

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
October 2005

Faithbuilders Fellowship

A new publication, free to all requestors ... but we must receive your request to continue sending it.

The purpose of this publication is to follow up on the thousands of persons introduced to the Truth through the work of Faithbuilders Fellowship. It is not generally known, except to a few, how large was the response to this work which was developed by Bro. Gilbert Rice, of blessed memory. Our purpose through this journal is to nourish that interest and expand the work to others.

Much of that interest developed in Africa and India, where the numbers of intelligent, thoughtful men and women of Christian faith are vast and increasing. But responses are also plentiful elsewhere. One of our goals through this journal is to promote a sense of community and brotherhood among these many widespread persons of faith. Another is to introduce them to the broader "Bible Student Movement," in cases where their exposure to this is limited.

Another is to help them put on the "whole armour of God," including the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, endurance, gentleness, piety, faith, meekness, self control (Galatians 5:22, 23). Another, to increase their appreciation of the Divine Plan. Another, to probe the deeper things of Scripture, both Doctrine and Prophecy.

The present Harvest of the Gospel Age is drawing to a close. We are thus in the closing years of the most wonderful opportunity which ever has been, or ever will be, extended to mortal man — namely, to consecrate their lives to God and thereby embrace the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). The time remaining is relatively short, only some decades. Then "the master of the house" will rise up and "shut ... the door," admitting no others (Luke 13:25, Matthew 25:10). Thus our interest to advance the cause while it is timely.

However, the close of the heavenly call is not the end of God's Plan. Then the Millennial Kingdom for the remainder of the world will be just beginning. It will begin at Israel, where Christ's Kingdom on Earth will first be established. Then it will grow worldwide (Daniel 2:35). Even the dead of past ages will then be raised to life. The knowledge of God will fill the earth "as the waters cover

the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). (See the articles "Chart of the Ages," "Two Ages of Redemption," and "When Comes the Kingdom?" in this issue.)

Many Contacted, Few Deeply Studied

As often with public work, the number of contacts and interested ones is much greater than the number who pursue the Truth to its depth. This is not simply because some are more interested. Another reason is that Christian readers are frequently not accustomed to studying the Bible to actually learn what God is doing — now, in the past, and in the future.

The Bible contains more than moral maxims and Christian principles. But few set themselves to learn the specifics of God's program. Why did God allow Satan to tempt our first parents? Why does He allow evil to continue? Will He stop it ... and when? Why did Jesus have to suffer and die?

What is different about God's calling before Jesus came, and since Jesus died? How does the present Gospel Age differ from the coming Millennial Age? Will God reclaim the heathen? When? What will be the work of the Saints in glory?

Bible Students have answers to all of these questions. You can also. Easily. If you wish to. In this very issue many of them are answered, and others will be addressed in future issues.

Then, Going Deeper

Beyond understanding the Divine Plan in general, there are types, shadows and prophecies which give greater precision to our understanding. For example, in Galatians 4:22 and following, Paul explains that the Covenants of God were represented in the lives of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar.

In Hebrews chapters 5 and 7 he shows the references to Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and Psalms 110 have deep things to say about Christ. He chided the brethren just a bit, seeing they had not advanced in these things. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the

oracles of God” (Hebrews 6:11-13). He urged them to look into the “meat,” “the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).

So we will explore the depths of the Lord’s Word. The gathered light of the entire Gospel Age is focussed in our day, and we can properly expect some success.

Forming Study Ecclesias

We hope our readers everywhere will form study ecclesias in their local areas, if this is not already the case. Studying the Scriptures in concert with others is a great benefit, and part of what the Lord commended in Matthew 18:20, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (See the article “Establishing an Ecclesia,” in this issue.)

Asking Questions

As you study, questions will come to mind. Some can be answered from reading the study material a second time, carefully, closely. But sometimes it helps to have a personal answer to specific questions. Feel free at any time to email, or write, with specific Scriptural questions. We will answer them briefly, quickly, and specifically. Our interest is in your growth in things spiritual.

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If you wish your name entered for a free subscription, request it as soon as possible. Email is the best way — state your name, repeat your mailing address, and request “Faithbuilders Fellowship.” Email ...

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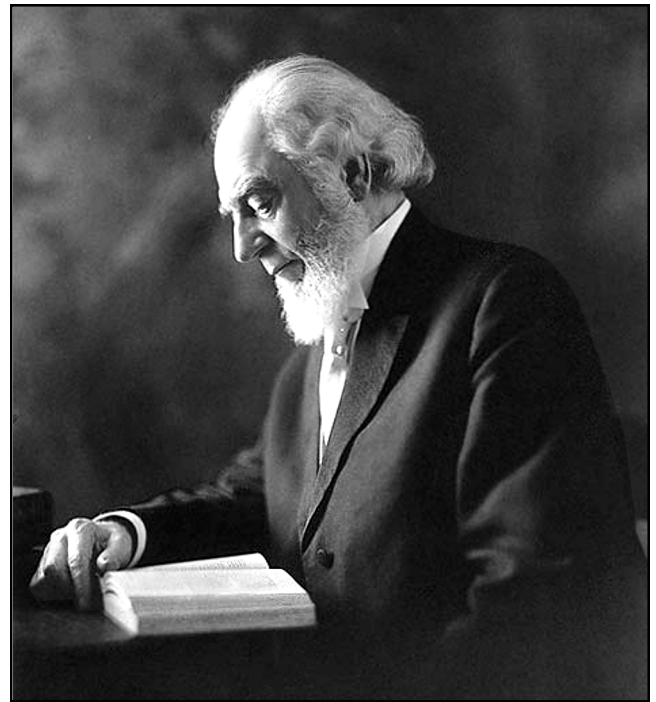
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We intend to publish monthly, Lord willing. If you wish to have a subscription, or know someone who does, contact us today. ***If we do not receive your request, we will not send the next issue.***

Pastor Charles Russell

Founder of the Bible Student Movement

Pastor Charles Russell, the leading light of the Bible Student Movement, was the greatest Christian leader and Bible Student of the 20th century. In his lifetime he was a public figure of international reputation. But foremost, and above all, he was consecrated to God, and devoted to the service of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Pastor Charles Russell

He was a wealthy businessman in his early years. Had he pursued his business interests, he may have been famous for his wealth, as some of his contemporaries — Rockefeller, Carnegie, and others. But while a young man he learned from other long time students of prophecy that the long hoped for *Parousia* of Christ had begun, and the harvest of the Gospel Age was upon us. (See the footnote about *Parousia* at the end of the next article.)

Therefore he sold his business interests and devoted his considerable personal wealth to preaching the truths of the Divine Plan, which gradually formed through the studies of brethren over many years. These various doctrines congealed as a comprehensive testimony of Present Truth under the ministry of Pastor Russell.

Seven Messengers

Revelation 12:1 pictures the early church as having a crown of 12 stars. These stars represent the light-bearers to the Church, the 12 “apostles of the lamb.” They grounded the Church in the “faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). But Revelation also says Jesus “had in his right hand seven stars,” which represent seven “angels” or “messengers” to the seven stages of the Christian church through the age (Revelation 1:16, 20). These seven messengers are notable individuals, teachers, who would guide each stage of the Church with an enlightening message appropriate for their time in history.

The specific identification of these seven messengers varies among brethren, but there is a general consensus that Paul, John, Arius, Waldo and Luther were among them. Of recent years some have identified William Penn

as the messenger to the Philadelphia phase of the Church, beginning in 1667, and we are attracted to that view. Certainly the seventh messenger was Pastor Charles Taze Russell. Pastor Russell was the author of a series of six volumes collectively titled “Studies in the Scriptures,” which present the substance of the Harvest Message which Bible Students everywhere embrace with appreciation.

Great Changes

Pastor Russell died in the year 1916. By that time the Bible Student Movement was worldwide, though mainly in America and Europe. In the years following, as so often happens at the passing of a great leader, the movement drifted and changed.

Two central truths of the movement — that the Millennial Kingdom of Christ would bless every man, woman and child with an opportunity for life — and that presently the Lord’s people are called to become joint-heirs with Christ in the heavens — both began to change. When this happened the movement took on a different spirit, and in the 1930s adopted the name Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Bible Student Movement

Those who held to the Truth separated from the Watchtower Society, and continued the original message and the original movement. This is the movement which we represent. It is still called the “Bible Student Movement,” as it was in Pastor Russell’s day. (It is also affectionately called the “Truth Movement” by its many friends.) Faithbuilders Fellowship is part of this original, worldwide, Bible Student Movement.

We organize today, as the early church did, in independent study ecclesias. Elders and deacons are selected from the congregation, and serve for the love of the Lord, without monetary pay. We do not take up collections, and we do not pay ministers. We follow the spirit of devotion preached by Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 16:24, Romans 12:1). We conform our characters to become Christ-like (Romans 12:2). And we preach the gospel of the Kingdom wherever possible.

Bible Student literature is written for the serious student. It takes time to proceed through it. When you do, you will find it rich, spiritual food, satisfying to mind and heart. No reasonable question need go unanswered. As questions arise in your studies, feel free to ask them through mail or email.

If your heart is touched by its message, and you have not already done so, consider deeply the opportunity of consecrating your life to God, having this consecration symbolized by water baptism, and becoming part of the body of Christ (Romans 6:1-5). No greater opportunity is open to men and women today than this blessed privilege. May the Lord richly bless your noble studies of the Lord’s Word.

Brother Gilbert Rice

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ... for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself” (Matthew 6:33, 34).

Bro. Gilbert Rice is known to our readers around the world through his various publications under the name “Faithbuilders Fellowship.” He was one of the deepest students of scripture of the contemporary Christian world. He passed away at the age of 78, after 66 years of devoted service, beginning from the age of 12 when he made a thoughtful consecration of his life to God. He leaves as legacy the work of Faithbuilders Fellowship.

Bro. Gilbert moved from his native Seattle, Washington, soon after graduating from high school, in order to engage in full time service with the Dawn Bible Students Association in New Jersey. Though naturally gifted, he gave no thought to seeking higher education, thinking first of the “Kingdom of God, and His righteousness,” Matthew 6:33, which was his hallmark text.

He would have been eighteen years of age at the time. Thereafter his parents joined him at the Dawn, where on occasion, after working through the day, he continued through the night in his contributed service.

Those were the years of World War II. Bro. Gilbert was subject to the draft, but as a conscientious objector to participation in military service — the usual position of Bible Students everywhere — he served his time at a medical facility. He married Sr. Marjorie Jeuck in 1945. Their first son passed away in his early childhood, but five other children grew to adult years and all consecrated their lives to God (compare Genesis 18:19).

IN THIS ISSUE

Faithbuilders Fellowship 1
Pastor Charles Russell 2
Brother Gilbert Rice 3
Establishing an Ecclesia 5
Chart of the Ages 6
Two Ages of Redemption 9
When Comes the Kingdom? 11

FAITHBUILDERS FELLOWSHIP is a publication of Millennial Morning, a recognized religious, non-profit organization established for the dissemination of Christian teaching. Address all communications to — 8060 Wing Span Drive, San Diego, CA 92119, USA. Contact us by email at — FFellowship@aol.com. Subscriptions are free to all requestors. Visit our website at members.aol.com/FFellowship • Scriptural questions are welcome at all times. Those of general interest may be published in future issues • We are part of the Worldwide “Bible Student Movement.” To find a Bible Study Ecclesia in your area, tell us your city and country and we will advise you of the nearest one.



Brother Gilbert and Sister Marjorie Rice

In May of 1947 the couple moved to California where Bro. Gilbert was elected an elder in the San Diego Bible Students Ecclesia. He served that ecclesia faithfully for many years following until his stroke on August 11, 1999, and passed to his reward on March 11, 2002. It is now half a week of years since his passing.

None was his equal in labors, devotion and service to the local brethren, the Truth, and the Ecclesia. He was a pastoral figure, always ready to lend a helping hand, comfort the bereaved, and assist financially. He regularly officiated at weddings and funerals. He traveled often, serving various conventions in America and Canada.

In their early marriage Bro. Gilbert and Sr. Marjorie were monetarily poor, because of his emphasis on spiritual activities first. But with small children to raise, he set his shoulder to his duties. Soon he found a niche marketing automobile fluids, sold his accounts to a competitor, and found employment at newspapers and elsewhere using the typesetting skills he learned at the Dawn. He had no steady position, but the Lord overruled that he found employment on a daily basis. When pressed to join a working coalition necessary for employment, he was almost disbarred by his fellows because of his position as a conscientious objector during the war.

As time passed he opened a small typesetting service which rapidly became the largest in the city. Through various requests, he opened shops in two other cities and acquired a third. The demands were pressing, but his service to the Lord was primary. He continued active in witness work, nourishing his children in the fear of the Lord, leading local services, and filling speaking appointments in the Lord's work. Most holidays were spent with his family at Bible Student conventions.

Of course, every Sunday was devoted to regular meetings of the San Diego Ecclesia. Midweek evening meetings were attended weekly, sometimes twice weekly. The entire family was involved. By this means we all learned the value of putting spiritual things first. We learned the Truth early, and thoroughly. Family vacations were extended camping trips enroute to distant Bible Student conventions.

Witness Work

From time to time the local Ecclesia sponsored public meetings at cities in surrounding areas. On one occasion Bro. Gilbert was attacked by a dog while tracting for a public meeting in El Centro, California, an experience I remember as a child.

He continued this custom even late in life. As he tracted assiduously for a series of prophetic meetings in San Diego, not long before his stroke, he became disoriented through exhaustion and heat, and made it home only by the Lord's overruling providence. Up to and even including his last day of life, he continued sending Truth materials to inquirers in far away places.

International Service

His international service began in the late 1960s, co-operating with Bro. Robert Alexander and others to provide witness materials for the Japanese people. He was a founding member of the Divine Plan Foundation, and of the Bible Students Newsletter, first printed in San Diego.

In 1972 he became a founding member of the Bible Students Committee for Africa, well known to our many brethren and associates in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and elsewhere. His international travels began in 1974 with a pilgrim trip to serve brethren in India, but this trip also took him through Africa and around the world, introducing him to brethren of several countries.

When these opportunities declined, he continued his labors through Faithbuilders Fellowship, publishing over 50 deeply thought treatises on the Lord's Word for public distribution. These went out by the tens of thousands, augmented by lengthy trips through Africa, India, Europe, Australia and the Orient. It is these labors to which we have fallen heir. It is an honor to forward the work so nobly engaged.

Resting, Yet Working

Now he rests from his labors. However, we are confident that he continues his service to God on a higher plane in union with saints beyond the veil. We are now living in the end of the Gospel Age, during the *Parousia** of Christ. Thus we are in the fortunate time of Revelation 14:13. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

As the Apostle Paul recounted the heroes of faith from the Old Testament, so let us remember the faithful of the present age, and be uplifted, strengthened, encouraged, to emulate their faith in our lives. Let us follow the examples we have observed in brethren who have passed beyond. As they fought the “good fight of faith,” so let us. Even until death.

* *Parousia* is a Greek word which means “presence” (as in Philippians 2:12). The common version English translation of the New Testament often renders this word “coming,” which obscures the meaning somewhat. Technically this rendering is not incorrect, because “coming,” as a noun, usually refers to one’s presence following a transit. For example, if one says “at my coming, we will renew our friendship,” this actually refers to one’s presence, after an arrival. When *parousia* is used respecting Christ’s Return, it refers to the period of time after he has returned — his “presence.”

According to the prophecies, Christ’s presence is coincident with the last phase of the Church, namely the Laodicean stage. This is the Church of our day. Most brethren commence this Church about the year 1874, marked by the end of the 1335 years of Daniel 12:12. Before the Return of Christ the saints who passed away slept peacefully in death, waiting for the resurrection. But now, during the present Harvest period, those who are “faithful unto death” (Revelation 2:10) are raised shortly following their death. Thus our belief that Bro. Gilbert is now rejoicing in glory.

Establishing an Ecclesia

*“Not Neglecting to Meet Together”
(Hebrews 10:25, RSV)*

Friends of the Truth everywhere are interested to know how to establish an Ecclesia* of the Lord’s people in their area, which we heartily recommend. The following guidelines are adapted from an article on this subject by Bro. Gilbert Rice.

Any agreed location for a meeting is appropriate; the place is hallowed by the assembly of devoted hearts. A home, school room, church building, or even a garden may be suitable. The form of meeting can be simple. Three or four believers are sufficient to begin. Others can be invited to share as the weeks proceed.

The one whose personal appreciation and zeal leads to the formation of a meeting might be the beginning leader, if he is capable of engaging the minds of the attendees in the scriptural lessons. As attendance increases, others found qualified to function as chairperson could be asked to lead also. The privilege of leading could be rotated weekly, monthly, or quarterly.

Leaders should be thoughtful, fair-minded, humble, patient, careful to listen to the expressions of others, intent on proclaiming as truth only evident Bible teachings. Interest and learning comes by participation, so questions, comments, and answers by all who attend should be encouraged. Leaders should be devoted to God, and clear in understanding God’s Plan of the Ages. They should be clear that Jesus “gave himself a ransom

for all” (1 Timothy 2:6), that the redeemed of this age are offered a Heavenly Call to joint-heirship with Christ, and that the world in general will have an opportunity for everlasting life in the Kingdom of Christ, soon to be established.

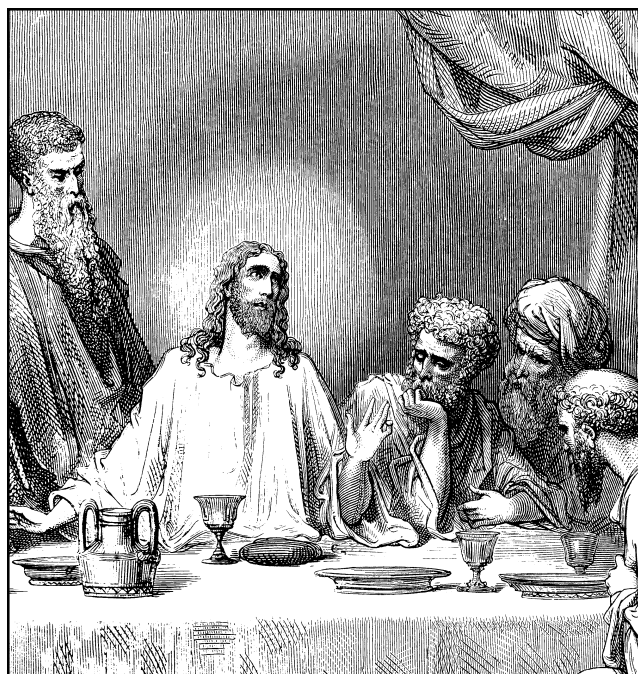
Any of the publications available through us, or the Bible Student Movement generally, are suitable for use as a topical study guide. Each one attending the meeting should be given a copy for themselves. When these materials are used, all participants, but specially the one appointed in advance to be leader of the meeting, should come prepared. Preparation for leading requires a close reading of and familiarity with the portion to be covered.

Start Now

You may start forming these meetings even now, by choosing an article in this publication. The one titled “Chart of the Ages” is specially suited for an opening study. Then you might proceed to the article titled “Two Ages of Redemption.” If you have extra copies of this paper, pass them to others in preparation for the meeting. You can easily make more copies for a larger group.

The meeting should open with prayer for the Spirit of God to guide the participants, and assist them to understand the lesson at hand. In a moderate or larger sized group, one or more hymns might be used at the outset to focus the minds, hearts and emotions of those gathering, on the spiritual joys and blessings of such a Christian gathering.

When the study is engaged, the leader may ask a participant to read the opening paragraph or two of the material used as a guide for the study. These can be read aloud, while each one in the meeting follows with their



Jesus meeting with a little flock

own copy. Thus all minds are focussed on the same issues, for clarity and discussion. The Bible passages referenced in the paragraphs can also be read aloud and should be given close attention. Be sure to consider the context of the passage to get the meaning intended in the scriptures cited. The goal is always to understand the mind of the Lord on whatever subject is at hand.

Related scriptures brought to mind during the leader's preparation can also be considered in the study. Specific questions could be prepared in advance, asked by the leader to prompt the participants to express the Truths elucidated in the study material. Sometimes appropriate scriptures will come to the mind of participants, which they can share by public comment. To keep order, the comments of the participants should be directed to the leader, for the benefit of all. Any relevant questions of the participants can also be directed to the leader, who may give a comment or call for comments by others as suits the occasion.

The session might last an hour or more. In San Diego, on Sunday mornings, our custom is to open with a 15 minute devotional prepared by a local brother — seven or eight brothers are appointed by a quarterly chairman to lead this in rotation weekly. This devotional includes an opening hymn, an opening prayer, some uplifting exhortation from the scriptures, interspersed with two or more hymns.

This devotional is followed by a one hour study using the series titled "Studies in the Scriptures" as subject material. Following a half hour break for fellowship, we have a second hour led by one of the local elders, either a discourse or a directed study, or a question meeting. In this case the local elders give their pre-studied comments on questions the class submits in earlier weeks.

Once monthly the morning study is supplanted by a Testimony meeting. That day is extended by a communal lunch after the second meeting. Every family brings a large dish of food of their choice, these are put out in a serving line, and all the attendees stay for the meal and fellowship.

Perhaps once every other month we have a visiting elder from another Ecclesia serve us with two discourses, with lunch between, making a full day of spiritual gathering and fellowship. We meet also on an evening during the midweek for hymns, a study in the Scriptures, and some brief testimonies. We open and close all our meetings with a hymn and a prayer.

Notify Us

Let us know if you begin a new study group. We can supply literature for all the participants, and can remember your meetings in prayer. If questions arise, feel free to email us for a scriptural reply. Remember how deeply the Apostle Paul was studied in the Scriptures, and follow his noble example. Remember how he admonished the Philippians, "I pray that your love may abound yet

more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Philippians 1:9, see also Hebrews 5:12 through 6:9).

Let us become rooted, grounded, and nourished, in the "Present Truth" (2 Peter 1:12). Those who are devoted and capable, set it as a goal to "put on the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11) and assist others to the same end.

If you are a leader of Christian people, take seriously your responsibility to teach them the Truth. If you are in an area without an established Ecclesia, make plans to form a study group which can become an Ecclesia. God-speed to you all.

* *Ecclesia* is the Greek word used in the New Testament for a congregation of the Lord's people. It is common among brethren in the Truth Movement to refer to the San Diego Ecclesia, or the Lagos Ecclesia, or the Ecclesia in Coimbatore, India, etc.

Chart of the Ages

A Visual Study of the Divine Plan

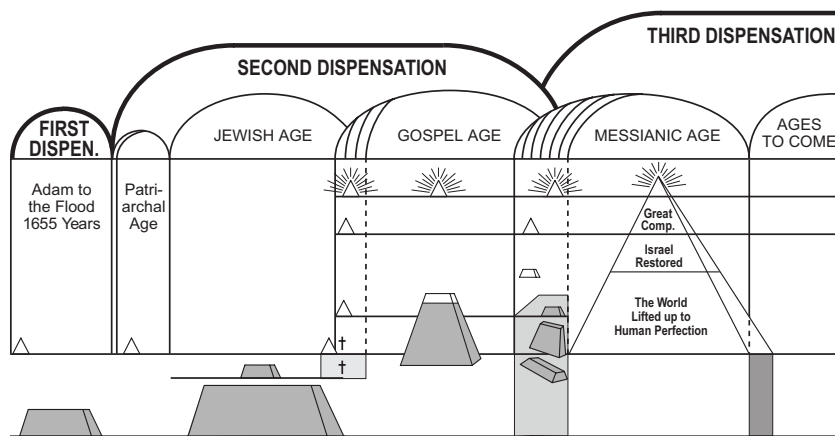
On the following page is a simplified version of a graphic known by Bible Students everywhere as the "Chart of the Ages" (A full version appears in Chapter 12 of the first volume of the series "Studies in the Scriptures," titled *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, along with a detailed explanation.)

The basic structure of this chart, showing the Plan of God for mankind, is 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 endured for 1655 years until God brought it to a close with the Flood, saving only Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, eight persons total (1 Peter 3:20). In that pre-deluvian world people regularly lived into the 700s, 800s, and 900s of years, though none evidently reached the 1000 year mark. Probably that was an upper limit suggested by God's words, "In the **day** that thou eatest [of the forbidden tree], thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Psalms 90:4 refers to a thousand years as one day in the sight of God.

The first world was different in many ways from the present. The race was nearer perfection, evidently more robust of health, and probably their mental capacities were similarly improved in comparison to us today. After the flood the lifespans of mankind dropped parabolically, until living a hundred years became rare. Apparently Earth's environment was altered substantially in the cataclysm of the flood, allowing more radiation to pierce the atmosphere, which gradually weakened the genetic substance of the race.



There were other large differences as well. Genesis 6:1-4, 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 tell us some of the angels materialized into human form to in-breed with humanity, producing a mixed offspring not intended by God in the original design of creation. These worked with the natural depravities of the world to bring about a condition of wickedness and violence (Genesis 6:12), such that God deemed it better to remove them through the flood, and repopulate Earth afresh through the family of Noah.

The many millions or billions of Adam's race who perished in the flood are not forgotten by God. They sleep in death, awaiting the resurrection to occur during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ (John 5:28, Acts 24:15). Then they will return to a world governed in righteousness. Everything will be conducive to their progress. By having the downward course of the world checked by the flood, the world was measurably cleansed, and the people will be better for it during the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, a valuable lesson was given for all generations, that God, though long suffering and merciful, will not permit evil to continue. He will bring evil doers into judgment. At the end of the 1000-year Kingdom of Christ there will be a final judgment in which all who are evilly disposed after the Millennium will be destroyed (Revelation 20:7 and forward). That destruction will be *everlasting*. Thus it is very important that before that time the world learns, and knows, that the final judgment will be irrevocable.

The flood stands as a stark lesson to everyone that God is mindful of sin. Reformation and repentance are required of everyone who will gain everlasting life — either in heaven (through the Gospel Age call), or in Earth (through the Millennial Age call). Thus the condemnation of the world in the flood was not only Just, it was also Wise and even Loving, since it leads to the greatest good for all.

The Present Evil World

This epoch is divided into three ages — the Patriarchal Age, the Jewish Age, and the Gospel Age. During the **Patriarchal Age**, God dealt with individuals of faith

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 He would bring a blessing to “all the families of the earth” through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 28:14).

This “seed of Abraham” — who would he be? He must be an heir, descending from Abraham, who would be the channel of all God's promises for life and blessing to the world. Paul says clearly that Jesus Christ was that seed. “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).

Abraham's son by his wife Sarah was Isaac, and Jacob was a son of Isaac. God chose them to carry forward the line through which Christ would come. 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, and of his oath unto Isaac [He] confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and 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,” which was another name of Jacob.

God made it clear that Messiah would come through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), and later narrowed the line of descent to David, King of Judah (2 Samuel 7:16). Thus when Matthew composed his Gospel he began by showing the legal genealogy of Jesus from Abraham, through Judah, through David, onward to Christ (Matthew chapter 1).

When Jesus appeared as the savior of the world, the promised Messiah (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 and acceptance of his ransom sacrifice for our sins. That was something not available to Abraham, Moses, or any of the ancients — not even to John the Baptist.

Christians generally fail to grasp how different and grander are the hopes of Christians, who receive redemption in Christ, from the hopes of godly men and women in previous ages. Abraham and others were *friends* of God through faith. But we become *sons* of God

through faith. They had earthly hopes, we have spiritual hopes. They had faith in a coming redemption, we receive the actual redemption.

God “hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ... according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began [it was planned for long ago], But is *now made manifest* by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9, 10).

The reward of the saints is to reign with Christ in Heaven, as glorious spirit beings. Our hope is to have a change of nature, and secure a heavenly life. Such a call was never offered to the ancients of faith — the “Ancient Worthies” as we call them. They knew of a coming release from condemnation, and a resurrection of the dead as a result. They knew they would be rewarded for their faith during that resurrection. But their hopes were earthly. In accord with their hopes, they will be raised to life as human beings, here on Earth. They will be the leaders on Earth during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, whereas the saints of the Gospel Age will rule from Heaven during that Millennial Kingdom.

“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 living in a period of transition which closes the Gospel Age, and brings us into the Millennial Age. When the Kingdom of Christ is established in the Earth, in the few decades just ahead of us, then the Millennial Kingdom of Christ will begin. (See the article titled “When Comes the Kingdom?” on page 11).

By that time the saints of the Gospel Age will be complete in glory, beyond the “veil” of flesh which separates us from our heavenly reward. As Revelation 19:7 expresses it of that time, “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife [the Church] hath made herself ready.”

The Church in glory 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. First the Ancient Worthies will be raised to life as leaders. Then the Kingdom of God will begin at Israel, and the Israelites will be converted to recognize Christ Jesus as their Messiah.

This conversion will occur at the crescendo of Israel’s troubles, when many nations come against her, as the prophets predicted (see Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, also Joel chapters 2 and 3). In their despair the Israelites will turn to God, the only hope for their desperate situation. Then the Ancient Worthies will guide Israel through her

peril and explain that their deliverance comes through Messiah, Jesus Christ. What a thorough repentance this news will bring!

“In that day ... I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications [prayer]: and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:9, 10).

Thereafter the blessing and authority of that kingdom will flow outward to the entire world, which will gradually come under its blessed sway.

“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain [kingdom] of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills [other nations of the Earth]; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall ... say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:1, 2). You can read more about the establishment of this Kingdom in Zechariah 14:3-9.

The Church in glory during this time will be the spiritual leaders of the Kingdom. From their heavenly station they will supervise, instruct, direct, and judge the people of the world. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Revelation assigns two roles for the Church during the Millennium — Priests and Kings. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ... they shall be **priests** of God and of Christ, and shall **reign** with him [Christ] a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6, 1:6). Priests lead people to God, and Kings set the laws and agenda.

During this thousand year Kingdom, Satan will be bound “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled” (Revelation 20:3). When his deceptions are removed, and the veil obscuring the purposes of God is removed, the people of Earth will respond with enthusiasm.

“He will destroy ... the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations ... And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is Jehovah, 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 which the Bible calls a “Little Season” (Revelation 20:3). It will be a period of testing following the Millennium, when Satan will be permitted to test mankind as he tested Adam and Eve in the Gar-

den. “When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations” (Revelation 20:7, 8). The purpose of this is to allow each to show by their conduct what is in their heart — whether pure or impure.

By this time the world will be thoroughly prepared for such a test. Behind them will lay the present life of sin, death, and condemnation, followed by several 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. Every blessing life holds will be open and manifest during that time. The noble desires of every heart will find satisfying fulfillment. Each one, contributing to the common good, and benefiting from the same, will be richly blessed. Who would not choose those incredible blessings and the principles from which they spring?

Free Moral Choice

But as Satan was originally holy, and chose of his free will to take a wayward course, so this most precious bestowment — free moral choice — will be allowed to each person. During the **Little Season** each will show what is in his heart. Those committed to the right will receive never ending life. Those who choose evil will not. Thereafter Satan and all the ungodly will be cut off, never to afflict the world again.

Then God will have achieved His purpose. In heaven he will have a divine family, tried through difficulty and found faithful, a treasure through all eternity. On Earth He will have a race of mankind in a perfect society, equally enjoying the bounties of a perfect world, with full employ of every God given talent.

(In the next issue we will discuss the various levels, pyramids, and other details of the chart)

Two Ages of Redemption

The Key of the Divine Plan

The key to understanding God’s Plan is to recognize that He has planned not simply one, but two different and distinct ages of redemption. The first is for calling, developing, and polishing the elect who will constitute God’s divine family, and rule with Christ in heaven during the Millennium. This is the **Gospel Age**.

The second is the **Millennial Age**. It is called the Millennial Age because it is a thousand years long. In that age God will resurrect all the dead of past ages (John 5:29, Acts 24:15). He will remove the hindrances now keeping the world from the Truth (Isaiah 25:7). Satan will be bound to prevent any interference (Revelation 20:3). A divine government will be established at Israel, led by the Ancient Worthies on Earth, ruled by the saints from heaven (Revelation 20:6, Micah 4:1-4, Zechariah 14:3-9).

This kingdom will have all the answers the world longs for.

- Wars will cease worldwide. “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth” (Psalms 46:9). “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4).

- There will be universal education about God, and what He expects. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

- Every man, woman and child who has ever lived will have an opportunity to gain everlasting life. “The earnest expectation of the creation waits ... because [then] the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption” (Romans 8:19, 21).

- The curse will be lifted. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Distinguish the Ages

Distinguishing these two separate and distinct ages of redemption clarifies much of the obscurity respecting God’s plan for the world. For example, what will happen to the billions of humanity that do not know the one True God, Jehovah, or his son, Jesus Christ? Are there not many good hearted people in the world without a saving knowledge of Christ? Some suppose God will graciously take them to heaven, their ignorance notwithstanding. But no scripture allows this, and Acts 4:12 is clearly against this.

Others suppose they are lost forever, perhaps even to horrible suffering. But the scriptures also do not allow this. “The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18). “God is love” (1 John 4:8), “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Scriptural answer is that in the Millennial Age all living generations will be taught the Truth, and all the dead of past ages will be raised to life, redeemed from death through the Ransom sacrifice of our Lord. Then they will learn the Truth. Then they will have an opportunity to secure everlasting life by reformation and obedience to the Truth. Even those from wicked Sodom of old will be included, as expressly declared in Ezekiel 16:53-63.

The Purpose of the Present Age

When Christ died at Calvary, and rose on Sunday morning, he opened “a new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20). He opened a call to “glory and honor and immortality” (Romans 2:7). This was something new, distinct from all the ages past. Christ “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

This is the greatest conceivable opportunity. It is an offer to be heirs of God — joint-heirs with Christ Jesus — of all the spiritual blessings God plans for His elect. However, this offer is contingent. It is contingent upon following a devoted life, and walking humbly before God, as Jesus walked (Romans 8:17, Micah 6:8).

In the present Gospel Age the path to life is narrow and secured by few. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). And there are conditions. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12). “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

You can make your own estimate of the number who meet these conditions. By any count, it is a relatively small number. So what of the remainder? What of the billions who know not the Master — Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists, Shintoists, or simple unbelievers? Or the millions in Christian cultures who pay no heed? Or the large majority of even Christian people who ignore the criteria expressed above? The answer is the same for all — God has another plan for these. They will have their opportunity for life in the Millennium. The Heavenly Call will then be closed, but the call to perfect, unending human life on Earth, will still be a wonderful opportunity.

Narrow, Yet Broad Enough

Yes, the heavenly call really is as narrow as the texts above say. Even the Apostle Paul said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13, 14).

Pursuing worldly pleasures, ease, and present comforts, will not secure the prize of the overcomers. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind [seeking] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

On the other hand, the way is broad enough so that even the simplest can attain it. It is not a matter of skill and ability, but of a heart willing to patiently put on the spirit and character of Christ through our lifetime. It will not admit a single person who deems the Christian goals unworthy of their daily attention and effort. But it will not restrict a single person who humbly follows the Master.

Two Paths for Christians

In light of these scriptures, one may wonder, what of Christians who do commit their lives to God, but do not follow through with a life of consecrated devotion? Paul addresses this question in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. In this

passage Paul begins by mentioning the foundation of our salvation, which is Christ (verse 11). Then he explains that we need to build on that foundation our structure of faith, works and character — our Christian life.

This building can be either with the divine principles represented by “gold, silver, precious stones,” or our time can be wasted on earthly pursuits represented by “wood, hay, stubble” — combustible elements which will not abide the testings God allows to come our way (verse 12). In verse 13 Paul says the work of every man will be manifest by the fire of trial and experience, “and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

Verse 14: “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward” — the reward promised to the overcomers. “Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Verse 15: “If any man’s work shall be burned [metaphorically, like wood, hay, stubble], he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” In other words, the trials will purge the dross, he will receive life beyond the veil,* but the reward of reigning with Christ, being part of his Bride class (Revelation 19:7, 8), will be missed. Thus the exhortation: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Various Ages

There are various ages in the Divine Plan. (See the accompanying article on the Chart of the Ages.) Two of them are ages of redemption, which follow the sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary. One is the Gospel Age, the other is the Millennial Age. The first is for the heavenly call, the second for the earthly call. When we distinguish these two ages, and these two calls, the Plan of God becomes reasonable, sensible, understandable.

God’s Plan of redemption is comprehensive. “In the dispensation of the fullness of times” God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (Ephesians 1:10).

* “Beyond the veil” is a common expression among Bible Students. It refers to our Heavenly Home. It derives from a type in the Old Testament, Israel’s Tabernacle in the Wilderness. That Tabernacle had two compartments, termed the “holy” and the “most holy.” The first represents the present condition of saints, called to be members of the body of Christ. As the priests in the holy saw by the light of the golden candlestick, so we see by the light of the Scriptures. As they displayed two stacks of six loaves of “shewbread” on a golden table, so we have the 66 books of the Bible for our spiritual nourishment. As they offered incense on the golden altar in the holy, so we offer our prayers and devotions to God (Psalms 141:2).

In the “most holy” there was but one article of furniture, the ark of the covenant, representing the presence of Jehovah in heaven. This chamber was separated from the “holy” by a curtain called “the vail” in Exodus, and the “second veil” in Hebrews. Thus the expression used so often, “beyond the veil,” which means beyond the present fleshly conditions into Heaven itself, in the presence of God. There we will appear during the resurrection.

When Comes the Kingdom?

The Nearness of our Hopes

It is coming soon. About 38 years from now. Do you remember Israel's Six-Day War? It was 38 years ago. It hardly seems so long ago. We marvelled at the victory against so many Arab nations, all united to destroy one tiny little country. All in vain, for this is the time for Israel's regathering. Setbacks may come, but nothing will thwart the movement of God's Plan when it is time.

As recent as that seems, it is the same length of time backward from now, as the Millennial Kingdom of Christ is forward from now. The Kingdom should come, at the end of 6000 years of human history, within the year 2043, just 38 years ahead.

What is the Evidence?

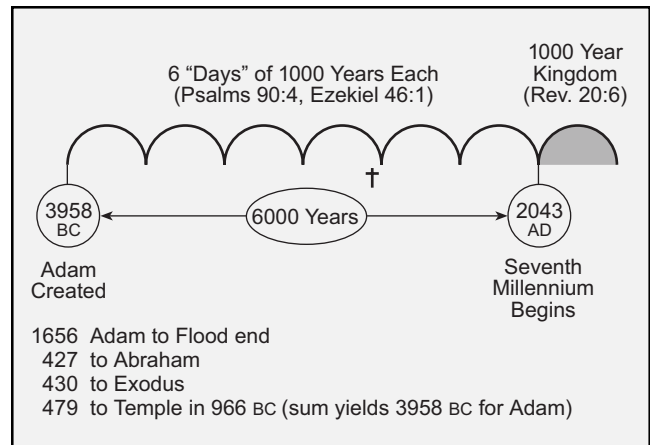
The evidence for this projection is the longstanding view, traceable in early Christian writings and even before that in Jewish thought, that following 6000 years of human history the Seventh Millennium would bring a relief from sin and death, emancipating the creation during a Thousand Year Sabbath of rest and restoration.

With this expectation in mind, Christians for centuries have studied and searched when the end of 6000 years of human history may come. In the early 1800s the Adventist Movement swept through Christian Churches, across denominational lines, anticipating the end of the age and the return of Christ. Among their prophetic calculations was the opinion that 6000 years from Adam would close with the year 1843.

As the year arrived, expectations mounted. This was not among a few here and there, but among millions of Christians in America and Europe who recognized that some of the time prophecies of Daniel had already closed, and others were near closure. The last of these, it was thought, (the 2300 years of Daniel chapter 8), would close with the year 1843, synchronous with the end of 6000 years. The date passed, some fine tuning ensued, and the expectations were reset to the following year, 1844. Even a specific day was anticipated, October 22, computed as the Day of Atonement for 1844. Still, their hopes did not materialize. The disappointment was keen.

Dates Come, Dates Go

The passing of this date, so widely anticipated, brought the ill repute of failed expectations. Naturally this dimmed the enthusiasm of many. But others continued to examine the divine word, rightly supposing that the error was not in the Scriptures, but in our imprecise understanding of them. These prophecies had been "closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). It would not be surprising if the keys to understanding would not all come at once. They would study still, seeking more precise information.



They rightly understood that the prophecy of 1260 years, mentioned twice in Daniel and five times in Revelation, had closed just before the opening of the 19th century. But there are five time prophecies in Daniel about the end times — 1260 years, 1290 years, 1335 years, 2300 years, 2520 years — and how all of them related to each other was uncertain.

Since then, these prophecies have all come into sharper focus. Bible Students for five generations have understood that the 1260 years closed in 1799, the 1290 years closed in 1829, the 1335 years in 1874, and the 2520 years in 1914.*

At one time the last of these dates, 1914, was also anticipated as the time when the saints would be delivered and the Kingdom of Christ established. The date was indeed a milestone in prophecy, introducing the "time of trouble" of Daniel 12:1. But it did not bring the climax.

The Kingdom Still Awaits

The establishment of the Millennial Kingdom is still pending. For us this is a great benefit, as it allows time for us to enter the fold of Christ, receive the Heavenly Call, become part of the Bride of Christ, and reign with Christ during the Millennium.

But the time draws near. The favor of this period will soon close. The Kingdom is already being established in Heaven, as one by one the saints are raised to be with Christ as they complete their earthly lives, since the return of Christ at the close of the 1335 years.

Already Revelation 11:15 has commenced: "The Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord [God] and his anointed [Christ]," and the present time of trouble is a consequence (verses 15-18). In a few years hence the present Harvest, which is the closing period of this age, will end (Matthew 13:30, 39). Then the Kingdom of Christ will be established, at Israel, through the resurrected Ancient Worthies.

Six Thousand Years

The key to the question — When do 6000 years from Adam close? — is in resolving the history of Old Testa-

ment times back to the reign of Solomon. It is now generally agreed, by scholars who appreciate the integrity of the books of Kings and Chronicles, that their united testimony, supported by the history of contemporary nations, show year “one” of Solomon’s reign commenced in Tishri of 970 BC.

The spring of that year would be in the year we number 969 BC. Three years later take us to the spring of his fourth year in 966 BC. According to 1 Kings 6:1, Solomon then commenced building the Temple at Jerusalem. The same text says that was the beginning of year 480 from the Exodus. In other words, the Exodus occurred 479 years earlier, namely 1445 BC.

Galatians 3:16 says the Covenant with Abraham, as he entered the promised land, was 430 years earlier, namely 1875 BC. Now we are close to finding the date of Adam.

Genesis chapter 5 gives the generations from Adam to Noah. Each time span from generation to generation is listed. The flood ended after 600 years of Noah’s life (Genesis 8:13). The total, from Adam, is 1656 years.

Genesis chapter 11 brings us from the Flood to the Covenant with Abraham 427 years later. Add the numbers — 1875 BC + 427 + 1656 — and the result is 3958 BC for the beginning of Adam’s life.

Counting 6000 years forward from there concludes with the year 2043 AD. (6000 - 3958, plus 1 to account for the absence of a year “zero” between BC and AD, results in 2043 BC).

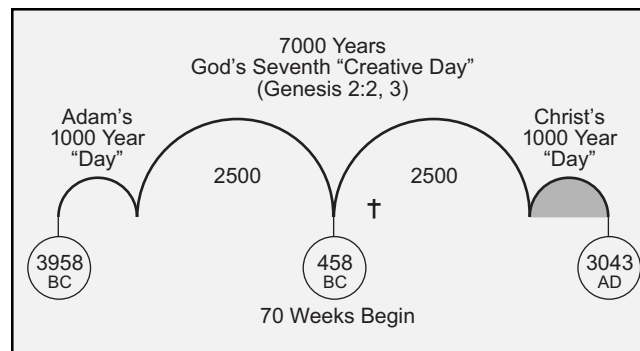
Is This Credible?

As in all things of the future, we wait patiently, but expectantly, until circumstances put to rest any uncertainties. But it is highly credible. The deductions are grounded in the scriptural record, which, remarkably, takes care to give an explicit count of years, evidently for just such a purpose.

Additionally, the testimony of time prophecy intertwines with this in remarkable ways. Here is a single example. The 490 year prophecy of Daniel chapter 9, which takes us to the cross of Christ in 33 AD, commenced with the decree of the Persian Emperor, Artaxerxes, in 458 AD.** From this prophecy count the years to the redemption provided by Christ at Calvary.

The date commencing this count of years — the touchstone of time prophecy — is precisely midway through the 7000 years of God’s plan, from Adam through the Millennium of Restoration (compare Habakkuk 3:2.)

The greatest event in human history may be said to be the death of Jesus at Calvary, and his resurrection on the third day following. Very soon, another 38 years as we understand, evidently the time will arrive for the next major milestone in God’s Plan. The Millennium so long anticipated will break upon the world, to their surprise, and then to their delight.



Troubles will still intervene. The world advances to the brink of the seventh plague of Revelation (chapter 16:16-21). But that final birth pang will introduce a golden age for the world. “All creation is yearning, longing to see the manifestation of the sons of God [and when that blessed time comes] ... at last the Creation itself [will] be set free from the thralldom of decay to enjoy the liberty ... of the children of God” (Romans 8:18-21).

What Do You Wish?

Do you wish to be part of Christ, to reign with him in glory, in heaven, during that Millennium? Or will you be among the teeming billions of mankind who awake to the Golden Age of redemption, and grow to everlasting human life, perfected, cleansed, in a perfected society?

The years ahead are still replete with opportunity to consecrate your life to Christ, to follow the Master, become part of his elect, and receive a change of nature from human to spiritual in the resurrection.

In this case, you will have the honor and pleasure of assisting Christ uplift and nurture the entire world during the Millennium, from your heavenly station. All the dead of past ages will be raised, to learn from the lessons of sin of past times. Those who reform may live forever, as our first parents were offered in Eden. The test at the end of the Millennium will determine. Certainly the vast majority will accept the goodness of life with rejoicing.

* These are discussed in “Studies in the Scriptures,” Volumes 2 and 3, *The Time is at Hand*, and *The Kingdom of God*. The evidence has clarified, and some imprecisions have been corrected, since those volumes were published. For example, it is now apparent that the beginning of the 2520 years, sometimes called the “Times of the Gentiles,” began in the year 607 BC, the year Babylon began the conquest of the holy land, bringing it and the nation of Israel into bondage. 2520 years later, in 1914, began the war which freed the holy land from the oppression of the Ottoman Turks, and breathed life into Israel’s national hopes.

** This decree is referred to in Daniel 9:25, quoted at length in Ezra 7:11-26, and clearly dated in history, 458 BC.

In the Next Issue ...

- *An Elegant Description of the Kingdom*
- *Chart of the Ages, continued*
- *Daniel, the Prophet (first of a series)*