

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
March, April 2007

The Ransom

"Christ died once concerning sins, a righteous person on behalf of unrighteous ones" (1 Peter 3:18).

In order to redeem the world from the curse of death, one thing was needful above all — someone to pay the penalty for Adam's sin. God justly imposed the sentence for sin. It could not be arbitrarily revoked, else the standard of justice would be set in jeopardy — and that to the everlasting detriment to all of God's intelligent creation.

However, love is always the great motivating influence which prompts God to His wonderful works toward us. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Love therefore prompted God to provide a ransom. Who could this be? There are two essential qualifications.

(a) Someone who is not himself cursed. This eliminates everyone from Adam's race. That is why our Lord Jesus had his life transferred from above. He did not receive his life from Adam, so he was not infected with Adam's sin or the curse.

(b) Someone who is willing to accept our penalty upon himself. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4, 5). "I lay down my life ... No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:17, 18).

These two conditions were fulfilled in Jesus, whom God sent to be our ransom. "The Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom" (Matthew 20:28). "There is ... one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5).

God might have chosen another of His many angels for this mission. But He chose His honored son. To him would be the opportunity. It would cost our Lord dearly — first his demotion from spirit to human nature, his humble upbringing as a child, a life of devoted reverence and service. It would bring him many weary days, many adversaries, unjust accusations, and finally a humiliating death. But by this means Jesus' sterling character would be enhanced, matured, and prepared for the remarkable honors to which he was later exalted. Yes, this privilege would go to God's honored and dependable son — Jesus.

Ransom

The word for "ransom" in the original text is the Greek word *lutron*. This comes from the verb *luo*, to loose, and the suffix *tron*, which refers to the item providing the loosing. Thus *lutron* is the price of release — a ransom. In case of the condemned race of humanity, the price necessary was the life of a perfect, uncondemned man. A perfect man sinned and incurred the death penalty. Another perfect man, Jesus, accepted that penalty, which allows the world to go free.

The text in Matthew 20:28 (it also appears in Mark 10:45) uses this word, *lutron*. It is followed by a second, independent word, *anti*. We sometimes use this second word, in English, as a prefix meaning against. But that is not its meaning here. The Greek word means literally "in place of, instead of" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 394). For example, in Matthew 2:22 it is translated "in the room of": "Archelaus did reign in Judaea *in the room of* his father Herod." Those four italic words represent this one little word, *anti*.

In Matthew 20:28, this word means that Jesus, as the price for man's release, gave himself for the world — he accepted the punishment for the sin of the world upon himself — "in place of, instead of" Adam and his race, so that they could go free.

The word in 1 Timothy 2:5 is only a little different. There the word "ransom" comes from the Greek word *antilutron*, which is followed by the Greek word *huper*. The first word means a "corresponding" *lutron*, or price of release. In other words, the price corresponded with the need. The word which follows, *huper*, means on behalf of. So this text affirms that Jesus "gave himself a corresponding price of release, on behalf of all."

Notice that these texts do not say Jesus would simply provide a ransom, but that he himself would constitute the ransom. It was his very life, as a perfect human being, which constituted the value of the ransom. The needful thing was to yield his life for us, in payment of our debt. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven ... the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

The penalty for sin is not torture, not unending life in misery, not an eternity of estrangement from God. The penalty for sin is death — “dying, thou shalt die” (Genesis 2:17, literal rendering). “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Therefore, the price of release from the curse imposed upon Adam for sin, was the life of our redeemer, Jesus. He yielded this by dying for us.

Jesus had his life transferred from heaven above, into human nature, in the womb of Mary, in order to be born a human being and grow to manhood. At Jordan he presented his life in devoted sacrifice to God, and completed yielding his life on Calvary’s cross. When he died, he gave up his human life for all time. He was “put to death in flesh ... made alive in spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). When he was raised to life again, he was no longer a human being. He became a spirit being of the highest order, “at [God’s] own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:20).

So Long Ago

But Christ died almost 2000 years ago. If his death was to pay for the sin of Adam, which passed to his posterity, why is the world still dying?

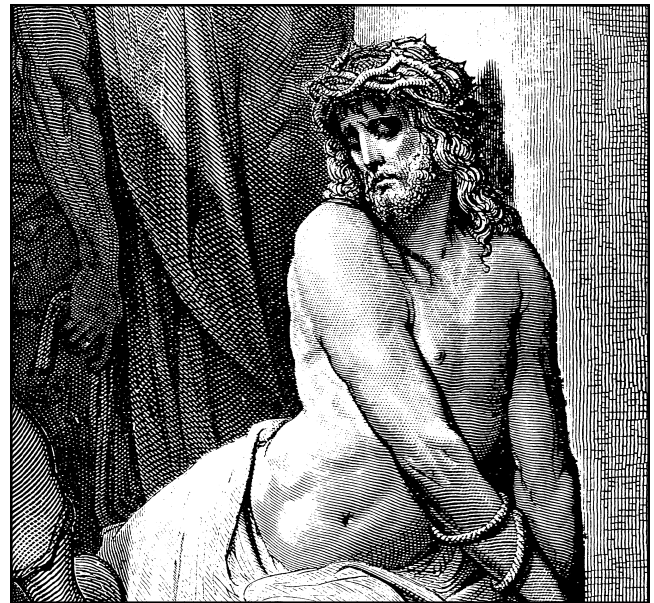
The answer is that the Ransom price — the value of Jesus’ perfect human life relinquished in death — has not yet been applied for the world. It is being used, but not yet for the world. It has been applied only on behalf of those who consecrate their lives to God. When this work is complete — when the entire “bride” class is in glory with Christ — then this age of redemption will close and a second age of redemption will begin. That will be the Millennial Age. At that time, the Ransom Jesus provided will be applied to the entire world to release them from condemnation. Because of that — and not until then — the resurrection of the dead can proceed.¹ (Not all in a moment. That would be confusion. Gradually, during the thousand years.)

Blood

To represent the value of a life which had been yielded, the Scriptures use the symbol of blood. It is a good symbol, because blood is the vital sustainer of life, carrying the life-giving oxygen to all parts of the body. When blood is shed, it represents the value of the life thus ended.

This symbol is used in Romans 5:9: we are “justified by his blood.” It is also used in 1 Peter 1:18, 19, “You were ... redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ.” We access this redemption by expressing appropriate belief and conduct — that is, faith. For this reason Paul says we are “justified by faith” (Romans 5:1), in the same context in which he says we are “justified by his blood.”

Blood is a very old symbol of life, even used in the Old Testament. “The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).



“He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

It is this blood — not literal blood, but the value of Jesus’ life represented by blood — which Jesus took with him when he ascended to heaven. There, in heaven, he would use the value of that life to redeem first the Church Class (during this age), and later the world (during the next age).

Notice what Paul says about Jesus possessing his blood, that is, the value of his relinquished human life, as he passed into heaven. The text is Hebrews 13:20. The King James version misses an important word, which clouds the meaning — the little Greek word *en*. We quote from the Rotherham translation which captures the thought correctly.

The text describes God as the God of peace (because he makes peace with us through the blood of Christ — compare Romans 5:1). Then Paul describes God as “He that led up from among the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep [Jesus], **With** the blood of an age-abiding covenant.”

In other words, when Jesus was raised from the dead, he had something. He had the blood — that is, the value of the life he sacrificed — with him. It was a possession to be used according to the will of God to redeem us. In other words, Jesus’ life was not simply forfeited, lost, gone — the value of that life was retained by him for the great redemption work planned by God.

Two Applications of the Blood

In the Old Testament, perhaps the holiest day of all for the Jewish people was the “Day of Atonement.” This was the 10th day of the 7th month, and this day is still observed by the Jewish people today. Leviticus chapter 16 explains the particulars of this day, and the various offerings made. The sin offerings that were offered provided

blood, which represented the value of the offerings. This blood was brought into the Most Holy, into the presence of God, and there sprinkled on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. In this way the type shows the use of the redemptive blood.

What we wish to notice is that the blood was applied not simply once, but twice. The first time the high priest entered the Most Holy, he applied the blood on behalf of the consecrated ones — the priests. The second time he entered the Most Holy, he applied the blood on behalf of the entire nation of Israel.

This is meaningful. This is a type, a picture, of God's plan of redemption. It shows that there are two distinct applications of the redemptive blood — for, as Bible Students maintain as a central feature of their faith — there are two separate and distinct ages of redemption. The first application is for the consecrated class, those who accept Christ now, and accept Jesus' invitation to self-denial and cross bearing. Hebrews 9:24 refers to this. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The second application, the one for all the remainder of Israel, shows that after this age for the consecrated, another age of redemption follows. This will be for the remainder of the world — those who will be blessed **by** the saints when, as a class, they are complete in glory with Christ.

Now we see that Jesus' death, by itself, did not automatically bring release from the curse. Jesus was raised from the dead with the value of the Ransom price he provided, and by God's design Jesus himself is the one who applies the value of the Ransom. He applies it first to us who consecrate our lives now, and later to the world during the Millennium. Jesus died "for our offences" — to provide the Ransom value — and "was raised again for our justification" — to apply the Ransom (Romans 4:25).

Two Very Different Ages

The works of the two ages differ from each other. In the present Gospel Age, God is not restoring us to become perfect human beings. Far from it. We have a greatly superior hope, a hope to be of the nature of Jesus — sometimes brethren refer to this as the Divine Nature — the highest of all forms of spirit life. This is so great a prospect, we simply cannot comprehend its fullness.

But it is not fleshly. It is spiritual. As Jesus sacrificed his life in the work of God, so he calls us to sacrifice our life in the work of God. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice," Paul urged us (Romans 12:1). Thus God does not propose that the redemption which we now receive should cure us of fleshly infirmities or imperfections.

However, we are justified by the Ransom applied to us. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1), for "we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:11). This is a

legal matter, between God and us — and a very important matter! Because we have been redeemed, God can accept the sacrifice of our little all as something clean, wholesome, purified. We have sin in our flesh. But to the extent our new mind strives against this, and overcomes this, God reckons the deficiency part of the old human nature which has been covered.

With the world during the Millennium, it will be different. God proposes to restore them to perfect human life, as Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden before sin. Therefore, in response to their growth in faith, the world will appreciate temporal, physical benefits as they progress up the "highway of holiness" during the Kingdom of Christ. They also will have the privilege of service to God, to demonstrate their faith — but it will not mean sacrifice unto death, as it does with us. It will mean growth in vitality, health, soundness — on the road to regaining perfect human life.

When the world comes back from the grave during the resurrection, they will be raised to life without expressing faith, for no faith can be expressed in the tomb, and most of the world dies without faith. But to make progress in the Kingdom they will need to learn faith. They will be rewarded according to the faith and conduct they express.

By the end of the Millennium the entire world, if they are willing, may be restored to the status Adam and Eve had at first — perfect human life. But the world will have a great advantage over what Adam and Eve had, namely 6000 years of experience with the consequences of sin, and 1000 years of experience with the benefits of Godliness. They will be much better prepared than our first parents for the test of faith which comes at the close of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-9).

As for the old curse, it will be no more. "There shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3). It will have been lifted by the precious blood of Christ. The satisfaction of our debt, freely paid by Christ Jesus, secures that blessing.

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Luther and Russell

Martin Luther's Reformation was founded on his appreciation of Justification by Faith, as opposed to the Papal practice of paying money for remission of sins (the practice of indulgences). Luther was thus a vehicle for restoring to the Church the precious doctrine of the Ransom. We are justified by faith in the blood of Christ — graciously, freely, as an undeserved gift.

But the remarkable and devoted labors of Martin Luther — whom Time Magazine at the turn of the Millennium identified as "Man of the Millennium" — were only the beginning of restoring the wholesome truth of the Divine Plan of the Ages. For centuries Papacy had ruled an apostate Church. Many defiling errors had crept in. Luther and other reformers assisted in cleansing the Sanctuary Class of these errors, but that work would proceed on to at least the year 1843 (see the article in this issue on the prophecy of 2300 years).

And not until the Harvest of the Gospel Age, introduced with our Lord's return in 1874, would the whole purpose, point, and meaning of the Ransom, and all its implications for Two Ages, be fully studied, explained, published, and distributed. This was the work of the Harvest Messenger — the last Reformer in one sense — Pastor Charles Russell. Understanding the Ransom and all its implications was the very center of his ministry.

For those who have not read it, we highly recommend "Study IX, Ransom and Restitution," part of Bro. Russell's hallmark book, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. A Magazine Edition copy of this book is available free of charge to all our readers — simply request it by mail or email, and it will come with the next issue of Faithbuilders Fellowship. Read that chapter slowly — deliberately — mark the solid foundation which it establishes for the Doctrine of the Ransom.

Connection of Dates

It is engaging to us that the very day Luther is considered to have begun his Reformation work — October 31, 1517 — was the same calendar day that Bro. Russell completed his work. Bro. Russell passed away, to receive his heavenly reward, on October 31, 1916. The parallel of dates is at least an engaging coincidence, but we believe it is more than coincidence. By this means the Lord marks the work of restoring to the Church the understanding of the Doctrine of the Ransom, and its meaning in the Divine Plan.

The span of years between these two dates is 399. Is there meaning to this perhaps? We noticed that this was shy, by one year, of a nice, round, 400 years. But there it is, 399, rather than 400. Some time later we observed that the chronology of the Hebrew Old Testament, treated in our on-going series on Chronology, established the time between Adam and Christ as exactly 3990 years, from 3958 BC to Jesus' death at Calvary in 33 AD.



Martin Luther, 1535

In other words, the entire span during which the curse operated, until the Ransom was supplied by Christ at Calvary, is 3990 years — and the period during which the lost doctrine of the Ransom was restored to the Church was a period one order of

magnitude less — 399 as compared to 3990. This is one part out of 10, a token, a reminder, of the larger period.

Another point links these two great reformers. The last full day of ministry for Martin Luther was February 16 (1546). He was bedridden the next day and died hours later. The first day of life of Bro. Russell was the same calendar day — February 16 (1852). By this means also, divine providence joins the work of these two devoted servants in restoring this precious doctrine.

(1) We are referring to the resurrection of the world, of course. The resurrection of the faithful saints who died during the Gospel Age has been in process since the return of Christ. The Lord's people who died during the Gospel Age slept peacefully, unconsciously — they were dead — until the end of the age. When Christ returned, the "sleeping saints" were raised to life, and since that time, each one who makes his calling and election sure is raised to spirit life at the time of his death. We have been living in the days of the *parousia* (presence) of Christ since his return in 1874.

Incoming Mail

Many letters and emails come from readers and new subscribers, and we are glad for each one. Often they come from leaders of fellowship groups which we have not visited personally. A brief inquiry of this sort came just now. It appears below, together with our reply, which may apply to many of our readers overseas, where access to Bible Student Ecclesias is not readily available.

Brother in Christ — Receive my Christian greetings in Jesus' name. I write to request you to keep on sending me a free subscription. The messages are helpful indeed ... Would you tell me where I can find my Bible Study Ecclesia in my area. If brotherly friends want to come to Malawi for holidays or Gospel ... please let them come. We shall welcome them all. Malawi needs ministers. God bless you ... Malawi (leader of the Free Church of Christ).

Adapted from our reply — Dear Brother, Greetings in Christ. Thank you for your request for Faithbuilders Fellowship. We gladly added your name to the subscription list. We publish about every two months.

It appears that you are responding from the very first issue of October, 2005 — so glad to know that though the time has been long, the material did reach you and you have replied. As to an ecclesia in your area, none exist that I am aware of ... there are, however, many individuals in Malawi who receive the Faithbuilders Fellowship material. Here are some of the locations which may prove of interest (appended).

I made a note of your kind invitation to visit Malawi again — but when that might be, I am unable to say. We have about 90 subscribers in Malawi. However, only here or there do we find a reader sufficiently earnest in understanding the Plan of God that they recognize and appreciate the distinction between the Truth of the Lord's word, and the many false impressions of Christian people received as traditions from the past.

The Lord's word is a deep mine, with precious jewels. Our Lord himself said in Matthew 13:52, "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

We hope that you might be such a reader — and such a leader — who plumbs the depths of the Truth, grasps the import, and expresses it to all you can influence. So many of the Churches teach simply that bad people go to a place of punishment, and good people go to heaven. This may be sufficient to move them toward goodness — but it misses the entire point of the Divine Plan. Which is, the recovery of the entire world during the approaching Millennial Kingdom of Christ. The salvation then offered to the entire world will not be a reward in heaven, but everlasting life here, on Earth, as Adam and Eve had an opportunity for at the beginning.

The present age is very different. The present call is indeed to a heavenly reward in glory with Christ — but the terms for this are very different than what is preached normally. The terms are laid down by Christ in Matthew 16:24: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Precious few follow this advice — and thus secure the prize of the overcomers. Those who do, will constitute the class symbolized in Scripture as the "Bride" class (Revelation 19:7, 21:9). This class will reign with Christ from heaven, during the Millennium, and lead the world back to God.

When this age closes, about 36 years future as we understand, then the second part of God's program will begin. Then will come the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth for a thousand years — during which every man, woman and child who has ever lived will be reclaimed from death, learn the blessings God has given them through Jesus, and walk back to perfect life — if they are willing.

Meanwhile, where are the Dead? They rest silently, peacefully, unconsciously — they are dead. They await the resurrection, when they will come back to life again.

We hope your reading is profitable. We appreciate your reply, and your interest in the Truth. May it prosper, grow, develop, and be rich with fruitage in the minds of those to whom you spread it. Yours in Christ, (signed).

2300 Years

Daniel Chapter Eight, Part Two

The Daniel article in our last issue covered Daniel 8:1-8. The meaning of this passage is almost universally understood by those who study it, so clear is the match between prophecy and history. The Persian Empire is represented by the ram of verse three, its two horns are the Medes and Persians, and the higher horn is the Persian horn which became dominant in the empire.

The Grecian Empire is represented by the goat of verse five, which attacked the ram rapidly and fiercely, just as Greece under Alexander did the Persian Empire, conquering it within four years (from 334 BC when their armies first met, to 330 BC when the last Persian Emperor Darius Codomannus died). Thereafter Alexander brought the empire to the border of India before retreating to Babylon where he hoped to establish the capital of a new empire. But there he died, still a young man.

In our last issue we spent a good amount of time reviewing the division of the Greek Empire into four independent kingdoms. This process was complete by at least 301 BC, at the passing of the aged Antigonos, who had hoped to maintain some central authority. Thus the process consumed 22 years following the death of Alexander in 323 BC. Though full of intrigue, the events of those 22 years are little discussed even by prophetic students, perhaps in part because all of this is summarized briefly in the prophecy: "The great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven" (Daniel 8:8).

By way of review — the four divisions of the empire became (1) Macedonia under Cassander, (2) Thrace under Lysimachus, (3) Syria under Seleucus (thus the Seleucid Empire), (4) Egypt under Ptolemy.

Daniel 8:9-14

We now enter one of the most intriguing parts of the prophecy. The first eight verses seem easy to apprehend, but the next set is more challenging. "Out of one of them [one of the four horns] came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land [Israel]. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (verses 8, 9).

By many this is applied to Antiochus Epiphanes, who descended from Seleucus, first ruler of the Seleucid Empire, one of the four "horns" from Alexander's empire.

Antiochus Epiphanes appeared in the fifth generation following Seleucus and ruled for 12 years, from 175 BC until his death in 163 BC. He is infamous for his brutal persecution of the Jews for holding to the faith of their fathers. It was that persecution which led to the famous revolt of the Maccabees, under their original leader Mattathias, father of Judas Maccabeus. No doubt the Jewish people themselves recognized that persecutor, and that persecution, fulfilling these texts. It is an appropriate application, on one level.

However, a fuller application rises above the Seleucids and applies to the mighty Roman Empire itself, which would even more completely break the Jewish people (Daniel 11:14 refers to Rome as the “breakers of thy people,” corrected translation). Verse nine says this power became “exceeding great.” The Persian Empire was “great” (verse 4), the Grecian Empire was “very great” (verse 8), but by contrast this power became “exceeding great.” This comparison strongly favors Rome as the fulfillment.¹

However, though Antiochus did not so completely fulfill the prophecy as did Rome, the fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanes should not be overlooked. What Antiochus did was a foreshadow of what the greater persecutor would later do. And even the later persecutor, Rome, would be superseded in its persecuting fervor on the Lord’s people by Papal Rome, which is the third and most complete fulfillment of the passage. (We will find a three-tier fulfillment also in Daniel chapter eleven).

Verses 10 through 12 speak of the persecution of the Lord’s people, likening them to stars, the “host of heaven,” which are cast down and trampled upon. This happened to the Jews under Antiochus, to Jews and Christians under Rome, and to Christians under Papacy. Antiochus magnified himself “even to [against, margin rendering] the prince of the host” by killing righteous Onias, the high priest of Israel. He stopped the daily sacrifice in the temple and desecrated “the place of [God’s] sanctuary,” thus causing it be “cast down” from service in the offerings of God ordered in the Law. A host — a large contingent of apostate Jews — supported his defiling ways, “and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered” (verse 12).

Rome also persecuted the Lord’s people, the Jews who held to their Law, and the Christians who held to Jesus. Pagan Rome bitterly persecuted the saints of God, beginning under Nero, then continuing under Nerva, Trajan, and Diocletian during the Smyrna phase of the Church. “The devil shall cast some of you into prison [death], that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days [303-313 AD under Diocletian]: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). In Revelation 12:4 this persecution of Christians by Rome is expressed in language which seems drawn out of Daniel’s prophecy. The dragon’s “tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast

them to the earth: and the dragon [Rome, as an agent of Satan] stood before the woman [the Church as an institution], for to devour her child [the fledgling Christian community] as soon as it was born” (Revelation 12:4).

Rome as a persecutor of the Jews caused “the place of his [God’s] sanctuary [to be] cast down” by burning the Temple in 70 AD, and in 131 AD rededicated the holy city to pagan gods, Hadrian renaming it “Aelia Capitolina” (Aelia after Hadrian’s name Aelius, Capitolina in honor of Jupiter Capitolinus). This stirred the Bar Kochba Revolt which was squashed by 135 AD.

But the widest and most protracted persecution came through Papal Rome. During the ages of her power, exterminations and inquisitions for heresy and noncompliance with antichrist Papacy caused the death of multitudes over a period of centuries. (See *The Time is at Hand*, Study Nine, “The Man of Sin — Antichrist,” pages 328-347, for accounts of the multitudes who perished thus.) The Roman Pontiff claimed to be Christ’s representative on earth, but by perverting the character of Christianity, Papacy magnified themselves against Christ, “prince of the host.” By the doctrine of the mass which required ever-repeated sacrifices of Christ, they took away the antitypical “daily sacrifice,” namely the Ransom price given once for all by Christ (Hebrews 10:12). The throngs who supported Papacy through the ages are the “host ... given him.” For centuries “it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered” (verse 12).

Threefold Application

The reader who is familiar with this chapter in Daniel, and the many discussions about it by prophetic students through the years, may recognize in the brief comments above a resolution of many opinions in one. The resolution comes in recognizing that sacred prophecy may have more than one intended meaning, each for a different time. As one prophetic broadcaster of past years termed it, the Old Testament is a “Canon of Double Sense” (Treasures of Tanakh radio broadcast). And in this case we might say a Canon of Triple Sense.

This approach is not an arbitrary one. Nor a simplistic one which merely seeks to embrace every view. It is predicated upon a thoughtful appreciation of the nature of prophecy, which sometimes uses immediate situations as a springboard for deeper and more distant meanings. One clear example of this has been noted in endnote number one, the prophecy of the birth of Jesus, but there are many others. The invasion of Judea and siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib, for example, formed the predicate for the prophecy of Isaiah 37:33-35, also Micah 5:5, both of which apply as well to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39.

The prophecies of Jeremiah against Babylon, the empire which burned the Temple at Jerusalem, began to be

The Little Horn

Rome “emerged” from the Grecian Empire — perhaps in the sense that it “emerged” from Hellenic Culture, which had filtered west.

fulfilled two generations after that prophet when Persia took Babylon. But these would have meaning again later against Rome, the empire which burned the second Temple at Jerusalem. (Compare for example Jeremiah 51:25, which predicts Babylon will become as a “burnt mountain,” with Revelation 8:8 which speaks similarly of Rome.) And yet on a third level, “Babylon” applies to great Papacy as made explicitly clear in Revelation 17:5. Thus prophecies about Babylon applied to that empire, to the Roman Empire, and to Roman Papacy.

It is similar here in Daniel chapter eight. The great persecuting power that would arise a few generations after Daniel would be the most vile persecutor the Jews had yet known. But a greater application would come with Pagan Rome, and an even more expansive one with Papal Rome.

As briefly mentioned earlier, one of the significant evidences that these levels apply properly in this chapter, is that we find the same three levels in the more detailed prophecy which closes the book of Daniel, contained in chapters 10, 11, 12, which we will get to in time.

Came Forth a Little Horn

Before going further, we pause to examine one of the stipulations of the prophecy which has received a fair amount of attention. “And out of one of them [one of the four horns of Grecian power] came forth a little horn” (verse 9). It is easy to see how Antiochus Epiphanes fulfills this. He was a ruler of the Seleucid Empire, which was one of the four divisions, “horns,” rising from Alexander’s Grecian Empire. But in what sense did Rome come “out of one of them”?

Alexander conquered eastward, whereas Rome was westward. Thus Rome was never incorporated into the Grecian Empire as such. However, it was Hellenized by Greek culture. Probably it was in this sense that Rome “came forth” from the Grecian Empire — not as a former conquered territory, but as part of what the Grecian Empire encompassed culturally. The Anchor Atlas of World History (1974 paperback edition), page 77, mentions Rome in her pre-empire days, when sacked by the Gauls in 387 BC thus — “the **Hellenic** city of Rome was taken and burned.” When Rome subsequently emerged to grow into an empire, it grew out of this cultural background.

Another possibility is that the prophecy speaks of how Rome came toward the holy land. Rome battled

Macedonia in a series of four wars. (a) The First Macedonian War, 215-205 BC, in which Macedonia was allied to Hannibal of Carthage, ended by treaty. (b) The Second Macedonian War, 200-196 BC, also ended with treaty but unfavorable to Phillip V of Macedonia, who was however allowed to retain his kingdom. (c) The Third Macedonian War, 171-168 BC. Rome was victorious at the Battle of Pydna and divided Greece into four puppet republics. (d) The Fourth Macedonian War, 150-148 BC, in which Rome put down a rebellion. The four districts were dissolved and Macedonia officially became a Roman province. Perhaps it was Rome coming through, or out of, Macedonia by treaty and conquest as it approached Israel, that the prophecy speaks of.

In either case, the designation of this fourth empire as “exceeding great” compared to its predecessors seems to require an application to Rome — as do the following points. (a) The time prophecy of 2300 years (considered further on). (b) The parallels between this chapter and chapter 11, which leads to the Kingdom of Christ. (c) The connection of this prophecy to those of chapters two and seven, in which the fourth Kingdom in each case, with its later ten-fold division, refers to the Roman Empire.

Verses 13, 14.

With the close of verse 12, the basic vision Daniel received has closed. The remainder of the chapter records discussion, elaboration, and explanation, of what Daniel saw to this point. The first part of this is verses 13 and 14, which records a question and answer between two holy ones which appeared in the vision.

“Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” (verse 13).

By this means God caused Daniel to record the question, and the cryptic answer which follows, which would be valuable information for the Lord’s people in later centuries. This method is used also in chapter 12:6,7. There it is used about the 1260 years; here in chapter eight, about a period of 2300 years. These were the two time periods which specially motivated the Adventist Movement led by William Miller, in the early 1800s, in the Northeastern United States.

The answer to the question of verse 13 is given in verse 14. “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days: then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” As far as we are aware, this time prophecy applies only to 2300 years — a day for a year, as elsewhere.² But when do these years commence, and when do they end? The record must have deep meaning for the saints. To be introduced into sacred writ so pointedly, to be numbered so clearly, to be applied to the Lord’s people so directly — there must be deep and profitable meaning.

Where Does it Begin?

But quickly the student of this prophecy notes a problem. Whereas most time prophecies describe a specific beginning point — notice Daniel 9:25, Daniel 12:11 *cf* 11:31 for example — in this case none is explicitly mentioned in the passage itself.

One might suppose that as the cleansing of the temple occurs at the end of 2300 years, we need to identify some defilement 2300 years earlier. But if the temple to be cleansed is the spiritual temple of Christ, this is unsatisfactory, because the Church has not even existed for 2300 years. If we waited until Christian times to begin the period, the fulfillment would be centuries in the future, well past any feasible time for the conclusion of this age. Time and circumstance therefore suggest that the 2300 years do not begin with some defilement, merely that they reach to the close of the defilement. “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14).

Where, then, do the 2300 years begin? Apparently at some marked point within the prophecy itself. What point might that be?

The vision opens with the appearance of a ram who “did according to his will, and became great” — the Persian Empire. This is followed by a vision of the Grecian Empire running headlong into Persia. That is followed by a vision of Rome beginning to emerge as a “little horn.” We will revisit these three points later. We will find a starting point for each one. But so far, we do not find any explicit starting point for the 2300 years — at least not one explicitly mandated in the prophecy itself.

Because of this, it was common in the adventist studies two centuries ago to find a beginning point by linking this prophecy to that which appears next, in chapter nine. Daniel 9:24 says “seventy weeks are determined upon thy people ...” The Hebrew word rendered “determined” is from Strong’s number 2852. It is used only once in the Old Testament, namely in this text. It is the word *chathak*, which means “properly, to cut off, i.e. (figuratively) to decree.” Perhaps these seventy weeks of years are “cut off” from the previously mentioned 2300 years. It does not seem a necessary conclusion, but perhaps a permissible one — looking for some hint on the subject, as all students of this prophecy do.

If this is so, then we notice something a little parallel in the 1260 year prophecy. That time prophecy appears first in Daniel 7:25. There, as with the 2300 days, it is mentioned without an explicitly defined starting point. The period is again mentioned in Daniel 12:7. In the verses which follow that, two other prophetic periods are mentioned — 1290 years and 1335 years. If these all commence at the same time — this is the customary view, and we think the correct view — then the point commencing them all is given in Daniel 12:11. That text tells us clearly that the starting point for those

2300 Years — Three Applications

- (1) During Persian Empire (458 BC to 1843 AD)
- (2) Advance of Grecian Empire (334 BC to 1967 AD)
- (3) Sprouting of Roman Horn (387 BC to 1914 AD)

time prophecies is at Daniel 11:31. (More on this when we reach those chapters.) In other words, after a time prophecy is introduced, clues to its application can follow afterwards.

Perhaps, then, the starting point mentioned in chapter nine is meant as a clue to the start of the 2300 years of chapter eight. This is the view which was common within the adventist movement. They supposed that the 70 weeks of years (chapter nine) was the first part of the 2300 years (chapter eight).

Here is what Le Roy Edwin Froom says of this in his well known *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*. “Between Germany’s Johann Petri (d. 1792) — who was the first to enunciate the principle that the 70 weeks of years comprise the first part of the 2300 year-days, and that they begin synchronously — and America’s John Robinson (1843), some seventy expositors employed this principle and applied this procedure. Indeed, it came to be regarded as axiomatic, and was considered as perhaps the final factor essential to the unsealing of this portion of Daniel relating to the last things, which had not been clearly understood until the close of the eighteenth century. Then, at this point of time, many expositors, standing at the dawn of the nineteenth century, expressed the conviction that mankind had now entered the ‘time of the end,’ elsewhere denominated the ‘latter days,’ or ‘last days’ ” (Froom IV, page 407).

The Date Produced

As we will see when we examine Daniel chapter nine, the 70 weeks of years leading to the death of Christ commenced in 458 BC with the decree of King Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. If this is the forepart of the 2300 years, then this period runs from 458 BC until 1843 AD. (2300 - 458 = 1842, adjust by one for crossing the BC / AD dividing point, yields 1843 AD).

This does bring us to a point of note in the history of the Christian Church. This was the date widely anticipated for the return of Christ by the Adventist Movement of the early 1800s.^{3,4,5} As a consequence of this movement, many of its participants reexamined the scriptures for a clearer view of the Truth, and several fundamental points were clarified to a good number. Clarity on the nature of man as inherently mortal, clarity of the nature of Jesus as the son of God and the holy Spirit

as the power and influence of Jehovah, and some clarity about a greater hope for the world after this age — all these vital points were awakened. It was a “cleansing” of the spiritual sanctuary for the saints, preparatory to the Harvest which commenced in 1874.

For an broader discussion of the cleansing work, see *The Kingdom of God*, Volume three of “Studies in the Scriptures” (Pastor Russell), Chapter Four, pgs. 95-120.

Beginning in the Persian Period

We return now to the suggestion above that there are three potential starting points in the prophecy of Daniel chapter eight itself. The vision opens with a ram (Persia) standing, already an empire. No mention is made of the ram defeating some other beast, so the vision opens at some time after Babylon has fallen. But when? Verse three mentions that the ram pushed in various directions, expanding its influence. But we are merely sometime during that empire, without an explicit beginning. If the 2300 years begin where the 70 weeks of chapter nine begin, then they begin in 458 BC, 80 years after the famous decree of Cyrus in 538 BC allowed the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem, and 128 years before the death of the last Persian Emperor.

Beginning in the Grecian Period

The vision next identifies a Goat — Greece — running headlong into the Ram. The first major battle fulfilling this occurred in 334 BC. If we commence 2300 years from this date, the result is 1967 AD ($2300 - 334 = 1966$, adjust by one for crossing the BC/AD divide, yields 1967). This was the year of the remarkable deliverance of Israel in the “Six-Day War” of June of that year. In this conflict Israel received control of Jerusalem which they had lost to Jordan in their War of Independence in 1948. This renewed control included the famous Temple Mount where the Temple of Israel had stood. The place of the “sanctuary” was now in Israeli hands again.

Remember that Greece — or rather one of its horns, the Seleucid Kingdom under Antiochus Epiphanes — was the great persecutor of the Jewish people. Thus it is appropriate for an application of the prophecy as it may pertain to natural Israel, to commence when Greece enters the prophetic picture of this chapter, namely in 334 BC.

The cleansing of the Spiritual Temple by 1843 meant only a preparatory cleansing from various defiling errors of Christian doctrine — but not yet the setting up of the Truth doctrines in their proper order which would come later during the Harvest. In a similar way, natural Israel securing control of the Temple Mount again in 1967 does not mean all is well there. Israel will not be established in faith until the Kingdom is established, and they receive their Messiah, Christ. The prophecy simply points to a marked point in the sovereignty of Israel over the place of their ancient Temple.

Beginning with the Sprouting of Rome

A third potential starting point is at the rise of the third kingdom treated in Daniel chapter eight — namely Rome. But in this case the prophecy shows something very different than with Greece. It shows Rome not thundering headlong in conquest of its predecessors, but merely beginning to emerge as a power out of Greece — in this case out of Grecian culture, as suggested above.

When did Rome begin to emerge? Surprisingly, the process began even before the days of Alexander. A well known and early historian of the Roman Empire was Polybius (ca. 203 BC - 120 BC). He was a Greek historian who penned “The Histories,” about the rise of the Roman Empire. Where would he commence his treatment? He addresses this question in the opening page of his work, and then, in Section Six, decides upon the year we know as 387 BC.

“It was ... the nineteenth year after the battle of Aegospotami and the sixteenth before that of Leuctra, the year in which the Spartans ratified the peace known as that of Antalcidas with the King of Persia, that in which also Dionysius the Elder, after defeating the Italiot Greeks in the battle at the River Elleporos, was beseiging Rhegium, and that in which the Gauls, after taking Rome itself by assault, occupied the whole of that city except the Capitol. The Romans, after making a truce on conditions satisfactory to the Gauls and being thus contrary to their expectation reinstated in their home and as it were now started on the road of aggrandizement, continued in the following years to wage war on their neighbors. After subduing all the Latins by their valour and the fortune of war they fought first against the Etruscans, then against the Celts, and next against the Samnites, whose territory was conterminous with that of the Latins on the East and North.” He continues to recite their progress through Italy, then outward, progressing ultimately to an empire.

Note the date which he chooses as a beginning — the year we know as 387 BC. If we commence an application here, and proceed 2300 years forward, these years close at the year 1914 ($2300 - 387 = 1913$, adjust one for crossing the BC/AD divide, yields 1914 AD). Now notice Daniel 8:24 about Rome. “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

Notice the final end — “broken without hand.” This reflects what is said in Daniel 2:34, a stone was cut out “without hands” which would smite the image on its ten toes — the countries of Europe which the Roman Empire became. As we hold, with many other Bible Students, the image of Gentile authority pictured in Daniel chapter two was “struck” by World War I, which commenced in 1914. The “stone” which struck it represents the Church class which God has called out of this world

through the holy Spirit, “without hands.” Thus the 2300 years, as it applies to the political and religious powers descended from Rome, points to 1914 for “cleansing” the scene, in order for the spiritual sanctuary class to later establish their Kingdom.

As with the two other applications of the 2300 years, this one also points to the time of an incipient cleansing, rather than to the full establishment of the good and righteous things which replace the previous desecrations.⁶

Wonderful Numberer

We cited verse 13 above, but did not pause to notice something revealed in the margin of our common version. After the vision of the warring beasts closed, Daniel heard “one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision ...?” The expression “certain saint” is from the single Hebrew word *palmoni*, which the margin gives as “the numberer of secrets, or the wonderful numberer.” It is hard to know the derivation of this comment. Strong’s Concordance lists the word as 6422, *palmowniy*, which it refers to 6423 and gives the meaning “a specified person,” person in italics as to suggest a supplied thought. Removing this, “specified.”

Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon gives more detail. It also refers the reader to 6423, and on that word says “one whom I point out, as it were, with the finger, but do not name.” Perhaps it is the thought of pointing which the comment in the margin takes in the sense of counting or numbering. If the concept of “numberer of secrets, or the wonderful numberer” is justified, it is of interest that the question posed to this one is about a number of years. “How long shall be the vision” — and the answer — “2300 days; then shall the temple be cleansed” (each day representing a year, as customary in Daniel’s prophecies.)

Doctrine of the Mass

This prophecy speaks of the desecration of the Church Class, the spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, 1 Peter 2:5), with the defiling doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Chief among these corruptions is the doctrine of the mass. Though it now seems odd to most Protestants (and even disinterested persons), this teaching says that the emblems of bread and wine used in memory of Jesus’ death, when blessed by the priest, actually become — not just represent, but actually become — the body and blood of Jesus. The word applied to this change is “transubstantiation” — changing one substance into another. What was bread just moments ago is changed into the body of Christ; what was wine just moments ago is changed into the blood of Christ. This comes from attaching an absurdly literal meaning to Jesus’ words at the last supper, “take, eat, this is my body ... drink ... this is my blood” (Matthew 26:26-28).

Beginning Points

As the 1260, 1290, 1335 Years of Daniel 12 begin at one time (539 AD), so perhaps the 2300 and 490 Years of Daniel 8, 9, start at one time (458 BC).

Only a little reflection on our Lord’s words elsewhere clarifies this incredible misunderstanding. “I am the door [of the sheepfold]” (John 10:7). Is Jesus then not really a person, but a door? Matthew 13:38. “The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom ... the tares are the children of the wicked one.” In all of these it is transparently clear that “is” and “are” connect to symbols. This is no less clear respecting the bread and wine as symbols of Jesus’ body and blood. We partake of these in remembrance of what he gave for us — his human life, as a ransom.

The doctrine of the mass supposes that a fresh sacrifice of Christ is necessary on each occasion to relieve the sins of the people. This displaces and overlooks the fact that the one offering which Jesus presented at Jordan, and completed at Calvary, is good for all time, never again to be repeated. “Every high priest **stands** daily, ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices [repeatedly], which can never take away sin; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, **sat down** on the right hand of God ... for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:11-14).

Requiring fresh sacrifices, repeatedly, does away with the once-for-all offering. By this means it “removes” what is represented by “the daily sacrifice.” The daily sacrifice kept by Israel, a lamb in the morning and another in the afternoon, foreshadowed the atonement Jesus himself would provide as the “lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The “magic” words by which the Catholic priest supposedly transmutes the emblems into the actual body and blood of Jesus are said in Latin, “Hoc est enim corpus meum” (for the bread), and “Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei” (for the blood). (The first phrase said repeatedly and quickly may be the source for the expression “hocus pocus,” popular with magicians.)

Because Catholics deem Jesus to be God, this means the bread and wine become God himself — and as such should be **worshipped**. “The Consecration in the Mass takes place immediately before the elevation of the Host and Chalice, which are raised above the head of the priest that the people may adore Our Lord who has just come to the altar at the words of Consecration” (Catholic.net, Lesson Twenty-Second, Question 894).

Thus not only is the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary displaced by need of repetition, but idolatry is practiced —

the worship of God in the form of mundane bread and wine. (The original idolatry in Israel was the worship of Jehovah in the form of a golden calf — once in the wilderness, and later as national policy by Jeroboam, first king of the northern, divided kingdom.)

Thus when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the altar, stopped the daily sacrifice, and initiated idolatry in natural Israel, this served as a picture of what Papacy would later fulfill within spiritual Israel. It is thus appropriate for the words of the prophecy to have an initial meaning to the desecrations of Antiochus, as a precursor fulfillment of the broader desecrations of Papacy.

“Evening and Morning”

Verse 14 says the cleansing of the temple would occur at the end of 2300 “days.” Uniquely here, the word “days” is from the Hebrew expression “evening morning.” Rotherham renders this, “Until two thousand and three hundred evening-mornings.” This unusual way to express the thought of “day” is apparently used to emphasize the observance each day of an evening sacrifice, and earlier a morning sacrifice. Recall that verse 12 says this vision was about “the daily sacrifice,” and verse 13 asks, “How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice?” The answer is appropriately given in terms of the two times daily when that offering was made.⁷

We will resume next issue with verse 15.

(1) Sometimes the more immediate fulfillment of a prophecy is a closer fit for the details of a prophecy, whereas the more distant and less specific fulfillment is by far the more grand and important fulfillment. Notice for example the prophecy of Isaiah chapter seven which predicts the virgin birth of Christ, as shown by Matthew’s use of it (Matthew 1:23, compare Isaiah 7:14). Surely the birth of Christ is the grand meaning of the prophecy — but as one reads the seventh chapter of Isaiah, in context with the historical episode it recounts, it is apparent that an immediate and precise fulfillment appeared in Isaiah’s day, by a young lady who bore a child through natural means as a sign of God’s deliverance of Israel from a contemporary threat.

(2) There are efforts to apply the prophecy as so many literal days to a cleansing of the literal temple in the days of the Maccabees. But we have seen nothing either specific or satisfying.

(3) The application of the 2300 days prophecy was a key ingredient of Miller’s scheme. However, he was not the first to embrace it. Froom cites “seventy-five prominent and respected voices ... [who] all appeared prior to the publication of William Miller’s first book on prophecy in 1836” who held these years would terminate “about 1843-1847.” (Froom IV, 403)

(4) As it happens, this is an even 200 years from the date we presently anticipate the opening of the Millennium.

(5) There is something of a self-fulfilling application here. A central reason the followers of William Miller looked forward to the date 1843 was their understanding that the 2300 years would end then. This disturbs us just a little. On the other hand, irrespective of the cause, there is no question that this movement did bring the Lord’s people to a marked point of preparation for the harvest to follow three decades later.

(6) A reasonable objection to this option might be that it dates the sprouting of the Roman horn, 387 BC, before the rise of Alexander,

before his death, and therefore certainly before the four horns which rose after him. Yet the vision shows this little horn emanating from one of the four horns. Possibly this is fatal to the endeavor. But on the other hand, it is simply true that Rome began to sprout as a power before the emergence of the four horns of Greece. As these symbols may pertain to Antiochus Epiphanes, there is no problem, for he arose five generations after the original Seleucus formed one of the four independent Grecian horns. Sometimes the most immediate fulfillment of prophecy is the most precise — again, the example of Isaiah chapter seven, fulfilled more precisely in the days of Isaiah, though more importantly in the days of Jesus. In Daniel chapter eight, Rome is the more important application, even if it fits less precisely in some details.

The suggestion that the “little horn” emerged in 387 BC is not original with us. We learned of it through Bro. James Parkinson of Glendale, California. Its appeal is (a) this is the beginning traced by the historian Polybius, (b) the results take us to 1914, which is also the date of the smiting of the image in Daniel chapter two. In both chapter two and chapter eight appears the expression “without hands.”

On the other hand, one might plausibly associate the emergence of the “little horn” with the Punic Wars which Rome waged with Carthage for maritime control of the Mediterranean. (In Latin, Carthage was “Punci,” from its history as a settlement from Phoenicia, whence the term “Punic” Wars.) Four such wars were waged over about a century. The first began in 264 BC, which would have been after the four horns had developed from Greece.

(The 334 BC - 1967 application was suggested by an elderly Greek brother, perhaps Bro. Kurios, shortly after the six-day war.)

(7) Some have supposed that 2300 evenings and mornings means 1150 days. This has not served as a key fitting any closely thought application of the prophecy, as far as we know. It is apparent that the text means 2300 evenings, and 2300 mornings — one of each for 2300 days. Why evening appears before morning is unclear, but possibly because the evening sacrifice was considered the more auspicious occasion of the two. The evening sacrifice marked the death of Jesus on the cross, and was respected as the “hour of prayer” in the temple (Acts 3:1).

Three Doves

Our last issue carried an opening article titled “Three Callings of the Spirit” — the call of the Ancient Worthies in Old Testament times, the Heavenly Calling during the present Gospel Age, and the Earthly Calling during the approaching Millennial Age. In each case the calling went forth through the holy Spirit, which is the power or influence of God exhibited to accomplish whatever His will is.

The “holy Spirit of God” (Ephesians 4:30) is represented by a dove. One memorable instance was at the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan River. As he rose from the water, “he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matthew 3:16). This marked Jesus as Messiah, fulfilling Isaiah 42:1, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him.”

But in addition to this anointing of Jesus individually, the episode also marks the beginning of the second of the two “callings of the Spirit” — namely the Heavenly Call, which began with Jesus and extends to his body members, the Church class.

Three Doves

Therefore we note with interest that three doves are used together in one Old Testament narrative which refers to the three distinct callings of the holy Spirit which God extends during His Plan of the Ages.

The episode we have in mind is found in Genesis 8:6-12. It occurred as the flood of Noah's day was coming to a close, opening upon a new world. It brings our mind back to the opening of the world in the days of our first parents, in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were allowed the blessed option of everlasting life, contingent upon obedience. We know how this ended — they disobeyed, and ever since that time the human race has experienced the consequences. This is a 6000-year lesson in the meaning of sin and what it brings. This lesson will prove of tremendous value, when at the close of the Millennium, the world is again on trial for life, after being perfected during the Millennium.

The episode about the three doves illustrates the three callings of God extended between the temptation in the Garden, and the final test at the close of the Millennium.

A Raven

The narrative begins with a period of 40 days, followed by a raven sent out of the ark, "which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth" (Genesis 8:6). Forty is a symbol of trial or testing in the scriptures, and in this case represents the trial in Eden. The raven represents the spirit of sin and death which was released as a consequence — which remains until the restless masses of the world, the "sea" class, has been converted to Christ. (Compare Isaiah 57:20, "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," with Revelation 21:1, "there was no more sea").

Three Doves

But with the raven, a dove is sent forth as well. "Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground" (Genesis 8:8). So with the curse of sin and death — justly imposed and wisely allowed for instructing the world — God also sent out His Spirit. The purpose of this was to develop and nurture a faith class. We know that class as the Ancient Worthy class. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, the prophets, were among this class called out of the world through the Spirit of God. They were not called to heaven. They will be raised to life on earth at the outset of the Millennium, and govern the earth on behalf of Christ and his elect who will reign from heaven.

The dove returned, representing the close of that call. Noah waited seven days and sent out another. That dove returned with an olive leaf in her beak. Noah waited seven days again and sent out the dove a third time. This time the dove remained out without returning.

A Raven and Three Doves

The raven represents the curse. The Doves represent the holy Spirit, with its Three Callings — to the Ancient Worthies, the Church, and the World.

Seven is the perfect number of scripture, and applies to Christ as the perfect one from above who gave himself as our ransom. The seven days preceding the two last releases of the dove identify two ages of redemption, based upon the sacrifice of Christ. The first is the Gospel Age. When the dove came back "in the evening," it represented the close of the present Gospel Age and its heavenly calling. The olive leaf is a symbol of peace. This represents that at the close of the Gospel Age, peace for the world is at hand, for the close of this age introduces the Millennium. (See Zechariah 14:4, where the mount of Olives represents the Millennial Kingdom.)

The third time the dove was sent out represents the next work of the holy Spirit — during the Millennium. Then God "will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). Everyone will be blessed by it then. Even the dead of past ages will benefit, for they will live again through a resurrection of the dead.

Thus this little episode of seven verses forms a picture of the three callings of His Spirit — for the Ancient Worthies, the Gospel Age Church (to heavenly glory), and the Millennial Kingdom (to everlasting life on earth).

Time Links

We cannot pass without notice that the flood episode, which initiated this episode, is connected chronologically to the three points at which these callings of the Spirit began — (a) 3958 BC (the fall of Adam), (b) 33 AD (the year Christ died and was raised), (c) 2043 AD (the year we anticipate the opening of the Millennium).

(a) There are three "beginnings" in the Divine Plan, namely the beginning in the Garden, the beginning again at the Flood, and the beginning of the "morning" half of 7000 years, 458 BC. The flood was situated enough years after the fall of Adam, so that it occurred 1845 years before 458 BC.

(b) From the Flood in 2303 BC until the first age of redemption opened in 33 AD is 2335 years — which is the sum of 1335 and 1000 (also of 1845 and 490), all well known periods of prophecy.

(c) From the Flood to 2043 AD is 4345 years — which is the sum of 1845 and 2500, also two notable time periods in the Plan of God.

Special Note ... *We anticipate publishing an issue every two months hereafter. This schedule will allow time for expanding the work in other ways.*