

Faithbuilders Fellowship

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

Parousia

"What shall be the sign of thy coming [parousia, presence], and of the end of the age? (Matthew 24:3).

Millions of Christians look forward to the "coming" of Christ Jesus. During the last supper, Jesus told his disciples, "If I go ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3). The promise of his second coming — his second advent — has been cherished in the minds and hearts of his followers ever since.

But there is a secret about this subject that so many Christians have not yet discovered. Namely, that the second advent of Christ includes two main periods of time — (1) the present Harvest of the Gospel Age, which commenced in 1874, and (2) the Millennial Age, which begins after 6000 years of sin and death, evidently a little less than 40 years before us.¹

Brethren of the Bible Student fellowship have known for many years that Christ has already returned and is invisibly present now, during the Harvest. As a spirit being, his presence now, and also later during the Millennium, is unobserved by literal sight, just as the angels who care and protect the Lord's people are unobserved because they also are invisible, spirit beings.

There will come a time when the power of Christ is revealed to the world in the judgments of Armageddon which close this Harvest period and introduce the Millennium. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance" (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8). They will not see Jesus, any more than they will see angels. But his power and authority will be seen through the unfolding judgments which alert the world to a great change in the affairs of earth. Thereafter Christ's Kingdom will begin at Israel, the ancient prophets will be raised to guide Israel, and the influence of Christ's Kingdom will be seen by all.

The presence of Christ is now perceived only by those of faith, through the prophecies of the Lord's Word. Christ's presence was to be accompanied by a time of trouble — this was fulfilled by World War I, World War II, and Armageddon which follows (Daniel 12:1, Matthew 24:21, Revelation 11:18).

Second, Christ's presence was to be accompanied by the return of Israel to their ancient homeland, and the rebirth of their nation (Acts 3:21). This has already occurred.

Third, Christ's presence was to restore to the Church the understanding of God's Plan of the Ages (Luke 12:37, Revelation 3:18, 20). This we have today, recovered from the errors of the dark ages, in the Truth movement.

Thus we are already living in the days of the second advent of Jesus. The return of Christ is not future, not impending, but has occurred and we see its effects. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Paul tells us those who died in the Lord in past times would be raised at the return of Christ. Evidently this has occurred, and now each one who passes into the sleep of death is "changed" from death to life as they fall asleep. (See the article "Alive and Remain" in the March issue.)

Parousia

The text heading this article relates a question the disciples asked our Lord Jesus a few days before his passing. "What shall be the sign of thy *parousia*, and of the end of the age?" The Greek word *parousia* is rendered "coming" in the common version of our Bibles. But the actual meaning of the word is not coming, as though Jesus was on his way, but presence, as though he had arrived.

Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says this. "Parousia, literally, a presence, *para*, with, and *ousia*, being ... in a papyrus letter a lady speaks of the necessity of her *parousia* in a place in order to attend to matters relating to her property there. Paul speaks of his *parousia* in Philippi, Philippians 2:12 (in contrast to his *apousia*, absence). Other words denote the arrival. *Parousia* is used to describe the presence of Christ with his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, 2 Peter 1:16."

One of the better translations of the scriptures, a very close and literal translation, which is well known among Bible Students, was produced by Joseph Rotherham. He wrote a special note in the appendix of his translation

about this word, explaining why he chose to uniformly translate the word “presence.” Here is an extract.

“In this edition the word *parousia* is uniformly rendered ‘presence’ The original term occurs twenty four times in the New Testament ... The sense of ‘presence’ is so plainly shown by the contrast with ‘absence’ (implied in 2 Corinthians 10:10, and expressed in Philippians 2:12), that the question naturally arises, Why not always so render it? The more so, inasmuch as there is in 2 Peter 1:16 also a peculiar fitness in our English word ‘presence.’ This passage ... relates to our Lord’s transformation upon the Mount. The wonderful manifestation there made was a display and sample of ‘presence’ rather than of ‘coming.’ The Lord was already there ...”

All Instances

The testimony of Philippians 2:12 is so emphatic that *parousia* means “presence” in contrast with *apousia*, “absence,” that the meaning of the word in this text is undisputed. We understand the word invariably means “presence.” A detailed examination of this word can be found in the November-December 2003 issue of “A Herald of Christ’s Kingdom.” It can be seen at the following website — www.Heraldmag.org/2003/03nd_8.htm

In the box at the upper right of this page is a list of all the instances of this word in the New Testament. We have used the word “presence” for *parousia* in each case on this list.

Four of these texts contain the phrase “at his *parousia*” or “at the *parousia* of our Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 1 John 2:28). This is an awkward way of referring to a presence, but would be natural if referring to an arrival. However, in each of these cases the word “at” represents the Greek word *en* which is better rendered “in.” Here are the same texts from the Marshall’s Diaglott:

- 1 Corinthians 15:23 in the presence of him
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19 in the presence of him
- 1 Thessalonians 3:13 in the presence of the Lord
- 1 John 2:28 in the presence of him

The same preposition appears in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “unto [*en*, in] the presence of our Lord.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:15, “remain unto the presence of the Lord,” the word “unto” is the Greek *eis*, which properly means “into.” Thus in all six texts, these two and the

All 24 Instances of *Parousia* in the New Testament

Matthew 24:3	What shall be the sign of thy presence?
Matthew 24:27	so shall also the presence of the Son of man be
Matthew 24:37	so shall also the presence of the Son of man be
Matthew 24:39	so shall also the presence of the Son of man be
1 Corinth. 15:23	afterward they that are Christ’s at his presence
1 Corinth. 16:17	glad of the presence of Stephanas
2 Corinth. 7:6	by the presence of Titus
2 Corinth. 7:7	not by his presence only
2 Corinth. 10:10	his bodily presence
Philippians 1:26	my presence to you again
Philippians 2:12	in my presence
1 Thess. 2:19	Christ at his presence
1 Thess. 3:13	at the presence of our Lord Jesus
1 Thess. 4:15	remain unto the presence of the Lord
1 Thess. 5:23	unto the presence of our Lord
2 Thess. 2:1	the presence of our Lord
2 Thess. 2:8	brightness of his presence
2 Thess. 2:9	whose presence is after
James 5:7	unto the presence of the Lord
James 5:8	the presence of the Lord draweth nigh
2 Peter 1:16	the power and presence of our Lord
2 Peter 3:4	the promise of his presence
2 Peter 3:12	hasting unto the presence of the day
1 John 2:28	before him at his presence

four listed above, the *parousia* is something which can be entered in or into. This is consistent with the meaning “presence,” but not with “arrival” or “coming.” (In 2 Peter 3:12 “unto” is not represented in the Greek. In James 5:7 it is translated from the Greek *eos*.)

One Remaining Concern

Philippians 1:26 may suggest a different view than “presence.” It reads: “That your rejoicing may be more abundant ... by my coming to you again.” To simply substitute the word “presence” would not fit in this English translation, for a “presence” is not “to” someone but “with” someone. Have we then a firm example where “presence” is inadequate to express the thought?

The sense of this text suggests otherwise. It was not the approach (coming) of Paul that would rejoice these friends, but his presence among them again. But how shall we deal with the grammar? The word at issue is “to,” the Greek *pros*. This preposition is here in the Accusative case. Moulton’s Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, 1978 edition, says of this Accusative case, if “used of the place to which anything tends [as for example with a word meaning to go, travel or approach, it

is to be rendered], to, unto, towards.” However, “of place where [it is to be rendered], with, in, among, by, at.” This is its usage in Philippians 1:26. The Marshall’s Diaglott says “through my presence again with you.”

As the Lightning

Another telling use of this word is in Matthew 24:27, “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the *parousia* of the Son of man be.” The comparison Jesus intends by the lightning is not the suddenness of its flash — as though Jesus would suddenly appear at his arrival — but the general enlightenment which would result from his *parousia*, just as lightning shines across the whole heaven.

In context Jesus was warning his disciples against any claim of a private, local, confined presence. “If they shall say ... he is in the desert [or] ... in the secret chambers, believe it not.” For his presence would be manifest by a broad, expansive influence of enlightenment. The point Jesus makes fits a period of presence.

Why the Imprecision?

Why, then, is the word so frequently translated “coming”? Of the twenty four instances of *parousia*, the King James version renders it “presence” only twice, 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:12, where the context forces the rendering. But why “coming” elsewhere?

The translation “coming” is not as egregious as it might first appear because the word “coming” when used as a noun can mean “presence.” If one says “at my coming we will renew our friendship,” the friendly exchange does not take place in transit, but after one’s arrival, during his presence. *Parousia* is in every case a noun, unlike a verb such as “I am coming” where the act of transit is the point. *Parousia*, a noun, “being alongside,” never refers to a transit. Though not egregious, the translation “coming” should be avoided because it is imprecise and misleading.

Arrival?

But what of the term “arrival”? Would this be a feasible rendering of *parousia*? Surprisingly, the King James version of the English Bible never uses the word “arrival,” in either the Old or New Testament. It is a noun, and it would emphasize that *parousia* does not mean transit. But it would imply the word has particular focus on the conclusion of a transit (which it does not), and fails to express the thought of a continuing presence. This would not fit well the texts that refer to events “in” or “into” the *parousia* of Christ. Better to render the word consistently “presence.”

The “Sign” of his Parousia

Matthew 24:3 marks the first use of the word *parousia*. “What shall be the sign of thy *parousia*, and of

the end of the age?” Most agree that at this time the disciples did not understand that Jesus would die and return to his heavenly Father for many centuries before coming again to establish his kingdom. What, then, was the basis of their question about his *parousia*? Probably it was the closing warning of Jesus to the apostate leaders of Jerusalem before he exited the temple that last day of his public ministry. “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39).

This must have seemed odd as they deliberated on these words. Jesus had walked among the Pharisees for three and a half years, shown many evidences of supernatural power, wisdom, and spoke as “never man spake” (John 7:46). What wonderful evidences of his claim to be sent of God. But if these had not convinced the Pharisees, what would? How would they come to say “blessed is he [Jesus] that cometh in the name of the Lord?” What sign [*semeion*, evidence, proof] would Jesus give in order to induce this recognition? “What shall be the sign of your presence?”

They were not asking, as so many Christians assume, for signs of his approach to alert them to a sudden appearance. They were asking what sign would accomplish what the Lord predicted — to make him known as the one coming in the name of God.

Jesus responded at length to their inquiry. His words were framed to fit the end of the Jewish age, which was the immediate concern of the disciples. We know, however, from the later application of his answers by Paul, Peter, and John, that the answer applies to the close of the Gospel age as well. But for now, let us consider the words as they applied long ago.

In verses 4-13 he warned them against premature expectations, showing that many years would intervene before the end would come and the sign of his authority be recognized. In verse 14 he shows that the gospel

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would be preached far and wide as a witness, and “then shall the end come” — the closing experiences, when the Roman armies would intrude upon the holy land and great perplexity and distress result.

This period and its adversities are described in verses 15-28. During this ending period the desolating armies of Rome would come into the sacred precincts (verse 15), those of faith would flee to the mountains (verse 16), and they were advised to be earnest and rapid in their flight (verses 17-19). If their flight was in the winter, or on the sabbath, or they had small children to care for, their difficulties would be compounded (verses 20 and 21). If there was no intervention, the disaster would come upon believer and unbeliever alike, sparing none, but by God’s providence there would be some interventions. Twice the threat was “shortened” — literally “cut off,” ended — before it resumed a third time after the elect had fled (verse 22).

In those days false deliverers would falsely predict a good result, and the deceptions would be strong, but warned the elect against them all (verses 23-27). Amid the distresses, however, he would safely gather his saints (verse 28). During this time the authority and presence of the master would be recognized by his elect, though unperceived by others (verses 27 and 28).

Then the climax would come. Immediately after the tribulation of the days of siege and flight, the next wave of attack would devastate Jerusalem and the polity of Israel would collapse (verse 29). Then would they see the evidence — the sign — of Christ’s authority and majesty in the coming of the dire judgments Christ had predicted. “Then shall appear the sign [*seemeion*] of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (verse 30).

How This Applies Today

All of this has its parallel in the more complete fulfillment of our day. We have been in the end of the age for many years (verses 15-28), while the Lord’s saints have been fleeing to the mountains (representing our Lord and his care, Psalm 125:2), and he has gathered them around the carcass of “meat in due season,” freshly provided for their nourishment (compare Job 39:27-30). But the final judgment still awaits. When the seventh plague of Revelation is poured, its force will sweep away the present governments and God’s kingdom will be established in the earth.

“Then [in the climax incident to the seventh plague] shall appear the sign [*seemeion*] of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,” perceiving the authority and majesty of earth’s new king in the collapse of present governments (compare Revelation 1:7). It is this sign, the fall of present institutions, which will alert the world to the change in circum-

stances, and the presence of a mightier power taking hold of earth’s affairs. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

“The Parousia of Christ will not be known to the tribes, or families, of the earth in general, but will be known only to the most saintly ones of the church of Christ. Consequently, the sign of the Son of Man must in some sense stand related to his Epiphania, or shining forth in the ‘flaming fire’ of judgment, which the whole world of mankind will recognize — 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9” (Pastor Russell’s Sermons, p. 420, “The Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven”).

Final Comment

If the word *parousia* could ever mean something other than presence, presumably some examples of its use exclusive of “presence” could be found. For example, “His arrival will be at noon” or “my coming will be by ship.” No such instances can be found, nor does the intrinsic meaning of the word — being alongside — have any reference to transit, movement, approach, or even arrival. On the other hand, every one of the twenty four instances of this word in Scripture is consistent with the word “presence.”

(1) One could say three periods, if one counts the “little season” of testing which follows the Millennium. Matthew 25:34, 40 shows Jesus still the “King” in that period of judgment.

Unprofitable Words

Counsel from the Pen of Pastor Charles Russell

“Every idle [unprofitable or pernicious] word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

In view of the fact that the present is our (the church’s) judgment day, we see what great importance attaches to our words. All our words are taken by the Lord as an index of our hearts. If our words are rebellious, or disloyal, or frivolous, or flippant, or unkind, unthankful, unholy or impure, the heart is judged accordingly, on the principle that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). “He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life” (Proverbs 13:3).

The Psalmist puts this prayer into the lips of all who feel this responsibility, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep a guard at the door of my lips. Permit not my heart to incline after any evil thing” (Psalms 141:3, 4). “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my strength and my redeemer” (Psalms 19:14).

If, in the daily scrutiny of our ways, which is the duty of every Christian, we discover that in any particular our words have been dishonoring to the Lord, we should remember that in the name of our Advocate we may approach the throne of grace, explain to our Heavenly Father our realization of the error, our deep regret at our failure to honor his name and his cause by a holy walk and conversation, and humbly request that the sin be not laid to our charge, but that it may be blotted out through his gracious provision for our cleansing through Christ, humbly claiming that in his precious blood is all our hope and trust. Thus we should render up our account for every idle word; and by our words of repentance, supplemented by the merits of Christ applied by faith, shall we be acquitted. (Zion's Watch Tower, February 15, 1896)

Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

A Study of Daniel, Chapter Four

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37).

This is the third time Nebuchadnezzar was moved to praise God. After Daniel interpreted the king's dream of the image in chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar praised Jehovah as "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets" (Daniel 2:47). After the three Hebrews were delivered from the fiery furnace, he affirmed "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Daniel 3:29). But the praise of Daniel 4:37 exceeds them both.

Nebuchadnezzar passed through seven seasons of abasement and was humbled — just as the world has been abased and humbled through sin and death. After seven millenniums the world will worship God for all His blessings. Nebuchadnezzar's sanity and dominion was restored to him after his ordeal. So will mankind's reason and dominion be restored to them after their ordeal. Then Christ will say to all the obedient, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Then they will "praise, extol and honor" the "King of heaven" as never before.

The Introduction

Verses 1 through 3 are an introduction by Nebuchadnezzar, addressed to the people of his realm. "Unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation."

We observed in previous chapters the positive character of this king, and the honesty of his decrees, notwithstanding their severity. His honesty shines through here as well. It is right for men and women to mark their experiences, and note the hand of providence in them — and express their appreciation forth rightly. Nebuchadnezzar did this, by decree to all his realm. So should we express the "praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Nebuchadnezzar was not a fully converted man. There is no record that he adopted the ways of God's people or became a proselyte to the Jewish faith. But he honestly testified what God had done through this experience. He recorded the experience in detail, and frankly admitted his formerly proud demeanor. Confession is good for the soul. Nebuchadnezzar's confession of his pride was to his credit.

So should we be honest of heart to recognize our sins. Without this quality, we lose the value of our experiences. Shall we need them repeated? Or will we learn quickly, humbly, and be both profited in character, and spared further adversity? Remember that the faithful 144,000 of Revelation chapter seven were spared the four winds of trouble, whereas the great multitude who had spots of sin on their robes were allowed to pass through that trouble for their purging.

The Setting

This episode began with a dream. Nebuchadnezzar remembered it vividly. He sensed that this dream, like that in his second year, recorded in chapter two, had a deep meaning. As before, he commanded his wise men and counsellors to interpret the dream, but none availed him. In his brasher, younger years, he had ordered their death, but by now he had mellowed somewhat and his policy was less intense.

We do not know in which year of his 43 years of reign this episode began, but most place it late in his reign. Probably this is correct. We have extant records from Babylon for the first eleven years of his reign, filled with activity and conquest. We have records from the scriptures of his 18th year when he took Jerusalem for the third time and put an end to Zedekiah's kingdom (Jeremiah 52:29, 12).¹

Jeremiah 52:30 speaks of another campaign by Nebuchadnezzar five years later. Ezekiel 29:17 speaks of the 27th year of Ezekiel's captivity, which would be the 34th year of Nebuchadnezzar. By this time Nebuchadnezzar's army had taken Tyre after a lengthy siege (Ezekiel 29:18), and he would have more successes against Egypt as reward for his service against Tyre (Ezekiel 29:18-20). Probably after all of these came the fateful experience of Daniel chapter four.

By this time Daniel would be in his fifties, having served in the court of Nebuchadnezzar for more than 30

years. The others had all failed to interpret the king's dream. "But at the last Daniel came in before me ... in whom is the spirit of the holy gods ... before him I told the dream" (Daniel 4:8). He remembered Daniel's service three decades earlier, and was optimistic that Daniel could explain this dream also.

The Dream

The dream is recounted in verses 10 and forward. As dreams sometimes go, this one changed in ways that only a dream allows. It began with a large tree which gave shade, nourishment and comfort to all creatures within its influence — its height "reached unto heaven" and its breadth was as far as the eye could see.

An angel from heaven next appeared. He is termed "a watcher," from the ability of angels above to observe the affairs of men below (verse 13, also verses 17, 23). The angel commanded the tree to be cut down, his branches cut off, his leaves shaken, his fruit scattered, the animals in its care dispersed, and the birds in its boughs driven away.

However, the stump of the tree remained and it was secured with bands of iron and brass, as though to protect it for a later regrowth. Note these metals — we will see them again in the prophecies of Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah, which relate to this dream.

Then the symbolism changes and the subject changes from a tree to a man, "wet with the dew of heaven, and his portion with the beasts of the grass of the earth: Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him" (verse 15). It is here that we see the tree represents a mighty dominion of a great king, who was abased, roaming like an animal, his reason abated.

Then a most significant addition. "Let seven times pass over him" (verse 16). The mention of these "seven times" appears four times in this chapter — verses 16, 23, 25, 32. It is clearly a vital part of the lesson. And it is unique to the testimony of Daniel up to this point. Daniel is famous for time prophecies, but these appear mostly in the latter half of the book. Here only is a time feature mentioned from the first portion — except for the prophetic 10 days of testing we saw in chapter one.

The lesson of the dream follows in verse 17. "This matter is by the decree of the watchers [angels], and the demand of the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17).

Evidently this verse records the sentiments of Nebuchadnezzar, for the previous verses are part of his explanation, and in verse 18 which follows, Nebuchadnezzar is still the speaker. But verse 17 apparently expresses the king's later appreciation of the meaning, added here as part of his testimony to the people of his realm. Notice the closing part — "the basest of men."

These would be Nebuchadnezzar's own words respecting himself, in a public decree. This evidences the sincerity of his humility.

Let us be sincere like this in learning the lessons God has for us in our experiences.

Note also the words before that, "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Six times in this chapter Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel's Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, whose first three letters name the Babylonian god Bel. The king was still a heathen. But here, as in chapter three verse 29, he acknowledged the superiority of "the most High." The time will yet come when the people of the world will similarly recognize that Jehovah is "the most High," and even more completely than Nebuchadnezzar, they will worship, honor and obey him. This is the work to be accomplished during the Millennium, which lies not quite four decades ahead.

The Interpretation

Verse 19 records Daniel's reaction. He was stunned. "Then Daniel was ... astonished for one hour." He perceived that the dream applied to the king he served. He would that it were otherwise. "My lord, [may] the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation to thine enemies" (verse 19). But it was about Nebuchadnezzar. Respectfully, dutifully, Daniel proceeds to explain.

The great tree represented the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar. "Thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth" (verse 22). The cutting of the tree represented the loss of his dominion, and a period of "seven times" would pass over Nebuchadnezzar. Meanwhile his reason would flee, he would eat grass as an animal, his hair and nails would grow, "till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (verse 25). Notice that Daniel did not add the words "the basest of men" — this would have been an affront to the dignity of the king — but a humbled Nebuchadnezzar did use them after the experience.

That the stump was preserved represented that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be restored — thus the dream ends on a note of hope. At this point Daniel kindly, cautiously, respectfully, advised the king what to do. "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility" (verse 27).

May we learn from the spirit of Daniel. Let our words be respectful, specially to those of some authority. Do the younger ever speak disrespectfully toward their elders? Even the Law of Moses tells us this is not proper (Leviticus 19:32). Do brethren ever revile their leaders? Saint Peter observed such behavior and warned against it (2 Peter 2:10). Is there ever a spirit of excited complaint? Jude warns against this also (Jude 1:9).

Even in our dealings with our peers, Jesus laid down a principle which will guide us. “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:2). If we are disrespectful in our language and demeanor toward others, others may exhibit the same toward us. If we wish courteous conduct from others, let us see that we are courteous toward them.

On the other hand, if we are despised without such cause, then we can rejoice for suffering as Jesus did — namely, for righteousness. “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God ... Christ also suffered ... leaving us an example ... who did no sin” (2 Peter 1:20-22).

The Fulfillment

“All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar” (verse 28). There was a delay in the decree. Perhaps the king took Daniel’s advice, and his “tranquility” was extended. But the time would come, and it did come, after 12 months. “At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon,” admiring his attainments. “While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee ... the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen” (verses 29-33).

But the restoration also followed. “At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever ... my reason returned unto me, and ... the glory of my kingdom ... and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (verses 34-37).

So with the world. Humanity began with our first parents in the garden, and to Adam was given a dominion which would have flourished in perfection had he obeyed God. He did not. The blight of sin and death followed, but after “seven times” passes over the world mankind will have their dominion restored. This is depicted in lovely terms in the last chapter of the Bible. “There shall be no more curse ... they shall see [God’s] face; and his name shall be in their foreheads ... and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:3-5). Thus shall the original dominion, lost in Eden, be restored to the world after 7000 years — 6000 years of sin and death, followed by the Millennium of Christ’s kingdom.

Deeper Meanings

So far we have seen two meanings to the dream. It applied to Nebuchadnezzar personally, and in a deeper

way to the human race. But this is not all. There is another layer of meaning which applies to the nation of Israel. In this case the kingdom which was removed for a season was the Jewish Kingdom which ruled from Jerusalem.

As Adam’s original right of dominion was from God, so the right of dominion of the Kingdom of Israel was from God. The kings who ruled there, ruled “upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah” (1 Chronicles 28:5). They were commanded in the Law of Moses to abide by the Law of God as the ruling law of their kingdom. “And it shall be, when he [the king anointed to rule Israel] sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them ... that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left” (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

That kingdom was typical of Christ’s kingdom which rules Earth during the Millennium. In fact Christ rules by the same authority — for as Ezekiel 21:27 says, the authority of that kingdom would be overturned, “until he come [Jesus] whose right it is; and I will give it him.” Christians have recognized Christ as their king during the entire Gospel Age, and since his return in 1874 his authority extends to the nations of Earth (Revelation 11:15). Now he prepares the world to recognize him as their king during the Millennium (Revelation 20:6).

The reason Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom for a season was pride and sin. The reason Adam lost his kingdom was disobedience to God’s command. The reason Israel lost their kingdom was pride, sin, and disobedience. But in each case, as the dream predicts, there is a recovery from the punishment when the lessons are learned, after “seven times” have passed.

“Seven Times”

This expression appears four times in the narrative. The word “times” is from the Chaldean word *iddan*, word number 5732 in Strong’s Concordance. “from a root corresponding to that of 5708; a set time; technically a year,” always rendered “time” or “times” in the common version. Word 5708, referenced in this definition, is *ed*, “from an unused root meaning to set a period ...” (Strong’s Concordance).

Evidently the word applies to any regular period. It may be “technically a year,” but is also used more broadly. The word “year” appears nine times in the common English version of Daniel, each case referring to a specific year of the reign of a king. That word is Strong’s 8141 (once 8140 which is the Chaldean equivalent), which Strong defines as “a year.” *Iddan*, by contrast, is apparently more flexible. As it applies to Nebuchad-

nezzar's madness, some suppose it was for seven years, but it may have been much briefer — seven seasons, or seven months, or some other period.

The flexibility of this word is useful in recognizing the deeper meanings of the dream. We have already remarked that the seven times applies to seven millenniums, as it applies to the kingdom of Adam which was lost in Eden, and restored as a result of the Seventh Millennium (Revelation 20:6).

As it applied to Israel in Daniel's day, it apparently referred to the seven decades during which Babylon was granted power to rule over the kingdoms of that day. "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jeremiah 25:11). "After seventy years be accomplished for Babylon I will visit you" (Jeremiah 29:10).

During this period Israel lost their national sovereignty to Babylon. Because they would not submit to this punishment, they soon lost their kingdom completely and were dispersed from their homeland. The tree was cut down and those it nourished were scattered.

70 Years for Babylon

4	Nabopolassar (years 17 to 21)
43	Nebuchadnezzar
2	Amel-Marduk
4	Neriglissar
17	Nabonidus
—	
70	Years

But they would be restored. Even when Jeremiah prophesied of Israel's coming loss, he added prophecies of their later restoration. "There is hope in the end ... thy children shall come again to their own border ... Is Ephraim my dear son? ... for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still ... I will surely have mercy upon him, saith Jehovah ... set thine heart toward the highway ... O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities ... I will bring again their captivity ... there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks ... Upon this I awaked ... and my sleep was sweet unto me ... Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast ... I will watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 31:17-28).

These words were accomplished when the Israelites returned to their land after the empire of Babylon passed to king Cyrus, ruler of the Medo-Persian empire. In a deeper way, these words are being fulfilled during the present Harvest period, by the regathering of Israel from all the lands of their dispersion.

The seventy years of Babylon's rule ran from 610 BC, when Babylon replaced Assyria as the ruling empire of the Middle East. 610 BC was the year the last capital of the Assyrian Empire, namely the city of Harran, fell to the Babylonian army. Seventy years later brings us to 540 BC, the year Cyrus mustered his armies to advance against the might of Babylon. After some skirmishes in the field of battle, the city of Babylon fell in October of the following year.

Thereafter Cyrus became master of the empire. The regnal years of both Babylon and Medo-Persia ran from the spring of the year. Thus when Babylon fell to Cyrus in October of 539 BC, that was about mid-way in the year which became Cyrus' year of accession to the empire. His official "year one" began the next spring, with the commencement of the Babylonian month Nisanu (the Jewish month Nisan). That was in the year 538 BC. In that year, according to Ezra 1:1 (also 2 Chronicles 36:22), Cyrus issued his famous decree allowing the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. A summary of it is recorded in Ezra 1:1-4.²

Gates of Brass, Bars of Iron

It is helpful to recognize the role of Cyrus in releasing the Jewish people from their bondage, because the book of Isaiah names him explicitly. "Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him ... I will go before thee ... I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron ... for Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect" (Isaiah 45:1-4).

The commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown says Persian kings were not anointed, but "the expression is applied to [Cyrus] in reference to the Jewish custom of setting apart kings to the regal office by anointing." In other words Cyrus was anointed to a service for God. "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me" (verse 5).

The gates of brass that would be loosed before him evidently refer to the "100 massive gates, twenty-five on each of the four sides of the city, all, as well as their posts, of brass," and the bars of iron "with which the gates were fastened."³ This reminds us of the bands of iron and brass which bound the stump of the fallen tree in the dream (Daniel 4:15). These are emblems of the power of Babylon which restrained the growth of Israel until those bands would be broken.

The same emblems appear in Psalms 107, in a passage which refers to Israel — punished by God for their rebellion, and later released from that punishment by God's mercy. The segment of that psalm which refers to Israel is Psalms 107:10-16. The closing verse of that passage expresses what God does to release Israel. "He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder" (verse 16). This God did through Cyrus when he conquered Babylon and released the Israelites. This also

God does through Jesus, whom Cyrus represented, now that Jesus has returned to take control of this world.

Christ returned in 1874 according to the prophecy of 1335 years in Daniel 12:12. In that year the first and only Jewish prime minister of England was elected, namely Lord Beaconsfield, sometimes called Disraeli. In 1878 he was prominent at the Berlin Congress of Nations which met to resolve the aftermath of a war between Russia and Turkey, which was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, which also controlled Palestine. The treaty which was drawn up agreed that all residents would be granted equal protection and rights of the law. This included Jews in Palestine. This opened up the opportunity for a resettlement of the land by the Jewish people. In that very year, 1878, the Jewish colony Petah Tikvah was established, the early sign of Jewish regathering.

However, there was no hope of establishing an independent homeland for the Jews until the grip of the Ottoman Empire was removed. That empire decomposed in a seven year period, from 1911 to 1918. In 1911 Italy attacked their north African holdings. In 1912 Greece and Turkey were at war. In 1913 Turkey ceded away her European holdings to the Great Powers. In 1914 Turkey sided with Germany in the Great War, and by the close of that War, in 1918, the Ottoman Empire lay in dust and ashes. The history of Turkey began anew in 1918.

This seven year period remarkably parallels the seven years during which the Babylonian Empire took control of the land of Israel 2520 years earlier. As noted above, Babylon took the last stronghold of the Assyrian empire in 610 BC. Subsequently they crossed the Euphrates into the holy land in 607 BC, beginning a conquest which resulted four years later, 603 BC, in the declaration of Daniel, "The God of heaven hath given thee [Nebuchadnezzar] a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory ... Thou art this head of gold" (Daniel 2:1, 37, 38).

During World War I, when the British occupied Palestine, shortly before they took Jerusalem, the British government formally declared their intention to make of Palestine a national homeland for the Jewish people. This was known as the Balfour Declaration (named for Lord Balfour). This promise ultimately took shape by the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948. Thus the national hopes of Israel began to sprout again as a consequence of World War I.

The campaign of Babylon's conquest in the holy land began in 607 BC, and the war which snapped the bands of "iron and brass" allowing the nation to grow again began in 1914. Between these two dates is 2520 years. (607 + 1914 = 2521. Subtract one year to account for the absence of a year "zero" between the BC and AD eras. This results in 2520 years total.)

The span of 2520 years is renown as the period of Gentile Times, from Babylon to the Great War, which restrained the growth of Israel's national hopes. It is exactly seven "times" of 360 years each, which is the

length of a prophetic "time" in both Daniel and Revelation (Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:14). (This may be explained in more detail in the next issue.)

Four Applications

We now have four applications of the "seven times" mentioned in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Four Applications

- 7 seasons upon Nebuchadnezzar
- 7 decades upon Israel until Cyrus
- 7 x 360 years upon Israel to modern times
- 7 x 1000 years upon mankind

Is it merely a coincidence that the expression "seven times" appears four times in the narrative of Daniel chapter four? Or is this perhaps related to the four layers of meaning of the "seven times"? Remember the word for times, *iddan*, is a flexible word which can refer to any regular period of time. It was the right choice if the dream was meant to cover various different fulfillments.

Leviticus 26

Long before the days of Daniel, Moses also predicted "seven times" of punishment upon Israel if they were disobedient to the Law given by God. This warning appears in Leviticus chapter 26. There, just as in Daniel chapter four, the expression "seven times" appears exactly four times (verses 18, 21, 24, 28).

There also, the symbols of iron and brass represent the oppressive powers which would punish Israel and restrain their national hopes. "I will break the pride of your power [their power as a nation]; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass" (Leviticus 26:19). Heaven and earth are used widely in scripture to represent the governing powers, religious and civil, which rule the world.

Deuteronomy 28:23 uses the same symbols. If Israel became and remained disobedient, "thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron ... Jehovah shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies ... and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth." This occurred when their nation was conquered.

These predicted punishments became ripe during the Babylonian empire. This is indicated in Leviticus 26:32. "I will bring your land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it." The desolation of the land occurred during the Babylonian empire (compare 2 Chronicles 36:21).

Also Leviticus 26:34, 35 "Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in

your enemies' lands ... as long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when he dwelt upon it." The land kept sabbath after Israel was scattered by the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 36:21).

Also Leviticus 26:31, "I will ... bring your sanctuaries unto desolation." The temple at Jerusalem was burned by the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 36:19).

Roaming as a Beast

A prominent part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was that "his heart [would] be changed from man's, and ... a beast's heart ... given unto him" (Daniel 4:16). He would eat grass like an animal, live in the open, and "be wet with the dew of heaven" like animals.

This symbol also is meaningful. During the 2520 years of Israel's punishment they were subject to four world powers — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Rome would split into the various countries of Europe, into which many of the Jews were scattered and ruled. These four empires are represented in Daniel chapter seven as four animals — a lion, bear, leopard, and "dreadful" beast — showing how God perceives these empires which ruled mankind so long. "As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people" (Proverbs 28:15).

While Nebuchadnezzar was insane, he conducted himself as an animal, representing the beastly conduct of the nations which rule the world. While Babylon ruled for seven decades, they were as a lion (Daniel 7:4). While the four empires of Daniel ruled the world for 2520 years, they were pictured like powerful animals. While mankind endures seven millenniums before they are fully restored, most of that time is under the rule of fallen governments — "beasts." But in the end the people are relieved of the burdens, stand upright again, reason and dignity restored, and they praise the King of Heaven. Nebuchadnezzar did this literally. Israel rejoiced when they returned to Judea after their Babylonian captivity. Now in their regathering after the 2520 years, many of them already give thanks to God, and the remainder will do so soon according to Zechariah 12:10. When the Millennium has done its work among men, the entire world will rejoice in their restoration to a full standing of perfection, so long ago lost in Eden.

At last everyone who responds to God's grace will "praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment" (Daniel 4:37).

(1) Jeremiah 52:12 calls this the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, using what historians call a "non-accession year reckoning." This means the year a king came to the throne is counted as number "one" of his reign. Jeremiah 52:29 is appended by a scribe in Babylon, using Babylon's "accession year reckoning." This means the year a king came to the throne is counted as his year of accession, and his official year "one" begins with the following New Year's Day.

Jeremiah chapter 52 was not written by Jeremiah himself, but assembled later from other sources. Notice Jeremiah 51:64, "Thus far as the words of Jeremiah" — showing he did not write the chapter following. Most of Jeremiah 52 comes from the book of 2 Kings. Jeremiah 52:1-27 are the same as 2 Kings 24:18-25:21. Jeremiah 52:31-34 matches 2 Kings 25:27-30. The four verses in Jeremiah between these two parts, namely 52:28-30, is a record not matched elsewhere. Apparently it was appended from information in Babylon in later years — thus these few texts use the Babylonian method of counting years.

(2) Evidently there was more to the decree than appears in Ezra 1:1-4. The enemies of Israel were successful in stopping the temple construction, and it languished for 16 years before work resumed early in the 2nd year of Darius Hystaspes, king of Persia. It was completed late in the 6th year of that king. To justify resuming the work, a search was made in the records of Persia to locate the initial decree of Cyrus. Ezra 5:17 through Ezra 6:5 records the search, and the results — "there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written ..." That record specified the dimensions of the temple to be rebuilt, the manner of construction, and the restoration of gold and silver vessels.

(3) Jamieson, Fausett, Brown, citing Herodotus 1.179).

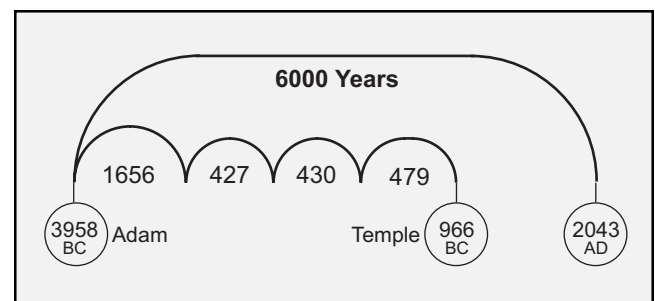
Exodus to Solomon

In previous issues we traced the years from Adam to the end of the Flood (1656), then to the Covenant with Abraham (427), then to the Exodus (430). We have but one period more to cover, to link the history of mankind from Adam to Solomon. This period is given in one text of scripture, namely 1 Kings 6:1.

"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 Jehovah."

The Exodus from Egypt occurred in the spring of the year, and the building of the temple began in the spring of the year also, commencing year number 480. Thus 479 complete years lapsed between the two events.

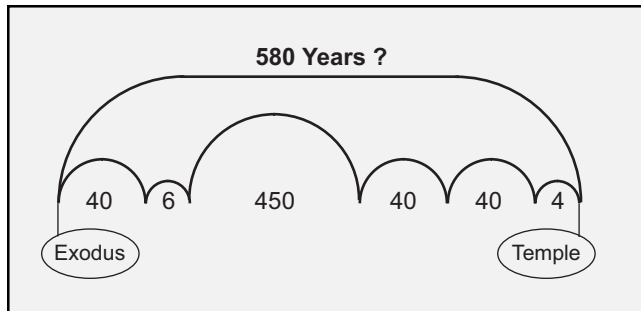
The fourth year of Solomon commenced in Tishri of 967 BC. Thus the spring of that fourth regnal year was in 966 BC. Thus the date of Adam's creation can be computed backward — $966 \text{ BC} + 479 + 430 + 427 + 1656 = 3958 \text{ BC}$. Six thousand years forward from that date bring us to 2043 AD — the anticipated date beginning the Millennium of Christ's Kingdom.



A Complication

This is clear. The testimony of 1 Kings 6:1 is very direct. However, as is well known among students of Bible chronology, there is another text of scripture which seems to differ. This has led to some confusion, and different opinions. The apparent disharmony has caused a great deal of discussion. It is this which appears to complicate the matter, which otherwise is clear and direct.

That other text is Acts 13:20. In this text Paul seems to say that the period of Judges is 450 years. But this is not consistent with the testimony of 1 Kings 6:1. The reason for this we illustrate below.



The first 40 years on the diagram above are the 40 years of Israel's wandering in the Sinai. The next 6 were spent in conquering the land of Canaan before the land was divided among the tribes. Then began the period of judges, followed by the 40 year reign of Saul, the 40 year reign of David, and the first 4 years of the reign of Solomon.¹

If the period of Judges lasted 450 years, as suggested by Acts 13:20, and shown on the diagram, then as you can easily see, the total period of time from the Exodus through the fourth year of Solomon would be 580 years — whereas 1 Kings 6:1 says it was 479 years.

Which is correct? Which is incorrect? How can we explain the apparent disparity, if both are sacred scripture?

The answer is relatively simple, even though not well known. Acts 13:20 is an account of a speech Paul gave impromptu, in a synagogue of the Jews, which he attended as a visitor. As a matter of respectful custom he was asked if he had some word of exhortation for the gathering. He took the opportunity to briefly review the history of God's leading of the Israelites through past times, and brought them up to Jesus who died for the forgiveness of their sins.

It was in this general review of Jewish history that Paul mentioned the period of Judges as 450 years. Paul was using a convention of the time, which was to describe the length of a period of history by summing the parts of that history that were known and recorded. This approach may not appeal to the western mind of today, but it was the custom of that time in the Middle East.

Using this approach, one finds that during the period of Judges the Old Testament provides 19 periods of time

which tell us the length of oppressions, judgeships, and periods of relative peace. If one sums these 19 periods of time, the result is the number 450 — exactly the sum reported by Paul. In the box below is a list of those 19 periods, and their sum.

Nineteen Periods

YEARS	ACTIVITY
8	Serve Mesopotamia, Judges 3:8
40	Rest under Othniel, Judges 3:11
18	Serve Moab, Judges 3:14
80	Rest under Ehud, Judges 3:15, 20
20	Serve Hazor, Judges 4:2, 3
40	Rest under Deborah, Judges 4:4, 5:31
7	Bondage under Midian, Judges 6:1
40	Rest under Gideon, Judges 8:28
3	Reign of Abimelech, Judges 9:22
23	Tola Judged, Judges 10:1, 2
22	Jair Judged, Judges 10:3
18	Serve Ammon, Judges 10:8
6	Jephthah Judged, Judges 12:7
7	Ibzan Judged, Judges 12:8, 9
10	Elon Judged, Judges 12:11
8	Abdon Judged, Judges 12:13, 14
40	Serve Philistines, Judges 13:1
20	Samson Judged, Judges 15:20
40	Eli Judged, 1 Samuel 4:18
—	
450	Sum of Nineteen Periods

Thus Paul did not err, nor did the scripture err. Acts 13:20 reports exactly what Paul intended — namely, the sum of 19 periods of time. But those 19 periods of time have some gaps unaccounted for, and several overlaps, so that the simple sum of the listed periods do not give us an accurate length of the entire period. Paul knew this. His subject was not chronology per se, and a precise count was not his concern in this general review of history — he merely used the custom of his day, and prefixed the result with the word “about” to indicate the imprecision.

Note this point well — the scripture is not in error. Acts 13:20 merely presents the accepted method of Paul's day for expressing historical periods of the past.²

The Other Option

Another option for the problem is to simply dispute one of these texts. This is usually done by disputing the statement of 1 Kings 6:1. Sometimes this is done by supposing that the text was not original, and was added by a

later editor, who made a mistake. However, there is no textual evidence for this — it is simply a surmise.

Another method of disputing the text is to assume it was corrupted through copying at some time in the many centuries since its original composition. In this approach it is popular to suppose that one digit has been changed — that originally the text said 580th year, rather than 480th year — which would almost allow 450 years for the period of Judges.

This fails to grasp the source and reason for the figure in Acts 13:20, as explained above. In addition, there are two other impediments to this view. (1) The difference cannot be explained as a simple one digit error. The Hebrew texts extant today do not use digits for numbers, but write them out long-hand — such as “four hundred eightieth year,” rather than “480th year.”

(2) It is possible that in ancient times the scribes used a briefer method for writing numbers. A common method was to use the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet to represent the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 200, 300, 400. In this case 580 would be written with letters representing the numbers 400, 100, 80. Therefore rather than mistaking one character for another, the error would be in dropping a character altogether — possible, but less likely.

But the actual difference is not simply 100 years, but more precisely 101 years. For in order to make a period of judges of 450 years, the number in 1 Kings 6:1 would have to read 581st year, instead of its present 480th year. The number 581 would be composed of the letters representing 400, 100, 80, 1. In other words, two characters must be dropped — which is much less likely.

What Acts 13:20 Actually Says

Those who insist the period of Judges was exactly 450 years fail to recognize what Paul actually says in Acts 13:20. First, Paul uses the word “about,” *hos*, recognizing that the sum he reports is not the true length of the period. Vines Expository Dictionary says of this word, *hos*, “used of numerals it signifies ‘about.’” In verse 21, when Paul reports the length of Saul’s reign, he does not use “about” because he is not reporting a sum of years.³

Secondly, the period Paul comments on does not take us to the reign of King Saul. It takes us “until Samuel the prophet,” not “until King Saul.” When we understand the source of Paul’s information, it becomes clear why he takes the period **until** Samuel, but not **through** Samuel.

The number Paul reported, 450, is the sum of 19 periods — but the Old Testament does not give a number of years for Samuel. Thus Paul could not include Samuel in his tally. Paul’s sum takes us “until Samuel the prophet,” but no further.

This means that without 1 Kings 6:1, which spans the time from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon, there would be no way to know, from the Old Testament, the actual length of time that passed during this period.

If one disputes the integrity of 1 Kings 6:1, then one has no sure means of discerning the length of years from the Exodus to the Kingdom of Israel.

Thus the thread of chronology which God provides us, from Adam forward, would be broken, and we would be unable to count an accurate sum of 6000 years from Adam forward.

Could the Judges Have Lasted 450 Years?

There is good internal evidence from the Old Testament that the period of Judges, from the division of the land until the reign of King Saul, could *not* stretch as great a period as 450 years. This evidence we take up in the next issue.

(To be continued)

(1) To be precise, we should consider fractional years. This is almost never done, because it is detailed, and does not change the final result. But we will explain it briefly.

A little over a year after the Exodus Israel left for the wilderness of Paran (Numbers 33:3, 10:11-13), where Moses sent out 12 men to spy out the land. Caleb was among them. He was 40 at the time, and 85 when the land was divided among the tribes (Joshua 14:7, 10). Therefore the land was divided 46 years after the Exodus. The time was apparently after the spring / summer military season of the year, as Autumn approached — that is, 46½ years after the Exodus, or 6½ years after crossing the Jordan River into Canaan.

The regnal years of Saul, David and Solomon ran from Tishri to Tishri. Thus the four years of Solomon’s reign listed on the diagram begin in the Autumn, but end in the spring when the temple foundations were laid. In other words the period was actually 3½ years rather than four.

So the two parts of the diagram which involve fractional years are in one case ½ year greater, and in the other ½ year less. Six becomes 6½, four becomes 3½, but the sum is the same. Therefore, considering fractional years does not alter the overall result.

(2) Another resolution is followed in the NIV and NASB translations, which draw from different manuscripts than the common version in Acts 13:20. These translations place the 450 years before the division of the land rather than afterward.

Perhaps this is the solution. But there are two reasons why we think otherwise. (a) The source of the number 450 appears to be the sum of periods which followed the division of the land. (b) Since the Greek manuscripts underlying Acts 13:20 differ, one of them was changed. If the original said the 450 years preceded the division of the land, there would be no apparent reason for someone to change it, and generate a conflict with 1 Kings 6:1. But if the original text put the 450 years following the division of the land, then a thoughtful scribe, or collection of scribes, seeing the apparent conflict with 1 Kings 6:1, might have had a motive for “re-expressing” what they surmised was a mistake.

(3) Paul does use the word “about” in Acts 13:18, “about the time of forty years suffered [God] their manners in the wilderness.” Israel’s wilderness wandering was 40 years, from spring to spring. But Israel was not always rebellious during that time — thus “about.”

In the Next Issue ...

- *The Resurrection*
- *Times of the Gentiles*
- *Daniel Chapter Five*