

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
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The Abrahamic Covenant

"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"
(Genesis 22:18).

One of the most precious promises to Bible Students is God's promise to Abraham that "all the nations of the earth" would be blessed. This would happen through a descendant of Abraham, the "seed" of Abraham, whom Paul says is Christ. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). In verse 29 of the same chapter Paul says those who come into Christ, becoming part of the body of Christ, are included in this seed. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Thus during the Millennium, the second age of redemption which is still approaching, God will bless "all the nations of the earth" through the reign of Christ and his saints. Those saints constitute the true church of Christ. The word in scripture for "church" is *ekklesia*, which means a called out class — in this case, called out from the world to become part of the spiritual Bride of Christ. Their purpose in the kingdom is to serve as priests with Jesus to recover the world during the Millennium. "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

The beneficiaries of that blessed reign will be the world of mankind. The living generations will have the first opportunity; thereafter, all the past generations who fell into death will be raised to life. The Truth will be made clear to everyone. Satan will be bound during this Millennium "that he should deceive the nations no more" (Revelation 20:3).

Isaiah 35:8 says "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness ... the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Everything will be conducive to recovering the human race. Unlike the present time when only an elect class is gathered out from the world, then everyone will be blessed. "God our Saviour ... will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the Truth" (1 Timothy 2:3, 4).

Even the Sodomites of old will be raised to life, repent of their deeds, and become converted to God. Ezekiel told Judah, "Thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters ... I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters [from the grave, in the resurrection] ... when ... Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate ... I will give them unto thee [Judah] for daughters ... And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah" (Ezekiel 16:46, 53, 55, 61, 62).

The Present Blessings

These blessings await the future. Meanwhile, from the time of Christ to the present, those who respond with faith are blessed in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham now, in this first age of redemption. The blessing we receive is greater than the world will receive in the next age, because we are called to heavenly glory, whereas the world during the Kingdom will be called to earthly glory. In both cases God offers something amazing and wonderful, namely everlasting life. For us it will be a heavenly life as glorious spirit beings, for the world an earthly life as perfect human beings, which they will attain as they become obedient and godly during the Millennium. The first advent of Christ brought the present Gospel Age, the second advent of Christ brings the promised Millennial Age. Thus there are two ages of redemption in which God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled.

During the Jewish Age which preceded the Gospel Age, God's favors were to Israel. The Gentiles could access them by proselyting to the Jewish Law, but otherwise they were estranged from God. "Ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, [had] no hope ... without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:11, 12). But now it is different. "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh [to God] by the blood of Christ ... having abolished ... the law of commandments ... and preached peace to you which were afar off" (verses 13-17).

It is this blessing open to us now which Paul refers to in Galatians 3:8, 9. "The scripture, foreseeing that God

would justify the heathen [gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Thus God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled towards us now, and towards the world during the Kingdom.

We become children of Abraham, the seed of Abraham, by expressing the kind of faith that Abraham expressed — faith in God, apart from the Law, even before he was circumcised. “We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Romans 4:9-11).

In other words, Paul says we Gentiles, even if uncircumcised in the flesh, can become children of Abraham, children of faith, just as Abraham was accepted by God before he received the sign of circumcision. The faith Abraham exercised was in the promises of God about his future blessings. The faith we exercise is in Christ as God’s agent through whom all the promised blessings flow. As we believe into Christ, and commit ourselves to him in accord with that belief, we become children of Abraham, and heirs with Christ of the promise made to Abraham.

Others in past ages, even Abraham himself, lived before the time the blessing of “all the families of the earth” could begin, because they lived before the time of Christ through whom those blessings flow. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 1:13).

But in contrast to them, we have received the promise. We have received atonement in Christ. “These all [the Ancient Worthies Paul describes just before this], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [the Abrahamic promise, which comes through redemption in Christ]: God having provided some better thing for us” who live after Christ died, and thus have access to redemption and eternal life (Hebrews 11:39, 40).

Isaac Represents Christ ... and Us

Isaac was the literal “seed” of Abraham. He was heir to all the wealth of Abraham, and the birthright of faith from Abraham. Isaac represents Christ Jesus, God’s “only begotten son” (John 3:16), just as Isaac was



Abraham, obedient to God even to the giving of his son, Isaac, who pictured our Lord Jesus offered by God for our sins.

Abraham’s “only begotten son” (Hebrews 11:17). But Paul says we also are part of the “Isaac” class. “Ye brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise” (Galatians 4:28). Jesus is the heir of all the treasures of God, but we also are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). In this the saints have a special position, and special privileges.

But they are not the only ones who will become “children of Abraham.” Everyone who expresses vital faith, devoted faith, transforming faith, and comes into the family of God, will be considered children of faith, children of Abraham, “the father of them that believe.” During this Gospel Age this includes all of the Great Company class, for example. In the resurrection, all the Ancient Worthies will be counted “children of Abraham.” All of these classes will serve to assist and bless the world, who will then just begin to respond to God’s program for universal reconciliation.

The first ones to be reached during the Millennium, after the raising of the Ancient Worthies, will be the nation of Israel. When God fights for them as in the days of old, against the invading hosts of Gog from the north, and pours upon them the spirit of prayer, they will turn to

God with their hearts, and be converted to their Messiah, Jesus Christ (Zechariah 14:3, Ezekiel 38:16, 39:27, Zechariah 12:10). Thus they will become “children of Abraham,” not merely by natural descent, but by faith in Christ, and conduct in accord with that faith. Thus they will have a part also in blessing “all the families of the earth.” Though greatly subsidiary to the saints in heavenly glory, Israel’s part will nevertheless be an important part. For they, under the leadership of the Ancient Worthies, will be an agent for extending to the nations, the blessings God has for everyone in the kingdom.

As the people of earth gradually respond to the news, and become committed to Christ themselves, and wish to personally assist the work of reconciliation onward toward others, they also will become children of faith, “children of Abraham.”

“All who come into harmony with the Lord will be counted as part of the earthly seed of Abraham, until finally, by the end of the Millennium, all exercising faith and obedience will be known to the Lord as the seed of Abraham. ‘In becoming that seed, shall all the families of the earth bless themselves’ ” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 6, Author’s Foreword, page ii).

This citation from the writings of Pastor Charles Russell is consistent with the views expressed above. But notice the quotation which he uses — “In becoming that seed, shall all the families of the earth bless themselves.” The expression “bless themselves” does not appear in the standard King James, English translation. But it does appear twice in Bro. James Parkinson’s RVIC (Revised Version Improved and Corrected). Here are the verses.

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18). “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves” (Genesis 26:4). In both of these texts, the Rotherham translation agrees in saying “bless themselves.” In both cases the New American Standard Bible (NASB) gives this rendering in a footnote.

Allegory of Abraham’s Wives

It is well known among Bible Students that Paul says that in the life of Abraham, to whom the promise was made, God interwove allegorical lessons about this covenant. The women who bore Abraham’s children, and the children themselves, are part of the allegory. The passage explaining this is Galatians 4:22-31.

There Sarah represents the original covenant with Abraham, and Hagar represents the Law Covenant which was added to the Abrahamic covenant 430 years later. The Law Covenant gave form and shape to the nation of Israel as God’s people. Hagar represents that covenant, and Ishmael her son represents the nation of Israel which was nurtured by that covenant.

But the child of promise came through Sarah. After many years of barrenness, and many years after Ishmael, Sarah bore Isaac. Christ, who came so many years after Abraham received the promise, and many years after the nation of Israel had taken form and shape, was the promised child, and the saints who are part of the body of Christ are part of that seed. Thus Sarah, representing the original Abrahamic covenant, is represented as our “mother.” “Rejoice, thou barren [Sarah, the Abrahamic covenant] ... break forth and cry, thou that travailest not [since barren so long]: for the desolate [barren one] hath many more children than she [Hagar] which hath an husband [a figure of speech meaning one who has child by a man, as Hagar had].

Paul was speaking of the fruitage of the Abrahamic Covenant during this Gospel Age. Thus we might say that Sarah represents the spiritual part of God’s promise to Abraham. But Abraham’s seed, as we have seen above, is to encompass everyone who ever turns to faith, whether among those called to heaven now, or those called to earthly life in the Millennium. Thus in the Old Testament the seed of Abraham is likened to the “stars of heaven” — as when God spoke to Isaac — and also as the “dust of the earth” — as when God spoke to Jacob.

Applying this distinction to the allegories, Sarah evidently represents the spiritual part of the Abrahamic covenant, operating during the present Gospel Age. Perhaps then Keturah, the next wife of Abraham, represents the earthly part of the Abrahamic covenant, which will operate during the Millennium. Paul does not mention this feature, but it seems a reasonable extension of the picture of Abraham’s wives.

Keturah had six sons. Probably they were born while she was still a concubine before the passing of Sarah (1 Chronicles 1:32). Similarly, the world of mankind are brought into being before the work of the Sarah covenant is completed. But the status of Keturah’s sons was

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elevated when Keturah became a full wife, after the passing of Sarah. So during the Millennium, after the spiritual part (the Sarah part) of the Abrahamic covenant has done its work, the world of mankind will be elevated in status. Then they will fully become sons of God, be brought into the family of faith, and receive all the blessings of life and prosperity God intends for the world.

Wisdom from a New King

“And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace” (1 Samuel 10: 27).

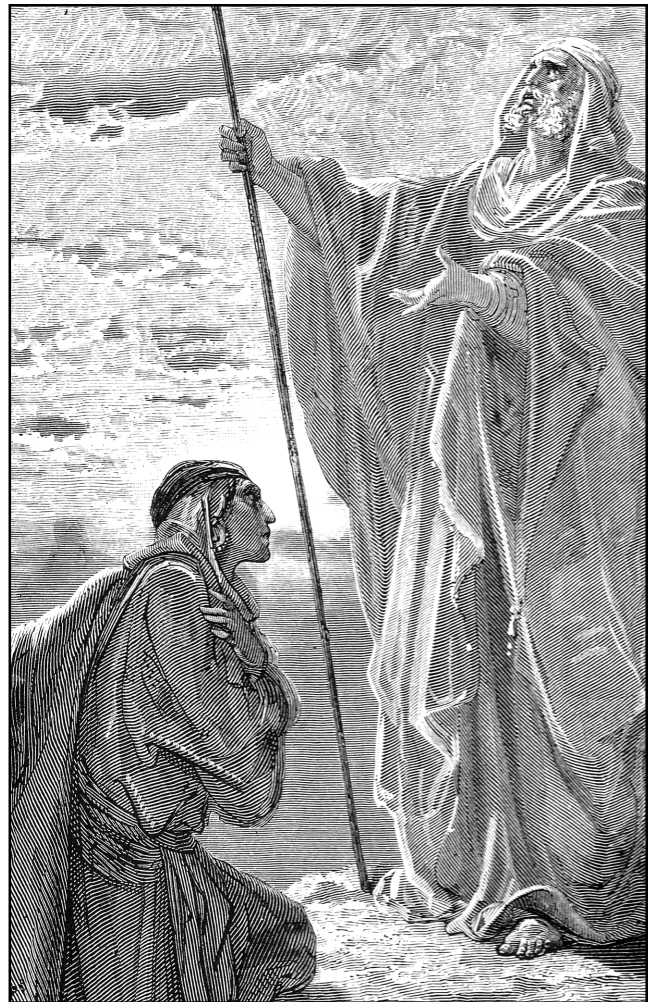
Samuel was the spiritual leader of Israel since the passing of his mentor Eli a generation before. He would live perhaps another 25 or more years, but nevertheless he was growing old. He had two grown sons whom he made judges in Israel, stationed in the southern mountains at Beersheba. But they were of a character different than their noble father. Frequent bribery and perverted judgments elicited complaints, and contributed to a request from the elders of Israel for a new leader — a king.

“Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations” they demanded (1 Samuel 8:5). This displeased Samuel, but there was not a trace of selfishness or resentment in his response. Samuel knew God was their true benefactor, and He had raised up necessary judges from time to time to guide his people and deliver them. But Samuel did not attempt to decide the matter on his own — a good example for all the Lord’s dear people. He took the matter to God in prayer and sought direction from Him who understands all, and knows the end from the beginning. God’s wise counsel comforted Samuel.

“Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them ... they have forsaken Me and served other gods ... listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7-9). The selfless prophet delivered God’s warning (verses 10-18). But the elders insisted: “But there shall be a king over us; that we also be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 17:14-20).

The Son of Kish

Kish, a Benjamite, had sent his son Saul with a servant in search of animals that had wandered far. They looked for days. Eventually the servant suggested they seek help from a man of God nearby — Samuel himself. Already Samuel had been informed by God that he would meet a man out of Benjamin to be king over His people. Thus did God reveal His choice to Samuel, and he greeted Saul with these words, “On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee?” (1 Samuel 9:20).



Saul, humble, at the feet of Samuel.

Saul protested. He was of the smallest of the tribes of Israel. But Samuel, accepting the divine providence and selection, would not be dissuaded. A meal had been prepared, and thirty guests, and Saul was honored before them all with a choice portion. In the morning Samuel directed Saul to send his servant on ahead, while Saul lingered “a while, that I may shew thee the word of God” (1 Samuel 9:27).

“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, is it not because Jehovah hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1 Samuel 10:1). What a sobering responsibility and high privilege. Samuel then predicted three things that would happen to Samuel as he left the scene, as tokens that this was of God. “And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day” (1 Samuel 10:9).

The King Installed

Coronation day came. Samuel called the people together unto Jehovah, to Mizpeh, north of Ramah, south of Bethel, 14 miles west of Gilgal. Samuel warned the people again — “You today rejected your God, who deliv-

ers you from all your calamities and your distresses” (1 Samuel 10:19).

The tribes presented themselves for selection. Lots fell upon Benjamin, then upon Kish, then upon the name of Saul. This was the first public identification of their king. Saul, in humility, was hiding among the baggage, but Samuel had him brought out, and commended him before the people, who replied “God save the king” (1 Samuel 10:24). But not everyone was pleased. Perhaps his very humility caused them to disdain him as a leader. “The children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.” (verse 27).

In that, Saul was wise. Dignified silence and reserve was a rebuke more severe than contention or threat. Soon the new king was tested in a different way — by the Ammonites. After decades of peace, they despised Israel and threatened war. Saul mobilized the nation and scattered the Ammonites. The victory brought honor to their new king, who quietly ignored those who suggested death to the “sons of Belial” who earlier despised him. Israel reaffirmed Saul as their king at Gilgal, and he was acclaimed by all (1 Samuel 11:1-15). “There Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly” (verse 15).

Most remember Saul for his later deflections. But in these early experiences he exhibited humility, reserve, patience, wisdom, mercy. Had these qualities been displayed by the young Rehoboam years later, after the passing of his father Solomon, it would have preserved the kingdom from division and prevented years of hostility, war, and bloodshed. Saul might have been justified in responding more harshly. But the wisdom of his course is manifest in the fruits produced. Let us observe this higher wisdom in our circumstances as well.

— Adapted from Bro. Gilbert Rice,
“To Obey is Better than Sacrifice”

The Visions of Daniel

“The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the holy people of the most High” (Daniel 7:27).

The first six chapters of Daniel take us from Daniel’s captivity as a lad at the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC, the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar) until his deliverance from the den of lions as an aged statesman, and supreme administrator under Cyrus. In these episodes we have pictures of the Church and their trying experiences during the Gospel Age, which prepare them to become supreme administrators of the Kingdom under Christ.

We now embark on the second half of the book, chapters seven through twelve, which record the visions and angelic testimonies given to Daniel himself. These are

recorded in Daniel in sequence as they occurred, but this prophetic section overlaps in time with the previous narrative section. Chapter seven begins in the “first year of Belshazzar,”¹ and chapter ten concludes in the third year of Cyrus (536 BC, Daniel 10:1). There are four parts in this section: chapters 7, 8, 9 each contain one account, and chapters 10, 11, 12 are together one unit containing the fourth account. Here we consider the seventh chapter, with its famous vision of four beasts, which represent four world empires dominating God’s people.

Chapter Seven

Verse one says Daniel had “a dream,” “visions of his head upon his bed,” which like the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar earlier, had deep meaning for future times. As just noted, this was in the first year of Belshazzar, and the next chapter occurred in the third year of Belshazzar. The next two were in the first and third years of Cyrus — an interesting symmetry which may have some deeper meaning which is not yet apparent.

As noted in footnote one, the date of the first vision would have been either 553 or 552 BC. By 553 BC, 50 years had passed since the second year of Nebuchadnezzar (603 BC), when Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about the image of precious metals which represented four world empires. That dream of the Babylonian king, and this one of Daniel, represent the same features from two different viewpoints. The view from this world’s leaders is of magnificent and resplendent empires. The view from the prophet of God is of ravaging, beastly governments.² Daniel’s view accords also with Proverbs 28:15, “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.”

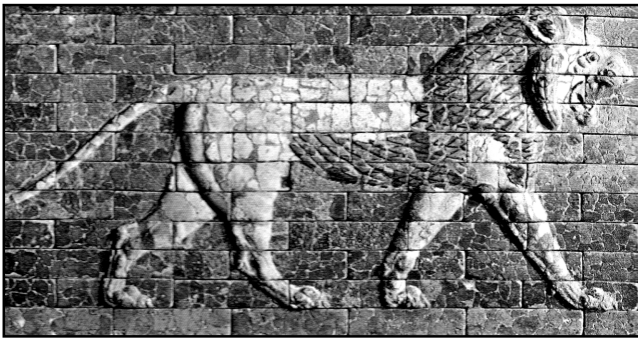
In a previous article we observed that Belshazzar was the son of the emperor Nabonidus. Belshazzar was given the authority of the Kingdom to rule on behalf of his father, in the third year of Nabonidus, though commercial transactions in the empire were still dated by the years of Nabonidus, for his was the chief authority. We have an especially large number of records extant from his reign — an average of more than 160 records per year. These were dated with the year, month and day of his reign, as was customary during the Babylonian Empire. These thousands of first hand records were receipts of financial transactions. By them we have confirmed the various historical notes from antiquity that the reign of Nabonidus endured for the last 17 years of the empire.

One of the state records of the time says, “In the beginning of the third year, he (Nabonidus) entrusted the military camp to his first born (son). He put under his (command) the army of all the lands. He let everything go and entrusted the kingship to him and, as for himself, he took the path to distant regions” (*The Reign of Nabonidus*, Beaulieu, page 150). This was 14 or 15 years before Cyrus the Persian would liberate Israel in the first year of his reign.

Four Beasts

In this dream, four winds of heaven “strove upon the great sea,” representing the winds of war which sweep over mankind, producing one empire after another. “Four great beasts came up from the sea” (verse 3). These are explicitly interpreted in verse 17 as “four kings.” These could be Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and Julius — except that the entire context, and verse 12 in particular, shows that the kingdoms formed by these men, rather than these individuals in particular, are the real fulfillment of the symbols.³

The first beast was a lion — Babylon. A lion and leopard are both yellow in color, as are gold and copper, the corresponding symbols in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The lion had eagle wings on its back, suggesting the agility of its armies and speed of its conquest, whereas the ponderous armies of the Persian empire are represented by a bear. The lion was a symbol used in Babylon, representing ferocity and strength (see illustration below, and notice even the wing on the body of the lion).



A Winged Lion from Babylon.

The lion in Daniel’s dream was made to stand upon its feet, and a man’s heart was given to it. The heart in our culture represents the seat of affection, but in ancient times it was considered the place of discernment. Here it represents the ancient wisdom of the Babylonian empire, which preceded Egypt as a center of mathematical and scientific investigation. Their base 60 number system lingers with us today in the 60 minutes of an hour, and 360 degrees of a circle.

The second beast was a bear — Medo-Persia. Persia’s massive armies wore down their opponents, and in this kind of warfare presumably greater numbers would perish, represented by the command “arise, devour much flesh” (verse 5). Three ribs in the mouth of the bear represent Lydia, Babylon and Egypt, three centers of power which it conquered. This bear “raised itself up on one side.” Jamieson, Fausset and Brown’s Commentary says: “The idea then would be, It lay on one of its fore feet, and stood on the other ... denoting a kingdom that had been at rest, but is now rousing itself for conquest.” If this is the meaning, we recall that Media had been a power for many years, even taking Assyria’s

capital Nineveh two years before Babylon replaced Assyria as the leading empire. But Media did not assume an empire until now, at the fall of Babylon. In the meantime Cyrus king of Persia melded Media and Persia into one kingdom after defeating his grandfather Astyages, king of the Medes, 11 years before the fall of Babylon. Now the collective kingdom roused itself to empire status.

The third beast was a leopard — Greece. Its four wings, as compared to the two on the lion, depict agility and quickness even more. It may also suggest the four parts of the empire. Certainly the four heads on this Leopard do represent the four kingdoms into which the empire divided after Alexander’s death. The spots of a leopard perhaps “denote the various nations incorporated into his empire; or Alexander’s own variation in character, at one time mild, at another cruel, now temperate, and now drunken and licentious” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).

The four kingdoms spawned by Alexander’s empire were Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, and Egypt. The first rulers of each kingdom were Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy, respectively. However, this division was not immediate upon the death of Alexander, who died in June of 323 BC at the age of 33.⁴ Ptolemy became the ruler of Egypt that year, but did not take the title of king until 305 BC (Wikipedia, Ptolemy Soter).

The Anchor Atlas of World History says: “301 BC, Decisive battle at Ipsus. Victory of Seleucus and Lysimachus over Antigonos, the last representative of central power (81 years old). Establishment of four kingdoms: Thrace and Asia minor under Lysimachus, Macedonia under Cassander, Egypt under Ptolemy, the Persian heartlands under Seleucus.” As the vision predicted, four kingdoms did arise, symbolized by the four heads on the Grecian leopard. But it was not immediate. It took a few years.

The Fourth Beast — Rome

The fourth beast was “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth.” It seems clear that this means the fourth kingdom was stronger than any of the other three. This description fits the Roman Empire, which is the usual interpretation. This description does not fit any of the four fragments of the Grecian Empire (such as Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled the Syrian fragment, for example). The iron teeth remind us of the iron legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s image, and both refer to the same empire. This beast “devoured and brake in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it” — another testimony of its superior strength.

The “Little Horn” — Papacy

The beast had 10 horns, just as the image of Nebuchadnezzar had 10 toes. The 10 horns are 10 divisions of the Roman Empire. When treating Daniel chapter two earlier in this series, the following 10 were suggested — Ostrogoths, Lombards, Heruli, Visigoths, Sueves,



"Four great beasts came up from the sea ... are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth" (Daniel 7:3, 17).

Vandals, Franks, Burgundians, Alemans, Anglo-Saxons. Verse eight says another horn grew up among them, a "little horn" at first, which then became dominant over the others. This horn had eyes denoting wisdom, and a mouth speaking "great things" — bombastic claims. Verse 21 says this horn "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them."

A glance at the history of Europe makes it clear what power this was, that ruled Europe, exhibited political cunning and wisdom, made specious, incredible, arrogant claims of authority, and persecuted the saints for centuries. Only one entity fits this description — The Roman Catholic Church.

Thus the Church/State mixture predicted in Daniel chapter two (clay mixed with iron in the feet and toes of the image), is also shown in this vision. Papacy ruled from Rome as a successor of the Roman Emperors. Thus Rome, the renown seat of authority "wounded to death" when it was overrun by Heruli, Vandals, and Goths, after Constantine previously moved the capital of the empire to Constantinople, was "healed" (Revelation 13:3). It revived as the center of authority under the Popes of the Roman Church.

Divine Court Sits in Judgment

The vision of Daniel then proceeds to a scene of judgment against this system. We can better understand the time of that judgment by the time prophecy contained in verses 25 and 26. "He [this notable horn, Papacy] shall speak great things against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end."

These 3½ "times" are 360 years each, 1260 years total, running from 539 AD to 1799. (See Volume Three of *Studies in the Scriptures*, chapter two, "The Time of the End," which explains 1799, and chapter three, "Days of Waiting," which explains 539.) As the time allowed for this great apostasy grew to a close, its judgment came due. The "judgment shall sit," Papacy's dominion would be removed, and its consumption would proceed.

That judgment is shown in the vision beginning with verse nine. "I beheld till the thrones [of judgment of the divine court] were cast down [placed, established, set up], and the Ancient of days did sit [the Great Judge takes his seat], whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him [God]: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment [of Papacy] was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:9, 10). The same scene of judgment is expressed by the symbol of measuring in Revelation 11:1,2, "measure the [nominal] temple of God, and the [nominal] altar, and them that worship therein. But the court [representing the true saints, on the fringes of the nominal systems] ... measure it not ... [for that is] the holy city [which had been persecuted, trodden] under foot 42 months [3½ times, fulfilled as 1260 years]."

Daniel's attention was then drawn to the horn, still speaking loud blasphemies and bombast. Daniel continued to watch in the vision as the verdict was carried out, "till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame," symbolizing destruction (verse 11). The same symbols are applied to Papacy in Revelation 19:20, "the beast was ... cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." When this comes, Papacy as ruling institution of Christendom will be no more.

Thus when Papacy's judgment was due, not only was their dominion removed, but they would be brought low in stages, until finally consumed by the "burning flame."⁵ The loss of Papal prestige began at the Reformation from 1517 onward. But their loss of political control in western Europe came much later, in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In 1798 the French General Berthier took the Pope prisoner. He was subsequently

taken from Italy to France, where he died in the summer of 1799. Briefly Papacy was headless. A new Pope was chosen early in the following year, but never regained the political authority which was customary in former times.

Verse 12 explains that with the other empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece — it was different. When their dominions were removed they continued as countries for many years. “They had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.” But with Rome, as represented in Papacy, when the judgment was due as 1799 approached, there began a process which strips Papacy of her authority by stages and ends in her collapse.

The Napoleonic Wars, the loss of Papal States in 1870, World War I and World War II, each weakened the status of the Catholic Church. No more does the world tremble at the dictates of Rome. Like Jezebel of old, Papacy paints her face to look as good as possible. But also like Jezebel, the blood of God’s holy ones is on her hands. “I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints ... the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6). So her doom is sealed. Her enemies “shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (Revelation 17:16). “With violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down” (Revelation 18:21). God “hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand” (Revelation 19:2).

The Kingdom of Christ

Verses 13 and 14 explain that Christ will then be given the authority of the world. Already Christ has returned as a conquering king, but the formal inauguration of his kingdom comes in the stormy period of the fall of mystic Babylon a few years ahead. The language of verse 13 is similar to the language of Matthew 24:30, and we understand both refer to the time of Christ’s *apokalupsis*, or revealing, “in flaming fire taking vengeance” (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Here are the two texts, from Daniel and Matthew, followed by a comment from one of Pastor Russell’s Sermons on the latter text.

“And I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man [our Lord Jesus] came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him” (Daniel 7:13).

“Then shall appear the sign 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” (Matthew 24:30).

“We cannot say that the sign of the Son of Man in heaven will be his Parousia [which began in 1874]. On the contrary, 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

“Little Horn” Ruled 1260 Years

- 3½ Times (Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:4)
- 42 Months (Revelation 11:2, 13:5)
- 1260 Days (Revelation 11:3, 12:6)

$3\frac{1}{2} \times 12 = 42$ months, $\times 30 = 1260$ days (years)

Defeat of Goths (539) to death of Pope (1799)

forth in the “flaming fire” of judgment, which the whole world of mankind will recognize (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)” (*Sermon Book*, page 420).

Verse 14 describes that Kingdom of Christ which will rule the world for a thousand years. “There was given him [Christ] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” So closes the vision which Daniel describes.

Later in this chapter, when the interpretation is given, we learn that Christ reigns not alone, but shares that kingdom with the saints. Notice how verses 26 and 27 comment briefly upon verses 9 through 14. “But the judgment shall sit [against Papacy, at the close of the 1260 years], and they shall take away his dominion [after 1799 Papacy did not rule as before], to consume and to destroy it unto the end [that end is still impending, about the year 2043 as we understand]. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the holy people of the most high, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

That is where all who are consecrated to God in the present life, have our hope and expectation in the future life. The saints of the present Gospel Age are called to a heavenly reward which they receive after death in the resurrection. When John saw this in the vision of Revelation, he said they “reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4). Revelation 20:6 says that during this period “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Already Christ has assumed the authority of the world (Revelation 11:15). Already the saints who died in Christ have been raised to life again. As Christ sat in the throne with his father, so the risen saints have been seated with Christ in his throne as joint-heirs with him (Revelation 3:21). But not yet has the world recognized their authority. Not yet has their dominion been established in the earth. Not yet have they begun their priestly work for the world from heaven. All of this awaits the proper time, namely the thousand years of Revelation 20:6 — and the proper circumstances, namely the completion of the elect class, all the saints who will reign with Christ as priests and kings in that Millennium.

The Vision Ended

Daniel's account of his night vision ends with verse 14. What follows until the end of the chapter is the record of two questions which Daniel asked of "one of them that stood by" in this vision, whom Daniel properly supposed could give more information on the meaning of what he saw. Actually even this continuing exchange was part of Daniel's dream that evening. So by the subhead "The Vision Ended," we mean the vision within his dream, about which he now seeks more information.

Verses 15, 16 — "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit and in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things."

That first question was very general: what does this all mean? The meaning which is given is also very general, telling us in two short verses the whole import. "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (verses 17, 18).

This interpretation tells us something we may not have guessed from the vision itself. The vision in verses 13 and 14 tells us simply that one like "the Son of man" was given the dominion. But the inspired interpretation tells us that this includes the "saints of the most High," which accords with the testimony of Revelation 20 as we saw above. So sometimes the answers not only explain what we read, but tell us more details we would not have known only from the earlier narration of Daniel.

Daniel's Second Inquiry

Verse 19 gives us Daniel's second question. The explanation of the angel was so brief, it said nothing about the horns which were so prominent a feature of the fourth beast. "Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet."

Daniel's request continues through verse 20. But let us pause here to note something else Daniel now recalls from the vision, which he did not mention earlier. This fourth beast had "nails of brass." We did not know that until now. We knew it had iron teeth, but only now does Daniel tell us the nails were of brass. So some things which he earlier he did not mention before. (This observation may also help us in verse 21.)

But about those nails of brass. The book of Job speaks of two animals. (1) Leviathan of chapter 41, which correlates to the dragon of Revelation 12, 13, 16, and 20. This represents Satan as ruler of governments. (2) Behemoth of Job 40:15, which correlates to the beast of Revelation 13, 16, 19. This represents Papacy which ruled from

Rome with authority over nations. Job 40:18 describes Behemoth this way: "His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron." Both symbols are used — brass and iron. Notice the use of these metals also in Leviticus 26:19, Deuteronomy 28:23, Daniel 4:15, Psalms 107:16, and Isaiah 45:2. All these verses speak in one way or another of the oppression of Israel, which was chiefly expressed through Rome, Pagan and Papal.

Verses 20, 21, 22. Now we continue with Daniel's second inquiry. In verse 19 he asked about the fourth beast, Rome, and here asks even more specifics. "And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld [in the original vision], and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."

Daniel had not previously recorded that the "little horn" persecuted the saints. Only that it had the appearance of wisdom (the eyes), and a large mouth filled with bombastic utterances. That is in verse eight, and the next verse says only "I beheld till the thrones" of judgment were set and the divine court sat in judgment. Evidently Daniel saw in that vision that the horn waged warfare against the saints of God for a lengthy time, but only now, in verse 21, does he mention this part. This fuller testimony accords with Revelation 13:6, 7: "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, them that dwell in heaven, and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." Revelation 13:5 says this continued for 42 months; Daniel 7:25 says 3½ times, or years, which is the same period. This persecution endured until the "judgment was set," and its authority removed.

Verse 22 says at that time "judgment was given to the saints of the most High." This does not mean judgment authority was given to the saints. It means judgment was passed in favor of the saints. Remember, the judgment of the divine court which this refers to came at the close of the 1260 years of Papal authority, which closed with the year 1799. Christ's return was not until 1874, and not until then were the saints of God raised to heavenly glory and authority. We mention this in particular because we misapprehended this point in our studies of this passage years ago, and we were assisted by the late Bro. Gilbert Rice to see this more clearly.

Here is Rotherham's rendition of verse 22. "Until that the Ancient of Days came, and justice [footnote, "vindication"] was granted to the holy ones of the Highest — and [subsequently] the time arrived, that the holy ones should possess the kingdom."

Here is the NIV rendition. "Until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of

the Most High, and [subsequently, at the time of verse 14] the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”

Here is the NASB rendition. “Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and [subsequently] the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.”

The Answer to Daniel’s Second Inquiry

The answer to Daniel’s second question begins in verse 23. That verse says, in essence, that the fourth beast was the most powerful of them all, as we observed earlier from verse seven.

Verse 24 says the 10 horns are 10 “kings.” We saw earlier that this chapter uses “kings” to represent kingdoms (verse 17, compare verse 12). So these 10 horns are 10 powers which rise out of the Roman Empire, out of the territory that it ruled. This verse also says the 10 horns appear before Papacy, the little horn, rises among them. Verse 24 says “he [Papacy] shall subdue three kings,” which is mentioned also in verse seven, “three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.” These may be the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths.

The answer proceeds through verses 25, 26, 27, which we considered earlier. Verse 28 concludes the chapter. Such a vision, predicting stress for the people of God for so long a time, would weigh upon Daniel, and it did. “My cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.”

But Daniel knew, both from the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter two and Daniel’s dream in chapter seven, that ultimately the Kingdom of God would be established universally in the earth. Today we are very near that time, merely a generation away. Rather than being “troubled” as was Daniel at the prospect of so long a time of misfortune still ahead, we do as Jesus said, “lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

(1) If the year Belshazzar became regent for his father was counted as “year one” then the date was 553 BC. If it was counted as an accession year, then this “year one” was in 552 BC. Sometimes even when a kingdom used accession-year reckoning (as Babylon did), the first year of a coregency was numbered one. It is unclear which method Daniel applied to Belshazzar’s years.

(2) This observation is made also in *The Divine Plan of the Ages* by Pastor Charles Russell. “In Nebuchadnezzar’s vision we see the empires of earth as viewed from the world’s standpoint, to be an exhibition of human glory, grandeur, and power; though in it we also see an intimation of their decay and final destruction, as expressed in the deterioration from gold to iron and clay. ... But now, calling to mind the difference of standpoint, let us look at the same four universal empires of earth from the standpoint of God and those in harmony with him, as portrayed in vision to the beloved prophet Daniel. As to us these kingdoms appear inglorious and beastly, so to him these four universal empires were shown as four great and ravenous wild beasts. And to his view the coming Kingdom of God ... was proportionally grander than as seen by Nebuchadnezzar” (pages 256, 257).

(3) However, it is noteworthy that each of these four persons is referred to individually in the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus are there by name, Alexander is referred to in Daniel 8:21 as the large horn on the Grecian goat, and Julius Caesar is the “he” of Daniel 11:41, on the first of three levels of meaning, the one which leads to the “standing” of Christ at the first advent (see Daniel 12:1). The deeper meaning is to Napoleon, on the third level of meaning, the one which leads to the “standing” of Christ at the second advent. The two episodes, the two fulfillments, are separated in time by 1845 years.

(4) 33 is an interesting age at death, the same age as Jesus. We would pass this by as coincidence — and it may be still — except that Zechariah 9:9 which refers to Christ’s entry to Jerusalem, had an initial application to Alexander’s approach to Jerusalem. The first part of Zechariah chapter nine is all about Alexander’s conquest of the holy land. (See any good Commentary for details.) Cyrus also is a picture of Christ in Isaiah 45:1.

(5) See Volume Two, *Studies in the Scriptures*, chapter nine, “The Man of Sin — Antichrist,” pages 353-356, for a look at four stages in the rise and fall of Papacy.

Extending the Symmetry

Evidence of design in the time periods of God’s Plan.

In our series on Bible Chronology we have explained the links of time from Adam to the founding of Solomon’s Temple, in the spring of 966 BC. Only four periods of time are necessary for this — Adam to the Flood, to Abraham entering Canaan, to the Exodus, to the foundation of the Temple. The matter is actually simple in retrospect. The complexities come in only in examining competing views of specific details. These complexities are worth investigating, and thus the articles foregoing. But the essence is sufficiently clear that it can be presented to a fresh audience (new to the subject) in less than half an hour’s time, satisfactorily.

Summary of Bible Chronology

1656	Adam to Flood	(Gen. 5:3-28, 8:13)
427	to Abrahamic Cov.	(Gen. 11:10-32)
430	to Exodus	(Galatians 3:17)
479	to Temple, 966 BC	(1 Kings 6:1)
2992	Years	

This sums to 2992 years, and takes us to the date 966 BC. Beginning at this date, and counting back 2992 years, brings us to the year of Adam’s creation in 3958 BC. Forward from that date 6000 years takes us to 2043 AD. (Remember to adjust by one when crossing the BC/AD divide.) This takes us to the opening of the Seventh Millennium, which evidently is the period of Christ’s Thousand Year Reign, specified in Revelation 20.

In the January issue we observed a symmetry of years around the date of the Exodus. From the Flood to the Exodus (858 years) is the same length of time as from the Exodus forward to the end of the Kingdom of Israel. All by itself, these two equal periods are engaging.

In the March issue we explored an expansion of this symmetry. From the end of Adam's 1000 year day of judgment, to the Flood (655 years), is the same length of time as from the burning of the temple in 587 BC by the Babylonians, to the autumn of 69 AD, ending Israel's forty years of probation, after which the Romans burned the second temple.

Note these four periods of time on the chart below: 655, 858, 858, 655. Without regard for any other feature of the diagram, consider just these four symmetrical features, linking such milestone events in the Biblical history of the world. Does not the symmetry of these periods speak of thoughtful design?

1000 Years

Now observe that the chart below begins with a 1000 year period. This is the thousand year "day" in which Adam would die — and he did. He died 70 years shy of the close of that "day" (see Genesis 2:17, Psalms 90:4).

Notably, none of the ages recorded for the antediluvian patriarchs reached 1000 years. Methuselah, the oldest man on record, fell 31 years shy of the mark. 1000 years was evidently an upper limit on the life spans of mankind under the curse. (This is one reason we do not think either Enoch or Elijah had their lives prolonged when they were "taken" by God in a miraculous way. As with Moses and Aaron, they had their lives completed by an intervention from God.)

The first 1000 year period on the chart is balanced with an ending period of the same amount, which is the Millennium of Revelation 20. But the noticeable gap on the chart — between 69 AD and 2043 — disturbs the symmetry. Is there an explanation for this?

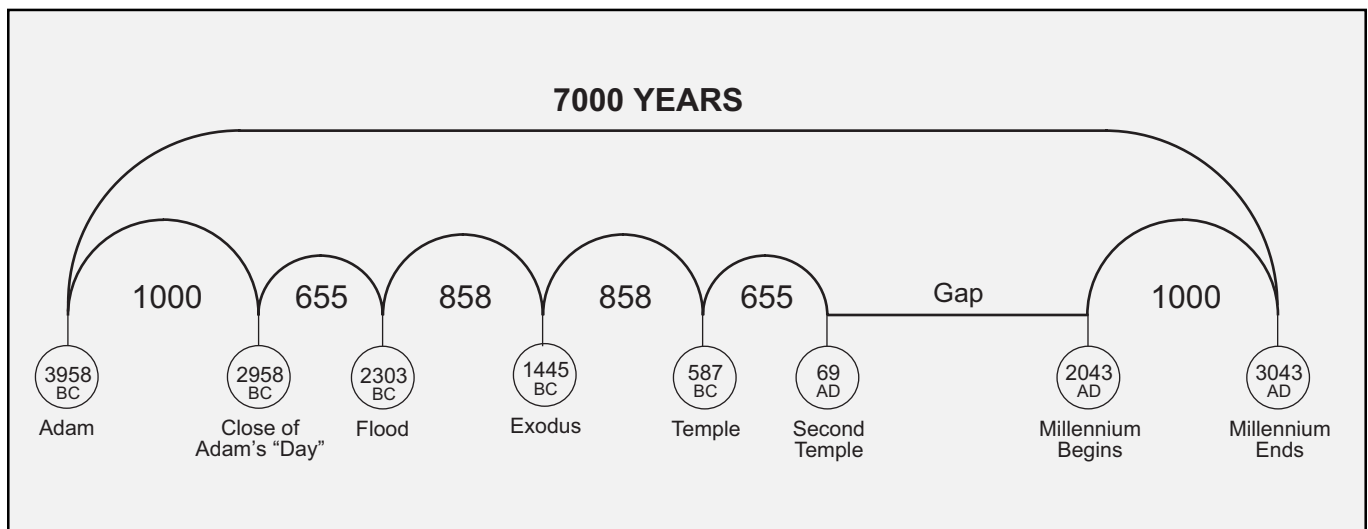
There is. We explain this by the three items which follow.

(1) Israel's 40 years of opportunity after the advent of Christ closed with the year 69 AD. This was followed by the collapse of their nation. This fulfilled the predictions of our Lord Jesus about the judgment coming within a generation of his warning. In Matthew 10:23, Jesus warned that his disciples would scarcely have time to go "over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" — that is, come in judgment, closing the Jewish age with the Romans taking Jerusalem and burning its temple.

Jesus warned the rulers at his trial about this in his last words to them. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Those he spoke to would not see this climax in 2043, for they would be long dead, and not raised for many years thereafter. Jesus referred to the climactic judgment to follow a generation later in the fall of Jerusalem. That would evidence the power and authority of the Son of man, and many of them would live to see it happen.

That is the immediate fulfillment also of Matthew 24:29, speaking of the collapse of the Jewish polity, and verse 30, "Then shall appear the sign [evidence, proof] 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," the power and glory of righteous judgment.

However, as expressed earlier, this has a second, deeper, broader fulfillment at the *apokalupsis* (revealing) of Christ's second advent at the close of the present harvest of the Gospel Age. In other words, the events which followed 69 AD and the close of the Jewish Age, and the events impending about the year 2043 closing this Gospel Age, are parallel fulfillments. The "asymmetry" of the chart of parallel periods links those two times together, as the symmetry "jumps" over the years which intervene between these two fulfillments.



(2) The connection between these episodes is deepened another way. Both of them involve seven judgments against the ruling system of the day — Judaism in one case, Christendom in the other.

The seven judgments ending the Jewish Age are the seven “woes” recorded in Matthew 23:13-29. They are contained in verses 13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, and 29. (Verse 14 is omitted in the Nestle Greek text as reflected in Marshall’s Diaglott, also omitted in the NIV, and bracketed with notation in the NASB.)

The seven judgments ending the present Gospel Age are the seven last plagues of Revelation chapters 15, 16. The last of these brings Armageddon, anticipated about the year 2043.

The time parallels we are examining hinge at the Exodus, which also involved a series of plagues. The seven last of the 10 plagues in Egypt are distinct from the first three. Thus there also we have seven defined judgments, which foreshadow the seven judgments on Judaism, and the seven judgments on Christendom. Revelation 11:8 links all three of these together in one text — “the street of the great city [**Christendom**] ... spiritually is called ... **Egypt**, where also our Lord was crucified [**Judaism**].”

(3) The events following 69, and those following 2043, are brought into contrast in Old Testament prophecy. Zechariah 13:7 speaks of the smiting (death) of our Lord Jesus — “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” (so applied in Matthew 26:31). Zechariah 13:8 then speaks of the judgment on Jerusalem following 69 AD. Two parts (the religious and political) would be “cut off and die,” but the third part, the elect, would be brought through the fire ending the Jewish age and refined as silver and gold.

Zechariah 14:1, 2, then explains how this judgment comes. “The day of Jehovah cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken ...” This refers to the capture of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Roman army took Jerusalem, “half of the city” went into captivity, but “the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city” — in other words some residents would remain. So it happened.

In the end of this age Jerusalem again will be targeted, but in this case the city will **not** be taken. Ezekiel 39:4, Joel 2:17-20, Isaiah 37:33, all affirm God will **not** allow Jerusalem to fall to the enemy again. Instead, “Then shall Jehovah go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives ... In that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ... and Jehovah shall be king over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:3, 4, 8, 9).

Zechariah 14:2 is about the capture of Jerusalem following 69 AD. Verse 3 is the deliverance of Israel by God at the establishment of the Kingdom, 1974 years later. (Observe a similar jump in time between the close of Zechariah chapter 11, and the opening of chapter 12.)

But 1974 Years?

But is there any specific point to the number of years — 1974 — which constitute this interval? Something numerical which would be fitting for this chart of parallels? Since the pivot of these parallels is at the Exodus, let us examine that pivot point for some clues. Four prominent periods either close or open at that event.

Four Exodus Time Periods

- (1) 430 years, Exodus 12:40
- (2) 400 years, Genesis 15:13
- (3) 144 years, from the death of Joseph to the Exodus, Genesis 50:25
- (4) 1000 years, from the Exodus to Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem (1445 BC to 445 BC)

The sum of these periods is **1974** years. These periods are each linked symbolically. The three which precede the Exodus represent the Gospel Age, which ends with the judgment of this world, represented by Egypt. The period which follows the Exodus represents the Millennial Kingdom which follows the judgment of this world. Here are the specifics.

- The 430 years is the period following the Abrahamic Covenant, picturing the Gospel Age when the spiritual Seed of Abraham is developed.

- The 400 years connects to the 144,000 of the elect class, for 400 years x 360 per year = 144,000. Genesis 15:13 says this was a period of affliction for the seed of Abraham, representing the afflictions of the Gospel Age when the saints are called and developed.

- The 144 years denotes the same class, by a briefer form of the number. (See Revelation 21:17 where this briefer form also represents the church class.) This period begins at the death of Joseph, who is a picture of Christ. Thus it represents the Gospel Age from Christ to the judgment of this world.

- The 1000 years is the duration of the Kingdom which follows the plagues on this world, and the completion of the walls of New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:17).

987 Years

As each of the periods on the chart we are discussing are found twice — 1000, 655, 858 — so the gap of 1974 can be expressed as two periods of 987 years. We observe the following about this period of years. (a) From Adam to the taking of Enoch was 987 years. We may probe this point more deeply another time. (b) 858 plus 987 yields 1845 years, the time so familiar to Bible Students as the span between the first advent of Christ in 29 AD, and the second advent of Christ in 1874.