

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
January 2006

Soul and Spirit

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

This brief text expresses a simple truth. Souls die. Against the speculations of some that there is something within a man, a "soul," which remains alive after death, lingering as a disembodied spirit, the scriptures affirm to the contrary. Death is what it seems to be — death.

When a dog dies, what happens to the dog? It stops breathing, its body decays and returns to the elements. Thought and consciousness immediately terminate. There is no more dog. It does not go to some place prepared for old dogs, to chew bones in bliss, for there simply is no more dog. It is dead, it is gone, it is no more.

Death is the same for human beings. Death is the cessation of life. Psalms 146:4 describes what happens when a man dies. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other ... they have all one breath ... all go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20).

The Resurrection

However, unlike the animals, man has the hope of a resurrection from the dead. Animals were made to live for a limited period of time, procreate, age, and pass away as part of the cycle of nature. But man, the height of God's physical creation, was created with the capacity to live forever. They appreciate life, plan for the future, and cherish the hope for continued life. Accordingly, the prospect of living forever was offered to Adam in the Garden of Eden, by God who created him.

This offer was contingent upon obedience, a test which Adam and Eve failed. But even after being expelled from the Garden, so robust was the human frame that Adam lived 930 years before death claimed his life. Almost 4000 years after Adam sinned, Jesus died as a ransom for father Adam, which allows Adam and his posterity a release from the death penalty — in other words, a resurrection from the dead. For the world, this will come during the Millennium so near at hand.

In the meantime, where are all the dead of past ages? They are simply dead. They silently await the resurrection, when they will be reconstituted as the persons they were before they died, to learn the lessons God has for them during the Kingdom on earth.

Lazarus as an Example

When Lazarus fell sick, our Lord deliberately did not go to his friend, knowing that death would soon follow. Soon Lazarus did die, and Jesus said to his disciples he would go to awaken Lazarus out of his sleep. His disciples were confused at first, supposing that rest would do Lazarus good. Then Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). Jesus used the metaphor of "sleep" because he knew Lazarus would be raised out of death, just as we are raised out of sleep after a night of rest.

In this respect the whole world sleeps in death, waiting for the resurrection — unaware of what is transpiring in the meantime, because the dead do not sense, feel or think anything. "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).

Where was Lazarus when he was dead? He was simply dead. While he was dead, where did he go? What did he see? Who did he speak to? What did he eat? How did he feel? What did he think about? The answer is clear — he went nowhere, he saw no one, he did not speak, eat, feel, or think. He was simply dead. When he was raised to life he began again to do all those things.

What is a Soul?

From our opening text, it is apparent that souls do die. The expression "immortal soul," sometimes used among Christians, is not found in the Bible. A soul is a living being, whether animal or human, and neither animals nor humans are immortal. The Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh*, word number 5315 in Strong's Concordance, which gives this definition: "A breathing creature, i.e. animal or (abstractly) vitality; used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense."

Genesis 2:7 uses the word “soul” for Adam. “The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” A soul is a living being, a body combined with the breath of life. Adam subsequently died, and he with all the others silently awaits the resurrection.

Animals as Souls

As Strong’s Concordance notes, animals are also souls — living beings. However, in the common English version this is hidden by the translation, which confuses the subject to many readers. When the word *nephesh*, soul, refers to an animal, the translators rendered it with some other word, such as creature.

For example, Genesis 1:20 says “let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature [*nephesh*, soul].” Verse 21, “God created great whales, and every living creature [*nephesh*, soul] that moveth. Verse 24, And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature [*nephesh*, soul] after his kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.” Here are other texts of the same sort: Genesis 1:30, 2:14, 9:3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 18. And Isaiah 19:10, “All that make sluices and ponds for fish [*nephesh*, souls].”

This method of translating hides the fact that animals are souls. Were this fact more open and apparent, it would assist people to recognize that souls are not immortal, for no one supposes that animals are in any sense immortal.

Only once in the Old Testament did the translators render the word *nephesh* “soul” when it applied to animals, namely Numbers 31:28, where the word applies at one time both to people and animals: “one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.”

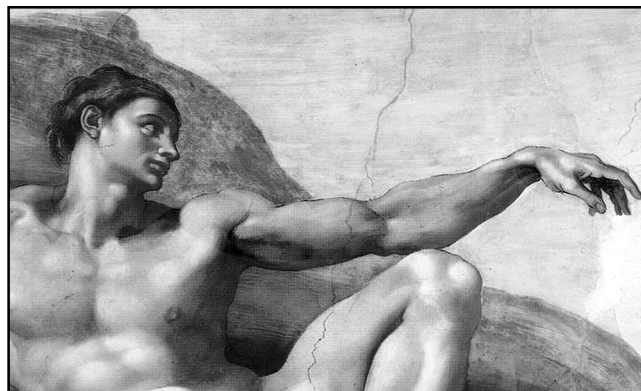
Other Hidden References

There are other important places where the translators also obscured the use of *nephesh*. “There were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body [*nephesh*, soul] of a man ... those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body [*nephesh*, soul] of a man ... If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body [*nephesh*, soul] ...” (Numbers 9:6, 7, 10). If the translation use “soul” in these places, it would be apparent to the reader that souls simply die.

When Samson toppled the house of Dagon, he prayed to God: “Let me [my *nephesh*, soul] die with the Philistines” (Judges 16:30).

Expanded Use

The texts above give us the proper meaning of the word soul, namely any living being. However, Strong’s Concordance shows that *nephesh* is sometimes used figuratively for one’s life, being, or vitality.



“And man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).
(Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel)

Here are two examples of this.

(1) When Rachel was dying at the birth of Benjamin, Genesis 35:18 says “As her soul was in departing (for she died) ... she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.” (2) 1 Kings 17:21, speaking of the raising of a young boy by Elijah, says he cried to God “let this child’s soul come into him again.” In both of these cases the word “life” or “being” is the meaning intended.

Sometimes the word is used of one’s deepest thoughts or feelings, distinguished from the mere body. Thus 2 Kings 4:27 says of a troubled woman, “her soul is vexed in her.” Language is flexible, and the word *nephesh* is used flexibly. But none of these cases are any predicate for believing some conscious force called “soul” mysteriously lingers after death. Death is death. It is the cessation of life.

Soul in the New Testament

The New Testament Greek word for soul is *psuche*. Whenever the word “soul” appears in the common English version of the New Testament, it is from this word (Strong’s number 5590).

1 Corinthians 15:45 uses *psuche* as the counterpart of the Hebrew *nephesh*, which serves to equate the two words. “The first man Adam was made a living soul [*psuche*].” This expression clearly draws from Genesis 2:7, where *nephesh* is used.

This word is frequently rendered life. “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it” (Mark 8:35). “I lay down my life” (John 10:17). “They seek my life” (Romans 11:3), and many other examples. In these cases “life” refers to the being, the person. The same meaning attaches when the word is rendered “soul,” as in Acts 2:43, “fear came upon every soul” — every person, or being.

Revelation 8:9 and 16:3 apply the word to sea creatures. Revelation 6:9 and 20:4 use the term metaphorically of the spent life of the saints, awaiting the resurrection. John 12:27 says of Jesus “now is my soul troubled.” Thus there is a breadth in this Greek word that matches the breadth of its Hebrew counterpart.

In the Old Testament the condition of death is expressed by the Hebrew *sheol*, and its Greek counterpart in the New Testament is *hades*. This was the condition into which Jesus' "soul," *psuche*, passed for three days until his resurrection, for a soul, *psuche*, dies and is later raised from the dead.

Spirit

The word "spirit" in the Old Testament is usually from the Hebrew *ruach*, and in the New Testament it is usually from the Greek *pneuma*. Both terms refer to breath, inhalation, or the movement of air, whether gentle or forceful. But as these are invisible forces, the words are applied by extension to the "spirit" of a person which is the invisible mental force, personality, influence, or disposition of a person.

Thus the Old Testament uses *ruach* when speaking of the "spirit" of Jacob, Elijah, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Joshua, God, and others. The New Testament uses *pneuma* when speaking of the "spirit" of Paul, Christ, and God.

Old Testament (Hebrew)

Nephesh — Soul (living creature)
 Ruach — Spirit (breath, movement of air)

New Testament (Greek)

Psuche — Soul
 Pneuma — Spirit

These words are also used to describe the influence of various non-personal but good "spirits" — the spirit of Truth, Holiness, Life, Faith, Wisdom, Grace and Glory — and of an opposite spirit of Jealousy, Judgment, Burning, Heaviness, Infirmary, Divination, Bondage, Slumber, Fear and Error.

Ruach also refers to the "spirit of life" which we receive from God, which figuratively "returns" to him when we die. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). This does not imply a transport of persons. It applies to the motivating force of life, of both good and bad people alike.

Both words sometimes refer to the essence of a person, that is, their identity, character, personality. In this sense Jesus commended his "spirit" to God when he died, which was restored on the third day when God raised Jesus from the dead (Luke 23:46, Psalms 31:5). In this sense also Paul speaks of the "spirits of just men," the faithful Ancient Worthies of the Old Testament, who were matured by the things they suffered,

and await their resurrection reward in the Kingdom (Hebrews 12:23, 11:40).

None of these cases teach that any conscious entity persists after the death of a person, except metaphorically, in the memory of God. Not until the resurrection does a person who has died live again as a conscious, sentient being. The great hope for the world lies in such a Resurrection from the Dead. "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, 29).

*"All that are in the graves shall hear
 his voice, and shall come forth."*

(John 5:28, 29)

This assurance was secured for us at great cost, both by God who gave His dearest treasure, his son Jesus, and by Jesus who labored in his ministry for 3½ years, suffered accusation from the religious leaders of his day, and died for our sins on the cross.

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust ... [to] bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh" (1 Peter 3:18). "By man [Adam] came death, by man [Jesus] came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21).

For the saints of the Gospel Age this resurrection occurs during the present "Harvest" period. For the remainder of the world the resurrection will occur during the coming Millennium.

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Daniel Chapter One

The Value of a Godly Conscience

The opening chapter of this remarkable book describes the captivity of Daniel and his three Hebrew friends, who were four young men among a number of others taken captive from Israel to Babylon at the same time.

The names of these four young Hebrews are “Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,” which are their Hebrew names (Daniel 1:6). They were given different names by their Babylonian captors, namely Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 1:7). They were taken captive at an early age, probably their middle to late teen years. Jehoiakim was king of Judah at the time, and this captivity came in the third year of his eleven year reign.

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it” (Daniel 1:1). This was the first of four captivities of Israelites to Babylon, all at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel went captive in the third year of King Jehoiakim. Ezekiel went captive eight years later, during the three month reign of Jehoiachin. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, a brother of Jehoiakim, went captive at the end of his eleven year reign. That was “the third time” Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21:14). The fourth and last captivity, five years later, was of Jews who fled to Egypt after the deportation of Zedekiah (Jeremiah 52:30, 43:7-11).

The dates of these captivities were 605 BC, 597 BC, 587 BC, and 582 BC, respectively. We can assign these explicit dates because God has provided them, by linking these episodes firmly to the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar in the record of Scripture. Nebuchadnezzar, being a king of a broad empire — the first of the series of empires in Daniel’s visions — is firmly dated in history.

Dates for the reign of Nebuchadnezzar are established in several ways. One of the most direct means is a series of eclipses of the moon which were recorded during his long 43 year reign. “We have records of lunar eclipses in years 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 30, 31, 32, 41 and 42 of his long reign, which assign these years to the dates 604, 593, 592, 591, 590, 575, 574, 573, 564 and 563 BC.”* Subsequent research has identified more than two dozen such eclipses.** Each of these independently dates the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The united testimony of the collection is beyond reasonable doubt.

Thus firmly has God provided the means for establishing the time of Daniel’s remarkable prophecies, and the history of Israel with which his narrative intertwines. This is valuable evidence for the integrity of the divine record, which, as we noted in our previous issue, is debated by those who have cause to impugn the prophecies of Daniel.

Famous Among His Contemporaries

By the time Ezekiel came to Babylon, Daniel was already famous for his devotion to conscience (chapter one), and for interpreting a dream of Nebuchadnezzar (chapter two), and had been highly elevated in the kingdom. So, though the book of Ezekiel appears before the book of Daniel in our Bibles, the episodes recorded of Daniel began earlier than the narrative of Ezekiel.

Daniel was held in high esteem by his captive Israelite countrymen. Even God commented to Ezekiel about the faith of “Noah, Daniel, and Job,” placing him in very exclusive company (Ezekiel 14:14, 20).

A Test of Conscience

Daniel would be highly favored of God, as the recipient of remarkable prophecies, by which Daniel would become esteemed by his peers, by Jews ever since his day, by Christians for now almost 2000 years, and during the Millennium by the entire world. Such privilege for a young captive in a pagan kingdom is extraordinary. It is fitting that in preparation for his career, there would be some tests of fidelity, character and loyalty to God — and such tests came early.

Daniel and his three friends were bright and promising young men in training for service to the king. As such the king supplied the best of provisions for them, including “a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.”

But this apparent favor contained a problem for the conscience of these Hebrews, for meat from the king’s table was probably offered to a Babylonian God, and was thus, as Paul terms it, “meat offered to idols.” To eat such meat was reprehensible to the Jews then, even as it was in Paul’s day. It would imply a measure of respect or support for false gods which was improper in light of their devotion to Jehovah. Wine from the king’s table was likely offered in libations to pagan gods also. So “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8). This decision was shared by his companions as well.

In itself, this determination meant self-denial, because these choice items from the king’s own provision must have been delightful to the tastes of the day. All men and women of conscience recognize a value to self-denial, for it takes us away from satisfying our natural appetites, and directs the mind and affections to the higher value of the spirit.

On another occasion, later in Daniel’s life, when he was perplexed over a concern of the spirit and wished understanding, he again choose a time of self-denial. “In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole



The Prophet Daniel, by Michelangelo

weeks were fulfilled” (Daniel 10:2, 3). God responded to this sacred attitude and sent his angel Gabriel to provide the vision detailed in chapters 11 and 12.

The Apostle Paul and the brethren in Antioch similarly exhibited the value of such abstinence as they sought the will of God in conducting their ministry to the Gentiles. “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul [Paul] for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2, 3).

Jesus did the same, when he was driven into the wilderness following his baptism. There he fasted forty days, and meditated on the Scriptures and how to conduct his ministry. Apparently he was miraculously sustained in this circumstance, as was Moses when in Mount Sinai for forty days on two occasions, and Elijah once when he went without food for forty days. We should not suppose God will work such miracles on our part. But we may emulate the spirit of these examples by drawing away from fleshly appetites when seeking spiritual direction.

How Daniel Pursued His Conscience

Verse nine says “God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” Daniel’s meek disposition, sweet temperament, and compliance with the wishes of his masters, endeared him to them. They could see he was not a self-interested person, nor proud and arrogant. Our associates should be able to see the same in us, if we follow the example of our master Jesus. Of him also, during his early years, it was recorded: “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

The character of Daniel moved those in charge of him to assist him, specially as Daniel probably did not make

many special requests. But Melzar, who was in charge, feared that Daniel and his friends would grow weak and thin, and their condition be charged against him.

So Daniel proposed a test. “Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink” (Daniel 1:12). At the end of 10 days, Melzar could judge their appearance and deal as necessary. The diet of “pulse” was a vegetarian diet of lentils, which have both protein and energy, and produced highly satisfactory results so that “at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat” (verse 15). So they were allowed to continue their special diet indefinitely.

This continued to be a reminder to them of their relationship to God, as Israelites under the covenant given Israel long before by Moses, and thus nourished their spirit. Their peaceful assurance of conducting themselves worthily before God no doubt caused them to prosper the more as they applied themselves to their learning and responsibilities, so that in due course, they were fit for the exaltation Nebuchadnezzar later gave them.

So with us. Our daily compliance with Godly principles in our life, even if they do not accord with the natural pleasures which others enjoy, give us a sense of nearness to God which puts our minds at peace irrespective of outward conditions. This improves our ability to apply ourselves to our responsibilities, whether it be schooling in our early years, or responsibilities to wife, children and family in our later years. It also improves our dedication to labors for the Lord’s people, our Christian brothers and sisters.

Not a Heavy Yoke

The Christian life is not without its burdens. But they are not heavy burdens, because they are things which Christ sees we can manage, if we apply ourselves to our duties. We do not need to fathom difficult mysteries, or accomplish great deeds, but simply be responsible to the duties we have, do justly, be kind and considerate of others, and “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

Thus Jesus said to the crowds who followed him, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Another Quality of Daniel

Daniel was firm in his decision, but he did not manifest a stubborn spirit. When Melzar indicated his concerns, Daniel did not stubbornly refuse and claim principle as a defense. It is usually possible to be firm in our decisions for principle, without being obstinate. Daniel

sought a means of abiding by his conscience without harming the interests of others. So should we, whenever possible.

Some years later, during the Persian period of history, we have a contrast of two women who both stood for something proper, but by very different means, with very different results. The two were Vashti and Esther, queens of Ahasuerus, which is the Hebrew name for the king history usually calls Xerxes. Vashti refused the command of the king, and probably had good grounds for concern. The king's intent was probably contrary to the natural modesty which is a becoming trait of noble women. Had she relied more upon her charm and appealed to her king's calm judgment with tact and a kindly spirit, she may have been more successful. Certainly Esther was when she approached the same King with a matter of even greater concern. Note also Abigail's humble attitude in 1 Samuel 25:23, 24. Her wise conduct quieted the spirit of King David and averted a great loss.

As our text above says, Jesus was "meek and lowly of heart" (Matthew 11:29). Paul appealed to these qualities when counselling the brethren in Corinth: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you" (2 Corinthians 10:1). He reminds us in Galatians 5:23, "Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Let us remember Daniel's sweet example, and let others see this spirit in us. With this God Himself will be pleased.

A Picture of the Church

As expressed in the previous issue, Daniel is a picture of the elect Church now being developed during this Gospel Age, which extends from the time of Jesus until the establishment of the thousand year Kingdom of Christ. As we understand the evidence of Scripture, that Kingdom is but 37 calendar years future, for 6000 years from Adam appear to expire within the year 2043 AD.

The Church has been through many difficult experiences, from the persecution of early Christians by Jewish leaders who beat and imprisoned them, even stoning some of them as Stephen, killing others with the sword as Herod did to James to please the Jews, and almost did to Peter (Acts chapter 12).

The persecution of Christians intensified with the persecutions under Pagan Rome, which began on a broad scale when Nero accused Christians of sedition against Rome. He burned many of them, wrapped in skins soaked with flammable oils, to give light in his promenades. Nero had already killed the apostles Paul and Peter, by the sword and by crucifixion, as early Christian testimony has it. Nero died soon thereafter, and this active persecution ceased for a time. But it was renewed from time to time by enemies of Christians using the power of Rome as their tool.

10 Years of Special Persecution

But the worst was at the very climax. This was during the reign of Emperor Diocletian, who ruled from 245 to 313 AD. Here is an extract about this period (from www.reformation.org).

"Beginning in the year 303, the pagan Roman Empire made one last great attempt to exterminate Christianity. This persecution, under the Emperor Diocletian, began on the 23rd of February (303 AD), that being the day the Roman Terminalia was celebrated, and the cruel pagans boasted that they would finally put a termination to Christianity. ... The lives of Christians during that time consisted of persecution above ground and prayer underground. This is known in history as the era of the martyrs.

"The main target of the pagans was the New Testament ... and the histories of Christ. Even the books written by pagan authors were destroyed because they would reveal a lot about the doctrines and practices of the Apostolic church. There were millions of Christians and many of them had copies of the New Testament. Only about 5,000 manuscripts have survived from that time and the oldest is dated around 350 AD. By being "faithful unto death" [Revelation 2:10] Christians were defeating paganism in the Roman Empire.

*"Ye shall have tribulation ten days ...
be thou faithful unto death."*

(Revelation 2:10)

"From 303-313, Christian bodies and books were systematically destroyed during this last great pagan persecution. Eusebius tells us that there were innumerable histories of the Life of Christ and the early church. Only one account survived this persecution. ... Rome was systematically destroying Christian history so that the next generation of believers would have no idea what their parents believed. ... Even Eusebius was imprisoned and it is a miracle that any of his writings have survived. His close friend and mentor Pamphilus was martyred during this time. This persecution lasted 10 years and was ended by the victory of Constantine, and his Edict of Milan (313 AD)."

The Smyrna Phase of the Church

In Revelation chapters two and three, our Lord Jesus gave to John a message for seven churches in Asia Minor which represent the seven stages of the Church of Christ through the Gospel Age, from the days of the apostles (Revelation 2:2) until the second advent of Christ (Revelation 3:20).

Period two was represented in the message to Smyrna. This period was after the fall of Jerusalem, but still under the rule of the Roman Empire. Jesus' message to Smyrna included this warning: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison [the prison house of death, Isaiah 24:22, 42:7, 49:9], that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation **ten days**: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

The "ten days" refer to the specially bitter persecution of Christians by Diocletian from 303 AD to 313 AD. In prophecy, a day often represents a year, so that this warning of 10 "days" was fulfilled by a persecution of 10 years.

The 10 days of trial in Daniel is a picture of this testing of the Christian Church. They would not offer homage to pagan gods, as Diocletian required, and were willing to suffer the consequences of conscience with quiet fortitude. They yielded their lives in obedience to principle. Even worldly people note this example with respect and admiration. During the Millennium the entire world will appreciate the testimony of these noble martyrs for the cause of Christ.

The persecutions of the Church by Pagan Rome were represented in this first episode of Daniel and his companions. When they are raised to life on earth, as part of the Ancient Worthy class who will lead Israel and the world during the Kingdom, no doubt they will be blessed to learn that their humble stand for conscience was so blessed by God as to represent the martyrs of Jesus who gave their lives out of conscience.

Let us always follow a Godly conscience.

Three Years

The three years mentioned in Daniel 1:5 were the first three years of their captivity. These were also the first three years of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, beginning with the year of his accession to the throne.

The Babylonian custom was to number the year of transition to an outgoing king, and count the same year as the "year of accession" of the incoming king. The new king's official "year one" would begin with the next New Years Day. For the Babylonians this was in the spring of the year, day one of their month Nisanu (whence the name "Nisan" for the same month in Hebrew, ever since Israel's captivity in Babylon).

Thus the three years of training of Daniel and his companions were (1) The year of accession for Nebuchadnezzar, (2) Year one of Nebuchadnezzar, (3) Year two of Nebuchadnezzar. These three years of training, counting inclusively, were completed in the second regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar. This is the year mentioned in Daniel 2:1, the year Daniel stood before the king and interpreted his dream of the metallic image (of which, more in the next issue).

Three Years of Training

- (1) Accession year of Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC)
- (2) Year one of Nebuchadnezzar (604 BC)
- (3) Year two of Nebuchadnezzar (603 BC)

The Closing

Chapter one ends with the completion of the three year course of training. "And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm" (Daniel 1:19, 20).

When we finish our course of instruction, and pass our tests of conscience, we will someday stand before our king and serve in his heavenly courts. Three is a symbol of redemption — thus Jesus was three days in the grave, the price of his betrayal was 30 pieces of silver, he was anointed by Mary for his impending death with 300 pence of ointment, and on the day of Pentecost 3000 responded to Peter's message and were redeemed by Christ.

Perhaps the three year instruction period for Daniel and his friends represents the Gospel Age of Redemption during which the saints are called to obedience and training for their service beyond the veil.

Perhaps also there is a second picture, relative to the faithful who endured the trials of the Church of Smyrna. When the Edit of Milan of 313 AD relieved the Church of her burden, shortly thereafter Christians were elevated to great stature in the Roman Empire by Constantine.

There was a brief resurgence of paganism during the reign of "Julian the Apostate," a nephew of Constantine, who ruled from 361-363 AD. But thereafter paganism lost its hold over the empire. The "war in heaven" for spiritual control, between the forces of Christianity and the forces of paganism, was won by Christianity. This fulfilled the prediction of Revelation 12:9, "The great dragon was cast out [of heaven, representing spiritual control], that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

But other trials were yet ahead for the Lord's people. More of this in Daniel chapter two.

The final verse of chapter one reads "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." In fact the last record of Daniel is in the third year of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1). Evidently the intent of Daniel 1:2 is that Daniel continued through the remaining years

of the Babylonian Empire, and lived to see the next kingdom take the empire.

So the Church lives to see the return of Christ and the inauguration of his power in the earth. Christ has already returned, invisibly, with regal authority, as a fulfillment of Cyrus (compare Isaiah 45:1). As we will see later in our study of Daniel, Christ returned in 1874, and we have been in the Harvest of the Gospel Age since that time. (See the following article on “The Harvests.”)

Our returned Lord is even now a conquering king, bringing into judgment the nations and systems of this earth. For this reason the world has passed through two World Wars, with Armageddon still ahead. Thereafter, Christ’s Millennial reign of peace will be established in the earth, and through it all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

* *The Stream of Time*, page 87. This work is available from us on request, in either electronic or printed form. The source for this information is *Supplement to The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, page 42, Carl Olof Jonsson, Odeon Books, August 1989.

** *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, Third Edition, 1998, page 182.

The Harvests

“The Harvest is the end of the age” (Matthew 13:39).

This is the third part in our series explaining the Chart of the Ages, which is a graphic representing God’s Plan of the Ages from Adam through the Millennium to the ages beyond. The first article explained the different time periods — the three Dispensations and the Ages within these Dispensations. The three dispensations are (a) The world before the flood, (b) the “Present Evil World” since then, (c) the “World to come wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

The present dispensation is divided into three Ages: (a) the Patriarchal Age, from Noah through Jacob, (b) the Jewish Age, (c) the Gospel Age. This Gospel Age is the first age of redemption. Its purpose is to call an elect company of devoted followers of Christ, to overcome the sinful influence of the world, develop the character of Christ, preach the Gospel presently, and later rule with Christ during the Millennium.

The next dispensation begins with the Millennium, which is the second age of redemption in God’s Plan. It will be followed by a “Little Season” of testing. Then follow the “Ages to come” during which mankind will live forever in a perfect world, and the saints of God will live forever in heaven.

Planes and Pyramids

Our second article explained the levels, or planes of existence, in God’s Plan, and the persons and groups of people represented in the pyramids on the Chart. Plane

N is the plane of human perfection, or justification. Plane **R** represents the fallen state of man during the 6000 years of sin and death, Plane **P** the status of Israel which was elevated above the world through the Law given at Mount Sinai, Plane **M** the plane of spirit-begetting, Plane **L** the plane of spirit life, Plane **K** the plane of divine glory and exaltation for Christ and the Church in heaven.

The Harvests

Yet to be explained are two periods of transition, (a) between the Jewish and Gospel Ages, and (b) between the Gospel and Messianic Ages. Both of these periods are scripturally styled a “harvest,” because these are times when the fruitage of the age then closing is ripened, gathered, and brought into new conditions. We will discuss the first of these in the present article, and reserve the latter for the next issue.

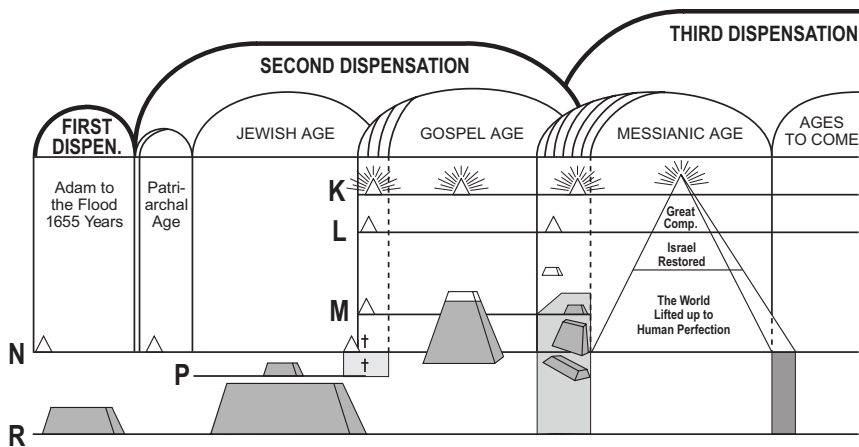
The Jewish Age Harvest

The Jewish Age Harvest is mentioned by Jesus in Luke 10:2. “Therefore said [Jesus] unto them [his disciples], The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.” For almost 1500 years, since the time of Moses, the nation of Israel had been cultivating the spirit of God in their hearts by observing the principles of the Law, which were “holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). One of the purposes of this training was to prepare Israel to receive Jesus as their Messiah when it was God’s time for Jesus to lead Israel to the greater blessing of the Heavenly call.

After Jesus was baptized, and after his 40 days of meditation in the wilderness, he began the work of preaching the “Kingdom of God” to the Israelites whose hearts were ready to receive him. His message was from God. The fifth chapter of Matthew is Matthew’s summary of the kind of things Jesus presented to the crowds who followed him.

Jesus preached Godly values, such as humility, repentance, meekness, hungering for righteousness, mercy, purity, and peace. He exhorted them to endure persecutions, if need be, for their faith. He said to let their lights shine out to others, avoid hollowness and hypocrisy, value the principles contained in the Law, and raise their standard higher than the mere letter of the Law to the very spirit of the Law, as a guiding force within their hearts. They should mature in these values by meditating on them and applying them in their life (Matthew 5).

By doing this, and following these teachings of Jesus which he received from God, they would be prepared to receive the redemption he would soon provide and embrace the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Thus they would be “harvested” and come into the new and higher privileges offered in the Gospel Age.



A Process of Many Years

All of this would take time. Jesus began the work of Harvest while he was with his disciples, and labored with them as they went from village to village, city to city, preaching the good news of this opportunity to enter the Heavenly Kingdom. Luke 10:1 says on one occasion Jesus appointed seventy disciples, in teams of two, to go before him “into every city and place” where he would follow, to alert the people and prepare them to receive his message. On this occasion he referred to the large work of that harvest, and asked his associates to pray for yet more reapers to reach all parts of Israel.

In Matthew 10:23 Jesus showed that the harvest work among Israel would proceed for many years, and even then scarcely be finished, for the largeness of the task at hand. Not always would their message be received; sometimes it would stir persecution. But they must persist, fleeing to another location to continue the work, for the time was short relative to the work. “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” (Matthew 10:23).

“Till the Son of man be come” here meant the coming of Christ in the judgments which would close that age. Those judgments began with the Roman Wars opening in the year 66 AD, continuing by fits and starts through 73 AD when the last Jewish stronghold, the fortress Masada, fell to the Roman legions. In 70 AD Jerusalem was taken, the city pillaged, the glorious Temple burned, and the polity of Israel came to a close.

Thus for 40 years, from the baptism of Jesus in 29 AD until the last Atonement day offerings in the Temple in the autumn of 69 AD, the work of Harvest continued, gathering in those of humble hearts and spiritual minds to the side of their Messiah, Jesus. They were “reaped” into the Christian community and received the privilege of the Heavenly call.

The Harvest at Sychar

John 4:3-38 records a passing visit by Jesus to Sychar, a city of Samaria. Samaritans were a mixture of gentile

peoples transported to Israel seven centuries earlier by kings of Assyria. They were called “Samaritans” because they were brought to Samaria, the capital of the old ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, after it was conquered by the Assyrian Empire. Many of the Israelites were dispersed through captivity, and the “Samaritans” replaced them. Subsequently these Samaritans adopted the worship of Jehovah and embraced the hopes of Israel.

The episode at Sychar begins with Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan

woman at a well. During their conversation the woman became aware that the remarkable man before her was the Messiah. She hastily spread the news, and a goodly gathering of people came to see and hear him. These were people of faith. Jesus recognized them as part of the “wheat” ready for harvest, and told his disciples,

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours” (John 4:35-38).

The Close of the Harvest

As a natural wheat harvest closes by burning the residual stalks, plants, husks and chaff after gathering the ripe wheat, so the Jewish Age Harvest closed by “burning” the “chaff,” that is, the Israelites who were not ripe in their hearts to receive the Gospel.

John the Baptist warned the people of that coming judgment. He told them Messiah was at hand, “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable” (Luke 3:17). The nation suffered that symbolic “burning” in the Roman wars which followed a generation later.

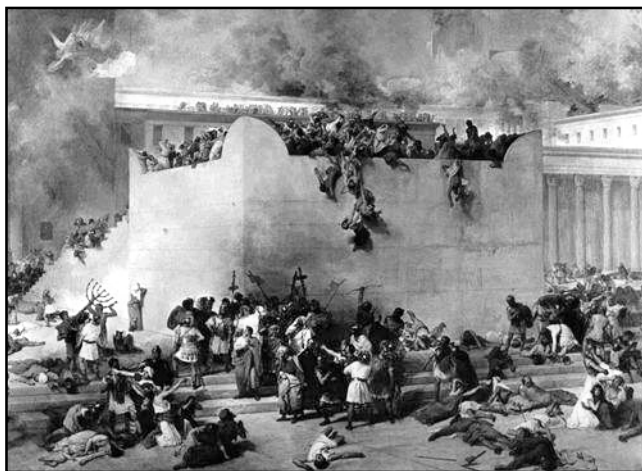
Overlapping Ages

Notice on the Chart the **four arcs** which begin the Gospel Age, which overlap the closing of the Jewish Age. The **first** of these, and the solid vertical line which descends from it, marks the date 29 AD when Jesus began his ministry by being baptized by John in the Jordan River. John was puzzled by this, as John’s baptism represented repentance, but Jesus’ baptism had a deeper meaning, namely immersion into the will of God. For him this meant laying down his life until his work was completed on Calvary’s cross. (Compare Luke 12:50.) After Jesus’ return from the wilderness he began preaching

the message of the Heavenly Kingdom. In this sense the Gospel Age began with his ministry in 29 AD. The **second** arc takes us to 33 AD when Jesus died on the cross as the ransom for our sins. Not until then was full redemption available. Shortly thereafter, on the day of Pentecost which followed 50 days later, the nucleus of the Church at Jerusalem received the holy Spirit as an evidence that they had been redeemed and were accepted into the body of Christ. Now the Gospel message could go forth in its fullness.

It began at Jerusalem, expanded to Judea after the persecution of Stephen, spread to Samaria through Philip (Acts 8:5-12), to Ethiopia by Philip preaching to a visiting Eunuch who was evidently a Jewish convert (Acts 8: 27-39), then to the Gentile Cornelius through the visit of Peter (Acts chapter 10).

The **third** arc represents 70 AD when Jewish rulership at Jerusalem was ended by the Roman armies who killed many, took many captive, and burned the sacred temple. Thus ended the main work of the Jewish Age Harvest.



Burning of the Temple at Jerusalem by the Romans, 70 AD.

The **fourth** and last arc takes us to the final close of Jewish influence in Jerusalem in 135 AD at the collapse of the Bar-Kochba rebellion. After this time Jerusalem was rededicated by the Romans as Aelia Capitolina, pagan offerings were established, and Jews were forbidden access to the city on penalty of death. In every respect the Jewish Age had closed.

Thus by stages did the work of the older Jewish Age come to a close, and the work of the newer Gospel Age expand.

We will continue this closing portion of the Chart study — The Harvests — in the next issue, by examining the even more extensive work of the Gospel Age Harvest. We are in that Harvest today. We have been in the Harvest of the Gospel Age for parts of 132 years, and are nearing its close. Only 37 years remain, as we judge the testimony of the Divine Word.

Noah to Abraham

This is part three of our series on Bible Chronology. In the first we explained that 6000 years from Adam expire with the year 2043 AD, marking this as the beginning of the grand, promised Millennium of Revelation chapter 20. During that Millennium Satan will be bound “so that he can deceive the nations no more” (verse 3), freeing the world of his deceptions. Then everyone, worldwide, will come to a knowledge of the Truth. God “will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

During the present Gospel Age, which lasts from our Lord’s death until the Millennium, God has not been converting the world — if that were his objective, then it surely would have been accomplished. Rather, His objective during this age has been to select from among the world an elect class, the “Church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23), elsewhere termed a “Bride” for Jesus (John 3:29, Revelation 19:7, 21:2), composed of the 144,000 described in Revelation 14:1.

But soon the Millennium will come. If it begins, as we understand from the Scriptures, in the year 2043 AD, then we have but 37 years to that blessed time. However, that age will be born through final, severe spasms of trouble, and those distresses will take time to fade away. It may take some time for various nations to receive that Kingdom.

Summary of Calculations

Our confidence in the time of these expectations is founded on the record of years contained in the sacred text of the Old Testament. Here is a brief summary, to remind the reader.

6000 Years

1656 Years — Adam to End of Flood
 427 Years — To Covenant with Abraham
 430 Years — To Exodus
 479 Years — To Solomon’s Temple, 966 BC

—————
 2992 Years until 966 BC
 3008 Years from 966 BC to 2043 AD

—————
 6000 Years from Adam to 2043 AD

The first part of this summary — the years from Adam to the end of the Flood — was discussed in detail in our previous issue. This article considers the next portion, from the Flood to God’s Covenant with Abraham.

Genesis Chapter 11

The history of this time begins in Genesis chapter 11. Verse 10 says Shem begat Arphaxad two years after the flood. As mentioned in the closing note of our previous article, in a genealogy, “begat” refers to the birth of a son. Here is a list of generations beginning with Arphaxad, through Terah, the father of Abraham.

End of Flood to Passing of Terah

2 Years until Arphaxad (Genesis 11:10).
35 Years until Salah (Genesis 11:12)
30 Years until Eber (Genesis 11:14)
34 Years until Peleg (Genesis 11:16)
30 Years until Reu (Genesis 11:18)
32 Years until Serug (Genesis 11:20)
30 Years until Nahor (Genesis 11:22)
29 Years until Terah (Genesis 11:24)
205 Years to the passing of Terah (Genesis 11:32)

427 Years

At the death of Terah Abraham left Haran for Canaan and received the Covenant from God at Shechem. “The LORD appeared unto Abram [his name had not yet been changed to Abraham], and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him” (see Genesis 12:1-7).

Stephen mentioned this during his trial recorded in Acts chapter seven. He says Abraham “came ... out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land [Israel]. And ... he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:4, 5).

The Age of Abraham

At this time “Abram was seventy-five years old ... and into the land of Canaan they came” (Genesis 12:4, 5). This means that Abraham was born when his father Terah was 130 years of age (205 - 75 = 130).

Some are confused by this because Genesis 11:26 says “Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran,” listing Abram first. However, this text is not giving the birth order of Terah’s sons. It lists Abraham first because of his importance in the record, for he was the one favored by God.

In this it is similar to Genesis 5:32, which lists the sons of Noah. “Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” This lists Shem

first because of his importance, for he was the ancestor of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Israelites. But Shem was not the eldest. We know this, because Genesis 11:10 says Shem was 100 years old **two** years after the flood, whereas Noah’s first son was more than 100 at the time. (For Noah was 500 years old 100 years before the flood.)

The Time Since Adam

Since there were 1656 years from Adam to the end of the Flood, and 427 years thereafter until God’s Covenant with Abraham, the sum of these years gives us 2083 years from Adam to the Covenant.

To the Exodus

The led the Exodus, and mediated the Law, at about the same time (a few weeks between). In Galatians 3:16, 17, Paul says the Law came 430 years after God’s covenant with Abraham. “The covenant that was confirmed before of God [to Abraham] ... the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul ...” It seems clear that Paul separates the two covenants by 430 years.

How did Paul know this, living so many years after the fact? He secured the number of years from Exodus 12:40, 41, where 430 years is mentioned twice. We will discuss this text in our next issue. Here we only note that it is the source for Paul’s remarks in Galatians.

This means from Adam to the Exodus and the giving of the Law was 2513 years after the creation of Adam (2083 + 430 = 2513).

To the Temple

1 Kings 6:1 tells us that the founding of Solomon’s Temple began in the 480th year after the Exodus. “And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.”

The second month, Zif, is the one which followed Abib, later called Nisan, in the spring time. The Exodus began in the middle of Abib, so it also occurred in the spring of the year. One complete year after the Exodus brings us to the 2nd year ... 479 complete years after the Exodus bring us to the 480th year.

This means from Adam to the founding of the Temple was 2992 years (2513 + 479 = 2992). Adding this number of years backward, from the date of Solomon’s founding of the Temple (966 BC), we arrive at 3958 BC as the year of Adam’s Creation. 6000 years from there forward brings us to 2043 AD (6000 - 3958 BC = 2042, plus one to adjust for crossing the BC / AD divide, yields 2043 AD for the close of 6000 years from Adam).

Pause a moment. Note that at each step, the scriptures provide the necessary information to connect the chain of testimony and count of years, from the remote

beginning of our race in father Adam, to historical times. This count of years could easily have lapsed at any time — as it does in the history of every people, other than the Hebrews, God’s chosen people.

Thus God has supplied what we have in no other way, namely a means of counting the years from Adam to our day. Why this particularity and care? That we have this remarkable testimony suggests a value to it, leading us to the grand Seventh Millennium, toward which the Plan of God is building for a grand climax. (See chart below.)

It is our privilege, as the Lord’s children, to look into the deep things of His word, and secure from it a prospect for the fruition of our hopes in the near future. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants” (Amos 3:7).

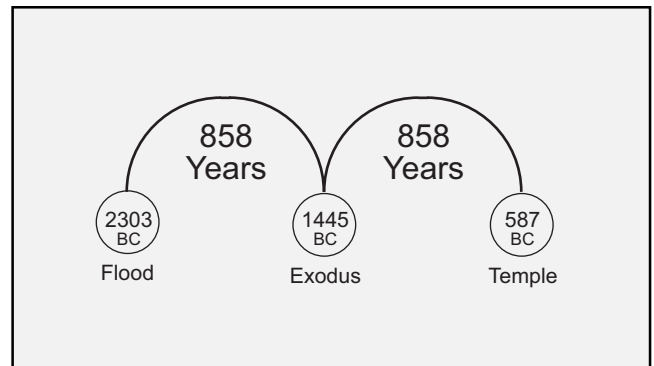
Another Engaging Symmetry

Before we close, let us observe another engaging feature about this material. The feature here introduced is one of symmetry. It begins with the passing of the Old World at the opening of the Flood. Because the Flood episode consumed one year (and a few days), the date opening the flood was 2303 BC.

From there until the Exodus and giving of God’s Law to Israel was 858 years. That also marked the end of an Old World — Israel’s bondage to Egypt and its Pharaoh.

Now the point of symmetry. If we advance from the Exodus forward another 858 years, one arrives at the date 587 BC. As mentioned in the Daniel article earlier in this issue, that was the date of the end of the Kingdom of Judah. There Zedekiah lost his throne, Jerusalem was sacked, its people removed to Babylon, and the temple burned.

God brought that kingdom to an end because of the wickedness of the leaders and the people, just as he brought the Old World to a close, and the rule of Pharaoh



over Israel to a close. Note the illustration above, showing this symmetry.

It seems the Lord is giving us evidence of design and thoughtful arrangement in the time periods composing His Plan of the Ages. The various stages of God’s Plan did not occur randomly, but as we might expect of the brilliance of the Divine Mind, there is an underlying order and symmetry. By observing this, our confidence is deepened that we have apprehended the evidence of scripture correctly about these periods of time, which lead us, ultimately, to the establishment of Christ’s Millennial Kingdom.

This symmetry is elegant. But is it too simple? Might it be coincidence? In our next issue we will augment this diagram, to show how it extends both backward and forward, in an expanded symmetry. Line upon line, precept upon precept, feature by feature, let us absorb each portion in sequence.

In the Next Issue ...

- *Consecration*
- *The Harvest of the Gospel Age*
- *Daniel, Chapter Two*

