

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Michael the Archangel, Jesus

“At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1 ASV).

In Jude 1:9, Michael is termed “Michael the archangel.” Among brethren, Michael is commonly identified as Jesus (although this is not widely followed among other Christians). This article will support the view that Michael refers to Jesus.

The name “Michael” (Strong’s H4317) means “who is like God.” This article will investigate the work associated with the expressions Michael, Michael the Archangel, Archangel, God’s Trumpet, and stand up. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 with Joshua 6:15-16 will be compared, confirming the work Jesus is doing at his Second Advent.

In Daniel 12:1, Michael is said to “stand up,” that is, take regal authority. The text says that Michael “standeth for the children of thy people.” Daniel was Jewish, so evidently “the children of thy people” refers to Israel. Today, Israel has been restored to their Promised Land, suggesting that this text is now being fulfilled in the closing period of the Gospel Age.

Jeremiah, an older contemporary of Daniel, recorded: “I will set mine eyes upon them [Israel] for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down, and I will plant them, and not pluck them up” (Jeremiah 24:6). This is another confirmation that the fulfillment of Daniel 12:1 has begun. The restoration of Israel is a consequence of the return of Christ, depicted by Michael standing up, preparing for the Kingdom.

The restoration of Israel has been progressing since 1878, with the establishment of Petah Tikvah, (which means “door of hope,” compare Hosea 2:15). Of note, the period from 1878 until Israel was declared an independent nation in 1948, was a period of 70 years — reminding us that Israel lost its national independence long ago to Babylon, who ruled for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11).

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” This text uses two different expressions when discussing our Lord’s return: “the Lord himself,” and “descend from heaven.” The first expression indicates a personal return and not simply a work. Since Jesus descends “with the voice of the archangel,” this connects Jesus to Michael.¹

The expression “with a shout” indicates that the action is loud and clear, but only to those attentive. Paul may have taken this expression from Matthew 24:31, speaking of Jesus at his return, “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Possibly Paul drew his conclusion in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 from the account in Matthew 24:31, where the subject also describes a gathering of the elect.

THE TRUMP OF GOD

The expression “Trump of God” reminds us of the Feast of Trumpets, in Leviticus 23:23-25 and Numbers 29:1-6. This occurred on the first day of month seven, today called Tishri (formerly Ethanim, 1 Kings 8:2). This was the beginning of Israel’s agricultural year, sometimes referred to as their civil year. Even today, “Rosh Hashanah,” New Year’s Day on the Jewish calendar, is Tishri first.

Nine days after Rosh Hashannah, on Tishri 10, came the Day of Atonement, representing the time when the

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long-awaited blessing of mankind will be realized, and the atoning blood of Jesus applied on their behalf. The “Feast of Trumpets” represents the Harvest period, this time of transition prior to blessing the world (R2531). The Harvest is a period of time during which the Church is completed, and the promised blessings of the Kingdom ushered in. This period of transition includes the judgment of nations. The “time of trouble” has been in progress since 1914, when World War I commenced the judgment of nations.²

NISAN 10, TISHRI 10

Six months earlier, on Nisan 10, Israel was to select their Passover lamb (Exodus 12:3). In fulfillment of this, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was on Nisan 10, when he presented himself as their antitypical Passover lamb, their redeemer and king. The account is recorded in all four gospels (Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-44, John 12:12-19). Thus, Jesus' formal and public presentation to Israel at the First Advent fulfilled the type on Nisan 10.³

At the close of the Gospel Age harvest, the benefits of Jesus' redemptive work for mankind will be applied. This is also pictured as occurring on the 10th day. However, for mankind it will fall on the 10th day of month seven, half a year later, picturing the opening of the second age of redemption. Israel will be the first people to recognize the intervention of their Messiah, Jesus. It will be a time of national repentance, humility, and yet, wonderful joy (Zechariah 12:9, 10, 2 Chronicles 20:21).

Joshua 4:19 offers additional testimony about Nisan 10. The priests went before the people, and all Israel followed, as they crossed the River Jordan, making camp on the east side of Jericho. This took place exactly forty years to the day after the selection of the lamb in Exodus. The age of sacrifice is represented by the forty years of testing in the wilderness, the antitypical Gospel Age. Thus, leaving the wilderness pictures the end of the Gospel Age.

Crossing the Jordan into the land of promise represents the end of the curse and opening of the Kingdom. The Messianic blessings then commence. We are now in the harvest. Jesus has returned and we wait for the features of the harvest to be completed before the world can cross the River Jordan and receive the Atonement Day blessings.

JESUS TAKES CONTROL

To understand that Jesus has taken control, let us return to the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 12:1, “At that time shall Michael **stand up**.” What does the expression “stand up” mean, in the context of this prophecy? The following scriptural testimony reveals that “standing” means to take authority, or control. It is used six times in Daniel chapter 11, to refer to a king coming to the throne with regal authority.

The seventh case of standing is Daniel 12:1, when Michael “shall ... **stand up**, the great prince.” When this

Six Examples in Daniel 11

- (1) Daniel 11:2, “there shall **stand up** yet three kings in Persia”
- (2) Daniel 11:3, “A mighty king shall **stand up**, that shall rule with great dominion”
- (3) Daniel 11:4, “When he shall **stand up**, his kingdom shall be broken.”
- (4) Daniel 11:7, “of her roots shall one **stand up** in his estate”
- (5) Daniel 11:20, “Then shall **stand up** in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom.”
- (6) Daniel 11:21, “In his estate shall **stand up** a vile person ... he shall ... obtain the kingdom.”⁴

is understood as referring to regal authority, the natural application is to Jesus taking power, supporting the thought drawn from 1 Thessalonians 4:16, that Michael is Jesus.⁵

TWO VIEWS WITH A DIFFERENT EMPHASIS, COMPARING 1 THESSALONIANS 4 AND JOSHUA 6

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Christ returns with a shout, the voice of the archangel,⁶ the trump of God, and then the dead in Christ rise. In Joshua 6:16, the same events occur, but in reverse order. In verse 15 the Israelites rose early at dawn. The priests then blew their trumpets, followed by Joshua's command, and then was a shout of the people.

Why is 1 Thessalonians 4 presented in reverse order? Apparently because the emphasis or perspective is different. Paul's emphasis is on our Lord's return and the time when the members of his Bride are glorified. The Lord's Second Advent is unperceived by the world, as a thief. But the church perceives the time, by observing world events, and comparing them to the scriptures (Luke 12:37). They recognize the period of Christ's presence, and that he is taking control of Earth's affairs.

One rises early in the morning to do a work, but not to disturb those who are asleep. This represents the invisible presence of our returned Lord and the resurrected sleeping saints, who “rose early at dawn,” the dawn of the Messianic Day. “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching” (Luke 12:37). For these, “he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” We have been served with the richness of God's Plan.

In Joshua, the order is reversed to emphasize the sequence of events as viewed by the world. At the conclusion of Joshua chapter six, the priests first march

around the city seven times, blowing their trumpets. At the final trumpet, at Joshua's command, the people shout, and the walls of Jericho come tumbling down. This exciting picture provides a glimpse into the events leading to the final destruction of the kingdoms of this world, of the present age. The church first hears the shout of the Lord's return, and then sees the prophetic events unfold. The world first sees the events, then, with the inauguration of the kingdom, come to understand the meaning of it all.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, KJV).

"On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city" (Joshua 6:15-16, NRSV).

SUMMARY

In conclusion, several events happen simultaneously during our Lord's presence. Some are seen with natural eyes, and understood with spiritual eyes. Michael, our returned Lord, is gathering the Israelites and planting them in the land that God promised them (Daniel 12:1). We observe this with our natural eyes, yet are guided by the scriptural testimony.

We also see the dissolution of this present age -- for the Kings have had their day! At the same time, we understand that the prophetic clock has reached the time for those saints who fell asleep through the Gospel Age, now to be awakened from the sleep of death. The dead in Christ rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16). When we understand who Michael is, and the work he is doing, we view him no longer as a thief in the night, but as a reigning king.

— Br. William Dutka

(1) If the term "archangel" refers to the highest of all the angels, thus one archangel, then identifying Jesus' return with the voice of "the archangel" means that Paul understood Jesus to be "Michael the archangel." In an old Jewish writing titled "The Book of Enoch," seven "archangels" are listed by name. However, the scriptures refer to only the single archangel, Michael.

(2) For additional information concerning the expression God's trumpet, see the article "Was Jesus Born on the Feast of Trumpets?," *Beauties of the Truth*, November 2021. See also some comments respecting the Feast of Trumpets and Israel's longing for a return to Jerusalem, Volume 3, page 249.

(3) John 12:1 says Jesus came to Bethany "six days before Passover," meaning six days before Nisan 15, when the Israelites ate their Passover lambs. In 33 AD, Nisan 15 was on a Saturday. Six days before that would be Sunday, Nisan 9, the day Jesus arrived in Jerusalem from Jericho. "On the next day" Jesus rode into Jerusalem



Priests blowing trumpets at the fall of Jericho

(John 12:12). That would be Monday, Nisan 10. Jesus knew the meaning of the day. Thus, on this day of apparent triumph, death was deeply on his mind. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27).

(On the other hand, an editor notes: While concurring that Monday, Nisan 10, closed out the "shadow" of the sacrificial lamb being presented in the Temple, it is not agreed that the presentation of Christ Jesus as the true Passover lamb links to the Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem, see R4122, 3538.)

(4) On the specific kings intended:

Daniel 11:02 — Cambyses, Bardiya, Darius

Daniel 11:03 — Alexander

Daniel 11:04 — Alexander

Daniel 11:07 — Ptolemy III, Euergetes

Daniel 11:20 — Augustus Caesar, or Seleucus IV

Daniel 11:21 — Tiberius Caesar, or Antiochus IV

(5) A concern might be raised from Daniel 10:13, which refers to Michael as "one [H259] of the chief princes" — suggesting others existed of similar rank. However, the word "one" in this case is the same word that appears in Genesis 1:5, where it is rendered "first": "the evening and the morning were the first day." If this rendering is intended in Daniel 10:13, then the text identifies Michael as "first of the chief princes." The first of all the angelic hosts was Jesus, "the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14).

(6) Notice, "the archangel" — not "an archangel" — suggesting only one of this rank.

Fig Tree and Figs in the Bible

The Fig Tree and Figs in Jewish Environment, Life, and Culture.

Of all the fruit trees found in Israel, the fig tree carries central significance in Jewish life and culture. It has been an integral part of the diet, customs, and landscape of Israel. There are a myriad of references to it in Biblical writings and Israeli literature. The ubiquity of fig trees and figs in Jewish culture, along with olive tree and vines, assures that when these are used in God's messages, the concepts are easily understood. They can illustrate fertility, bounty, abundance, prosperity, well-being, and sweetness

— or conversely scarcity, poverty, unhealthiness, and bitterness. Here are some examples from scripture.

- “God is bringing you into a good land — a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills, a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey ... and you will lack nothing” (Deuteronomy 8:7-9, NIV).

- In Jotham’s parable (Judges 9:10-11), after the olive tree declines to be their king, “The trees said to the fig tree, ‘Come and be our king.’ But the fig tree replied, ‘Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?’” (NIV).

- “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness ... your fathers as the firstfruits of the fig tree” (Hosea 9:10, Berean Study Bible).

- In contrast, Jeremiah describes the calamity of exile. “There will be no grapes on the vine. There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither” (Jeremiah 8:13, NIV).

PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS

The fig tree is native to South West Asia, Palestine, Egypt, and Israel. It grows 30 to 35 feet high reaching trunk diameters up to two feet. The tree has wide spreading branches and wide leaves. It is adaptable to various soils, even rocky soil. Though it can grow wild, it does best when cultivated. It takes time to culture and nurture, so when mature, the gardener would have spent some years. It is then that they produce good fruit. It is long lived, and valuable both for fruit and shade (John 1:48-50).

In its annual growth cycle, fruit buds appear first, and then leaves. Consequently, when the leaves appear, there should be fruit on the tree. The first crop is ripe in June or early July. These early figs can easily be shaken from the tree (Revelation 6:13, Nahum 3:12). In August or early September, a second crop of figs ripens.

BIBLE LANGUAGE ABOUT FIG TREES AND FIGS

The first reference to figs in the Bible is in Genesis 3:7, “The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” In Genesis, the fig is the only tree specified by name in the garden of Eden.

Figs were primarily used for food, often dried and pressed into cakes (1 Samuel 25:18, 30:11-12). They were also used as medicine, for example as a poultice to cure Hezekiah’s boils. “Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered” (2 Kings 20:7).

God’s prophets often evoked feelings, concepts, and messages using analogies related to figs. They were familiar, accessible, and thus effective in suggesting hope, prosperity, stability, peace, righteousness — or disapproval and impending calamity. Here are some examples.



Fig trees are prized for their fruit.

- “They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (Micah 4:4).

- Sennacherib, king of Assyria, used the expression to urge Israel to give up the battle. “Hearken not to Hezekiah ... come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig trees” (1 Kings 18:31).

- “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon” (1 Kings 4:25).

- Jesus evoked the image of a righteous man with God’s peace, when speaking of Nathaniel, he said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel said to him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered ... Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee” (John 1:47, 48).

CONVEYING NATIONAL CALAMITY AND WARNING

Jeremiah 5:15-17, “I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation ... Their quiver is as an open sepulchre ... they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities.” Psalms 105:33, respecting Egypt, “He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.”

EXPRESSING WEAKNESS AND SUSCEPTIBILITY

Nahum 3:12, “All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.”

Isaiah 34:4, “All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.”

AS A SYMBOL OF ISRAEL

Hosea 9:10, "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time."

Jeremiah 24:1-9, "The Lord shewed me ... two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty [or bad] figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad ... good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten. ... Like these good figs ... I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them. ... I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ... As the evil figs ... So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem ... to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse."

Joel, Habakkuk, and Haggai, all warn that God would bring destruction and crop failure in judgment against Israel, speaking of empty, bare, fruitless fig trees. They use the fig tree as a barometer of the health of Israel. A flourishing fig tree is about restoration and blessing. A barren or removed fig tree is about punishment. Thus, Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree, Mark 11:12-21. "On the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever [“till the age”]. And his disciples heard it" (verses 12-14).

This action by Jesus was unprecedented. The tree projected an image of fruitfulness because of its foliage, but it had no fruit. This act was in the context of addressing the evils of hypocrisy and squandered privilege, exhibited

by the Israelites.

"In the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away" (verses 20-21).

Other trees in the area might have been fruitless also, but without foliage raising disappointing expectations. Gentile nations were devoid of God's ways and had no relationship with Him. Without light and hope, their figs were not yet. However, the barren tree with pretentious foliage was a fitting symbol of Israel, professing allegiance to God, favored by Him, and self-righteous above others.

The Jewish faith, with its temple, its sacred altars, its priests and sacrifices, was outwardly grand, but excelling in hypocrisy, lacking humility and love. Israel had received great blessings from God. They were accountable for the lack of fruitage. "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48, ESV).

Cursing the fig tree signaled that the privilege of the Jewish nation would be removed. This stands as a warning to us as well, not to squander God's grace, and our privileged relationship with Him through Jesus.

PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down'" (Luke 13:6-9, NKJV).

This parable is analogous to the parable of a vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. However, the parable in Luke is specific to Jesus' ministry of 3½ years. Jesus sought fruitage among the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In this parable the caretaker requested that the owner give the tree the entire 4 years to bear fruit. (A planted fig tree takes three to four years before it bears fruit.) The number 4 appears often in the Bible, usually associated with testing, trial, or judgment.¹ Israel had ample time to reform. So had the human race: roughly 4000 years, from Adam to Jesus.

END TIMES

Jesus again drew an analogy from the fig tree for a sign to Christians of the end times (Matthew 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-30, Luke 21:29-32). "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ... when ... these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:29-32). The fig tree in Luke refers to natural Israel. The rebirth of Israel, the fig tree, and many new nations, all the trees, was a sign to mark the end of the age.



Joel, Habakkuk, Haggai

The fig tree is also used in Revelation 6:13, during the sixth seal, in a modified way. In Luke, the fig tree refers to natural Israel. In Revelation, its use is in the sixth period of the Church. There the fig tree represents nominal Spiritual Israel. Christendom was “shaken of a mighty wind” during the French Revolution.

THE BUDDING FIG TREE — ISRAEL’S RESTORATION

Many Christians see that Israel has a significant role in God’s future work, based on the lesson above, and on Romans 11:25-27. Here Paul speaks of a time when Israel turns to Jesus as Savior. “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins’ ” (NIV).

Accordingly, the reestablishment of Israel and gathering of Jews from all over the world draws well-deserved attention. For more than a century past, starting with the Zionist movement, the Jewish people have been gathering back to their homeland. The fig tree is “budding.” The leaves of the tree, a visible testimony, may represent the reestablishment of Israel as a nation, from 1948. Here is a resume of Israel’s progress, from 1878 forward.

Below is an historical and chronological time line respecting the fig tree, Israel, in its restoration. Ultimately Israel will deliver fruitage that they lacked during the First Advent of Messiah. Notice the pattern of 70 years, spanning an average Biblical generation² — a midpoint between 40 and 100 years, which are other Biblical definitions of a generation.³

Six Events of Note Respecting Israel

1878 — Petah Tikvah, the first Jewish settlement after the Berlin Congress of Nations

1897 — First Zionist Congress, under Theodor Herzl

1917 — Balfour Declaration, from Arthur Balfour

1948 — State of Israel Created, under David Ben-Gurion (1878 + 70)

1987 — The London Agreement, informal peace agreement between Israel and Jordan (1917 + 70)

2018 — US Embassy and Additional Embassies Moved to Jerusalem (1948 +70)



They shall look unto him whom they pierced.

FUTURE — ISRAEL RECOGNIZES MESSIAH

The actual crop of figs belongs to the future, after Israel’s blindness is removed, the nation turns to God, and in humble submission recognizes Jesus as Messiah. This is the fruitage God desires and patiently awaits.

What an exciting time to be living as we watch the budding fig tree, Israel, fulfill the words of Jesus. “When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:31).

Christians of the 20th and 21st centuries have been privileged to see the miracle: of Israel’s reconstruction. They have returned to their ancestral land despite centuries of exile and persecution. This fulfillment of fig tree prophecies is faith-strengthening testimonies for contemporary Christians.

— Based on a discourse by Br. Tom Gilbert

(1) Whether as 4, 40, 400, or 4000, the basic number 4 often connects with trial, testing, or judgment. (a) The rain of Noah’s day continued for **40** days, sweeping away the old world, Genesis 7:4. (b) Abraham’s seed would receive the land of promise “in the **fourth** generation,” after **400** years of waiting and development, and **40** years in the wilderness, Genesis 15:13-16, Numbers 14:33. (c) Moses waited in exile **40** years before leading Israel out of Egypt, Acts 7:23, Exodus 7:7. (d) Moses was **40** days in the mount, a test of faith and patience for the Israelites (Exodus 24:18). (e) For disobedience, God permitted Israel to be oppressed by the Philistines for **40** years (Judges 13:1). (f) Israel was taunted by Goliath for **40** days (1 Samuel 17:16). (g) God gave Nineveh **40** days to repent, John 3:4. (h) Jesus was tried in the wilderness for **40** days, Matthew 4:1. (i) Jesus’ ministry lasted approximately 3½ years, shy of **4** years, as Jesus proved his fidelity to God beyond doubt.

(2) Psalms 90:9-10, “All our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

(3) A generation in the Bible is primarily the age of a man when his first male child is born; but secondarily, the age of a man at his death. The Bible rounds the span of years in a “generation” to be 40 and 100 years, but on occasion “70 years” — which is the average of 40 and 100. This allows the three-time frames to work in numeric harmony, producing the numeric symmetry found in the Bible. The 100-year generation predominates prior to Moses, when men lived longer, but 40 years after Moses.

Four Classes

The Church, Great Company, Ancient Worthies, World of Mankind.

We read in the Bible that four classes of people will be rewarded with everlasting life In Jehovah's Divine Plan of the Ages, made possible through the Ransom Sacrifice of His only begotten son, Christ Jesus. These four classes are represented in scriptural pictures, as follows.

(1) The Church of Christ, to receive the divine nature on the spiritual plane, are shown as "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:9), as "the King's daughter ... all glorious within" (Psalms 45:13), and also pictured by the priests of the Old Testament.

(2) The Great Company, to receive a spirit nature on the spiritual plane, are shown as "the virgins ... companions [of the bride class] that follow her" (Psalms 45:14). They are also pictured by the Levites who wash their garments and are presented as helpers to the priests (Numbers 8:5-22).

(3) The Ancient Worthies, to be raised to perfect human life on the earthly plane, are to be made "Princes in all the earth" (Psalms 45:16), represented in Ezekiel's vision of the temple as "Prince" class who will lead mankind to God in the Kingdom (Ezekiel 46:9, 10).

(4) The willing and obedient of mankind restored to perfect human life on the earthly plane during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Isaiah 35:10, Ezekiel 45:22, 46:9).

Of interest to us in this article are four passages of scripture in which all four classes are represented in one context.

(1) PSALM 45

This passage describes a royal marriage. In the immediate application it is likely that the passage refers to King Solomon. But in Hebrews, Paul recognizes that the passage refers prophetically to King Jesus (compare Psalms 45:6, Hebrews 1:8, 9). Verse 13 refers to the bride as a "king's daughter," and this august occasion was attended by royal visitors from Tyre (verse 12). For these reasons the passage may refer to the marriage of Solomon to the daughter of the King of Egypt (1 Kings 3:1, 7:8) — but prophetically to the marriage of Jesus to the Bride class, drawn out of the kingdoms of this world, pictured by "Egypt."

In verses 13-17, there are references to all four classes. (a) Psalms 45:13,14. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; Her clothing is interwoven with gold. She will be led to the King in embroidered work" (all quotations from the NASB). Here we see the Bride, the daughter of King Jehovah, the 144,000 church members developed by faith and their covenant of sacrifice during the Gospel Age. They will be rewarded with the same Divine Nature as her

Bridegroom, shown in her bridal garments interwoven with gold.

(b) Psalms 45:14, 15. "The virgins, her companions who follow her, will be brought to You. They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing; They will enter into the King's palace." In these verses the companions who follow the Bride are the Great Company class. In Matthew 25:2,3 they are depicted as "foolish virgins" and lose the chief reward promised to the Bride class. They would get nothing, if it were not for our Lord's grace. Nevertheless, because of loyalty to him, he will have mercy on them and give them a resurrection to a spirit nature like the angels possess. These will follow the bride into the heavenly realm of their King and Heavenly Father.

(c) Psalms 45:16. "In place of your fathers will be your sons; You shall make them princes in all the earth." Here we see the **Ancient Worthies**. They were forefathers of faith but now will be sons to the Second Adam and Second Eve. After the heavenly marriage of the Lamb and his bride, children will be "born" to them through the resurrection process.

The first to be raised from the grave on earth will be these Princes. Due to their faith and passing their tests of obedience in serving God before the Flood, and in the Patriarchal Age, and the Jewish Ages, they will be rewarded with perfect human life. These faithful men and women will be the visible spokesmen for the invisible spiritual Mediator of the Messianic Kingdom.

(d) Psalms 45:17. "I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore, the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever." The **people** here represent the entire human family. They will be raised from the grave and then go through the process of reaching human perfection, walking the highway of holiness in Christ's Kingdom. The willing and obedient will develop a character of divine love as shown in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25).

These people also will have to pass a test of obedience. In the "little season" the Mediator will remove the covering over the people. Then Satan will be released to test whether they love the Lord God with all their hearts



Abraham and Isaac, two of the Ancient Worthies

and minds. Those that follow Satan at that time will be destroyed in the Second Death. The obedient will gain perfect everlasting life on the restored earth, giving Jehovah thanks and praise forever and ever.

(2) 1 CHRONICLES 28:20-21

A second Scriptural portrayal of the 4 classes is found in 1 Chronicles 28:20-21. David had collected all the materials for building God's Temple and now encouraged his son to complete the Temple's construction. In verse 20 King David told his son, "Be strong and courageous and act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God my God is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the Lord is finished."

The temple of God is His workmanship. During the Messianic Kingdom, the Spiritual Temple, Christ head and body, will be the means of blessing mankind and bringing them back into direct covenant relationship and everlasting life on earth that was lost in Adam.

Verse 21 says, "Now behold, there are the divisions of the **priests** and the **Levites** for all the service of the house of God, and every willing man of any skill will be with you in all the work for all kinds of service. The **officials** and all the **people** will be entirely at your command." (a) The priests represent the Church, the bride of Christ. (b) The Levites represent the Great Company, the foolish virgins. (c) The officials represent the Princes, the Ancient Worthies. (d) The people represent all mankind who will be under the leadership of the spiritual Mediator, the Melchizedek priesthood, and the earthly visible spokesmen, the Ancient Worthies.

(3) EZEKIEL 44

A third picture of the 4 classes to gain life in Jehovah's Divine Plan is in Ezekiel's Temple, found in Ezekiel 44. "Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut. (2) The Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore, it shall be shut.' (3) As for the **prince**, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate and shall go out by the same way" (Ezekiel 44:1-3).

The temple door facing east is shut, meaning the door to the high calling at that time will be closed and the church class complete. (a) First, we see the **Princes**, the Ancient Worthies, who cannot enter by this east gate, because they will be earthly, and not heavenly. They will feed on the bread, the word of the Lord, in order to receive life and to dispense it to the people.

(b) Ezekiel 44:10. "But the **Levites** who went far from Me when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear the punishment for their iniquity." Here, second, we see the Great Company class shown as the once disobedient Levites. Verse 11 shows



Priests and Levites represent the Church and Great Company.

that they will serve "in my sanctuary" (heaven), assisting the work of blessing the people.

(c) Ezekiel 44:15. "But the Levitical **priests**, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord God." Here, third, we see the Church, the priests who were faithful in discharging their service of sacrifice during their "day of salvation."

(d) Ezekiel 44:19. "When they go out into the outer court, into the outer court to the **people**, they shall put off their garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers; then they shall put on other garments so that they will not transmit holiness to the **people** with their garments." Here, fourth, we see the people representing all mankind that will be blessed by the Melchizedek priesthood.

(4) NEHEMIAH 9:38

The fourth example of the four classes to gain life is found in Nehemiah 9:38. Here we see the parties who will be involved in making the New Covenant between God and Israel/mankind. "Because of all this We are making an agreement in writing; And on the sealed document are the names of our leaders, our Levites and our priests."

First, we see the **leaders** (princes in King James), representing the Ancient Worthies. Second are the **Levites**, who represent the Great Company who will assist the priests. Third are the **priests**, representing Christ head and body. This agreement is being signed by the three parties listed above for the benefit of the fourth class, being all the **people**.

The Melchizedek priesthood, Christ head and body, will be mediators of the New Covenant. The Great Company, the Ancient Worthies, and the people will all be helpmates and assistants in Jehovah's great program to restore mankind back into direct covenant relationship as sons with the Heavenly Father, which was lost in Adam.

All four classes will have been tested and rewarded with everlasting life, either on the spiritual or earthly plane of existence. All four classes will praise their Heavenly Father for ever and ever in the Ages to Come.

— Br. Brad Sweeney