

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
July, August 2006

The High Calling

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

It is common among Christians to expect a place in heaven after death. In general this is a good expectation — if the Christian is consecrated to God. Many Christians, however, do not appreciate the need for committing one's life to God. They suppose that believing in Jesus, and avoiding sin in their lives, is sufficient.

These are both very good decisions. But Paul says we should go further than this. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

This can be done by thoughtfully taking ourselves to God in prayer, expressing to him that we yield our life to Him, and will seek thereafter to serve Him, and the Truth, and the Brethren, as the chief cause of our life. This is making a thoughtful and deliberate consecration of ourselves to God.

When this is done, then it is appropriate to symbolize this decision by water baptism. This permits others to know the determination we have made. This may help them to understand the way we live our lives — which is different than the world. This may also encourage others to think about their opportunity for consecration to God.

Three Legs of the Christian Life

There are three basic components to the Christian life, for those who have consecrated their lives to God. One, a vital one, is character development. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). We are transformed from our natural tendencies, into persons reflecting the character likeness of our Lord Jesus — who himself displays the character of Jehovah.

This is not an easy thing to do, specially at first. We all have our own natural inclinations, and sometimes these are not consistent with godly character. In this case we have to change our speech, or conduct, or habits, to put them in accord with the character which God would have us exhibit to others. A guiding principle to direct our

thoughts, words and actions, is "love." The apostle John said, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). But this is a broad word, and some specifics are helpful in applying this general quality in our daily experiences.

"As every lovely hue is light, so every grace is love," expressed the poet. Here are some of the lovely shades of love (from Volume Six of *Studies in the Scriptures*, page 186).

Components of Love

Joy — Love exultant
Peace — Love in repose
Long-suffering — Love enduring
Gentleness — Love in society
Goodness — Love in action
Faith — Love on the battlefield of life
Meekness — Love in resignation
Moderation — Love in training

Every day we can express some or all of these qualities. As we do, they should become the natural, rather than exceptional, responses to our experiences.

Study and Service

The second leg of Christian life is study, and the third is service. Every Christian should have a Bible and value it. In western societies this is a given. In poorer countries, every one concerned with things of the Spirit should save their funds and acquire a Bible — then treasure and value it.

We should be familiar with the scriptures. We should know how the books of the Bible are arranged, what subjects they cover, how they relate to each other. The Old Testament has three parts — historical (Genesis through Esther), devotional (Job through Song of Solomon), prophetic (Isaiah through Malachi).

The New Testament begins with five historical books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts). Then follow the epistles of Paul, 14 in number. The sequence as they appear in our modern Bibles was chosen by Martin Luther, according to his estimate of the prominence of the ecclesia to which each epistle was written.

Then come the general epistles, sometimes termed "Catholic" epistles. The term "Catholic" here does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church. The word means general, or universal. It refers to the fact that most of these epistles were written to brethren generally, rather than to specific ecclesias.

There were seven of these epistles — James, two from Peter, three from John, and Jude. The prophecies and visions of Revelation close the Bible. The 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 of the New Testament make up the 66 books of sacred writing.

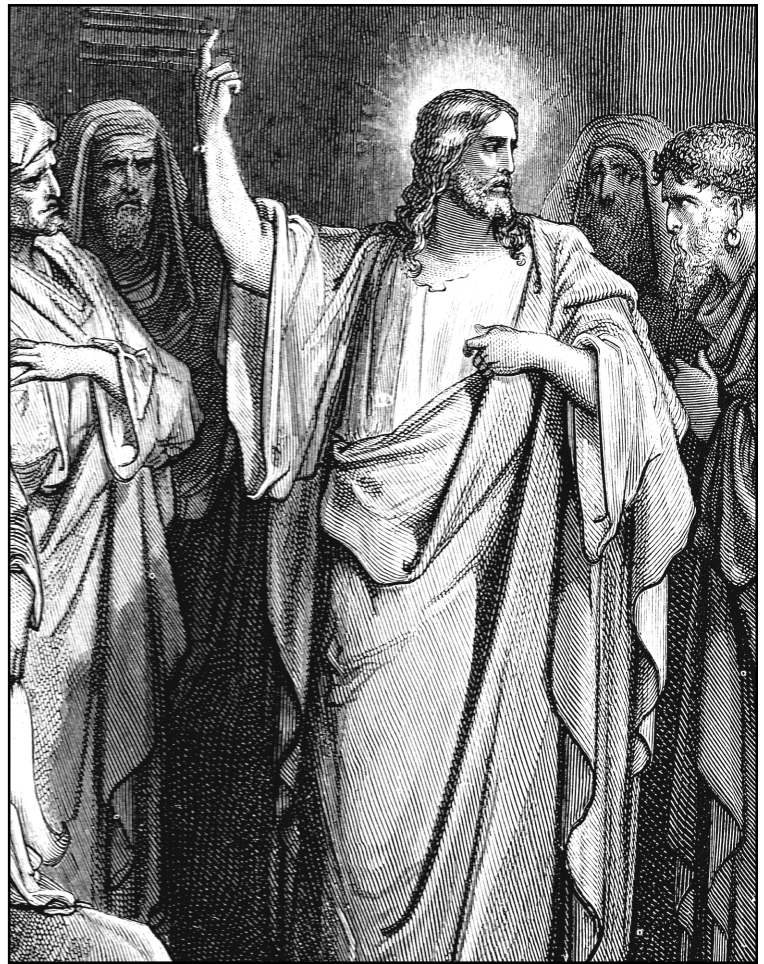
To properly understand God's Plan of the Ages, we recommend to all of our readers the book by Pastor Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. If you do not have a copy of this book, you may secure one by writing or emailing your request to us. We will send a magazine edition of that book, with a lovely four color cover, with the next issue of Faithbuilders Fellowship.

Service

No child of God can demonstrate the sincerity of his consecration without service for the Truth or the Brethren. This may be through distribution of the Truth to others, supporting the saints engaged in the work, encouraging brethren, supporting ecclesia meetings and functions, teaching children, witnessing to neighbors, or other means. Let each one look for opportunities to serve, even though this means the sacrifice of time or money or both. This is the lesson of our Lord Jesus in the parable of the talents — Matthew 25:15 and forward. Each of his servants is expected to use their opportunities to serve their master.

Patience and perseverance in these areas — character, study, service — will produce in us what the Lord looks for in those who become members of his Bride class (Revelation 19:7-9). Then, at the end of our life, we will receive the commendation — "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). Our reward will be in heaven. We will be raised divine, spirit beings, in fellowship with Christ and all the saints who have gone before.

By attending to the things of the spirit, we can make sure not only of our present calling to follow Christ, but our election to the Bride class as well. "Give diligence to



Christ, who brought "life and immortality to light" and opened up the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus."

make your **calling** and **election** sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).

Close of the High Calling

At some time the High Calling will close. Because some brethren anticipated the Kingdom would come soon, very soon, after the year 1914, a large number of brethren living after that time supposed that the High Calling did end in the years following 1914. They supposed they had received the call, but no others were being admitted.

Among those who "closed" the door to the High Calling were those who later took the name Jehovah's Witnesses. This is the reason why Jehovah's Witnesses today do not encourage people to run for the High Calling — the Heavenly Calling. After Pastor Russell died in 1916, control of the society which he founded to promulgate the Truth was taken illicitly by Judge Rutherford. He had a forcible character, was competent in speaking and writing, and enjoyed a certain prominence among brethren at the time. Thus, irrespective of the fact that Bro. Russell had not selected him to participate in the board of directors — and certainly not as leader of them — Judge

Rutherford nevertheless managed to secure control of the society.

That is all part of history, as is the large division of brethren which followed as a consequence. The Bible Student Movement as it exists today is heir to the movement continued by brethren who left the society to pursue the Truth, and its witness, according to the spirit of the original movement. But even among them, some factions presumed the High Calling had drawn to a close.

In retrospect, all of this closing of the “door” of the High Calling was clearly wrong. Had brethren of that time known that the approaching Kingdom of Christ would not be established on the earth for another hundred years, the opinion that the door of the High Calling had closed would never have taken hold.

But time has advanced. Now we are but one generation away from the Kingdom being established in the Earth. The High Calling is still open. The Harvest of the Gospel Age still continues. But it will close in the coming years. When it will close we do not know. Presumably it will close some time before the year 2043, if that year marks the end of 6000 years from Adam, and the start of the Millennium. All the more, then, should we encourage all Christians of faith to take the opportunity of entering into the door of opportunity now. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able ... When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door” (Luke 13:24, 25).

Daniel and the Lion's Den

“Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee” (Daniel 6:16).

Chapter Six of Daniel contains the famous story of Daniel and the Den of Lions. Daniel was an aged man at the time. His early prominence in the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar had faded into retirement, until he was recalled at the moment of crisis the night the empire fell to Cyrus and the Persian armies. Belshazzar in his last night, before he died, honored Daniel for his explanation of the handwriting on the wall, thrusting Daniel again into public prominence. He had even received the “third place” in the kingdom — briefly.

Cyrus the Persian was evidently the same person as Darius the Mede (as explained in our previous issue). Daniel 6:1 opens with the record of him setting over the kingdom 120 princes “which should be over the whole kingdom” he had obtained by conquest.

A little more than 50 years later, in the reign of Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther, the Persian Empire ruled 127 provinces (Esther 1:1). Perhaps during the intervening time the expansion or reorganization of the empire augmented the divisions from 120 to 127 and

the princes referred to in Daniel 6:1 were those responsible to account for the various provinces. This is only a supposition however.

Over the 120 princes were “three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage” (Daniel 6:2). Cyrus evidently saw the trustworthy character of Daniel, and realized the advantage of such a noble, wise, and experienced administrator. “Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm” (Daniel 6:3).

In this we are reminded of Joseph who was second only to Pharaoh in his authority over Egypt. Joseph was a picture of our Lord Jesus who is second only to Jehovah in his supreme authority. Daniel, however, is a picture of the Church, who will be second to Christ. Christ was pictured by Cyrus, the one “anointed” by Jehovah (see Isaiah 45:1).

Character the Chief Requirement

Daniel's wisdom and experience were valuable to the king, but his honesty and integrity were surely the qualities which allowed Cyrus to rely upon him with confidence. It is clear as the narrative unfolds that the other two presidents, and the princes under them, were of a base and ignoble character. Cyrus would have noted the difference.

Let us learn that the attribute which allows God to favor us as members of the Bride class who will rule the world with Christ during the Millennium, is our character. If we are honest, trustworthy, pure, then God can use us. If we are not honest, not trustworthy, not pure, then we cannot be trusted with such high dignity. Our abilities will be magnified through our glorification to the divine plane. But our integrity is developed here in this life.

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Jealousy at the Root

Daniel's exaltation stirred jealousy in the others. Probably this was augmented by the inability of the others to secure unjust gain from their positions, because of Daniel's oversight. If the others had been just and honest men, they would have appreciated the oversight of someone like Daniel. Honest men appreciate other honest men — even if they have differences. An honest man does not conspire against another honest man.

Daniel had the advantage of the principles of the Divine Law which he cherished and followed from the days of his youth. The others, his heathen associates, had not this advantage. But even with that considered, they fell short of the nobility which history seems to accord to Cyrus.

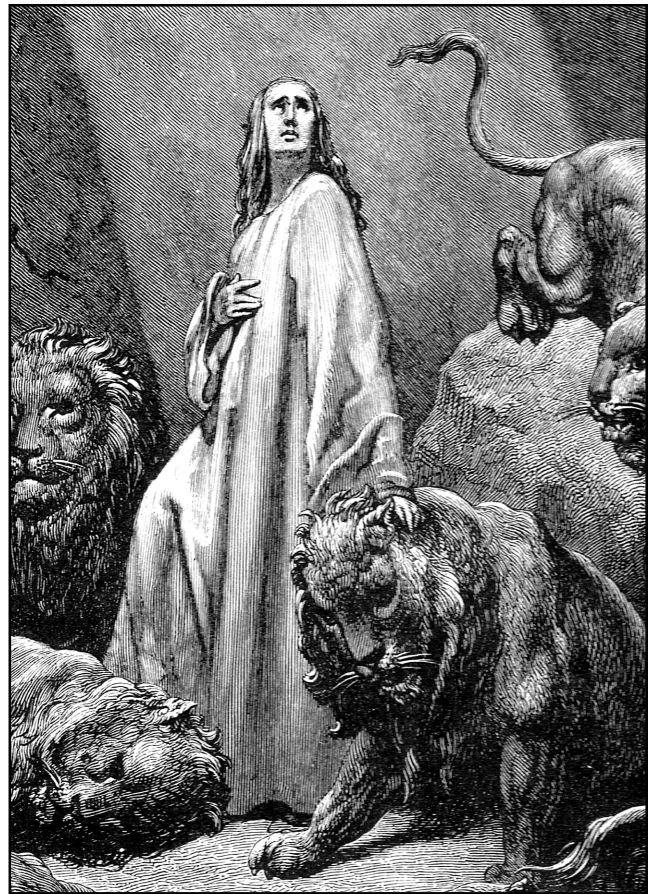
They realized that to find fault with Daniel they would have to find it with his religious convictions and practice, which were resolute and dependable. They laid the trap with flatteries to the king, but their agenda was against Daniel. A decree was secured from the king that no one could "petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king" (Daniel 6:7).

Cyrus was partial to religious liberty, but this relatively brief period for his newly acquired dominion to thus honor him seemed to him innocuous enough. Had he thought more deeply, he might have recognized how much this would try men of conscience — as it did Daniel.

Daniel might have reasoned that he could pray secretly for the next month. Even Jesus advised us to be private in our devotions, so as not to appear proud for our piety (Matthew 6:6). Surely this option would have crossed the mind of Daniel, as it would most people of Christian faith and conscience today. Had Daniel chosen this way, he would have escaped the immediate danger.

When tests of conscience come to us, as they necessarily do from time to time, we might chose a moderate approach without outward disturbance or exhibition, seeking inwardly to be obedient. This has its virtue. It reminds us of the course Daniel and his three companions did chose early in their captivity as they determined not to eat the king's meat, but proposed a reasonable vegetarian diet to their captor which pleasantly resolved the concern for everyone. They were firm, but did not display an adamant or obstreperous spirit — a good example for us.

But Daniel saw this case differently. He knew the motive. He knew the plot. He knew his enemies. Daniel judged that to change his innocent and devoted procedure would be yielding principle. So he did as usual. He opened his windows toward Jerusalem, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God" (Daniel 6:10). The testimony of his meek but faithful conduct has been a record of encouragement to God's people ever since.



Daniel in the Den of Lions

The King Made Aware

The accusers were swift to inform the king of the transgression — for this was the very purpose of their plan. "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief," this does God hate (Proverbs 6:16, 18). When the accusers appeared before the king, he began to grasp the whole situation. He was first displeased with himself, for he had no real intent to place a burden upon such a noble conscience as he knew Daniel to have. He had been caught up in the moment, seductively, and now regretted it thoroughly. "He labored till the going down of the sun to deliver" Daniel, but even the king could not void the signed decree, according to the custom of his people and his time — as the accusers pointedly reminded him (Daniel 6:14, 15).

Cyrus proceeded with his duty. But his personal anxiety is shown by passing a sleepless night without food or the customary pleantry of music. He rose early in the morning, anxious to see if his encouragement to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee" (Daniel 6:16) proved true. It did!

With joy he heard Daniel's reply, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths ... forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him" (Daniel 6:22-23).

The law was satisfied. Daniel had been committed to the den; now he could be retrieved from it. His accusers and their families were cast in, and the hungry lions made quick work of them. This was not at Daniel's command, but the king's command. But Daniel must have thanked God deeply for the reversal of matters, which thereafter allowed Daniel to serve the king without the constant association of his former accusers. All of them will be restored in the kingdom of course, along with the remainder of the world. Their everlasting prospects were not injured by the king's punishment.

The King's New Command

Cyrus then followed the example of his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar in honoring the God of Daniel. Daniel must have remembered the former occasions, and taken delight in seeing the unfolding providence of God whereby Daniel's sore distress was turned to an honor to Jehovah.

"I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end" (Daniel 6:26).

"So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, *even* in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (verse 28).

The Consequences

As this experience occurred early after the transition of the kingdom to Darius (Cyrus), and he had now executed a decree that Jehovah should be honored throughout his realm, this may well have been the predicate for the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jehovah's temple at Jerusalem.

That decree was issued in the "first year of Cyrus king of Persia." That first regnal year of Cyrus began in the spring of 538 BC. Probably the episode of Daniel and the Lion's Den occurred during the accession year of Cyrus, between October 539 BC when Babylon fell and Cyrus rode into Babylon in triumph, and the spring of the following year. This would explain why the decree did not follow more immediately upon the fall of Babylon.

Additionally, it is likely Daniel had something to do with the issuing of the decree, because there was information about the temple, in the decree, which indicated a knowledge of various details about how the structure should be rebuilt. Daniel would have known about such things from the memory of his young years, and from consultation with other Jews of the captivity about their knowledge and remembrance.

The decree as found in Ezra 1:1-4 (and 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23) is comparatively brief. It is but an extract of the whole. This is apparent from the later record of Ezra. When the Jews returned to Israel, they re-laid the foundation of the temple in the year following — that would be 537 BC, in the spring of the year (Ezra 3:8). The initial

work brought joy to the returnees, although the older ones who remembered the glory of the first temple wept at the comparison (Ezra 3:11-13).

But soon the enemies of Israel sent accusations back to the king and the work ceased (Ezra 4:1, 24). Ezra 5:1 then records the resumption of the work in the 2nd year of Darius Hystaspes, king of Persia (not to be confused with Darius the Mede). That would be the year 520 BC. When this work resumed, the enemies of Israel tried to stop it again, but the Israelites insisted they had a right by virtue of Cyrus' original decree. King Darius commanded a search be made, and "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 ..." (Ezra 6:1).

What follows is the original decree of Cyrus, but verses 3, 4, 5 include in this decree a variety of specifics about the construction of the temple and the resumption of the offerings which are not recited in the summary of the decree given in the opening verses of Ezra.

Daniel as Picture

The sixth chapter of Daniel draws to a close the narrative portion of Daniel's record. The next six chapters comprise the prophetic section.

As a picture or illustration of greater things in the Divine Plan, Daniel represents the Church during the Gospel Age, subject to the will of the powers of this world.

The enemies of the Church in Revelation are depicted graphically and symbolically as the Dragon (political power), Beast (Papacy) and Two-Horned Beast (Church of England and Ireland). You will find these mentioned from chapter 12 forward in Revelation. The interpretation we give is the same as the interpretation given

The Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:3-5)

In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:

And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

in Volume Four of *Studies in the Scriptures*, in the 1912 foreword, by Pastor Russell — and broadly embraced by students of prophecy among the Bible Student Fellowship.

These three enemies are depicted symbolically in the first six chapters of Daniel, in the same sequence as they are introduced in Revelation. Daniel chapter one speaks of 10 days of trial in captivity, representing 10 years of severe persecution of the early Church by Pagan Rome — political power (Revelation 2:10).

Daniel chapter two speaks of the image of Gentile governments which become mixed with the “clay” of religious authority. This amalgam became Papacy, which ruled Europe during the Dark Ages.

Daniel chapter three speaks of a statue, 60 x 6 cubits, a small “image” of the 666 designation for Papacy in Revelation 13:18. That image was a product of the two-horned beast of Revelation, which represents the Church of England (and Ireland).

The next three chapters — four, five, six — show the demise of these institutions. Chapter four records the insanity of Nebuchadnezzar for “seven times,” representing the rule of gentile kingdoms for 2520 years, ending in 1914 when the kings ruling Christendom were shaken of their power during World War I. This was the beginning of the end for the dragon, political power.

Chapter five records the fall of Babylon — which Revelation uses as a symbol of Papacy. (Revelation 17:5 is very pointed on this.)

Chapter six speaks of two enemies of Daniel, the two presidents who conspired against Daniel. This conspiracy of two parties reminds us of the two-horned power, the Church of England and Ireland, which burned a number of Christian martyrs in years past. Chapter six ends in the demise of these conspirators, just as Revelation 19:20 depicts the demise of this two-horned “false prophet” at the advent of the Millennium.

Daniel and his three Hebrew companions represent the Church through the Gospel Age facing the persecutions of these institutions. We are thankful that we have arrived at that point in God’s Plan that these institutions have their powers curtailed, pending their collapse in the seventh plague (Revelation 16:17-21).

Meanwhile the Church are being gathered one by one to be with Christ in glory. When the Church is complete, then the blessed Millennium will bring life to all people. The world will gradually recognize, and then appreciate, the opportunity for everlasting life on Earth.

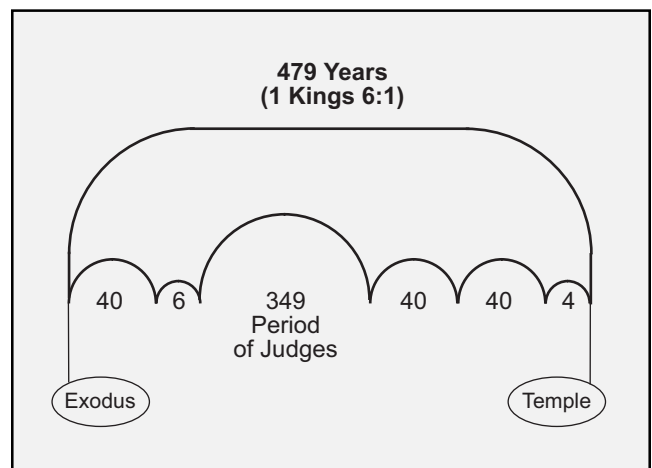
***Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known.***

Exodus to Solomon

(Part Three)

This is part of our series on Bible Chronology. In the first two segments of this portion, from the Exodus to the fourth year of King Solomon, we saw that the period of Judges lasted 349 years. That was the period of time from the division of Canaan among the Israelites after their conquest of the land, until the anointing of Saul as king of Israel.

1 Kings 6:1 is the text from which this period of 349 years is calculated. That text specifies that 479 years passed from the Exodus until the founding of Solomon’s Temple in the fourth year of his reign. From this we deduct the 40 years Moses led the Israelites in the wilderness, and the 6 years spent conquering Canaan, from the front part. We deduct the 40 years of Saul, 40 of David, and 4 of Solomon, from the back part. The portion remaining is 349 years, commonly called the “Period of Judges.” This is illustrated in the box below.



This differs from the number 450 used by Paul in Acts 13:20. As we observed earlier, Paul secured his number from a simple sum of 19 periods of time mentioned in Judges and 1 Samuel, which reach until Samuel’s judgeship. (Paul’s count takes us only until Samuel, because the Old Testament supplies no specific number of years for his judgeship.)

The reason the sum of the periods exceeds 349 years by so much is that many of those periods overlap one another. In our last issue we observed that if these periods did not overlap, so that the Period of Judges lasted 450 years or more, the few generations from Rahab to David would be insufficient to span the distance. This is evidence that a shorter period is called for, such as the 349 years indicated by 1 Kings 6:1.

There is also internal evidence in the Book of Judges for the shorter period. That internal evidence shows that various periods during the time of Judges did indeed overlap. That evidence is the subject of this article.

Internal Evidence

The Israelites frequently slipped into sin by following the gods of the Canaanites. For this reason God would allow foreign armies to oppress them for a time, but when the Israelites cried to Jehovah for help, he would send a Judge to deliver them. This happened repeatedly. In each case we are told how long the oppression endured, who saved them, and usually how long the Israelites had peace thereafter. Here is a list of the first four episodes.

Oppressor	Duration	Deliverer
Cushanrish.	8 years	Othniel
Eglon	18 years	Ehud
Jabin	20 years	Deb., Barak
Midian	7 years	Gideon

Following this, Abimelech, one of the sons of Gideon, exalted himself to be a king, but after three years he was killed in a period of civil war. So closes the 9th chapter of Judges. Two other judges followed, namely Jair and Tola. Then Israel slipped into idolatry again.

Two Oppressors

This time the idolatry was so severe, God allowed not one, but two oppressors to afflict Israel simultaneously, in two different parts of Israel. “The anger of Jehovah was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon” (Judges 10:7).

The narrative then discusses the Ammonite oppression in the eastern part of Israel. Its length was 18 years. It was relieved by Jephthah, as explained in the remainder of chapter 10, and chapters 11 and 12.

After completing the account of the Ammonite oppression, the Book of Judges then lists three judges who followed Jephthah — Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. These judged consecutively for 7, 10, and 8 years. So starting with the Ammonite oppression of 18 years, and including Jephthah’s judgeship of six years, this accounts for 49 years since the beginning of the oppression.

Philistine Oppression

But what of the Philistine oppression? The Philistines were in the southwest of the land of Israel, near the original allotment of the tribe of Dan, and near the border of Judah. How long did this oppression last? How was it ended?

The writer of Judges returns to this matter at the beginning of chapter 13. He first repeats the cause of that

oppression, namely the sins of the Israelites. “The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of Jehovah: and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years” (Judges 13:1).

Now we learn for the first time the length of that oppression — 40 years. Then begins the story of Samson, a child promised to Manoah and his wife. God sent an angel to the wife of Manoah, who told her the child to be born “shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (Judges 13:5).

It is clear from this that the oppression had already begun before Samson was born, and it would not end until after Samson had died — for he would only “begin” to deliver Israel. Thus his entire life was included within the 40 years of Philistine oppression. Judges 15:20 and 16:31 tell us Samson judged Israel for 20 years, and the first text adds “in the days of the Philistines.”

Evidently Samson “judged” Israel in the sense of avenging them against the Philistines. This must have begun when Samson was a young man in his teen years, and had cause against the Philistines because of a young Philistine lady he courted for a wife. His service ended 20 years later when he collapsed the house of Dagon upon himself, taking with him 3000 Philistines, among them many leaders and nobles.

This must have substantially weakened their ability to oppress Israel, but it did not end the oppression. When did that Philistine oppression end? It must have ended soon after Samson’s death, because he was born during the oppression, lived to his late 30s, and died before the end of the 40 year oppression.

But how did it end? Who brought it to an end? Where is the account which describes this? The end of every other oppression is narrated in Judges. Where is the narration for the end of the Philistine oppression?

A Break in the Narrative

The answer is hidden from the casual reader. But it is there. It follows in 1 Samuel 7:10-17. “So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel” (verse 13).

The connection is hidden by the intervening chapters of Judges, and the story of Ruth. Those intervening narratives record three important episodes which all occurred much earlier in the period of Judges. Before going on to the history of Israel’s Kingdom, which began with Saul, these narratives must be included. They were not recited earlier, because they do not pertain to any specific judge. So they are appended here, before the Book of Judges closes, before proceeding on to other stories which take us into the Period of Kings.

Judges chapters 17 and 18 describe how much of the tribe of Dan went into lasting idolatry. Chapters 19-21 explain how the tribe of Benjamin was nearly exterminated.

nated. The Book of Ruth explains the family history of King David.

With these vital pieces of history completed, the narrative then turns to Samuel, who led Israel at the end the Philistine oppression. He also was a child of promise, and he also was a Nazarite from the womb — just like Samson. In fact the two were contemporaries, Samson evidently preceding Samuel by a little.

In this they are a picture of two others who would come much later to deliver God's people. These were John the Baptist — also a child of promise and also a Nazarite — and Jesus of Nazareth, also a child of promise and an antitypical Nazarite. His consecration to God fulfilled what was represented under the Law by the vow of the Nazarite. These two contemporaries, John the Baptist and Jesus, brought Israel back to God, and into the blessings of the Gospel Age.

At the approach of the second advent of Christ another couplet of consecrated brethren did a parallel work for spiritual Israel. These were Bro. William Miller, leader of the Adventist movement in America who announced the soon coming of Christ, followed by Bro. Charles Russell, leader of the harvest movement who announced the actual return of Christ. But this digresses. We return to the narrative about the Philistines.

Samuel

While explaining the birth of Samuel as a promised child of Hannah, the first chapter of 1 Samuel necessarily introduces Eli who judged Israel as a priest during the time Samuel was born. Eli judged Israel for 40 years (1 Samuel 4:18). During this time Samuel grew under his tutelage. While Samuel was a young man, Eli fell and died when he heard the news that the Ark of God was lost to the Philistines in battle. 1 Samuel 5:9 tells us that

Nazarite Couplets

- Samson, Samuel
- John the Baptist, Jesus
- William Miller, Charles Russell

(The last three were antitypical Nazarites)

at that time, the Philistines had already been oppressing Israel for some time. The ark was returned to Israel a few months later, but then spent 20 years in Kirjath-jearim before the Philistines were finally vanquished (1 Samuel 7:3).

This means there were about 21 years from the loss of the ark (when Eli died), to the end of the 40 year Philistine oppression. Therefore that oppression overlapped the last 19 years of Eli's judgeship. Therefore Eli's judgeship began about 21 years before the Philistine (and Ammonite) oppression began, and about 22 years before Samson was even born. This is illustrated in the box at the bottom of this page.

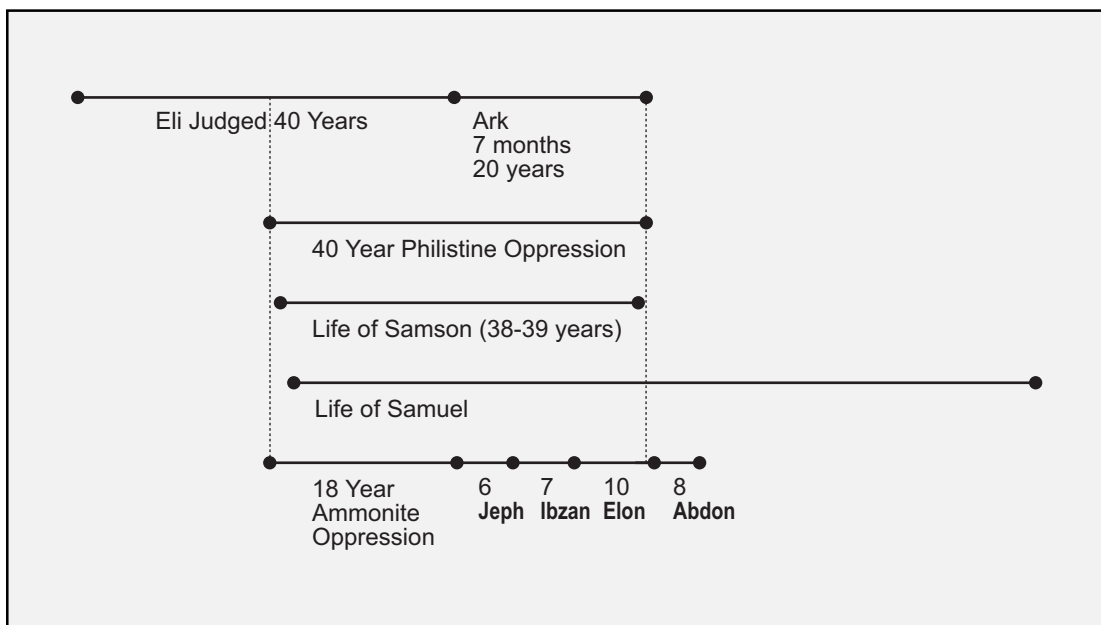
Notice the number of overlapping periods. These overlaps are implicit in the history recorded in Judges. The 40 years of Eli's Judgeship, the 20 years of Samson's Judgeship, the 40 years of Philistine oppression, the 49 years of Ammon, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon — these all overlap. This is why the actual period of the Judges is so much less than the simple sum of all the periods listed in Judges and 1 Samuel.

Judges 11:26 says there were about 300 years from the time Israel came into the eastern part of their promised land, until the Ammonites oppressed Israel. Perhaps that figure is a round number, but the actual figure would

The Chart at the right illustrates the overlapping of Eli, the 40 year Philistine Oppression, the life of Samson, the life of Samuel, and the 18 year Ammonite Oppression.

The key to Judges is recognizing that the Philistine Oppression of Judges 10:7, and the Philistine Oppression of Judges 13:1, are the same oppression.

When this is understood, all the episodes in Judges fit readily into the 349 years allowed by 1 Kings 6:1.



be close. We will use it as though it were an actual figure, and the reader can make any mental adjustment he or she wishes.

Then from the division of Canaan among the Israelites, six years after they entered the eastern part of the promised land, until the beginning of the Ammonite and Philistine oppression, would be 294 years. This allows another 55 years until the 349 years of the Period of Judges ended when Saul was anointed king.

If Samuel was born a year after Samson, and Samson a year after the Philistine oppression began, then Samuel would be 38 when the Philistines were defeated, and about 53 when Israel demanded a king. By that time his grown sons had shown their bad characters. Samuel would live perhaps another 30 years,¹ until about the age of 83.²

The Significant Point

The significant point to notice is this. The overlaps described above, which seem evident from the text, limit the length of the period of Judges. From the division of Canaan, until the judgeship of Samuel — or even to the anointing of Saul — could not have been 450 years. For in that case Samuel would have lived to something like 183, rather than simply 83 — an impossible age for that time.

Thus the internal evidence from the Book of Judges is consistent with the testimony of 1 Kings 6:1.

Therefore, we have three witnesses to the shorter length of the period of Judges. (a) The explicit statement of 1 Kings 6:1, (b) the evidence of the genealogy leading to King David, (c) the internal evidence of the narratives in Judges and 1 Samuel. The latter two support the integrity of the testimony of 1 Kings 6:1.

Without God providing us the crucial testimony of 1 Kings 6:1, we might estimate the period from the Exodus to Solomon, but we would be at a loss to know the precise number of years. Thus we would be unable to determine a connected and reliable count of years from Adam forward through to Solomon. Remember that Acts 13:20, which has been relied upon by many, does not give us the necessary information. For (a) that text merely reports a sum of periods listed in Judges and 1 Samuel without regard to overlaps, (b) that text takes us until Samuel, rather than until Saul, and no text tells us the specific years of Samuel's judgeship.

The testimony of 1 Kings 6:1 has been challenged, because of its *apparent* inconsistency with Acts 13:20. But now we see the reason for the difference. Now we see that both texts accurately report what they intend. Neither is in error. Neither sacred record need be disputed. The value of Acts 13:20 is that it assures us of the integrity of the periods listed in Judges. The value of 1 Kings 6:1 is that this text, and only this text, yields a precise figure to span the time from the Exodus to Solomon, thus bridging over any uncertainties in the Period of Judges.

Let us therefore receive with appreciation what God has provided.

A Connected Thread

This finding connects the thread of Bible chronology from Adam, to the flood, to Abraham, to the Exodus, now to the reign of King Solomon — near the time when the history of Israel is linked to the history of other nations. This allows us to assign an historical date. By this means the beginning of Solomon's first regnal year can be dated to Tishri of 970 BC. Thus the spring of his fourth year, when Solomon's Temple was founded, was in 966 BC.

From this date we can count backward through scriptural time to Adam — and 6000 years forward from there take us to 2043 AD. Evidently that year will commence the long looked for Seventh Millennium — the Thousand Years of Revelation 20:6.

From Solomon back to Adam

966 BC	Solomon year four
479 years	Back to the Exodus
430 years	Back to Abraham
427 years	Back to the Flood's End
1656 years	Back to Adam
<hr/>	
3958 BC	Creation of Adam
2043 AD	End of 6000 years from Adam

That millennium will commence in a crescendo of troubles described as the seventh plague of Revelation 16. But shortly thereafter, the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ will begin to flow as a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1).

Then the weary world will realize the wonderful blessings God has for them. They will need but the humility to accept them by the means God offers them.

(1) The reason we say Samuel lived about another 30 years after Saul was anointed, is that Samuel lived to anoint King David as a young man. Suppose Samuel lived until David was 20 years of age. That would be ten years before David became king at age 30 (2 Samuel 5:4). Since Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21), there were 30 years from Saul's anointing until that time.

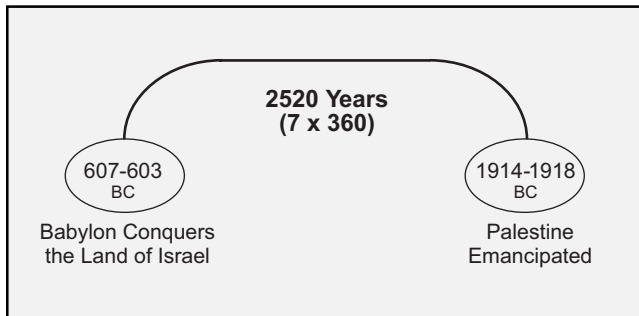
(2) If the 300 years of Judges 11:26 take us to the beginning of Jephthah's judgeship, rather than the beginning of the 18 year Ammonite oppression, then Samuel would have been 18 years older than the ages we list. This is possible. Eli died at the age of 98 by a fall. Samuel could have lived to be about the same age. If Samuel was born more than a year after Samson, and / or the 300 years Jephthah refers to were rounded off and were actually a little less, Samuel would have lived to his late nineties, as Eli did.

Times of the Gentiles

(Continued)

In the last issue, we observed that the 2,520 years of Israel's national punishment, frequently termed the "Times of the Gentiles," ran from 607 BC to 1914 AD. With the year 607 BC began a four year conquest of Israel's land of promise by Nebuchadnezzar. This culminated in 603 BC when Daniel declared Nebuchadnezzar the "head of gold" of the image representing the Gentile Nations that would rule during the time of Israel's punishment.

That four year period of conquest is paralleled by the four year period from 1914 to 1918, during which the land of Israel was freed from the Ottoman Empire. England took the rule thereafter, and declared their intent to make Palestine a national homeland for the Jewish people. This was done through the Balfour Declaration, late in the year 1917.



However, the restoration of Israel to independent statehood did not occur immediately. There were many fits and starts along the way. Before May of 1948, when the State of Israel commenced, there were many difficulties pushing the Jewish people back to their land — notably, the holocaust which occurred during World War II.

That holocaust was precipitated by Adolph Hitler, who published his plans for the end of the Jewish race in his work *Mein Kampf*, published in 1924. It was another eight years before Hitler's Nazi party became the leading political party in Germany, in the elections of 1932. The following year Hitler became Chancellor, and in 1934 when President Von Hindenberg died, Hitler rose to that post as well. Thus the three years of 1932 1933, 1934 saw Hitler and his party rise to control Germany.

The Holocaust itself commenced in 1939. When Hitler's troops invaded Poland, they marched out the Jews from the towns they took and shot them. Subsequently death camps were formed to destroy the Jewish people in greater numbers. As a consequence of this mass murder and genocide, the nations of Earth agreed to the formation of the State of Israel. This was passed by the United Nations late in 1947, and became effective in May of 1948.

Therefore we can outline the following steps in the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in modern times.

Israel Reestablished

- 1914 Beginning of WW1 which liberated Palestine
- 1918 End WW1, Palestine free of Ottoman Empire
- 1924 Mein Kampf gives Hitler's plan
- 1932 Nazis become dominant party in Germany
- 1933 Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
- 1934 Hitler becomes President of Germany
- 1939 Holocaust begins
- 1948 Israel reborn as a State

2,520 Years Earlier

What is remarkable about this list of successive dates, is that a parallel set of dates 2,520 years earlier were involved in the successive decline of the Jewish State during the time the Babylonian Empire was taking control of the ancient middle east.

607 BC was the date of Nebuchadnezzar's advance across the Euphrates into the northern portion of the land of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem for the first time two years later (Daniel 1:1), and by 603 BC he was the acknowledged ruler of the land (Daniel 2:38).

But Israel revolted under King Jehoiakim, and following his death Nebuchadnezzar sieged the city again and took his son and successor Jehoiachin captive to Babylon, along with Ezekiel the prophet and a large number of others. Zedekiah was installed as king under oaths of fealty. The year was 597 BC.

Zedekiah would later revolt, leading Nebuchadnezzar to return to Jerusalem. After a three year siege, in the years 589, 588, and 587 BC, Jerusalem fell, the temple was burned, and the city fell to ruin. There began the "desolation of the land" which Jeremiah predicted would occur (Jeremiah 22:5, 25:11).

Five years later, as recorded in Jeremiah 52:30, Nebuchadnezzar took more Jewish captives, presumably from Egypt where they had fled after the killing of the Babylonian governor Gedeliah (see Jeremiah 43:9, 10). That was the year 582 BC.

Eight years later Ezekiel the prophet had a remarkable vision of the restoration of Israel, Ezekiel 40:1 and following. That was the year of Israel's last Jubilee — their 17th Jubilee — which ran from Tishri of 574 BC until Tishri of 573 BC. That was the Jubilee Ezekiel spoke of earlier, in Ezekiel 7:13, one which he said the Israelites would be unable to keep because they would not be in their ancestral lands.

Here is the sequence of dates described above.

When Israel Lost their Nation

607 BC	Beginning of conquest of holy land
603 BC	Nebuchadnezzar master of Israel
597 BC	Captivity of Jehoiachin
589 BC	Siege of Jerusalem under Zedekiah
588 BC	Siege of Jerusalem under Zedekiah
587 BC	Siege, then collapse of Jerusalem
582 BC	More captives taken (from Egypt)
573 BC	Year of Israel's unfulfilled Jubilee

Now notice the remarkable relationship of this sequence to the earlier one. Each date in this list is 2,520 years before each date on the earlier list. Here is the comparison, date for date.

Comparison of Dates

607 BC	1914	2,520 years apart
603 BC	1918	2,520 years apart
597 BC	1924	2,520 years apart
589 BC	1932	2,520 years apart
588 BC	1933	2,520 years apart
587 BC	1934	2,520 years apart
582 BC	1939	2,520 years apart
573 BC	1948	2,520 years apart

Thus the dates and events which brought Israel low, are parallel with the dates and events which brought Israel back to statehood 2,520 years later. Israel lost their nation in stages, and Israel regained their nation through episodes which correspond in date. The parallel series of dates strengthens our appreciation that the 2,520 years of Israel's national punishment have been correctly applied.

Leviticus 26

As noted in the first part of this article, from the previous issue, the original understanding of this prophetic span of time was drawn from Daniel chapter four. But later, the 26th chapter of Leviticus was added as a second testimony.

There, as in Daniel chapter four, there are four mentions of "seven times" of punishment. The word "times"

is supplied by inference — there is no separate Hebrew word in the text. But the comparison of Leviticus 26 with Daniel 4 supports the inference.

The four cases of this warning are in Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28. God warned them that if they did not keep his commands he would punish them, repeatedly as necessary. If Israel would not be reformed by these, then "I will punish you **seven** [times] more for your sins ... I will bring **seven** [times] more plagues upon you according to your sins ... Then will I also walk contrary unto you and will punish you yet **seven** [times] for your sins ... I will chastise you **seven** [times] for your sins."

The text is not so specific that we must apply these warnings to a period of seven prophetic times of 360 years each. But the parallels between this account, and that of Daniel chapter four, are so many and so specific, a link between the two seems natural and reasonable.

For instance, verse 33 says that during this punishment Israel would be scattered "among the heathen ... your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste." This occurred when Babylon deported the Israelites, which is also the time applied to Daniel chapter four. Verse 34 says "Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate" — this also happened during the Babylonian captivity. And so with the rest of the warnings that follow in Leviticus 26.

Leviticus 26:19 says at this time "I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass." The same symbols appear in Daniel chapter four — bands of iron and brass bind the stump of the tree, the kingdom of Israel, and prevent it from growing until seven times are completed.

Leviticus chapter 26 thus provides a parallel testimony of Israel's national punishment.

Leviticus 26:44-46 assure Israel that when the punishment is completed, God will remember his people, reclaim them, restore them, bless them, and use them. We are in the time of God's plan when He is fulfilling that promise. They are already restored as a nation. In the years to come, they will become the nucleus of God's Kingdom on earth.

With Fury Poured Out

The experiences which drove the Jewish people back to their ancestral land have been difficult to endure. The Holocaust saw the death of six million of their race. World War I, and World War II, exacted untold miseries upon them, and upon the Gentile nations. But the connection between these distresses, and the establishment of Israel as a nation again, is too clear to be overlooked. Is this distress reflected in the prophecies that speak of the restoration of Israel?

Yes, very clearly. The prophet Ezekiel predicted just such troubles when he spoke of Israel coming back to their land. "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely with

a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you [hold judgment against you] face to face” (Ezekiel 20:33-35).

Some Troubles Avoidable

It did not have to be so. In 1874, coincident with the date of our Lord’s return, England elected as prime minister, Lord Beaconsfield, Jewish by heritage, though of Christian faith. He was the leading figure at the Berlin Congress of nations in 1878, which resolved the aftermath of a war between Russia and Turkey. As a consequence of that gathering of nations came the Berlin Treaty, which expressly mandated equal treatment under the law for all residents of Palestine. Importantly, this included Jewish people, who formerly had second place status under the Ottoman Turkish rule of Palestine.

Some Jewish people were quick to take advantage of this, founding the settlement of Petah Tikvah the same year. In 1896 Theodore Herzl published his book “The Jewish State,” and the following year convened the first Zionist Congress. All of this was a stimulus for the Jewish people to look for an independent state again.

Those Israelites who had faith in the promises took the opportunity to return to their land. By this means they escaped the brutal experiences brought to Europe by Hitler and World War II. But the call of faith did not motivate sufficient numbers. For this it would take the bitter experience of persecution — the “fury poured out” which would attend God’s regathering of Israel.

But these difficulties will last only until they have accomplished their purpose. That purpose is (a) to drive Israel back to their land, (b) to direct their attention to Jehovah who can relieve their trials, (c) to purge out the rebellious. Then the blessings will begin to flow.

“And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels ... and ye shall know that I am Jehovah ... For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith Jehovah, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them ... I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen ... And ye shall know that I am Jehovah” (Ezekiel 20:37-44).

Then, through Israel, God will extend his favors outward to all nations. “In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that

God is with you ... there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities ... saying, Let us go speedily to pray before Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts ... many people and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem” (Zechariah 8:23, 20-22).

Were Not Ten Cleansed?

“Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger” (Luke 17:17, 18).

Ten Lepers met Jesus one day nearly 2000 years ago as he journeyed south to Jerusalem. All sought his mercy and were given the same instruction: “Go show yourselves unto the priests.” As they obeyed his word, all were cleansed. Yet only one, a Samaritan, returned to give thanks to Jesus.

The failure of the nine to do so brought the above remarks recorded by Luke. What of the other nine? Were they grateful for their healing? Or did their joy in the gift cause them to quickly forget the giver? Yes, it is possible even for those who have received much to take God’s favors for granted.

Thankfulness, genuine gratitude, is a mark of maturity and gentility among all honorable people. But even then, it remains only a gesture unless it comes from the heart in real appreciation of the goodness of the giver. The one leper, when he realized he had been healed, deliberately returned back to where Jesus was. Heedless of all about him, he praised God with a loud voice. Falling on his face at Jesus’ feet, he thanked him publicly.

There is a lesson of thankfulness here for all people. It is not surprising to find numerous scriptural injunctions to Christian thanksgiving — for all things, at all times, in all circumstances. Indeed, the Christian life is to be one of thankfulness, for “what has thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). The words in Psalms 107:21, 22 are relevant to every believer in Christ Jesus.

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.” Praise, sacrifice, and witness help us discharge our debt of gratitude.

May our lives be lives of thankfulness and praise in every part: first to our Heavenly Father for all the riches of His grace; to His dear Son, our Savior, who loved us and gave himself for us; and toward all whose love and kindness enrich our lives.

— Bro. Gilbert Rice

Special Note ... This issue is assigned the date “July, August 2006.” Various travelling commitments induce us to combine these two issues into one.