expression “Times of the Gentiles,” which appears in Luke 21:24. “And they [Israel] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

This expression is famous for its usage by prophetic writers from the 1800s until today. It is generally applied to a period of 2520 years, during which Israel experienced national punishment. But only the name of this period is drawn from Luke. The actual period of time is drawn from Daniel chapter 4, and Leviticus chapter 26.

It is not apparent that Jesus had a period of 2520 years in mind when he mentioned this expression, but it is clear that he was referring to a period of punishment for Israel, subjected to various Gentile nations until God’s time for Israel’s release would come.

The period of 2520 years as a measure of Israel’s national punishment was first deduced from Daniel chapter four. It was observed the Daniel 7:25 and 12:6 both use the expression “time, times, and half a time” —

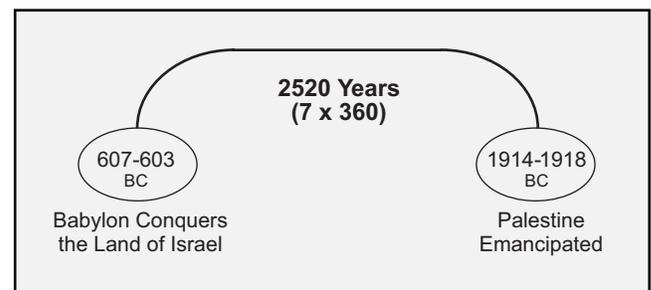
3½ times — for a period of 1260 years, and this is generally agreed by Bible Students today. Therefore, the expression “seven times,” which appears four times in Daniel chapter four, would mean a period twice the 1260 years, namely 2520 years. (Seven periods of 360 years each.) Subsequently the four mentions of “seven times” in Leviticus chapter 26 were also connected to this.

This period was applied to the years from 604 BC to 1917 AD by J. A. Brown in his work *The Eventide, or Last Triumph of the Blessed and Only Potentate*, published in London in 1823. It was later applied by William Miller to the span from 677 BC to 1843 AD, in accord with his view that 1843 was the climax of all the time prophecies. (He had at least five time periods concluding in that year.)

But this period is more famous for the application made by Charles Russell, which he secured through Bro. Nelson Barbour, a young associate of Bro. William Miller. Pastor Russell applied it to the period from 606 BC to 1914 AD. This application became even more famous as it was carried on through the Jehovah’s Witnesses and preached worldwide as a consequence.

Today we can improve the precision only a little. All brethren today who appreciate that this period of seven prophetic times closed with 1914 — which marked the opening of World War I — and attend to the absence of a year “zero” between the BC and AD eras, recognize that the proper date for the beginning was 607 BC.

Those who attend to the facts of history recognize this as the year Nebuchadnezzar crossed the Euphrates with the army of Babylon, beginning a campaign of conquest which endured until 603 BC, the date marked in Daniel 2:1, 38, where Nebuchadnezzar was acknowledged the “head of gold,” ruler of the first of the four empires to rule Israel.



This closing date of the conquest is of special interest, because 2520 years later mark the year 1918 AD, which was the close of World War I, which freed Palestine from its Turkish overlords, allowing Israel to blossom as a nation again in the years following. *(To be continued)*

Special Note ...

This issue is assigned the date “June 2006.” Because of the slippage of publication times, and the delay of mails, no issue is dated to May. The previous issue was April.