



The Seven Dispensations



by John R. Ecob DD

PROPHECY SERIES - STUDY NO 3 FOR THE HERALD OF HOPE

The Seven Dispensations (Administrations of Time)

THE NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH

(Rev. 21 & 22)



ETERNITY PAST



The Seven Dispensations



“Rightly dividing the Word of Truth”

by

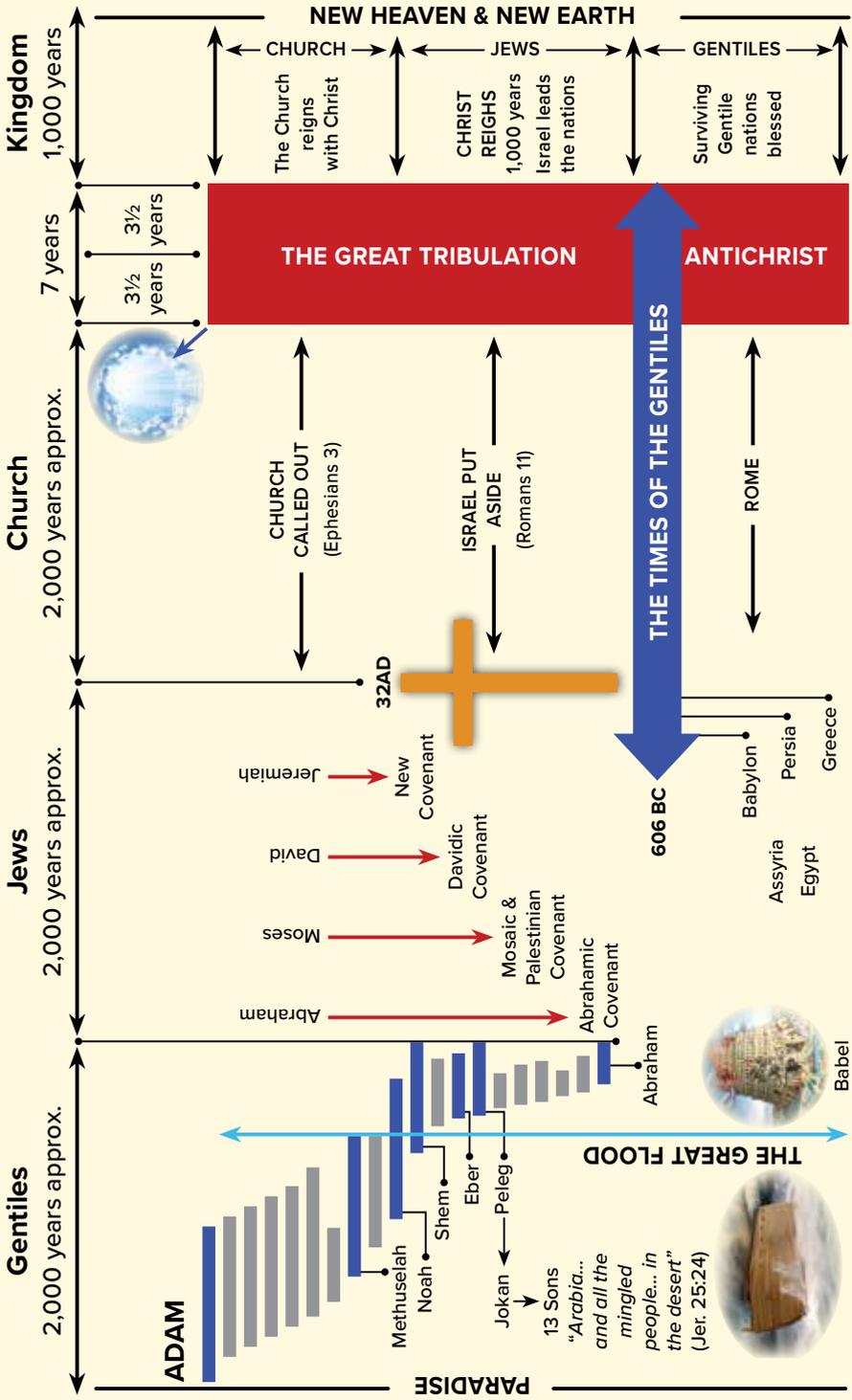
John R Ecob D. D.

Editor of the Herald of Hope

Email: editor@heraldofhope.org.au

Published by the Editorial Committee of
the Herald of Hope magazine
PO Box 4216, Marayong, NSW 2148 Australia
www.heraldofhope.org.au

Jew, Gentile & Church Throughout Time



Kingdom

Church

Jews

Gentiles

1,000 years

7 years

2,000 years approx.

2,000 years approx.

2,000 years approx.

3½ years

3½ years



32AD

606 BC

Abraham

ADAM

CHURCH

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

CHURCH CALLED OUT (Ephesians 3)

NEW COVENANT

DAVIDIC COVENANT

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

PARADISE

THE Church reigns with Christ

ANTICHRIST

Jeremiah

David

Moses

Abraham

Methuselah

JEWS

CHRIST REIGNS 1,000 years Israel leads the nations

ISRAEL PUT ASIDE (Romans 11)

Mosaic & Palestinian Covenant

Assyria

Eber

Noah

GENTILES

Surviving Gentile nations blessed

ROME

Babylon

Egypt

Shem

Jokan

13 Sons "Arabia... and all the mingled people... in the desert" (Jer. 25:24)

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

Abraham

Greece

Persia

Peleg

Abraham

THE GREAT FLOOD

Babel

Abraham

Abraham

Abraham

Abraham

Abraham

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The importance of Dispensational teaching

1 - THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

From the creation of Adam to the Fall (4130 BC)

2 - THE AGE OF CONSCIENCE

From the Fall to the Flood - 1656 years

3 - THE AGE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

From the Flood to Abram - 427 years

4 - THE AGE OF PROMISE

From Abram's departure from Haran to the Exodus - 430 years

5 - THE AGE OF LAW -

From the Exodus to Pentecost - aprox.1,648 years

6 - THE CHURCH AGE

From Pentecost to the Rapture - AD32 to the present

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST

The 7-year Tribulation will see Israel brought to repentance in the first 1,260 days. In the second 1,260 days, the nations led by Antichrist will be judged. Christ returns *"immediately after the tribulation of those days"*.

7 - THE AGE OF THE KINGDOM

Christ reigns as King of kings from Jerusalem for 1,000 years after which the earth is renovated by fire and there is a New Heavens and New Earth for eternity.

The Seven Dispensations

INTRODUCTION

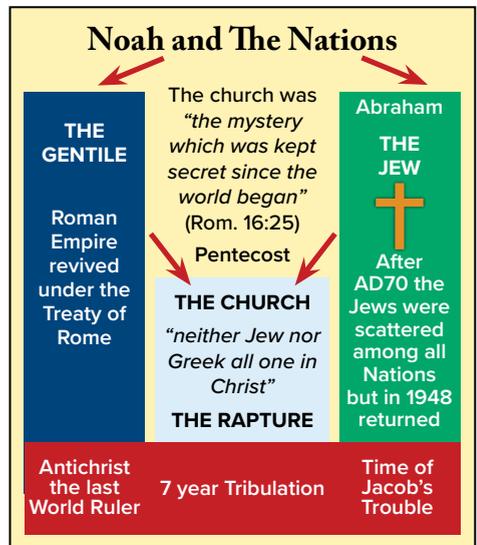
IN ORDER to accurately interpret the Bible one must understand the dispensations of time so that we can *“rightly divide the Word of Truth”*. Bible history divides into seven distinct dispensations. Paul told Timothy:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH” (2 Tim.2:15).

The Bible is a book of history and prophecy and there are seven major periods of history. Prophecy is history in advance given by God who alone has foreknowledge. God, who created the universe, is in control of history and He **administers** the world in seven periods from the beginning of time to the end of time. We call these periods dispensations or administrations. Failure to recognize these changes in God’s **administration** will cause us to arrive at the wrong context when interpreting Scripture.

Also the peoples of the world have been divided into three **classes**: **the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church**. What is written to the Church does NOT apply to Israel or the Gentiles; what is written to the Jews does NOT apply to the Church.

These three divisions will never cease in time or eternity; they even continue into the New Heaven and New Earth where the Church will dwell in the New Jerusalem, Israel will surround the city and the saved Gentile nations will occupy the New Earth.



From the beginning of history there were no national divisions but after the Flood God divided the families by language into nations and gave them their own lands (Gen.10:5,32) but when men became idolatrous and polytheistic, God chose one nation - the descendants of Abraham, through whom He communicated and preserved His Truth in the earth. Abraham’s descendants became the children of Israel and God entered into an eternal covenant relationship with the nation of Israel.

At that stage of history there were only **two classes** of people on earth; Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews worshipped the Living God while all other nations had their own gods. When a Gentile turned to the Lord he left his nation and its gods and became a *“stranger”* in Israel. In Solomon’s day there were 153,600

Introduction

believing Gentile “*strangers*” living in Israel (2Chron.2:17). Israel was charged with the task of making known the Living God to all nations.

It was always God’s plan to establish His kingdom on earth with Israel as the ruling nation under the Kingship of Christ and so promises were made through the prophets that Messiah would come.

When Christ came, Israel rejected her promised Messiah and the nation was put aside and **partially blinded** to truth. She lost her headship over the nations until the day she turns back to the Lord. The Jews were scattered among the Gentiles in AD70 but God did not abandoned His chosen people. He has bound Himself by everlasting covenants to the nation of Israel and will fulfil His promises when Israel seeks the Lord in the coming Great Tribulation.

In the meanwhile, God is establishing the Church comprised of **individual** Jews and Gentiles who place their trust in Jesus Christ during this age. The Church is a unique body indwelt by the Holy Spirit where there is no distinction between Jew or Gentile as Paul wrote:

*“There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are **all one in Christ Jesus**” (Gal.3:28).*

The Church is not a kingdom or nation and exercises no secular powers. Secular powers have been given by God to the Gentile nations and they are answerable to God to administer righteous judgment. Christians are to be subject to “*the powers that be*” because these are “*ordained of God*” (Rom.13:1). The Church is a heavenly people, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph.1:3).

Only since the day of Pentecost has there been three classes of people: the **Jew, Gentile, and the Church**. If we fail to recognize this fact our understanding of the Scriptures will be confused.

Changes in Administration

It is important to recognize these **three divisions among the peoples of earth** and also the **seven periods** of time in the history of mankind when circumstances changed and God **administers** the human race differently. In each administration there is a fresh revelation of God.

In the Garden of Eden there was no sin until Eve was deceived by Satan. Administration of the world before the fall could not be the same as it was after the fall. There was no need of salvation in Eden for there was no sin but once sin entered, God’s administration changed: sacrifices were needed. Other changes came as the years unfolded and so God’s administration varied to meet the needs of mankind and it is **these changes in administration that we call, Dispensations**. The seven Dispensations revealed in the Bible from the creation of man to the future eternal state are:

The Seven Dispensations

- 1) The Dispensation of Innocence - Only Adam and Eve.
- 2) The Dispensation of Conscience - No distinction among men.
- 3) The Dispensation of Human Government - National distinctions.
- 4) The Dispensation of Promise - Jew and Gentile.
- 5) The Dispensation of Law - Jewish nation and Gentiles.
- 6) The Dispensation of the Church - Jew, Gentile and the Church.
- 7) The Dispensation of the Kingdom - Jew, Gentile and Church.

From the beginning God made man in His own image and likeness intending to dwell with man on an earth that was created, not only by Himself but for Himself. Adam enjoyed sweet unbroken fellowship with his Maker.

Angels were the heavenly “ministers” (servants) of God but man was a special creation made in God’s image to inhabit the earth. When the earth was created, Lucifer, a special chief angel, was given dominion over the nations that would be born, but he was lifted up in pride and exalted himself above the throne of God. One third of the angels of heaven followed him.

When the Devil tempted the Lord in the wilderness he offered Jesus power over all the kingdoms of the world saying, *“That is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it”* (Luke 4:6).

Satan’s design from the beginning was to rule creation and mankind as *“the god of this world”* (2Cor.4:4) and so he deceived Eve and has ever since sought to bring men under his control. The proud heart of Satan craves worship and so there is a conflict. Jesus said that the Father seeks worshippers and *“they that worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). In contrast; the Devil is a liar and the father of lies.

The history of the world is about the conflict between God and Satan for possession of the hearts of men; every tactic of Satan has met an appropriate response from God in order to maintain Truth in the earth and to bring men back to God.

When Adam sinned, God’s response was a promise to send His Son in the fulness of time to break Satan’s power over men and ultimately to wrest the kingdoms of this world from Satan’s control. Only when the Son of God delivers up the kingdom again to the Father will there be a New Heaven and New Earth wherein dwells righteousness and then *“the tabernacle of God be with men and he will dwell with them”* (Rev.21:3). The Paradise that was lost in Eden will again be restored:

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy

that shall be destroyed is death" (1Cor.15:24-26).

The seven dispensations of time trace God's plan to deliver mankind from Satan's kingdom and to bring them into the Kingdom of God. In every dispensation, every kind of administration, man has proved to be a failure and it is confirmed that we can only be redeemed by the grace and mercy of God appropriated by faith in a perfect substitutionary sacrifice.

Note Concerning Chronologies

It is important to recognize the difficulties when determining dates for events in the period before Christ for the following reasons:

- 1) The Jews used a Lunar/Solar calendar. i.e. each month began with the sighting of the new moon and adjustments were made every few years to keep in step with the seasons when an extra 12th month was added.
- 2) The Jews counted "inclusively". i.e. a part year was said to be one year. Thus when a king began his reign during a year it was counted as one year.
- 3) A close examination of the chronologies of the kings of Judah and Israel will reveal some gaps between the reigns of kings. Thus when a king died there may be a gap in time before the next king began to reign.
- 4) Bible Prophecy uses a 30 day month and 360 days in the year. Thus 3¹/₂ years is said to be 1,260 days and 42 months.
- 5) The dates shown on the charts in this book are from the Gregorian Calendar of 365.24 days using 721BC as the datum.
- 6) For the above reasons there will be some differences in dates quoted by other reference books but they are not significant. The dates shown give a good indication of the historical context of events sufficient to interpret the Scriptures.

The Seven Dispensations

1 - THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

THE Age of innocence is that period of history when Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. Little is recorded about life in Eden. Our first parents were naked and were not ashamed; they could eat of every tree except the tree of “*the knowledge of good and evil*”; God walked with Adam from time to time and Adam was responsible to “*dress*” (*care*) and “*keep*” the garden. Dominion over all the animals was given to Adam.

We do not know how long Adam was in Eden before he sinned nor are we told when Satan sinned. We know that Satan was created an exceedingly beautiful angel named Lucifer, and that he fell through pride when he tried to exalt himself above the throne of God (Isa.13:12-14). One third of the angels were deceived by him (Rev.12:3-4).

God created the heavens and earth and then in six solar days finished by bringing order and beauty on earth and placing man upon it. God saw that all He had made was very good and we know from Job 38:7 that “*all the sons of God (angels) shouted for joy*” at that time. Lucifer’s fall must have been **after** the creation because **ALL** the sons of God rejoiced when the earth was created; he must have sinned after the initial creation of the heavens and earth (Gen.1:1).



1-The Age of Innocence

Satan was one of three chief angels that are named: Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer. Michael is the guardian angel of Israel (Dan.12:1), Gabriel stands in the presence of God (Luke 1:19) and communicates messages while Lucifer was given custody of all the nations (Luke 4:6). Lucifer therefore had a special connection with earth and that custody may have been given after man had been created. If this is the case, then the fall of Satan was after the creation of man and the temptation of Eve was his first move to lead the earth in rebellion against God; he already had one third of the angels and the human race was added.

When Adam sinned he was expelled from Eden; "*cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way*" at the entry prevented Adam partaking of the tree of life in his fallen condition. The kingdom that God intended should serve Him, had fallen into the hands of God's enemy: Satan.

One day Satan will be judged and all who co-operate with him will share in his judgment. Scripture states that hell is "*prepared for the devil and his angels*". (Matt.25:41). Even the serpent that Satan used to deceive Eve was cursed.

No sooner had Adam sinned than God announced His plan to recover the Kingdom: the seed of the woman (Christ) would bruise the serpent's (Satan's) head while the serpent would bruise His heel. This prophecy was fulfilled in the fulness of time at Calvary when the virgin-born Son of God; the seed of the woman, "*through death, destroyed (broke the power) him that had the power of death, that is the Devil*" (Heb.2:14). Then, Christ rose from the dead and the power of death was broken. By the end of time all will have been raised, either to life or to damnation. Death will be abolished.

The consequence of sin was death, or **separation from the life of God**. Physical death followed and Adam and Eve were banished from Eden but not before a loving God had provided coats of skins of slain animals to cover the nakedness of the guilty pair. The way back into fellowship with God through the death of an innocent substitute was thus made clear. When Adam's sons, Cain and Abel, approached God, only the sacrifice of a sin offering would suffice. When Cain refused, he was banished; sent "*out from the presence of the Lord*" (Gen.4:16).

Four Rivers in Eden

*"And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the **first is Pison**: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the **second river is Gihon**: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the **third river is Hiddekel**: that is it which goeth toward the east of*

The Seven Dispensations

Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates” (Gen.2:10-14).

It is easy to identify the river, Hiddekel, as the Tigris River and another was the Euphrates River, but the other two are not so easily identified. The land of Havilah was Arabia and suggests Pison has ceased to exist since the Flood. Gihon must be the Nile which, prior to the Flood was linked to the Garden of Eden. In Moses’ day it compassed the *“whole land of Ethiopia”* (Africa) and therefore could be no other than the Nile prior to the Flood.

The Flood was a global event which no doubt changed many geographic features when the *“fountains of the deep”* broke up and when great shifts in the earth’s crust took place to receive the waters back after the Flood. Many of today’s deserts may well have been inland seas for centuries as the waters receded. The ice caps in Antarctica and Greenland are no doubt a relic of the Biblical Flood. The ice caps are thousands of meters deep and in Antarctica the ice rises to more than 5,000 meters above the present sea level. The ice could not be formed from snowfalls because Antarctica is the driest continent on earth with only one inch of annual precipitation (snow) at the pole.

There is evidence that prior to the Flood the polar regions had a moderate climate protected by a canopy of cloud. Mammoths grazed there and trees grew. Coal deposits, which are buried trees, are found in Antarctica.

The Flood covered *“all the high hills that were under the whole heaven”*(Gen.7:19) and since the Antarctic ice cap is about 5,000 meters high; (just a little lower than Mt Ararat), and the ark rested on Ararat as the waters receded, there must have been many mountains thrust up as the deep ocean trenches, up to 11,000 meters deep, opened to receive the waters. Mount Everest (8,848 m) was formed when the Indian Plate of the earth’s crust was moved north over the China plate. The entire topography of the earth changed as the waters receded so that the oceans now occupy 70% of the earth’s surface.

The Garden of Eden was a beautiful place located in the Middle East but we cannot identify its exact location.

What can we Learn from the Age of Innocence?

- 1) God is the Creator and cares for His creation. Man is made in the image of God and is uniquely superior to all animals (Gen.1:26-27).
- 2) God desires to communicate and fellowship with man (Gen.3:8).
- 3) Man did not evolve but was created a highly intelligent creature. Adam named all the animals. His language was Hebrew and he could speak and write because he recorded the generations of Adam (Gen.5:1).
- 4) God intended that man and woman should live in a marriage relationship. It is not good for man to be alone (Gen.2:18). Marriage would protect men from fornication (1Cor.7:2). *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:*

1-The Age of Innocence

but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb.13:4).

5) God operated on Adam after putting him into *"a deep sleep"* and took a rib from his chest. Thus operations and anaesthetics are Scriptural (Gen.2:21). God was the first surgeon.

6) The woman is to desire her husband (alone) and he is to rule over her (Gen.3:16). The man is the head of the woman (1Cor.11:3).

7) God intended that man should be industrious and responsible to care for the Garden- *"to dress (care for) and keep"* it (Gen.2:15).

8) Man knows what is good and evil because God's law is written in his heart (Gen.3:7) - *"which shew the work of the law **written in their hearts**"* (Rom.2:15).

9) Man had a **free will** to exercise even when he was perfect. Man can choose good or evil; God or Satan (Gen.2:16-17). The choice of evil does not require a fallen sinful nature. God created the angels sinless and also man. Sinless angels and sinless mankind can choose to sin against God because they are not robots and have free will. Men blame others for their sin (Gen.3:12-13).

10) Men are to *"till the ground"*, grow crops and be industrious. (Gen.3:23).

11) Satan is the enemy of God and our enemy is seeking to turn us against God (Gen.3:1-5).

12) Satan is a liar and deceiver. He would have us think that God does not love us and deprives us of blessing (Gen.3:1-5).

13) There will always be conflict between Satan and mankind but one of Eve's seed would one day triumph over Satan. The *"seed of the woman"* would be the virgin-born Son of God (Gen.3:15).

14) Satan's doom was already determined and Christ would triumph over him through His death on the cross (Gen.3:15).

15) Fellowship with God is broken by sin (Gen.3:8-11).

16) Sin brings shame and fear of God (Gen.3:7).

17) Sin separates from God and brings judgment (Gen.4:23-24).

18) Sin brings death (Gen.2:17). After death our bodies return to dust from which it was made (Gen.3:19).

19) By the sacrifice of a substitute our shame can be covered and our sin pardoned (Gen.3:22). Christ is our substitute and sacrifice.

20) God has mighty angels who execute judgment (Gen.3:24; Matt.25:31).

There is a lot to learn from the Age of Innocence!

The Seven Dispensations

2 - THE AGE OF CONSCIENCE

THE Age of Conscience is that period of history from the expulsion of Adam out of the Garden of Eden to the great Flood of Noah's day. Adam and Eve now had the "*knowledge of good and evil*". Their conscience was activated to know good and evil and all their descendants have that same conscience by which they know what is right and what is wrong. The Bible states:

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;" (Rom.2:14-15).

In the heart of every son of Adam is **the knowledge of right and wrong** and each person is reminded of it every time they sin unless their conscience is "*seared as with a hot iron*" (1Tim.4:2). The law of God is now written in the human heart and even without the written law of God, **men know when they sin**. God also speaks through creation:

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom.1:20).

The massive effort by evolutionists to deny the Creator, is Satan's work to silence the testimony of God in the conscience, in creation and by the voice of God's Spirit in the heart. Any honest person who considers the vast diversity in life forms on earth, the intricate design of every large and small creature, the vastness of space and the harmony of the heavenly bodies, can come to only one conclusion: **The Lord God made them all**. David said,

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works" (Ps.139:14).

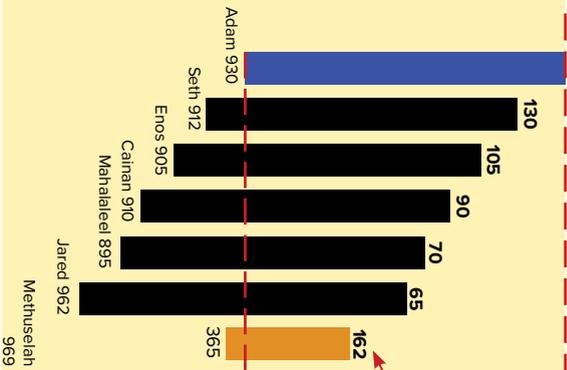
The Way of Redemption Revealed

After Adam had sinned, God revealed the one and only way for mankind to be redeemed. "*The wages of sin is death*" (Rom.6:23). There was no death in Eden but when Adam sinned he began to die physically and he became spiritually "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph.2:1). James states that "*the body without the spirit is dead*" (James 1:18). Death is separation from the life of God in time and eternity.

From the very beginning of time God would teach men that atonement must be made for sin; a life must be forfeited to gain eternal life. The promise that "*the seed of the woman*" would bruise the serpent's head (Gen.3:15) was a prophecy that a virgin would bring forth a manchild who would lay down His life to save us from Satan and sin.

When Cain and Abel came to God to seek pardon, Abel brought a sacrificial lamb but proud Cain brought the works of his hands; "*the fruit of the ground*"

Adam ← 6 Days of Creation



Enoch - "was not for God took him."

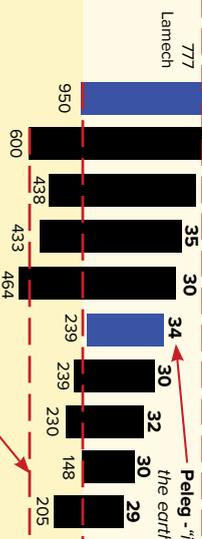
Methuselah

Lamech

Noah

Shem

NOAH'S FLOOD



Pelegr - "In his days was the earth divided" Gen.10:25.

Abram born the year Noah died

Abram was 150 when Shem died

THE EXODUS



GARDEN OF EDEN

AGE OF INNOCENCE

AGE OF CONSCIENCE

NOTE:

The length of each bar in the chart represents the age of a patriarch drawn to scale.

A horizontal line drawn at any point indicates those alive at any one time.

From Adam to the Flood was 1,656 years. Gen.ch.5.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Pelegr had a brother Joktan who had 13 sons - Arabian Princes

430 YEARS OF SOJOURN

from Abram's 75th Year
Israel 215 years in Egypt
(4 Generations) Gen.15:16

AGE OF GOVERNMENT

AGE OF PROMISE

The Seven Dispensations

(Gen.4:3). God rejected Cain's offering and told him to offer a sin offering; a sacrificial lamb, but instead he was angry and murdered his brother and hid his body. Cain was driven out from other men, took his sister to be his wife and started a family line of men who showed no sign of repentance.

Like Cain, today, men will perform all manner of good works and religious rituals, thinking they will earn favour with God, but God has only one way of salvation and it is through the sacrificial death of His beloved Son who is the Lamb of God and who shed His life blood on Calvary's cross to make atonement for the sin of the world. There, "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself*" (2Cor.5:19). There is no other way. Faith in Christ's redeeming work is the only way. From the beginning of time until Christ came, men offered lambs without blemish as sin offerings. They looked forward to the day when Christ the sinless "*Lamb of God*" would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29) and today we look back by faith.

The Way of Cain

Jude wrote of false teachers in his day who had "*gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward*"(Jude11). These were preachers who preached a bloodless religion of good works. Balaam was a false prophet who prophesied in order to get rich. Religion was a business.

We read little of the descendants of Cain except that he built a city and one of his descendants was a skilful "*artificer in brass and iron*" while another was "*the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle*". Another was the "*father of all such as handle the harp and organ*"(Gen.4:20-22).

The ungodly line of Cain were cultured and industrious like the Greeks of later centuries. Orpheus, a Greek who lived near Olympus before the 6th century BC was considered a prophet or wizard who enchanted animals, plants and rocks with his singing and music. He claimed to be the **son of the god Apollo** (the god of music) who gave him a golden lyre which gave him power over hades and when his wife died of a snake bite he said he went to the underworld to bring her back but she did not return. The arts have always been a part of pagan worship.

The Godly use of music glorifies God and was a large part of worship at the Temple. David's psalms are with us today but pagan music enchants and silences the conscience. It provides an emotional fix for those who wish to escape the convicting voice of the Spirit of God.

Fallen Angels Mingle with Men

The Age of Conscience lasted 1,656 years and there were only 10 generations. Men lived to almost 1,000 years. During this dispensation Satan **introduced fallen angels into the human race** and their offspring were giants.

"The sons of God (evil angels) ... took them wives of all that they chose" (Gen.6:2).

This continued after the Flood and was not just manipulation of the genes to

2-The Age of Conscience

produce giants for that would only produce tall men and it is not sinful to be tall. This was an attempt to destroy true humanity and produce a **hybrid race or demigod race** thus frustrating the purpose of God to provide redemption for mankind by the “seed of the woman” who was the perfect “**man, Christ Jesus**”. If Christ was not **truly man as well as God** “*manifest in flesh*”, He could not be our Saviour:

*“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh** is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is **come in the flesh** is not of God: and this is that **spirit of antichrist**... even now already is it in the world”* (1 John 4:2-3).

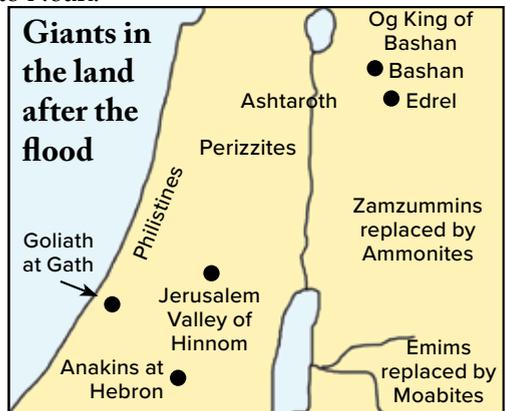
The *Epic of Gilgamesh* written before Abram was born, states that Gilgamesh, from the city of Erech, was two thirds a god and one third a man. His homosexual partner was made by a god according to the Epic. The gods of Greece, Egypt and Rome were demigods and may be traced back to the gods of Babylon; to those days after the Flood.

Scripture states that the sons of God “*took them wives of all that they chose*”. The original Hebrew language indicates the word “took” could have been a **forceful “taking”** of the daughters of men and this is borne out by the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in which Gilgamesh is called “the Wild Ox” and we read:

“There is no withstanding the aura or power of the Wild Ox. Neither the father’s son nor the wife of the noble, neither the mother’s daughter nor the warrior’s bride was safe” p.4 “there is no withstanding the desire of the Wild Ox” p.5.

The Epic states that the elders of the city of Erech, approached the “gods” to ask that they create another giant who might restrain Gilgamesh and so one of the gods made Enkidu from “dust and divine spittle” and he became the homosexual partner of Gilgamesh thus diverting his attention from the women and boys of Erech. These myths may well have some factual basis for Gilgamesh claimed to have talked to Noah.

Jude indicated that those angels which “*kept not their first estate, but left their habitation*” (Jude 1:6) had been consigned to chains of darkness till the last days but there is nothing to say that it **only happened before the Flood**. They evidently continued this activity after the Flood because many giants are recorded down to the time of David (1000BC) in the land of Canaan. The Zamzummims were **destroyed by the Lord** before



The Seven Dispensations

the Ammonites possessed their land (Deut.2:21) and there were Anakims, Emims and Og king of Bashan who slept on an iron bed almost 14 feet long! Goliath and his four brothers fought Israel in David's day and David was used to eradicate them. Christ is in the line of David and will finally sit on David's throne for ever.

We repeat: This was Satan's attempt to pollute the human blood stream and thus make the promise of the "*seed of the woman*" impossible.

The offspring of these "*sons of God*" (fallen angels) were demigods that historically became the gods (idols) worshipped by the nations. The ancient world: Babylon, Greece, Rome, Egypt, all worshipped many "gods" and we call this polytheism. Paul warned:

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col.2:18).

God's answer to this invasion of humanity by fallen angels was to banish the angels that "*kept not their first estate*" (Jude 1:6; 2Pet.2:4) to the bottomless pit in chains of darkness reserved unto the day of judgment. The legion of demons that possessed the demoniac of Gadera were terrified that Jesus might send them to the "*abyss*" (bottomless pit) "*before the time*"(Matt.8:29). They will be released in the Tribulation (Rev.9:2-11) to torment those who receive the mark of the Beast and will be finally cast into the lake of fire which is "*prepared for the Devil and his angels*" (Matt.25:41).

God Spoke Through Prophets to Warn the Antediluvians

Not only did men have the testimony of conscience and creation but there were **preachers of righteousness** such as Enoch and Noah:

"(God) spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2Pet.2:5).

"Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 1:14-15).

It has been suggested that Jude was quoting the *Book of Enoch* which also contains the quoted verse in ch.2 of that book but the *Book of Enoch* was a pseudographic writing with 105 chapters falsely attributed to Enoch. It makes extraordinary statements such as the claim that giants at the time of the Flood were 300 cubits (450 feet) tall and ate everything including men.

We note that it is an isolated verse that stands alone in chapter 2 of the *Book of Enoch*. We should also note that the *Book of Enoch* is **not an inspired writing** and nobody knows who wrote it or when it was written. The statement in Jude 1:14-15 was certainly not quoted from the spurious *Book of Enoch* but from

2-The Age of Conscience

other records which are no longer available. It is more likely the writer of the *Book of Enoch* got his version from Jude or the same inspired source that Jude used.

In addition to preachers who warned of coming judgment, God's Holy Spirit strove with the hearts of men. God said:

*"My spirit shall not always **strive with man**, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen.6:3).*

Peter tells us that it was Christ who, **by His Spirit**, preached,

*"being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by **the Spirit: BY WHICH** also he went and preached unto the spirits (now) in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited **in the days of Noah**, while the ark was a preparing" (1Peter 3:18-20).*

When Jesus died He did not go into the torment section of *hades* to preach to the spirits of lost men or angels. Jesus is God the Son and in His pre-incarnation days He preached **through Noah by His Holy Spirit** and the spirits of **those men** who were disobedient **then**, are **now** in prison in the torments of *hades*. When Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:31 state that Christ's soul was not left in *hades* (Heb. *sheol*) it was in **the paradise section of *hades*** where Old Testament saints were waiting for Christ to complete the work of redemption and NOT in the place of torment. Before Christ rose and took the deceased Old Testament saints to heaven there were two places in *hades* (Heb. *sheol*). There was torment and paradise, separated by a great gulf (Luke 16:26).

The world was exceedingly wicked in Noah's day but God in love was longsuffering and waited 120 years, warning men of future judgment.

Thus we see that, in the Age of Conscience, God **not only** spoke to men through their conscience, through creation, through the testimony of the Godly line of Seth, but also by the strivings of the Holy Spirit so that nobody could say they did not have the opportunity to be saved. The fact that Satan had his demigod giants to bully the people was no excuse.

Polygamy

Polygamy began with Lamech in the line of Cain for he took **two wives** (Gen.4:19,23). There were two men named Lamech before the Flood; one was from the line of Cain and the other from the line of Seth. It was Lamech from Cain's line who took two wives. Jesus said:

*"God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they both shall be **ONE FLESH**: so then they are no more two, but **ONE FLESH**" (Mark 10:6-8).*

Adam said of Eve:

*"This is now bone of my bones, and **flesh of my flesh**: she shall be called Woman" (Gen.2:23).*

Polygamy devalues womanhood and makes women little more than a

The Seven Dispensations

comodity for the benefit of man. God always intended that marriage should be the union of one man and one woman for life. Under the Law of Moses, divorce and remarriage was permitted in the case of unfaithfulness because the unfaithful partner had ceased to be "one flesh" with the wife or husband. Paul said,

"What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh" (1Cor. 6:16).

Marriage is sacred because it reflects the relationship between God the Father and Israel, and between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. The Church is not only the Bride of Christ but it is also the Body of Christ. When we are saved we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ (1Cor.12:13) and we become "one" with Christ never to be separated in time and eternity.

Noah's Ark and the Flood

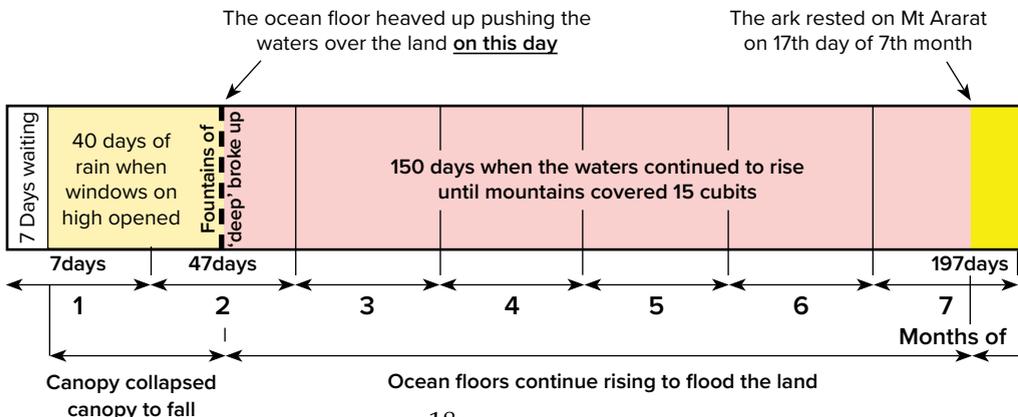
Noah must have employed many to build the enormous ark 300 x 50 x 30 cubits or 465 x 77 x 46 feet with three storeys. These workers were willing to accept payment for service yet still refused to repent just as unsaved workers in Churches today are involved in church work.

The animals taken into the ark were no doubt young ones and none were meat-eating until after the Flood (Gen.9:1-3). Many animals hibernate through winter including polar bears, skunks, hedgehogs, snakes etc. It is possible some animals hibernated during the year-long Flood.

Noah entered the ark and God shut the door. Seven days later the flood came and for 40 days it rained. Before the Flood a canopy of cloud covered the world (Gen.2:6) and the earth was watered by a mist. During the 40 days the canopy collapsed and at the end of 40 days

"were all the fountains of the great deep (ocean) broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (Gen.7:11).

Today 97 percent of Earth's water can be found in the oceans. Of the tiny percentage that's not in the ocean, only two percent is frozen up in glaciers



2-The Age of Conscience

and ice caps. Less than one percent of all the water on Earth is fresh.

The crust of the earth is very thin; ranging from 30 km thick on the continents to only 5 km thick under the oceans. The crust is floating on molten magma and is fractured. It rises and falls as the moon passes just as the tides rise and fall due to attraction of the moon. After 40 days of rain the ocean floor heaved up for 150 days to raise the level of the Flood. At the end of 150 days the great ocean trenches opened and the waters receded.

Methuselah was the son of Enoch, a prophet living before the Flood, to whom God gave warnings of future judgment. Some authorities say the name Methuselah means, *“the man of a spear”* but other ancient authorities say it means, *“when he dies, it shall come”*. If this is the true meaning of the name then undoubtedly Enoch gave his son a name that was a prophecy that the Flood would not come **until Methuselah died**. Methuselah lived longer than any other man (969 years) which was testimony to the **longsuffering** and patience of God for both Methuselah and his son Lamech, the father of Noah, died in the year before the Flood.

Persistent Sin Hardens the Heart

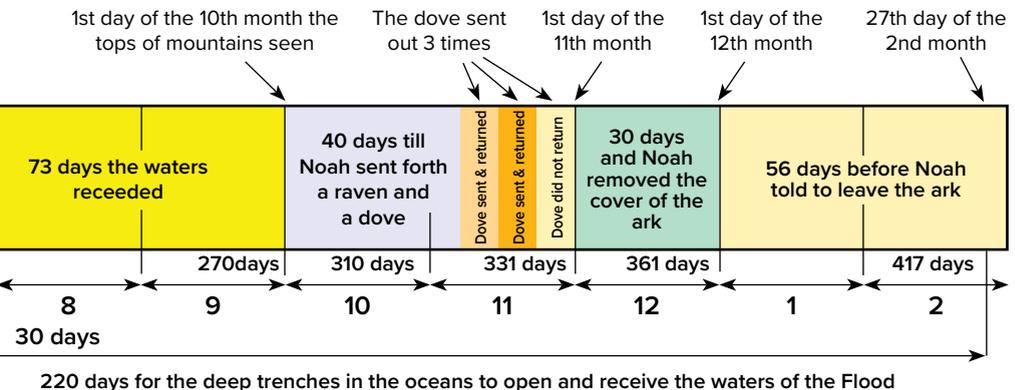
The Age of Conscience concluded with **men’s consciences silenced by sin**. Men no longer heard the voice of their conscience for *“every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen.6:5).

“When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).

Temptation begins in the **thoughts**; in the imaginations of the heart. Jesus said that once we sin in thought we are already guilty (Matt.5:27-28). Vain (proud) imaginations darken the soul:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom.1:21).

The Gospel of Christ gives us victory over every evil imagination:



The Seven Dispensations

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor.10:4-5).

The Earth was Filled with Violence

The Age of Conscience began with violence when Cain slew Abel and it ended with a world full of murder and violence. The giants produced by the union of fallen angels and women were *“mighty men (tyrants) which were of old men of renown (fame)” (Gen.6:4).*

The Hebrew suggests these were *“powerful, warriors, or tyrants”* who were still famous when Moses wrote the Pentateuch. They were not famous among God’s people but with the heathen who perpetuated their memory by worshipping them as gods. They were in fact demigods, part men and part evil angel.

The Last Days Will Be Like the Days of Noah

There was a population explosion:

“and it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth...” (Gen.6:1).

From Adam’s creation to the Flood was a period of 1,656 years and so we would expect there to be a large population within a few generations. In Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 2 there is a footnote that states Adam had 33 sons and 23 daughters. He states that Lamech, in the line of Cain, had 77 children to his two wives.

In 1850 world population was about one billion. In 2020 it reached 7.7 billion and is now increasing at about one billion every 11 years. Like the days of Noah we are seeing a population explosion. Jesus said:

“As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark” (Luke 17:26-27).

Demonic activity will abound in the last days. Paul wrote:

“In the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared as with a hot iron” (1Tim.4:1-2).

Departure from the Scriptures is evident in all major sections of Christendom. Charismatic doctrines of tongues, exorcism, healings and miracles are embraced. False prophets abound today claiming to have *“a word from the Lord”*. Biblical tongues were known Gentile languages given to the early Church as a sign to Israel that God was turning to the Gentiles but today’s tongues-gibberish experience and associated prophesying are *“another spirit” (2Cor.11:4)* that has seduced many.

The age of conscience closed with the Flood which has left us with abundant evidence seen in the fossil records. A new Dispensation began.

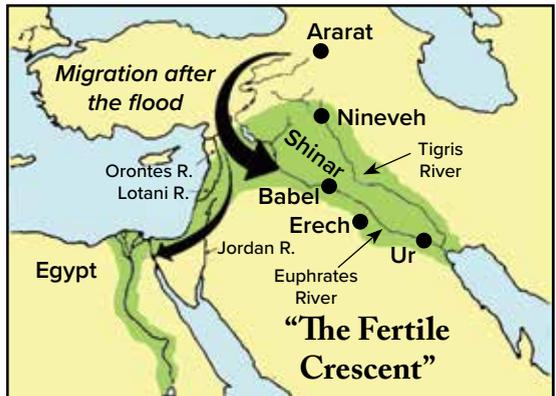
3 - THE AGE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

THE Age of Human Government began after the Flood with God’s mercy extended to Noah and his sons. God promised that He would never again destroy the earth with a Flood. The rainbow was designated as a perpetual sign or token to remind mankind of God’s covenant of mercy.

The human race began after the flood with three families led by Japheth, Shem and Ham. The descendants of Canaan were cursed and spread through the land of Canaan, Egypt and Africa. The descendants of Shem were the Godly line from whom sprang Abraham and his descendants. The line of Japheth were the European races.

Administration of the human race changed. After the Flood God divided *“the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth”*(Gen.10:32). Society was organized into nations with cities ruled by kings. In Genesis chapter 14 we read of four kings from Babylonia who invaded Canaan to fight with five city kings from Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar. We don’t read about kings or nations before the Flood. The human race had been divided into just two families; the line of Cain and the line of Seth.

Ancient historical records from the great library at Nineveh assembled by Ashurbanipal who was king over the Assyrian Empire in the 7th century BC, have a number of records describing the civilization before the Flood. Some of these documents list **ten kings** who reigned before the Flood. The Bible does not call them kings but names ten Fathers in the line of Seth. The Bible only mentions kings after the Flood. Nations and kings did not exist until the age of human government.



New Languages and New Nations

After the Flood, men settled at first in the plain of Shinar between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and all spoke one language - no doubt Hebrew. When Nimrod tried to unite all men under his control and built the tower of Babel

The Seven Dispensations

with a Temple at the top for the worship of the heavenly bodies, God confused the language of each family and scattered each language group **as nations** into lands allocated by God. Thus **nations** were formed and we read:

*“By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided **in their lands**; every one after **his tongue**, after their families, in their nation”* (Gen.10:5).

*“These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these **were the nations divided** in the earth after the flood”* (Gen.10:32).

The earth was *“divided”* in **the days of Peleg** (Gen.10:25) which places the confusion of tongues about 250 years after the Flood when world population would have reached several million.

While Nimrod built the idolatrous tower of Babel, Asshur, from the godly line of Shem, *“went forth”* about 450 km north of Babylon...*“and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen”* (Gen.10:11-12). The Assyrians descended from Asshur and Nineveh was possibly a protest against the idolatry of Nimrod. This may explain why the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah in the 9th century BC. (Jonah 3:5).

The modern trend to promote multiculturalism runs counter to God’s plan in the Age of Human Government.

A New Environment

After the Flood there was a new environment and longevity began to reduce; at first to about 450 years, and then to about 230 years. It reached 120 years in the days of Moses. (See the chart on page 23). The canopy of cloud that encircled the earth before the Flood protecting life on earth from deadly gamma rays from the sun, collapsed when the Flood came, thus shorten life. The Bible states that then

*“were the fountains of the great deep broken up, and **the windows of heaven were opened”*** (Gen.7:11).

Before the Flood, when Adam dwelt in the Garden of Eden,

“there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground” (Gen.2:6).

Without rainfall it would not have been possible to produce a rainbow and it was after the Flood that God gave the rainbow as a sign of His promise never again to destroy the earth with a global flood. Also, the removal of the canopy revealed the heavenly bodies such as planets, stars, comets and meteorites in

The Seven Dispensations

After the Flood men were given the flesh of all animals, birds, and fish to eat. Before the Flood, men were given **every herb of the field** to eat. God said: Noah's three sons were about 100 years old at the time of the Flood. Noah was 600 years old and when he drank the fruit of the vine he became intoxicated and uncovered in his tent. Ham, the youngest son, discovered him and told his brothers. It is apparent that he made no attempt to cover his shame. Subsequent history would indicate that Ham and his descendants were evil. Japheth (the elder) and Shem however discreetly covered their father and Canaan the son of Ham was cursed.

It may well have been that environmental conditions on earth so radically changed after the Flood that fermentation was accelerated and Noah, unaware of the danger of drinking fermented grape juice became intoxicated. When Canaan was cursed, Japheth and Shem were blessed by Noah and the descendants of Canaan were to serve the descendants of Japheth and Shem (Gen.9:24-27).

New Topography

Many geographic features changed at the time of the Flood. The ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica were formed at the time of the Flood. Their height and depth running into thousands of meters could not be deposited by snow for Antarctica is the driest continent on earth with less than one inch of annual precipitation. The polar regions enjoyed a moderate climate prior to the Flood and animals grazed there. Mammoths have been found, suddenly frozen with the dandelions they were eating still in their mouths. Islands of mammoth bones have been found off the coast of Russia. Semi-tropical vegetation once covered the landscape in the frozen northern regions.

Mountains were thrust up at the time of the Flood and the earth's crust convulsed. The Indian continent was pushed north creating the highest mountains in the Himalayas. Great trenches formed in the oceans to receive the waters from the land. The deepest parts of the ocean are found in trenches—at more than 35,000 feet (nearly 11,000 meters), Challenger Deep is a part of the Mariana Trench, where the Pacific Plate is subducting beneath the Philippine Plate.

The height of **Mount Ararat where the ark came to rest after the Flood is 5,137 meters** and the highest mountain of ice in Antarctica, **Mount Vinson, is 5,168 meters above sea level**. When the canopy collapsed the temperatures at the poles plummeted and the waters in the polar regions remained as frozen ice. Ice has been drilled to depths of 4,000 meters in Antarctica. At the North Pole the Ice was located in the Arctic Ocean and melted from the warm currents from the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf Stream but Antarctica is on land and remains as testimony to the Flood.

3-The Age of Human Government

New Food was Eaten

Before the Flood, God told Adam

*“Thou shalt eat **the herb of the field**; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground”* (Gen.3:18-19).

Before the Flood animals were only offered in sacrifice but after the Flood they were used as food and men became meat eaters. Animals were divided into “clean” and “unclean” categories (Gen.7:2). Clean animals were for sacrifice (Gen.8:20). God said:

*“The **fear of you and the dread of you** shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. **Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat** for you; **even as the green herb have I given you all things**. But **flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat**”* (Gen.9:2-4).

In the Garden of Eden and until the Flood there were no wild animals. Wild animals reacted in fear of man but before the Flood, animals were under no threat from man. After the Flood animals feared and dreaded men and this is why they became vicious.

A New Religion - The Tower of Babel

At this time all men spoke one language (Hebrew) and they settled in the plain of Shinar. One of Ham’s descendants, Nimrod, commenced to build the Tower of Babel and certain other cities in that region. Nimrod was called a “*mighty hunter before the Lord*” (Gen.10:9) and in view of his evil character it is possible he was a giant; the product of fallen angels intermingling with humankind as they did before the Flood. He began to build a number of cities in addition to the Tower of Babel “*whose top was unto heaven*” (Gen.11:4). The tower was for the worship of the heavenly bodies i.e. sun, moon, and stars. If the stars and planets were not visible before the Flood due to the canopy, then superstitious men would believe that these new lights that appeared and moved through the heavens were gods.

One of Nimrod’s cities was Erech and we know from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Laws of Hammurabi* that polytheism was practiced. Gilgamesh and Hammurabi were kings of Erech and Babylon about 2150 and 1750 BC respectively.

The evidence of many giants in the land of Canaan after the Flood would indicate that fallen angels were still seeking to corrupt the human bloodstream. *The Epic (poem) of Gilgamesh*, claims to be written when Noah was an old man, probably 300 years after the flood; 50 years before Abram was born. It tells the story of King Gilgamesh of the city of Erech which was built by Nimrod. In the

The Seven Dispensations

Epic, Gilgamesh is described as a giant twice the height of a normal man who was two thirds a god and one third a man. He was a tyrant who took anybody's wife, son, or daughter for sexual gratification. It states that nobody's wife was safe and the elders asked the gods to produce another giant to control him. Enkidu was made from "divine spittle" and dust and he fought Gilgamesh but Gilgamesh prevailed and Enkidu became Gilgamesh's homosexual partner.

While the story has many mythical aspects it agrees with the Biblical account of the Flood which is narrated by Noah in the Epic. It certainly confirms that polytheism was generally practised at that time.

New Languages

God judged the people who were building the Tower of Babel by confusing their language and construction of the tower ceased. Prior to this the whole world spoke one language; probably Hebrew, because the Godly line of Shem would not have been involved with the construction of the pagan Tower of Babel and their language was not changed. Eber, the father of the Hebrews, was the great grandson of Shem and it was in the days of Eber's son, Peleg, that the earth was "*divided*" (Gen.10:25).

The Age of Human Government radically changed life on earth and national systems that exist today were established in the era. Men have been ruled by kings, dictators and by representatives of the people in democratic societies but they have been divided according to their languages and in the lands allocated to them by God.

It is only in recent days that multiculturalism has become popular with nations, prompted largely by the population explosion. Mass migrations are occurring and national identities are being blurred. Millions have fled their country of birth to escape persecution but the system of national governments remains in one form or another.

In the final stages of world history according to Bible prophecy, there will be a one-world government under Satan's control headed up by Antichrist when all peoples will give allegiance to one "*man of sin*" and national identities will be extinguished for just three and a half years until Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords. Then Israel will be the leading nation and all nations will serve the Lord for 1,000 years.

4 - THE AGE OF PROMISE

THE Age of Promise or the Age of the Patriarchs is the period of history from the call of Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees to the departure of the Children of Israel from the land of Egypt.

About 2100 BC Abram was a young man living in Ur of the Chaldees where idolatry was rife. Excavations at the site of the city of Ur show that much of the city was occupied by a pagan Temple.

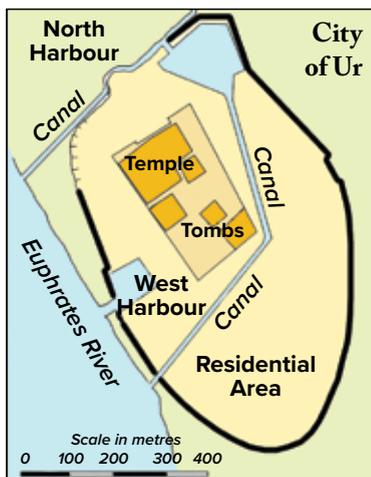
Jewish tradition recorded in the *Talmud* states that Abram's father Terah, was the chief officer of King Nimrod and that when Abram was born the magicians interpreted the stars to mean that Abram would one day destroy the nation and so Nimrod ordered that he be killed. Abram and his mother were hidden in a cave where they lived for years till Abram had grown up. When Abram returned to his father he found that Terah had 12 idols, one for each month, as well as many smaller ones and Abram took an iron bar and smashed them. Finally he fled to Noah and Shem.

The *Talmud* states that when Terah secretly visited his son, Shem convinced him to abandon his idolatry and go with Abram to the land of Canaan.

Many of the details of the story in the Jewish *Talmud* are fanciful and appear to be borrowed from other historical records to make a good story. However there may be some truth in the account in the Talmud for Scripture states that Terah worshipped idols in Ur (Josh.24:2) and that God had told Abram to leave his country **and kindred** and go to a land that God would show him (Gen.12:1). With this command were promises that God would make of him "a great nation" and that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen.12:2-3).

The Bible states that **Terah took Abram** from Ur, north-west along the Euphrates, till they came to Haran, which was a commercial city about 100km south of the Euphrates on the Belikh River. It was a centre of worship of the "moon god". Whether Terah was still worshipping the moon at this stage we do not know.

The name Terah is a Chaldean name meaning "delay" and the stay at Haran delayed Abraham from obeying the Lord's command. The name Haran



The Seven Dispensations

according to the Hebrew Lexicon by Gesenius means “a place dried up” or “parched with the sun”. Perhaps we can learn a lesson here that when we delay obeying the Lord, life can be a barren place.

When Terah died, Abram was 75 years old and he immediately took his nephew Lot and they journeyed to the land of Canaan in obedience to the Divine command.

Abram’s faith was tested for there was a drought in the land of Canaan so he passed through the land until he came to Egypt where Pharaoh took his wife, Sarah and would have made her one of his harem had the Lord not intervened. Abram returned to Bethel in the land of Canaan which means “house of God” where he had earlier built an altar to the Lord (Gen.13:1-4).

While at Bethel there was strife between Abram’s herdmen and Lot’s herdmen, for they both had large flocks. Lot left Bethel and chose the well-watered plains of Jordan, near the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the burnt out remains of which have been located at the northern end of the Dead Sea. Abram moved south along the high country to Hebron which means, “fellowship”.

The Abrahamic Covenant

God tested Abram’s faith by telling him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering and when Abraham obeyed, believing God would raise him from the dead, God provided a ram to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac and said:

“By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen.22:16-18).

The promises made to Abraham were later confirmed to Isaac (Gen.26:1-4) and Jacob (Gen.27:28; 28:10-15; 35:9-12).

Human sacrifice was practised by the heathen nations and was condemned by God. God told Jeremiah:

“(Israel) built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin” (Jer.32:35).

God’s command to Abraham therefore to offer his only son was contrary to all that Abraham knew of God especially after the Flood when murder was to be punished with a death sentence, yet his obedience was unconditional believing that God would even raise Isaac from the dead (Heb.11:17-19). God was making it known that His only begotten Son would one day die as a

4-The Age of Promise

sacrifice to atone for all of human sin and that He would be raised from the dead. When Abraham's obedience was evident God provided a ram caught by its horns in a thicket.



The Age of Promise is the **Age of the Patriarchs**; the Fathers of the nation of Israel, and the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) were passed to Jacob's sons before he died (Gen.48&49). This Dispensation in which God administered His will through the descendants of Abraham is fundamental to all the future prophecies of the Bible. It was necessary to separate Abraham from the idolatry in Ur in order to preserve Truth in the earth and to raise up a great nation, Israel, to be the custodian of the Scriptures and to bring Christ into the world.

After the Flood the nations had been given the opportunity to administer God's will but had dismally failed. This was clearly a new administration or dispensation by God in which God was making **covenants with Abraham** to define the land that God would give him (Gen.13:15; 15:18-21). This land would be *"an everlasting possession"* (Gen.17:7-8) which would be passed on to Abraham's descendants through Isaac (Gen. 17:19-22).

"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut.32:8).

The future of nations is determined by their relationship with Israel. Those that bless Abraham's seed God will bless and those that curse Abraham's seed God will curse (Gen.12:3; 27:29). God has determined that His blessing on all nations must flow through the seed of Abraham (Gen.22:18).

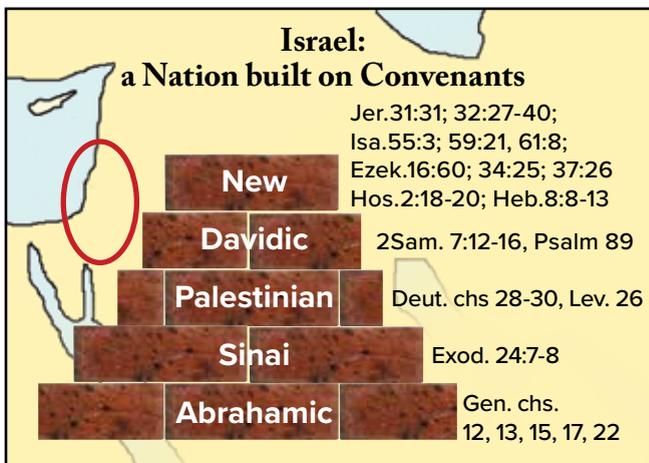
Ezekiel clearly indicates that even when Israel is under the chastening of God, the Gentiles must not despise them or persecute them. Tyre, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Egypt and the Philistines were all judged for standing against God's people (Ezek.chs 25 to 32).

We call this covenant the **Abrahamic Covenant** (Gen.17:7) which was the first of a series of covenants God made with Abraham's descendants. In the next dispensation, the Age of Law God gave the **Siniatic Covenant** (Exod.31:16-17), the **Eternal Priesthood Covenant** (Num.25:11-13) , the **Palestinian Covenant** (Deut 28-30) and the **Davidic Covenant** (2 Sam.23:6) all of which were built on the Abrahamic Covenant. Jeremiah and other prophets indicated that, in the last days, God will make a **New Covenant** (Jer.31:31) with Israel when the

The Seven Dispensations

entire nation will be saved and blessed in Christ's Kingdom on earth.

These covenants are eternal and never can be cancelled; they foreshadow times when Abraham's seed would turn away from God and be punished but God's purpose is that ultimately, through



the nation of Israel, all nations will be blessed in His Kingdom.

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But **this shall be the covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel;*

*After those days, saith the LORD, 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 the LORD: **for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them**, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD” (Jer.31:31-37).

The Age of Promise began with faithful Abram obeying the Lord and leaving the idolatrous city of Ur for a land which was promised but was never possessed by either him, Isaac or Jacob. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed God's promises as Paul said:

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they

4-The Age of Promise

were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb.11:13).

In the days of Jacob his evil sons sold Joseph into Egypt when Joseph was 17 years old but, when he was 30 years old, God exalted him to be the prime minister of Egypt. When there was a 7-year dearth Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt for grain and in the 2nd year of the dearth Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and they were finally reconciled. Jacob relocated to Egypt and while Joseph was Prime Minister they were blessed in the land but when Joseph died the next Pharaoh persecuted the children of Israel.

The seed of Abraham sojourned as strangers for 430 years from the time he left Haran to the very day they came out of Egypt. (Gal.3:17). The actual duration of the stay of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt was **four generations (Gen.15:16; Exod.6:16-20)** (215 years) and during that time they turned to idolatry (Ezek.20:7-8) and came under the chastening hand of God. When the Egyptians afflicted the people, they cried out to the Lord and He sent Moses to deliver them.

The Age of Promise began with blessing and ended with bondage in the land of Egypt: a new administration was required and that brings us to the Age of Law.

Lessons to Learn

The Age of Promise has many spiritual lessons for us today. As in Abraham’s day we live in a time of great apostasy and idolatry. Christendom has departed from the truth of the Word of God and has denied the great fundamentals of the faith once delivered to the saints.

The world has been brought into the Church with its rock music and repetitious contemporary choruses. Noise levels have in many places reached the pain threshold and we hear of Christians taking ear plugs to Church which they wear until the sermon.

Liberal theology is taught in Theological Colleges where creation is replaced with evolution, the verbal inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is rejected and the premillennial return of Christ is ridiculed.

Mysticism and “traditional meditation” is being practiced with candles in dimly lit rooms to produce an atmosphere akin to Romish places of worship.

Signs and wonders are sought with self acclaimed “prophets” getting “a word from the lord” or interpreting devilish tongues gibberish which is often given equal authority with the Bible.

Whenever a believer makes a stand against these errors he or she is ostracized and rejected. Christendom is fast becoming like *Mystery Babylon* that will be

The Seven Dispensations

judged in the Tribulation. It will become

“the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev.18:2).

When Abram found himself in such a situation the Lord told him to get out of the religious apostasy and to walk by faith with God wherever God would lead him. The old fashioned doctrine of Biblical separation is clearly stated in Scripture. To the Corinthians Paul wrote:

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and the table of devils” (1Cor.10:21).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2Cor.6:14-18).

For Abram it was a lonely path. He took his idolatrous father as far as Haran but could go no further until he died. From Haran, Abram sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise and when strife arose between Abram’s herdmen and Lot’s herdmen he lost his nephew who preferred the lush plains of Jordan and the fellowship of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He later witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and was no doubt saddened to see Lot in a pitiful state living in a cave with two daughters.

Abraham walked alone with God trusting in the promises of God and, though he never possessed the promised land, by faith he saw the fulfilment of God’s promises afar off (Heb.11:13).

Today many Christians have chosen the same path and have left the mainstream churches to meet with small companies of believers in “house churches” or small congregations where they honour God, holding forth the Word of life and encouraging each other in the pilgrim pathway.

Abram had to overcome the attraction of family ties and of his own kindred to walk a path he had never trod before. He left worldly friends behind but was called the *“friend of God”*.

“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend” (Isa. 41:8).

Some Christians have never learned the lesson that Abraham learned: **Its better to be a friend of God than a friend of the world.** We can never be a blessing to the world while we are a part of it.

The Age of Promise concluded in failure as the children of Israel found

4-The Age of Promise

themselves slaves in the land of Egypt. They had come there in the 2nd year of a great seven-year famine which God sent on the nations. This seven-year dearth (famine) must have been extraordinary for Scripture states that it was *“in all lands...and all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands”* (Gen.41:54,57).

This famine followed seven years of abundance and was a necessary part of God’s plan to progress history to the next Dispensation: the Age of Law.

There are three reasons why God sent such a **global dearth in the days of Joseph**:

1) God sent the dearth so that His servant Joseph would be exalted to the throne of Egypt. Joseph had been sold as a slave into Egypt by his evil brothers and was languishing in prison but had remained faithful to God. **God cares for His servants and keeps His promises.**

2) God would use the dearth to afflict Joseph’s brethren and bring them to bow in repentance before him. They had sold him for 20 pieces of silver to be a slave in Egypt but God had exalted him.

Joseph was a prophetic ‘type’ of the Lord Jesus and it was after two years of a 7-year global dearth that his brethren were repentant about what they had done to him.

In the last days God will use the 7-year Great Tribulation (*“the time of Jacob’s trouble”* Jer.30:7) to bring Israel (Jesus’ brethren) to bow before Him whom they sold for 30 pieces of silver. It could also be after two years of the Tribulation that the Russian invasion will occur and Israel will cry out to the Lord in repentance for rejecting Jesus Christ.

3) Prophecy must be fulfilled. The dreams of Joseph that indicated his brethren would one day bow before him must be fulfilled.

In the second year of the dearth, when Jacob heard that Joseph was alive, he moved to Egypt with his family. It was in God’s plan for the children of Israel. We read:

*“And God spake unto Israel (Jacob) in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for **I will there make of thee a great nation**: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again”* (Gen. 46:2-4).

5 - THE AGE OF LAW

THE Age of Law began when Israel left the land of Egypt and concluded on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was formed; a period of about 1648 years. *“The sojourning”* of the patriarchs had lasted 430 years from the time Abram left Haran until the children of Israel left Egypt but their stay in Egypt was only for **four generations** (Gen.15:16) which lasted 215 years - Levi, Kohath, Amram and Moses (Exod 6:16-20). They multiplied to such an extent that the Egyptians became afraid. When Pharaoh tried to kill all baby boys the mid-wives refused to carry out his wishes. He then ordered all the Egyptians to dispose of the baby boys in the River Nile but the more he afflicted the children of Israel, the more they multiplied.

How long this order lasted we do not know but we know it applied in the days of the Pharaoh who reigned when Moses was born. The decree may have been rescinded when Pharaoh decided he needed many male slaves to build his treasure cities: Pithom and Rameses. Or it could have been his daughter’s influence for when Moses was a baby his mother placed him in a basket and launched him into the Nile where the Princess, Pharaoh’s daughter, found him and adopted him as her son.

Forty years later Moses fled from Egypt to the land of Midian but by that time God had trained His man for the task of leading Israel to freedom. After another forty years minding sheep in the land of Midian, he returned to lead Israel back to the land of Canaan.

The affliction of the children of Israel in Egypt was sent for three reasons:

- 1) The children of Israel had turned to idolatry and were worshipping the gods of Egypt. God would bring them to repentance.
- 2) God would preserve Israel as a people and prevent them from integrating with the Egyptians. God has isolated the Jews through the centuries by bringing persecution upon them and thus He preserved their identity as a people while living in foreign countries. We know that the children of Israel had begun to integrate because there was a *“mixed multitude”* that came with them from Egypt (Exod.12:38).
- 3) God fulfilled the promise made to Abraham:
*“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their’s, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**; And also **that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge**: and afterward shall they come out with great substance”* (Gen.15:13-14).

Egypt had control of the land of Canaan at this time and the affliction of Abraham’s seed began when Pharaoh took Sarah away from Abraham; it continued for 430 years until the Exodus. There were only 30 years when they were not afflicted **while Joseph ruled in Egypt**.

5-The Age of Law

At the end of the 430 years the children of Israel cried unto the Lord and God had His man, Moses, ready to lead them out and bring them into the land promised to Abraham.



At first Pharaoh refused to release the children of Israel and God sent plagues on the land of Egypt as He had told Abraham He would (Gen.15:14). On the night that Israel left Egypt the angel of the Lord slew the firstborn in every house where the blood of the Passover lamb was not applied to the doorposts. When Pharaoh mobilized his army and pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea God opened a way

through the waters and when Pharaoh followed, the waters returned. Pharaoh and the entire Egyptian army drowned in the Red Sea. Thus Egyptian control over the land of Canaan was broken and the way was prepared for Israel's conquest of Canaan.

The *Tel-el-Armarna Tablets* were a large number of clay plates found at Tel-el-Armarna in Egypt which proved to be the foreign affairs department of the Pharaoh reigning at the time Israel entered Canaan. They contained letters from the kings of cities in Canaan begging for soldiers to resist the Habiru (Hebrews) who were entering the land but the reigning Pharaoh was unable to send any help because Egypt had not recovered from the desolation experienced 40 years before when the entire Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea.

The path taken by Israel as they came out of Egypt was chosen by God in order to destroy the Egyptian army. At first Israel headed north to Succoth toward the short road along the coast into Canaan but then God told Moses to turn south and He continued south, still in Egypt, until Israel was trapped with the Red Sea on their left and mountains in a wilderness area before and on their right. God put a pillar of cloud and fire between Israel and the Egyptians and led them through the Red Sea. When Pharaoh and his army followed, the sea returned and Pharaoh with his 600 chariots perished!

So complete was the destruction of the Egyptian army that *"there remained not so much as one of them"* (Exod.14:28) and Egypt was left without its king!

Thus the Age of Law began with Israel departing from Egypt and through the wilderness of Sinai where God gave them His laws, the priesthood, and the Tabernacle. **A new Dispensation began.**

No longer were the children of Israel slaves to the Egyptians but they were a nation in their own right on the way to the land that God had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as an everlasting possession. God's timing is always perfect and it was **exactly 430 years** to the very day from the day Abram left Haran to enter the promised land!

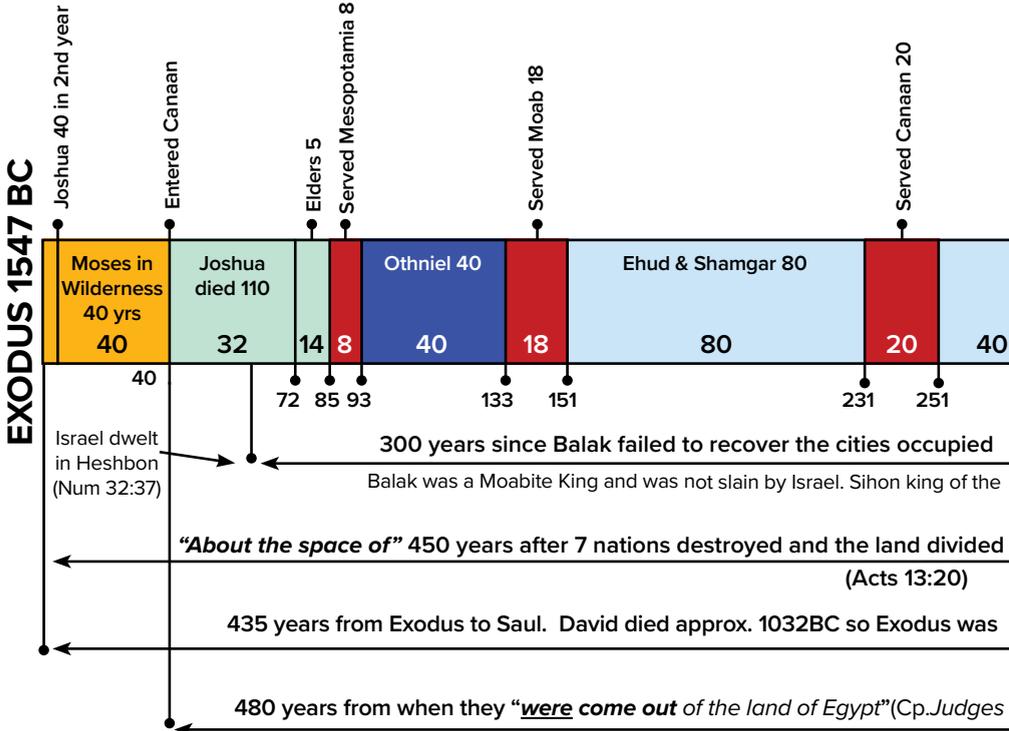
The Seven Dispensations

“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass **at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the SELFSAME DAY** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt” (Exod.12:40-41).

God made a covenant with the nation at Mount Sinai in which He promised blessing if Israel obeyed His law. Also, God established an everlasting priestly covenant with Phinehas which created a line of priests to serve in the Tabernacle and Temple. However Israel broke the law as soon as God gave it and they made a golden calf to worship. The tables of stone were broken and new ones had to be engraved.

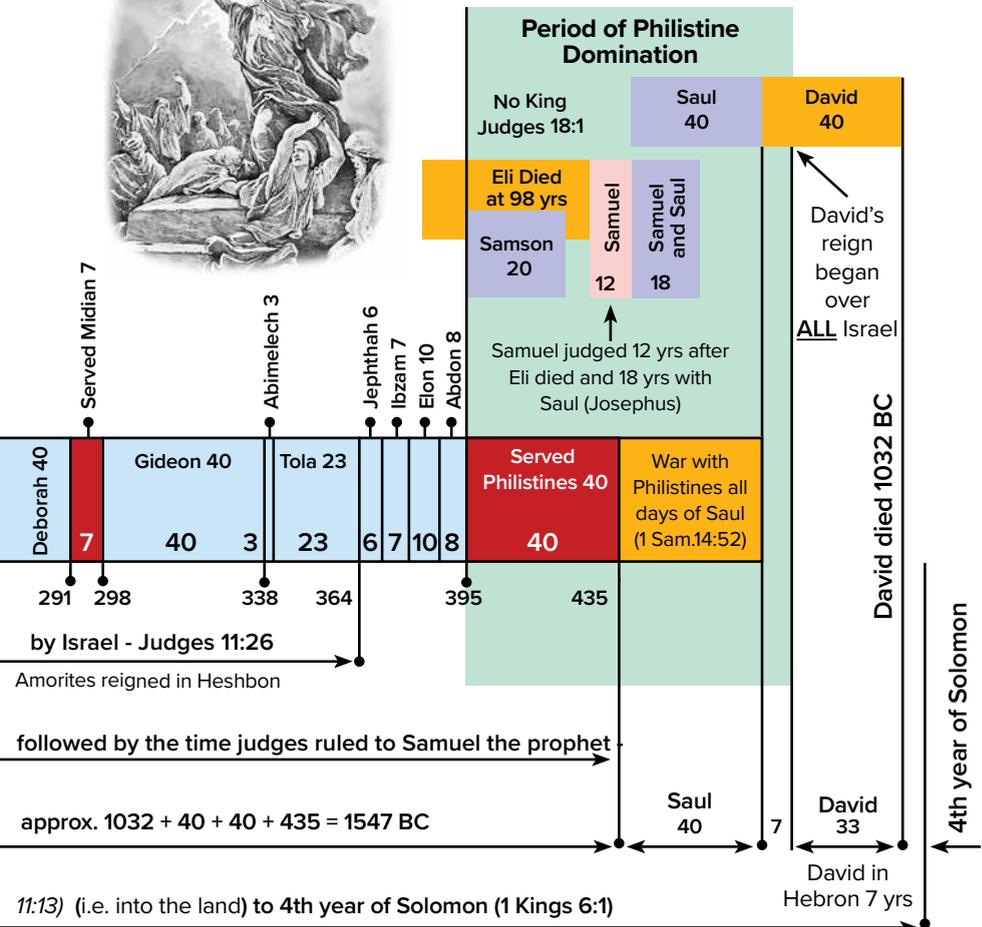
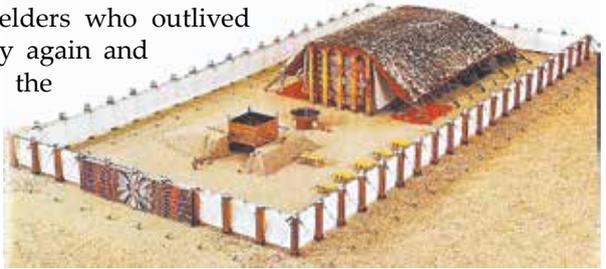
At first the Age of Law was administered from the Tabernacle and years later from the Temple at Jerusalem. A priestly system was established during Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness and an entire annual program of feast days, sacrifices and offerings was instituted. Each tribe was allocated responsibilities and when they entered the land of Canaan each family and tribe was given its own portion of land.

From The Exodus to David



5-The Age of Law

After 40 years in the wilderness Israel entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who outlived Joshua but after that, they again and again turned away from the Lord and He gave them Judges to rule over them for about 400 years. See the chart below.



The Age of Law

Descendants of **JAPHETH**
Gen 10:2-5

Gomer (Caucasus)
Magog, Meshech & Tubal (Russia)
Ashkenaz & Madai (Medes/Central Asia)
Togarmah (Turkey)
Javan (Greece)
Kittim (Italy)
Tarshish (Britain)

The above are predominantly European and Slavic nations



Greece/Rome

Descendants of **HAM**
Gen 10:6-20

Cush (Ethiopia and Babylon)
Mizraim (Egypt)
Phut & Ludim (Africa)
Sheba & Dedan (Arabia)

Canaan (Canaanites)
Sidón, Heth, Jebusites, Amorites
Casluhim & Caph-torim (Philistines)

EGYPTIAN EMPIRE
(Descendants of Ham)

ASSYRIAN EMPIRE
(Descendants of Shem)

Descendants of **SHEM to ABRAM**

40 years in wilderness
Conquest of Canaan under Joshua

Othneil
Ehud
Shamgar
Barak
Gideon
Abimelech
Tola
Jair
Jephthah
Ibzan
Elon
Abdon
Samson
Eli
Samuel
Saúl
David
Solomón

15 JUDGES

Rehoboam
Abijam
Asa

Jehoshaphat
Joram
Ahaziah
Joash
Amaziah (Uzziah)

Jotham
Ahaz
Hezekiah
Manasseh
Amon
Josiah
Jehoahaz
Jehoiakim
Jehoiachin
Zedekiah

Jeroboam
Nadab
Baasha
Elah
Zimri
Omri
Ahab
Ahaziah
Joram
Jehu
Jehoahaz
Joash
Jeroboam II
Zachariah
Shallum
Menahem
Pekahiah
Pekah
Hoshea

Southern Kingdom of Judah

Northern Kingdom of Samaria

721 BC

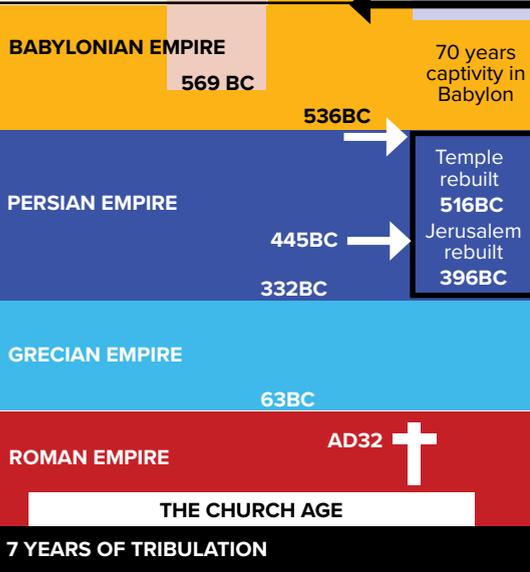
Samaritans

THE PROPHETS

ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

- Jonah
- Amos
- Isaiah
- Hosea
- Micah
- Zephaniah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Jeremiah
- Obadiah
- Daniel
- Ezekiel
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Joel
- Malachi

606BC



70 years captivity in Babylon

Temple rebuilt 516BC
Jerusalem rebuilt 396BC



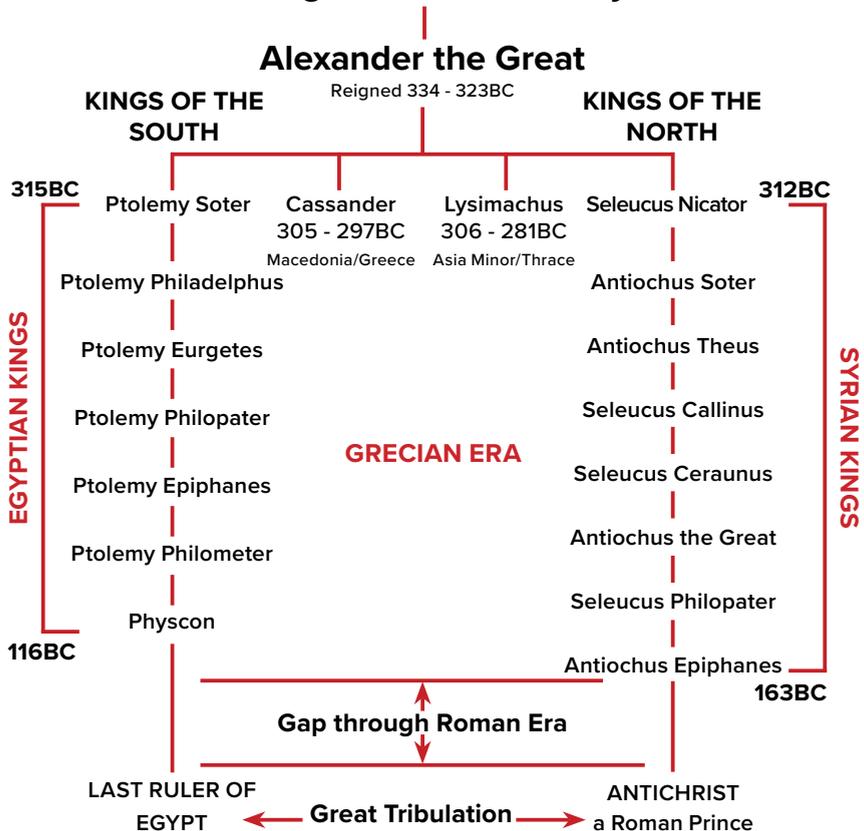
5-The Age of Law

From its beginning the nation had no king for the Lord was their king (1Sam.12:12) but in the days of Samuel they asked for a king to fight their battles; they wanted to be like other nations. God gave them Saul to be king and when he failed God chose David; *"a man after God's own heart"*. God established an **everlasting covenant with David** and promised that there would never cease to be a man of his line available to sit on David's throne (Jer.33:21).

It was in the time of David that the last of the giants lived. We don't read of any giants after David.

After David, his son Solomon reigned but when he died the nation divided; 10 tribes in the north made Samaria their Capital and 2 tribes in the south made Jerusalem their capital. From its very beginning the northern kingdom was idolatrous and worshipped two golden calves that were the gods of Egypt so in 721BC God sent the Assyrians to carry away many from the northern kingdom to Media.

Yet 4 Kings of Persia after Cyrus



The Seven Dispensations



When the southern kingdom of Judah fell into sin and idolatry God sent the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (606-586BC), to carry them captive to Babylon for 70 years. The throne of David ceased (Ezek.21:25-27) and it will remain so until Christ, the Son of David, returns to sit on David's throne (Acts15:14-18; Amos 9:11).

The Babylonian Empire was overthrown in 538BC by Cyrus the Persian King and in fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer.25:11-12), after 70 years of captivity in Babylon Zerubbabel led some of the Jews back under a decree of Cyrus. The **Temple** was finally rebuilt in 516BC. Later, in 445BC,

Nehemiah led more of the Jews back under a decree from the Persian King Artaxerxes allowing the Jews to **rebuild the City** of Jerusalem.

By the year 400BC the nation had lapsed into apathy and about 120BC the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees controlled worship at the Temple in a formal way. **Traditions and rituals** replaced the love of God's Law and genuine obedience from the heart.

The Persian Empire was conquered by the Greeks led by Alexander the Great in 332BC and after his death in 323BC the empire was divided into four parts. The Jews found themselves between the Greek Seleucid kingdom to the north and the Greek Ptolemies to the south in Egypt. The kingdom of Judah suffered greatly as there was conflict between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. About 167BC the Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes ruled in the northern Seleucid kingdom and he greatly afflicted the Jews until the Maccabees were able to drive out the Greeks. Daniel foretold these events in Daniel ch.11:1-35 and ch.8:1-25. The worst period was the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes 175 to 163BC.

The Grecian Empire finally collapsed when the Roman General Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C. and the Romans appointed Herod the Great, an Idumean, as King of the Jews in 37B.C. Herod died about 1B.C., and his sons ruled after him.

The Coming of Messiah

Malachi wrote the last of the inspired Old Testament writings about 400BC and there were 400 years when there was no word from the Lord until John the Baptist appeared in fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger

of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal.3:1).

John was the last of the Jewish prophets in the Age of Law (Matt.11:13). He announced to coming of Messiah and preached the kingdom of God. Jesus was born about 3 B.C. Jesus said:

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached" (Luke 16:16).

John, Jesus and the 12 disciples that Jesus chose all preached that *"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"* (Matt.3:1; 4:17;10:7). Israel was given the opportunity to be a part of the Kingdom of God on earth with Christ as their King but after nearly three years Jesus was rejected by the nation.

John the Baptist also announced the coming of Messiah as **the Lamb of God** (John 1:29) who would take away the sins of the world and He baptized Jesus in Jordan but John's ministry was terminated when Herod had him executed.

In fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy, on Palm Sunday, Jesus presented Himself to the nation as her King:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech.9:9).

But in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah ch.53) Christ was *"despised and rejected"* by His own nation and four days later they crucified their King at the Passover feast of the Jews. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead indicating that He had defeated Satan and death. When He rose all the Old Testament saints that had died from Adam to Christ, were also raised from Paradise and 40 days later Christ took them to heaven when ascended from the Mount of Olives and *"led captivity captive"*(Eph.4:8).

In the final meeting with the Disciples on the Mount of Olives Jesus was asked, *"Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel"* (Acts 1:6)

The Disciples has just concluded nearly three years preaching that the Kingdom of God was *"at hand"* and now that Christ had risen they expected it to begin. But Israel must be brought to repentance; she must be dispersed among the nations and brought into Great Tribulation. In the meanwhile the Gospel of the Grace of God must be preached to all nations and the Church which is *"neither Jew nor Greek...but all one in Christ Jesus"* much be established. The Age of Law had passed and a new dispensation had arrived.

Lessons to Learn

It should be remembered that the Gospels record the testimony of Jesus under the Age of Law. The three synoptic Gospels were written by A.D.65 and John's Gospel was written about A.D.90. In A.D.70 Jerusalem was burned and the

The Seven Dispensations

Temple destroyed. The Jews were scattered throughout the nations exactly as Jesus foretold (Luke 21:24).

The ministries of the Lord Jesus and His disciples before Pentecost were **to Israel in the Age of Law**. The Church did not exist at that time. Jesus told His disciples:

*“Go **not** into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans **enter ye not**: But go rather to the lost sheep of **the house of Israel**”* (Matt.10:5-6).

The primary meaning of all the parables is therefore applicable to Israel and not the Church. If we remember this it will help us to rightly divide the Word of Truth. The reason for much erroneous teaching today is that people apply Scriptures to the Church which were given to Israel under the Dispensation of Law.

There is a difference between the Synoptic Gospels and John’s Gospel. The synoptic Gospels were written while the Temple and its services were still operating. John’s Gospel was written 20 years after the Temple ceased to exist and the Jewish nation was scattered. The Apostle John in his Gospel, Epistles and Revelation, was writing to Gentile believers who were not familiar with Jewish Temple customs and practices. He adopts Roman time instead of Jewish time and uses the word “world” 81 times. The Synoptic Gospels each uses the word “world” an average of only 11 times.

Israel was God’s earthly people and will inherit an earthly kingdom but the Church is a heavenly people “*blessed with all spiritual blessings in **heavenly places in Christ***” (Eph.1:3).

*“For our conversation (citizenship) is **in heaven**; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”* (Phil.3:20-21).

The great emphasis on “the Kingdom of God” and “the Kingdom of Heaven” in the Gospels continues the hope of Israel presented by the Old Testament prophets and it will only be fulfilled when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish His millennial kingdom. This must be the context of all that is written in the four Gospels.

God has not finished with Israel. The promises to Abraham were eternal unconditional promises and in the last days Israel must be restored to play the major part. However before Israel can be restored the Church must be completed and must depart for the marriage of the Lamb in heaven. This must be the case because Jesus said that when He comes again to Israel He will “*return from the wedding*” (Luke 12:36).

We will now consider the sixth Dispensation: the Church Age.

6 - THE CHURCH AGE

THE Church Age began on the Jewish Feast Day of Pentecost AD32 which was 50 days after the day Christ rose from the grave. It will conclude when the Church-age saints are raised and the living saints are changed and caught up to heaven at the Rapture, immediately before the Tribulation.

After 3pm on the Jewish Passover Day as the Jews were killing the lambs for the Passover meal, Jesus died. He thus fulfilled the Old Testament type and so Paul wrote, "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*" (1Cor.5:7).

Just as the firstborn of the Israelites were spared when they sprinkled the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintols of their houses so we are spared from eternal judgment when we trust in Christ's shed blood. In those 3 hours of darkness on the cross He bore the full penalty of our sin.

Many prophecies were fulfilled when Christ died. Isaiah prophesied that He would be "*wounded for our transgressions*" (Isa.53:5). David indicated that the soldiers would "*cast lots*" for His garment (Ps.22:18) and would pierce His "*hands and feet*" (Ps.22:16). Daniel prophesied the very time that Christ would be "*cut off*" (Dan.9:26).

The third day after Passover was the Jewish *Feast of Firstfruits* when a sheaf of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest was brought to the Temple and waved before the Lord. It was on this very day that Christ was **the first** to rise from the dead fulfilling the type of the *Feast of Firstfruits* as Paul indicated when he wrote of the resurrection of Christ:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (died)" (1Cor.15:20).

When Jesus died there was an earthquake (Matt.27:51) and the veil in the Temple that hid the Holy Place, was torn from top to bottom. That year when the priest stood in the Temple waving the sheaf, it was before a torn veil thus fulfilling the type of the *Feast of Firstfruits* and declaring that Christ had risen and the way into the Holy Place, into heaven itself, was now made open to repentant sinners.

Then, counting 50 days from that first day of the week to another first day of the week, the Feast of Pentecost, they celebrated the completion of the ingathering of the harvest and on that day the Holy Spirit was poured out upon 120 Disciples in the upper room and the Church was formed. The



The Seven Dispensations

sabbath which was a sign between God and Israel for ever (Exod.31:17) had passed and the Church began on the **first day of the week**. The Age of Law was replaced by a new Dispensation; the Church Age. Israel was blinded spiritually and in AD70, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The Jews were scattered among the nations.

Isaiah prophesied 700 years before Christ came that this **blindness would come upon Israel** (Isa.6:9-13; 29:10) and his prophecy was quoted by Jesus (Matt.13:14-15; John12:40) and by Paul (Acts 28:26-27).

When David foretold the crucifixion of Messiah he prayed that Israel's eyes would be "*darkened that they see not*" (Ps.69:23). This blindness however would not be permanent for although the Apostle Paul quoted David's psalm and applied it to Israel in his day (Rom.11:10), he went on to say that "*blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*" (Rom.11:25).

Romans chapter 11 makes it clear that God has plucked off "*the natural branch*" of the olive tree (Israel) and has grafted a "*wild olive branch*" (the Gentile believers) into their place UNTIL the "*fulness of the Gentile*" has come in and after that, "**ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED**" (Rom.11:26).

On the day of Pentecost the Apostles preached in **Gentile languages** signifying that God was turning to the Gentiles because Israel had been blinded. Isaiah had prophesied that there would come a day when God would speak to Israel "*with stammering lips and another tongue...yet they would not hear*" (Isa.28:11-12). That time had come.

The Acts of the Apostles records Israel's rejection of the message of the Gospel preached in Gentile languages. When Paul addressed the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia he said:

"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

In the final chapter of the Book of Acts Paul quoted Isaiah's prophecy and told the Jewish elders at Rome, "*Henceforth I go unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it*" (Acts 28:28).

From these Scriptures it is clear that there is a **break in God's relationship with Israel** beginning at the day of Pentecost and concluding when the "*fulness of the Gentiles be come in*". **That break in Israel's relationship with God is the Church Age.**

During the Church Age, Israel, as the natural olive branch has been broken off but God says that He is able to "*graft them in again*" (Rom.11:23) "*if they abide not still in unbelief*".

6-The Church Age

The interruption in God's dealings with Israel is the time when the Gentile Church is gathered in and after the Church is complete, Israel will repent **in the first half** of the coming Great Tribulation and again be God's witness on earth. Many scriptures speak of Israel's ultimate blessing in the last days.

The Church is a Mystery

The truth of the Church was concealed by God until it was revealed to the Apostle Paul. Paul wrote about this mystery in his Epistle to the Romans chapter 16:25-26, in the Epistle to the Ephesians chapter 3:1-10, and in the Epistle to the Colossians 1:18-27.

Paul wrote

*"that by revelation he (God) made known unto me **the mystery**...which in **other ages** was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is **now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; **that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel**" (Eph.3:3-6).*

The "mystery" Church is when Jews and Gentiles who believe are made **one body** through the Gospel of Christ.

In the Old Testament, during the Age of Law, there were only Jews and Gentiles. When Gentiles were converted they left their country and people as Ruth the Moabitess did, and joined themselves to Israel as "strangers in Israel". There were 153,600 converted Gentiles in Israel when Solomon reigned about 1000BC (2Chron.2:17) and God's law made special provisions for converted Gentiles (Exod.12:43-49).

Since the day of Pentecost however there have been three groups: The Jew, the Gentile and the Church. Paul wrote that now

*"there is **NEITHER** Jew **NOR** Greek (Gentile)...for ye are **ALL ONE** in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:28).*

To the Roman Christians Paul wrote that this mystery "had been **kept secret since the world began**" (Rom.16:25). That means that the Church did not exist in the Old Testament and the **Old Testament therefore was written to Israel.**



The Seven Dispensations

While spiritual applications can be made for today and its prophecies should be studied, it must be interpreted in the context of the nation of Israel.

In addition, there is a **future** terminus point for the Church after which Israel must again turn to the Lord and be blessed. When the *“fulness of the Gentiles be come in”* (Rom.11:25) is a definite **terminus point**. **At that point** the completed Church will be removed and Israel will take over again. That terminus point is the Rapture of the Church when

“the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Thess.4:16-17).

Only New Testament, Church-Age believers are *“in Christ”*. To be **in Christ means to be in the body of Christ** which is the Church (Col.1:24). The moment we believe in Christ the Holy Spirit places us in (baptizes us into) the Body of Christ which is His Church.

All the Old Testament saints from Adam to Christ were resurrected with the Lord Jesus as indicated in Matt.27:52-53. Many appeared in Jerusalem after Christ rose from the dead. Jesus indicated that the resurrection of Old Testament saints was imminent when He said:

“The hour is coming, AND NOW IS, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

Jesus went to Paradise when he died on the cross and when He ascended, He took all the deceased saints who had been waiting in Paradise, into heaven (Eph.4:8-10). Paradise is now in heaven (2Cor.12:4).

The resurrection of the Church Age saints will occur when *“the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”* i.e. At the Rapture. On that day the *“dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”* (1Thess.4:16-17).

The Church Age is a Pause in Israel's History

This break in Israel's spiritual history is indicated by Daniel in his 70 “weeks” (70 sevens) prophecy (Dan.9:24-27). The angel Gabriel was sent by God to show Daniel God's plan for Daniel's people and his city, Jerusalem. Seventy “sevens” were determined upon **the Jews and Jerusalem** beginning from the decree *“to restore and build Jerusalem”* in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (445BC). Sixty-nine sevens (483 years) were completed when Messiah the Prince presented Himself to Israel as her King: This happened on Palm Sunday when Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled:

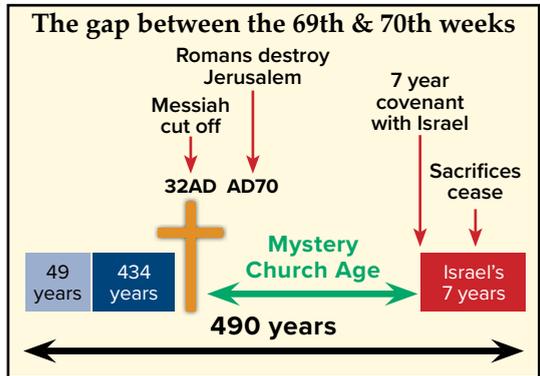
“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zech.9:9).

6-The Church Age

There remains only one more “seven” of years but three things must happen **before** it begins:

- 1) Messiah must be “cut off”. This happened four days later.
- 2) Jerusalem and the Temple must be destroyed: This happened in AD70.
- 3) Israel must again become a nation and a **future prince** from the nation that destroyed Jerusalem must confirm a covenant with Israel for 7 years. That is still future.

The first two items are now past history. Israel became a nation again in 1948 and the final week of Israel’s history has yet to run its course but before that begins the Church must be removed for the 70th “week” (7 years) **is Israel’s time** of testimony. and we are still waiting for a “Roman prince” to confirm a 7-year covenant with Israel. The Roman prince is Antichrist and we see the Roman Empire being revived under the banner of European Union (EU). He will break his covenant with Israel after the entire nation turns to the Lord in the first half of the 7 years of Tribulation (Ezek.39:22-29).



James' Prophecy of Israel's Future

The Apostles were challenged by Jewish believers in the early Church who insisted that Gentiles should accept Jewish circumcision to be saved and James gave the decision of the Apostles. We read:

*“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God **at the first did visit the Gentiles**, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this **I will return**, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and **I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles**, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:13-18).*

James quoted the prophecy of Amos that the throne of David had been set aside for a period of time during which God is calling out Gentiles to be His people. However, after that, Christ will return and re-establish the throne of David and, through Israel, the Gentiles will again be greatly blessed in the

The Seven Dispensations

millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Ezekiel also prophesied that God would overturn the throne of David three times in his day and that *“it shall be no more until He come whose right it is”* (Ezek.21:27).

Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to Jesus and that God would *“give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Israel for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end”* (Luke1:32-33).

The Church is a Building, a Holy Temple

God has always desired to dwell with man. At the beginning of time God walked with Adam in Eden. He walked with Enoch, Noah and Abraham. When Israel came out of Egypt God told Moses:

“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle...

And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims” (Exod.25:8-9,22).



In Moses' day the presence of God was in the Tabernacle and the pillar of cloud and fire was seen over the Holy place. In Solomon's day the Temple was built and the glory of God came into the Temple. It departed from Israel in Ezekiel's day when Israel turned to idolatry (Ezek.9:3; 10:4,18-19; 11:12-13). It will return after Christ returns and the millennial Temple is built (Ezek.43:1-7).

When the Lord Jesus came His body was a Temple and God dwelt in Him. He was God manifest in flesh. John wrote:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

When the Church was formed at Pentecost it was no earthly Temple. The Apostles built no cathedrals because the Church is a spiritual Temple built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets (Eph.2:19-22). God dwells in the Church which is *“built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph.2:22). Paul wrote:

*“Ye are God’s husbandry, **ye are God’s building**. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, **I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon**. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Cor.3:9-11).*

It is a serious matter for anyone to defile, with wrong doctrine or ungodly conduct the Temple of God yet Christendom has done just that. The true Church today is not a pagan edifice filled with the false doctrines of infant baptism, calvinism, amillennialism, charismatic tongues, liberal theology and theistic evolution but it is the company of born-again believers who worship in Spirit and Truth:

*“Know ye not that **ye (plural) are the temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile **the temple of God**, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, **which temple ye (plural) are**” (1Cor.3:16-17).*

The Church is not bricks and mortar but **living stones** as Peter wrote:

*“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, **Ye also, as living stones**, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Peter 4-5).*

One day the Church will be completed and the last living stone will be added. Only then will the tabernacle of God be removed and translated to heaven in the Rapture of the Church; relocated to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the *“**general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven**”* (Heb.12:23).

The Church is a Body

The New Testament frequently describes the Church as the body of Christ. Each Christian is a member of the body and **Christ is the head** from whom all directions and control should come. Paul warned about men imposing their will and fleshly ideas on the Church:

*“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, **And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God**” (Col.2:18-19).*

Every believer is a member of the Body of Christ from the moment of conversion for we read:

*“For by one Spirit **are we ALL baptized into one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been ALL made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many” (1Cor.12:13-14).*

The Seven Dispensations

Christendom has placed men as the head of the Church and this has made them puffed up in their fleshly minds. The Holy Spirit has ordained godly men (Acts 20:28) to lead local churches and godly elders and pastors will say with Peter that they are not “*lords over God’s heritage*”; they are “*ensamples to the flock*” (1Peter 5:3). Christ is the Chief Shepherd and **the flock belongs to Him**.

Just as the human body receives direction through the nervous system from the brain, so the body of Christ is be motivated, directed, and stimulated by Christ who is our Head. Each member is answerable to the Head and no man must be allowed to place himself between individual members and the Head. When all members are directed by the Head there is perfect harmony and oneness. Christ

*“is **the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREEMINENCE.** For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”* (Col.1:18-19).

The Body of Christ is universal. There is only **one Body** of Christ on earth and each local Church is to function as His body in the local situation. However there is only one place where the entire Body will ever be gathered and that is in heaven where we read of the “*general assembly and church of the firstborn*” (Heb.12:23). The concept of a World Council of Churches or a Papal Church is foreign to Scripture and a denial of the headship of Christ. One only has to watch the way Catholics bow before the Pope, pray to saints, and submit to whatever the Pope decrees to realise that Christendom is not the Body of Christ.

The Church is a Bride

Paul told the Corinthian Christians that they were “*espoused*” to one husband that they might be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin (2Cor.12:2).

John the Baptist said that Christ was the bridegroom and he, as an Old Testament saint living in the Age of Law, was **a friend of the Bridegroom**. Old Testament saints are friends of the Bridegroom.

He said:

“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease”
(John 3:29-30).

When Christ returns after the Tribulation **the Bride of Christ comes WITH Him** and will have “*made herself ready*” for the marriage supper of the Lamb on earth (Rev.19:7). In view of this it is only reasonable to conclude that the Bride of Christ must be taken to heaven **BEFORE** the marriage in heaven and sometime **BEFORE** Christ returns. Luke states that Christ will “*return FROM*

the wedding" (Luke12:36).

Jewish weddings required the engagement (espousal) to take place about one year before the marriage was consummated. This was a binding covenant in which the Bride-to-be was called the "wife" of the Bridegroom.



During the time of espousal the bridegroom prepared a place for his bride in his father's house and when it

was complete, his father would send his son to bring his bride to the father's house for the marriage.

The bride and bridegroom did not know **when** the bridegroom would come and needed to be ready at any time. When the bridegroom came for his bride she would be carried in a palanquin chair to the Bridegroom's father's house where a marriage ceremony was conducted. The couple would enter the "bridal chamber" alone where the marriage was consummated and after seven days they would appear to the waiting guests for the marriage supper.

The Jewish pattern is replicated in the spiritual realm for Christ and His Church. Those on earth who turn from sin to Christ are "*espoused*" (engaged) to Christ the moment they believe in a binding relationship that cannot be broken. When the Father in heaven determines the time for the wedding of Christ and His Church, He will send His Son (Christ) to get His bride. Christ will come into the air and shout to call her to Himself:

"The dead in Christ will rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1Thess.4:16-17).

At the end of the millennial Kingdom, the New Jerusalem, where the Church now dwells in heaven, will descend from God out of heaven to the renovated earth "*as a bride adorned for her husband*" and the tabernacle of God will be with men (Rev.21:2-3,9-10).

In the future eternal New Heaven and Earth the Church will dwell in the New Jerusalem; Israel around the city for there are 12 gates and an angels stands at each gate on which is written the name of each of the twelve tribes; the "*nations of those that are saved*" from other ages will dwell in the New Earth. The Church therefore has a special place in the New Jerusalem for Jesus has

The Seven Dispensations

promised

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev.3:21).

Rapture of the Church a Sign to Israel

In His Olivet Discourse just before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus indicated to His Jewish disciples what would be the sign of the “*end of the age*”. He then described the 7-year great Tribulation. There are three parts to the Tribulation:

- 1) The first half is described from Matt.24:7 to 14;
- 2) The mid-point is described in Matt.24:15-20; and
- 3) The second half is described in Matt.24:21 to 28.

The Tribulation is “immediately” followed by the return of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom. Therefore the Great Tribulation must occur in the last days, at the “*end of the age*”, and it must be only a **short period** of time immediately before Christ returns in glory and power to reign over the earth.

We read:

“IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven “ (Matt.24:29-30).

Jesus gave several signs to His Jewish disciples, who were Old Testament saints at that time, and one of these signs was the **sudden, global, disappearance of people**. Jesus couldn't say that this was the Rapture of the Church because the Church was not revealed until after Christ had died and risen from the grave. However, Jesus could say that there would be a sudden global disappearance of people as a **sign to Israel** that the “*end of the age*” had come.

We know that this sudden disappearance is the Rapture of the Christians because, since that time, Paul has had the truth of the Church revealed to him and in 1 Thess.5:1-9 and 2 Thess.2:1-13 he indicates that the “*Day of the Lord*” (the Tribulation) **cannot come** while the Church is on earth.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath (of the Day of the Lord), but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.5:9).

The sudden disappearance of the Christians will be a **clear sign to Israel** that the last 7 years of Israel's history has come after which the nation will be blessed in Christ's millennial Kingdom.

In Luke 17:26-36, Jesus described three signs to Israel that would indicate the end of the age had come and that **the Kingdom was about to be established**:

- i) World conditions would be “*as it was in the days of Noah*”. After Noah was removed to safety, the flood came. Also the earth was “filled with violence”, men “multiplied” on the face of the earth and took “wives of all that they chose”.

6-The Church Age

ii) World conditions would be “*as it was in the days of Lot*” in Sodom. The day Lot was removed from Sodom, the fire fell - Homosexuality and sexual immorality were judged.

iii) There would be a sudden global disappearance of individuals: “*one shall be taken and the other left*” from bed, the field, and while grinding at the mill. The Greek word translated “*taken*” means “to receive to one’s self”, and the word “*left*” means, “to put away”.

When the disciples asked the Lord, “Where?” (would they be taken) Jesus said they would rise like eagles to be gathered to the **living, saving body** (Greek, *soma* and **not** *ptoma* which is a dead carcass).

The disciples would not have understood the Lord’s answer because they were still in the Dispensation of Law but the three signs were clear: they would know **when the kingdom was about to appear** when the righteous were suddenly removed before the great Tribulation. The Rapture of the Church will be the final sign to Israel that the “*end of the age*” has come.

The Church Age will Conclude in Apostasy

Some teach that the kingdom of God will be established on earth through the preaching of the Gospel and point to large numbers attending charismatic churches. Kingdom theology has become popular because it is often accompanied by a “prosperity gospel” which teaches that the more you give to TV evangelists the more God will give to you. They tell us that God wants all Christians to be rich and earthly riches are a sign that God is with us. Rolls Royce Cars, holiday homes, and personal jet aircraft are thought to be proof that they are part of a last-days revival before Jesus Christ returns. **Nothing could be further from the truth!**

The Bible teaches differently:

*“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen **the poor** of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? ”*
(James 2:5-6).

God promised to bless Israel materially if they obeyed Him because they are **His earthly people** but the Church has no such promises since we are a **heavenly people** and “*here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come*” (Heb.13:14).

The history of the Church Age is portrayed chronologically in seven letters to seven Churches of Asia in Rev. 2 and 3. The Church at

- **Ephesus** was prophetic of the Apostolic era;
- **Smyrna** of the Suffering Church during the pagan persecutions up to the Edict of Toleration in **AD 313**;

The Seven Dispensations

- **Pergamos** was the State Church established by Emperor Constantine;
- **Thyatira** was the Papal Church that grasped political power under Gregory the Great in AD 590;
- **Sardis** represented the Reformation Church that “escaped” from the clutches of Rome at the time of the Reformation - beginning in 1517;
- **Philadelphia** was the great Missionary Church beginning with the Moravian Revival in 1700.

The final stage of Christendom before the Rapture is

- **Laodicea** the Last Days Church that makes the Lord sick; He will spew it out of His mouth. This Laodicean Church says, *“I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing”!* This is a description of the **final stage** of ecumenical, and charismatic Christendom that is commercializing Christianity today.

Denominations are asset rich with large property holdings and investments. In Western countries some pastors receive regulation salaries and many are making merchandise of the people (2Peter 2:1-3). How different to the faith missionaries of a bygone day! This is the final stage of the Church age which began with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost but ends in apostasy.

In each stage of history there have been genuine and false members of the church. The saved are called *“overcomers”*. When the saved are raptured, the last “week” (7 years) of Israel’s prophetic history (Dan.9:27) will begin during which time *“all Israel shall be saved”* (Rom.11:26). This will prepare Israel for her role in **the Kingdom of Christ on earth** which is the seventh and final Dispensation before there is a new heaven and earth and the eternal state.

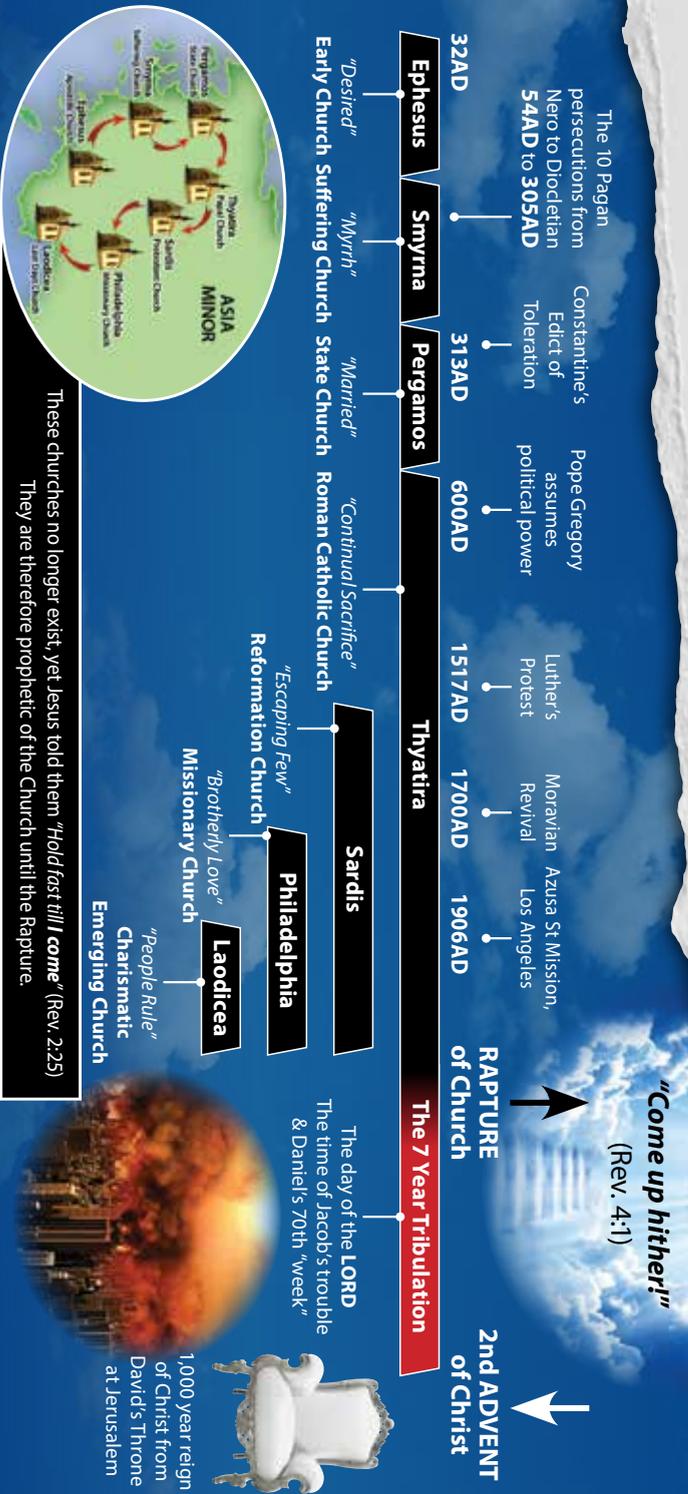
When John finished writing the seven letters to seven churches he saw a **door open in heaven** and he heard a voice calling him to *“Come up hither!”*

Immediately John was caught up to heaven where he saw the Lord Jesus begin to open seven seals on a book that contained the Judgments of the Tribulation. As each seal was opened a judgment fell on earth and these judgments were the wrath of God that will come in the last days on earth. They will be revealed during the 7-year Tribulation. The Rapture must therefore occur BEFORE the Tribulation.

No further mention of the Church can be found in the Book of the Revelation until the end of the 7 years of Divine wrath when Christ **returns from the wedding** as King of kings and Lord of lords to reign over the earth for 1,000 years. The 7th Dispensation is the Age of the Kingdom.

THE SEVEN STAGES OF CHRISTENDOM

as foretold in the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches (Rev: 2 & 3)



These churches no longer exist, yet Jesus told them "Hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25) They are therefore prophetic of the Church until the Rapture.



NOTE: The "overcomers" in each stage are the **saved** remnant in Christendom. They will not be "blotted out" of the Book of Life and will be kept "from **the HOUR** of temptation which shall come upon all the world..." (Rev. 3:10)

The Seven Dispensations

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST

THE climax of the ages is the second Advent of Jesus Christ; It is to this event that all of history and prophecy is advancing: when Christ *“returns from the wedding”* (Luke 12:36) to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The first Advent brought the Son of God from the Father in heaven to live on earth as a man. He was rejected by His own people, Israel, and endured the pain and suffering of the cross. However, Jesus endured this *“for the joy that was set before Him”* (Heb.12:2) that, through His death, He would bring *“many sons to glory”*. He is now set down at the right hand of the majesty on high *“henceforth expecting until all His enemies be made His footstool”*. **At the second Advent, Christ** will take His great power and reign; Satan will be bound 1,000 years; Antichrist and his False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire and every knee will bow before the Lord Jesus Christ.

Daniel indicates there will be a partial resurrection at the second coming of Christ. After Daniel described the first half of the 7-year Tribulation in Dan.11:36-45, he then described the second half of the Tribulation in chapter 12. He wrote:

*“And many of them that **sleep in the dust** of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever”* (Dan.12:2-3).

Those who are raised when Christ returns cannot be Old Testament saints for they rose with Christ (Matt.27:52-53). They cannot be the Church-age saints for they were Raptured before the Tribulation. John states that they will be those who are **martyred by the Beast** during the Tribulation (Rev.20:4). Those raised to everlasting shame and contempt will be the Beast and all who follow him during the Tribulation for Matthew states that the *“goats”*, the living unsaved at the second coming *“go away into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels”* (Matt.25:41). They will be slain and given resurrection bodies to go to the lake of fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels (Dan.7:11; Rev.19:20).

Many Scriptures describe the amazing sight that men will behold as Christ returns to reign. Paul says He will come *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God”* (2Thess.1:8).

Matthew states He will come *“in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”* (Matt.24:30). Jude says He will come *“with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all...”* (Jude 1:14-15).

The Second Advent of Christ

John writes in greater detail: *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; ... And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”* (Rev.19:11-16).

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev.11:15).

Isaiah wrote: *“Behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many”* (Isa.66:15-16).

The Apostles Peter, James and John had a preview of the second coming of Christ on the mount of transfiguration and Mark described it:

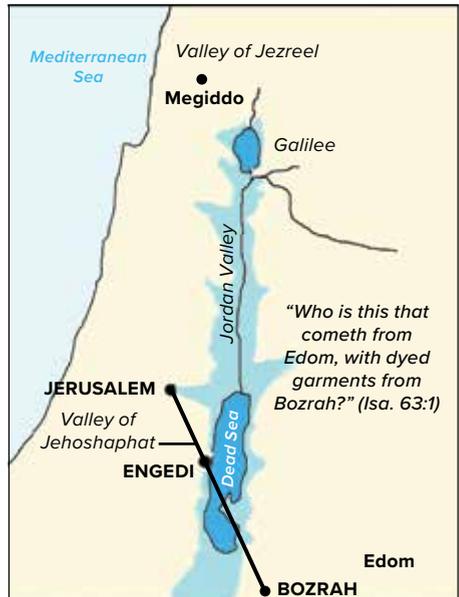
“After six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them” (Mark 9:2-3).

Jude wrote: *“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds...”* (Jude1:14-15).

Zechariah states plainly that His feet shall stand on the mount of Olives and Isaiah indicates which direction the Lord will arrive at Jerusalem:

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save” (Isa.63:1).

When Christ comes, *“every eye shall see Him”* (Rev.1:7). People on all sides of the globe must visibly behold Christ coming so it would seem the Lord will



The Seven Dispensations

appear for at least a whole day in the heavens, perhaps above the equator, and then descend from the south east over the mountains of Edom, (Bozrah), across the valley of Jehoshaphat south east of Jerusalem, to the mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem - the very place from which He ascended back to heaven 2,000 years ago!

It is absurd to suggest that Israel will not be converted to Christ until they see Him coming. It will be too late for anybody to repent at the second advent. Israel is converted to Christ in the **first half of the Tribulation** when the Russian/Islamic armies invade the land. Joel indicates that the Spirit is poured out on the nation when God "*removes the northern army*" (Joel 2:20) and Ezekiel states that Israel shall know that the Lord is God "*from that day and forward*" (Ezek.39:20-29).

The Rapture is NOT the Second Coming of Christ

The Rapture takes place before the Tribulation and occurs in a split second; "*in the twinkling of an eye*" (1Cor.15:52) but the second advent will occupy some time as the Lord appears to all men and engages the armies of Antichrist in the battle of Armageddon.

At the Rapture Christ only comes into "*the air*" where the saved will meet Him. At the Second coming Christ comes to the earth with His saints to rescue repentant Israel from the Antichrist. He stands on the Mt of Olives.

The Rapture is for the Church which is the Bride of Christ. Christ comes as the heavenly Bridegroom to take His Bride to the marriage of the Lamb in heaven while the Tribulation occurs on earth.

When Christ returns after the Tribulation, He comes **with His Bride** who has "*made herself ready*" (Rev.19:7) at the Judgment Seat of Christ and displays her rewards at the marriage supper of the Lamb on earth. Therefore, Christ "*returns from the wedding*" when He comes again (Luke 12:36). There can't be a wedding in heaven without the Bride and the Church must be taken to heaven **before** the Tribulation if she is to come **with** Christ when He returns "*immediately after the tribulation*"(Matt.24:29). At the Rapture of the Church Christ comes FOR His Church-age saints but at the second Advent He comes WITH His saints.

The Second Coming is after the Tribulation

The second coming of Christ to the earth occurs "*immediately after the Tribulation of those days*" (Matt.24:29). The Rapture of the Church occurs **immediately before** the seven-year Tribulation for "*ye brethren are not in darkness that **that day** (the day of the Lord) should overtake you as a thief...for God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1Thess.5:4,9).

7 - THE AGE OF THE KINGDOM

THE final dispensation begins when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives as King of kings to reign over the earth for 1,000 years. The world will be purged of evil; Antichrist and his minions will be slain and given resurrection bodies and sent to the lake of fire. Satan with his angels will be bound in the Abyss (Bottomless Pit) for 1,000 years.

Immediately after the Lord returns He will **gather His elect nation, Israel**, from the *“the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matt.24:31). Jesus refers to Israel as *“these My brethren”* (Matt.25: 40). Then He will gather all **the nations** that survive the Tribulation to Jerusalem to appear before Him.

World population will be small after the judgments of the Tribulation for Isaiah wrote that *“the earth is burned and few men left”* (Isa.24:6). Jesus said that *“except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved”* (Matt.24:22). Antichrist and the vast armies that he mobilizes against Christ will all be destroyed at the coming of the Lord. Nevertheless all Gentile nations **surviving** will be brought before the Lord at the *“throne of His glory”* (Matt.25:31-46) and these Gentiles will be divided as sheep (saved) and goats (unsaved). To the sheep He will say:

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt.25:34).

To the goats He will say:

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire (gehenna -the lake of fire), prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt.25:41).

Thus the Kingdom of God will begin with **only saved people** remaining on earth. The sheep are not given resurrection bodies at this time for they are **living nations** who survived the Tribulation. Zechariah states that

“every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts...” (Zech.14:16).

Marriage Supper of the Lamb

The marriage supper of the Lamb will be held on earth soon after the Lord returns and will be attended by only saved persons for we read, *“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb”* (Rev.19:9). At the last supper before the Lord went to the cross, the Saviour said that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine again until *“the kingdom of God shall come”* (Luke 22:18). Jesus said:

“Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them” (Luke 12:37).

The Seven Dispensations

The Tribulation will last for 7 years divided into two periods of 1,260 days but Daniel indicates that there will be a period immediately after the Lord returns and before the Kingdom is established in which certain events must take place. Daniel wrote:

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, (halfway thro’ the Tribulation) there shall be 1,290 days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the 1,335 days” (Dan.12:11-12).

The marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev.19:9) and the judgment of the living nations that survive the Tribulation (Matt.25:31-46) must occur shortly after the return of Christ and **before** the Kingdom is established. At the end of the 75 day period after the Lord returns, those remaining are said to be *“blessed”*. That will be the portion of the *“sheep”* (saved) nations that enter the kingdom for Jesus will say to the sheep,

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt.25:34).

The Tribulation Martyrs Raised

The martyrs from the 7 years of Tribulation will be raised and **in resurrection bodies**, will reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev.20:4). Also, the Church-age saints will reign with Christ. These are raised at the Rapture **before the Tribulation begins** and the 12 Apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt.19:28). Twice Jesus promised the disciples that they would reign over Israel (Luke 22:29-30) and since they are the foundation of the Church (Eph.2:20) they can only reign in resurrection bodies.

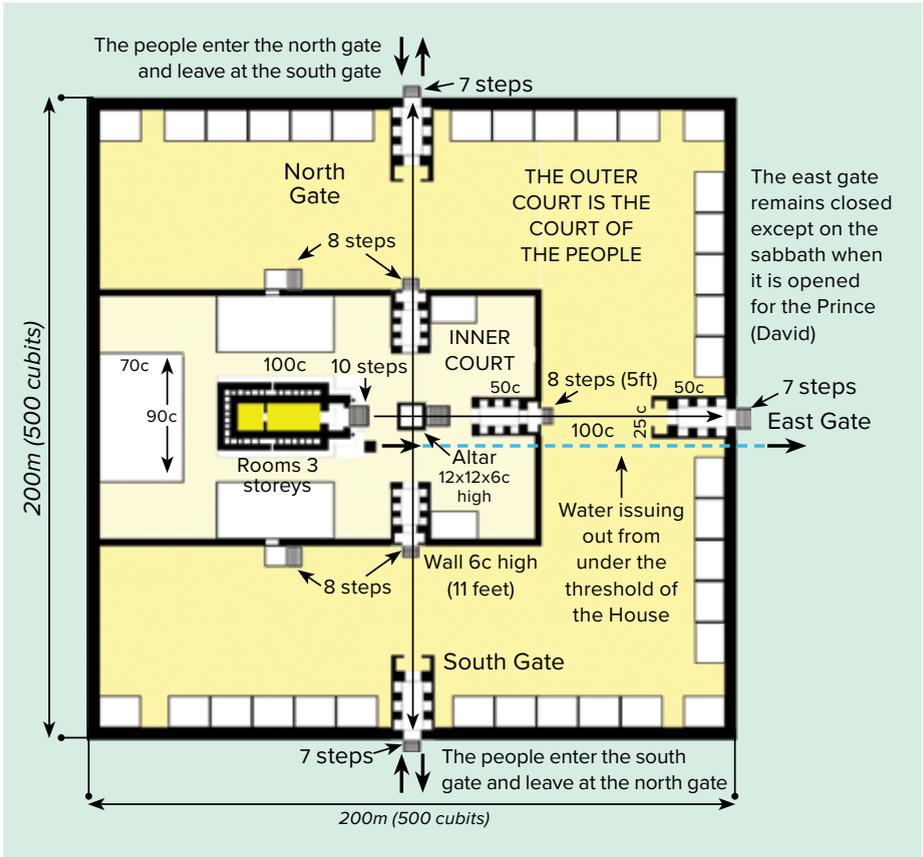
Just as the Old Testament saints were raised with Christ and came out of their graves and some appeared in Jerusalem (Matt.27:52-53); and just as the Lord continued to appear for 40 days after He rose, so in the millennial Kingdom resurrected saints will be appearing like angels to serve the Lord on earth.

Every Jew will be Returned to the Land

Every Jew on earth will be regathered to the land (Ezek.39:28; Jer.31:34); they will be brought by plane and the ships of Tarshish, (Britain/US), will be the first to bring them with *“their silver and their gold”* (Isa.60:8-9). The Gentile nations will give great honour to the Jews in recognition of their faithful testimony during the Tribulation. The Jews will be the *“priests of the Lord”* and *“the Ministers of our God”* (Isa.61:6) in Christ’s Kingdom. Zechariah stated:

“Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem... In those days... 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” (Zech.8:22-23).

Ezekiel's Millennial Temple - Ezek. chs. 40-42



The land of Israel will be divided among the 12 tribes as indicated in Ezekiel chapter 48. The priests will be located near to the Temple as will be the Prince and David will be their prince for we read: *"my servant David shall be their prince for ever"* (Ezek.37:25).

A Millennial Temple will be Built

Christ will reign from a Temple built to specifications described in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 43 and priestly service will recommence **in memorial** of Christ the Lamb of God who was slain.

The glory of God will shine over the Temple at Jerusalem and its light will lighten the whole city such that Kings will come to witness it (Isa. 60:1-3, 19-20). The throne of God will be in His Temple (Ezek.43:1-7).

The Seven Dispensations

“Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (Ezek.37:26-28).

The Lord will never again leave His Temple as He did in the days of the first Temple in 586BC.

When Christ returns the Mount of Olives on the east of Jerusalem will split and there will be a great valley from the Temple down to the Dead Sea. Such will be the volume of fresh water flowing from under the Temple that the salt waters of the Dead Sea will be healed and fish will be caught there (Ezek.47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Zech.14:8). The Judean wilderness will become fruitful and all the rivers of Judah will run with water fed from springs. The desert will blossom as a rose (Isa.35:1).

Jews will Preach to the Gentiles

The Jews will be the servants of the Lord and will take the Word of God to all nations:

“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa.2:3).

All nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and the Temple will be called *“an house of prayer for all people”* (Isa.56:7).

Creation will be at Peace

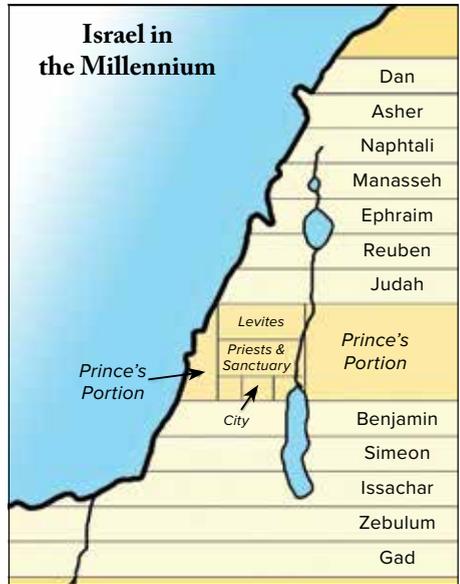
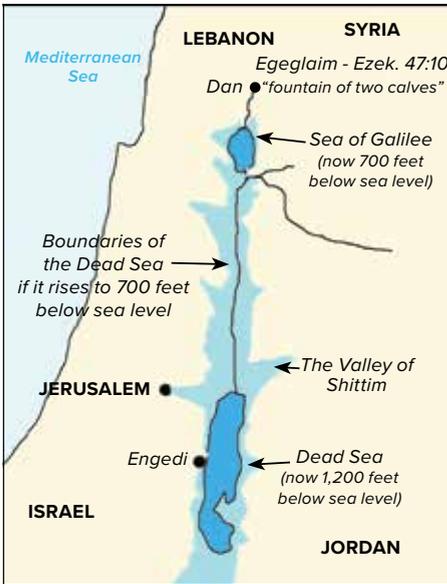
Even the animal kingdom will be at peace when Christ reigns:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa.11:6-9; Isa.65:25).

Israel will be Secure

If, during the 1,000 years of the Kingdom, a new generation should rise up and refuse to serve Israel, that nation will perish *“yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted”* (Isa.60:12).

“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa.2:4).



Although the Kingdom will experience great blessing, peace, and prosperity under the reign of Christ administered by His people Israel, a new generation of Gentiles will be born and be given the freedom to choose.

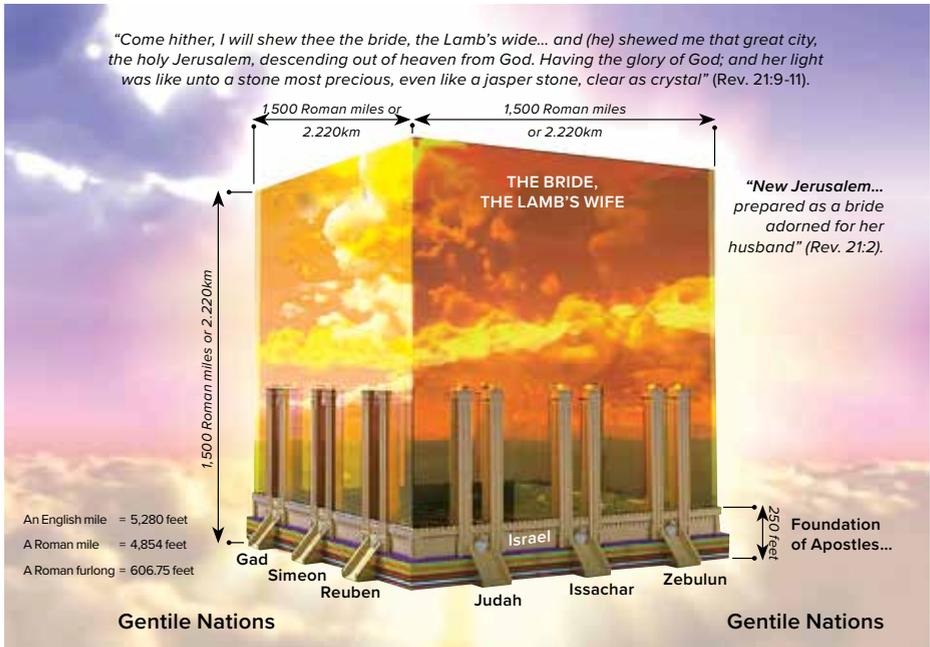
At the end of the 1,000 years Satan will be loosed from the bottomless pit for a season to test the nations and many will be deceived. Again Jerusalem will be surrounded and the Lord will send fire from heaven and destroy them (Rev.20:9).

Sadly the Millennial Kingdom Dispensation which is so blessed with the presence of Christ visibly seen at Jerusalem, will conclude in rebellion against Christ. Thus we see that no matter how ideal the conditions, the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Apart from a work of God's grace in the human heart, man will fail every time. There is no excuse for such failure for provision is made in the death of Christ for every sinner from all time and each one has a free will to choose.

A New Heavens and New Earth

At the end of the millennial kingdom the earth will be renovated by fire and there will be "no more sea" (Rev.21:1). An entirely new environment will be created for resurrected people. Then there will be a resurrection of **all the unsaved in hades** to appear before the "great white throne" where they will hear their degree of punishment in the lake of fire. Only the unsaved will appear before the "great white throne" (Rev.20:11-15) and the Lamb's book of Life will be opened to show where their names were blotted out. The books of

The Seven Dispensations



works will also be opened to determine the degree of punishment. God will be justified in all His judgments. Some shall be *"beaten with many stripes"* and some with *"few stripes"* (Luke 12:47-48).

The saved from the millennial kingdom will be raised (if they died), or raptured (if alive) (Rev.20:5), and the **eternal kingdom** of Christ will begin.

The New Jerusalem which Jesus called the *"Father's house of many mansions"* (John14:2), will come down from God out of heaven to the cleansed earth and the Church-age saints will reign with Christ **in the city**, redeemed Israel will **surround the city**, and the Gentile nations *"of them that are saved"* will occupy **the new earth**. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be located in the New Jerusalem and the saved from the Church-age will occupy the throne with Christ (Rev.3:21; 22:1-3).

God's desires all men to be saved and dwell with Him eternally. That is why the Bible concludes with the words:

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev.22:17).

Have you come to Christ and received God's free pardon and eternal life?
"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom.10:9).

The Big Picture of Bible Prophecy

"Study to shew thyself approved who God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORLD OF TRUTH"

(2Tim. 2:15)

"Give none offence, neither to the JEWS, nor to the GENTILES, nor to the CHURCH OF GOD"

(1Cor. 10:32)



Messiah "cut-off"
Dan. 9:26

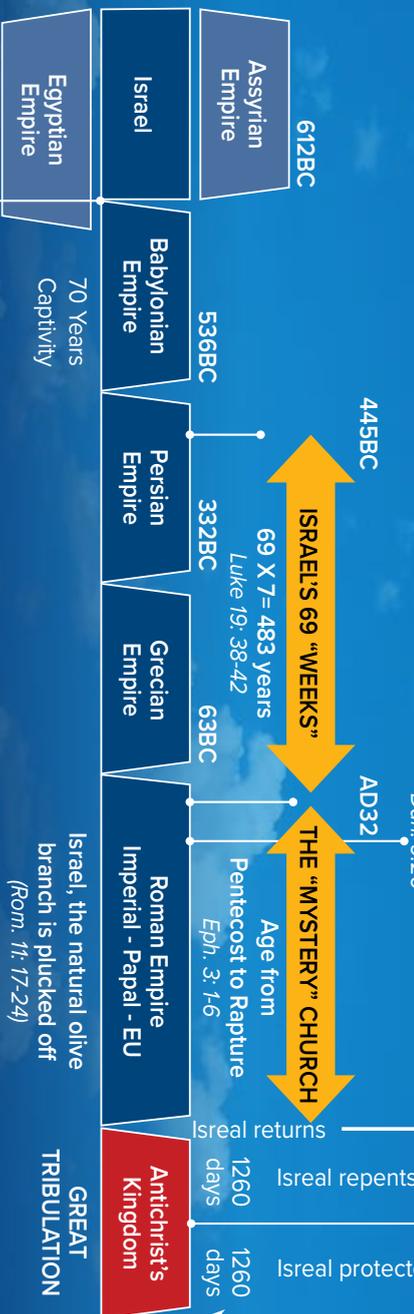
AD70 Israel scattered
by the Romans
Dan. 9:26



RAPTURE OF
THE CHURCH

70th "week"
= 7 years
Daniel 9:27

THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH
Resurrection of the unsaved to the Great White Throne (Rev. 20)
THE SECOND COMING IF CHRIST FOLLOWED BY HIS MILLENNIAL KINGDOM



THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of Gentiles be fulfilled". (Luke 21: 24)

THE LAKE OF FIRE

**A SERIES OF STUDIES COVERING
THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF BIBLE PROPHECY:**

- 1. THE REVELATION 2. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH**
- 3. THE SEVEN DISPENSATIONS 4. ISRAEL'S COVENANTS & KINGDOM**
- 5. THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES 6. RUSSIA & ISLAM**
- 7. BRITAIN & USA**

www.heraldofhope.org.au

