

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
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Death and Resurrection

"His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalms 146:4).

There is a wide misunderstanding in the Christian world about what happens when a person dies. But the text heading this article expresses the truth well.

Death is what it seems to be. It is the cessation of life — the opposite of life. When a person dies, he stops breathing, his body normally returns to the earth by a process of decay, unless unusual steps are taken to preserve it, and all thought and awareness come to an end. There is no pain, no pleasure, no dreaming, no sense — the person is simply dead. "In that very day his thoughts perish."

We have no question about what happens when a dog dies. The essence of the dog does not float away, hovering above, he does not continue to sniff, smell, or think of bones or anything else — the dog is dead, and exists no more. It is the same with a human being.

"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast ... All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20).

When Lazarus died, and was raised by Jesus on the fourth day, his sisters were overjoyed to see him. But there is no record of asking him, Where did he go? Who did he see? What did he eat? Who did he speak with? Was it hot or cold, when he was dead? These would all be useless questions, for the dead do not move about, see, eat, speak, or feel anything. If, as some pagan customs have it, people put food in a tomb for the dead, it is never eaten, it merely rots away. Liquids are never drunk, they merely evaporate, slowly, with time. When a person is dead ... he is dead.

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

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The Great Hope

However, that is not the end of the story. Because Jesus "tasted death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9) — and every woman and child — all who have died will be raised back to life again. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28).

The resurrection from the dead is a miracle. It means the miraculous recreation of the body and brain of the person. That is remarkable enough.

But it also means every thought, memory, bent of personality, preference, hope, and characteristic of the person has to be restored as well. For not merely a body, but the entire identity of the person, is to be reestablished. This can only be done if a precise, detailed, comprehensive memory of that person has been retained in the mind of God, so that the person can be reconstituted as he or she was. It is a remarkable miracle, greater even than creating Adam at the beginning.

However, this is the plan of God for the entire world. The texts above directly confirm this. Also, we have several examples to illustrate the ability of God to do as He promises. In addition to Lazarus, the scriptures refer to these other examples as well.

- Elijah raised a widow's son (1 Kings 17:17, 23)
- Elisha raised his benefactor's son (2 Kings 4:20-35)
- Elisha's bones revived a dead man (2 Kings 13:21)
- Jesus raised Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22, 35-43).

- Jesus raised a widow's son (Luke 7:11-15).
- Peter raised Tabitha, that is, Dorcas (Acts 9:36-41).

These seven examples (including Lazarus) all illustrate that the resurrection of the world can take place. This work will amaze, delight, and enthrall the world, when they see the results.

But there is another resurrection, of even surpassing wonder, promised for those who have entered the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus," which we do by a personal consecration of ourselves to God, in private prayer to Him. Of course to receive the high station to which we are called, we must prove "faithful unto death" to our commitment (Revelation 2:10).

The Heavenly Resurrection

The Heavenly Resurrection is more remarkable than the Earthly Resurrection, for in this case the person will receive life on a higher plane. The identity of the person will still be preserved, but in a glorious heavenly body, a divine body, higher than we can comprehend. Our life will be incorruptible, eternal, on a spiritual plane of existence even higher than the angels.

It is this kind of resurrection that Jesus received when he was raised from the dead on the Sunday morning following his death. The human body that Jesus sacrificed on the cross was taken away from the tomb miraculously, lest it be an impediment to the faith of the disciples that Jesus had been raised. But that human body was not the glorious spiritual body that Jesus was raised with. In heaven above, Jesus does not bear the wounds that he suffered here — nor will the saints who join him later bear the scars, disfigurements, loss of limbs, or other abuses they may have suffered here.

Heavenly beings do not have human bodies. They do not need two legs to walk about, or two feet designed to stand upon a physical earth, or two ears to hear the vibrations of the atmosphere conducting sound, or the sense of smell to detect the physical atoms and molecules which conduct aroma. All these are physical parts of earthly bodies. The heavenly resurrection is superior in every way, on a higher plane, and not composed of physical matter as we know it.

On occasion, angels in the Old Testament assumed bodies in human form in order to converse and speak with God's servants and prophets, to deliver messages of one kind or another. But a reading of the various episodes will show these were not their real bodies.

Sometimes they appeared as simple men, as to Abraham in the plains of Mamre (Genesis 18:2). To Daniel, the angel Gabriel appeared in stunning grandeur with eyes like flames, body as beryl, loins wrapped with gold, arms and feet shining as brass (Daniel 10:5,6).

Sometimes they simply vanished, as with the angel that appeared to Gideon (Judges 6:21). On one occasion an angel dissipated in the smoke of an altar, after appear-

ing to Manoah to promise the birth of a son (Samson, Judges 13:20).

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, he also materialized a body as suited the occasion. He appeared sometimes in a familiar form, as to the disciples in an upper room on the Sunday of his resurrection. A week later he appeared the same to them all, when Thomas was present, even with wounds such as he received on the cross, in order to convince them it was really him, Jesus. But he was not the same as before. He would appear or disappear at will, without using the door or windows.

On occasion he appeared as a **stranger**, as with the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:12,13). When he appeared to the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, "none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou?" (John 21:12) — evidently he did not **look** like Jesus, but they knew it must be him, from the miracle of the fishes they caught. When Jesus appeared to Paul at his conversion, Jesus showed him a glimpse of his ascendant glory, so great that it struck Paul blind (Acts 9:3-9).

So with the saints, when they are raised to heavenly life. We will not be human, fleshly, five or six feet tall with neatly groomed hair — but heavenly, spiritual beings, entirely different than the fleshly beings we are now. Identity will be preserved, for that is a matter of thought, memory, personality, character, and experience — all of this will be transferred, as it was when Jesus was raised. But our bodies will be glorious heavenly bodies, no longer fleshly or earthly, and our intellects expanded appropriate to the higher order of being we will then attain by the grace of God.

"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren

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ren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:49, 50). The Great Company class will also be raised heavenly, but will fail of the glory accorded the Bride class.

Sheol and Hades

Sheol is the Old Testament Hebrew word which refers to the condition of the dead. *Hades* is the corresponding New Testament Greek word. *Sheol* is word number 7585 in Strong’s Concordance. It is rendered three different ways in the English common version of the Old Testament — namely, grave (31 times), pit (3 times), and hell (31 times).

All of these are somewhat misleading. “Grave” gives a reasonable thought, but it is not technically precise. There is a Hebrew word for grave, namely *qeber*, word number 6900 in Strong’s Concordance. That word is defined as “a sepulchre” — translated burial, burying place, grave, sepulchre.

An example is Genesis 35:20, “And Jacob set a pillar upon her **grave**: that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.” A grave is a physical location where a body is deposited, whereas *sheol* is not a place, but a condition — the condition of death, oblivion.

The same concern pertains to “pit.”

Concerns for the rendition “hell” are different. In some ways it is more precise than the others, if “hell” is understood correctly. The English word “hell” is derived “from *helan*, to cover, conceal” (Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary, Unabridged, Second Edition). The English word “hall” is derived from this as well, “literally, a cover, shelter, from the root of *helan*, to conceal” (same source). Thus “hell” really, literally, means a hidden place or condition — not bad for a definition of the condition of the dead.

However, the understanding of the word “hell” so widely held in the English world is that it refers to a torrid place of flames, suffering, and torment — which is just the **opposite** of the scriptural meaning. Death is a condition of oblivion. It is unconscious, painless, without experience or sensation — non-existence.

A common thought is that good people go to heaven, and bad people go to hell, but this also is exactly the **opposite** of the truth about *sheol* (Old Testament) or *hades* (New Testament). In fact, **everyone** who died in the Old Testament went to *sheol*, whether good or bad, irrespective. Here are some examples.

- Genesis 37:35 — Jacob and Joseph
- 1 Samuel 2:6 — anyone
- 1 Kings 2:6,9 — Joab
- Job 14:13 — Job
- Psalms 9:17 — the wicked
- Psalms 16:10 — prophetic of Jesus

Words Rendered “Hell”

Sheol — Old Testament, means simply the condition of death.

Hades — New Testament, means same as Sheol.

Gehenna — New Testament, not treated in this article, except here. It refers literally to the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, used as a garbage dump, where fire and worms consumed the garbage. It is used by Jesus as a symbol of everlasting death for the wicked, and correlates to the symbolic “lake of fire” of Revelation (19:20, 20:10, 14, 15). “Gehenna” is used in the following verses. It should never be rendered “hell,” it should simply be rendered “gehenna.”

Matthew 5:22,29, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15,33, Mark 9:43,45,47, Luke 12:5, James 3:6.

Tartartoo — New Testament, not treated in this article, except here. It appears only in 2 Peter 2:4, and should never have been translated “hell.” It does not refer to death at all, but to the restraints imposed upon the fallen angels after the flood.

- Psalms 31:17 — the wicked
- Psalms 49:10,14 — Wise men and fools
- Psalms 55:15 — conspirators
- Psalms 88:3 — a good but afflicted man
- Psalms 89:48 — all men
- Psalms 141:7 — David and his people
- Proverbs 1:12 — victims of evil men
- Proverbs 30:16 — people in general
- Ecclesiastes 9:10 — all people
- Isaiah 14:11 — Lucifer
- Isaiah 38:10 — good king Hezekiah
- Ezekiel 31:15 — The empire of Assyria
- Hosea 13:14 — Israelites

As for *hades*, in the New Testament, Acts 2:27,31 uses it about Jesus when he died for three days. Of course no one really believes Jesus suffered torture for three days, or was seared by flames. Jesus was dead. So clearly *hades* cannot mean a place of fire and torture.

On the third day, God raised him from the dead and he has been alive evermore. “I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18). That is a unique testimony for the son of God — one which will never apply to any other spirit being. For unlike humans, who were condemned to death for disobedience, the angels who sinned did not die, and cer-

tainly the good angels never did or will die. The angels who sinned and do not repent will ultimately be destroyed, and they will never live again. Only Jesus, of all the beings originally from the heavenly courts, ever will have suffered death and been raised again.

Hades, like *sheol*, is the condition of oblivion — or more precisely, of **temporary** oblivion. It is temporary, because all the captives of death will be released in a resurrection from the dead. Thus in Revelation 20, referring to the Millennial Age, we read “death and hell [*hades*] delivered up the dead which were in them ... and death and hell [*hades*] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:13, 14). What of the unrepentant during the Millennium? “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (verse 15).

From this passage, two things are clear. (1) *Hades* (and the Old Testament *sheol*) results from the disobedience which came into the world through Adam. When that curse is expunged, and all the captives are freed by a resurrection from the dead, then that condition exists no more — it is destroyed. (2) *Hades* and *sheol* are not a place of fire, for it would be senseless to cast a place of fire into a lake of fire.

The lake of fire is a symbol. It represents everlasting destruction, which is the eternal penalty for the unrepentant. They will not suffer some ghastly torture for the ages of eternity — that would not be justice. It is an offense to the noble sensitivities of any thinking person to suppose God, who is unbounded in wisdom, planned from the beginning for the everlasting torture of people for any reason. That would be an unjustly extreme punishment, even for Satan himself. Satan, and all the ungodly, will simply be removed, as though they had not been. They will not merit the prize of eternal life, and so will not receive it. The pleasures of unending life are reserved for the righteous — whether in heaven above, or in the paradise below that Earth will become.

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Behavior in the Church of God

“If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:31,32).

Those words were written to brethren at Corinth. Years later Paul, then an aged Apostle, wrote a letter to his son in the faith, Timothy. At this time Timothy was a

man of responsibility, advising brethren in proper Christian conduct. Paul intended to visit Timothy, but if he were delayed, this letter would provide some guidelines for Timothy by which to conduct the affairs of the house of God, “which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Here is some of that counsel, from the first three chapters of that epistle, condensed, and partly paraphrased.

“The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. Avoid any thing that is contrary to sound practice, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, committed to my trust. To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

“Follow the example of others and war a good warfare. Hold to your faith with a good conscience. Remember to observe supplications, prayer, intercessions, and giving of thanks, even for those in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life of godliness and honesty. Let men pray everywhere with holy hands, without wrath, without doubting.

“Let sisters adorn themselves in modest apparel, with sobriety; and, as becomes women professing godliness, with good works. Let them learn with reverence and humility, careful not to clamour for authority or speak loudly. Thoughtful, without railing or complaint, sober, faithful in their service.

“Let the men be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, hospitable, moderate, patient, not envious. Let them hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Let them rule their homes. Let their children be obedient. Let their children exhibit always a godly demeanor.”

The Church Today

In some ways, the Church today is like the Church of Corinth, with worldly influences permeating even the Church. The subscription to First Timothy says that it was written from Laodicea. This reminds us that we are today in the Laodicean stage of the Church. All the more should we heed the thoughtful counsel of the experienced apostle. We live in an era when dissensions are not unknown among the saints. All the more should we take care.

If any should be disposed to complain against, or even mock, an elderly brother long in years, and long in devoted study of the scriptures, such criticism would be better withheld. If the complaint be from any who have not themselves grounded their views in the Scriptures, through personal study, then all the more would this trespass be inappropriate.

The proper attitude is to respect the dignity of the brotherhood. Not in vain do the scriptures tell us to respect the wisdom of years. As Job 32:7 advised, “Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.” The spirit of the world is very different. In the

*“Days should speak, and
Multitude of years should
teach wisdom.” (Job 32:7)*

world, youth are disposed to disregard the advice of seniors. In the world, personal wish and preference exalt themselves above sanctified custom. But let this spirit not take root within the Church of God. Let us see that we promote the wisdom from heaven.

The proper adornments for consecrated men are sobriety, diligence, and service. The proper adornments for consecrated sisters are works of kindness, humbly tendered, with a meek and quiet spirit. The proper adornments for the younger ones are respectful address, thoughtful attention, and a helpful spirit.

For us all, let common courtesy spring as an overflow from the inner man. Let our dress and apparel be modest, becoming, and appropriate to a house of worship. Let us inhibit any sense of rancor, bitterness or affront. Let our interest be deep in the Scriptures, and our fellowship reflect that interest. Let us be swift to hear, slow to speak, and attentive. “Look not every man on [simply] his own things, but every man also on the [deliberations] of others” (Philippians 2:4). And, as we discuss the treasures of holy writ, let our goal be to embrace the mind of our Heavenly Father on every matter, as revealed in the holy Scriptures.

Top of the Mountains

“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains” (Micah 4:1).

This text is well known, and oft cited, among Bible Students. Probably Micah, who was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah, picked up this language from the prophecies of his senior prophet, for these words appear in about the same form in Isaiah 2:2.

The three verses which follow speak of the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, which will flow from Israel, which will become the center of God’s Kingdom on earth.

(2) “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. (3) And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong

nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (4) But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it” (Micah 4:2-4).

This is one of many Old Testament prophecies which refer to the prominence of Israel during the Millennium. Zechariah chapters 8, 12, 14, and Ezekiel chapters 36-39, are other excellent examples. God plans to use Israel as the nation through whom the Kingdom of God will spread outward to the world.

This explains why in our day God has restored Israel to their land, to their statehood, and protected them against so many perils.

Israel is not yet the Kingdom of God. Many Israelis do have faith in Jehovah, and recognize His hand in their restoration. But the government of Israel as it exists today is not based upon faith in God. It is not this government that will lead the nations during the Millennium.

The Israelites as a nation do not yet recognize their Messiah. There is a movement among individual Israelis to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and this is good news. But the large majority do not. However, Zechariah 12:10 assures us that they will turn to Jesus when the crucial time comes.

This will be when the Ancient Worthies are raised from the dead, in response to Israel’s prayer to God for deliverance. The Ancient Worthies will explain to Israel that deliverance is coming from Jesus, their long-forsaken Messiah. This will precipitate a national mourning, repentance, and enthusiastic embrace of their rightful King and Messiah. This will occur near the opening of the Millennium.

Then Zechariah 8:3 will come to pass — “Thus saith Jehovah; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts the holy mountain.”

“And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zechariah 8:21-23).

Top of the Mountains

With this view of prophecy into the future, it must excite the interest of all to see that Israel has sprouted again among the nations of earth. In scripture a mountain frequently represents a nation. For example,

in Daniel 2:35 the Kingdom of God is represented by “a great mountain [that] filled the whole earth.” (See also Ezekiel 40:2.) Our opening text refers to mountains as well — “the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains.” Israel’s reappearance as a nation is in preparation for the Millennium which rapidly approaches. As we understand, it is but a generation future.

1948

Israel reappeared as an independent state in the year 1948. We might ask, is this year, so weighty in the progress of affairs toward the kingdom, suggested in the pictures or prophecies about the Kingdom? If it is, then we have not only the fact of Israel’s reappearance, but the time of their reappearance, as a double-cord of evidence that we are witness to the working of God in our day.

In this article we consider three occasions where this date is indicated.

(1) Seventy Years. Israel lost their national independence when God allowed Babylon to dominate the middle east for 70 years. This period is mentioned six times in scripture —

- 2 Chronicles 36:21
- Jeremiah 25:12
- Isaiah 23:15
- Jeremiah 29:10
- Jeremiah 25:11
- Daniel 9:2

Isaiah refers to the effect of this period upon Tyre, Jeremiah 25:11,12 refer to the effect upon the “nations,” and the other three texts refer to the effect upon Israel directly. When the seventy years closed, God would punish the king of Babylon, reestablish the Israelites upon their land, and restore the nation.

But during the 70 years proper, Babylon would be used as an instrument of punishment upon Israel and surrounding nations. Though Israel remained a people, they lost both their independence, and their national structure, during those 70 years allotted to Babylon.

It is therefore engaging to observe that the modern state of Israel was formed again in a similar period. Bible Students have long observed that the regathering of Israel in modern times commenced with the year 1878. In this year Lord Beaconsfield, also known as Disraeli, was a leading figure at the Berlin Congress of Nations, convened to resolve the Russo-Turkish War of 1877.

Disraeli was the first and only Jewish Prime Minister ever elected to lead England. One of the resolutions of the Berlin Congress was that thereafter the Ottoman Empire, that ruled the land of Israel at the time, was compelled to provide equal protection of the Law to all residents. Notably, that included the Jewish people. This stirred interest among Jewish people to resettle their ancient homeland and that very year — 1878 — saw the establishment of the settlement named “Petah Tikvah,”

Seventy Year Parallel

- Israel lost their national independence during the “Seventy Years for Babylon” (Jeremiah 29:10) — from 610 BC to 540 BC. In 610 Babylon replaced Assyria as the Empire of record in the Middle East, by taking the last Assyrian stronghold, Haran. In 540 BC Cyrus turned his army against the empire of Babylon, and the city fell to him the following year.
- Israel regained their national independence during the Seventy Years of their restoration — from 1878, when their resettlement began, until 1948, when independent statehood was achieved.

which means “door of hope,” evidently named in memory of Hosea 2:15. **Seventy years later**, in 1948, Israel achieved independence as a sovereign nation again.

This parallel period of 70 years is as though to tell us that Israel was now, for the first time since their Babylonian captivity, accorded full independence as a free nation again. They had enjoyed limited independence under the Maccabean rulers during the Grecian Empire, but not until now had they full rights and privileges of an independent state. Thus 1948, the end of 70 years, is marked as a significant milestone date.

(2) The Pattern of Years. The United Nations resolved in November of **1947** that Israel would be an independent nation, and this resolution was to become effective with the end of the British mandate over Palestine in mid May, **1948**.

The reestablishment of Israel was in large measure a result of the holocaust — the Nazi effort to exterminate Jews wherever they found them during World War II. It began when the war began, for in 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, they at once rounded up the Jews in the villages they took, marched them out, and shot them. Thus the holocaust began in **1939**.

The Nazi party rose to political power in Germany in a series of three years — in **1932** they became the largest single party in Parliament, in **1933** Hitler became Chancellor, and in **1934** Paul von Hindenburg, the President of Germany, passed away and Hitler succeeded him.

Hitler had earlier laid out his plans in the infamous book *Mein Kampf*, dictated in **1924**.

Before that, World War I, from **1914** to **1918**, had freed Palestine from the Ottoman Turks and transferred control to England, who in 1917, in the Balfour Declaration, declared their intent to make Palestine a national homeland for the Jewish people.

Therefore, we could list the major events leading to Israel's independent statehood, to be as follows.

- 1914-1918 World War I
- 1924 Hitler's plan to exterminate Jewry
- 1932-1934 The Nazi rise to power
- 1939 Beginning of Holocaust
- 1947-1948 Statehood reestablished

This sequence of years is significant, because it matches the sequence of years by which Israel lost their national independence during the time Babylon was permitted to subdue the state of Israel, so long ago. Here is that historical sequence of events.

The first time Babylon crossed the River Euphrates, which constituted the northern border of the holy land (Genesis 15:18), was year 19 of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar. This was in **607 BC**. Nabopolassar reigned to his 21st year, then died, and was succeeded by crown prince Nebuchadnezzar.

In years 19 to 21, and the first two years of Nebuchadnezzar — a span of four years — the Babylonian armies continued campaigning in the holy land and surrounding areas, year by year. By this means all those lands were subdued. As Daniel 2:1,38 expresses it, Nebuchadnezzar had become the "head of gold." This was in year two of Nebuchadnezzar, **603 BC**.

Jehoiakim was king of Israel at the time, and had become subordinate to Babylon (Daniel 1:1). However, he would break his oath of fealty, rebel, and the Babylonians would march against Israel again, taking Jerusalem after the brief three-month reign of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim. This was at the close of year seven of Nebuchadnezzar, as it turned into year eight — **597 BC**.

Zedekiah now became king of Israel. As time passed he also rebelled. Eight years after his accession, Babylon came against them again, sieged the city for three years, burned the temple, and tore down the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1-8). That three year siege was from **589 to 587 BC**.

Five years later, in **582 BC**, Nebuchadnezzar took more prisoners, either from Judea, or perhaps from Egypt where the Jews had fled (compare Jeremiah 52:29,30).

Eight years later, Ezekiel received a vision of the restoration of Israel and the establishment of God's Kingdom (Ezekiel 40:1 through the end of the book). The year of that vision is marked in Rabbinical writing as the last Jubilee of Israel — the one which they could not keep — the one which broke the cycle (compare Ezekiel 7:13). That closing Jubilee year ran from Tishri to Tishri, **574 to 573 BC**.

Therefore, we can list the years when Israel lost their statehood as follows. We list these years in the same

arrangement as the closing years, for ease of comparison (All these are BC years.)

- 607-603 Babylon conquered holy land
- 597 Jehoiachin captive to Babylon
- 589-587 Siege of Jerusalem, Zedekiah falls
- 582 More prisoners five years later
- 574-573 Last Jubilee, vision of restoration

Notice — the pattern is exactly duplicated. The sequence of events by which Israel lost their nation, is replicated in the sequence of events by which Israel regained their nation — year by year.

Whatever the number of years is between the two lists, the striking feature is that the pattern is the same in each case — for the demise of Israel on one had, and the restoration of Israel on the other.

However, the number of years between the two lists is also noteworthy. Each year in the list above is exactly **2520** years before the corresponding years in the previous column. Bible Students will recognize this number as the length of the famous "Seven Times" of Israel's national punishment (Compare Daniel 7:16,23,25,32 and Leviticus 26:18,21,24,28). For seven prophetic times of 360 years each is a period of **2520** years.

The conclusion we draw is that the reestablishment of Israel, concluding in 1948, was not a random occurrence. The **pattern** of years — and also the **number** of years between — tells us there is order, plan, design, and meaning. God is in charge, and He has providentially overruled events in a timely manner.

Israel's restoration in 1948 was not random. It is a meaningful date.

(3) "**Top of the Mountains.**" This third and final approach brings us back to the days of Noah, the Flood, and the Ark God asked Noah to build to save himself and his family. Peter, in 1 Peter 3:20,21, tells us that Noah's salvation in the ark is a picture of our salvation in Christ, and the water around them is a picture of the water of baptism. "The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure ... even baptism, doth also now save us."

That picture, of salvation in Christ, takes us to the year 33 AD, when Christ died, rose again the third day, ascended on high, and appeared in the presence of God for us. Not until then could we "enter" the ark, and be rescued from the curse that sweeps over the entire world.

Genesis 7:12 says the rain fell 40 for forty days, and swept away the old world. Often in prophecy, a number of days represents so many years in fulfillment. This is the key to the 70 weeks of Daniel chapter nine leading to the death of Christ, and also the 1260, 1290, and 1335 "days" of Daniel and Revelation. If we apply

that key here, then the 40 days of rain would represent forty years of judgment. Forty years from 33 AD takes us to 73 AD, the date the last rebellious faction of Israel fell to the Romans. The fortress of Masada fell in 73 AD, ending the Roman War against Judea. So there does appear to be meaning here.

However, the waters did not subside when the rain stopped. The waters prevailed from month 2, day 17, until month 7, day 17 — five months to the day. We suggest that these five months take us in picture through the first age of redemption, the Gospel Age, from the beginning of the age until the Harvest period closing this age.

To be specific, those five months would span the time from 33 AD, when Jesus died, until 1874 AD, when the Harvest commenced at the second advent of Christ.

In Noah's experience, the ark came to rest then. It ran aground and lodged firm, having hit earth. Everything looked the same — water everywhere — but they had come to a stopping point. So in 1874, having been carried about on the seas of this world, the saints came to a prophetic stopping point — the end of the 1335 years of Daniel 12:12. "Blessed is that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

It takes us to the time of our Lord's return, as Luke 12:36,37 suggests, "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord ... **Blessed** are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

The end of the 1335 years was an exceptional prophetic marker, the last in the series of Daniel chapter 12. Looking around, the world appeared about as it had earlier — but they had "come aground" upon a fixed prophetic date. Things would begin to change, as the signs of the end of the age grew more abundant. The details of this would be another subject — but brethren of Present Truth have long recognized that 1874 brought us to the return of Christ and the opening of the Gospel Age Harvest period.

We notice in passing that the five months that bring us to the ark resting, which we suggest represents the time of the second advent, remind us of the parable Jesus gave in Matthew 25 about five wise virgins waiting for the bridegroom. Those virgins represent the saints through the age waiting for the Lord at his return. At last the cry went out, "Behold the Bridegroom!" (Matthew 25:6). Thus **Five Months** take us to the Lord's return in one picture — **Five Virgins** lead us to the Lord's return in the other.

Months of 30 Days

If one compares the Five Months we have been discussing, with the 150 days of Genesis 7:24, it is clear that each month was precisely 30 days. This observation is necessary in order to understand the discussion that follows. Normal calendars today do not count every month as 30 days — neither the Jewish calendar, which

alternates between 29 and 30, nor the English calendar, which alternates between 30 and 31 (except for February).

But the ancient calendar of Egypt did have 30 day months, 12 of them, making 360 days total. Of course the year is really 365 days — they knew that, and added five extra days before each new year. Thus the year came out correctly in whole days. Probably that ancient Egyptian calendar was based on the more ancient calendar Noah used. That would mean Noah also added five extra days at the close of each year.

The Next Event of Record

Genesis 8:5 says, "And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen." What might this picture — "the tops of the mountains"? It represents the first visible evidence that the end of the flood episode was at hand.

We suggest this represents the appearance of the state of Israel among the "mountain" kingdoms of this world. Remember that this same expression appears in Micah 4:1, where the "top of the mountains" refers to Israel. The establishment of Israel as a nation among other nations is a visible foregleam of the coming Kingdom.

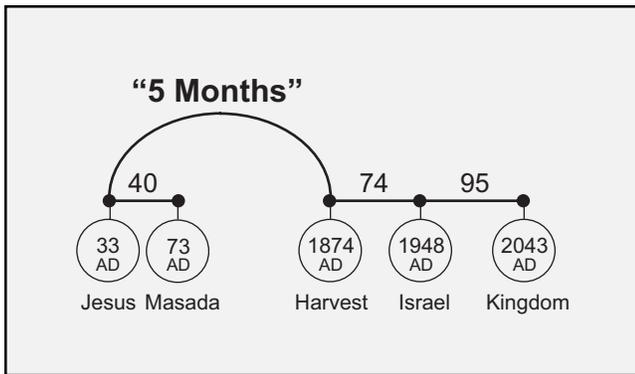
So how many days had passed, from the time they came aground (month 7, day 17), until the "tops of the mountains" were seen? From day 17, to day 30 of that month, would be 13 days. One more, to the first of the next month, would be 14 days — now we are at month 8, day one. Another 30 days (44 total) take us to day one of month 9 — another 30 (74 total) take us to day one of month 10.

So 74 days passed from the time the ark came aground, until they saw the tops of the mountains. Recall that the 40 days of rain at the outset pictures 40 years, to the end of Israel's hopes after the first advent.

Might these 74 days near the end, take us 74 years beyond the second advent? Might they take us to the hopes of Israel reestablished? Let us see. Starting at 1874, going forward 74 years, brings us to **1948** — exactly the right year!

But this is only a sign of the coming Kingdom. When does the Kingdom itself arrive? Genesis 8:13, "And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry."

This is the **first day** of the new year — an appropriate symbol for the opening of a new age in the history of mankind, the Millennial Reign of Christ. The world has waited for this, and now it approaches!



Here Noah cast away the covering the ark — as though to represent that now the redemption we have enjoyed in Christ is uncovered for the entire world to behold. So it will be in the Millennial Kingdom — the world will behold the salvation they so desperately need, and the entire world will enter the blessings God has prepared for them.

Six Centuries

The calendar date of record shows that six centuries — to the very day — had come to a close when the waters were dried. Does that perhaps suggest the Six Millenniums from Adam which come to a close at the opening of the Millennial Kingdom?

And what of the timing? From the “top of the mountains” appearing at month 10, day one — 1948 — how many days pass until New Year’s Day when “the waters were dried up”?

To the opening of month 11, 30 days — to the opening of month 12, another 30 (60 total) — to the opening of month one another 30 (90 total). But what of the five extra days before the new year? If those are added, then the sum is 95 days.

Can these also apply as the others, on a day-for-a-year basis? From **1948**, if we add **95** years, the result brings us to **2043** AD — the very year which, according to the record of the Hebrew Old Testament, **6000** years from Adam come to a close!

This testimony is riveting to us. There is interpretation here — we hold it cautiously, until the new day of the Millennium arrives, and clears any possible mists — but the evidence is thoroughly energizing to our faith. The long promised Millennial Reign of Christ, we anticipate in only another 34 years. It will be introduced within the year 2043 AD.

Conclusion

Let us then focus anew on the privileges of service we have, from now until then, to be ambassadors for Christ. Let shine the light of the glorious gospel in all its beauty — and encourage all who wish, to enter into the “High Calling of God in Christ Jesus” while these years of opportunity are yet with us.

We commit ourselves to God, in personal consecration to Him, by private prayer to Him. Then we symbolize our consecration by water baptism as a public declaration of our decision. Thereafter, we live a life of Christian service, character development, and study.

This service is a great privilege, for we are ambassadors for the King of Glory himself (2 Corinthians 5:20). The rewards for faithful service are more wonderful than we either deserve, or can appreciate.

Reader Questions

Matthew 27:52,53 — *According to the raising of Jesus Christ, the holy ones were seen with him entering Jerusalem. Which Jerusalem did they enter? Who saw them entering Jerusalem? Those who saw them were all holy, or mixed with sinners? Those raised with him, did they die again?* — *Kakamega, Kenya*

The form in which this passage appears in the common version gives a false impression. The passage is referring to things that occurred when Jesus died. Starting in verse 51, the passage says there was an earthquake, the veil in the temple was rent, rocks were split apart, graves were dislodged, and bodies in them were thrown upright. All of these events were testimony to something dramatic — which the death of the son of God was.

These events also have symbolic meaning. The earthquake represents the great upheaval that would soon come in Judea. Within a generation, the Romans would sweep through the land and put an end to the rebellious city (compare the earthquake of Revelation 8:5).

The veil in the temple represented the flesh of Jesus. Being rent, it opened a new way to God for us (Hebrews 10:20). The graves dislodged, and bodies thrown up, represents the resurrection of the dead — all the dead of past ages will come back to life again (John 5:28).

Verse 53 gives the impression that the bodies that were thrown up by the earthquake, then came to life and walked into Jerusalem. However, this is incorrect. It is an unfortunate rendering, perhaps based upon some early corruption of the text itself. Following is a translation drawn from the word-for-word translation in the Kingdom Interlinear version.

“And the tombs were opened and many bodies of the having-fallen-asleep holy (ones) were raised up, and having gone forth out of the tombs after the being-raised-up of him [Jesus], they entered into the holy city and they were made apparent to many.”

Now here is the **sense**, as we understand it.

“And the graves were split apart by the earthquake when Jesus died, and various bodies in the tombs were thrown up — these were bodies from the tombs near Jerusalem, where holy ones often were buried — and after the resurrection of Jesus, which was on Sunday

morning, as people walked through the area on their way to the city and passed out of the graveyard into Jerusalem, they observed this remarkable sight. Upon coming into Jerusalem they told many in the city what they had seen.”

“Which Jerusalem did they enter?” — the literal city of Jerusalem.

“Who saw them entering Jerusalem? — the people who happened to be in Jerusalem that Sunday morning, when normal business resumed following the Sabbath.

“Those who saw them were all holy?” — No, those who saw the bodies thrown up were just the common people. The holy ones were those who had been buried — for among those of faith it was evidently esteemed a privilege to be buried near the city which was so revered.

“Those raised with him, did they die again?” — The “raising” of the bodies was not on Sunday morning, but on Friday afternoon, when Jesus died. Those in the tombs were not raised to life again. They were simply thrown out by the force of the shaking earthquake. It was not like Lazarus, whom Jesus raised to life again (and who surely died again.) If they had been raised to life when Jesus died, they would not have lingered there among the tombstones, before walking away on Sunday morning.

This is a passage which has engaged the minds of many, and some manuscripts differ slightly on how they express the matter. But above is what we best judge to be the intent of what occurred.

Daniel: Conclusion

“Shut up the words, and seal the book, [until] the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4).

With this article, covering Daniel 12:5-13, we conclude our series on the Book of Daniel. Daniel 12:4 completed the narration of history in advance begun in Daniel 11:2. The nine verses considered here give additional information about the vision, from the angel who delivered it to the prophet Daniel.

Verse 5 — “Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two [angels], the one on this side of the bank of the river [Hiddkel, known today as the Tigris], and the other on that side of the bank of the river.”

Chapter 10 introduced the scene of this last, three-chapter vision, by saying Daniel was standing on the bank of the Tigris river when a mighty angelic being appeared to him — Gabriel, as we determined earlier, comparing Daniel 10:21, 11:1 with 9:1,21, 8:16. Gabriel has narrated the prophecy up to this point, and now appear two other angels, one on either side of the Tigris.

The first vision of Daniel was received in a dream, recorded in chapter seven. Chapters 8, 9, and 10-12, give three more visions, each one given Daniel by Gabriel. The choice of Gabriel for this mission is appropriate, for these visions all pertain to the coming of Christ in one way or another — either the first or second advent of Christ — and Gabriel was the angel who announced the work of Messiah in the days of Zacharias and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist, and Mary and Joseph, mother and guardian of Jesus. (Probably Gabriel is also the one depicted in Revelation chapter 10, in the message of the sixth trumpet, which precedes the return of Christ at the seventh trumpet.)

Verse 6 — “And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?”

The man clothed in linen was the angel, Gabriel, who appeared in the form of a man to give Daniel the vision. This text describes him as upon, or above, the waters. That position, and the remarkable appearance of this messenger (detailed in chapter 10), was a reminder of his supernatural character. The two angels who appeared with him now would be additional witnesses that the narrative came from the heavenly courts.

The one nearer to Daniel asked Gabriel a question that Daniel would have had also, if not then, at least later on. “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” Daniel represents the Church class, as suggested early on in this series. The question of the angel is one the saints were very interested in through the dark years of affliction during the Gospel Age — how long? When will these adverse conditions close? “How long, O Lord?” (Revelation 6:10).

If the angel near to Daniel thus represents the saints during the dark days of persecution, perhaps the second angel, on the far bank of the Tigris, represents the saints living after the close of that time. The response to the question comes in the next verse.

Verse 7 — “And I heard the man clothed in linen [Gabriel], which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him [God] that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”

Daniel did not understand this cryptic answer. “I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” (verse 8). But Daniel could not know how long this cryptic “time, times, and an half” would last, or various other specifics — so Gabriel told him, “Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (verse 9).

Daniel could understand some things. He would know, from being attentive to his others visions, that after the Persian Empire would come the Grecian Empire, and

after that a fourth empire stronger than either — we know that as the Roman Empire. Daniel knew that from that fourth empire would develop a powerful persecuting force which would rule for “a time and times and the dividing of time” (Daniel 7:26). Now, fourteen years later, he hears Gabriel mention this same period of persecution again — only here a little more precisely. For “dividing of time” is now said to be “an half,” rather than some other proportion.

The “Daniel class” through the age has known the same. They knew that the greatest persecutor of the saints would come when Rome’s power would wane, for Paul taught them this. “Only he who now hinders will hinder, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8). But how to calculate the time they knew not, and if Paul had some insight on this, he did not express it in any of the writings extant today.

Prophetic Days of Daniel

3½ Times	Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Rev. 12:14
42 Months	Revelation 11:2, 13:5
1260 Days	Revelation 11:3, 12:6

All three expressions refer to the same time,
 $3\frac{1}{2} \times 12 = 42$ months, $\times 30 = 1260$ days.

Fulfilled as so many years — as were the
 70 Weeks of Daniel chapter nine. See also
 Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:5,6

1260 years — 539 to 1799 — End Papal power
 1290 years — 539 to 1829 — Prophecies clarify
 1335 years — 539 to 1874 — Return of Christ

As the age progressed, and Papacy developed, and spiritual darkness settled upon Christendom, many saintly ones recognized Papacy as the “man of lawlessness” (as the better manuscripts give for the expression “man of sin,” 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

On this nearly all the Reformers agreed. Some began to see that the time period involved was 1260 years — $3\frac{1}{2}$ “times” of 360 years each — by piecing together the clues from Revelation (Revelation 11:2,3, 12:6,14, 13:5) — and applying the “day for a year” principle which unlocks the meaning of the seventy week prophecy in Daniel chapter nine.

But at what date these years would begin, and at what date they would end, was unclear until the close of those days. So the “Daniel class” would be unclear until the fulfillment approached, and would not have precision until after the close of those days.

Verse 10 — “Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

The understanding of these times would come gradually to those who concerned themselves with it. “Let him that hath understanding, count ...” (Revelation 13:18). Verse 11 then suggests when that comprehension would become more general.

Verse 11 — “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up [this refers to Daniel 11:31], there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

We now see that Papacy, with its doctrine of the mass substituting for Christ’s once-for-all redemption, was “set up” in political authority in 538 AD, at the earliest. In that year the Pope was left in control of Rome by Emperor Justinian’s General, Belisarius. However, their position was tentative until the following year, 539 AD, when the Pope’s rival, the Gothic ruler Witigis, was subdued at his capital, Ravenna.

1260 years further on take us to 1798, when the Pope was removed from Rome by the armies of France, and thereafter taken to France. There he died a prisoner of Napoleon in 1799. For a time, Napoleon would not allow the election of a successor Pope. Papacy was temporarily “headless,” and never again regained her status as arbiter between nations. By 1799, those days had closed.

But verse 11 speaks of something 30 years beyond that — not merely 1260 prophetic “days,” but 1290 of them — fulfilled, as customary in time prophecy, as so many years. 1290 years from 539 bring us to 1829. This was the time when half a dozen years of prophetic studies came to a head in England.¹ Across the Atlantic in New England, the Adventist movement spawned by these very time prophecies of Daniel would soon coalesce around the person of Bro. William Miller.

It was in the year 17 BC that King Herod, in the 18th year of his reign, began to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem (compare John 2:20). This was 45 years before the year our Lord was baptized at Jordan to commence his First Advent ministry. In like manner, 1829 was a beginning in rebuilding the Church, the spiritual temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16) — 45 years before 1874, when the work of Christ’s Second Advent commenced.

Verse 12 — “Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

This specifies a period of 1335 days. Applying the day-year principle which is the key to all these prophecies, that would be 1335 years. This runs 45 years beyond the 1290, and takes us to 1874.

This closing prophecy introduces us to the Harvest or ending period of the Gospel Age, when “Michael” — our Lord Jesus — would “stand up” and exercise his regal

authority (Daniel 12:1). This verse 12 is the foundation text for understanding that 1874 commenced the Second Advent of Christ.

The text itself is very brief, even cryptically brief. But we can extract enough clues from these few words to understand the meaning. “Blessed” and “waiteth” are words that our Lord applied to the time of his Second Advent in Luke 12:35-37. “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that **wait** for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and **knocks**, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes shall find **watching**: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to **meat**, and will come forth and serve them.”

We highlighted the words “wait” and “blessed” to show the connection of this text to Daniel 12:12. The passage in Luke refers to the Second Advent of Christ. The comparison suggests that this is also the point of Daniel 12:12.

We also emphasized the words “knocks” and “meat,” because these words in Luke connect to Revelation 3:20, which is part of the message to the Laodicean Church — which represents the Church during the present Harvest of the Gospel Age. To Church Four, Jesus said “hold fast till I come” — to Church Five, “I will come as a thief” — to Church Six, “I come quickly” — to Church Seven, “I stand at the door and **knock**” (Revelation 2:25, 3:3,11,20).

When Jesus would come, and be present during the Harvest, he promised his people to “sup with him, and he with me.” This is the same promise as in Luke, where Jesus would serve spiritual “meat” for the waiting servants after his return. What is that spiritual **meat**? It is the understanding of God’s “Plan of the Ages” now open and available to all the saints who wish it.

The saints have **waited** long, and now the **blessed** time is here. Jesus has **knocked** at the door of our hearts with the rap of prophecy, and we have the honor to sup with him on a rich spiritual feast of truth.

Those who have come into the light of Present Truth recognize it as from our master. The Divine Plan is sparkling with hope for everyone. Christ died to redeem both the Church of the present age, and the world to be blessed during the approaching Millennial Age.

As God used 12 apostolic lights to ground the Church in the Christian Faith early in the age (Revelation 12:1), so through the age God has used seven “stars,” one to each stage of the Church, to direct them to the Truth. The brethren of Present Truth today appreciate the value of these servants of God. The Truths we are heir to were promoted through their ministry — not as inspired teachers, as the apostles in their writings, but as guiding lights pointing us in the right direction.

Among these, the seventh and last was Pastor Charles Russell, author of “Studies in the Scriptures,” so well known among Bible Students today. The first volume of that work, “The Divine Plan of the Ages,” is now becoming widely known also among our newer brethren in developing countries.²

As near as we can determine, Bro. Russell saw the propriety of Christian Baptism in the year **1874**, according to the testimony of his sister in some early Convention Reports — an engaging coincidence with the year our Lord returned to feed the saints with Present Truth. Bro. Russell, by his own testimony, had been active “from 1871” onward “in promulgating ‘present truth’ ” (Reprints page 3809, bottom). Then, in 1879, he began publishing “Zion’s Watch Tower,” which continued under his editorship for 37 years until his passing.

Forty years after the date of our Lord’s First Advent (29 AD) brings us to 69 AD — the last year the Jews could observe their Atonement offerings before the temple was burned the following spring. Forty years after the date of our Lord’s Second Advent (1874 AD) brings us to 1914 — the year in which the “time of trouble” was unleashed with the opening of World War I.

These parallels give additional testimony that we are in the right path in understanding the meaning of the time prophecies of Daniel

Verse 13 — “But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

Daniel will stand in his lot a little farther on, when the Ancient Worthies are raised at the opening of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Chronologically, that is due in another 34 years, when 6000 years from Adam come to a close.

But Daniel represents the Church class, and this statement probably carries a subtle deeper meaning as well. Namely, that the Church class would “stand in their lot” — that is, be raised to heavenly life with their Lord — after the 1335 years of prophecy had run their course.

Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 that the dead in Christ would rise at the return of Christ, and we who remain into the harvest would “afterward” join them. When the saints now fall asleep into death they are raised “in a moment” to join those above.

For a long time the saints who died waited until the “end of the days.” Now they have joined our Lord in glory. If we are “faithful unto death,” we will join them also. “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

(1) See the magazine “Herald of Christ’s Kingdom,” November-December 2003 issue, article titled “1874” — subhead “Meanwhile, in England.”

(2) We will mail a magazine edition copy of this work to all who request it and supply their mailing address.