

Section 1

The Seven Dispensations

of Time



*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a
workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH”*

Introduction

The Bible must be interpreted literally in every sense of the word. From Genesis chapter 1 to Revelation chapter 22, it should be approached as the words of God, infallibly inspired and preserved by the Holy Spirit. God said what He meant, and meant what He said.

To understand God's prophetic Word it is necessary to -

- i) Adopt sound principles of Biblical interpretation.
- ii) Distinguish between the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church.
- iii) Recognize the seven dispensations of time.

Where symbols are used in the Word of God, these are to be understood within their context and the meaning becomes evident as Scripture is compared with Scripture under the Holy Spirit's leading.

There are no myths and legends in the Bible. It is historical and factual. The characters of the Bible were real people moving across the stage of time, and the places were real places. Miracles were not the norm but the exception, and occurred through Divine intervention in the affairs of men. They defy human explanation and must be accepted in a factual sense.

Similarly, prophecy must be interpreted in its literal sense. Israel, the nations, and the Church, must not be confused. What was promised to Israel as a nation will be fulfilled and cannot be applied to the Church. To fail to distinguish between the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church, will only lead to confusion.

Finally, God's administration can be seen in seven distinct dispensations of time, each beginning with a new opportunity and ending in utter failure and deserved judgment. We live in the latter days of the sixth dispensation and observe a world about to experience the Great Tribulation judgments.

When the last dispensation is completed at the end of Christ's millennial kingdom, time will be no more, and the saved of all ages will enter the eternal blessedness of the new heaven and new earth, when

"all things shall be subdued unto him...that God may be all in all"
(1 Cor.15:28).

Principles of Biblical Interpretation

The importance of adopting sound principles of Biblical interpretation cannot be overstated. The Bible is not a "lucky dip" from which isolated verses can be taken and interpreted out of

context. Peter tells us that

“no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet.1:20).

Every Scripture must be understood in its historical and textual context. It must agree with other Scriptures bearing on the same subject. It cannot have an isolated meaning, for God has confirmed every truth in His Word with multiple witness.

The Bible is the oldest book in the world, it being over 3,500 years since Moses wrote the first five books, and Moses incorporated even more ancient records, including the *“Book of the Generations of Adam”* (Gen.5:1). To be able to find a reliable, continuous genealogy from Adam to Christ, spanning 4,000 years, is no mean feat. There is no equal in the records of antiquity.

The explanation for such a phenomenon can only be found in its source, for the Bible claims to be the words of God given by Divine inspiration (God breathed) as holy men of God were moved (borne along) by the Holy Spirit. For this reason the Bible can rightly claim to be the words of the Holy Ghost (Acts1:16; Acts 28:25), using the mouths of the prophets. As a consequence the Bible is infallible, inerrant, and complete.

Proofs of the inerrancy of the Bible are legion. However, nowhere can its incredible Divine origins be better demonstrated than in its prophetic pronouncements. Foreknowledge is a unique attribute of God, who says,

“I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa.46:9-10).

Many prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled in remarkable fashion. At least 33 prophecies were fulfilled in one day - the day Christ died!

The mighty empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece, all rose and fell as foretold by the Bible. The cities of Tyre, Nineveh, Sodom, Babylon, and Jerusalem, were all destroyed in precisely the manner foretold by the Bible!

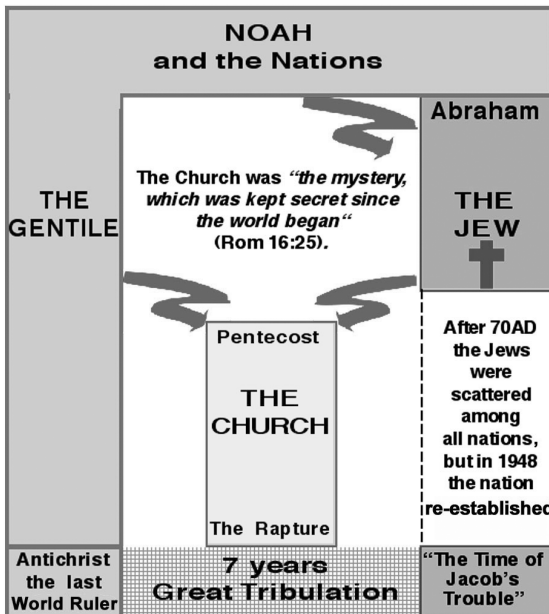
The fact that so many prophecies have already been fulfilled, leads us to believe that those which are yet future will just as assuredly be fulfilled.

The Jew, the Gentile, and the Church

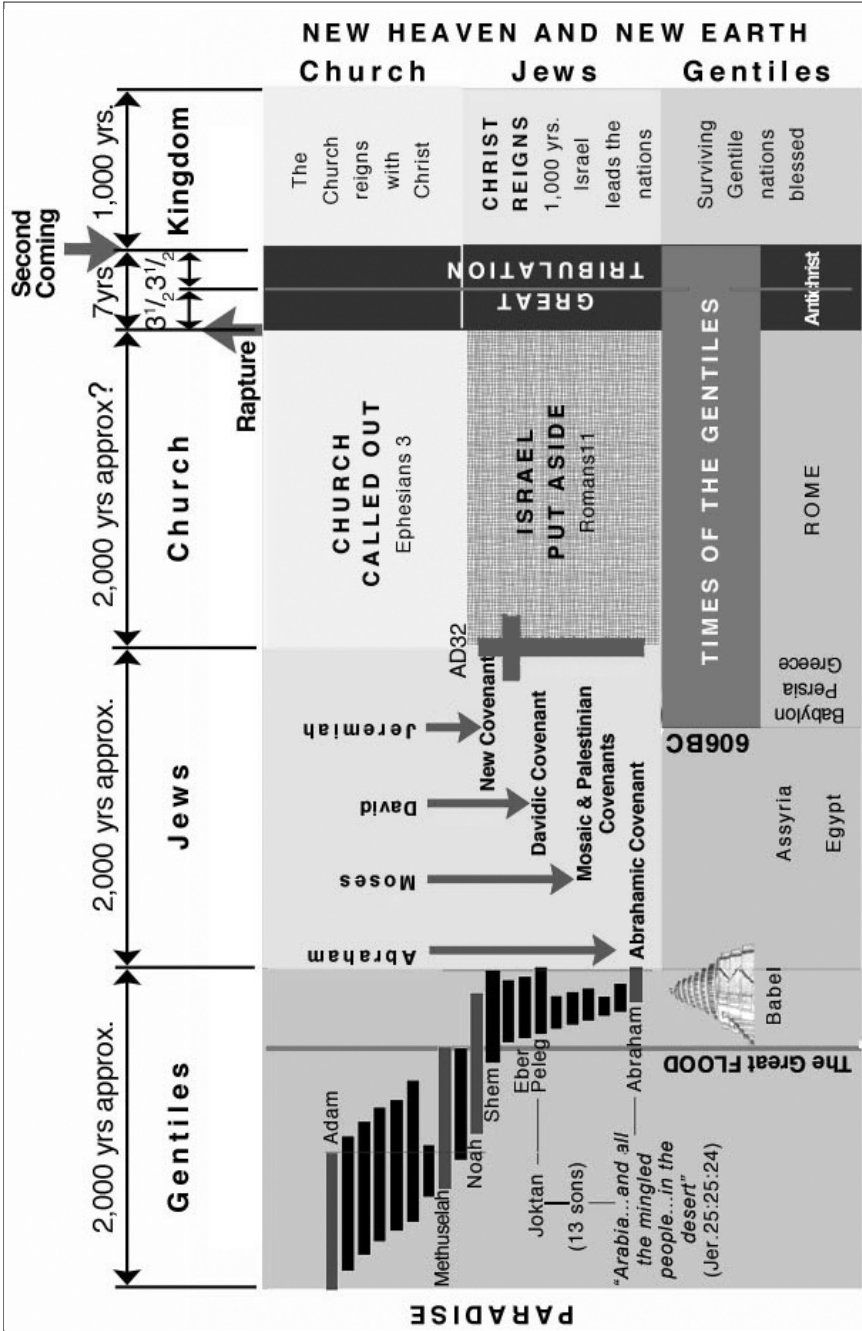
There are three divisions in the human race in relation to God’s dealings with mankind. They are clearly stated by the Apostle Paul.

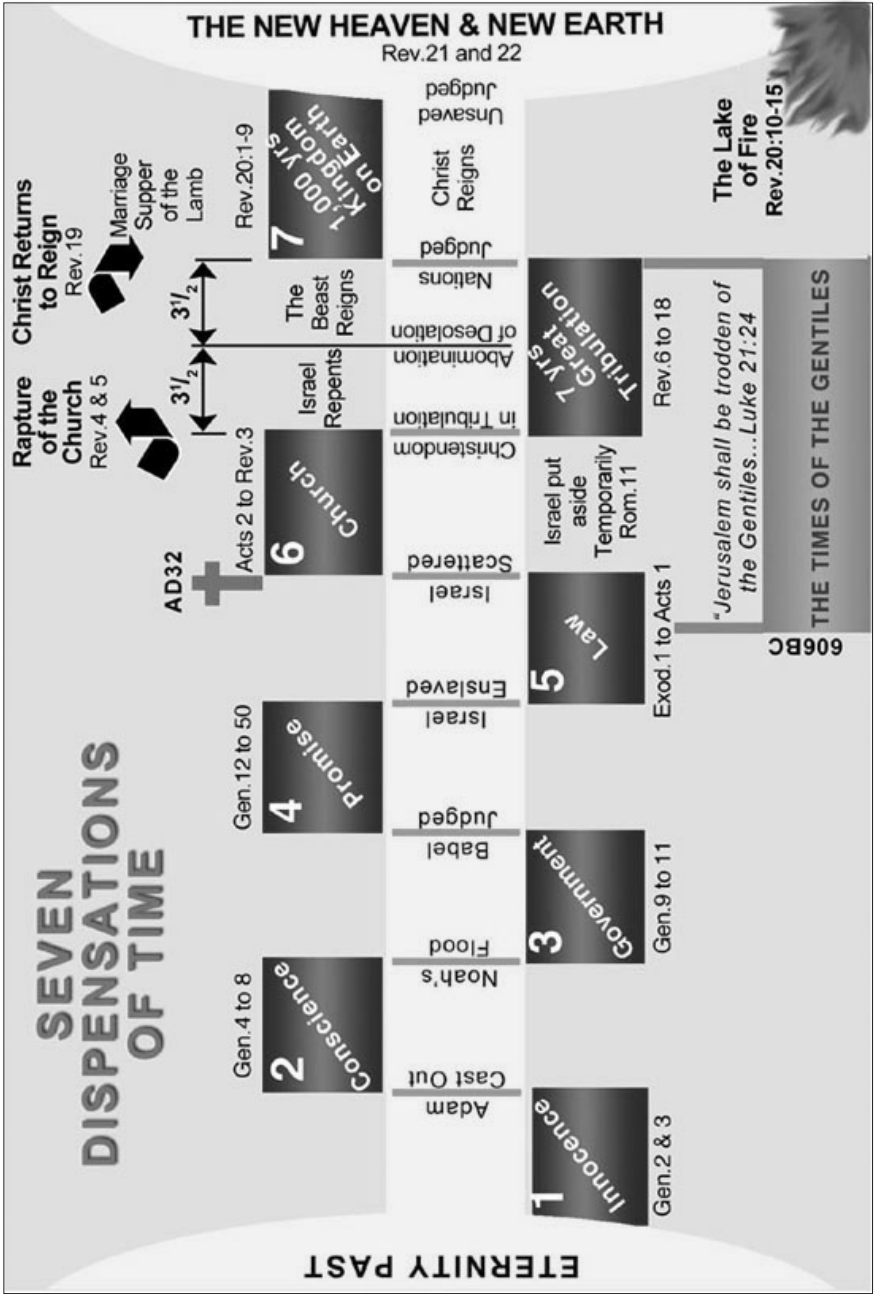
“Give none offence, neither to the JEWS, nor to the GENTILES, nor to the CHURCH OF GOD” (1 Cor.10:32).

Failure to delineate between these peoples renders accurate interpretation of prophetic Scriptures impossible. Since the days of Abraham there have been JEWS and GENTILES, but since the day of Pentecost to our present time a third category has been introduced by God; it is the CHURCH.



Special attention will be given to God’s program for the Jew in Section 2 - *“The 70 Weeks of Jerusalem and Israel,”* and to the Gentiles in Section 3 - *“The Times of the Gentiles.”* The Church will feature in Section 6 - *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”*, as we see its history outlined in the letters to the seven Churches of Asia. This study of the seven dispensations provides an overview of all three groups, and the following diagrams show their place in history.





The Seven Dispensations of Time

There are seven clearly defined periods of history from Adam to the end of time, and these are known as the “SEVEN DISPENSATIONS.”

A “dispensation” may be defined as, “an age, or a **period of time**, in which God worked with and through a particular person or people for the blessing of mankind”. In the Old Testament such periods of time are frequently described as “*generations*” (Ps.100:5), and in the New Testament as “*ages*” or “*the world*” (Heb.9:26; Gal.1:4).

We must recognize that God’s administration of the human race has varied over its 6,000 years of history. There have been, and will be, different dispensations of time. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we read of “*the ages to come*,” “*other ages*,” and “*all ages*” (Eph.2:7; 3:5,21). The Epistle to the Colossians speaks of “*ages and generations*”(Col.1:26). The disciples asked Jesus, “*What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*”(literally *age*) (Matt.24:3).

The history of the world, is the story of man. Amazingly, the Bible gives a grand panoramic view of history as seen from God’s perspective. History is punctuated with times of Divine intervention when the human race has come under specific judgments. After each judgment God adjusted His administration over human affairs, but under every type of administration man has utterly failed.

To rightly divide the Word of Truth it is therefore essential to recognize the different ways that God has administered His Truth in His revelation to man. The seven dispensations of time are as follows:

- 1) **The Age of Innocence** -Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- 2) **The Age of Conscience** - From Eden to Noah’s Flood.
- 3) **The Age of Human Government** - From the Flood to the Tower of Babel.
- 4) **The Age of Promise** (Covenants) -From Abram to the Exodus.
- 5) **The Age of Law** - From the Exodus to Christ.
- 6) **The Church Age** - From Pentecost to the Rapture.
- 7) **The Kingdom Age** - From the Second Coming of Christ to the New Heaven and New Earth.

1st Dispensation - The Age of Innocence Gen. 1 to 3

When God created Adam and Eve He placed them in the Garden of Eden. Daily, God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in unbroken fellowship.

We are told very little about life in the Garden of Eden, but it is clear that fellowship with God was unbroken and the whole of the creation, ie flora and fauna, was in harmony with its Creator. Sickness and death were unknown, and man was given *“dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing... upon the earth”* (Gen.1:28).

Full provision was made for man and the animals. God said to Adam, *“Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed...and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food”*(Gen.1:29).

Adam was not idle. God planted a garden and appointed Adam *“to dress it and to keep it”*(Gen.2:15). Adam was the first gardener, and he enjoyed every fruit that grew in the garden with one exception - the tree of *“knowledge of good and evil”*.

Through Satan’s deception Eve, and then Adam, disobeyed the Divine command and ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. At that moment sin entered the human race and fellowship with God was broken. Mankind experienced guilt and became conscious of good and evil.

Furthermore, the whole of creation came under the curse of sin *“for thy (Adam’s) sake”*(Gen.3:17). The earth brought forth *“thorns and thistles”* and Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden, but not before God slew animals to make *“coats of skins, and clothed them”* (Gen.3:21). Cherubims and a flaming sword guarded the way to the tree of life.

The coats of skins involved the death of animals, signifying that the wages of sin is death and that only a substitutionary death could avert judgment for sin. Adam’s sinful nature has been passed on to all men, *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Christ) shall many be made righteous”* (Rom.5:19).

Jesus Christ *“became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,”* so that we might be clothed, not in coats of skins, but in the righteousness of the Lamb of God!

Thus the Age of Innocence begins with blessing, ends in judgment, and displays the grace of God in providing an atonement (a covering) for sin.

2nd Dispensation - The Age of Conscience Gen 4 to 8

Outside the Garden of Eden, provision was made for fellowship with God but this involved the death of a substitute. A lamb was prescribed, and soon we read of Cain and Abel bringing offerings to God.

Cain steadfastly refused to shed the blood of a lamb and thus was rejected by God. After refusing to shed the blood of a lamb as a sin offering (Gen.4:7) he slew his brother, and thereafter violence characterized the Age of Conscience, till we read,

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen 6:11).

The civilisation before the Flood was cultured and skilled in the manufacture of musical instruments and implements of iron, brass and gold. We read of the sons of Lamech in the line of Cain, that his son Jubal *"was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ"* (Gen 4:21), and Jubal's brother Tubal-cain *"was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron"* (Gen4:22). Such skills indicate an advanced cultural and industrial society.

In 1922 Sir Leonard Woolley led an archeological dig for the British Museum at Ur, where Abram had lived. He found beneath an 8-foot thick layer of clay a golden helmet or wig of the most exquisite design, together with many other artifacts. These items from ancient graves predated the Flood and testify to the amazing skills of the antediluvian civilisation.

Sir Leonard observed:

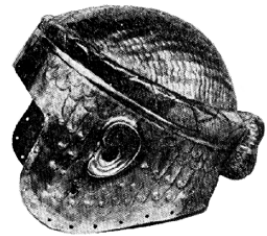
"In no single grave has there been any figure of a god, any symbol or ornament that strikes one as being of a religious nature."

The antediluvian civilisation was apparently materialistic and sensual, and this is entirely consistent with everything Scripture has to say about it. Jesus said of the days before the Flood,

"...they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" (Matt.24:38-39).

Genesis chapter 6 paints the grim picture as follows:

"Men began to multiply on the face of the earth...they took them wives of all which they chose...every imagination of the thoughts of his (man's) heart was only evil continually...The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen.6:1-2,5,11).



Helmet of Gold from Ur

The Basics of Bible Prophecy

In the midst of such wickedness there was one man, Noah, who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8), and when the universal flood covered the earth he, and those who entered the ark with him, was saved from the wrath of God.

Thus the second dispensation shows that the knowledge of right and wrong does not save, and concludes in Divine judgment. Only by the grace (undeserved favour) of God, through faith, can anyone be saved.

3rd Dispensation - The Age of Government Gen.4 to 11.

Before the Flood there is no mention of kings or kingdoms. The Bible simply speaks of “mighty men which were of old, men of renown” (Gen.6:4). However after the Flood we have the first mention of a kingdom. Nimrod, the son of Cush, is described as “a mighty one in the earth” and “a mighty hunter before the LORD” (Gen.10:8,11).

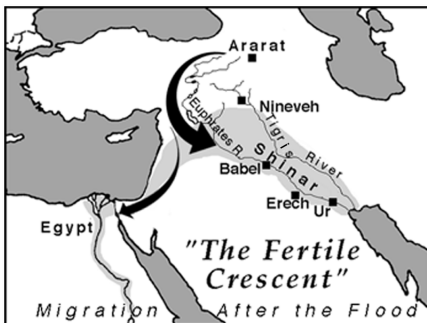
We are also told,

“The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar” (Gen10:10).

In addition, another man, Asshur,

“buildded Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city” (Gen.10:11-12).

The names given in the 10th chapter of Genesis are familiar to students of ancient history, because secular history acknowledges that the earliest traces of civilization are to be found in the “fertile crescent” which stretched from the Persian Gulf up the Euphrates valley and then south along the coast of Israel (Canaan) into Egypt. This area is referred to as the “cradle of civilization.” We know that the ancient Akkadian and Sumerian kingdoms flourished in the land of Shinar, between the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris, and the Egyptian Pharaohs ruled over the Nile.



When we remember that the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat at the headwaters of the Euphrates and Tigris, we would expect that some of the descendants of Noah would travel down the Euphrates valley to the fertile plain of Shinar, while others would move south to the lush well-watered Nile Delta. The fact that Nimrod built

the city of Accad gives us a connection with the Akkadian kingdom. Cities such as Babel, Ur, Erech, and Nineveh, and the land of Shinar, appear frequently in text books on ancient history. Even the date attributed to the first Akkadian king, Sargon, agrees with Bible chronology.

Prof J H Breasted, in his book *Ancient Times*, states:

“About 2,500 BC there arose in Akkad a Semite chieftain named Sargon...the first great Semitic leader in history” (Page 159).

After the Flood a number of changes occurred. First, mankind’s dominion over the entire animal kingdom was reaffirmed. We read, “*The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth...fowl...and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered*”(Gen. 9:2).

Next, all animals were given to mankind for food, but eating of blood was forbidden. In Gen 9:4 we read,

“*But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.*”

Then authority was given to the new civil powers to execute judgment on evil doers.

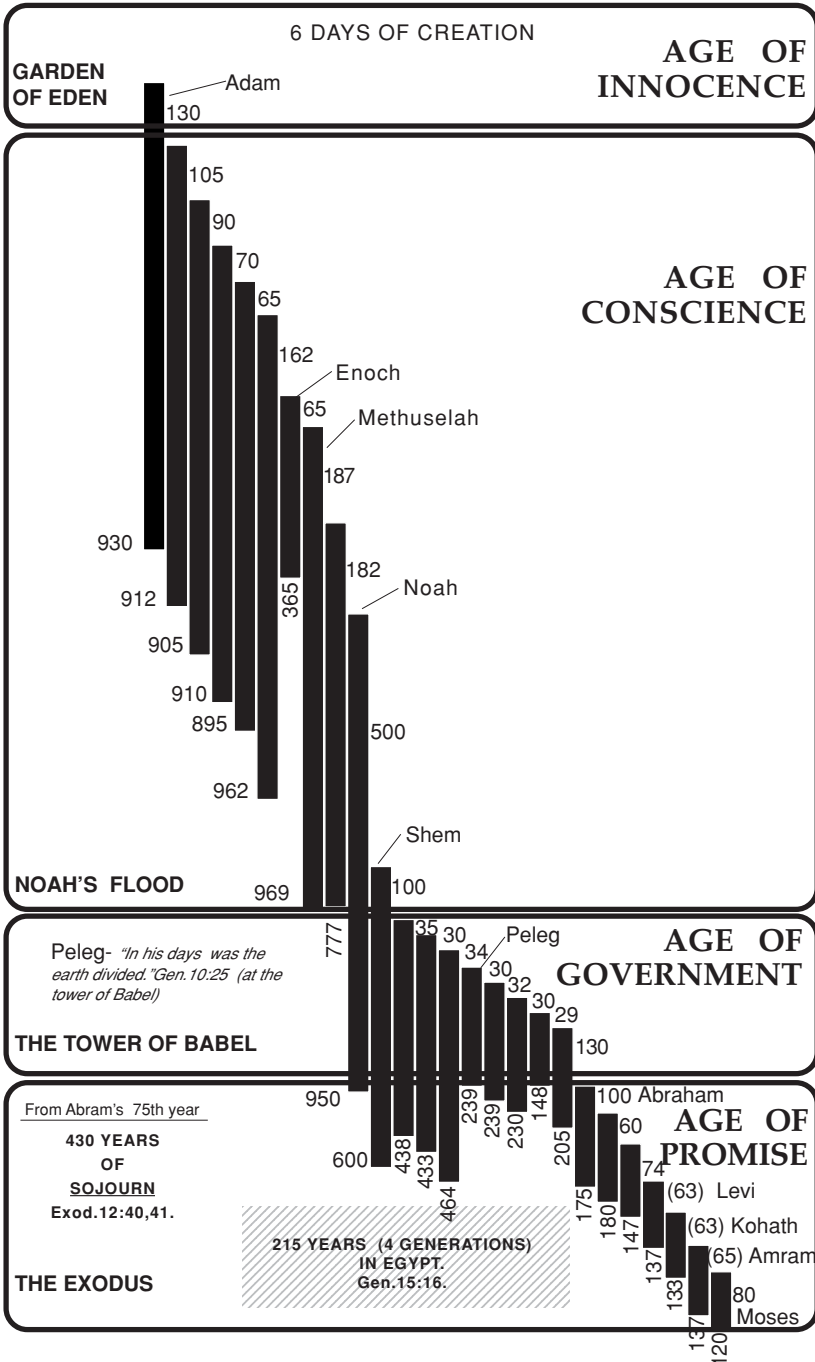
“*Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, **by man** shall his blood be shed*” (Gen.9:6).

This command stands in contrast to the Divine command that Cain, the first murderer, was **not to be slain** by human hand. God said, “*Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold*” (Gen.4:15).

Finally, God established His covenant with Noah, **and his descendants after him**, that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. The rainbow was given as the token, or evidence of the covenant.

Sadly, the new power bestowed on man was abused, and idolatrous practices were used to control the people. The centre of this idolatry was the Tower of Babel, “*whose top was unto heaven*” (Gen 11:4), ie the worship of the sun, moon and stars. It was the beginning of astrology, the superstition of the “Signs of the Zodiac.”

The Bible tells us that Terah, the father of Abram, “*served other gods*” (Josh 24:2,14), and Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud states that Abram had to flee to Shem because Nimrod had ordered his death for destroying Terah’s idols. Ancient tradition also says that Nimrod was finally put to death by Shem for his idolatry, and thereafter a priestly system was set up by his wife, Semiramis, who produced an illegitimate child and instituted the worship of “the mother and child.” This has come down to us in the idolatrous worship of Mary and the baby Jesus!



It is only to be expected that such idolatry would bring Divine judgment. The construction of the Tower of Babel was intended to unite all people, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth!" (Gen.11:4); so God confounded their language and "from thence did the Lord scatter them upon the face of all the earth" (Gen.11:8-9). Thus the earth was divided in the days of Peleg and construction on the Tower of Babel ceased (Gen.10:25).

The Age of Government began with a Covenant and ended in confusion. The time had come for God to work through a new channel.

4th Dispensation - The Age of Promise Gen.12 to 50

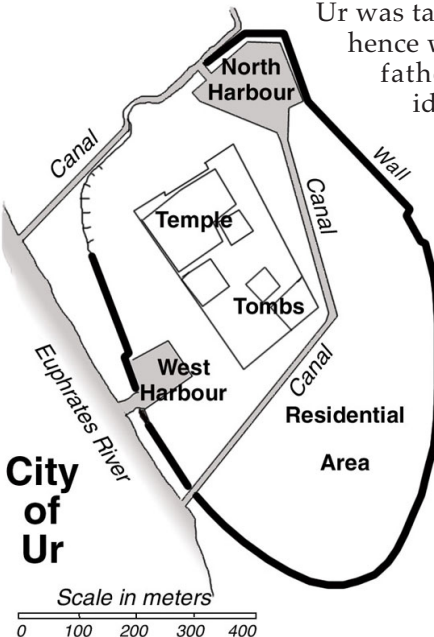
Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldees, which was, according to history text books, the leading city in the Plain of Shinar for many years. Ur was situated on the Euphrates River and had harbours for ships, as shown in the following map. Prof. J H Breasted writes:

"The period of the kings of Sumer and Akkad (beginning about 2,300 BC) may be summed up as more than a century of prosperity under the leadership of Ur, followed by two centuries of decline under the successors of Ur...The power and splendour of Ur in this age were never forgotten" (*Ancient Times* pages 163 & 166).

Ur was therefore the royal city and, as the map shows, had royal tombs. Much of the city of Ur was taken up with a pagan temple and hence we can understand how Abram's father, Terah, became involved in idolatry as stated in Joshua 24:2.

The Jewish Talmud, quoting Jewish tradition, even says that Terah was Nimrod's right-hand man.

According to the Talmud, Abram became disillusioned with the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. Since he could not pray to the sun at night time or the stars during the day, he judged that they were useless to him as his gods. Consequently he broke down the idols of his father, Terah, and fled to Shem the son of Noah for protection.



The Basics of Bible Prophecy

Abram's departure from Ur was in response to a command from the LORD. The Biblical record simply states:

*"The LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee **out of thy country**, and from thy kindred, and **from thy father's house**, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen.12:1-3).

The Age of Promise is also the age of the patriarchs. It began with Abram and traces the sojourning of Abram, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and the 12 patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, whose families became the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. During this age the promised land was not possessed, as Heb.11:9 -16 indicates,

*"These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."*

At this time God made promises (covenants) to Abraham and confirmed them to Isaac (Gen.26 1-5) and Jacob (Gen.27:28-29; 28:4,13-15; 35:9-12). These promises, known as the **Abrahamic Covenant**, stated:

- i) God would bless Abraham and make "*a great nation*" of him (Gen.12:1-3; 22:15-18).
- ii) All who blessed Abraham and his seed would be blessed, and all who cursed his seed would be cursed (Gen.12:3).
- iii) God would give to Abraham, and to his seed after him, all the land "*from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates,*" for an **everlasting possession** (Gen.13:14 -18; 15:18 -19 ; 17:8).
- vi) In Abraham's seed (Christ), all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 22:18, "*and to thy seed, which is Christ*" Gal 3:16).
- v) Abraham would become the "*father of many nations*"(Gen.17:5).

Sadly, the Dispensation of Promise ends in failure. Joseph is sold as a slave into Egypt by his brothers, and 22 years later the 12 families follow, ultimately to become Pharaoh's slaves themselves.

We should remember that God knew what would happen and had informed Abraham in advance. In Gen.15:13-16 God said to Abram, "*Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a **land that is not theirs**, and shall serve them; and they shall **afflict them four hundred years**...But in the **fourth generation** they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."*

A case of Fulfilled Prophecy

The **sojourning** of the seed of Abraham was 430 years, from the day of Abram's departure from Haran to enter the land of Canaan

(Exod.12:40-41) to the day of the escape of Israel under the leadership of Moses at the Exodus.

Of the 430 years, there were **400 years of affliction** at the hands of the Egyptians who controlled all of Canaan. Only for 30 years, while Joseph was in favour with Pharaoh, was there any respite. When "*there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph,*" persecution resumed (Exod.1:8).

The final part of the prophecy indicated that the seed of Abram would be a stranger in a land which was not theirs (Egypt), but in **the fourth generation** they would **return to the land of Canaan** (Gen.15:16). An examination of the chronological chart on page12 will indicate that Abram's descendants were 215 years in the land of Egypt, and that the four generations in Egypt were Levi, Kohath, Amram and Moses (Exod.6:16-20).

While the Israelites were slaves in Egypt through their own folly, it was also true that they could not possess the land given to Abraham until 400 years of affliction were completed because "*the iniquity of the Amorites* (who possessed the land of Canaan) was "*not yet full*" (Gen.15:16). Here we see the patience and longsuffering of God, who could not permit the Amorites to be judged **until** they had sealed their doom by the hardening of their hearts. Once the cup of their iniquity was filled Divine justice could allow judgment to be executed. This God did by the sword of Joshua; which brings us to the Age of Law.

Like all of the dispensations, the Age of Promise began with a new administration and new opportunities, but ended in abject failure and slavery. No matter how God chooses to administer the affairs of this world, man will always prove a failure. The wonder is that God persists; but then He is "*the God of all grace!*" (1 Pet.5:10).

5th Dispensation - The Age of Law Exod 1 to Acts 1

The period from Moses to Christ constitutes the fifth Divine administration under which mankind has lived. It begins with a fresh revelation of God and great manifestations of His power in the land of Egypt. In their bondage, Israel cried out to God. Their cry was heard and Moses was sent to deliver them from the power of Pharaoh. Ten plagues were sent on Egypt, and finally Pharaoh allowed Israel to leave. Many signs and wonders occurred. The pillar of cloud and fire went before them day and night, the Red Sea opened to allow the people to cross dryshod, water was provided in the desert, bread (manna) was sent daily and God manifested His presence on Mt Sinai. The Jordan

The Basics of Bible Prophecy

ceased to flow at a time when it was in flood allowing Israel to cross into the promised land, and finally the walls of Jericho collapsed as the priests of the LORD sounded the trumpets.

At the beginning of the Age of Law God gave Israel the Ten Commandments, sanitary, food, and moral laws, a new calendar, and a tabernacle with sacrifices and offerings, all to be administered by the priests and the Levites, who were in effect a spiritual civil service supported by the taxes (tithes) of God's people.

The Age of Law was also a time when God chose, out of all the nations, **one nation** to be the channel of revelation. The Old Testament Scriptures were written during this period, and its prophecies reach down to the end of time.

The history of Israel throughout the Age of Law may be studied in the chart on page 18. There Israel may be seen over a period of 1,500 years, during which it passes through the wilderness, conquers the land of Canaan, and is ruled over by judges, kings and Gentiles. When the Babylonians captured Jerusalem in 606 BC the time of Gentile occupation, known as the "*times of the Gentiles*," began. This will conclude when the Son of David, Jesus Christ, comes again to sit on the throne of David at Jerusalem, establishing His millennial kingdom (Luke 21:24).

God's choice of the nation of Israel was the fulfilment of His promises to Abraham. It was the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and therefore entitled to claim all the blessings bound up in the Abrahamic Covenant.

No nation on the face of the earth has ever experienced what Israel has seen. Moses made this clear in Deut.4:32-39.

"Ask now of the days that are past...since the day that God created man upon the earth...did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt...? Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee...thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire."

The Abrahamic Covenant is God's contract with Israel which He will always keep, but whether Israel **enjoys the blessings** of the Covenant depends on her obedience to God's law. This principle is clearly stated in the Palestinian Covenant recorded in Deut 28 to 30, and God will

never break His Covenant (Lev.26:44). It may be summarized under 3 points -

1) If Israel obeyed the LORD, then God would bless them in accordance with the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

“If thou wilt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments...all these blessings shall come on thee...and he shall bless thee IN THE LAND...The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself...and all people of the earth...shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods...IN THE LAND which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee” (Deut.28:1-14).

2) If Israel disobeyed the LORD, they would come under the chastening hand of God and be driven out of the land which God promised to Abraham and his seed for ever.

“If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD...all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.

*a) The LORD shall bring thee, **and thy king** which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known.*

*b) The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from **the end of the earth**...whose tongue thou shalt not understand...he shall besiege thee...and the LORD shall **scatter thee among all people**, from the one end of the earth even unto the other...and among these nations shalt thou find no ease...”* (Deut.28:15-68; 29:1-29).

3) If, after Israel was scattered, they turned back to God, then God would keep His promise and bestow upon the nation all of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant.

*“When all these things are come upon thee...and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, and shall return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice...the LORD thy God will...have compassion upon thee, and will return and **gather thee from all the nations**...and the LORD thy God shall bless thee IN THE LAND...which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them”*(Deut.30:1-20).

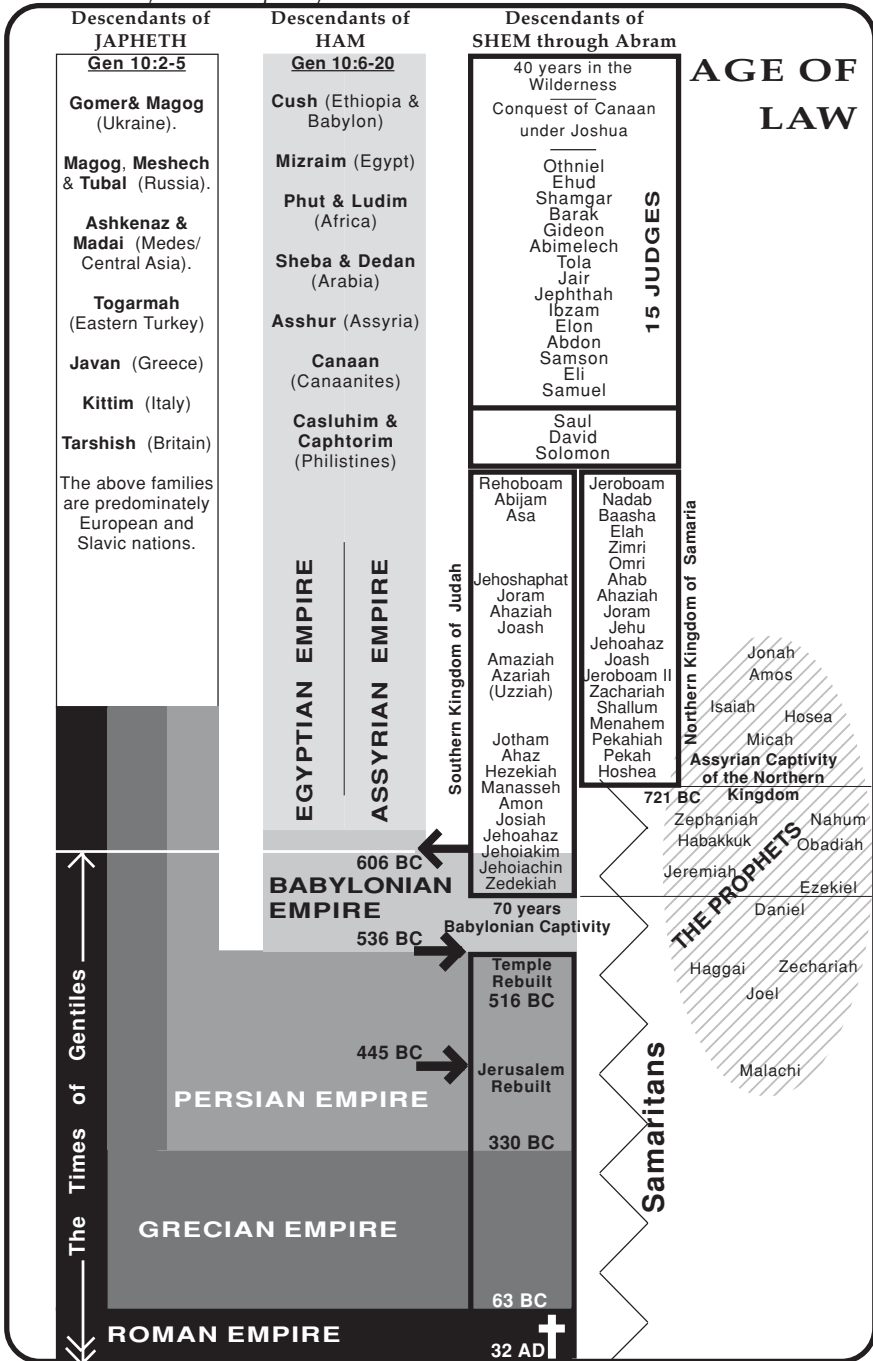
These are the three elements of the Palestinian Covenant which is the basis for God’s dealings with Israel throughout the Age of Law. Simply stated, it is:

1) **Obey**, and they will be blessed IN THE LAND.

2) **Disobey**, and they will be driven OUT OF THE LAND.

3) **Repent**, and God will bring them BACK TO THE LAND.

The Basics of Bible Prophecy



It is interesting to note that two scatterings of Israel are described. The first would be at a time when they had a king. This occurred when the Babylonians took **Jehoiachin captive to Babylon** in 597 BC. The second scattering would be after an awful siege at Jerusalem and would disperse the Jews among **all people**, from the one end of the earth to the other. This undoubtedly occurred in 70 AD at the hands of the Romans, and for nearly 2,000 years the Jews have been scattered around the globe in every nation exactly as described in Deut 28 & 29 ! However other Scriptures indicate that after the Rapture of the Church Israel will return to the Lord and **again become God's witness on earth.**

The Age of Law began with a marvellous deliverance out of Egypt but ended with the nation so far from God that it rejected Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and crucified Him on a Roman cross. In 2004 there were 5.3 million Jews back in the land, but still blind as to who their Messiah is.

When the Jews crucified their King the nation was put aside and God chose a new administration, a new channel to communicate His Truth to the world - the Church. We will now study the Church Age.

6th Dispensation - The Church Age Acts 2 to Rev. 4

The Church Age began at Pentecost and will be complete at the Rapture. In this age all who turn from their sin to Christ and trust in His redeeming blood for pardon are instantly baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, and are made members of the Church of Jesus Christ, where

*"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).*

Just before Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives the disciples asked, *"Lord, wilt thou **at this time** restore again the kingdom to Israel?"*

The Lord replied,

"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...but...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8).

Evidently the disciples knew nothing about the Church and fully expected the promised Kingdom Age would come as prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus indicated that the earthly kingdom would be deferred, and that a new dispensation, which included the Gentiles, was about to begin.

We need to be reminded that the Old Testament Scriptures have nothing to say about the Church. Everything we know about the Church is

The Basics of Bible Prophecy

recorded in the New Testament and Paul tells us that it was a “mystery,” “kept secret since the world began,” “hidden in God,” and “not made known unto the sons of men” (Eph 3:1-9; Rom 16:25).

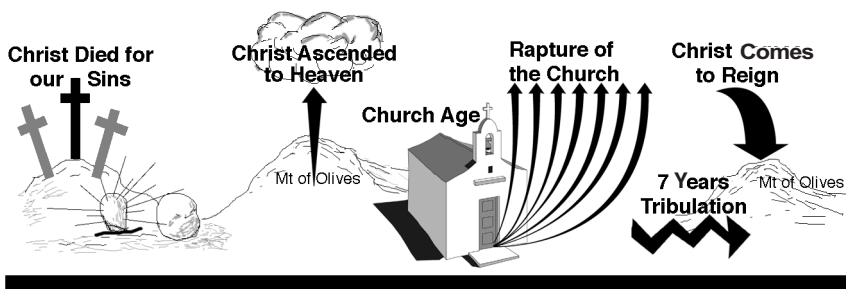
During the long Age of Law, Israel was God’s witness to the world and Jehovah God was the “God of Israel” (Exod 5:1). When a Gentile was converted he turned from his own nation’s gods to the God of Israel and identified with Jehovah’s people.

Paul describes the relationship between Israel and the Church during the Church Age, in Romans chapter 11. He likens Israel to the “natural branch” of the olive tree, and the Gentiles to a “wild olive branch”. The “natural olive branch” is broken off and the “wild olive branch” is grafted in. Thus he indicates that because of their rejection of the Messiah, Israel has been put aside and the Gentiles have taken their place as God’s witness in the world. However, if Israel repents of their rejection of Christ, they will be grafted in again.

*“ For God is able to graft them in **again**”(Rom.11:23). “ For...blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And **so all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer...when I shall take away their (Israel’s) sins”(Rom.11:25-27).*

When will the “fulness of the Gentiles” come in? The answer is obvious; at the Rapture. When the Gentile bride of Christ is complete the heavenly Bridegroom will snatch her away, and then will commence the 70th week of Israel’s history (Dan 9:24-27), the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7), otherwise known as the “great tribulation” (Matt.24:21,29).

In the first half of the 7-year Tribulation Israel will be invaded by an army led by Russia from the north. This northern led army will include Iran (Persia), Libya, Ethiopia (incl. Sudan) and Turkey. It will be at this point in time that Israel will be caused to trust in the Lord and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Messiah (Ezek.39:22). See Section 4.



The Seven Dispensations

At the beginning of the Great Tribulation Antichrist will arise and confirm a treaty with Israel for 7 years (Dan 9:27), but halfway through the 7 years he will break his treaty, and “*cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease*” in the rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem. He will exalt himself and sit in the Temple “*showing himself that he is God*” (2 Thess.2:4). See Study No 2.

Immediately after the Great Tribulation, Christ will come in glorious power to smite the Antichrist and all the armies of the nations which will be gathered against Jerusalem (Matt 24:29; Rev 19:11-21; Zech 14:1-9). The surviving nations will go alive into Christ’s millennial kingdom, which is the 7th Dispensation, or the Kingdom Age.

7th Dispensation - The Millennial Kingdom - Rev. 20

The seventh dispensation of time begins with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, immediately after the Great Tribulation, as King of kings and Lord of lords. It continues for 1,000 years.

Six times, in Rev 20:1-7, we read of a 1,000 -year period during which Satan will be bound and unable to deceive the nations. We are also told that the Tribulation martyrs, who refused the mark of the beast, will reign with Christ for 1,000 years.

Matthew chapter 25 indicates that the **saved living nations** that survive the Tribulation will enter Christ’s earthly kingdom. We read: “*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats*” (Matt 25:31-32).

To His sheep, Jesus will say,

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

The saved of all nations, who survive the terrors and slaughter of the Great Tribulation, will therefore go alive into the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ; but the unsaved, who received the mark of the beast and worshipped the Antichrist during the Tribulation, will be cast into everlasting fire. Jesus will say to them,

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

The 1,000-year reign of Christ will begin among the debris of Armageddon, and the Psalmist graphically described the scene in Psalm 46:6-10.

“The heathen (nations) raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his

The Basics of Bible Prophecy

voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us (repentant Israel); the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah (think on that!).

*Come, behold the works of the LORD, **what desolations he hath made in the earth.** He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen (nations), I will be exalted in the earth."*

At long last the Lord's Prayer will be answered; *"Thy kingdom come!"* Great changes will take place under the rule of the King of kings. Some of these are listed below.

1) The Lord will be King over all the earth and will *"rule all nations with a rod of iron"* (Zech.14:9 ; Rev.12:5).

2) There will be universal peace. *"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks"* (Isa.2:4).

3) A new millennial Temple of great proportions will be built at Jerusalem, where the glory of God will continually lighten the city (Ezek.40 to 48 ; Isa 60:19 - 20).

4) The nation of Israel will be the *"priests of the LORD"* to administer God's law from Jerusalem (Isa.61:6 ; Isa.2:1-5).

5) Gentile nations will bring their wealth to Jerusalem and assist in its reconstruction (Isa.60:5-11).

6) Gentile nations will serve Israel, and those who refuse will perish (Isa.60:12-24).

7) Each year the Gentile nations will go up to Jerusalem to *"worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles"* (Zech.14:16).

"And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain" (Zech.14:17).

8) The land of Israel will experience abundance of rain, and *"there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land..."* (Ezek.34:26 -27; Isa.41:18).

9) The name of Jerusalem will be changed.

"And the name of the city from that day shall be, Jehovah-Shammah", meaning, "The LORD is there!" (Ezek.48:35).

While the 1,000-year reign of Christ will begin with only saved Jews and Gentiles to inhabit the earth, their offspring, like every son of

Adam before them, will have sinful natures, and unless they personally repent of sin and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will grow up as unregenerate sinners. Their obedience to Christ's rule will be by compulsion and not out of loving submission. During this time Satan will be bound, so their hardness can only be attributed to the deceitfulness of their own sinful heart (Heb.3:13).

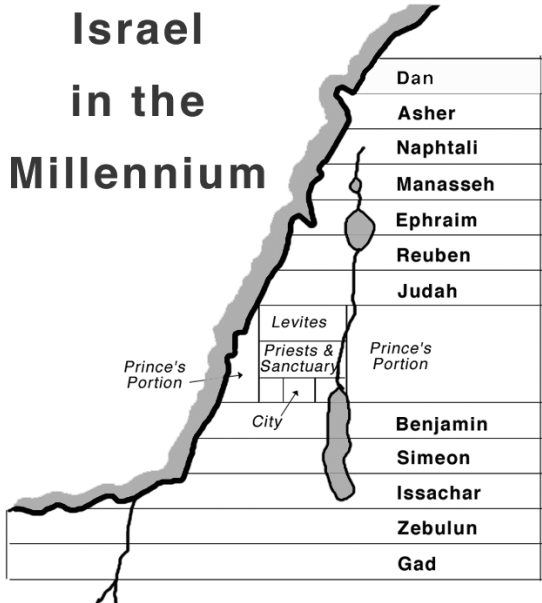
At the end of the 1,000-year reign of Christ, Satan will be allowed out of his prison to test the genuineness of the obedience of earth's inhabitants. The result will be that those who have not experienced real conversion will be deceived and will join in revolt against the Lord Jesus.

"When the 1,000 years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations...and they went up...and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city (Jerusalem): and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev.20:7-9).

At the conclusion of the millennial kingdom the **second resurrection** will take place. This is the resurrection of all of **the unsaved of all ages**, from Adam to the end of time. The **first resurrection** is the resurrection of the saved, and the second resurrection is the resurrection of the unsaved. The Bible does not teach one general resurrection.

The second resurrection brings before the great white throne the souls of the unsaved from hades (hell), in resurrection bodies, to receive judgment for the deeds done in the body. Their eternal destiny, however, is never in doubt, because in their lifetime they had rejected God's gracious entreaty and their names were blotted out of the Lamb's book of life.

When the Church is raptured in Rev.4:3 the rainbow of mercy is seen "round about the throne," but at the second resurrection there is NO RAINBOW!



The Basics of Bible Prophecy

The first resurrection of the saved is illustrated by the several stages of a harvest.

i) The **firstfruits** included the Old Testament saints who rose with Christ when He took paradise into heaven after His resurrection (Matt.27:52-53). In 1Cor.15:20-23 we read of *“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”*

ii) The **main harvest** will occur at the Rapture (1 Thess.4:13-18).

iii) The **gleanings** include the Tribulation saints who died during the reign of Antichrist (Rev.20:4-6), and all of the saved at the end of the millennial kingdom.

Finally, there will be a new heaven and new earth, *“for the first heaven and first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”* John sees the *“new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband”* (Rev .21:1,2).

The bride of the Lamb, the Church, will dwell in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9), *“and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it”* (Rev. 21:24). Time will have passed forever and we will stand as the objects of redeeming grace on the shores of an eternal day where there is no more sin, death, or sorrow, and GOD IS ALL IN ALL!

