

Faithbuilders Fellowship

Proclaiming Christ's Parousia
and the coming Millennial Kingdom
November, December 2008

The Resurrection of the Dead

"So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets ... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:14, 15).

A resurrection from the dead is the great hope of the Christian faith. The New Testament speaks repeatedly of this great blessing, secured for us at great cost — the death of our Savior on Calvary's cross.

The penalty of death was justly imposed on our father Adam, and his condemned life was passed to all of us through procreation. But our Lord Jesus, who was with his Heavenly Father from the beginning of creation, had his life transferred from the heavenly courts into the womb of Mary, in order to become a human being, to become our Ransom.

No one of Adam's race could redeem us. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him ... That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption" (Psalm 49:7-9). The reason is apparent — every one of Adam's race is himself under the curse of death. We could not rescue even ourselves from this curse, let alone provide release for any other.

That is why our redeemer had to come from above, untainted with Adamic sin, or Adamic condemnation. Because his life was not already condemned, he could agree to accept our penalty — that is, he could die for us. More specifically, he could die for our Father Adam. By taking Adam's penalty upon himself, Jesus can provide a legal release for Adam.

Because all of us share Adam's condemned life, by releasing Adam from condemnation, all of us can be included. Through one man we were condemned, and through one man we are redeemed.

"As by the offence of one [Adam], judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus], the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18). "He, by the grace of God, [could] taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

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Therefore, Resurrection!

Now that Jesus has died to pay for sin, the penalty upon Adam can be remitted. He and his race can go free. That is the point Paul makes in the Romans text just cited. To be set free from death means the dead can be returned to life — a resurrection for the dead. Christ will actually pay over the legal value of the life he gave, thus redeeming the human race, during the Millennial Age which is now approaching within a generation.

However, before that time comes, God has another work to accomplish. That is the selection of an elect class to rule with Christ during the Millennium. Thus for a little more than 2000 years, the rescue of the world is held in check while the elect "Bride" class is called, developed, and perfected. When this class is complete, and raised to glory in heaven with Christ, then the Millennial Age will commence. Then the world will be released from condemnation and death.

Not a Delay

It is not as though God is delaying the rescue of the world. God designed from the beginning that the Millennial Kingdom for their release would be the Seventh Millennium of human history. That time is approaching, and there will be no delay. In order to accommodate the development of his elect Church class, God sent Jesus more than 2000 years before the Seventh Millennium, to allow the intervening time for the present Gospel Age and its work.



Lazarus raised from the Dead,
an example of the Resurrection to come.

By providing the Ransom sacrifice of our Lord Jesus so long before it was necessary for the Kingdom, God allowed for the present Gospel Age and its surpassing call to glory. We are invited to the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Those who hear this invitation, and accept it by consecration to God in personal prayer to Him, can be redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ now, before the world receives their blessing. Those who consecrate their lives to God during this age, and are accepted of Him, are legally justified from condemnation. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). By this means, we can present the cleansed offering of ourselves in service to God, and be accepted.

This is a privilege which others, before the time of Christ, did not enjoy. Even John the Baptist, who died before the Ransom was provided at Calvary, was not called to the special honors of the Bride class. “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled” (John 3:29).

Resurrection of the Saints

We who enter the High Calling, and thereafter live a life of Christian devotion, will receive a heavenly resurrection, as did our Lord Christ Jesus. Paul discusses the resurrection of the saints in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. “There are also celestial [heavenly] bodies ... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption [our present human bodies]; it is raised in incorruption [our future heavenly bodies] ... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body [we all have one in the present], and there is a spiritual body [which the saints receive in the resurrection] ... As we

have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly ... flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption ... this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality ... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (verses 40-54).

Already Begun

Because we are now in the Harvest, or ending period of the Gospel Age (Matthew 13:39), our Lord Jesus has already returned to effect a change of the ages. We see the evidence of this all about us — (a) Israel has been regathered to their land preparatory for the Kingdom, (b) a Time of Trouble commenced with World War I, continued through World War II, with Armageddon impending, (c) an understanding of God’s “Plan of the Ages” has been restored to the saints for our spiritual nourishment.

Remember that the return of Christ is in two parts — first the *parousia* or presence of Christ, during this present transition of the ages. Second, the *apokalupsis* or revealing of Christ, when the world recognizes through the judgments incident to Armageddon, that Christ has intervened in the affairs of the world. Then the world will begin to understand that God has established the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, beginning at Israel.

Already we are in the first part. Already we are in the *parousia*, or presence of Christ. We still await the second part, that is the *apokalupsis* or revealing of Christ to the world. That is but a generation future — 2043 AD, the close of 6000 years of human experience, according to the history of the Hebrew Old Testament.

In both parts of Christ’s second advent, Jesus as a spirit being of highest order is invisible to the natural eye, as are all the angelic hosts of heaven. It is by the

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Faithbuilders Fellowship
8060 Wing Span Drive
San Diego, CA 92119, USA
FFellowship@aol.com
Website — **2043ad.com**

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testimony of prophecy that we now discern his *parousia*. It will be through the trouble of Armageddon and the establishment of the Kingdom at Israel, that the world will discern the presence of Christ.

As Bible Students have long appreciated, the prophecy of Daniel 12:12 provides the date 1874 for the beginning of the *parousia* of Christ — 1335 years after Papacy rose to political jurisdiction in 539 AD (marked in Daniel 11:31).

Therefore, we are already into the time when the saints who died long ago — the Apostles, early Christians, and all those from then until now — have been raised to their reward. If we are “faithful unto death” (Revelation 2:10), then as we complete our life here, we are raised “in the twinkling of an eye” to be with our Lord in glory.

Some Wait — Others Do Not

Paul knew that the Lord’s return was many years away from his day. Therefore, he realized that the saints who died then, early in the age, would not receive their resurrection glory immediately. They would rest in the sleep of death, waiting for the return of Christ. Then, during the *parousia* (presence) of Christ, they would be raised to glory. Whereas, the saints who die now, during the *parousia*, are raised to glory immediately.

When Paul himself was nearing death, he wrote his son in the faith, Timothy, and said “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at **that day**” (2 Timothy 4:8) — after the return of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Paul comments on the distinction between those who die **during** the age, and those who die at the **end** of the age. We cite these verses using the better Greek manuscripts, and better translation, which clarifies the text considerably, as compared with the common English version (the King James version).

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall all fall asleep, but we shall not all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, during the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the ones living at that time] shall be changed.”

Notice — all of the saints die. They all will “fall asleep” in death. Some remain in death until the end of the age. Others, who are alive and remain into the end of the age, will be changed into glory at the moment of death, “in the twinkling of an eye.”

We are in this period of time today. Though James, Peter, Paul, John, Barnabas, Mary, Martha, Priscilla, and all the saints through the age, waited peacefully in death for many years, now they have been raised to be with Christ. Faithful consecrated Christians today, since our Lord’s return, are raised promptly at the moment of death. If we are faithful, that will be our blessed portion as well.



*Abraham, a man of great faith,
an example of the Ancient Worthy class.*

The Great Company

According to the testimony of Revelation chapter seven, after this elect class, numbered there as 144,000, has been completed, then the Great Company class pass through their last purging experience before they also are granted a heavenly reward. The Great Company class is composed of those who consecrated their lives to God, but were not as circumspect and zealous as they wished to be.

Paul describes them in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 as building carelessly with “hay, wood, stubble” rather than the enduring principles represented by “gold, silver, precious stones.” They will miss the privilege of reigning with Christ in glory. But they will receive a remarkable privilege nevertheless. They will have honorable service in the heavenly courts, assisting Christ and the Church class in their work of rescuing mankind during the Millennium (Revelation 7:15).

The Ancient Worthies

When once the Bride class, the Church class, have all passed into glory, and the “four winds” of trouble begin to initiate some closing experiences upon this weary world, then will begin the Millennial Reign of Christ. Apparently at this time Israel will be threatened by “Gog” from the north, and his allies — probably Russia and a strong coalition of nations with them.

Then Israel will turn to God in prayer (Joel 2:12-20, Zechariah 12:10). In response to this prayer, God will raise up the heroes of faith from the Old Testament — the Ancient Worthies (Micah 5:5, Isaiah 1:26, Psalms 45:16). They will return to life as perfected men and women, in communion with the heavenly Kingdom. They will lead Israel to their Messiah, Jesus, and deliver them from the dramatic threat from the north.

The World of Mankind

It will take some time for the living generations to come into harmony with that Kingdom. But soon the nations of Earth will see God's hand at Israel, and welcome the blessings He offers. "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Jehovah ... Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem ... 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 8:21-23).

Many years may pass before the living generations are ready to receive their dead raised back to life again. Most brethren suppose that the first ones back will be the last ones who died. Probably that is so. The living will pray for this favor on behalf of their loved ones who died before, then after some time those raised to life will pray for those they remember, and onward from recent times back to earliest times, until all the dead of past ages are raised again.

If a century into the Millennium passes before the general resurrection begins, and if the resurrection takes two or three centuries to complete, this would allow at least six or seven hundred years in the Millennium for everyone to grow in character and become ready for the test closing the Millennium. The periods of time we mention — a century, then two or three — are simply guesses. But God will ensure that everyone, everywhere, will have all the time necessary to be fully reclaimed before the end of the Millennium.

Good Tidings of Great Joy

The visit of the Shepherds

Of the four Gospel writers — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John — two of them give accounts of the nativity of our Lord Jesus. Matthew records the visit of the wise men several weeks after the birth of Jesus, when the young child was in a home. Luke records the visit of the humble shepherds on the very night of the birth of Jesus, when the newborn babe was wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger (a feeding trough), for that evening there was no place available for regular boarding at an inn.

Bethlehem

The record is in Luke chapter two. Luke says Caesar Augustus decreed that all people of his empire should register for taxation, so Joseph and Mary travelled to the city of Joseph's heritage, Bethlehem, to enroll.¹

Thus the couple was in Bethlehem when it was time for Mary to give birth. By this means the prophecy of Micah 5:2 was fulfilled, "Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in



Shepherds in the field the night of Jesus' birth, visited by an angelic herald of Good Tidings of Great Joy.

Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Thus is manifest the foreknowledge of God, predicting from long before the specifics such as even the birthplace of our Savior. "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

Bethlehem was the home of Boaz, who became the husband of Ruth, who bore Obed, whose son was Jesse, the father of King David (Ruth 2:4, 1 Samuel 16:1). Thus Bethlehem was the home town of King David. As David was promised that the everlasting king of Israel would come from his posterity, it was appropriate for Jesus' birth to be in the home town of King David (2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 55:3,4, Acts 13:34).

The meaning of Bethlehem is "house of bread." It is a fitting name for the small town which introduced the Savior of the world, who later would declare "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Presumably Bethlehem was a place originally known for its bread production, judging by the name. There might be a number of such places, and to distinguish this Bethlehem from others it is termed "Bethlehem Ephratah."

The designation "Ephratah" (meaning fruitful) was a more ancient designation than Bethlehem, going back at least to the time of Jacob. "And Rachel [wife of Jacob] died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Genesis 35:19).² That name as well has meaning for our Savior, indicating that his service on our behalf would be highly fruitful.³ In fact the entire world

will be blessed as a consequence of the Ransom which Jesus gave in dying for us, and the teachings which he left as a legacy for us.

The Heralding Angel

That evening when Mary gave birth to the young child, Jesus, the circumstances were very modest. It seemed fitting to the Most High not to arrange for sumptuous facilities and worldly comforts, but to have the occasion simple, humble, yet everything necessary. So it is with the lives of most of those whom God calls to be associates of Christ. They are chiefly from the humble class of the world. They are not generally rich in this world's goods, they must labor to provide things needful for them and their dependents.

So Joseph and Mary experienced the needs common to the people of the day. Of course God's hand of providence ensured that all things necessary were provided for the care and safety of this young family. God does this for all of us as well.

However, God did prepare something wonderful to announce this most auspicious occasion in the history of the world. It would not be for kings, rulers, priests, or nobles. It would be for humble shepherds tending their flocks on the hillsides of Judea.

"There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid."

This angel came to herald the most joyous news possible, the birth of the Savior of the world. He was presented in a mode fitting such a remarkable announcement — lightened in a notable glory, awesome in sight, and of course intimidating to the surprised shepherds. "And they were sore afraid" (Luke 2:9).

Immediately the angel calmed their fears. "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people!" What a remarkable salutation! We who appreciate the wonderful blessings God brings to the world through Christ realize how wonderful the news. It brings to us in the present Gospel Age the surpassing "High calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), to join Christ in heavenly glory to rule the world during the Millennium.

For the remainder of the world also it means "great joy ... to all people," because Satan will be bound a thousand years, the world will learn the Truth of God's plan, and all the dead will be raised to life. The entire world will be uplifted in heart, mind, spirit, character, and given an opportunity for eternal, never-ending life in a perfected world. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ... Behold, I make all things new ... these words are true and faithful!" (Revelation 21:4, 5).

The wondering shepherds must have been struck with awe. They were impressed with the grandeur, glory and wonder of the announcement of his heavenly visitor. The angel continued. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David [which they knew was Bethlehem] a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). "Christ" is the Greek word which corresponds to the Hebrew "Messiah" — anointed. These shepherds were hearing that their much anticipated Messiah was born that night! The angel continued, "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

So ended the announcement of the heavenly messenger. Up to now he had been alone, speaking with these men on the hills of Judea. But suddenly there appeared others with him, in fact "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" (Luke 2:13, 14). After some time, as the heavenly choir completed their refrains, they retired back into the heavens, leaving the recipients of this heavenly choir in stunned contemplation.

Here was the kind of regal display fitting the birth of a king — and more, for what earthly king ever had such an exquisite heavenly choir? The value of this visitation was priceless. So whereas Joseph and Mary and their new child remained in humble circumstances, appropriate to the humble disposition which would characterize Jesus, the magnificence of the occasion was fittingly marked by a glorious choir from the courts of heaven itself.

Motivated

The shepherds were not indifferent to the privilege accorded them. "The shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known



Mary, Joseph, and Mary's newborn babe.

unto us” (Luke 2:15). Bethlehem at the time was so pressed by an influx of visitors, that there had been no room at the inn. Probably these shepherds had to exercise no small effort inquiring here and there, asking questions, pursuing leads, to locate the favored couple.

So all the humble who hear something of the grandeur of the truth message have a choice — will they be indifferent to the message? Or will they exercise themselves to inquire, seek, ask, follow up, on the blessings they have heard about? This is a first test for those who hear the message of truth. “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 20:16). What is the criteria? Why only few chosen? Because it depends upon the response of the individual. Let us all be like the shepherds who followed up on the announcement, pursued the good news, and found a deeper blessing.

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:16). Mary and Joseph had come through a pressing time. Away from close family and home, apparently in a shelter which also accommodated domestic animals, Mary had brought to birth her first child, and dutiful Joseph as her husband attended to the things necessary as best he could. It must have involved trust, faith in God, and some pressing emotions for this new little family.

Now, in the aftermath of the trauma and commotion, arrive these eager strangers, with remarkable news of a heavenly announcement of the birth of the Savior of the world. What a lively discussion there must have been! What encouragement the new couple must have drawn. What privilege the shepherds must have felt.

“Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). A little sentence so full of precious meaning. “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:20).

Even Greater News!

So wonderful was this occasion, not quite 2000 years ago. But now we live in the days of the Second Advent of our Savior. Even now we are in the closing years of the Harvest, itself the closing period of the age. We are but a generation from the establishment of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ in all the earth. Back of us lie nearly 2000 years of devoted service, experience, labors, suffering, overcoming, by the humble members of the body of Christ.

A few years remain for us to enter in with them, beyond the veil, in the glories above. Already a transition of the ages is upon us. Even the world sees the events, but only the Lord’s people, attuned to the lamp of prophecy from the sacred word, realize what they portend.

Soon, as the Millennium dawns upon a weary world, a voice of praise will resound from every nation, echoing the song of the Heralding angels, “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people!”

(1) Luke says “this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria” (Luke 2:2). This raises questions, for Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the year 2 BC, and the Jewish historian Josephus records a dispute about taxation dated to the year 6 AD (compare Acts 5:37) — seven years later — when Cyrenius was indeed governor of Syria. How is the seven year disparity explained?

There are three possibilities. (a) Perhaps Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem to be registered for a tax which would be collected later — and Luke 2:2 is Luke’s explanation that the actual imposition and gathering of the tax followed later, when Cyrenius was governor, in 6 AD. In other words, “this taxing [pursuant to the registration] was first made [or imposed, some time later] when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.”

(b) Perhaps Luke means to say this taxing was made when Cyrenius was considered a military governor of the region before he was later formally appointed political governor of Syria.

(c) Perhaps “first” (greek *prwtee*) here means “before,” as in John 1:15 and 15:18, so that Luke is explaining that this taxing was before the one made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

Tentatively we are inclined to the first explanation, supposing that the registration by families was prior to a later collection of taxes. For the actual collection of taxes presumably would be based upon a collector’s observation of the goods at hand where the people lived.

(2) Ephratah was also the name of the mother of Hur, who is said to be the “father [founder] of Bethlehem” (1 Chronicles 4:4, 2:19). Probably this Ephratah was named after the region. She was the second wife of Hur, after the passing of his first wife Azubah. The descent of Hur was Judah - Pharez - Hezron - Hur. This Hur, together with Aaron, held up the hands of Moses at the battle against Amalek (Exodus 17:10). His grandson Bezaleel was chosen to construct the sacred artifacts for the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:30).

(3) Joseph was a picture of our Lord Jesus, and the name of his son and heir, Ephraim, is “double fruit,” being the “dual of a masculine form of 672 [*ephratah*]” (Strong’s Concordance).

Gifts to Our King

The visit of the wise men

Only Matthew records the visit of the wise men from the east. They did not see Jesus the night of his birth, laying in a manger, as the shepherds had — but rather in a home some weeks later, after the little family had found more suitable accommodations for their stay in Bethlehem.

The wise men were drawn westward into the land of Israel from their home in the east — perhaps in Babylon or Persia — because they were following a “star.” Probably this star was one of the five visible planets. The name “planet” derives from a Greek word meaning “wandering star,” for in relation to the normal stars, which appear to us to move in unison across the night sky, planets move independently.

Of course anyone could have looked into the heavens and seen whatever these wise men from the east saw. If it was some unusually bright or supernatural appearance, presumably it would have attracted the attention of

nearly everyone. Yet the narrative shows that King Herod had to ask them carefully about their observations. This suggests that what caught the attention of the wise men was some symbolism they recognized in the natural movement that they observed — without that meaning, and the thoughtful observation with attended it, people at large would not have taken notice.

In recent years, using the proper date of Jesus’ birth, about October of 2 BC, and the proper dates for the death of Herod, about January of 1 BC, researchers have looked back into the ancient sky through calculations, to determine what occurred there during the year or two preceding the birth of Jesus.

Following are the results. (These are gleaned from the article “The Celestial Pageantry Dating Christ’s Birth,” in *Christianity Today*, pages 16-22, December 3, 1976, Ernest Martin.)

During this period, Jupiter was active in a striking number of engaging conjunctions. The list of celestial events below begins with August 1, 3 BC, and takes us through December 25, 2 BC.

Celestial Episodes, 3 to 2 BC	
August 1	Jupiter becomes a morning star
August 12	Jupiter-Venus conjunction (.23°)
Septem 1	Venus-Mercury conjunction (.36°)
Septem 14	Jupiter-Regulus conjunction (.63°)
Feb 17	Jupiter-Regulus conjunction (1.19°)
May 8	Jupiter-Regulus conjunction (1.06°)
June 17	Jupiter-Venus conjunction (.02°)
August 27	Jupiter-Mars conjunction (.14°)
Decem 25	Jupiter “stood” over Bethlehem at pre-dawn observation

Noting that “Jupiter was often associated with the birth of kings and therefore called the King planet,” Martin gives detailed suggestions on the probable, and notable, meanings that the other luminaries Jupiter conjoined with would have had to the wise men of the east. Then he adds:

“When [the wise men] reached Jerusalem, the Magi were told to look toward Bethlehem for the newborn king. This happened at a time when the New Testament says the star came to a definite halt in the heavens — it “stood over where the young child was” (Matthew 2:9). And indeed, the planet Jupiter [the other planets as well] does become stationary in its motion through the fixed stars. This happens at its times of retrogression and

progression. It could well be that Matthew was referring to such a thing.”

Jupiter had come to the point of retrogression December 25, 2 BC. Possibly this is about the time the wise men found the savior at Bethlehem. This would be several weeks after our Lord’s birth, but before the passing of Herod during the next month or two.

Three Wise Men

(The following comments are adapted from an article titled “Gifts to Our King,” by Pastor Charles Russell.)

Tradition is that the wise men were three in number, perhaps because they bore three gifts for the newborn king. These men were not of Jewish faith, but they were evidently men of faith and reverence. These God chose as messengers from the east to alert the people of Judea and Jerusalem to the good tidings at hand.

No false patriotism hindered these men from appreciating God’s favor toward men. If the king of the Jews was God’s means for bringing a blessing to the world, they would be glad to welcome this blessing from the Jewish people. When they found the Savior, no pride or arrogant spirit deferred them from appreciating God’s great gift, even when they observed the humble status of the family who bore this child of promise. In this there are lessons for us and all people — to appreciate the favors of God wherever they are found, and in what ever humble hearts they lodge.

Matthew says “when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him” (Matthew 2:11). Probably this worship was shown in three ways. (1) They reverently knelt or prostrated themselves. (2) They worshipped in their hearts and probably gave thanks audibly for locating the precious object of their search. (3) They opened their treasures and gave gifts — gold (appropriate for a king), frankincense (appropriate for a priest), and myrrh (a costly but bitter herb, symbolizing the sufferings of Christ that would follow).

Thus in the providence of God we see testimonies about what Christ would become. He was destined to be king of all, a great high priest to reconcile us all to God, and a suffering servant who would give his life to redeem us from sin.

The reverent spirit of these noble visitors who had so little light, so little knowledge respecting the great Messiah and his work, will bring to our cheeks the blush of shame as we reflect what manner of oblation should we pour at the feet of him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

With what deep reverence have we bowed the knee, and submitted ourselves to him? Have we offered our myrrh? Have we shown a willingness for service even to the extent of bitterness, a joy to honor the King to the extent of suffering with him? Have we offered him the

frankincense of heart adoration, appreciation, and gratitude? Have we laid at his feet our earthly substance — our gold?”

“My Son, Give Me Thine Heart” (Proverbs 23:26). When we give our hearts it includes all that we have and are in the fullest sense — to be used in joyful service for the glory of the King. To those who have never taken the step of personal consecration to God, we urge a prompt acceptance. Even irrespective of the gracious hopes we have of a transcendent reward of glory, honor, immortality, it is, as the Apostle declares, our reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

To those who have already accepted the Lord’s favor, who have already presented their bodies living sacrifices, who have already given the Lord their hearts, we urge a remembrance of the fact that the sacrifice once put upon the altar must remain there, and that the longer it remains the more joyful should be the service, the more appreciated every opportunity for sacrifice, the more rich should be the experience in the peace of God ruling in our hearts.

Daniel 11:31

“And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and they shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.”

This is the pivotal verse of the lengthy prophecy in Daniel chapter 11 which we have been examining in this series on Daniel. Up to verse 30, Antiochus Epiphanes has been the subject — the infamous persecutor of the Jewish religion, six generations after Alexander the Great. If the rendering of the common version be accepted, then this verse speaks of the same person, Antiochus. “Arms shall stand on his part.”

Immediate Fulfillment — Antiochus

Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled this text by polluting the sacred temple, putting a stop to the daily sacrifice, and instituting the offering of swine upon a newly constructed altar in the court of the sacred complex. Swine were unclean under the Law, and as a sacrifice, an abomination.

“The King sent agents to Jerusalem and the towns of Judaea with written orders that ways and customs foreign to the country should be introduced. Whole-offerings, sacrifices, and drink-offerings were forbidden in the temple; sabbaths and feast days were to be profaned, the temple and its ministers defiled. Pagan altars, idols, and sacred precincts were to be established, swine and other unclean beasts to be offered in sacrifice. ... On the fifteenth day of the month of Kislev in the year 145, ‘the abomination of desolation’ was set up on the

altar of the Lord ... On the 25th day of each month they offered sacrifice on the pagan altar which was on top of the altar of whole-offering” (1 Maccabees 1:44-59). This effort to overthrow the Jewish religion was accompanied by all manner of terror, torture, and death, against devoted Jews who were caught continuing to practice the Law.

Deeper Meaning — Rome

However, as deep and meaningful as was that application, there is a deeper meaning to this verse than only what happened during the years of this single king. This seems assured by the words of our Lord Jesus himself. For in Matthew 24:14, 15, Jesus said of the troubles future from his time, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.”

This remarks by Jesus evidently refers to the text we know as Daniel 11:31. So however it may have applied to the persecutions in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, who ruled from 175-164 BC, it must apply in a deeper way later as well. The context of Matthew 24 shows our Lord was speaking about the time the Roman army would sweep through Israel, siege Jerusalem, and finally lay it low. “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).

This fulfillment came during the years 66-73 AD, in the seven years of the Roman Wars against Judea. During this span the Romans threatened three times to take the city. At last on the third effort, which was the second actual siege, the city did fall. That was in the summer of 70 AD. Many Jews were slain, many taken into slavery, the temple burned, the city broken down.

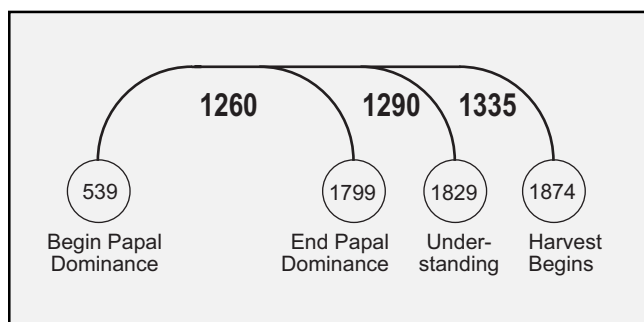
Thus the defilements early practiced by Antiochus Epiphanes were a prelude to the even greater devastations to be visited by the Romans, who are described in Daniel 11:14 as the “breakers of thy people” (a better rendering than the common version “the robbers of thy people”).

Deeper Meaning — Papacy

But there is even a third meaning to the prophecy of Daniel 11:31. For what happened to natural Israel, namely the desecration of their worship, defilement of their temple, and persecution of the people, would happen in even a more intense way to spiritual Israel, the saints of the most high, during the Gospel Age. This persecution would come from Papacy, who by consensus opinion of protestants for centuries is described as the great whore of Revelation chapter 17, “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of Harlots, and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:5, 6).

This is the application which is relevant to the time prophecies of Daniel chapter 12. We will look at these more closely as we advance in this series. Here we merely note that the 1260, 1290, and 1335 years of suffering and waiting by the Gospel Age saints is said to begin with the fulfillment of Daniel 11:31 — “From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away; and the abomination that maketh desolate set up” (Daniel 12:11).

We discussed the 1260 years of persecution of the Church of Christ earlier in this series, when treating chapter seven. Daniel 7:25 calls it “time and times and the dividing of time” — $3\frac{1}{2}$ periods of 360 years each, 1260 years total. Bible Students date this span from 539 AD, when Papacy was set up in political authority, until 1799, when Papacy was broken through the death of the Pope while a prisoner in France, and Napoleon disallowed the election of a successor. The point of note here is that this prophecy falls into the Christian era, far beyond the days of Antiochus, and far beyond the days of the fall of Jerusalem.



1260, 1290, 1335 year Prophecies of Daniel chapter 12. These all begin with the events of Daniel 11:31, namely, the establishment of Papacy in political authority, along with its doctrine of the Mass.

The book of Revelation, written by the aged Apostle John, speaks of this prophetic period five times (Revelation 11:2, 3, 12:6, 14, 13:5). In each case it is something future from his day.

The great atrocities of Antiochus against the Jews, and of Rome as the breaker of their nation, were succeeded and exceeded by Papacy, both in length and severity, when they persecuted the Gospel Age saints of God and “scattered the power of the holy people” (Daniel 12:7). The key text under discussion, Daniel 11:31, predicts all three of these persecutions.

Three Levels — as in Daniel Chapter Eight

Readers of this series may recall that we observed the same kind of thing in Daniel chapter eight. There the prophecy shows that on the Grecian Goat, when the first notable horn was broken (Alexander the Great), four horns came up for it (the four divisions of the Grecian Empire after Alexander). Then out of one of those four

horns grew another little horn which became dominant over the others (Daniel 8:9), and “waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.” In other words, a dominant force would arise which would persecute the people of God.

There also we observed that the prophecy applied in a limited sense to Antiochus Epiphanes, who uniquely did invade and subdue the southern kingdom, that is Egypt (as Daniel 8:9 indicates). There we also saw that for this power to be “exceeding great” as compared to the description “very great” for Alexander (compare verses 9, 8), it must have been fulfilled by Rome. Also, seeing that Daniel 8:14 says the temple would not be cleansed for 2300 years, it seems clear that the prophecy refers to the spiritual temple, the Church of God, “which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:17) — which temple was defiled by Papacy.

In other words, as in Daniel chapter eight there are three levels of application — Antiochus Epiphanes, Pagan Rome, Papal Rome — we now see the same three levels of application in Daniel 11:31.

We have already cited from the Book of Maccabees how Antiochus defiled the temple at Jerusalem. When Pagan Rome destroyed the temple in 70 AD, that stopped the daily sacrifice. Later, in the days of a second revolt of the Jews (132 to 135 AD), the city was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, and again an “abomination that maketh desolate” appeared in the sacred precincts.

As to Papal Rome, the “abomination of desolation” was famously fulfilled by the doctrine of the mass. This is a doctrine which teaches we need a fresh sacrifice of Christ on every occasion — in the form of the miracle wine and miracle bread of the mass. Whereas the scriptures teach clearly that Christ died once for sin which was sufficient for the need. “After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, [he] sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12).

Verses 32-35

These verses describe the afflictions suffered by the Maccabeans and other faithful Jews under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors. In the second level, they describe the afflictions of Jews and Christians by Pagan Rome. In the third and most far reaching level, they describe the afflictions of Christians by Papal Rome during the harsh years of Papal rule and authority.

In all three cases there would be victories, missteps, triumphs, defeats, successes, failings. These experiences would endure for years, “they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days” (verse 33). God would assist them in their low points, “holpen with a little help.” Among the temptations and trials would be flattery and worldliness. Even some of the faithful might fall. All of these experiences



Antiochus Epiphanes,
the original "Lawless King."

would serve to purge and purify those of good heart (verses 34, 35).

The Lawless King

Verse 36 refers to the king who would bring these persecutions. Verse 36 does not introduce another king. It does not say "then shall rise another king, who shall do according to his will." Rather, it says "And the king [who in verse 31

brings the persecutions] shall do according to his will ..." The king referred to is the same one as introduced in verse 21, "in his estate shall stand up [become king] a vile person" — Antiochus Epiphanes.

Verse 25 tells us he would invade Egypt, "he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south." Verse 27 says that "both these kings ... shall speak lies at one table" — and so it was, Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria, and his nephew Ptolemy Philometor of Egypt, schemed each for their own purpose against the other at one table.

Verse 29 says that subsequently "he shall return" — that is, Antiochus would invade Egypt a second time, and so it was. Verse 30 says this second invasion would be repulsed by emissaries brought by ship — these were representatives of Rome demanding the retreat of Antiochus, and he complied. Verse 31 says "arms shall stand on his part," referring to Antiochus, and so it was, his armed men forced the atrocities upon Judea.

So when verse 36 says "And the king," it refers to the same one as introduced in verse 21. There has not been a change in reference. No new king of Syria has "stood up" as in previous verses. However, as we have noted — and not we only, but protestant prophetic commentators for years have noted — we are now in a section of the prophecy which has deeper meaning than to only Antiochus himself. It applies on a deeper level to the greater persecutor Pagan Rome, and also to the even greater persecutor Papal Rome.

The purpose of verse 36 is to designate this king as one who "shall do according to his will." In this respect, he would place himself above all rule, authority, and godly influence which was customary, and arrogantly act according to personal whim and choice. Verses 37-39 continue to emphasize this point. In this way, this king is shown be Lawless — or as we sometimes say, "a law unto himself."

That is the point of Paul's reference to him in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. There, according to the common version, Paul calls him "that man of sin." However, the better manuscripts express it differently. Rather than the Greek word *hamartia* (sin), they use *anomia* (lawless-

ness). According to Tischendorf's notes, the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts agree in the latter word. Bro. Parkinson's RVIC2000 follows this, as do apparently the following versions: Marshall's Diaglott, Rotherham, NASB, and NIV.

Paul's Source for This Expression

When we recognize that Paul described this persecutor as the "man of lawlessness," it helps us understand where Paul secured this expression. It is from Daniel 11:36. Some readers will see that the margin in our common version takes the reader back to Daniel 11:36. That verse and associated passage speaks of a king who places himself above customary authority — above the law — "lawless." Paul uses the word "man" because the prophecy from which Paul's comment is drawn speaks of a man, a king, the persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes. But its fulfillment in the deeper levels to Rome, and Papacy, take it beyond the realm of a single individual. It takes us to the system ruled by a Caesar or a Pope.

Note what Paul says of this "man of lawlessness." 2 Thessalonians 2:4, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." Compare this to Daniel 11:36, "he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god."

Paul continues, "so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Perhaps this combines the thoughts expressed in Daniel 11 verses 31 and 36. Verse 31 says the abomination is set up in the temple complex, verse 36 that his decrees are promoted above those of God.

The application Paul has in mind is not Pagan Rome — he looks beyond that. Paul has in mind the apostasy that we identify as Papal Rome. Paul refers to an apostasy, or falling away from the Christian faith, in verse three, and in verse seven he says this great persecuting system will not blossom until the one hindering its growth — the Pagan Roman Empire — would be removed.

How Did He Know?

How did Paul know a Christian apostasy would prosper after the decline of Pagan Rome? Daniel chapter seven would be one predicate for this. Paul would have known that the four beasts of that chapter represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. That chapter shows that after the Roman Empire proper, 10 horns or divisions of the empire would subsequently fall to another persecuting power making supposedly divine decrees, ruling the nations, and persecuting the saints (Daniel 7:8, 20-26). Paul's comment in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 that this usurping apostasy would later be consumed and destroyed, draws precisely from Daniel 7:26.

This takes us to verse 40, which describes the "time of the end" for this Lawless persecutor — Antiochus, Rome, Papacy — in each of three levels. This we will consider next issue.

Observation

Daniel chapter two shows an image of four parts, ending in 10 toes. Daniel chapter seven shows four beasts, and power resolving into 10 horns. These are compatible pictures which directly refer to four successive empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

In each case Papacy is shown associated with the various countries of Europe into which the empire dissolved. In chapter two, Papacy is like clay mixed with the iron kingdoms of Europe. In chapter seven, Papacy is like a stout horn that grows up to dominate the others.

In chapter eight, however, and in chapter 11 as we see now, we have a pair of prophecies which depict matters differently. Both of these chapters take us up to the fall of Alexander the Great, show that the Grecian Empire would divide into four segments, and then focus our attention on a strong persecuting force which would severely afflict the Lord's people.

That persecuting force would have three levels of application. (1) The Jews during the dark days of Antiochus could see in these prophecies their sufferings, and promises of God's care and direction through them. (2) Jewish Christians during the Roman Wars from 66 to 73, and even beyond to the days of the Bar Kochba rebellion from 132-135, could draw similar comfort from the same prophecies. (3) Christians through the dark ages of Papal dominion, who suffered long centuries of persecution, could draw comfort and hope from the same texts.

Each of these threads of meaning lead us to an intervention by our Lord, "Michael," who appears in Daniel 12:1 to give comfort, relief, and solace, to his people. We will see this as we continue with Daniel 11:40 and forward, in upcoming issues.

2043 AD

"Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Our regular subscribers are familiar with our expectation that the blessed Millennium of prophecy is but a generation future. This view is widely shared by most brethren of the Bible Student movement. However, our special interest in the year 2043 AD is more specific. Our new readers sometimes ask the basis for this date, and as our readership is expanding rapidly overseas, another explanation may be timely.

There is a long-standing view in the Christian world that the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, mentioned in Revelation chapter 20, coincides with the Seventh Millennium of human experience. In this case, to determine the year beginning the Millennium requires knowing when Adam was created, and by this means, when 6000 years from Adam expire. The question has captured

the minds of Christian students of the Bible for centuries. Sir Isaac Newton was engaged in this question, as well as a host of other well reputed Christian scholars.

The thought derives from God's command to the Jewish people that after six days of labor they were to rest the seventh day, which they called Sabbath. And that in the scriptures a day sometimes represents a period of 1000 years. "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (Psalms 90:4). "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8).

On this scale, six days of labor represent 6000 years of sin and death, and the day of rest represents the Thousand Years of the reign of Christ, the Millennial Age, when mankind can rest from the curse and gain relief from the burden of sin and death.

Ezekiel 46:1 reflects this meaning. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days, but on the sabbath it shall be opened" (Ezekiel 46:1). During the 6000 years of sin and death from Adam to the present, the world is far from God because of sin. But during the Millennium, Christ will use the Ransom price to redeem them all from the curse. Then God will be open and accessible to them.

6000 Years

If we follow the record of the Hebrew Old Testament, then 6000 years from Adam close with the year 2043 AD. How is the computed?

They key lies in determining a date for King Solomon, who ruled Israel for forty years, and constructed the famous Temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem. Following the reign of Solomon, the kingdom was divided — 10 tribes formed an independent kingdom in the north, under Jeroboam, while in the south, Solomon's son Rehoboam reigned at Jerusalem over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (and also the priestly tribe Levi). The northern kingdom was "Israel," the southern kingdom "Judah." The history of these kingdoms is recorded in detail in the books of Kings and Chronicles of the Old Testament.

In recent decades a gentleman named Edwin Thiele — a scholar and also a man of faith in the Scriptures — showed in a convincing way that the history of Israel and Judah can be reconciled into a cohesive whole. When that reconciliation is done, it also exactly corresponds to the history of the Assyrian empire, which has itself also become clear only in modern times.

Thiele's book on the subject is *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. It is a scriptural, historical and scholarly treatment. His conclusions are widely received among those who believe in the records of the Old Testament. Our independent study of the subject confirms his essential conclusion, namely, that King Solomon ascended the throne in the year which ran from Tishri 971 BC to Tishri 970 BC.¹ Thus "year one" of his reign commenced with Tishri of 970 BC.

The Next Logical Step

However, Thiele did not take the subject to the next logical step. If we can now firmly date the reign of King Solomon, so that we know the founding of the Temple in his fourth regnal year was in the spring of 966 BC, then we can compute the years back to Adam.

The Old Testament, in Genesis chapter five, gives us enough information to add up the years from Adam to Noah, and 600 more to the end of the flood — **1656**.

Genesis chapter 11 gives us information to add up the years from the end of the flood to the death of Terah (when Abraham came into Canaan and received a covenant from God) — namely, **427** years.

Galatians 3:17 tells us the Exodus (when the Law was given at Sinai) was **430** years after that.

1 Kings 6:1 tells us that the Temple of Solomon was founded **479** elapsed years after the Exodus.

So here is the result — from Adam to the Temple is 2992 years (1656, 427, 430, 479). If that was in the year 966 BC, then Adam was created in the year 3958 BC (966 BC, plus 2992 years backward, yields 3958 BC).

Now 6000 years forward yields 2043 AD. (6000, minus 3958 BC is 2042, but adjust by one year when crossing the BC / AD divide).

In other words — the Seventh Millennium of human history is due to commence with the year **2043 AD**.

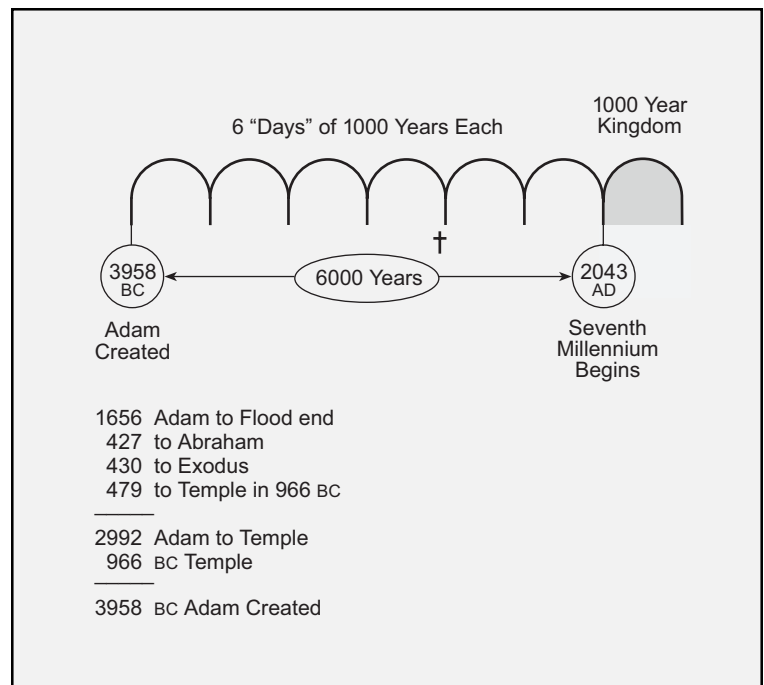
Confirmations

There are independent means of confirming this result. We have discussed these, in detail, in past issues of Faithbuilders Fellowship. For example, the Jewish Encyclopedia, and also the Encyclopedia Judaica, report the Rabbinical testimony that Ezekiel 40:1 marks the date of the 17th Jubilee of Israel. The year mentioned in that text is 574 BC — precisely the year which should mark the 17th Jubilee of Israel, counting forward from the time the Israelites first entered the land of promise on the east side of the River Jordan.

Also, if Adam was created in 3958 BC, then half of the 7000 years of God's Plan would run to 458 BC. This happens to be the same year that Ezra 7:7 records for the decree given him to inquire for the welfare of "Judah and Jerusalem." That begins the 70 week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, which leads to Christ.

In other words, "in the midst of the years" — exactly half way through the 7000 years of God's Plan from paradise lost to paradise regained — God "remembered mercy" and began the count of years toward the Redemption of the world (compare Habakkuk 3:2).

The casual or disinterested reader may miss the force of these confirmations, but they are deep and compelling. And these are not the only ones. Close readers may



recall that this chronology, drawn from the Old Testament, results in some engaging symmetries of time periods. For example, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, when God made with them His special Law Covenant at Mount Sinai under Moses, was not randomly placed. To the very year, it was midway from the Flood in Noah's day more than eight centuries before, and the end of Zedekiah's kingdom more than eight centuries after.²

Careful readers may also recall, from the columns of this journal, that Israel's Jubilee system of 17 cycles consumed 833 years, and that seven complete periods of this length span the distance from Adam (3958 BC) to the "Times of Restoration" at our Lord's return in 1874 AD.

There are other confirmations. We may discuss them in future issues. But remember that none of these pleasant confirmations are the **basis** for the chronology which brings us to the Millennial Kingdom in 2043 AD. The **basis** is the recorded testimony of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Those who wish a full treatment of the scriptural evidence itself are warmly invited to request a copy of the book *The Stream of Time*. We will send it at no cost to the recipient.³

(1) The Jewish month Tishri begins in the autumn of the year, about late September or early October. The name Tishri was adopted by Israel during their captivity in Babylon. The original name of the month in the days of Solomon is unknown.

(2) The specific dates: The Flood began in 2303 BC, the Exodus in 1445 BC, Zedekiah's Kingdom fell in 587 BC. Thus the interval from the Flood to the Exodus, and the Exodus to Zedekiah, was 858 years in each case. This symmetry is only the "tip of the iceberg" in a more elaborate set of symmetries.

(3) For the most efficient response, email your request and your full mailing address to DavRice@aol.com