

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
September, October 2008

Israel

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).

Long ago, God made choice of one people, one nation, to receive special favors above others. He offered them a special covenant, and gave them a specially ordained Law. After rescuing them from Egyptian bondage by many divine miracles, he led them into the wilderness of Sinai and at the holy mountain God made them this remarkable offer:

"You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:4-6).

God made this offer to Israel through a mediator, their leader Moses, and the people agreed. "All the people answered together, and said, All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:7). Thus Israel became a special people of God. The rite of circumcision which they kept marked them as heirs of God's covenant with Abraham. The Sabbath they kept was a sign of the additional covenant made with them at Mount Sinai.

By choosing Israel as a special nation, God kept the faith of Jehovah alive in the earth. He provided a people and a culture to preserve the words, promises, and principles of God, and to bear witness of them to the world. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1,2).

But privilege brings responsibility. If Israel would have the blessings of God, they would also have His corrections. God chastised the nation when they went into apostasy. He sent prophets to teach and lead them, but also to warn and chide them as necessary. God instituted a priesthood from the sons of Aaron whose duty was to maintain the faith of Israel and their service to God. The priesthood had the entire tribe of Levi associated with it to instruct and influence the nation for good.

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Not Arbitrary

God's choice of this people was not arbitrary. They were chosen because God promised to faithful Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would favor their descendants in a special way. "They are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Romans 11:28). "Jehovah did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because Jehovah loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8).

Cycles of faith and faithlessness ebbed and flowed in the nation during all their history. But God's purpose was firm and always among Israel there was a remnant of faith. Even in the darkest days of Ahab and Jezebel, who introduced Baal worship in the northern kingdom of Israel, some of faith remained. Elijah once prayed, "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away ... Yet [God replied] I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:14, 18).

A History of Israel's Experiences

The Book of Genesis covers 2369 years of human history, from the creation of Adam to the death of Joseph. Joseph preserved Jacob's family of more than 70 persons when they came to Egypt and received a choice part of land, Goshen, in which to flourish. After 144 years following the death of Joseph, Moses led the Israelites

From Adam to Jesus

2369	Adam to Death of Joseph
144	to Exodus
40	Wilderness
6	Conquer Canaan
349	Judges
120	United Kingdom
207	Fall of 10 Northern Tribes
136	Fall of Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar
49	Return from Babylon
570	to Calvary's Cross
3990	

out of Egypt. That is recorded in the Book of Exodus, and the remaining books of the Old Testament give us a history of the nation of Israel thereafter.

They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, conquered Canaan under Joshua in 6 years, possessed Canaan under their Judges for 349 years, and established a united kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon for 120 years. Then the kingdom was rent into two parts. The northern kingdom continued for 207 years until they fell to Assyria, and the two tribe southern kingdom another 136 years until Zedekiah fell to Nebuchadnezzar. It would be 49 years before their return from Babylon, and another 570 years to the death of Christ at Calvary.

During all this time, Israelites who appreciated their heritage and were led by God were richly blessed. They were heirs of the promises given to Abraham. They had the principles of the Law given through Moses. Jesus once summarized those principles with two commandments — “thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5), and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18).

Ancient Worthies

Those who followed these principles and were faithful to Jehovah became part of the “Ancient Worthy” class — a class which began with Abel and continued up through the first advent of Christ.

These Ancient Worthies will be raised to life perfect at the beginning of the Millennium and become the leaders of Israel during the Kingdom. Their authority will extend to the entire world, as nation after nation recognizes God's blessings upon Israel. “The mountain of Jehovah's house shall be ... exalted ... all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go

up to the mountain of Jehovah ... he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.” They will lead the world into a golden age of peace, prosperity, and blessing. “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Paul recites the noble character, work, and sufferings of these Ancient Worthies in Hebrews 11:33-38, “Of whom the world was not worthy.” The Ancient Worthies will be highly honored in the Kingdom. They will be examples of human perfection, wisdom, and devotion, for the world to emulate during the Millennium.

The Greater Call of the Gospel Age

But those who lived into and beyond the time that Christ died have an even greater honor. When Christ died as a ransom for us, for the first time ever, actual atonement for sin was available. Those who lived before this were accepted by God according to their faith, and were recognized as friends of God. “Abraham believed God ... and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23). But in the present Gospel Age we have a higher opportunity. “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12, 13).

Abraham looked forward to a new day when God would establish a world based on righteousness. He and his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob, and others of faith, “looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). That “city,” or government, is composed of the Bride class, that is, all the members of the body of Christ who prove faithful during this age. Together with Christ, they will constitute the new authority to rule the earth from heaven during the Millennium. Revelation depicts this class as a new city, a

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holy city, descending from God out of heaven as the new administration of Earth during the Millennium. “I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).

Heavenly Jerusalem

The remainder of Revelation chapter 21 contains a description of this new city in great detail — in symbols, of course. The **foundations** are the 12 apostles. The **wall** of the city, perhaps the height of the wall is intended, measured 144 cubits (Revelation 21:14, 17). This reminds us that Revelation describes the number of the elect class as 144,000 (Revelation 14:3). Also, the city measured 12,000 x **12,000 furlongs**, thus in area 144,000,000 square furlongs, again linking this city with the saints.

The many **jewels** described as adorning the city perhaps represent the individual members of the elect. “They shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (Malachi 3:17). No wonder that trials and testings are necessary in the Christian life, in order to crystallize and polish our characters, that we might constitute a treasure for our Heavenly Father.

The **gates** of the city to admit the world into fellowship with God are each made of a single, large, pearl (Revelation 21:21). A pearl is made through trial. As a grain of sand becomes an irritant to the oyster, it overlays the grain with layer upon layer of fine material which becomes a beautiful pearl. So in our Christian life, the irritants, the unpleasant trials we experience, are to develop in our character the beauty of a pearl. If we overcome these trials and become lustrous of character, we will be fit to show the way to the world how to pass through their trials on their way to God in the Kingdom.

The Ancient Worthies saw that such a government would come to the world. They will have a part in that government as the earthly representatives of it. But the saints of the present age will constitute the heavenly rulership of that government, together with their Lord, the “King of Kings,” Jesus. New Jerusalem is represented as descending from above, both because they will rule from heaven, and because their authority is from God who is above.

“These all [the Ancient Worthies], having obtained a good report through faith, **received not the promise** [about the seed of blessing]: God having provided some better thing for us [the Gospel Age Church]” (Hebrews 11:39, 40).

Christ is the seed of promise. “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made ... to thy seed, which is Christ. Secondly, we are part of that seed of promise as we come into Christ. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:16, 29).



New Jerusalem descending from God, representing the New Government of the World during the Millennium.

When Israel is Delivered

But when will the Ancient Worthies appear, and who will receive them? An answer is intimated in a prophecy known well among Bible Students, namely Micah 5:5. This prophet was a contemporary of Isaiah. Both of them prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, as well as other kings. At that time, the most feared power of the Middle East was the empire of Assyria. Already Assyria had taken the 10 tribe kingdom into captivity, and in the 14th year of Hezekiah their king Sennacherib advanced against Jerusalem.

The entire narrative is recorded in Isaiah chapters 36, 37 and 38. Hezekiah implored the protection of Jehovah, and Isaiah brought assurance from God to the king that He would deliver them. “Thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it” (Isaiah 37:33). “I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city” (Isaiah 38:6).

And God did deliver them in a remarkable way. In the morning as the Israelites looked out, the enemy army had been decimated, and the residue retreated back to Assyria. This is used by God as a backdrop for the invasion of Israel by the land of the north, predicted in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. Then also God will deliver Israel from an overwhelming enemy coalition. The words of Isaiah and Micah about how God would deliver Israel from Sennacherib apply again to the deliverance to come in the final troubles closing the present Harvest, or ending period, of this Gospel Age.

Here is how Micah 5:5 describes the deliverance. “And this shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes of men.” The verses following that describe a great victory by Israel over their enemies.

Seven Shepherds, Eight Princes

Who are these seven shepherds, and eight princes? A shepherd is a metaphor in ancient writing for a king, for a shepherd rules his flock as a king rules his people. In fact the famous expression “he shall rule them with a rod of iron” (Revelation 2:27) literally means he will “shepherd” them with a rod of iron. Thus the seven shepherds refer to seven kings.

Most agree that the “seven kings” refer to the glorified saints, the Bride class, who reign as kings with Christ in glory. The number “seven” is associated with



Sennacherib, King of Assyria

them because the Church is developed during the seven time periods of the Gospel Age, referred to in Revelation as the seven Churches of Asia minor (Revelation chapters 2 and 3).

By comparison, the eight princes take us into the Millennial Age — that being an “eighth” period, as it follows after

the seven stages of the Gospel age. The “princes” are the Ancient Worthies, lower in authority than the saints in glory, the spiritual rulers of the Kingdom. Psalms 45:16 refers to the Ancient Worthies as “princes” also. Thus this text in Micah suggests that the Ancient Worthies are raised in answer to the prayer for deliverance by Israel when they implore Jehovah to save them.

Joel

The prophet Joel also served during the Assyrian period and his prophecy also seems to have as backdrop this invasion of Israel by Sennacherib of Assyria. Here is Joel’s comment about what Israel will do when invaded by Gog from the north.

“Therefore ... saith Jehovah, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness ... Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep ... let them say, Spare thy people, O Jehovah, and give not thine heritage to reproach ... Then will Jehovah be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, Jehovah will ... remove far off from you the northern army ... Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for Jehovah will do great things” (Joel 2:12-20).

Zechariah

The prophet Zechariah lived later than the others, and predicted the fall of Israel to the Grecian Empire, and later to its successor the Roman Empire. But he also speaks of a final battle against Israel, and God’s deliverance of them. “It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications [prayer]: and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:9, 10).

This prophet connects the deliverance of Israel to the time when Israel recognizes Jesus as their Messiah, and weeps bitterly for having renounced him for so long. But how will this come to be? After 2000 years, what is it that clearly tells the Israelites that Jesus was indeed their appointed Messiah? There must be some remarkable and undeniable testimony about this, to bring such a prompt, complete, wholehearted repentance in Israel.

The answer appears when we combine the testimony of all these prophets together. In their final peril, Israel will have their attention forcibly directed to the God they have known their whole history — Jehovah. In the press of crisis, even men who do not live their faith in normal circumstances tend to turn to God.

When Israel prays earnestly to Jehovah for deliverance, then God will act. The church in glory, from heaven, will intervene on behalf of Israel to turn aside their enemies. At the same time, the “eight princes,” the Ancient Worthies — the “prince” class of Ezekiel 44:3 and 46:10 — will be raised from the dead to lead Israel through the crisis.

These Ancient Worthies will be raised perfect, and will have communion with the heavenly rulership. They will explain the facts to Israel: that Jehovah their God whom they implored in prayer is answering their prayer through their Messiah, Jesus.

The press of events and crescendo of emotions will work the necessary transformation of mind and heart, and the nation will resoundingly acclaim their Messiah. The one they cast away so long ago, will be their Savior again!

The Role of Israel in the Kingdom

Then Israel will become the holy people of God they were destined to be from the first. They will be “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” as God offered them at the beginning. They will have missed the more glorious heavenly reward, the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Of that privilege, Paul says, “the election [the elect ones who received Christ at the first advent] obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11:7).

But that blindness upon the remainder was not complete, it was only in part. They did not lose their faith in Jehovah, though they were blinded to their privileges in Christ. But “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Romans 11:28) and God’s favor for his chosen nation of Israel is sure. God is very merciful. Each one of us can testify to that in our own experience.

Then Israel, as a nation, will be repentant. Then they will be humbled. And then they will be usable. The nations abroad will take note of the remarkable deliverance. They will hear the reports about Israel’s leaders raised from the dead, and see the victory God brings through them. Even nations who do not themselves know God, will know that Jehovah, the God of Israel, has done something remarkable. God will be “sanctified in them, in the sight of many nations” (Ezekiel 39:27).

The blessings of life will first nourish Israel, and then begin to flow outward from them to a weary world, ready for something better after the great time of trouble closing this age. “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ... and Jehovah shall be king over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:8, 9).

“And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts ... Yea many people and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Jehovah” (Zechariah 8:21, 22).

Under the leadership of the Ancient Worthies, the blessings will begin to accrue wonderfully at Israel and the other nations will want some of that blessing. This will be a natural inducement for them to seek the Lord, through his chosen people, who will gladly teach the world about the wonderful God who called them, chastised them, and delivered them.

Some nations may not respond at first. If they “will not come up ... unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain” (Zechariah 14:17). Probably this “rain” represents the blessings of the Kingdom. The nations who refuse the call of peace and grace from Israel will not enjoy the advantages. If this does not cause them to humbly come to God, then punishments will be imposed to encourage their cooperation (Zechariah 14:18, 19).

Gradually all will come, all will be blessed, and the Millennial Kingdom of Christ will become universal. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

A Nation Again

The reappearance of Israel as a nation among nations in the year 1948 is a tangible sign of the coming Kingdom. If our understanding be correct that the Seventh Millennium commences in the year 2043, then we have but a generation more, 35 years, before the introduction of that kingdom among men. Meanwhile the progress of events continues steadily in the right direction.

As embraced by Bible Students broadly, the end of the 1335 years of Daniel 12:12 came with the year 1874, marking the *parousia* of Christ — that is, the first stage of the second advent. Christ is present as the unseen regal authority, overruling affairs for the establishment of his Millennial Kingdom. The saints who died long ago have joined him in glory, and in the few years remaining the body of Christ will be complete.

Three and a half years after our Lord’s first advent, Israel was cast off from favor as a consequence of their rejection of Christ. Now, three and a half years after our Lord’s second advent, Israel’s fortunes have begun to reverse. In **1878** Petak Tikvah was established in the aftermath of the Berlin Congress of nations, which secured for Jews and all an equal standing before the law in Palestine. The first Zionist congress was convened by Theodore Herzl in 1897.

In World War I England conquered the holy land, and in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration, England declared their intent to make Israel a national homeland for the Jewish people. The Great Depression broke some financial restraints holding Jews in Europe and elsewhere, and they began returning to Israel in greater numbers. The holocaust during World War II, beginning in 1939, propelled many more back to Israel. At last, in **1948**, Israel became a sovereign nation again.

In 1956 Israel took the Sinai peninsula, but returned it to Egypt under pressure from the United States. In 1967 Israel conquered it again, and also retook Old Jerusalem, including its temple mount. In 1973 they escaped a near defeat, which woke them from a sense of complacency. In 1980 they moved the capital of Israel to Jerusalem. But in 1993, with the Oslo accords, they began a well intentioned but unfortunate path of compromise that has led to one disappointment after another.

The Restoration of Israel	
1878	Petak Tikvah
1897	Zionist Movement
1914	World War I
1917	Balfour Declaration
1930s	Depression
1939	Holocaust, WW2
1948	Independence (after 70 years)
1956	Sinai Campaign
1967	Old Jerusalem retaken
1980	Jerusalem annexed
1993	Oslo Debacle

Meanwhile, their economy is strong and their numbers are increasing. Some are secular in outlook, some are religious, and many are somewhere between. All of them should regard the testimony of the prophets and appreciate that God is working on their behalf. Some do. In due time, all of them will.

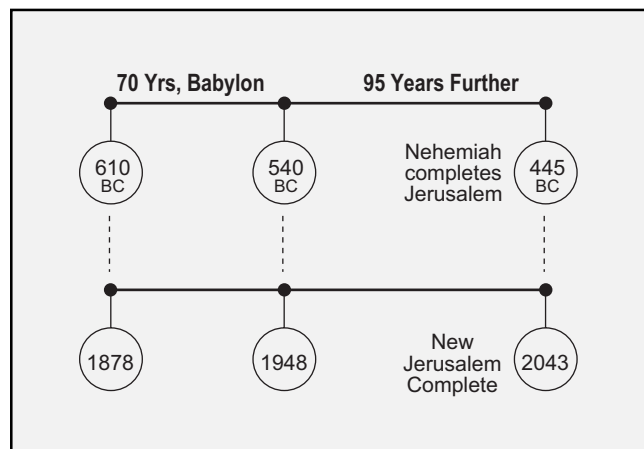
70 Years

We notice with interest that from 1878, when the return of Israel commenced, until 1948, when Israel became a nation again, was a period of 70 years. As they lost their national existence when Babylon ruled for 70 years, so they regained their national existence in a similar period of 70 years. This observation suggests that the declaration of the State of Israel in the year 1948 was not a random event, but part of a progression foreknown to God and orderly.

But there is more to this parallel. When Israel returned to Jerusalem out of Babylon, following the 70 years of Babylon's power, the rebuilding of the city was not immediate. Within a year they began the foundation of their temple, but because of opposition the work went into abeyance, and the temple was not completed for another 21 years. More than five decades passed, when Ezra the priest returned to Jerusalem to revitalize the city, but even his efforts to complete the walls of Jerusalem were not successful.

At last Nehemiah returned with a mandate from the Persian king Artaxerxes, and the walls were finished in just 52 days of intense activity. The year was 445 BC. This was 95 years after Babylon's 70 years had come to a close.

Now consider the date 1948, when Israel was declared a nation again, after 70 years of effort commencing with 1878. Another 95 years further take us to the date 2043 AD — the same date which the testimony of the Hebrew Old Testament provides for the close of 6000 years from Adam. If the usual view is correct that the Seventh Millennium is the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, then we have fresh confirmation for the date of the Kingdom.



When Nehemiah completed raising again the city of Jerusalem, it seems here we have a picture of the time when Christ completes the building of "new Jerusalem." Remember that Revelation 21:17 tells us the wall of new Jerusalem measures 144 cubits, suggesting the wall of the city represents the elect Bride class. When this class is complete, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2), then the Millennium will commence.

Events to Come

What the events will be in these coming 35 years between the present, and the Kingdom, we know not. There are prophecies which speak of more land coming to Israel, and more trouble coming to their enemies. When and under what circumstances these will be fulfilled we will see by and by.

Our best judgment, gleaned from what we have heard, learned from others, read and considered from the prophecies, is that the final invasion against Israel from the "land of the north" will come from Russia (Gog), augmented by the European Community (Gomer) which Revelation chapter 17 suggests will have a united front at that time. This alliance is supplemented by Turkey (Togarmah), Libya (Phut), Iran (Persia), and others from Africa (Cush). This coalition is described in Ezekiel 38:3-6.

Probably at this time the coalition described in Psalms 83 joins with the coalition from the north. That psalm describes the ongoing enmity of Arab countries against Israel, which we think will crescendo at the same time as the invasion of Gog from the north.

At the July, 2008, Bible Student General Convention in Pennsylvania, this subject was discussed by three brethren in an evening Panel Discussion, which our readers may find of interest.¹

In any case, we know the outcome. Israel will be delivered from a final peril. The Church will intervene from above. The Ancient Worthies will be raised to lead them here below, and point Israel to their Messiah. This will precipitate a national repentance and a national conversion. Humbled, thankful, they will appreciatively receive the favors of the Kingdom through their Messiah, Christ Jesus.

Then they will have the blessed privilege of bringing to the world the rich blessings they receive in the Kingdom of Christ, then beginning.

"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations; even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you!" (Zechariah 8:23).

(1) It can be accessed on the internet at biblestudentsweb.com/general08/mp3/Panel072108.mp3

Christian Principles

*"He that doeth truth cometh to the light"
(John 3:21).*

We who have given our lives to God are engaged in a struggle for righteousness and against sin. The world is involved in struggles also — sometimes on the side of good, sometimes not — according to where their own self-interest lies. But those who are in Christ are of a purer sort. They follow principles, rather than simple advantages. They conduct themselves justly, kindly, generously, truthfully, and are disposed to suffer wrong rather than violate someone else.

The more a Christian follows this practice in their life, the more it becomes part of them. The more one experiences earthly loss on behalf of principle, the more firmly the principles of right and wrong adhere in the heart to guide our conscience and conduct in the future. The pain of loss deepens the value of what we have suffered for.

That is the purpose of the Christian life — to develop the principles which are right, noble, pure, as the guiding forces of our life. At the close of life, this commitment to what is right is fixed in our heart, and we are judged suitable by the Heavenly Father for the "inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

When seen from this point of view, the struggles we have in the present will pay rich rewards in the future. We should appreciate right for the intrinsic good that it is, even if pursuing what is right will not bring us earthly gains which avarice and insensibility might. Such gains never bring satisfaction. They numb our spirit to the higher sentiments which lead to true happiness.

Written in the Heart

There will come a time when the world will no longer operate after selfish principles. Jeremiah the prophet described how things will be in the Kingdom of Christ, in this way. His words apply specifically to Israel, but in due time all the world will convert to the Messiah of Israel, our Lord Jesus, and thus be inducted into the heritage of the seed of Abraham.

"This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:33, 34). The following verse tells us this promise is as sure as "the ordinances of the moon and of the stars" (verse 35).

During the Millennial Age the world will have the law of God written not on tablets of stone, such as Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, but on the tables of

their heart. It will not be comprised of a list of specific commandments, but the principles which each person will apply to the circumstances of life from their own enlightened conscience. Then the spirit of love actuating every person will operate for the good of every other person.

This does not mean there will be no common agreements, expressed in specifics, that people will live by. Organization of large populations makes this kind of agreement helpful, even necessary, to the smooth interaction of people. This function is largely supplied by custom and culture today, and it will likely be so during the Millennium as well. But the lengthy laws of specific do's and do not's, crafted in technical language, will be unnecessary when righteous principles govern the conduct of each person from within.

For Us it is Today

The world itself can appreciate the value of this kind of living. In western cultures, people sometimes remember when a hand shake and a word of affirmation by honorable people was sufficient to assure the fulfillment of a commitment. Those who are committed to a life of doing what is right should conduct themselves as far as possible in this way.

Today, before the world is induced by God's intervention to reorganize itself along these proper lines, the Lord's people have the privilege of having the principles of God written in our hearts by the spirit of God. Paul, as a minister of Christ, said to the brethren at Corinth that this kind of writing was being done in them. They had become an epistle, or letter, "of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

This, Paul said, was part of the glorious administration of this age of the holy Spirit, which surpassed the brightness of the old Jewish Law in every way. This superior glory, Paul said, was represented by the glorious brightness from the face of Moses as he descended from Mount Sinai after his encounter with Jehovah. The brightness of Moses' face was a reflection of the glory of God he had seen in the mount. Paul says that glory represents the glory of the Gospel which we have presently, which we share and preach to others as we encourage others to appreciate Christ our Savior, and all the blessings of light, truth, and redemption we have in Christ.

"We all, with unveiled face, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory [that we behold in Christ], to glory [that we reflect to others]" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Even Greater in the Kingdom

When the saints have all had the Law of God written in their hearts as the motivating principle directing their thought and conduct, then we with Christ will figura-

tively descend from the mountain again, and minister the blessings of life and truth which we receive from God, to the whole world. Then, in the Millennial Age, the world will have the principles of righteousness written in their hearts.

In this way, through the course of a thousand years, the living generations will come to know God deeply. This blessing will be extended to all the dead of past ages as well, through their resurrection from the dead. “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth” (John 5:28, 29).

The Fundamental Doctrine

*“Other foundation can no man lay”
(1 Corinthians 3:11).*

The foundation of Christian doctrine is the Ransom. The implications of this doctrine reach to every area of God’s Plan of the Ages. The Reformation movement which commenced with the posting of Luther’s 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church emphasized “Justification by Faith” in the blood of Christ. That is, faith in the Ransom price that Jesus laid down for our release from the curse of death.

But the implications of the Ransom were not fully developed in the time of Luther. He and other reformers were just beginning to retrieve some of the Truths of God’s plan. The fuller explanation of this doctrine and all its blessed consequences would come during the Harvest. This contribution came through the work of Bro. Charles Russell.

Br. Russell used the Ransom doctrine as the underlying foundation for the work of the Harvest. Volume One of his series “Studies in the Scriptures” is titled *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, known by Bible Students everywhere simply as “Volume One.” Study Nine in this book is titled “Ransom and Restitution.” We heartily recommend this to all our readers. If any do not have this book, let us know your request and we will send you one with the next issue of Faithbuilders Fellowship.

Ransom

The concept of the Ransom is not difficult. One man, Adam, the father of all people today, was created perfect and offered everlasting life in a paradise world, on the condition of obedience to God. The penalty for disobedience was death. “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

Adam did sin, and the curse followed. Adam was expelled from the garden and its life-sustaining trees and made to till the soil with labor thereafter, until he died 930 years later. “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou shalt return unto the ground” (Genesis

3:19). Now Adam had only a condemned life to pass on to us all through procreation. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men” (Romans 5:12).

By this means the entire human race, suffering under the curse, learns by experience the consequences of sin. This learning would be of no value if the end were simply everlasting death. But God planned from the beginning for another opportunity for everyone. For Adam and Eve this will be a second opportunity for life, and no doubt they will make better choices the second time. But for everyone else it is the first opportunity for life, for all of us have been under the curse of death from the time of our birth.

This second opportunity for life comes because God sent his son to be born of the virgin Mary, grow to adulthood, and give his life for us as a “**Ransom**.” He releases the world from their bondage to the curse by paying a price for their release.

The price that Jesus paid was the value of a perfect human life. The perfect man Adam was justly condemned — the perfect man Jesus who was without sin, accepted the penalty of our sins upon himself, that we might go free. The value of his life given for us is the Ransom from the penalty justly imposed.

Not Used Immediately

That value — the Ransom Price — was not used immediately when Jesus died. But it was not forfeit. On the third day, when Jesus was raised from the tomb, Jesus had the value of that life at his disposal, to be applied when and how wisdom directed, to fulfill the Plan of God. This is what Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:20 — when our Lord Jesus was “brought again from the dead,” he came “with the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

Jesus would not use the value of that life for 50 days more, until the Day of Pentecost, when he “appeared in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24). And it would be another 2000 years plus, not until the coming Millennial Age, that Jesus will use the value of that life to redeem the race at large. But he has the value of it to use at the appropriate time for the rescue of the entire race.

Two Ages of Redemption

Jesus first uses the value of that Ransom to release from condemnation those who believe in him now, during the present Gospel Age. We are invited to participate in the most wonderful privilege ever offered to any of God’s creatures — the “High calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). This is a call from God to join our Lord Jesus in heavenly glory, and with him rule the world during the Millennium, for blessing “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 28:14).

We are still in the **first** age of redemption, termed by Bible Students everywhere the “Gospel Age.” This age is now drawing to a close. According to the chain of chro-

nology in the Hebrew Old Testament, we have but 35 years remaining to the close of 6000 years from Adam. Then will commence the glorious “Seventh Millennium,” which as many Christians hold, is the same as the Thousand Year Kingdom of Christ spoken of in Revelation chapter 20.

Then the **second** age of Redemption will open wide for the world. The kingdom will begin at Israel, led by the “Ancient Worthies,” men and women of faith who lived before Christ died on Calvary’s cross. Gradually the kingdom will spread to other nations, and ultimately it will cover the earth.

Then Jesus will use the Ransom to redeem Adam and all his race, removing the curse imposed in the Garden. Then the whole creation “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption” (Romans 8:21). “There shall be no more curse” (Revelation 22:3).

“Ransom and Restitution”

Here are some excerpts from Bro. Russell’s treatise on “Ransom and Restitution,” which explain the breadth of the hope contained in this doctrine.

“Paul’s reasoning on the subject is most clear and emphatic. He says (Romans 14:9), ‘To this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.’ That is to say, the object of our Lord’s death and resurrection was not merely to bless and rule over and restore the living of mankind, but to give him

authority over, or full control of, the dead as well as the living, insuring the benefits of his ransom as much to the one as to the other.”

“To claim that he gave a ‘ransom for **all**,’ and yet to claim that only a mere handful of the ransomed ones will ever receive any benefit from it, is absurd; for it would imply either that God accepted the ransom-price and then unjustly refused to grant the release of the redeemed, or else that the Lord, after redeeming all, was either unable or unwilling to carry out the original benevolent design.”

“Let the actual benefits and results of the ransom be clearly seen, and all objections to its being of universal application must vanish. The ‘ransom for all’ given by ‘the man Christ Jesus’ does not give or guarantee everlasting life or blessing to any man; but it does guarantee to every man another **opportunity** or trial for life everlasting.”

“The ransom given does not excuse sin in any; it does not propose to count sinners as saints, and usher them thus into everlasting bliss. It merely releases the accepting sinner from the first condemnation and its results, both direct and indirect, and places him again on trial for life.”

“The **experience** with evil, contrasted with the experience with good, which will accrue to each during the trial of the coming age, will constitute the advantage by reason of which the results of the second trial will differ so widely from the results of the first, and on account of which divine Wisdom and Love provided the ‘ransom for all.’ ”

The Kingdom of God

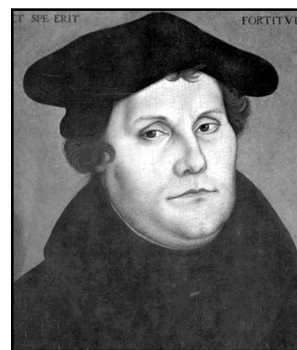
- “The **God of heaven** set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44).

- “One like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days ... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13, 14.)

- This kingdom will be shared by Christ with his elect, gathered from the world during the Gospel Age. “The greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the **saints of the most High** ... all dominions shall serve and obey” (Daniel 7:27).

October 31

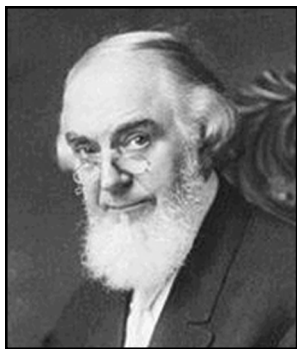
The work of restoring the Ransom doctrine to the Church, after it was so obscured during the Dark Ages under the rule of Antichrist, the “Man of Sin” (the Roman Catholic Church), in some respects commenced with Luther’s stand against indulgences. These “indulgences” were sold by the Catholic Church for money, as a means of buying forgiveness of sins.



Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Others before Luther saw this practice as detestable. John Huss burned at the stake in 1415, and among the charges for which he perished was his firm objection to this practice. John Wycliffe in the late 1300s, and others before him, protested this and other abuses of the corrupt Church.

When John Huss was brought to the place of his execution, he is reported to have said “Today you will roast a lean goose [Huss means goose], but a hundred years



Charles Russell (1852-1916)

from now you will hear a swan sing, whom you will leave unroasted and no trap or net will catch him for you.” The family emblem of Martin Luther is said to have been a swan.¹

As we understand the symbols, the work of the Reformation, and even the specific role of Martin Luther, is described in symbol in Revelation 9:1-12. The

“star” which fell from heaven was Luther, who was excommunicated for his stand on conscience against the abuses of the Church. To him was given a “key” to release the dormant doctrines of scripture from the pit of inactivity which held them so long.

More on this at some later time, if we run a series on Revelation. Here we note the date beginning his reformatory work, namely October 31, 1517, with the posting of the famed “95 Theses” for formal debate.

October 31 was also the calendar date on which Bro. Charles Russell, whom most Bible Students today recognize as the Seventh Messenger to the Church, completed his work and passed to his reward. That year was 1916. Possibly the coincidence of calendar days, October 31 in each case, is merely an accident of history.

Ordinarily we would assume so. But seeing that these men of faith were used to restore the doctrine of the Ransom causes us to wonder if the coincidence of dates beginning and ending this work are not a suggestion by the hand of providence, that marks the importance and relationship of their labors.

And there is this as well. The years between these occasions strikes our attention. From 1517 to 1916 is a span of 399 years. At first this modestly surprised us, so close to a nice round 400 years, which would have attracted our attention if it were so. But in retrospect, we observe that from the time of the original curse in Eden, in 3958 BC, until the time Christ died as our Ransom on the cross in 33 AD, is a period of 3990 years. (See the tally of years in the box on page two.)

Thus the 399 years consumed in restoring the Ransom doctrine to the Church, is a span appropriate to the subject, just 1 part in 10 of the entire span the condemned world waited for the blessed gift of our Redeemer — perhaps another testimony, in the providence of God, to highlight the work of these noble servants of the Most High.

(1) For a review of the closing experiences of John Huss, the reader may request the August 2008 issue of “Beauties of the Truth.” (We will send them as long as our excess supply lasts.) “Beauties of the Truth” is a publication for Bible Students that goes more deeply than most into fine points of the Truth.

Antiochus Epiphanes

(Continued)

Our series on Daniel has taken us into the long and oft-neglected 11th chapter of Daniel. It is neglected by many because of the many details it contains. But this prophecy is a deep treasure. It is like an exquisite composition by a Renaissance master. Its details may be passed over by the casual observer, but to the mind of the attentive, they bear rich testimony to the talents of the artist.

This chapter is an elegant treatment of the unique events during six generations of rulers following Alexander the Great, until Antiochus Epiphanes, the infamous persecutor of the Jewish people who tried to end the Jewish religion. Verse 31 is a key verse. It is referred to in Daniel 12:11 and Matthew 24:15, as a critical verse in the prophecy. From there forward, the prophecy applies simultaneously not only to Antiochus, but also to Pagan Rome which would break the Jewish nation in 70 AD, and to Papal Rome which would persecute the saints of God for 1260 years during the Gospel Age.

More on that later. For now we pick up the thread of thought from verse 25, where we left off last time. From verses 21 through 24 the prophecy treats the first years of Antiochus Epiphanes. Now, with verse 25, begins the account of his famous invasions of Egypt. As explained in the previous issue, these invasions are unique to history. They are the only successful invasions of Egypt following Alexander until Antiochus. Additionally, they are significant because it was in the aftermath of these invasions that Antiochus was stirred up against Judea.

Verse 25. “[Antiochus] shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south [Egypt] shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.”

As to the cause of the invasion, here are comments from the internet publication “The House of Ptolemy,” by Bevan. “Eulaeus and Lenaeus [regents for the young Pharaoh Ptolemy Philometor] still directed the policy of the kingdom, and determined to resume the plan of an attack on Coele-Syria [southern Syria, the land between Egypt and Syria]. Antiochus Epiphanes regarded their hostile preparations as a justification for striking first. Both sides had sent embassies to Rome to present their case to the Senate, since any disturbance of the status quo in the East was liable to provoke the disapproval, and perhaps the intervention, of Rome.

“But Rome for the moment was entangled in the war with Perseus of Macedonia, and the Powers of the East were left to take independent action. Eulaeus and Lenaeus in 170 BC [other sources give 169 BC], after making boastful speeches at Alexandria, led out an army to attack Coele-Syria.

“Antiochus met them with his army before they had crossed the desert, and the Ptolemaic army was shattered. Then, by some ruse which is not specified, but which Polybius [a Roman historian] thought discreditable, Antiochus seized Pelusium, entered Egypt, and moved up the river on Memphis [near modern Cairo]. For the first time since Alexander the Great, the invasion of Egypt from Palestine had been accomplished! Antiochus Epiphanes, thanks to the present regime in Egypt, had succeeded at last where Perdicas and Antigonus and Antiochus ‘the Great’ had failed!

“Young king Ptolemy, badly, perhaps treacherously, advised by the palace eunuch, tried to escape by sea to the island of Samothrace, leaving Cleopatra and his younger brother behind in Alexandria ... he was caught by the Seleucid forces and brought a prisoner to his uncle’s camp. Antiochus treated the young man with his characteristic false bonhomie [friendship]” (page 284).

Some place the fault for the armed conflict with the two regents of Philometor who pressed their claims on the land between Egypt and Syria. Their claims seem historically justified, but their policy led to a great defeat. Perhaps it is this which fulfilled the opening of verse 26.

Verse 26. “Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him.”

Presumably this was unintentional, and they “destroyed” the young king by the unwise counsel of his regents and advisors. By “destroy him,” the reference is not to the personal death of the young Pharaoh, for he lived many years more, but to the fall of his kingdom. Verse 26 continues, “and his army [the army of Antiochus] shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain [in the army of Philometor].”

Verse 27. “And both these kings’ hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.”

The two kings are clearly the invading Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria, and his nephew the defeated

Ptolemy Philometor, a lad of 16 or 17 years at the time. This verse tells us neither king died in the conflict, which makes it clear that “destroy him” in verse 26 does not intend to refer to any personal death.

The two kings — uncle and nephew — conferred together. In spite of an overt tone of friendship, each planned for his own advantage. Antiochus claimed to work on behalf of his nephew, and advanced to Alexandria to “help” Philometor, for the people there had promoted his brother Psychon to lead them. Philometor was in no position to resist his uncle’s wishes. By being agreeable he apparently hoped for time to work his own purposes after his uncle’s departure. This was a unique situation, conqueror and conquered accepting each other, discussing affairs within a conquered territory. As usual, the prophecy notes the unusual. By this means it clearly marks the events it predicts.

Here are comments by Thomas Newton. “Antiochus pretended to take care of his nephew Philometor’s interest, and promised to restore him to the crown, at the same time that he was plotting his ruin, and was contriving means to weaken the two brothers in a war against each other, that the conqueror wearied and exhausted might fall an easier prey to him. On the other side, Philometor laid the blame of the war on his governor Eulaeus, professed great obligations to his uncle, and seemed to hold the crown by his favour, at the same time that he was resolved to take the first opportunity of breaking the league with him, and of being reconciled to his brother: and accordingly, as soon as Antiochus was withdrawn, he made proposals of accommodation, and by the mediation of their sister Cleopatra [the second] a peace was made between the two brothers, who agreed to reign jointly in Egypt and Alexandria.

“But still this artifice and dissimulation did ‘not prosper’ on either side. For neither did Antiochus obtain the kingdom, neither did Philometor utterly exclude him, and prevent him returning with an army, as each intended and expected by the measures which he had taken: for these wars were not to have an ‘end till the time appointed,’ which was not yet come” (*Dissertation on the Prophecies*, pages 287, 288).

The text says their plans would not prosper because “the end shall be at the time appointed.” The “time appointed” for ending this war would be a year or two later, after a second invasion of Egypt (see comments on the opening of verse 29).

Verse 28. “Then shall he [Antiochus Epiphanes] return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.”

The following from 1 Maccabees 1:20-24 records the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus which fulfilled this text. “On his return from the conquest of Egypt in the year 143 [of the Seleucid era, which is 169 BC],

Persons of Interest

Antiochus Epiphanes, King of the Seleucid Empire (175-164 BC), infamous persecutor of the Jewish People.

Ptolemy Philometor, King of Egypt (180-145 BC), nephew of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Eulaeus and Linaeus, regents for Ptolemy Philometor, who directed the affairs of his kingdom during his youth.

Antiochus marched up with a strong force against Israel and Jerusalem. In his arrogance he entered the temple and carried off the gold altar, the lampstand with all its fittings, the table of the Bread of the Presence, the libation cups and bowls, the gold censers, the curtain, and the garlands. He stripped the gold plating from the front of the temple, seized the silver and gold, the precious vessels, and whatever secret treasures he found, and carried them all away when he left for his own country. He had caused much bloodshed, and he boasted arrogantly of what he had done.”

Verse 29. And at the time appointed he shall return, and come into the south; but it shall not be in the latter time as it was in the former” (American Stand. Version).

Verse 27 said of the first invasion, that it was not yet time for resolving the conflict between Egypt and Syria. This second invasion is the time. It is “at the time appointed.” (This is another reason for seeing that verse 40 does not refer to a third invasion later on — see previous issue.) Both invasions were victories for Antiochus. But the results differed. Antiochus left Egypt after the first invasion on his own terms. Antiochus left Egypt after the second invasion at the insistence of Rome. That intervention of Rome is described in the next verse.

Verse 30. “For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved ...”

These “ships of Chittim” carried Roman ambassadors who forced Antiochus to withdraw, which made his conquest of Egypt all for nought.

On “Chittim” are these comments by Thomas Newton. “Chittim was one of the sons of Javan ... son of Japheth, by whose posterity ‘the isles of the Gentiles (Genesis 10:5) were divided’ and peopled, that is Europe, the countries to which the Asiatics passed by sea, for such the Hebrews called islands. ... it is very well known and agreed on all hands, that colonies came from Greece to Italy; and as Josephus saith, that all islands and most marine places are called Chethim by the Hebrews ... wherever the land of Chittim or the isles of Chittim are mentioned in Scripture, there are evidently meant some countries or islands in the Mediterranean” (*Dissertation on the Prophecies*, pages 73, 74).

The ships of this passage are Roman ships, possibly coming through Greece, which had recently been taken by Rome in 168 BC. Rome was gradually subsuming the territories of Alexander’s former empire into their own. They brought envoys from Rome with a demand for Antiochus to desist. It was delivered by Marcus Popillius Lenas, whom Antiochus knew from the years when he was a hostage in Rome. The account is famous.

“When he [Marcus] had found him [Antiochus Epiphanes] standing on the shore, and had delivered to him the decree of the senate, by which he was commanded to depart from the friends of the Roman people, and to be content with his own empire, and he would

have deferred the matter to consult with his friends; Popillius is said to have made a circle in the sand with the stick that he held in his hand, and to have circumscribed the king, and to have said, the senate and people of Rome order, that in that place you answer what is your intention. With these words being frightened, he said, If this pleases the senate and people of Rome, we must depart; and so presently drew off his army” (*Dissertation on the Prophecies*, page 290).

Bevan adds, “When the Roman ambassadors had seen Antiochus and his army safely out of Egypt, they proceeded to Cyprus and made the victorious Seleucid fleet withdraw from the island” (*The House of Ptolemy*, 286).

Verse 30 (continued). “... he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.”

Some years earlier, the devout high priest Onias had been deposed in favor of his brother Jason through bribery. Three years later Jason was replaced by his brother Menelaus through a larger bribe. While Antiochus was in Egypt, a rumor circulated in Israel that Antiochus had died. This led Jason to mount a campaign to take Jerusalem by force and retake the office of high priest. He succeeded temporarily. This roused the anger of Antiochus, and a severe persecution followed. Here is a record from the second book of Maccabees.

“About that time Antiochus undertook his second expedition against Egypt. ... On a false report of Antiochus’ death, Jason at the head of no less than a thousand men launched a surprise attack on Jerusalem. ... Jason embarked upon an unsparing massacre of his fellow citizens ... However, he failed to secure control of the government. [So he fled and was met by many troubles, before dying an exile at Sparta in Greece.]

“Judaea was in a state of insurrection, and he [Antiochus] set out from Egypt in savage mood. He took Jerusalem by storm, ordering his troops to cut down unsparingly everyone they met, and to slaughter those who took refuge in the houses. Young and old were murdered, women and children massacred, girls and infants butchered. At the end of three days the victims numbered eighty thousand: forty thousand killed in the fighting, and as many again sold into slavery.

“Not satisfied with this, and guided by Menelaus, who had turned traitor to both religion and country, the king had the audacity to enter the most holy temple on earth. The villain laid his polluted hands on the sacred vessels, and profanely swept up the votive offerings which other kings had made to enhance the splendour and fame of the shrine ... So Antiochus hastened back to Antioch, taking with him eighteen hundred talents from the Temple, carried away by arrogance” (2 Maccabees 5:1-21).

This takes us to verse 31, a critical scripture in the prophecy. There we will resume next issue.