

God's Kingdom is at Hand!



• BIBLE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP •

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Proclaiming the Parousia of Christ
and Coming Millennial Kingdom

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God's Kingdom is at Hand!

*“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).*

We are at the threshold of the most glorious epoch Earth has ever seen — The Thousand Year Kingdom of Christ! This will be the “Golden Age” mankind has cherished in their hopes since the dawn of history. It is coming, the time is at hand!

The results will be more wonderful, glorious, and all-encompassing, than even the finest dreams of philosophers, poets and sages. The best which noble men and women have dared imagine will be surpassed by the wonders God has planned.

- There will be world peace (Isaiah 2:4, Psalms 46:9)
- Handicaps will be cured (Isaiah 35:5, 6)
- All will know God (Jeremiah 31:34, Isaiah 11:9)
- Moral integrity will be universal (Jeremiah 31:33, 34)
- Sorrow and pain will end (Isaiah 11:9, Revelation 21:4)
- Death itself will cease (1 Corinthians 15:26, Revelation 21:4)
- All the dead will be raised to life (John 5:28, Acts 24:15)

Those who devoted themselves to God and godly principles will be raised to everlasting life, either here on earth (the Ancient Worthies of the Old Testament), or in heaven above (the consecrated and faithful of the present Gospel Age). The remainder of the world will be raised to life here, on Earth, received by those they knew and loved, and receive instruction, judgment, and learning about God. Their blessing will be proportionate to their progress.

Then, “the whole creation ... shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:22, 21). This is “God’s merciful purpose for the government of the world, when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind, of restoring the whole creation, to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things on earth, to find their one Head in Him” (Ephesians 1:9, 10, Weymouth).

God has been working out this plan, age by age, for the many centuries of human history. Meanwhile, the world has been learning necessary lessons of the consequences of sin. These are long, troublesome, difficult lessons.

But they prepare mankind to appreciate the age to come. The wonders of the next age will more than compensate for the trials of the present. Then, God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be fulfilled — "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18, 26:4, 28:14).

A Dear Price Paid

These blessings are secured by a dear price, the blood of Jesus, who died to redeem Adam and all of us from sin and death. Jesus gave himself "a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6, Matthew 20:28). "My flesh ... I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51, Isaiah 53:5, 6). "I lay down my life ... no man taketh it from me ... I lay it down of myself" (John 10:17, 18).

God was **Just** to impose the penalty for disobedience — **Wise** to allow the necessary experience — **Loving** to provide a release and a fresh opportunity for life — and God has the **Power** to accomplish it. These are the four attributes of God that direct all His activities (symbolized by the ox, eagle, man, and lion of Revelation 4:7).

The Time Has Come!

For nearly 4000 years God called the "Ancient Worthies," who will be the human leaders of the world during the Millennium (Hebrews 11:32-40). For almost 2000 years God has been selecting the "Bride class" to reign with Christ from above (Matthew 7:14, Revelation 3:21, 19:7, 8, 21:2). For now, during these closing years, the "High calling of God in Christ Jesus" remains open for all who wish it (Philippians 3:14). We enter this by consecrating our life to God. We secure the prize by remaining "faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10).

The long night of sorrow draws to a close. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!" (Psalms 30:5). We are on the verge of that morning. The Millennial Reign of Christ rapidly approaches.

Ezekiel 46:1 indicates in prophetic vision, the gates will be open on the thousand year "sabbath" day of mankind, and all the world may then enter the gates to approach God in worship and thanks. "One day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

A Crescendo of the Ages

Already we are in the "last days." Christ is present to supervise a transition of the ages. This transition includes a time of trouble unprecedented in human experience — the Great War of 1914, the Great Depression, World War II, the shaking of old empires, the Cold War, continuous local wars, and now the fire of Islamic terrorism. These "birth pangs" of a new order

may intensify, but they only hasten the glorious Millennium, and induce the longing of men for it.

The Gospel Age calling of the elect to Heavenly Glory is near its close. With its close comes the morning of release and blessing for the remainder of the groaning creation. “The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).

Soon the blessed Kingdom will break upon a weary world, so ready for it. During this time sin and death will begin to dissipate. Christ’s Kingdom will be established initially through repentant and restored Israel, according to the prophets (Zechariah 8:20-23, 12:10, 14:3-9, Micah 4:1-4). Gradually, its influence will spread to and assimilate all nations.

Satan will be bound for 1000 years (Revelation 20:2, 3). Christ and his elect will reign as “priests of God” to recover the world back to their Creator (Revelation 20:6). “The hopes, and fears, of all our years,” approach a wonderful climax!

Study Questions — (1) The Millennial Kingdom of Christ will last for how many years? (2) How many of the dead will be raised to life, and what text in John tells us so? (3) What scripture tells us that “all nations of the earth” will be blessed? (4) What text tells us that Jesus gave his life “a ransom for all”? (5) For how long has God been selecting the “Bride” class? (6) Where on earth will the Kingdom be established first? (7) Satan will be bound for how long, and what scripture tells us? (8) Our hearts and minds should be controlled by what quality? (9) The church class will reign with Christ in heaven during the Millennium, for what purpose?

The Bible

An Inspired Book — The Testimony of God

The Bible comes in two parts, the Old Testament with 39 books, and the New Testament with 27 books — 66 books total. This may be represented in the lampstand of the Tabernacle, which had 22 ornaments, each of three parts, thus 66 total (Exodus 25:31-33).

In the Old Testament are three parts: **History** (Genesis through Esther), **Devotional** (Job through Song of Solomon), **Prophecy** (Isaiah through Malachi). The Hebrews counted the same 39 books as only 22 in number, by combining them differently (for example, the 12 minor prophets are made into one book). Their count of 22 books matches the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (compare Psalms 119).

The New Testament also has three parts: **History** (Gospels and Acts), **Exhortation** (21 Epistles), and **Prophecy** (Revelation). Of the Epistles, 14 are from Paul, ordered per Luther's ranking of the notability of the ecclesia written to. The remaining seven epistles are from Peter (2), James (1), John (3), and Jude (1).

The Holy Bible

This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts binding, and its history true. Read it to be wise, and practice it to be holy.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure, and will endure forever.

The Purpose of Christianity

The reason for faith, patience, and discipline.

Christians are in training for a glorious future work of bestowing blessings upon the whole world of mankind. It is this blessed, Scriptural fact that gives point to the Christian life. The trials of faith, the discipline, and the hours of patient toil in the Master's service, would lose much of their meaning if, when the end of the narrow way of sacrifice is reached, there is nothing to do — nothing but an eternity of idleness.

The Scriptures admonish us to put down self and selfishness in order that our hearts and minds may be filled and controlled by love. We are to love God and each other as He loves us. God showed His love by the gift of His Son as our Redeemer. Jesus demonstrated his love by sacrificing his earthly life as a ransom for Adam and his race, condemned because of sin. If we are moved by such love, we too will delight in serving others.

Unquestionably, one of the sweetest joys of the Christian is experienced in selfsacrificing efforts to help others. But the present life is short. Human frailties are a handicap that limit our feeble service. Almost before we realize it, the eventide of life spreads its darkening shadows around us; and if the Spirit of God and of Christ fills our hearts we will feel that our service has been all too meager, that if possible we would like to continue that service, and increase it to the glory of God.

It is the possibility of doing just this that the Scriptures hold out as the great objective of the Christian life. The Christian church, made up of all true followers of the Master, will be the divine channel of blessing for the world. God promised Abraham that his seed would bless all the families of the earth. Christ and his church constitute that promised seed (Galatians 3:16, 27-29).

This future blessing is the work of the Millennial Age. The church participates in the "first resurrection" that she may live and reign with Christ (Revelation 20:16), for the blessing of the world.

What a privilege it will be in that new age, now near, to share with Christ the work of enlightening the world concerning God's loving plan, giving every person an opportunity for the blessings of life and happiness, that God provides through the redemption in Christ!

The Abrahamic Covenant

*“In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”
(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, whom Paul says is Christ. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith ... to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). In verse 29 Paul says those who come into Christ are included in this seed. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

That blessing will come to the world during the Millennium. But it begins with us, called to Christ during the present Gospel Age. We are “children of Abraham” if we have faith now. “They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify [us], the gentiles, through faith ... [said], In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Galatians 3:7, 8, also Romans 4:9-11).

When the elect class is complete in glory, which is soon approaching, then the remainder of the world will be blessed through Christ and his elect. The living generations will have the first opportunity. Thereafter, all the past generations will be raised to life. Satan will be bound, and the Truth will be made clear to everyone (Revelation 20:3).

Even the Sodomites of old will be raised to life, repent of their deeds, and be blessed through Israel during the Millennium. “Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former estate ... saith Jehovah” (Ezekiel 16: 55, 58).

Isaac Represents Christ ... and Us

Isaac was the literal “seed” of Abraham. He was heir to Abraham’s wealth. Isaac represents Jesus, God’s “only begotten son” (John 3:16). But 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 God, but we are “jointheirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

Ultimately, all who express vital faith will be considered children of Abraham, “the father of ... them that believe” (Romans 4:11). During the present Gospel Age this includes the Great Company class. In the resurrection, it will include all the Ancient Worthies.

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

Then they also will have a part in blessing “all the families of the earth.” Though greatly subsidiary to the saints in heavenly glory, Israel will nevertheless have an important part, under the leadership of the Ancient Worthies. Israel will extend to the nations the blessings God intends for everyone in Christ’s Kingdom (Micah 4:2).

As people respond to the news, commit themselves to Christ, and help reconcile others, they also will become children of faith, “children of Abraham.” “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’” (*The New Creation*, Foreword, page ii).

Allegory of Abraham’s Wives

In the life of Abraham, to whom the promise was made, God interwove allegorical lessons about His 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.

Sarah represents the original covenant with Abraham. Hagar represents the Law Covenant (Galatians 4:24, 25), added to the Abrahamic covenant after **430** years (Galatians 3:17). Ishmael, son of Hagar, represents the nation of Israel that was nurtured by that covenant.

But the child of promise came through Sarah. After many barren years, Sarah bore Isaac. This represents that although God’s covenant with Abraham appeared “barren” for centuries, in due time it did bear the promised “seed” of blessing — namely, Christ Jesus. It continues to bear the remainder of that spiritual seed, namely the elect “Church,” who are called to reign with Jesus. “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman [Hagar], but of the free [Sarah]” (Galatians 4:31).

Keturah

The death of Sarah represents the end of the spiritual promise — that is, the end of the present Gospel Age with its privileged “High Calling” (Philippians 3:14). After Sarah died, Abraham married Keturah, who for-

merly had been a concubine and had borne six children (1 Chronicles 1:32, Genesis 25:1-4).

Keturah represents the Millennial Age and its earthly calling for the world. The six sons of Keturah, born while she was a concubine, represent mankind, born in sin and “shapen in iniquity” (Psalms 51:5). When Keturah became a full wife, the status of her sons was elevated. So during the Millennium the status of the world will be elevated. If they then become obedient, they will be blessed with everlasting life as human beings, on earth.

Consecrated believers are sons of Sarah, the spiritual part of the Abrahamic Covenant. The world will become sons of Keturah, the earthly part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Thus the two classes are crisply distinguished.

In Genesis 22:17, the seed of Abraham was to be as the “stars of heaven” (spiritual) and as the “sand of the seashore” (earthly). Sarah represents heavenly promises, and Keturah represents earthly promises.

Study Questions — (1) Who is the Seed of Abraham in Galatians 3:16? (2) Who is added in Galatians 3:29? (3) What covenant is represented by Hagar? (4) What part of the Abrahamic covenant is represented by Sarah? (5) What part of the Abrahamic covenant is represented by Keturah?

The Return of Christ

“I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and ... sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Sometimes, when people learn that the Millennial Kingdom is at hand, they suppose that will mark the Return of Christ.

This is not the case. The return of Christ precedes the Millennial Kingdom by many years. Christ has already returned as the invisible, spiritual ruler of the next age. He is presently gathering his elect to their heavenly reward, and supervising a period of transition that has already begun.

Christ returned in 1874, at the beginning of the “Harvest,” or ending period, of the present Gospel Age. Bible Students have known this for more than a century. The signs that Christ has returned are all about us. Many Christians are unaware of this, because they suppose the signs indicate the soon coming of Christ — whereas they actually indicate the influence of Christ subsequent to his return.

Purpose of the Second Advent

The **purpose** for which Jesus returns is to commence the work of Harvest, gather his saints to glory, and establish his Millennial Kingdom. The Harvest of the present Gospel Age is defined in Matthew 13:39 as the *suntelia* (Greek word), or ending period, of the age (*aionos*).

The two highlighted Greek words are meaningful. If we read “end of the world” (as King James) one might get the wrong impression that the harvest refers to an abrupt end of the world. But the text really means that the harvest is the ending period of the age — a period of time that has already commenced. During the present “Harvest” period, the fruitage of the age is “reaped” or gathered, in order to begin the next stage of God’s Plan.

There was a Harvest of the Jewish Age, also. It ran from our Lord’s First Advent (when he was baptized in the year 29 AD), until the destruction of Judea and Jerusalem by the Roman armies during the seven years of the Roman Wars, from 66 to 73 AD.

Forty years after 29 AD, in the autumn of 69 AD, the Jews observed the Day of Atonement offerings in their temple for the last time. During the year then beginning (Jewish years begin in the autumn), the Temple was burned and Jerusalem was devastated. Scattered Jews gathered for a last

stand at Masada, which fell in the year 73 AD — forty years after Jesus' crucifixion in 33 AD.

Thus that harvest lasted 40 years (from 29 to 69), or by another measure, 44 years (from 29 to 73). That harvest period saw a spread of the Gospel among the Jewish people, until judgment fell upon Israel as Jesus predicted (John 4:35-38, Matthew 23:34 to 24:2, also 10:23).

The harvest of the Gospel Age is a larger work than the harvest of the Jewish Age. It covers the entire Christian world, rather than simply Israelites. The time allowed for this greater work is correspondingly longer. From the Lord's return in **1874**, until the Kingdom of Christ is established at the close of the Harvest.

Jesus was present to initiate the harvest of the Jewish Age, and Jesus is now present for the harvest of the Gospel Age. "Behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" (Revelation 14:14). This text depicts Jesus as the chief reaper of the present harvest work.

As explained in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, the Harvest is a time of separating God's people from the tares, or imitation Christians, with the "sickle" of truth — an understanding of God's "Plan of the Ages." The final result, after the separating work, is to bring the wheat into the barn. That is, to bring the Lord's people to their heavenly home in the First Resurrection (Revelation 20:6).

Gathering the Lord's people by the "sickle" of Truth progressed for many years, ever since the Truth Movement¹ commenced in the 1870s.

Nature of the Second Advent

Jesus was a man while on earth, but after he died, he was raised on the third day as a glorious, celestial, divine being — second only to our Heavenly Father in majesty, dignity, and honor. Jesus is no longer a fleshly being. Like all spirit beings, he is invisible to human sight.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was necessary for him to materialize a body in order to show himself to his disciples, in order to prove that he was alive again. When his purpose was ended for any given visit, Jesus dematerialized, and vanished from their sight.

(1) The "Truth Movement" is also sometimes called the "Bible Student Movement." A history of this movement is in the special History Edition of the magazine *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*. That issue is available on request at the website **Heraldmag.org**.

Now, although Jesus has returned, we do not see him in a physical way, just as we do not see angels. Nor will the world of mankind during the Millennium see Jesus with physical sight. They will, however, “see” him in the sense that they will understand that he is the new King of Earth, ruling from heaven to bless the world during the 1000 years of restoration.

Job once said of Jehovah, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5). He meant that he “saw” God through experience, faith, and patience. He did not see God physically, for “no man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18).

Likewise, when Isaiah said “the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5), the “seeing” is metaphorical. They will “see” the glory of God through His mighty works. In the same way, Israel (and subsequently the world) will “see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” through the judgments incident to Armageddon (Matthew 24:30, see also 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8).

During the Millennium, Satan will be bound and his usurped power will be ended. Jesus will then reign for the blessing of the world. But Jesus, as a being, will be as invisible to the eyes of the world, as Satan has been for 6000 years (Revelation 20:13).

Because Jesus' return is invisible, we are told to watch the signs, to match prophecy with world events, in order to be aware of the presence of Christ after his return. We must listen to the “knock” of prophecy and “open” to Jesus through a study of the Scriptures, in order to “dine” with him on Present Truth during the present Harvest period.

Three Signs

There are three primary signs that Christ has returned. **(1)** The feast of truth and understanding, after the dark period of the Gospel Age. Luke 12:35-37 affirms that this feast comes after Jesus' return. It is enjoyed by those who hear the “knock” and then “open” to him through study and investigation.

“Be like men that wait for their Lord ... that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes, shall find watching ... he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” The same promise is given in Revelation 3:20, the text which heads this article.

In Revelation, the context is the message to the seven churches, the seven stages of the one true Church through the Gospel Age. To church four, during the dark ages, Jesus said “that which you have already, hold fast, **till** I come” (Revelation 2:25). To church five, during the Reformation, he

required more. “Repent” (reform), else “**I will come** on thee as a thief” (Revelation 3:3). To church six he says, “Behold, I come **quickly**” (Revelation 3:11). But to church seven, today, he says “Behold, I **stand at the door** and knock” (Revelation 3:20).

Jesus is not coming, he is present. It is for us to respond, study the Truth, and “anoint [our] eyes with eyesalve, that [we] may see” God’s Plan of the Ages (Revelation 3:18). This sign, Present Truth, has been open to the saints since the 1870s. Thus we must now be in the *parousia*, or presence, of the Son of Man.²

(2) The second sign that Jesus has returned, and is present, is the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6, 3:21). The regathering of Israel began with the Jewish Colony Petah Tikvah, in 1878. In that year, the Berlin Congress of Nations produced a treaty following the Russo-Turkish war. One result was that all people in the Ottoman Empire would have equal protection of the Law. That meant that Jewish people once again could purchase land in Palestine. They did, and they began to resettle.

(3) The third sign that Jesus has returned is the Time of Trouble. This began with World War I, continued through World War II, and closes with Armageddon in the future. Daniel 12:1 tells us the “time of trouble” follows the standing of “Michael,” our Lord Jesus.

Forty years after Jesus’ first advent, began the Jewish year in which Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Forty years after Jesus’ second advent in **1874**, began World War One in 1914, initiating the Time of Trouble.

A Misunderstanding

The chief reason some are reticent to recognize our Lord’s return is a misunderstanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. They suppose this passage means that when Christ returns, the saints are taken to glory all together, in a single moment. So if consecrated brethren are still here, in the flesh, then, they reason, the Return of Christ must be still future.

However, the passage does not mean that. In verse 13, Paul comforts the Thessalonians about brethren who had already died. In verse 14 Paul ex-

(2) The Greek word *parousia* means “presence.” It is translated correctly in Philipians 2:12. In many of the other 23 places it appears in the New Testament, it is poorly translated “coming” — but it means “presence” in every case. Rotherham, Kingdom Interlinear, Emphatic Diaglott, and RVIC always render the word “presence,” and others put it in the margin. *Parousia* appears in Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8, James 5:7, 8, 2 Peter 3:4, 12, 1 John 2:28, and elsewhere.

plains that as God brought Jesus from the dead, so God will bring those long deceased brethren from the dead also, along “with” Jesus.

That word “with” is the crucial word. Jesus was raised close to 2000 years ago, but those deceased brethren would not be raised until the end of the age — many centuries after Jesus. So how is it that God brings them back from the grave along “with” Jesus? This word “with,” the Greek word *sun*, is here used to mean the same experience, but not at the same time. It is used this way also in 2 Corinthians 4:14. “He [God] which raised up the Lord Jesus [from the dead] shall raise up us also with [*sun*] Jesus” (2 Corinthians 4:14).³ We are raised “with” Jesus in the same experience, but not at the same time.

Another example is in Colossians 2:13. “You, being dead in your sins ... hath he [God] quickened together with [*sun*] him [Jesus], having forgiven you all trespasses.” We are enlivened “together with” Jesus, but not at the same time. Jesus was raised before any others were “quickened” through faith in his blood.

In Thessalonians, Paul then explains that those who are “alive and remain” at the presence of Christ do not precede the others — just the reverse. The dead in Christ rise first, and afterward [Greek, *epeita*] we who are alive and remain [after the Lord’s return] are caught up as they were, when we die. We share the same experience “with” them, but not at the same time.

When Did Christ Return?

The date accepted by most Bible Students is **1874**. We could only know such a date through a time prophecy. We treat this in the next article, and explain how this date comes from the 1335 years of Daniel 12:12.

(3) King James says “by,” from the Greek word *dia*. Better manuscripts show *sun* rather than *dia* in this text. Thus “with” in NASB, NIV, Phillips, Weymouth, Rotherham, Kingdom Interlinear.

Study Questions — (1) In what year did Christ return? (2) What is the ending period of the Gospel Age called? (3) Is Jesus visible, or invisible? (4) What are the three signs of Christ’s presence? (5) When were the saints of past centuries raised? (6) What does the Greek word *parousia* mean? (7) The date 1874 comes from what text in Daniel?

Time Prophecy

“The man clothed in linen ... swore by him that liveth for ever ... it shall be for a time, times, and an half” (Daniel 12:7).

The Bible is full of prophecy. On occasion, those prophecies include specific time periods, giving a remarkable specificity and precision to the forecasts. This gives a stamp of authority that is unparalleled in the writings of other reputed holy books, for only God truly knows the future. “I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done” (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

There are several shortspan time prophecies, covering periods from a few days to 70 years. Here are 12 examples: Numbers 14:33, 2 Kings 7:1, 8:1, 20:6, 1 Chronicles 21:12, Isaiah 7:8, 8:4, 16:14, 21:16, 23:15, Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10.

But those that take in centuries within their prophetic scope are the ones of special interest. The key to prophecies on this scale is the day-for-a-year principle. For example, in Daniel 9:24 there is a prophecy of 70 “weeks,” which would be 490 days. It takes us from the days of Ezra, who restored Jerusalem beginning in 458 BC, to the crucifixion of Christ on April 3, 33 AD — a span of 490 years.

This “key” appears explicitly in Numbers 14:34, “each day for a year,” and Ezekiel 4:6, “I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Notable students of prophecy over several centuries who recognized and applied this key, are — Walter Brute, Martin Luther, Napier, Fleming, William Whiston, Isaac Newton, Hales, John Aquila Brown, William Miller, H Grattan Guinness, E B Elliott, Charles Russell — many others could be added.

1260 Years

The most emphasized of these prophecies is one about 1260 years. It appears seven times in Scripture — twice in Daniel and five times in Revelation (Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:14, 11:2, 13:5, 11:3, 12:6). It is termed variously 3½ times (years), 42 months, and 1260 days. They are all the same period — 1260 years.

This prophecy speaks of an apostate Christian religious system, ruling from Rome, dominating Europe for centuries. Only one system fits this description, namely the Roman Catholic Church.

Isaac Newton supposed these years would close about a century after his time. A contemporary of his, Robert Fleming, deduced from the prophecies that Papal authority would be broken by a disturbance in France, in the 1790s. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, these conclusions formed one of the foundations for the Adventist movement that swept through Protestant Christianity in the first half of the 1800s.

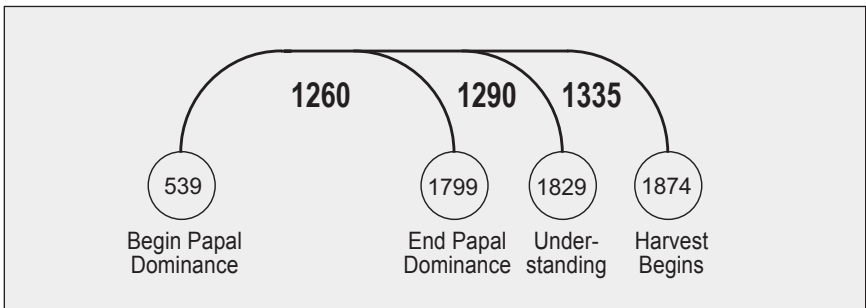
William Miller, leader of the Adventist Movement, fixed upon the dates 538 to 1798 for this span. These dates are still maintained by the largest fragment of that movement, the Seventh Day Adventists. Bible Students adjust these dates by one year, to 539 and 1799.

The year 539 saw the rise of the Pope to political influence when his Gothic enemies were defeated at the fall of their capital Ravenna. In 1799 Papacy was shaken through the death of the pope as a captive of Napoleon, who refused to allow the election of a successor. Even Papacy recognizes 1799 as the nadir (lowest point) of Papacy in modern times. Papacy would recover somewhat, then suffer other setbacks, and never again rule the nations. The 1260 years of her power closed in 1799.

1290, 1335 Years

But this was only the beginning. Daniel 12:11 adds a prophecy of 1290 years, and verse 12 adds one of 1335 years — which closed 30 and 75 years, respectively, beyond 1799. The first takes us to 1829, when the “wise” would understand the unfolding time prophecies of Daniel. The second takes us to 1874, the time of Christ’s parousia, and beginning of the Harvest — the closing period of the present Gospel Age.

For the significance of these dates, please see the article “1874” in the November-December 2003 issue of *The Herald* (www.HeraldMag.org). They are also treated at length in Volume Three of “Studies in the Scriptures,” titled *Thy Kingdom Come*, chapters 2 and 3. Bible Students for more than a hundred years have been intimately familiar with these prophecies, and their fulfillment at 1799, 1829, and 1874, respectively.



2520 Years

In the early 1800s, perhaps introduced in *Eventide* by John Aquila Brown, was the recognition that the “seven times” of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness, recorded in Daniel chapter four, represent seven prophetic “years” during which Gentile empires would have power. They would rule the world, and in particular, Daniel’s people Israel, for 2520 years. For if 3½ “times” are 1260 years, then 7 “times” would be 2520 years.

The same period is suggested in Leviticus 26, where Moses warned that if Israel disobeyed God, she would endure a national affliction of “seven” times, strokes, or periods (verses 18, 21, 24, 28).

Babylon, MedoPersia, Greece, and Rome (and her successors) ruled for “seven times,” the same period that Israel would be punished, subordinated. In both Daniel and Leviticus, the predicted seven times are repeated four times (Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32) — perhaps suggesting that four empires would rule.

There are many more connections between the two passages, Daniel 4 and Leviticus 26. Suffice it to say that the 2520 years there predicted run from the Babylonian conquest of Israel until its release from the Ottoman Empire during the Great War of 1914. The Babylonian conquest took four years, from 607 BC to 603 BC, and the Great War which liberated Israel took four years, from 1914 to 1918 — just 2520 years later.

Then England assumed a protectorate of the holy Land. In the “Balfour Declaration” they announced their intent to make Palestine a national homeland for the Jewish people. By fits and starts, at last Israel became an independent nation. The mandate by the United Nations became effective in May, 1948.

2300 Years

Daniel 8:14 tells us that the “sanctuary” class — the Church class (1 Corinthians 3:16) — would be cleansed from doctrinal defilements after 2300 years. It is widely held that this period began the same year as the 490 years of Daniel chapter nine began. That year was 458 BC. Thus the 2300 years closed in 1843.

1843 was the year of expectation for the Adventist Movement. In the crescendo leading to this year, the activity and study stimulated by their expectations was remarkable. Old defiling doctrines lingering from Papacy were recognized.

Better views replaced them. For example — that the dead do not suffer torture, but sleep peacefully until the resurrection. That Jesus became

flesh and died to redeem us. That a “greater hope” for the world begins when this age closes. That belief in Christ should be accompanied with personal consecration and character development.

The truths inherent in these cleansings would later congeal into the Divine Plan of the Ages that we have today, due at the end of the 1335 years. But the cleansing recognition of the various errors came to a head in 1843.

Seven Endpoints of Prophecy

33	The death of Christ (490 years)
1799	The end of Papal power (1260 years)
1829	Opening of Daniel’s prophecies (1290 years)
1843	Cleansing of old errors (2300 years)
1874	Harvest of the Gospel Age (1335 years)
1914	End Jewish national punishment (2520 years)
1948	Independence of Israel restored

God’s Leading Through Time Prophecy

Thus step by step, through His Plan of the Ages, God supplies time markers pointing the way toward the Millennium. Our resume of these dates here is brief, compared with the volume of material written on the subject in recent centuries.

Today we have the accumulated light of all those studies. The passage of years on the “path of the just,” as promised, has grown brighter, and has sharpened our focus (Proverbs 4:18).

7000 Years

6000 years from Adam, plus the thousand year Millennium, give us 7000 years total from Paradise Lost in Eden, to Paradise Restored. These 7000 years constitute an epoch “day,” the seventh creative day, on which God “rested” from the creation of things mundane.

As with the other creative days, the seventh day has an “evening” followed by a “morning,” the second half of the 7000 year “day.” This “morning” — the second 3500 years — is punctuated with seven dates marked in prophecy, building toward the Millennium.

The Kingdom Approaches

The establishment of God's Kingdom is at hand. It is timely for the Lord's people to appreciate the specifics, to the extent that their interest and desire motivates them to do so.

Do we long for every ray of light from above? Have we prayed, from the heart, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? (Matthew 6:10). If so, then we "must feel the liveliest interest" in this kingdom, and have "an absorbing interest in the fact, the time, and the manner of its establishment" (*Thy Kingdom Come*, page 19).

Study Questions — (1) How many years are indicated in Daniel 9:24? (2) How long are the three time prophecies in Daniel chapter 12? (3) In what year did they begin? (4) How is the length of the 2520 years computed? (5) What text in Daniel chapter eight speaks of the 2300 years?

Revelation

Past (Gospel Age) • Present (Harvest) • Future (Kingdom)

Revelation is a deep book, a mystical book. But it is intended to inform us (Revelation 1:1). One key is to recognize the organization of this book. It is in three parts: the Gospel Age, the Harvest, and the Kingdom. These sections do overlap in part.

Part One, Gospel Age (chapters 1-13)

- Introduction, chapter 1
- Seven churches, chapters 2-3
- Throne scene, chapters 4-5
- Seven seals, chapters 6-7
- Seven trumpets, chapters 8-11
- Overview of true church (woman), chapter 12
- Overview of false churches (Beast and False Prophet), chapter 13

Part Two, Harvest (chapters 14-19)

- Introduction, chapter 14
- Seven judgments, or plagues, chapters 15-16
- Overview of false church (harlot), chapter 17
- Judgment of false church, chapter 18
- Marriage of True Church, and final judgment of false churches, chapter 19

Part Three, Kingdom (chapters 20-22)

- Binding of Satan, reign of Christ and Saints for 1000 years, Resurrection and blessing of the world — all in chapter 20 (two overlapping parts, verses 1-10, 11-15)
- New Jerusalem, symbolizing the Millennial Kingdom, chapters 21-22

Chart of the Ages

A Visual Study of the Divine Plan

On the following page is a graphic known by Bible Students as the “Chart of the Ages.” Here we explain it briefly. (For a full explanation, see Chapter 12 of *The Divine Plan of the Ages*.)

This chart depicts the Plan of God for mankind. It has three great Dispensations: “The World that Was” (2 Peter 3:6), the “Present Evil World” (Galatians 1:4), and “The World to Come” (Hebrews 2:5, 2 Peter 3:13).

The World That Was

The first period, lasting **1656** years, ended with the Flood, saving only Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives (1 Peter 3:20). Our race then was nearer perfection, more robust of health — they regularly lived 700, 800, or 900 years. Probably their mental capacities were similarly improved compared to us today. After the Flood, the lifespans of mankind dropped rapidly until living a hundred years became rare. Apparently Earth’s environment was altered in the cataclysm of the flood, allowing more radiation to pierce the atmosphere, gradually weakening our genetic substance.

Genesis 6:14, 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6 tell us that some of the angels before the flood materialized into human form to inbreed with humanity, producing a mixed offspring not intended by God. These, together with the natural depravities of the world, brought wickedness and violence (Genesis 6:12). God deemed it good to remove them through the flood, and repopulate Earth afresh through the family of Noah.

However, the millions of Adam’s race who perished in the flood are not forgotten. They sleep in death, awaiting a resurrection during the Millennium (John 5:28, Acts 24:15). They will come back to a world of righteousness, with everything made conducive to their progress.

The Flood provided a lesson, for all generations, that God, though long suffering and merciful, will not permit evil to continue. At the end of the 1000-year Kingdom of Christ there will be a final judgment, and all who are evilly disposed will be destroyed (Revelation 20:7 and forward). That destruction will be everlasting.

The Present Evil World

This second epoch is divided into three ages — the Patriarchal Age, the Jewish Age, and the Gospel Age. During the Patriarchal Age, God dealt with individuals such as Noah, Shem, and others. As time passed, God made choice of faithful Abraham for a special purpose. To Abraham, his son Isaac, and his son Jacob, God uttered solemn covenant promises, bound with an oath, that God would bless “all the families of the earth” through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 28:14).

These three patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob — are the ones we think of most often as the favored of the Patriarchal Age. However, there were other godly persons of faith also, both in the four centuries from the flood to Abraham, and following (Genesis 14:18).

When Jacob died, God chose not simply one son, but all 12 sons, to receive His special blessings. “The covenant which he made with Abraham ... [He] confirmed to Israel for an everlasting covenant” (1 Chronicles 16:16, 17). Thus began the Jewish Age, for the 12 sons of Jacob were the fathers of the nation of “Israel.”

When Jesus appeared as the savior of the world, the anointed one of Israel, he opened the Gospel Age. This was very different than all the ages preceding. Following the death of Christ, for the first time since the fall of mankind into sin, actual redemption was available through belief in Jesus. That was something not available to Abraham, Moses, or any of the ancients — not even to John the Baptist.

Christians often fail to grasp how different and grander are the hopes of Christians, redeemed in Christ, from the hopes of godly men and women in previous ages. Abraham and others were friends of God — we become sons of God. They had earthly hopes, we have heavenly hopes. They believed in a coming redemption, we receive the actual redemption.

God “hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ... now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality” (2 Timothy 1:9, 10).

The reward of saints is to reign with Christ in glory as spirit beings, with heavenly life. Such a call was never offered to the “Ancient Worthies.” They knew release from condemnation would come, and a resurrection of the dead. But their hopes were earthly. They will be raised as human beings and lead the world on Earth during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

“These all [Ancient Worthies], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [which we in the Gospel Age do receive]: God having provided some better thing for us” (Hebrews 11:39, 40).

The World to Come

The Third Dispensation commences with the Messianic Age, sometimes called the Millennial Age. Already we are in the “Harvest,” a period of transition closing the Gospel Age, and bringing in the Millennium.

The saints will then have a blessed work to do. God will commit to them, together with Christ, the work of bringing the entire world into harmony with God. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). The Kingdom will begin at Israel, newly converted to Christ (Zechariah 12:10).

Satan will be bound “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled” (Revelation 20:3). Then the world will respond enthusiastically, “This is our God ... we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:7, 9).

The Little Season

Notice on the chart, at the far right side of the Messianic Age, at the bottom, a dark vertical band. This represents a period of judgment, after the Millennium. Satan will be permitted to try the hearts of mankind for a “Little Season” (Revelation 20:3, 7, 8), to allow each person to show what is in their heart — pure or impure.

By then the world will be well prepared for such a test. Behind them will lay 6000 years of sin, death, and condemnation, followed by centuries of experience in a perfect world where love, goodness, loyalty, kindness, and all the fruits of the Spirit will be pervasive in human society. Each person will contribute to the common good, and benefit from the same. Who would not choose those incredible blessings and the principles of good?

Planes and Pyramids

The various planes on the Chart describe levels of existence during God’s Plan, and the various pyramids represent people — either individuals (small pyramids) or classes (larger pyramids).

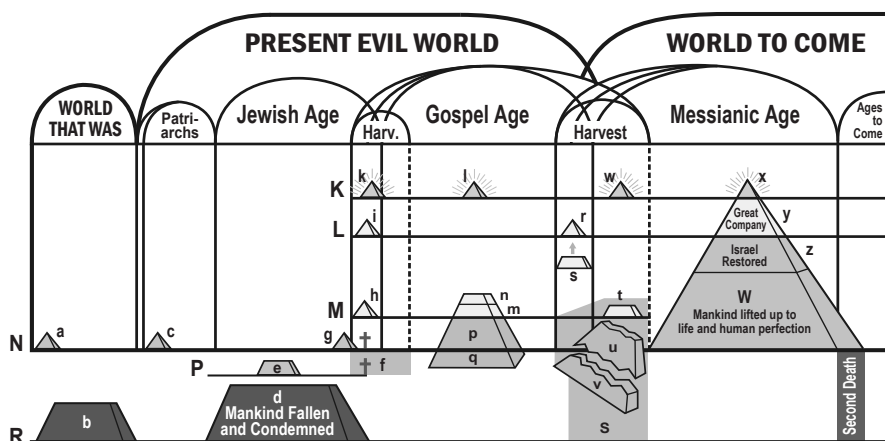
The first small pyramid, during the First Dispensation, represents Adam. The line on which that pyramid rests, Plane **N**, represents the plane of Human Perfection. (It also includes those who have been justified before God through their faith.)

The Large Pyramids

When Adam and Eve sinned, they fell from perfection, were expelled from Eden, and began to die. They descended to Plane **R** on the chart, the Plane

CHART OF THE AGES

From Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored



of Sin and Death. They had a large family, and the human race multiplied rapidly. The first large pyramid on Plane **R** represents the world during the First Dispensation. This pyramid is incomplete on the top, to show that the world was incomplete, imperfect, unjustified, not whole.

The next large pyramid to the right, also on Plane **R**, represents the condemned world during the Second Dispensation. But notice, to the far right, that there is no such truncated pyramid on Plane **R** during the Third Dispensation. That is because then the world will be redeemed by the blood of Christ, on Plane **N**, justified, regaining the perfection that Adam lost in the Garden. By the end of the Millennium, the entire world, resurrected and blessed, will have been restored.

Israel

Notice again the large truncated pyramid during the Second Dispensation. Above it is Plane **P**, with a small pyramid resting on that plane. That small pyramid represents the nation of Israel, who were heirs of the promises God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They became God's covenant people when Moses brought them into the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai, following their Exodus from Egypt.

By this means Israel became "an holy people unto Jehovah ... a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2). They had a status higher than the world, shown by their position on the chart, elevated above the rest of the world. Plane **P** is often termed "Typical Justification," because Israel was a type of the blessings to come to the world through the redemption in the following ages.

The Ancient Worthies

The men and women who were devoted to God before the time of Christ are termed “Ancient Worthies” because they lived long ago (ancient), and they were people of faith (worthy). Paul discusses this class in Hebrews chapter 11.

That class is represented in the small pyramid on Plane **N** during the Patriarchal Age. The pyramid is located there in memory of Abraham, “father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). However, that one pyramid during the Patriarchal Age stands for all the men and women of faith from Abel to John the Baptist. They are shown on Plane **N** because of their faith. They were justified by faith to friendship with God (James 2:23).

During the Kingdom, they will be “princes in all the earth” (Psalms 45:16). They are raised perfect, at the opening of the Kingdom, to lead Israel, and the world, during the Millennium (Isaiah 1:26, Zechariah 8:22).

Jesus

At the end of the Jewish Age is a period which overlaps the Gospel Age. This overlapping period is the Harvest of the Jewish Age, during which our Lord Jesus came to “reap” the ripe wheat of that Age (John 4:35).

The four small pyramids on the chart just before, and during, that Jewish Age Harvest all represent Jesus. The first one, on Plane **N**, represents Jesus as a perfect youth until he was 30, the age of maturity for religious service under the Law Covenant (Numbers 4:3).

The next pyramid, a little higher, represents Jesus when he was baptized at Jordan by John and began his ministry of 3½ years. At this time he was begotten of the holy Spirit to the new life he would attain at his resurrection — loftier, grander, higher, than even the life he had in glory before he came to Earth. To prepare Jesus for this elevation, his character was matured, expanded, and crystallized through suffering (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

After Jesus died, he was raised a spirit being, no longer human at all. As angels sometimes did in the Old Testament, Jesus materialized a body on occasion in order to appear to his disciples — as a gardener, or a stranger walking to Emmaus, or a stranger on the shore of Galilee — sometimes in a familiar body, sometimes not. Jesus was a spirit being of the highest order. “Christ ... once suffered for sins ... being put to death ... flesh, but quickened ... Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

Jesus was present 40 days with his disciples after his resurrection. Most of that time he was invisible (as spirit beings are), but at times he materialized, to teach them “things pertaining to the kingdom” (Acts 1:3). Then he

ascended to God from the mount of Olives, seated “on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).

The Gospel Age

During the Gospel Age, the professing Church is shown by a large pyramid in four parts. The portion below Plane **N** represents nominal Christians, who do not have the spirit of Christ in their heart. These are the “tares” of Jesus’ parable in Matthew 13:24-30.

Above that is the portion on Plane **N**. These are Christian people who have faith in Jesus, and live by his teachings. However, the next step is personal consecration to God, “present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Until then, one does not come into the body of Christ, and has no heavenly hope. Perhaps they suppose they will go to heaven, but unless they commit their lives to Jesus, they will be raised to life on earth during the Millennium, rather than in heaven.

The part of the pyramid above the plane of Spirit Begettall represents those who are consecrated to God, running for the prize of the high calling (Philippians 3:14, 2 Timothy 2:11, 12). Of these there are two parts — (1) Those who prove faithful and zealous, the “Bride” class (Revelation 19:7, 8, 21:9).

(2) Those who slip back. God loves them also, but they need special experiences to bring them along. They become the Great Company class. They receive life in heaven, serving God in His Temple (Revelation 7:9-15, 1 Corinthians 3:15). But they miss the chief prize.

Pyramid **r** represents Jesus at his return to gather his saints, **s**. When the “Bride” class is complete, they are together with Christ in pyramid **w**. Meantime, the Great Company class pass through their final experiences (Revelation 7:14). The other two classes (people of faith but not consecrated, and the tare class), are blessed with others the Millennium.

Study Questions — (1) What are the three great Dispensations in God’s plan? (2) What are the three ages within the Second Dispensation? (3) What is the first age of the Third Dispensation? (4) What is the purpose of the Gospel Age? (5) What is the purpose of the Millennial Age? (6) What short period follows the Millennium, and what is its purpose? (7) What is represented by Plane **N**? by Plane **R**? (8) What nation was on Plane **P**? (9) What is the name of the faith class before the time of Christ? (10) Who is represented in small pyramids **r** and **w**?

Bible Student Fellowship

A Brief Overview

The Bible Student Fellowship is international. However, we do not constitute a formal denomination, and there is no central headquarters. The various classes, or ecclesias, are independent, though allied through a common faith. Our elders and deacons are elected from the congregation and serve without pay. All are welcome to study with us. Those who are consecrated to God are eligible to participate in elections for class servants. Our common faith includes the following.

- God is the creator of all.
- We are sinners by nature.
- We inherited sin and the curse from Adam and Eve.
- As a consequence, our only hope is that ...
- Jesus, the son of God, was made flesh and ...
- Died for our sins.
- Therefore we repent of sin,
- Embrace Jesus as our redeemer, and ...
- Live according to Christian principles.

We encourage personal consecration to God (Matthew 16:24). We sacrifice earthly interests for spiritual interests, and yield ourselves “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable ... your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

We observe water baptism for the consecrated. We commemorate our Lord’s death annually, we meet weekly on Sundays and in midweek, we fellowship in conventions, endeavor to live holy lives, speak honestly, cultivate prayer, and live peaceably with all men.

The incredible privilege this brings to us is the “High calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). “Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne” (Revelation 3:21). “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown a life” (Revelation 2:10). “The pure in heart ... shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

A Ransom for All

*“There is one God, also one Mediator of God and of men,
a man Christ Jesus, the one having given himself a ransom
on behalf of all, the testimony in its own times”
(1 Timothy 2:5,6, Marshall Interlinear).*

From earliest times, the sacrifice of life in propitiation for sins persists as an idea in the human mind. This requirement was illustrated by the coats of skins that Jehovah made for Adam and Eve after God pronounced sentence for their sin.

God provided the victims whose skins were made into robes for the sinners — and only God could provide, in due time, the necessary sacrifice that would actually make propitiation for sins. Thus the incident in the garden of Eden illustrated God's love for the guilty pair, and foreshadowed its grand manifestation in “the fulness of the time” on behalf of them and all of us (Genesis 3:21, John 3:16, Galatians 4:4, 5, 1 Peter 1:20).

God's Justice

God's justice must be exact. But this does not mean that God is vindictive. In fact, God lovingly provided a ransom, to remove the divine penalty against the sinner. This satisfies divine Justice, and expresses divine Love. It magnifies God's character, and lays the foundation for blessing “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 28:14).

In due time that blessing will come to the entire world. Then the ransom laid down by our Lord Jesus will be the basis for reconciling the entire world back to God — for the debt will have been paid, and the curse can be lifted. This teaching of Scripture is sure.

The Sin

When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden “eastward in Eden,” they were perfect, “very good” (Genesis 2:8, 1:31). However, as earthly beings, their estate was below the heavenly. Our father Adam, though “a little lower than the angels,” was perfect on his own plane, when placed in the garden. However, he was without experience, and therefore without an established character. He and his beautiful companion were placed under a command that would test their obedience to God.

The test was a simple one, merely abstain from the fruit of a certain tree — while all the other trees were available to them. No law is of force unless a

penalty is arranged for infractions, so a penalty was given for disobedience to God's command. This is difficult for some, because the penalty seems out of proportion to the offence. Yes, death was the penalty for eating the forbidden fruit. Why was this?

Because the loyalty of the creature to the Creator was being tested. The smaller and less significant the incident, the more severe it is as a test of loyalty. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). God had a right to require obedience from mankind, and to declare that the disobedient should not be allowed to live.

The Penalty

The penalty for disobedience was stated in simple terms. It was death.¹ Some think that God meant to torture transgressors to all eternity. But had that been His intent, surely God would have stated that in the plainest terms, to allow no misunderstanding. Considering the issue involved, nothing less than the clearest possible expression of God's intent would have been given by our Creator, who embodies both Justice and Love.

Not a word in the first three chapters of Genesis reveals anything implying an eternity of pain as the penalty for disobedience. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die" (Genesis 2:17, margin). This is the only record of God's words to Adam on this subject before he sinned.

Here should be found the straightforward teaching of eternal torture, **IF** that was the penalty for disobedience. But God said nothing about that. Instead of saying that Adam would be kept alive in pain, God said that the transgressor would die. Later, the penalty of sin was repeated in the same terms — "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). "Death [came] by sin" (Romans 5:12). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).²

(1) Death is what it seems to be — the absence of life. The dead have no consciousness, no intelligence. They do not go somewhere, float away, or have any experiences. They are dead. Any philosophy that some vitality survives death, (a) contradicts the very meaning of death, (b) contradicts the meaning of resurrection (for the living need no resurrection). (Psalms 146:4, Ecclesiastes 3:20, 9:5, 10, Job 14:10).

(2) If eternal torment was the penalty, then in order to release us, Jesus must suffer eternal torment — which is impossible. If eternal torment was the penalty, and if Jesus is not suffering it, then we are not redeemed, and we can look forward to nothing but unspeakable woe to all eternity.

Adam did not die on the literal day of disobedience. But his sin did bring condemnation to death the moment the divine command was broken. Later, with the angels, God dealt differently. The disobedient angels were “reserved in everlasting chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6), and they will live if they are repentant. Satan will not repent. He will be destroyed. But the execution of that sentence has been postponed (Ezekiel 28:15, Revelation 20:10, 14, Romans 16:20, Genesis 3:15).

So also with Adam — he did not die as soon as he was condemned. The Hebrew word *yowm*,³ used in Genesis 2:17 for “day,” did not mean a literal 24 hour day. In this case that “day” was a thousand years, and Adam lived 930 years before he died (Genesis 5:5). The word *yowm*, “day,” has a wide use in “our day,” as well as in the Bible. Hebrews 3:8, 9 refers to “the day of temptation in the wilderness,” which was 40 years. 2 Peter 3:8 says, “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Adam did die within the thousand year “day” assigned to him. There is no record that anyone outlived a “day” of 1000 years — not even Methuselah, who died at the age of 969 (Genesis 5:27).

God pronounced the sentence: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19, 2:7).

The language used when executing the sentence is equally clear. “Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” (Genesis 3:22, 23).

Man’s sentence was death. He was driven out into the unprepared earth, to struggle with thorns and thistles. Near the close of his “day” he returned to the dust. Had he not sinned, he would have continued living.

“Many Made Sinners”

The sentence thus pronounced and executed has fallen upon all of Adam’s posterity. It is certain that we all die; and the Bible furnishes the only reasonable account why this is so. Some incorrectly think of death as a gateway to glory, instead of recognizing it as the penalty of sin. This is a great mistake.

(3) The Hebrew word for day, *yowm*, is not limited to a literal day of 24 hours. It is translated “year,” “season,” “time,” and “space” (Exodus 13:10, Leviticus 25:29, Numbers 9:22, Genesis 4:3, 26:8, 40:4, Joshua 24:7). In 1 Samuel 7:2 *yowm* is 20 years; in Psalms 95:8 40 years; in Leviticus 25:8 49 years. In Genesis 1, *yowm* refers to vast epoch-days of creative work.

Paul said, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ... so death passed upon all men” (Romans 5:12). “In Adam all die ... by man came death” (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22). Every member of Adam’s race experiences the consequences.

No other explanation than this, of God’s Word, suffices to tell us why infants die. These do not bring death upon themselves, because they know not right from wrong. Yet they die. “By one man sin entered ... and death by sin.” What is true of the infant is true also of the youth, the middle aged, and the old: all die because a condemned life was bequeathed to them by our first parents. All are born dying. The whole of what we call life is imperfect growth and a process of decay, arrested temporarily by such expedients as man can devise. Adam completed the journey in 930 years. The worldwide average length of life is now about 63 years.

But why? Why did God arrange that Adam’s penalty should descend to all the billions of his race, none of whom enjoyed his opportunity to live forever? Does it not seem unjust that such a multitude, without being consulted, and without power to avoid it, should receive a curse which they did nothing to bring upon themselves? Is there any wisdom in it?

Before mentioning the Scriptural answer to these reasonable questions, we might well ask — is it at all likely that we, in Adam’s position, would have done better than he did? Let each one carefully think this out for himself, and the conclusion must be that most of us, if not all, would have done precisely what our progenitors did in the garden of Eden.

Therefore, it cannot be said that God was unreasonable in not giving us an experience exactly like that of our first parents. And when the arrangements made for atonement for sin are comprehended, it will be clear that the course God took was not only reasonable, but was the most advantageous for the human race.

All the World Guilty Before God

God requires the punishment of disobedience, and cannot allow the guilty to be cleared (Exodus 34:6, 7, Romans 3:19). “Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne” (Psalms 89:14, 97:2), and God does not change His principles. He is “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17, Numbers 23:19). This inflexibility of purpose guarantees God’s reliability and the unchangeableness of His designs.

Without assurance on this point, we could not feel sure of anything. God was just to condemn Adam. If God simply changed His mind, what assurance could there be that God would ever be true to His commitments

thereafter? In that case, how could we have confidence in any blessings He would promise? Divine justice may seem severe at times, but its fixity is the guarantee of stability for the universe.

Our all-wise Heavenly Father foresaw the difficulty into which the entire race would be plunged by Adam's transgression. Even before creating man, God had a plan for our redemption, compatible with His principles. Wisdom showed the way in which Love and Justice could both be served. Justice was exacted. But Love expressed itself by providing a sacrifice — a corresponding price — which alone could satisfy the righteous claim of divine justice.

And what would be a corresponding price? A corresponding price would be the substitution of life for life. Nothing more could be required, nothing less would be satisfactory. But where shall be found the corresponding price? Since all the race was condemned, "none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psalms 49:7). Thus a redeemer must come from above, not tainted with sin as we all are.

Wisdom allowed the whole race — Adam's posterity within his loins — to be condemned on account of his sin. Thus, if a single man of perfect righteousness could be found, willing to give his life as a sacrifice, that would suffice to redeem Adam and all who received Adam's condemned life through procreation. Our Redeemer would also give up the life of a race of descendants within him, as with Adam.

But where was such a man, such a redeemer? No member of Adam's race was qualified. No freshly created new man would suffice — for there could be no assurance that another inexperienced man would do any different than Adam did. So God would provide a redeemer from heaven.

Bought with a Price

The Son of God shared his Father's love for, and interest in, the human race. When divine Wisdom pointed out that he might become the man required, God's son was willing. By giving up his human life, an earthly wife, and future posterity, he could supply the ransom which divine Justice required.

Jesus at once agreed to make the sacrifice. He had a closer association with the Father than any other being. He was trustful and willing to carry out this portion of the plan devised by God's wisdom. Jesus had been with the Father from the beginning. He had been the Father's right hand in the creation of all things (John 1:3).

But he was not a man. He was a spirit being of high order, next to God himself. How could he, Jesus, be a ransom, or corresponding price? In the

“Picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word. Love, from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act” (*Divine Plan of the Ages*, page 191).

glory of his prehuman condition he was far more than the value required, and divine justice, which could not be satisfied with less, could not require more. However, Jesus could be satisfactory to justice as a ransom by leaving his heavenly glory and becoming a man. As a man he could offer his life a ransom for Adam.

Could divine Power accomplish such a wonderful thing? Could God transfer Jesus from heavenly Jesus from spirit to earthly conditions? Yes, He could. So Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant ... he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7, 8, American Standard Revised). “A body didst thou prepare for me” — for sacrifice (Hebrews 10:5). “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

A Little Lower than the Angels

The glory of the first man is described in Hebrews 2:7, 8. “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” But the entrance of sin made a great change. “Now we see not ... all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:8, 9).

Note how clearly the ransom is here defined. Adam was crowned with the glory of perfect humanity, a little lower than the angels, and honored as ruler over the entire world. But he lost it all by reason of sin, and his posterity shares that loss. Jesus, a spirit being, one who participated in creating angels and men, divested himself of his heavenly glory, and took instead the glory and honor of perfect humanity.

The word “ransom” occurs three times in the New Testament: Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, 1 Timothy 2:6. In the first two, it translates the Greek noun *lutron*, Strong 3083, “the price for redeeming” (Thayer), “something to loosen with, a redemption price” (Strong). In 1 Timothy 2:6 the word is *antilutron*, which means “a substitutionary ransom” (Vine).

The Corresponding Price a “Touchstone”

William Tyndale, the great reformer, said that the doctrine of the ransom is the “touchstone to try all teachings.” This clear teaching of the ransom shows that our blessed Redeemer, when he was on earth, was actually a man. Before he came to earth he was a mighty spirit being, in fellowship with God himself. But it was “the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

The temptations of Jesus were real. His prayers to God were not formalities. He really gave up his all, his human life and its potential, for Adam and his race. He trusted his Father to raise him from death.

- “Ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20).
- “Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6)
- “His son ... the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).
- “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- Jesus “bare our sins ... on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).
- God “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).
- “Christ both died, and rose ... that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Romans 14:9).
- “He is the propitiation for our sins: and ... for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).
- “Redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot ... foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:18-20).

Christ died for all. Thus all will be redeemed. In the present Gospel Age, consecrated believers who trust in Jesus have their sins covered, “being now justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9, 3:24).

During the Millennium, the world will have the curse lifted. All will be called to obedience and everlasting life. “There shall be no more curse” (Revelation 22:3). “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

Study Questions — (1) What did God provide Adam and Eve as a sign of the coming atonement? (2) What is the penalty for sin? (3) How long was the “day” in which Adam died? (4) How many of Adam’s race are condemned by his disobedience? (5) What did Jesus do to redeem us? (6) Why was Jesus made “a little lower than the angels”? (7) How many times does “ransom” occur in the New Testament? (8) What is the Greek word for “ransom” in Matthew and Mark? (9) What is the Greek word for “ransom” in 1 Timothy 2:6?

Consecration

*“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ...
your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).*

Consecration is a term well known among Bible Students. It was also used in the Adventist Movement of the early 1800s, preceding the Truth Movement. But in much of the Christian world the term is seldom heard and its meaning is seldom appreciated.

One reason for this is a misunderstanding about the purpose of the Christian call. Some mistakenly suppose it is merely a means of escaping horrible punishment in the afterlife. Thus a simple profession of faith, and reasonably moral conduct, are thought sufficient to avoid the jeopardy and secure a place in heaven.

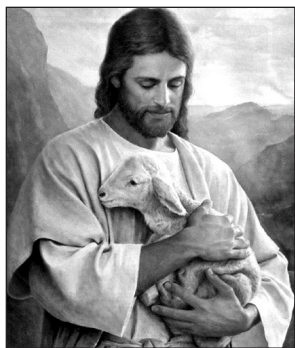
However, this seriously misapprehends God's purpose. God is not merely saving a few before He destroys (or worse) the remainder. Rather, God is now selecting men and women of faith for special honors during the Millennium. Namely, to reign with Christ in heaven as spiritual rulers of the world. They will lead the world to an era of righteousness, godliness, and truth.

This program will include all the dead of past ages, for they will be resurrected back to life during the Millennium in order to learn righteousness. As Satan and his demons now lead the world into sin and ignorance, then Christ and his saints will lead the world into obedience and understanding. (See Revelation 20:13, 6.)

High Standards

When we understand the high honor to which the saints are called, we better appreciate the high standards that are expected of them. These may be considered in four parts. (1) Godly conduct, (2) Character Development, (3) Study of the Truth, (4) Service and Sacrifice.

Godly Conduct. Paul lists some of the sins of the flesh in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 — fornication, idolatry, adultery, thievery, coveting, intoxication, railing. “The unrighteous [doing such things] shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Repentance is a prerequisite for consecration. Jesus taught us humility, sorrow for sin, meekness, holiness, mercy to others, purity of heart, making peace, and suffering for doing good (Matthew 5:1-11).



Jesus, our Good Shepherd

Character Development. Christian character is the inward quality that produces Christian conduct. Our character is the sum of the principles and qualities in our heart and mind. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

It is easy to drift with the world. But one who has consecrated their life to God will resist this, knowing the spirit of the world is contrary to God. “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”

(Romans 12:2). “The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

There are two lists of Christian character, one from Paul, the other from Peter. (1) “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22, 23).

(2) “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. For if these things be in you, and abound ... an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-12, condensed). Each of us should nurture these qualities daily (Colossians 3:2).

Study of the Truth. If we are consecrated to God, we want to know the plan of God. In Paul’s day, some of his fellow Jews had “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2). We should be zealous as they, but we should also know God’s Plan accurately.

When we observe how Paul reasoned on the truth, we learn how to reason. Sometimes Paul used pictures used in the Old Testament. For example, the spiritual meaning of the wives of Abraham (Galatians 4:21-31), of Israel’s Atonement Day (Hebrews 9:1-14, 10:1-10), and of Melchizedek (Hebrews chapters 5, 7). He also drew lessons from the prophets (Romans 9:23-33 for example).

We should take time from daily life to read and think through matters of Truth. “Walk worthy of the Lord ... increasing in the **knowledge** of God” (Colossians 1:10). “Abound yet more and more in **knowledge** and ... judgment” (Philippians 1:9). “No work is more noble and ennobling than the reverent study of the revealed purposes of God” (Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 1, page 13).

Service and Sacrifice. Part of a consecrated life is active service for Christ, sacrificing earthly interests for spiritual work — expending time,

strength, energy, talents, or means for the Truth. Opening our home for fellowship with brethren. Attending meetings of God's people. For the Apostle Paul it meant travelling to serve brethren, preach the Truth, accepting physical abuse and imprisonment, and finally martyrdom.

The circumstances of consecrated brothers and sisters in Christ will vary, but each should look for some opportunity to serve the Truth and assist brethren. The apostles of Jesus admonished us to do this, and gave examples in their own lives. "I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith" (Philippians 2:17).

"The house of Stephanas ... have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints ... submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helps with us, and labours" (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16). "Barnabas and Paul [are] men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:25, 26).

The Word "Consecration"

There are eight different Hebrew words in the Old Testament which are rendered consecrate, consecrated, consecration, or consecrations. Here are some of them.

Nazar (Strong's number 5144), "to set apart" (for sacred purposes), Numbers 6:12. This text refers to the Nazarite vow, which is a picture of the consecration of Christians to God.

The most frequent Hebrew term rendered "consecrate" is a pair of words used together, 4390 (*mala*, to fill) and 3027 (*yad*, open hand, Exodus 28:41, 29:9, 33, 35). It refers to priests in the Old Testament. To fill an open hand means to be devoted to a sacred duty. We should have our "hands full" with our Christian service.

Millu (Strong's number 4394), from 4390, means a filling, or consecration. It is used of the offerings by which the priests were consecrated to their office. It appears six times in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, referring to the ram of consecration. Once it refers to the days of consecration of the priests (Leviticus 8:33). We should be consecrated as they were, and even more deeply.

"Consecrated" appears twice in the New Testament. The most relevant case is in Hebrews 7:28, which speaks of Jesus consecrated as a priest to serve God.

The second instance is from word Strong's number 1457, and means "to renew ... inaugurate." The text is Hebrews 10:20, speaking of a "new and living way which he [Christ] hath consecrated [inaugurated] for us."

Are All Christians Consecrated?

It would be good if they were. But not all are. Many believe in God, believe in Jesus as their savior, and appreciate what God has provided. They refrain from sin and evil as best they can. But they do not commit themselves personally. Others attend worship services, express works of kindness and charity. All of this is good.

But a further step necessary for us to join the cause of Christ — namely, a thoughtful **consecration** to God of our life. If this step is taken, then it is proper to symbolize that decision with water baptism, as a testimony to others. (See Romans 6:16, 8:17, 2 Timothy 2:11, 12, for the meaning of Christian baptism.)

If you have not considered the matter of consecration, take time to do so. Read our Lord's words about making this decision, in Luke 14:26-35. Spend some time on this, read it thoughtfully, perhaps twice.

As you read, remember the blessings promised, and the conditions for them: “by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality” (Romans 2:7). Remember the privilege of being together with Christ, in heaven, to bless “all the families of the earth” during the Millennium. God wishes us to respond favorably. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). If you decide on consecration, this can be done in private prayer to God.

The Tabernacle

Those who approach God are represented in the Tabernacle arrangement of Israel. The world is outside the court, believers are represented inside the court where they see the altar (the sacrifice of Jesus) and the laver (to wash from our sins). Those who go further come to the Holy, where consecration is pictured. There we see the light of the Scriptures (the candlestick), we feast on the word of God (the showbread), and offer the incense of devoted lives (the golden altar). When we die here, we then pass into the Most Holy, into the presence of God, “beyond the veil.”

Study Questions — (1) God is selecting an elect class, for what special honor? (2) What are four parts of the consecrated life? (3) What vow is described in Numbers 6:12? (4) In Matthew 16:24, what does Jesus tell us to do? (5) What does Romans 6:3-5 tell us about baptism?

Firstborn of Every Creature

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For in him were all things created ... he is before all things, and in him all things consist” (Colossians 1:15-17).

Before the life of Jesus was transferred to the womb of Mary by Jehovah, Jesus had existed for long ages. He was the first of God’s creation, “the firstborn of every creature.” Having this priority in being, it pleased God to use him as a master workman assisting God in the creation of all that followed.

God the Creator

God is the Creator. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). “God said, Let there be light ... God made the firmament ... God created great whales ... God made the beast of the earth ... God created man in his own image” (Genesis 12:4).

The New Testament bears the same testimony. “God ... created all things” (Ephesians 3:9). “Meats, which God hath created” (1 Timothy 4:3). “Thou hast created all things” (Revelation 4:11). God “created heaven ... and the earth ... and the sea” (Revelation 10:6), “the creation which God created” (Mark 13:19).

The role of Jesus in creation was as assistant, helper, or workman. God is the architect, planner, director, and Jesus performed the work appointed him. “There is but one God ... of whom are all things ... and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Proverbs Chapter Eight

A lovely passage of Scripture which since the earliest days of the Church has been applied to our Lord Jesus in his prehuman existence, is contained in Proverbs chapter eight. It describes wisdom, introduced in Proverbs 1:20. “Wisdom cries aloud in the open air, and raises her voice in public places.” Wisdom is calling for the humble and meek who will attend to heavenly wisdom. Wisdom’s instruction and virtues are recorded chapter by chapter, through the ninth chapter.

The reader will find much benefit and interest in reading those nine chapters, recognizing in them that wisdom calls out through God’s son, Jesus. Even during the days of his life on earth, Jesus was noted for his remark-

able wisdom, as in Mark 6:2 and Luke 11:31. Paul also connects Jesus to wisdom. “Christ ... the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30).

If we read Proverbs chapter eight with this thought in mind, that Jesus embodies the wisdom of God, the text tells us much about Jesus when he was with God before being born a babe at Bethlehem. Here is the passage from the Revised English Bible, Proverbs 8:22-31 (the last two verses are from the NASB version).

“Jehovah created me the first of his works long ago, before all else that he made. I was formed in earliest times, at the beginning, before earth itself. I was born when there was as yet no ocean, when there were no springs brimming with water. Before the mountains were settled in their place, before the hills I was born, when as yet he had made neither land nor streams nor the mass of the earth’s soil.

“When he set the heavens in place I was there, when he girdled the ocean with the horizon, when he fixed the canopy of clouds overhead and confined the springs of the deep, when he prescribed limits for the sea so that the waters do not transgress his command, when he made earth’s foundations firm.

“Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; and I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in the world, His earth, and having my delight in the sons of men.”

What lovely poetic testimony. Jesus was created by God as “the first of his works,” he was “born when as yet there was no ocean,” he was beside God “as a master workman,” rejoicing in the creation that he accomplished by God’s side. How close this is to the description by Paul which heads this article.

The Beginning of the Creation of God

Late in life, exiled to Patmos, John received his vision of Revelation. After chapter one, which introduces the book, John gave a series of messages to seven ecclesias in Asia Minor, representing the one Church of God as it exists in seven time periods during the Gospel Age. The last message was to the Laodiceans, and is introduced in Revelation 3:14.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” John’s statement is explicit. It accords with the testimony of Paul and also Proverbs. Jesus was the first one God created. He was “the beginning of the creation of God.”

Some Christians are disposed to doubt the text — including some who are translators. They look for a different rendering to avoid the evident meaning, and change the word “beginning.” The Greek word is *arche*. John used this word 23 times in his writings. In every case it is rendered “beginning” in the common version, and the context shows that this is the meaning intended.

Jesus was the beginning of God’s creation, and as he was first, he was used by God to bring forth all the remainder. “All things came into being through him; and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3, 4, NASB).

In the Presence of God

In all the ages before Jesus came to earth, Jesus learned from God — His character, spirit, disposition. Jesus grew to emulate and reflect that same character.

John 1:1, 2, twice says that Jesus was “with God” at the beginning of creation, and 1 John 1:2 says Jesus was “with the Father.” The word “with” in all three cases is from the Greek word *pros*. This is not the usual word for “with.” That would be *meta*, which is used in the New Testament more than 400 times.

Pros implies more than simply being with. It implies direction — toward, to, unto — and suggests one looking to another. Jesus was looking to God, learning from Him, becoming like Him in character. “The Word was in God’s presence” (John 1:1, Revised English Bible).

Jesus Chosen as our Redeemer

Jesus was of spirit nature like the angels. But he was chief above them all. Jesus was the one God chose to send as our Redeemer. It would be a difficult mission. It would mean humility, suffering, a lifetime commitment of service for others, and it would end in a painful death.

Someone so noble as to endure such trials would be highly honored, and God wished this honor to go to his beloved son. Giving this greatest treasure in sacrifice for the world, God showed His love for mankind as He could show it in no other way. Abraham giving up his “only begotten son,” Isaac, gives us a sense for the cost that it meant for God to give His son for us.

That experience also allowed Jesus to gain depths and riches to his character which only suffering can bring. “In the days of his flesh ... he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that

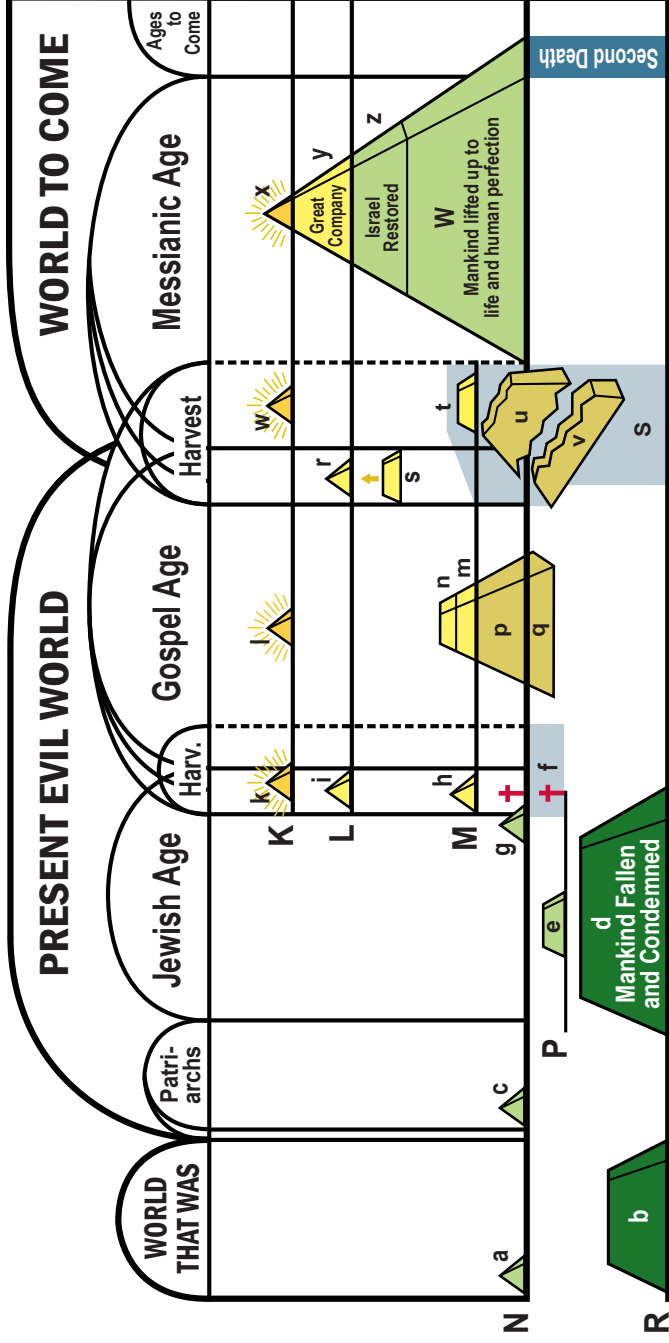
was able to save him ... though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

Jesus' character deepened with each painful circumstance which fastened his heart more firmly to God's principles. “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore ... thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:9).

Study Questions — (1) God was the Creator. What role did Jesus play? (2) In Proverbs 8, Jesus is the personification of what quality? (3) What does the Greek word *pros* mean as applied to Jesus? (4) What does Hebrews 1:9 say was done for Jesus?

CHART OF THE AGES

From Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored



“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables” Habakkuk 2:2