

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
September, October 2007

One God, the Father

"To us there is but one God, the Father"
(1 Corinthians 8:6).

Unlike the various Gentile nations, the Jewish people worshipped the one true God, whom Paul in our text above identifies as "the Father" — our heavenly Father. This is the same being whom Jesus referred to in his Sermon on the Mount, when he said to the multitudes, "your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Jesus is the son of God in a unique sense, "the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). He worshipped the same God. When questioned which of the commandments was the greatest, Jesus replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Jesus did this also, throughout his life (Matthew 22:37).

God revealed himself to Moses as Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the days of Abraham some others also still worshipped the one true God. For example, Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem), was a "priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:18). Even in the time of Moses there were at least some who still revered the one true God. Balaam is an example (even though he later became unfaithful). But most of the nations by that time had fallen into the worship of a false gods, often identified with the forces of nature — sun, moon, sea, storm — as though they were living, sentient, thinking persons.

They worshipped these in the form of images which were supposed to represent those "gods." This idolatry became rampant and pervasive in ancient times. In stark relief remained the Jewish faith in the one true God, Jehovah, who commanded his people Israel not to make any likeness to him, such as the idols the heathen utilized, and thus confuse a mere piece of wood, or stone, or metal, with the incomparably great God of the universe, whom the "heaven of heavens cannot contain" (1 Kings 8:27).

Jehovah

The name of God which he revealed to Moses, Jehovah, appears but a brief seven times in our common

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English version of the Old Testament. The underlying Hebrew is but four letters — usually transliterated as YHVH. These letters in Hebrews are Yod, Heth, Vaw, Heth — letters 10, 5, 6, 5 in the Hebrew alphabet.

The dominant letter, Heth, which involves an out-breathing to pronounce, is the letter which was added to the name of Abram to make Abraham, and to Sarai to make Sarah — after which they were productive in bringing forth the heir promised of God. The scriptures depict God as "breathing" the breath of life into Adam to enliven him. By adding Heth to the names of Abraham and his wife, he symbolically "breathed" into them also. Not long after this enlivening from God's spirit, the promised child miraculously came.

Rotherham's translation expresses the divine name more literally as "Yahweh." Probably this is closer to the original pronunciation. We retain "Jehovah" in our discussion simply because it is the familiar form, just as we retain "Jesus" as the name of our savior for the same reason. But the original pronunciation was different in both cases.

Though "Jehovah" appears but seven times in our English version, in fact the Hebrew word appears thousands of time in the Hebrew text. Every time the word LORD or GOD in all capital letters appears in our Old Testament, the underlying word in the Hebrew is Jehovah. Sometimes when citing such texts we change the word to Jehovah for clarity. If it were always so rendered in the common version, readers would much better appreciate that this is the name given for God himself.

The Father

That God — Jehovah — is the “Father of all” (Ephesians 4:6) means he is the ultimate source of all life, whether for angels, men, or his son Jesus. Throughout scripture, God is consistently represented as the Creator.

- Genesis 1:1, “God created the heaven and the earth”
- Genesis 1:21, “And God created ...”
- Genesis 1:27, “So God created man”
- Genesis 2:3, “Which God created and made”
- Genesis 2:4, “Jehovah God made ... earth ... heavens”
- Genesis 5:1, “God created man”
- Genesis 6:7, “Jehovah said ... man ... I have created”
- Deuteronomy 4:32, “God created man”
- Mark 10:6, “The creation ... God made them”
- Mark 13:19, “The creation which God created”
- Romans 1:25, “God ... the Creator”
- Ephesians 3:9, “God, who created all things”
- 1 Timothy 4:3, “which God hath created”
- Revelation 4:11, “Thou [God] hast created all things”
- Rev. 10:6, “[God] ... created heaven ... earth ... sea”

His only begotten son was the first of God’s creation, and was employed by God as a workman through whom the remainder was brought forth. Thus the New Testament speaks of Jesus as one “through” whom or “in” whom God created. Unfortunately the Greek words *dia* and *en* (through and in) are sometimes rendered “by,” which can cloud the issue of Jesus’ subordinate position relative to creation. Here are three texts as they should read.

- John 1:3, “All things were made **through** him.”
- John 1:10, “the world was made **through** him.”
- Colossians 1:16, “**In** him were all things created ... all things were created **through** him.”

The word “Father” is used of God more than 40 times in the Gospel of Matthew alone, and freely in the other gospels as well. In the epistles of Paul he frequently introduces his letters with greetings from God, who is described as the Father, in contrast to Jesus, who is referred to as our Lord.

- Romans 1:7, “peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ”
- 1 Corinthians 1:3, “peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”
- 1 Corinthians 8:6, “one God, the Father ... and one Lord Jesus Christ”
- 1 Corinthians 15:24, “[Jesus] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father”
- 2 Corinthians 1:2, “Grace ... and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”

- 2 Corinthians 1:3, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”
- 2 Corinthians 11:31, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”
- Galatians 1:1, “God, the Father”
- Galatians 1:3, “God, the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ”

Similar texts appear in Ephesians (1:2,3,17, 3:14, 4:6, 5:20, 6:23), Philippians (1:2, 2:11, 4:20), Colossians (1:2,3, 2:2, 3:17), 1 Thessalonians (1:1,3, 3:11,13), 2 Thessalonians (1:1,2, 2:16), and in the introductions to the following books also: 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 1st Peter, 1st and 2nd John, Jude, and Revelation (1:6), and in 2 Peter 1:17.

Note that whenever the expression “God the Father” appears, the punctuation should properly be “God, the Father.” (Notice, by comparison, that the expression “God the son” **never** appears in scripture.)

Broader Uses

The word “god” is often the rendering of the Hebrew word *elohim*, and in the New Testament of the word *theos*. As words, these apply broadly to any dignitary, judge, or magistrate. *Elohim* is used of Abraham on one occasion (Genesis 23:6, “mighty”), and *theos* of Jesus on several. But when either Jews or Christians speak of “God” they generally have in mind Jehovah, our Heavenly Father. So did the apostles in the many texts cited above.

“To us there is but one God, the Father” (1 Corinthians 8:6). “To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever” (Romans 16:27). “Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever” (1 Timothy 1:17).

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John the Baptist

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe” (John 1:6, 7).

John the apostle penned these words. He had been a disciple of John the Baptist originally, along with his brother James, and their partners in fishing, the brothers Peter and Andrew. All of these would become apostles of our Lord Jesus, and all of these had their attention directed to Jesus as a result of John’s ministry.

That was John’s mission, to stir the minds of Israelites to repentance from sin, and to look for the Messiah of promise who was soon to appear. When John 1:7 says “that all men through him might believe,” presumably the “all” refers to the Israelites whom John was sent to prepare.

John was about half a year older than Jesus, for Gabriel announced to Mary her coming child, when her cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of carrying John the Baptist (Luke 1:36). If John, like Jesus, began his ministry when he achieved 30 years of age, then John was preaching repentance to Israel half a year before Jesus began his ministry, when he came to John at the Jordan river for baptism.

Baptism at Jordan

When Jesus approached his cousin for baptism, John objected. “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Matthew 3:14). But Jesus was not being baptized for repentance of sin, as the others. Jesus’ baptism represented something different — a baptism, or immersion, into the will of God. In his case it meant a ministry of sacrifice for others, finally to end in giving his life.

Jesus did not explain this to John, but without objecting to what John said, merely replied, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Three years later, Jesus would ask his disciples, “Are ye able ... to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Matthew 20:22). Many years later, Paul explained that baptism into Christ means baptism into his death. “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death ... we are buried with him by baptism into death [and now] ... walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-3).

Only Matthew recorded the interchange of words between the two cousins, John and Jesus, at the river Jordan. Is this a conversation Jesus would have repeated to Matthew later? Or does this record suggest that Matthew also had his heart prepared by John, and as a disciple of John, happened to be present on the occasion? We know little about Matthew’s calling except for the brief record he supplies: “And as Jesus passed forth from

thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him” (Matthew 9:9).

Following Jesus’ baptism, John beheld as the holy spirit in the outward form of a dove alighted on Jesus. This calls to mind Isaiah 42:1, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him.” Also Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings.”

Jesus then was pressed of the spirit to go into the wilderness for meditation. He was there without food for 40 days. Afterward he resisted the tempter, and evidently soon thereafter appeared again at the Jordan, where John the Baptist saw him again.

Only a day before this, John assured the people that he (John) was not the anointed, the Christ, but that “there stands one among you, whom ye know not” (John 1:26), who was. John had already witnessed the spirit descending at Jesus baptism. He had already heard the words from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

Now, when John saw Jesus after his return from the wilderness, John pointed him out publicly. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The next day, Jesus appeared nearby again. And again, John took the opportunity to point him out. “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:35).

The two disciples were Andrew and John. Andrew’s brother Peter was then introduced to Jesus, who promptly named him Cephas, “stone,” indicating his future role as a leader in the Church. Perhaps James was introduced by his brother John, but the narrative does not specify this directly. As Jesus’ ministry began to grow, and people resorted to him, John the Baptist would observe, “he must increase, but I must decrease” (verse 30). John was of the old, Jesus was of the new. John would be one of the Ancient Worthies, Jesus was the first of a “new creation.” John will be one of the “princes in all the earth” of Psalms 45:16, Jesus would begin calling the bride class of Psalm 45:8-15.

“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom [Jesus]: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled” (John 3:29).

The Disciples of John

The Baptist’s disciples did not all turn to Jesus immediately. John’s ministry continued, and overlapped the ministry of Jesus by perhaps a year. John’s gospel records events in sequence as they occurred, and in chapter two



John, baptizing Jesus.

we have record of the first passover of Jesus' ministry, about six months after his immersion. Chapter three then records Jesus' interview with Nicodemus, and verse 22 says "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea: and there he tarried with them, and baptized."

The verses following that explain that John was not yet cast into prison. Then the opening of chapter four says, Jesus "knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John." This prompted Jesus to leave Judea and travel back to Galilee. Enroute, he encountered a Samaritan woman at a well, and this episode occurred about four months before the spring time harvest, according to John 4:35. In other words, we are about two months past a year after the autumn date of our Lord's baptism.

Here the other narratives — Matthew, Mark, Luke — pick up the thread. The first two tell us John was now in prison (Matthew 4:12, Mark 1:14). Probably it was that which caused Jesus to go northward, knowing that his time was not yet. He would not permit his increasing fame to result in his arrest, as occurred to his cousin.

What, then, became of John's disciples? Some of them would have turned to Jesus, specially later, after the news of Jesus' resurrection. But not all. John had a large following, and it continued wherever the Jews went. Many years later, in Paul's third missionary journey — perhaps 25 years after John's death — Paul encountered such disciples at Ephesus. He asked whether they had received the holy Spirit, and they replied no, they were not even familiar with it. "Unto what then were ye

baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:3-5).

Do we suppose Paul found all such disciples? Probably various ones were scattered here and there, and never did follow through with faith in Jesus as the Messiah, even though they were godly and devoted. It is likely they will receive, with John the Baptist, the reward of the righteous in the Kingdom on earth among the Ancient Worthies. Their hopes were earthly, and their reward will be earthly.

Barzillai

There is a suggestion concerning this, in picture, in the Old Testament. The narrative comes from the time of King David, who pictures our King Jesus. There was a revolt against David's leadership by his son Absalom, which pictures the revolt by the Jewish people against the administration of King Jesus. Absalom was renowned for his handsome features and healthy hair. His hair represented the attachment of Israel to their Law Covenant (as for example the hair of the Nazarite represented fidelity to his vows). But by lack of faith, their table of blessing became a snare (Romans 11:9).

Among the opposition to King David was his former counsellor Ahithophel, whose ruin was prophetic of the ruin of Judas, the betrayer of Jesus (compare John 13:18 about Judas, with Psalms 41:9, which evidently is about Ahithophel). This supports the view that the revolt against David represented the revolt of the Jews against their King Jesus.

As David and his men crossed eastward, away from the rebellion, into the land of Gilead, an old friend met him and assisted David's men. His name was Barzillai. He was a good man, and he showed by his actions his demeanor and his faith. Later, after the revolt was quelled, David invited his aged friend to come across the Jordan and feed at David's table in Jerusalem, the city of the King. The record of this interchange is in 2 Samuel 19:31-39. Barzillai declined the gracious offer, noting that he was "80 years old," too old for a change of venue.

Perhaps this illustrates those who had their sights set on the earthly Kingdom of Messiah — represented by the other side of Jordan — rather than the spiritual hopes brought by Jesus. Though disposed to faith in God and service to God, not all would enlist in direct service at the table of King Jesus.

The number eight, following as it does the number seven, often associates with the earthly kingdom, the Millennium, which follows the seven stages of the Church. Thus the Church class is represented in the "seven shepherds" [idiom for kings], and the Ancient

Worthies are represented in the “eight princes,” who intervene on behalf of Israel in their looming crisis (Micah 5:5). In the vision of Ezekiel’s temple, mankind in the kingdom is represented by the Israelites ascending two flights of steps as they approach the temple of God for worship. The two sets of stairs number seven steps, and eight steps, respectively — showing that mankind will approach God through the Church reigning in heaven, and with the assistance of the Ancient Worthies who will govern in the earth.

Thus eight, or its multiples by factors of 10, associate with the Ancient Worthies. Barzillai’s age of 80 years, specified twice in the narrative, suggests further that he represents those whose reward will be earthly. He represents those who overlapped the coming of Jesus, but whose focus and attachment was to the earthly hopes that God provided them.

After the Millennium

Of the Ancient Worthies, according to our Lord Jesus, none was greater than John the Baptist. “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matthew 11:11). What a remarkable commendation by our Savior, to his noble cousin John who called Israel to repentance, introducing the work of Messiah.

But as Jesus pointed out, those who participate in the Kingdom which he preached and introduced, would have a higher privilege yet. So it will be during the Millennium. The saints will reign with Christ from heaven, and the Ancient Worthies will govern the earth as examples of perfect humanity. They will be skilled in every way necessary, and be privy to wisdom from above. They will be honored as God’s representatives on earth, and direct the world wisely, and righteously. They will so function for a thousand years, and remain during the Little Season following the Millennium.

But what then? Might God have some special honor for these noble Ancients, after their service in the Millennium? The Scriptures do not speak much of that time, and appear to have no definite statement respecting the issue. Brother Charles Russell, who so many Bible Students appreciate as the last of the “seven stars” in the right hand of our Lord Jesus (Revelation 1:20), suggested that in keeping with God’s principles of rewarding faithful service, perhaps the Ancient Worthies will be granted a heavenly reward when their service here is completed, after the close of the Millennium.

If this is so, then Jesus’ faithful cousin John, who so devotedly stirred Israel to repentance, and announced the Messiah among them, may join him at last in the heavenly courts. “The Bride, the Lamb’s wife,” will already have been completed. But some special place of honor, subsidiary to the bride class, may be open for them.

70 Weeks

Daniel Chapter Nine. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness” (Daniel 9:24).

This prophecy of seventy weeks is a cornerstone of time prophecy. It provides a foundation, in the sense that it shows how time prophecy is to be applied — namely, on a day-for-a-year basis. Verse 24, cited above, so clearly points to the redemption in Christ, that among Christian people this application is nearly universal.

Verse 25 specifies that the 70 weeks (of years) began with the “commandment [of the Persian king] to restore and to build Jerusalem.” As we will see later, this refers to the decree of Artaxerxes authorizing the return of Ezra to restore Jerusalem. “Thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:14).

That decree was given in the opening of Artaxerxes’ seventh year, 458 BC. Seventy weeks of years later takes us to the spring of 33 AD, which was the year and season at which Christ died on the cross for our sins.

Introduction

However, before examining the specifics of the prophecy further, we back up to consider the opening of this ninth chapter. That opening is in a time setting 80 years before the decree of 458 BC, namely in the year 538 BC. It was “in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.”

Daniel 5:31 explains that “Darius the Mede” received the kingdom after Babylon fell into Persian hands. The date for the fall of Babylon is recognized by historians as 11/12 October, 539 BC. As far as we know, this date is **undisputed** and it may properly be considered an established date.

As was the custom among both Babylonian and Persian monarchs, the accession-year system was employed, by which the calendar year in which a king came to the throne was recognized as his year of accession. Year number “one” of his reign would commence at the next new year, which for both Babylonians and Persians was in the spring of the year. Their years began with the Babylonian month Nisanu (whence the Hebrew term Nisan). Thus the “first year of Darius ... the Mede” refers to the year beginning in the spring of 538 BC.

The identification of “Darius the Mede” has puzzled many. It is clear that Darius the Mede was not an independent king superior to Cyrus, for Cyrus entered Babylon only two weeks after its fall to his armies and was recognized as ruler of the empire. The most reasonable solution appears to be that Darius the Mede is the



Darius the Mede = Cyrus the Persian

same person as Cyrus the Persian — the two designations each emphasizing a separate portion of the peoples jointly ruled. Cyrus was Median through his mother, and Persian through his father, so both descriptions are accurate. Probably Daniel 6:28 is intended as an explanation that the two names refer to the same person. Probably this text should read, “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, **even** in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”¹ (See 1 Chronicles 5:26, where the same structure equates Pul with Tiglath-Pileser, two names for the same person.)

Verse Two

“In the first year of his reign [538 BC] I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

The word “accomplish” in this text comes from the word numbered 4390 in Strong’s Concordance, *male*. It refers here to an expiration or ending. It is rendered “expired” in 1 Samuel 18:26, 1 Chronicles 17:11 and Esther 1:5, and “be at an end” in Leviticus 8:33. The Laamsa translation captures the thought — “I, Daniel, understood by the scriptures the number of the years ... which the prophet Jeremiah said, that seventy years would elapse before the desolations of Jerusalem would come to an end.”

Daniel knew the seventy years predicted by Jeremiah had been completed. For Jeremiah 25:12 said that “when seventy years are accomplished [expired, *male*, 4390], I will pun-

ish the king of Babylon.” Belshazzar had been slain the evening Babylon fell to the armies of Cyrus, perhaps half a year before the time of Daniel chapter nine. Inasmuch as the King of Babylon had been punished, it was clear that the seventy years had previously expired.

Those seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah were defined as years “for Babylon” (Jeremiah 29:10) to exercise her empire. They commenced at the fall of the previous empire, Assyria, when their last stronghold, Haran, fell to the Babylonians in 610 BC. During those seventy years, one after another of the nations of the middle east fell to the power of Babylon, including the kingdom of Judah, ruled from Jerusalem. Those 70 years expired in 540 BC, and in that very year Cyrus turned his attention to the conquest of Babylon, which fell a year later.

Now, in 538 BC, those seventy years “for Babylon” were past, and the empire of Babylon was no more. It was now appropriate to pray for the restoration of Israel to their land. For Jeremiah had prophesied that after the “seventy years are accomplished [expired, *male*, 4390] for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10, ASV).

The desolation of Judea followed the collapse of Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah, and it would not abate until the close of Babylon’s seventy years. But now they had closed, and now the desolation could be abated. Thus the beloved Daniel “set [his] face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:3).

The Outpouring of His Prayer

An eloquent prayer of Daniel is recorded in verses four through 19. He acknowledged their sin, the righteousness of God, and the appropriateness of their punishment. But he also remembered that “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses” (verse 9), and he would implore those mercies now. For the honor of God’s name, he would ask, “for the city and thy people are called by thy name” (verse 19).

The Scriptural Seventy Years (610 BC to 540 BC)

- Seventy years appointed “for Babylon” (Jeremiah 29:10)
- Began with the fall of Assyria at Harran, 610 BC
- Ended with the advance of Cyrus against Babylon, 540 BC
- Belshazzar of Babylon “punished” (killed) October, 539 BC
- Thus the 70 years **must** have ended earlier (Jeremiah 25:12)
- “Accomplished” = *male*, ended, terminated (Daniel 9:2)
- Decree of Cyrus restoring Israelites, 538 BC
- Israelites in their cities by Tishri, 538 BC (Ezra 3:1)
- Desolation of Judea, begun in 587 BC, ends in 538 BC

Gabriel Appears

While Daniel was yet speaking, God replied through the angel Gabriel, the same angel who appeared 13 years earlier to give the vision recorded in chapter eight. The time of his appearance was appropriate to the message he brought. He “touched [Daniel] about the time of the evening oblation” (verse 21). The prophecy he bore would speak of redemption in Jesus, and “the time of the evening oblation” was the time for offering a sacrificial lamb, which pictured the sacrifice of Jesus.

Gabriel was an appropriate messenger to speak of the coming of Jesus, for Gabriel was the one who would later announce the coming of Jesus to his mother Mary. Gabriel encouraged Daniel to attend closely to the vision and words he would hear, and then delivered his message in verses 24 through 27.

The Connection

Daniel’s prayer had been for his people and for Jerusalem, and Gabriel mentions them both in the first sentence of his message. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city ...” (verse 24).

One cannot help but associate in some way the seventy years which had already elapsed, with the seventy weeks of years to run in the future. Perhaps it suggests that the blessings to come in seventy weeks of years, would outweigh the comparatively briefer seventy single years of the past.

The Prophecy

Most of verse 24 refers to the redemption brought through Christ — “To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.”

But there is more. “And to seal up the vision and prophecy [or prophet, margin].” Presumably this means the fulfillment of the vision by the ministry and death of Jesus was a seal to the vision and prophecy which Gabriel brought to Daniel. Later, in Daniel 11:14, appears some language which this reminds us of. “The robbers [breakers] of thy people [Rome, who would break Israel] shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.” This evidently means that Rome would advance themselves at the point in history referred to in Daniel 11:14, but they would not yet become the dominating force which prophecy predicted for them later. At that later time they would “establish the vision” by fulfilling it, but not yet. If “establish the vision” there means fulfill it, then “seal up the vision and prophecy” in 9:24 also probably means to fulfill it. This Christ would do by his successful sacrifice.

“Anoint the most holy.” Evidently this means the anointing of the holy spirit, opening the heavenly calling, introduced by our forerunner Christ. This may have been fulfilled at Jordan, when Jesus began his ministry

and service, or possibly by his opening the way “through the veil” for us, his followers, after he ascended and “entered ... within the veil” into the most holy (Hebrews 6:20, 19).

Exodus 30:26 speaks of anointing the Tabernacle, which included the most holy, and all the furnishings, which included the ark of the covenant residing in the most holy. Exodus 40:9, 16, says this was done the day the Tabernacle was set up. This pictured the establishment of God’s program of redemption at the outset of the Gospel Age.

The Decree

Daniel 9:25 tells us the starting point for this time prophecy — “From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” This refers to the decree issued by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, recorded at length in Ezra 7:11-26. It authorized the return of Ezra to Jerusalem with a large sum of money to “inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” It specifies that any Israelite of the realm who wished to, could join Ezra in his journey. Ezra had formal permission of the King and his seven counselors, and he authorized Ezra to accomplish “whatsoever shall seem good to thee” (verse 18). Verse 22 itemizes the wealth the King authorized from the treasury, verse 24 exempts Ezra’s assistants and ministers from tribute, and verses 25, 26 accord Ezra political authority.

The Street and the Wall

There is no specific record in Scripture of rebuilding any particular street of Jerusalem, either during the time of Cyrus and Zerubbabel when the Jews first returned from captivity in 538 BC, or during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, 80 and 93 years later, respectively. Perhaps the mention of “street” in the prophecy is incidental to the mention of “wall,” for the main street (or streets) of a city generally led to the gates which admitted people access to and from the city wall.



Ezra the priest, commissioned by Artaxerxes in 458 BC.

The Temple

Conspicuously, the prophecy does not mention rebuilding the temple. This may be because the temple was rebuilt before the time of Ezra, before the seventy weeks of years commenced. Thus it was not one of the activities accomplished during the seventy weeks.

The temple is mentioned in verse 26, but here it — refers not to its rebuilding, but to its later demise under the Romans, some years after the seventy weeks would have ended. “The people of the prince that shall come [the Roman armies] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood [of war and trouble], and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

That the rebuilding of the temple is not mentioned in the prophecy, is additional evidence that the decree from Cyrus to rebuild the temple, is not the decree intended in Daniel 9:25. However, there is something about the rebuilding of the temple that is interesting and helpful, as compared with the rebuilding of the city. This is explained following.

The decree of Cyrus, in 538 BC, is recorded briefly in Ezra 1:2-4. We say “briefly,” because there was more to the decree than recorded in these three verses. This is apparent by comparing Ezra 6:3-5, where additional features of that decree are recorded. On the basis of Cyrus’ decree, the Jews returned in good numbers, as recorded in Ezra chapter two. Ezra 2:64 sums the entire number as 42,360. The same number is later recorded also in Nehemiah 7:66, which repeats the record of that first, initial return from Babylonian captivity.

Probably this number is meaningful in a spiritual sense. Spiritual Israel during the Gospel Age was also in “Babylonian” captivity — Babylon here referring to the Roman Catholic Church, which is represented as spiritual “Babylon” in Revelation chapter 17. The time accorded this period of bondage for spiritual Israel is 42 months of years (Revelation 11:2, 13:5). The same period is also expressed as $3\frac{1}{2}$ “times” of 360 years each (Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:14). Probably the 42,360 number of captives returning from literal Babylon is intended to prefigure the release of the saints from spiritual Babylon during the **42** months and **360** year times. But this is an aside from our subject.

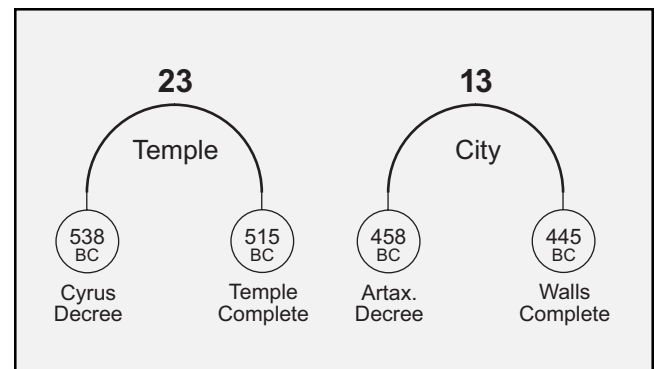
When the Israelites returned in the first year of Cyrus, Ezra 3:1 says, “when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.” This would be Tishri of 538 BC. Joshua was the high priest, and Zerubbabel, who was of royal descent from Jehoiachin, was governor. They caused an altar to Jehovah to be built and initiated sacrifices upon it. But the Temple had not yet been rebuilt.

That would commence the following spring, in 537 BC, in the second calendar month (Ezra 3:8). Verse 10

describes the foundation of temple being laid, and verses 11-13 record the mixed reaction to this momentous event — joy for the new, mingled with sorrow at the memory of the former.

When the adversaries of Israel heard of the rebuilding, and their involvement was resisted due to uncleanness, they turned against the project. They sent accusations back to the court of Persia, and so stopped the reconstruction (Ezra 4:5). “So [the work] ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Darius Hystaspes, who reigned 36 years from 522 BC to 486 BC). Ezra chapters five and six narrate the resumption of the work and the completion of the Temple.

In other words, the temple was commenced by decree of Cyrus, the work went into abeyance because accused of their enemies, and was resumed and completed some years later.



The same pattern exactly occurs respecting the rebuilding of the city, as represented in its walls. The decree of 458 BC, providing Ezra a mandate for the restoration of Jerusalem, prompted him to lay the foundations of the walls of the city shortly after his return. This is attested in Ezra 4:12: “The Jews ... [are] building the rebellious ... city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.”

Because they were accused of being a rebellious city, king Artaxerxes directed that the work of rebuilding the city be in abeyance “until another commandment shall be given from me” (Ezra 5:21). So the work stopped (verse 23), and was not resumed for 13 years, when Nehemiah received renewed permission.

So for the **temple** — the work was authorized, commenced, resisted, stopped, resumed, completed. Later, for the walls of the **city** — the work was authorized, commenced, resisted, stopped, resumed, completed.

The reconstruction of the temple, and of the city, experienced similar problems. In each case the process was begun by the decree issued — Cyrus for the temple, Artaxerxes for the city. The former was in 538 BC, the latter in 458 BC.

This comparison helps us appreciate that Daniel 9:25, speaking of a commandment to restore and build Jerusa-

lem, refers to the decree received by Ezra — not, for example, the permission received later by Nehemiah, which merely authorized a resumption of what Ezra had previously commenced. The decree identified in Daniel 9:26 was given to Ezra, in the seventh regnal year of Artaxerxes. The date was 458 BC.

Seven, Sixty-Two

Verse 25 breaks the count of years into an initial seven weeks (49 years), and a remaining 62 weeks, summing to 69 weeks which introduce the final and climactic 70th week. Why the segregation of the first seven weeks of years is not readily apparent. It may be a play on words, “seven sevens,” as the original language would express it. Or perhaps a remembrance that in the Jewish Law, seven weeks of years was a cycle of sabbaths culminating in a Jubilee. By comparison, Jerusalem would be rebuilt and reestablished as a center of trade and commerce by the passing of one such cycle of years.

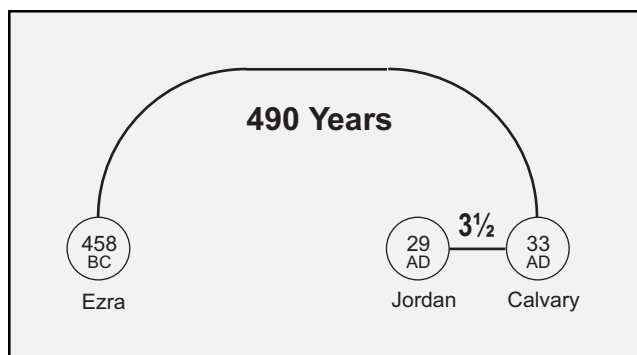
As to the 62 weeks remaining, we observe in passing that Israel was freed from Babylonian captivity under Cyrus, who was 62 years when his armies took Babylon (Daniel 5:31). A like number of weeks of years lead to the greater than Cyrus, our Lord Jesus at his first advent. (Compare Isaiah 45:1, where Cyrus represents Christ.)

Verse 25 says that these seven weeks, and then 62 weeks, summing to 69 weeks, would take us “unto the Messiah the Prince” — Jesus. Sixty-nine weeks of years would be 483 years. Counting these from 458 BC leads us to the spring of 26 AD (483 - 458, plus one to account for crossing the BC-AD divide, yields 26 AD). And yet our Lord Jesus did not become Messiah, the anointed one, until his baptism at Jordan in the autumn of the year 29 AD. Thus there appears to be an imprecision of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. How is this reconciled?

The answer is in two parts. (1) The prophecy as it is given is in fairly coarse units of measure — not single years, but weeks of years. If Jesus was baptized in the middle of a given week, then the nearest number of whole weeks which would pass before his introduction would necessarily end half a week before his baptism. In this respect, the prophecy expresses the matter properly. How many weeks of years would pass until Messiah? Sixty-nine would pass, and subsequently Messiah would appear. If the prophecy had said seventy, then it would indeed be imprecise, for it would have overshoot the appearance of Messiah.

(2) However, the prophecy does provide increased precision in verse 27. That text refers to the “midst of the week” — the middle of the last week in the series, the 70th week. The brings us to the autumn of 29 AD, precisely when Jesus was baptized at Jordan.

Verse 27 says “in the midst of the week he [God] shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease.” This applied when Jesus began his ministry, replacing the offerings of the Law, with himself as the antitype. Paul says that



when Jesus came to John at Jordan, “He taketh away the first [the type], that he may establish the second [the antitype, the reality, Jesus’ own sacrifice as a fulfillment of the sacrifices of the Law] (Hebrews 10:9).

Pronouns

Verse 26 says that after the 62 weeks (which follow the seven weeks), after the appearance of Messiah, he would be cut off. This refers to the crucifixion of Jesus. The next phrase in the common version says “but not for himself.” The thought is clear — Jesus died for our sins, not for any sins he had. But the way this is expressed may be misleading. The word “himself” has been added by the translators, and does not appear in the Hebrew text. The margin rendering in the common version says “and shall have nothing” — notice the absence of the pronoun. Rotherham’s version says “shall the anointed one be cut off and shall have nothing.”

We notice this detail, because the pronoun “he” appears in verse 27, and some have mistakenly supposed this “he” refers to “himself” in verse 26 — but it does not. “Himself” is not in the Hebrew text. Verse 27 refers to God, who is the active agent throughout the prophecy.

Verse 27 — “And he [God] shall confirm the [or a] covenant with many for one week.” The covenant referred to may be the Abrahamic covenant (compare Luke 1:72), which was confirmed to Israel through the work of John the Baptist even before the ministry of Jesus commenced. Or perhaps it was the Mosaic covenant, as John advised them to repent for the sins they accrued against under the Law.

In either case, the “sacrifice and oblation” of the Law ceased to be recognized of God when replaced by the antitype in Christ. This began in the “midst of the week,” when Jesus was baptized and began his ministry.

Thereafter, because of the abominations of Israel under the leadership of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and by the anarchy of the zealots, “he” (God) would make it desolate, “even until the consummation” in the Roman conquest of Judea. This occurred in the seven years of revolt and war from 66 to 73 AD. Rome would be the tool of God in bringing those judgments. Still later, Rome would be judged also, “and that determined shall be poured upon the desolator.”

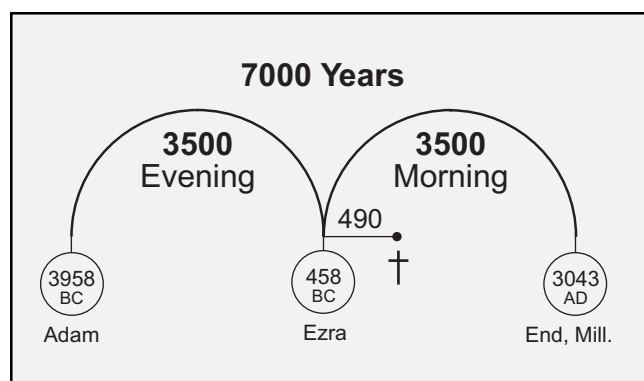
Verse 26 had warned of this climactic end to the Jewish Age also. “The people of the prince [Titus, the Roman prince and general who would take Jerusalem] that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [which was burned]; and the end thereof shall be with a flood [of war], and unto the end of the war desolations are determined [against Israel and Jerusalem, who would become scattered].

Morning

We have mentioned before in the pages of this journal, and repeat it here, that this prophecy is remarkably situated in the span of God’s Plan of the Ages. 458 BC, when the 70 weeks of years began to count, is at the half-way marker in the 7000 years of God’s plan — 6000 years of sin and death, and 1000 years of restoration in the Millennium.

Genesis chapter one speaks of seven creative days, each composed of an “evening” followed by a “morning.” The last of these is the present one, which evidently is 7000 years in length. By its close the purpose of God respecting mankind is achieved through the Millennium. The “morning” period of this 7000 year day commences exactly at the year 458 BC.

What an appropriate time! The morning of this 7000 year day introduces the count of years toward the Ransom, and all the blessings which accrue from it. Habakkuk 3:2 may be a prophetic marker of this point. “O Jehovah, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid” — so the world has heard the judgment of God and through 3500 years of the evening of darkness, experienced the fearful consequences. “O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”



In the very midst of the years — the very midpoint of his Plan of the Ages — God would “make known” his gracious purposes, by commencing the count of years toward the redemption for the world. Thus “in wrath” — while the curse is still abroad upon the world — “remember mercy” — which God surely does, in setting a precise time for removing sin through the sacrifice of Jesus as our Ransom.

When we realized some time ago this remarkable marker, the 70 weeks of years commencing at the half-way point in God’s Plan, the impression was deep upon us. It was a veritable “seal” upon the results gleaned from the scriptures, which speak of 6000 years of man’s history ending in 2043, and thus the Millennium reaching to the year 3043.

We previously had our attention called to the fact that the Jubilee system of Israel, beginning the year Israel entered the promised land at the crossing of Arnon, stretched to the 17th Jubilee marker at Ezekiel 40:1 (explained in our previous issue, the 2043 Special Edition). That spanned all the years which are sometimes disputed among brethren — the Judges, the Kings, and the Desolation of Judea — in a most satisfying way.

When later we perceived that the 70 weeks of years, the cornerstone of time prophecy, marked exactly the beginning of “morning” in the 7000 years of God’s plan, this second deep impression “set the seal” as it were that we had indeed ascertained the testimony of God’s word respecting chronology properly.

(1) See www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/daniel_wiseman.pdf for a discussion of this view, and a review of other options proposed.

Structure of the Old Testament

Becoming familiar with the scriptures

There are 39 books in the Old Testament. They are divided into three basic segments.

- Historical (Genesis through Esther)
- Devotional (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)
- Prophetic (Isaiah through Malachi)

First Section

The first section contains the five books of Moses. These are followed by a three sets of triads — Joshua, Judges, Ruth; three pairs of double books Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and the closing set of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Thus the five books of Moses are followed by 12 others, making 17 total.

These appear in our common version in their historical sequence, almost. The exceptions are understandable enough. (a) The story of Ruth occurs during the period of Judges. (b) 1 Samuel overlaps Judges somewhat, Samuel being a contemporary of Samson. (c) Kings and Chronicles cover the same period of time, Kings including a history of Israel’s divided kingdoms, Chronicles focussing more particularly on the southern kingdom, Judah. (d) Ezra and Nehemiah span the time from Cyrus

through Artaxerxes (and later), but the story of Esther occurs in the time of Xerxes, a generation before the individuals named Ezra and Nehemiah.

Second Section

The second section, the Devotional segment, has five books sometimes termed Wisdom books. These books also are sequenced in time order — Job first, Psalms, which contain many of David’s writings (but some of a later time also), and three books mostly written by David’s son Solomon, namely Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

Third Section

The third section is prophecy. The four “major prophets” are time sequenced — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel — or almost so, for the narrative recorded by Daniel begins a few years before the narrative contained in Ezekiel. (But Daniel’s narrative continues many years beyond Ezekiel’s.)

Lamentations is added after Jeremiah since it was authored by that prophet, which means this prophetic section also begins with five books. The remainder of the prophetic section, as with the historical section, is comprised of 12 books, often termed the minor prophets (even though Hosea, Amos, and Zechariah, have more chapters than Daniel).

The time of the 12 “minor prophets” overlapped the four “major prophets.” Of that last group of 12 prophecies, the first six pertain to the time Assyria was the dominant empire, the next three speak of a time when Babylon would displace Assyria, and the last three were during the Persian period when Israel was coming back to their land.

Structure of the New Testament

History, Exhortation, Prophecy

There are 27 books in the New Testament, combining with the old for 66 total. A pleasant way to remember how the 66 books are divided into Old and New is to add six to half of them, and subtract six from the other half — thus 39 and 27 books for the Old and New respectively.

As with the Old Testament, there are three sections of the New Testament —

- Historical (Matthew through Acts)
- Epistles (Romans through Jude)
- Prophetic (Revelation)

First Section

As the first section of the Old contains five books of Moses, so the first section of the New contains five books about the Greater than Moses, our Lord Jesus. The first four are the Gospels which narrate Jesus’ life — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. The fifth is also by Luke, the Acts of the Apostles.

The four Gospels are arranged in the order composed, and each is named for its author. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called “synoptic” gospels because they view (*optic*) Jesus’ life in a similar way (*syn*, with, or together). The reason they are similar is explained by the dependence of the latter two on Matthew.

Matthew’s Gospel is arranged topically. There are five main lessons from Jesus: (a) The sermon on the mount, (b) Jesus’ commission to his 12 apostles, (c) a series of parables of the kingdom, (d) personal advice to his disciples, and (e) our Lord’s great prophecy. These five lessons begin in chapters 5, 10, 13, 18, and 24, respectively.

Mark, who had not the authority of an apostle, evidently had Matthew’s earlier gospel before him, and with Peter as his advisor, condensed and clarified the former gospel for a wider audience. Luke follows the pattern of Matthew also, but resequences some of the narratives into the proper time order, and adds material from personal interviews he conducted of eyewitnesses. Luke was able to do his research while his mentor Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years.

John, some years later, as an aged disciple and the lone remaining apostle, composed a fresh gospel from his recollections, urged by his fellow Christians to commit his testimony in writing before his years expired. John’s Gospel gives us new information. Only John speaks of the first year of Jesus’ ministry, and only John traces the four passovers of our Lord’s ministry. (Assuming the “feast of the Jews” in 5:1 is a passover, or if not, then another spring feast, which thus covers each of the four spring seasons of our Lord’s ministry.)

Old Testament

History (17)

Torah (Five books of Moses)
Joshua, Judges, Ruth
1 and 2 Samuel, Kings, Chronicles
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Devotion (5)

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Eccles., Song of Solomon

Prophecy (17)

Isaiah, Jeremiah (Lamentations), Ezekiel, Daniel
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah (Assyria)
Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah (Babylon)
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (Persia)

John's testimony is rich with thoughtful reflections on the spiritual teachings of Jesus. Also, because he wrote after the gnostic errors had crept up within the Church, which question the very nature of who Jesus was, John emphasized that Jesus pre-existed with the heavenly Father as the Logos, was made flesh, taught, suffered and died for our sins, and was raised from the dead. The same emphasis is also seen in John's epistles, also written late in his life.

The Acts of the Apostles records the activities of the apostles after Jesus was taken up from them, through 12 chapters. Thereafter it follows the experiences of Paul to the close of the book.

Second Section

The second section contains the epistles of the Apostles. The first 14 are from Paul, sequenced, as we read in McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia, according to Luther's estimation of the relative importance of the ecclesias to whom the epistles were written. Thus first in order is the epistle to the Romans. The latter few of the 14 epistles of Paul are his letters to individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon), and last is his epistle to the Hebrew brethren at large.

This is followed by seven "Catholic" or "universal" or open epistles by other apostles — James, Peter, John and Jude. Paul's 14, and these seven additional, total 21 epistles from the hands of the apostles.

Third Section

The third section again is prophecy, in this case but one book, Revelation, unquestionably the most apocalyptic book in the scriptures. It stands unique in the entire New Testament, though supplemented perhaps by our Lord's prophecy of Matthew chapter 24.

Revelation was written by John the Apostle in his later years, when banished to the isle of Patmos by the emperor Trajan, according to early Christian testimony. Trajan ruled from 98 to 117 AD. Thus if the testimony connecting Revelation to the reign of Trajan is correct, this would be the product of John's last years. It was the parting gift of our Lord Jesus to the Church, through the last remaining of his appointed apostles. It outlines in symbol the unfolding plan of God as it would extend through two ages of redemption — the present Gospel Age, now closing, and the approaching Millennial age, which we anticipate, chronologically, in the year 2043.

The book covers three time periods, namely the two ages of redemption just mentioned, and the Harvest of the Gospel Age, which is a period of transition between the two. We are in that Harvest today, having passed more than 3/4 of its length. It commenced in 1874 with the second advent of Christ. Since that time we have been in the *parousia* of Christ, the time when Christ is invisibly present, unknown to the world, effecting a transition of the ages. (See Revelation 14:14, which repre-

sents Christ as present in this Harvest period.) Being so advanced in time, we have every advantage over Christians in former times, in grasping the meaning of this cryptic book. It sheds an abundance of light on our way.

Each of the three portions — for the Gospel Age, Harvest, and Millennial Age — may be further divided into four subportions, constituting 12 portions over all — a pleasant reminder of the 12 minor prophets which close the Old Testament.

There are other ways the book can be divided also, such as the four venues or locations of the Apostle John during the vision (on Patmos, taken in the spirit through a door in heaven, later to the wilderness, and lastly to a high mountain). Or to the seven basic scenes which segregate the book. Of these we will perhaps speak more in a future series on this delightful and now luminous book.

Summary

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have three main sections — History, Exhortation, Prophecy. In the Old Testament these contain 17, 5, 17 books respectively, each commencing with a discrete portion of five. In the New we have 5, 21, 1 respectively.

The scriptures come in two distinct parts — the Old and New Testaments — signified by the two olives trees (Zechariah 4:3), two witnesses (Revelation 11:3), two swords (Luke 22:38), and two candlesticks (Revelation 11:4), and the two rows or stacks of shewbread on display in the holy of the Tabernacle (Leviticus 24:6). The six loaves of shewbread in each suggest the 66 books of sacred testimony.¹

(1) This is a common thought among the brethren. We were hesitant about two sets of six loaves, side by side, representing the number 66, for some time — and still we have some pause about this. The 12 loaves total represent that this pictures the spiritual "food" for the 12 tribes of spiritual Israel. But the arrangement of them into two groups of six is stipulated in the text, and thus may be intended to suggest two digits adjacent to each other, as in 66 books of the Bible. Remember in the previous article the mention of 42,360 Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity, to suggest the 42 prophetic months, and 3½ prophetic times of 360 years each — two adjacent numbers within a larger number. This example, and others from scripture, induce us to look favorably to the two rows of six loaves as suggesting the 66 books of scripture.

New Testament

History (5) — Four Gospels and Acts

Exhortations (21)

14 Epistles of Paul

7 Epistles of James, Peter, John, Jude

Prophecy (1) — Revelation