

The ENJOY THE BIBLE

Quarterly

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Questions and Answers

Our annual issue devoted to questions and answers. The following selections have been edited for inclusion in *The ETB Quarterly*, and to remove any personal information.

Luke 13:6-9

I realize that God's program with Israel continued on following Israel's rejection of Jesus and His return to heaven, and that during that time God gave "repentance to Israel" just as it says in Acts 5. I also understand that in Luke 13:6-9 Jesus had given a parable about this very thing. But I am wondering if there is anything in Acts 1 through 7 itself that actually indicates the passing of the additional year the Lord spoke about? Or do we just take it that it had to be a year because of what the Lord said?

6 He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down. (Luke 13:6-9)

In view of what the Lord set forth in Luke 13:6-9, it is my understanding that the period of time during the opening chapters of the Book of Acts when God gave "repentance to Israel" did amount to the "this year also" that He spoke about in the parable. Or in other words, it did amount to a one year period of time from when the "repentance to Israel" commenced with the events of "the day of Pentecost" in Acts 2, to when it concluded at the end of Acts 7 when Stephen was given to see that the Lord was no longer sitting at the Father's right hand waiting until His foes be made His footstool, but He was standing. For since the "these three years" in the parable are the literal time of the Lord's ministry during which God 'sought fruit' from Israel and its vain religious system, so also would the "this year also" be the literal time during which the "fig tree" would be 'let alone' and given further and more intense attention, and thereby be given a further opportunity to "bear fruit."

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So then simply based upon the literal spans of time spoken about in the parable, (as well as upon the truthfulness of whatever the Lord says), we know that the time from Acts 2 to the end of Acts 7 lasted a year.

However the record of the opening chapters of the Book of Acts itself also testifies to the reality of this. It does this especially by what God has Luke record concerning Stephen, and the final opportunity that Israel's leadership was given to 'repent' as they were confronted with his stinging indictment of them.

In Acts 6:9 where the account begins to describe God's use of Stephen, the verse makes special mention of those who disputed with Stephen being ones who belonged to "the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia." This synagogue is significant because it is composed primarily of ones who are not native to the land of Israel or to Jerusalem, (and therefore did not live in Jerusalem or the land of Israel all the time), but who came to Jerusalem every year when required by the law, as for the day of Pentecost.

Wherefore this particular synagogue is mentioned in Acts 6:9 not simply because they were the ones who were "disputing with Stephen" at this time. But rather it is specifically mentioned because with this particular synagogue being 'in operation,' so to speak, at this time, it therefore testifies to the fact that a year had now transpired since the time of the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when these of Asia, Egypt, Cyrene, and the like, previously had been in Jerusalem.

Therefore this one year span of time from Acts 2 to Acts 7 not only perfectly tallies with what the Lord had said in Luke 13 about “this year also,” but what Stephen was given to see following Israel’s rejection of his indictment of them also perfectly tallies with the time having arrived for the “fig tree” to be cut down. For Stephen was given to see that the Lord was no longer *sitting* at God’s right hand as He had been doing since the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, but He was now *standing*, ready to make His foes His footstool.

Now had it not been for God unexpectedly suspending His program with Israel at this point in time, and then raising up Paul to be His brand new apostle and bringing in this present dispensation of His grace in connection with revealing “the mystery of Christ” to Paul, God would have continued on in His program with Israel as prophesied. The Lord, therefore, would have begun to ‘make His foes His footstool’ and “the fig tree” would have been ‘cut down’ in order to consign it to its prophesied destruction during the Lord’s day of wrath.

But now both the ‘cutting down’ of the “fig tree” so that it no longer ‘cumbereth the ground’ of God’s “vineyard,” together with the administering of the Lord’s day of wrath, await the resumption and fulfillment of God’s program with Israel which is still yet to come, following the conclusion of this present dispensation of His grace.

[Note: The next question also deals with the opening chapters of the Book of Acts, but it concerns the curious events of Acts 8 immediately following the end of God giving “repentance to Israel.”]

Acts 8

What kind of meaning are we to attach to the events recorded in Acts 8, (especially Philip going to Samaria), seeing how these things immediately follow upon the significance of Stephen’s ministry to Israel in Acts 7, which ended with him being given the vision of the Lord standing on the Father’s right hand instead of sitting, and Israel stoning him to death in view of it?

In view of the prophesied time of “repentance to Israel” that God gave to His nation during the time covered by the opening seven chapters of the Book of Acts, (which specifically commenced on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and concluded with Stephen’s ministry in chapter 7), there is indeed great significance to what is recorded immediately following the stoning of Stephen, beginning with the events that are set forth in Acts 8.

For if God’s program with Israel was going to continue on as had been prophesied, (and as it was fully expected to do at that time), then Acts chapter 8 and following naturally would set forth the record of the direct fulfillment of the *specific prophesied and expected events and activities* that were scheduled to take place following the conclusion of the time of the “repentance to Israel.” But since this is

not what we find Acts 8 and following describing, then what they relate actually testifies to the fact that God did *not* do what was expected. Or in other words, they testify how that all of a sudden God started doing some things that were not strictly according to what He had previously said, or that were not according to what had been previously prophesied that He would be doing.

Now it is these unprophesied and unexpected events, along with some other unusual activities, that make the record of Acts 8 and following so highly significant. For as the record relates how God began doing things that were downright curious, and even puzzling, it first of all makes it evident that God did not follow the conclusion of the prophesied time of “repentance to Israel” with the next course of prophesied and scheduled events that were expected to take place in His program with Israel. Instead the events and activities of Acts 8 and following relate how that God started doing things that were ‘not according to the program,’ so to speak.

And by doing these things God purposely began to make it apparent that His program with Israel *was not continuing on as prophesied*. Moreover by what He did God began to make it evident that He was not just making some minor unprophesied adjustments to His program with Israel, but rather He was actually doing things that were very different from what had been expected. In fact He was doing things that were clearly a departure from what was prophesied and from what was expected, and as such they were things that were in line with Him making a major change from what He had been doing.

Now the most outstanding of the unexpected and ‘not according to the program’ events that took place at that time is what is recorded in Acts 9, when the Lord Jesus Christ unexpectedly came back from heaven and God suddenly raised up Paul to be His brand new apostle to the Gentiles.

In fact this particular unexpected and unprophesied event is central to all the others, and it is the one that specifically defines and explains what God was doing at that time. For in view of the revelation of “the mystery of Christ” that God revealed to Paul, we are given to understand and appreciate *why* it is that Acts 8 and following does not record the prophesied continuation of God’s program with Israel.

For as God revealed to Paul, (and as God has Paul teach us to understand in his epistles to us), He has temporarily suspended His program with Israel in order to bring in this present dispensation of His grace to the Gentiles. And He has done this for the fulfilling of a secret purpose that He has in Christ, (“the mystery of Christ”), which He had previously kept hid in Himself since before the world began, and so said nothing about in ages and generations past.

But along with this most astounding, outstanding, and significant of the unprophesied events of that time, as mentioned God also did certain other unprophesied and unex-

pected things immediately following the conclusion of the prophesied time of giving “repentance to Israel.” And as noted, these were particularly designed by God to begin to make it apparent at that time that something unexpected and curious was going on. For things were not happening *according to what had been prophesied and expected*. And one of the events that began to make this apparent is what Acts 8 sets forth regarding Philip’s ministry in Samaria.

[Note: Actually Philip’s ministry in Samaria, and also beyond, did much more than this. For by means of it God also wisely and ingeniously provided for dealing with one of the immediate effects that came about from suddenly suspending His program with Israel. And this too is something we should understand and appreciate. However we will not deal with this additional matter at this time.]

Now in order to appreciate how Philip’s ministry in Samaria signified that all of a sudden things were not happening according to what had been prophesied and expected, we need to recognize that God previously had given some very specific instructions to Peter and the rest of Israel’s apostles, (and also to all the remnant of Israel), regarding exactly *where* they were to go in their evangelism during the remainder of the climactic stage in the program, and also precisely *when* it was that they were to go there. These instructions are set forth, for example, in the commissions that the Lord gave to them during His ministry among them, and especially just before He returned to the Father.

And indeed when we examine them these instructions are very specific. For example, though the apostles were instructed and commissioned to ‘go into all the world’ and to ‘go to all nations,’ the Lord did not tell them to do this randomly, or haphazardly, or all at once, or to do this in any old way that pleased them, or that seemed logical or right to them. Instead the Lord told them to do this in a very particular way, and to do it in a specific order.

For example, as Luke 24:47 sets forth, though their commission and ministry would have them going to “all nations,” they would be “beginning in Jerusalem.” And as is set forth in Acts 1:8, they would be “beginning in Jerusalem,” and then they would deal with “all Judea,” then “Samaria,” and then “unto the uttermost part of the earth.” This is the order in which their ministry was to be carried out.

Now this specified order of dealing with Jerusalem first, then all Judea, then Samaria, and then unto the uttermost part of the earth, is not simply one of practicality. It is much more than that. Rather it is the order for the expansion of their ministry, (and for the spread of “the gospel of the kingdom”), that is in perfect accordance with exactly how the prophetic events, (especially the signs), would be progressing during the remainder of the climactic stage and the final installment of Israel’s program.

Very simply put, those prophetic events and signs would be manifest first in Jerusalem, then in all Judea, then in

Samaria, and then finally to all of the world. And in connection with this the ministry of the apostles, (along with that of the rest of the believing remnant of Israel with them), was to be timed, so to speak, so that it was carried out in conjunction with those progressively developing prophetic events and signs.

Wherefore to describe it very simply, the apostles were to begin their ministry in Jerusalem, and they were to stay there and carry it out there, until the progressively developing events and signs during the final installment of the program told them to move their ministry into all Judea. Then they were to carry out their ministry in all Judea and stay there until the progressively developing events and signs told them to move into Samaria. And they were to minister there until the events and signs told them to move out into the nations of the world.

Now it is the specific nature of these instructions, (and especially their precise timing designed to correspond with the progressively developing prophesied events and signs that take place during the final installment in Israel’s program), that makes what Acts 8 records to be so significant. For God’s events and activities described in Acts 8 and following *do not follow what He had previously prescribed*. Everything up until the end of Acts 7 follows what God had prescribed ‘to the letter,’ so to speak. But following the conclusion of the prophesied time of “repentance to Israel” God began to change things, with things happening that do not fit the previously prophesied and prescribed order of things.

And, once again, one of the obvious evidences that God was not now doing things ‘according to the program’ is Philip’s ministry to Samaria. For according to the commissions and instructions that God previously had given, Samaria was not yet due to be evangelized. Not only was Jerusalem not yet fully dealt with as had been prescribed, (which is why the apostles did not leave Jerusalem when the persecution arose, just as Acts 8:1 states), but neither the prophesied signs and events that indicated the start of the final installment in the program had yet to occur, nor yet those that would tell them to leave Jerusalem and move into all Judea.

Wherefore Philip’s ministry to Samaria was clearly ‘not according to the program.’ And neither was the way that God responded to those who believed Philip’s preaching, just as verses 14–17 relate.

So then by having Philip go to Samaria ‘not according to the program,’ God began to give clear evidence that His program with Israel was not continuing on as had been prophesied and as had been expected. Moreover He began to make it apparent that He was instituting some sort of a dramatic change.

But then by the rest of the unprophesied and unexpected events and activities that He did during that time, God made it quite evident just how great a change it was that He was

making. For as He revealed to and through His new apostle Paul, He brought in *a complete change of programs*, involving the temporary suspension of His program with Israel and the ushering in of a new unprophesied and different dispensation of His grace to the Gentiles.

Ezekiel 20:5–9

In Ezekiel 20:5–9 God says that before He brought Israel out of Egypt He commanded them to ‘Cast away the abominations of their eyes, and not defile themselves with the idols of Egypt,’ but that they rebelled against Him. And He also says that this provoked Him to anger against them at that time, even to the point of ‘pouring out His fury upon them.’ Where in the historical record of the Book of Exodus did this occur?

5 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the LORD your God;

6 In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands:

7 Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then said I, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

9 But I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were*, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. (Ezekiel 20:5–9)

As the opening verses of Ezekiel 20 relate, when Israel began to experience the Fifth Course of Punishment of Leviticus 26, God began to culminate His indictment against them, (and also His justification for bringing it upon them), by having Ezekiel ‘judge the elders of Israel’ in connection with it.

In particular God had Ezekiel “cause them to know the abominations of their fathers,” and by doing so He in essence traced their worthiness for receiving the Fifth Course of Punishment from the time that He began dealing with them as a nation in Egypt until He actually had to bring it upon them.

Now what God says to Ezekiel about Israel’s abominations and idolatry *while they were still in Egypt* is actually something that He mentions in other places as well. For example, Joshua himself makes mention of it in Joshua 24:14,

and God refers to it again later on in Ezekiel as He continued His indictment. But God also does refer to it right back in the Book of Exodus itself.

However He does not refer to it in the kind of detail with which He describes it to Ezekiel. Instead what God says about it back in Exodus is only indicative in nature, and it is more or less ‘said in passing,’ so to speak.

In other words, God says something in Exodus that indicates that He gave Israel a command, and then a threat, just like He told Ezekiel that He did. But what God says about this in the Book of Exodus simply only indicates that He did this, without amplifying upon it or describing it in detail. Wherefore if we do not pay close attention to what it says back in Exodus, we can miss it.

What God said to Ezekiel took place in Exodus 6, where it records the issue of God beginning to confront Israel with the subject of His “Jehovah-ness,” especially as it pertained to the people being educated in their absolute need for Him to be what His name “Jehovah” stands for and means.

Now after God told Moses what to say about His “Jehovah-ness” to the children of Israel, (as recorded in Exodus 6:1–8), and then Moses spoke it to the people, (as the beginning of verse 9 relates), the remainder of verse 9 says, “but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.” Therefore they refused to listen to God as He began to educate them in His “Jehovah-ness.”

Now what needs to be recognized is that God in turn responded to Israel’s negative response to Him. And in particular He responded to them in a way that ‘cut to the heart of the matter’ of why they responded negatively. For in truth their “anguish of spirit” involved more than being grieved and distressed over how Pharaoh was now treating them, as is evident from the wording of verse 9 itself, and also from how they treated Moses and Aaron after they had complained to Pharaoh.

Hence when the people refused to listen to Moses when he confronted them with the issue of God’s “Jehovah-ness” unto them, their refusal was actually based upon the fact that they were *turning against God Himself*.

Now, as I said, God responded to this. But God does not give a detailed account of His response in Exodus 6. He only briefly says something that indicates that He did respond, and that His response was stern and serious.

What God did is in what Exodus 6:13 relates. As the first part of the verse states, “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel,...” This was God’s response to Israel after they refused to hearken unto the issue of His “Jehovah-ness” unto them. He gave them “a charge.”

Now exactly what God said to them in this “charge” He does not delineate here. But the fact that it was “a charge,”

that it was given in response to them refusing to hear Him, and that it dealt with what was going on in their minds and hearts, tells us something about it.

For example, it clearly indicates it was “a charge” that was strongly reproving and rebuking in nature. It was a charge of blameworthiness, as well as of correction in order to avoid consequences. As such it indicted them for their negative response and it dealt with the issue of what was behind it.

Moreover, as is commonly the case with such “a charge,” it undoubtedly also sternly took them to task for their contrariness, and it told them what they were worthy of receiving, and it also threatened them with receiving serious consequences if they did not respond positively to God now. And it ‘charged’ them with what they now needed to do when it came to responding positively to God.

This is what is legitimately indicated to have taken place simply by what the beginning of verse 13 says that God did.

So even though in Exodus 6 God does not give the details of what the “charge” said, we are able to understand the gist of what it said from the fact that it was “a charge,” and from the nature of the context in which God gave it.

So then on the basis of this we are able to understand that what God later on describes in detail to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 20:5–9, is what historically took place in Exodus 6 when Israel refused to hearken unto God’s declaration of His “Jehovah-ness,” and He then ‘charged’ them as Exodus 6:13 says.

Now as previously mentioned, this is further substantiated by some things that are said later on, both soon after Israel came out of Egypt and further afield.

For example, in Joshua 24:14 Joshua cites the fact that the people of Israel did ‘serve other gods’ in Egypt, as well as before. And he cites this as he charges them to “fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth,” by putting away from among themselves these very same gods that their fathers served before, including when they were “in Egypt.” And this tallies with exactly what God in Ezekiel 20:5–9 says that Israel did.

It is also interesting to note in Exodus 6 that immediately after verse 13 says that God ‘charged’ the children of Israel, God then briefly interrupts the historical account of things to set forth a special record about “the heads of their fathers’ houses” in verses 14–27. In doing this God signified and underscored the basis upon which He would be dealing with Israel from this point on in view of their rebelliousness.

Now this too tallies with what God says in Ezekiel 20:5–9. For after telling Ezekiel how Israel rebelled against His charge to them in that day, and how it provoked Him to anger against them, He then says...

9 But I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom

they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. (Ezekiel 20:9)

And this is just what Exodus 6:14–27 points out and underscores.

[Note: The next question also pertains to this very important time in God’s program with Israel when He was initially educating the children of Israel in the issue of His “Jehovah-ness” and grace.]

Exodus 15:22–26

In Exodus 15:22–26 what is the meaning or the reason behind the “tree” being cast into the “bitter” waters in order to make them “sweet”?

Just about everything that God did with Israel from the time He sent Moses back into Egypt to announce the arrival of the time of their deliverance, until He brought them to Mount Sinai, was designed to educate them in their need for God’s “Jehovah-ness” and grace.

In connection with this, once God brought them out of Egypt through the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea He began to intensify their education in the issues pertaining to His “Jehovah-ness” and grace. And the five ‘trials’ that they encountered from the Red Sea to Sinai, (from Exodus 15:22 to Exodus 19), were specifically used by God to give them this increased education.

Now in connection with this, the first ‘trial’ of Exodus 15:22–26 naturally involves the most fundamental ‘lesson’ for their education, which is why it is the one at which God “made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,” as the latter part of verse 25 states and as verse 26 goes on to describe. And since it is the first and most fundamental ‘lesson,’ it addresses the most fundamental thing that God wanted them to realize and learn about Him and His “Jehovah-ness.”

Wherefore as the account relates, after journeying “three days in the wilderness of Shur” the people of Israel “found no water.” And then when they “came to Marah” they found water, but “they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.”

Hence they were now in a very needful, if not desperate situation, with respect to their physical lives. But, once again, since God Himself was the one who had led them into this situation, He therefore purposely planned for them to be in this situation and designed it for their continuing education in the issue of His “Jehovah-ness” and grace.

Very simply put, this particular “no water” situation together with the “bitter” or poisonous waters situation confronted Israel with the fundamental fact that their “life” with God in all of its forms was completely dependent upon the issue of God’s “Jehovah-ness” and grace. Just as it was with their physical life in this “no water” and “bitter” waters

situation, they by nature also possessed ‘no water of life’ with God. And any attempt to look for it in what the world has to offer, or any attempt to generate life with God on their own by their own works, would only result in them finding ‘bitter/poisonous’ waters that would kill and not give life.

Wherefore their only hope of having “life” with God in any and all of its forms was totally dependent upon God graciously giving them “life.” And this is what they needed to ‘come to grips with,’ realize, and learn the truth of first and foremost as God worked to educate them in their fundamental need for His “Jehovah-ness” and grace.

Wherefore in connection with this, (and when as verse 24 says “the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?”), the LORD, (specifically going by His name “Jehovah”), manifested His “Jehovah-ness” to them in a way that was designed to get them to begin to think of Him as their only Life-giver. This He did when as verse 25 says, “and the LORD shewed (Moses) a tree.” For this “tree” was living in the midst of these ‘bitter/poisonous waters,’ and when according to the LORD’s instruction it was “cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”

So it was then that God manifested to them that He by nature is a ‘tree with life’ and is a ‘tree of life,’ and that in so being He alone by His own work is able to remedy their natural ‘no water of life’ and ‘bitter’/poisonous waters situation, and thereby give them ‘life with Him’ in all of its forms.

And indeed this is the first and foremost issue that Israel needed to realize, learn, and acknowledge, as God began to pointedly educate them in His “Jehovah-ness” and grace. They needed to learn that the most fundamental issue of all — i.e. having life with God — was not something they possessed by nature, nor could they come to possess it by their works, and neither could the world give it to them. Instead God Himself was the only source of ‘that life,’ (just like a ‘tree with life’ and a ‘tree of life’), and they could only have it by means of His “Jehovah-ness” and as a gift of His grace.

Daniel 3:25 and 3:28

Why in Daniel 3:25 does Nebuchadnezzar first say that “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God,” but then in 3:28 he says that God “hath sent his angel” to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego?

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:24–25)

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego,

who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. (Daniel 3:28)

It is my understanding that Nebuchadnezzar meant what he said in both places, (and that what he said is exactly as the KJV says), and that what he said in both places is indicative of how well, (and how not so well), he was responding to the information with which God was confronting him.

Before dealing with this, first keep in mind that much of what the opening chapters of Daniel set forth is information about how God was dealing with Nebuchadnezzar, along with specific information that God was giving to him to which he was expected to respond in a particular way.

For as God had indicated through Jeremiah and Ezekiel when He began to bring the first set of judgments of Israel’s Fifth Course of Punishment upon them, He was going to make Nebuchadnezzar ‘His servant’ in more ways than one. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar would not only ‘serve God’s purpose’ in judging Israel, but God would also use him as ‘His servant’ in some other ways.

One of these other ways would be for the dispensing of further information regarding Israel’s Fifth Course of Punishment. And this particular aspect of God’s use of Nebuchadnezzar got underway by means of the dream that God gave to him, as related in Daniel chapter 2.

Now in connection with this, as far as Nebuchadnezzar himself is concerned he was also given the opportunity to respond positively and properly to the information that God was making known through him. And his various actions in response to God’s information are indicative of how well, or how not so well, he himself responded.

For example, his initial response to Daniel, and to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, following God’s first revelation was a positive one. But his making of the “image of gold” unto himself in connection with what that revelation described was not. In fact, his negative responses predominate, as the information in chapter 3 relates.

What’s more, they eventually make it so that God deals with him in the severe manner related in chapter 4 in order to make it so that his negative responses do not continue to hold sway, and so that he does eventually fulfill the remainder of what he is given to do as God’s ‘servant’ during the first installment of Israel’s Fifth Course of Punishment.

Now because of how Nebuchadnezzar responded to the dream revelation in chapter 2, it is my understanding that he meant exactly what he said in both Daniel 3:25 and 3:28. With what he said in 3:25 being the real truth of the matter, but with what he said in 3:28 being the only thing he could confidently state took place.

Simply put my understanding is as follows: When in Daniel 3:25 Nebuchadnezzar said, “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God,” he realizes that “the fourth” person he sees is “like the Son of God” whom he had been previously informed about in the interpretation that Daniel had given to him of his dream.

For in accordance with Daniel’s interpretation of his dream back in chapter 2, he was given to know that “the stone” that “was cut out of the mountain without hands” cannot be a mere man at all. But rather that man would have to be “the Son of God,” otherwise he could not be described as he was.

Wherefore when he sees “the fourth” man and perceives that his “form” is clearly different from that of either Shadrach, Meshach, or Abed-nego, it naturally makes him think of that dream. By not having the same “form” as the others, the specific “form” of the “fourth” man made him think of the man that is “the Son of God” in the dream that God had given to him. Hence he said “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

Now in view of the dream revelation that God had given to him, he was correct in what he perceived. And even though Nebuchadnezzar with his limited understanding could only say that the “fourth” man was “like the Son of God,” the reason the man was “like the Son of God” is because He indeed was “the Son of God.”

Nebuchadnezzar then responds positively to the issue of God’s deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, declaring that they are the “servants of the most high God” and calling them to “come forth” out of the furnace and to “come hither” unto him, as verses 26 and 27 relate. Moreover he also responds positively by immediately making the pronouncement and decree described in verses 28 and 29.

However when he now speaks of the way by which “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego” delivered them, Nebuchadnezzar does not speak of “the fourth” man specifically as “the Son of God.” But now he says that God “sent his angel” and thereby “delivered his servants that trusted in him.”

Now as I said, it is my understanding that Nebuchadnezzar meant what he said this time as well, and that this too is indicative of how he is responding to things.

Hence when Nebuchadnezzar said that God “sent his angel,” this was all that his present understanding would confidently allow him to say had taken place. And he now needed to be able to confidently say what had happened, since he was now not only making a public proclamation, but a legal decree as well.

He therefore needed to be able to confidently state what had happened and what he saw. Plus he also needed to be able to describe it in a way that would be understood by ones

who were not privy to the dream revelation that God had previously given to him.

So then the upshot is this: Even though Nebuchadnezzar had previously said that “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God,” this was all that he could say about him; i.e. that he was “like the Son of God” from what he could perceive. With his measure of understanding he could not confidently declare to others that this is who “the fourth” man was, nor was he expected to be able to do so; (though this is who He was). But that this “fourth” one came from “the God of heaven” and was sent by Him, (which would be true of an “angel”), is a basic truth that Nebuchadnezzar was sure about and could confidently state to others.

Therefore when he makes his public pronouncement and blesses “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego,” this is what he confidently declares happened. And this is what those who heard Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation and decree would be able to readily understand. That is, they could easily understand the issue of God sending an “angel” to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

Wherefore we are not to look upon what Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 3:28 as if it denies that “the fourth” man was “the Son of God,” or as if it conflicts with 3:25, or as if it later on gives us the proper understanding that it really was only an angel and not the Lord. But rather we are to understand that this was what Nebuchadnezzar was confidently able to say based upon his measure of understanding. Nevertheless what he first perceived “the fourth” man to be “like,” as stated in Daniel 3:25, is in actuality who He was.

II Samuel 8:4 compared with I Chronicles 18:4, and II Samuel 10:18 compared with I Chronicles 19:18

Why is there a discrepancy between the number of “horsemen” in II Samuel 8:4 compared with I Chronicles 18:4, and then also between the number of men slain in II Samuel 10:18 compared with I Chronicles 19:18?

II Samuel 8:4 and I Chronicles 18:4

4 And David took from him a thousand *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David hocked all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots. (II Samuel 8:4)

18 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also hocked all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them an hundred chariots. (I Chronicles 18:4)

The difference between the 700 horsemen and the 7000 horsemen is attributed to the fact that the Chronicles account is taking into account the total number of horsemen that David took from Hadadezer after David had dealt with

Hadadezer's *complete exploits* at the Euphrates river. And the reason why I say Hadadezer's *complete exploits* is because there is a notable difference between what II Samuel 8:3 says that Hadadezer was doing "at the river Euphrates" and what I Chronicles 18:3 says that he was doing there.

As II Samuel says, he "went to recover his border at the river Euphrates." But in I Chronicles it says that he "went to stablish his dominion by the river Euphrates." The difference may not seem that great, but militarily-speaking it can be descriptive of two aspects of a campaign, with the I Chronicles account being the total result after David dealt with the two aspects of Hadadezer's campaign.

The first aspect of Hadadezer's campaign was to attempt "to recover his border at the river Euphrates," which is what II Samuel specifically records. This naturally would have been the major aspect of his campaign, which would have been brought to a halt, so to speak, when David "smote" him and took from him "a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen."

But that would not have been all of Hadadezer's army. For militarily-speaking he would have had troops in reserve for various purposes, including mounting another offensive if things went bad. And things did go bad for him.

Wherefore based upon what I Chronicles 18:3 says about him attempting to "stablish his dominion," his campaign included mounting another offensive. This additional offensive involved sending in a great number of "horsemen" by which he hoped to "stablish his dominion" after having lost it to David in the first offensive. But this attempt also failed, with an additional 6300 "horsemen" being taken by David, seeing that I Chronicles now says that "seven thousand horsemen" were taken by David.

Therefore it only *looks like* there is a discrepancy between II Samuel 8:4 and I Chronicles 18:4. And it only looks like there is a discrepancy because we have the tendency to assume that the two accounts are just duplicate accounts and that therefore they should say the exact same thing. But this is not the case. Instead the Samuel/Kings account and the Chronicles account are two distinct accounts, which look at and describe things from two separate perspectives.

Now as has been pointed out in previous *ETB Quarterly* articles, this issue of looking at and describing things from two different perspectives, (or in two different ways), is what we need to take into account when we deal with the information in the Samuel/Kings and Chronicles accounts.

Accordingly we need to pay close attention to exactly what is recorded in the immediate, near, and remote contexts of each account. For the contexts in each account supply pertinent information that has a direct bearing upon why one account will say one thing and the other something else, even when they are dealing with the same subject.

Very simply put what we need to understand first and foremost is that the Samuel/Kings account and the Chronicles account are two separate and different accounts; and God has designed them to be so. As such the Samuel/Kings account comes first, with it being more or less purely historical in its rendering and reckoning, as it follows the arrival of, and development of, the contracted Courses of Punishment of the Law in Israel's history. However the Chronicles account views the history and its events from the Divine viewpoint, and as such provides a particular type of commentary to the history that is significant in a number of ways.

In view of this it makes sense for the Chronicles account to differ in some of its details, seeing that God can reckon time, generations, royal lines, and the like, differently than man does; especially if man is either ignoring or unable to reckon things as God does, and so is handicapped when it comes to perceiving things properly from God's perspective.

Needless to say, therefore, it can require a patient and careful detailed examination of all of the recorded details in each account to begin to come to grips with all that was going on at a particular time in Israel's history and to realize the effects of it all. Add to this the reasons that God has for having two separate and distinct accounts of the 'kingdom-time' in His nation's history, and it should be clear that differences in the accounts are going to exist.

But the differences do not exist because of careless record-keeping, scribal errors, or anything like that. Instead differences exist because the two accounts serve two distinct purposes in God's testimony, which requires at times differing, (not contradictory at all, but actually complimentary), information to be presented, and differing systems of reckoning being used.

The 'supposed problems' only exist, (1) if we assume that the two accounts are supposed to be identical; (2) if we ignore the fact that some times the situations in Samaria and Judah demand the need to talk, for example, about a certain king's reign with respect to two different ages or periods of duration; and (3) if we ignore the fact that God has a significant reason for having two distinct accounts of the 'kingdom-time' in Israel's program, which makes it so that He wants the reign of certain rulers, and other such matters, to be looked at from two different perspectives.

When we do not do these kind of things then we can dismiss the idea of contradictions or mistakes in the two accounts, and we can replace it with solid understanding.

Let's now look at the other apparent discrepancy.

II Samuel 10:18 and I Chronicles 19:18

18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew *the men of* seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there. (II Samuel 10:18)

18 But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand *men which fought in chariots*, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host. (I Chronicles 19:18)

Complimentary information is also involved in explaining the reason why these two verses differ in their reckoning. However there is also the issue of a common false assumption that causes people to think that there is an error here.

First note the common false assumption. In II Samuel it says “David slew *the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians*,” while in I Chronicles it says “David slew of the Syrians seven thousand *men which fought in chariots*.” The assumption is that there was only one man per chariot, therefore there should only be seven hundred men slain.

But this is a false assumption, which is not only borne out by the testimony of the Scriptures in other places, but by secular history itself. For the militaries of many nations using chariots typically had several men per chariot, including 10 men per chariot, and some times even more. In fact later on we are told that Solomon’s armies had ten horses assigned to each of the chariots, which indicates that he used the 10 men per chariot system.

So with the false assumption of one man per chariot dismissed, it is easy to see that when II Samuel says “David slew *the men of seven hundred chariots*” this does not tell us exactly how many men were slain. It just says that all the men who were associated with those 700 chariots were slain.

However the Chronicles account does relate the number of the chariot men who were slain. For it says that “David slew of the Syrians seven thousand *men which fought in chariots*.” So as was commonly the case, the Syrians had several men assigned to each chariot. And since David slew 7000 of the men who fought in chariots, and there were 700 chariots, then there were 10 men per chariot. With this, once again, the Chronicles account compliments the Samuel/Kings account.

The same is true with respect to the “forty thousand horsemen” in II Samuel, and the “forty thousand footmen” in I Chronicles. This too is designed to be taken as complimentary, as the surrounding context to each verse shows.

For example, as II Samuel 10:6 relates, the children of Ammon “hired” certain Syrian “footmen” and other men for the battle. But as I Chronicles 19:6–7 also relate, the children of Ammon also sent and hired “chariots and horsemen” from Syria, as well as from other places.

So then when it comes to tallying up the full account of the battle, there is the need between the two accounts to deal with both the “horsemen” and the “footmen.” And this is what both accounts do when they are allowed to compliment each other and thereby supply the full reckoning.

Matthew 6:14–15

I know that God’s program with Israel was in operation during the Lord’s earthly ministry. But why in that program does Jesus teach His disciples that they will only be forgiven their trespasses if they forgive the trespasses of other men? What’s the reason for this? And what effect will it have upon the disciples, particularly if their trespasses are not forgiven?

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14–15)

In order to understand the reason for this ‘conditional and reciprocal forgiveness,’ and also how it will affect the disciples, we first need to make sure that we understand some other things.

First of all we need to make sure we understand that Matthew 6:14–15 is part of what is commonly called ‘The Sermon on the Mount.’ This means that it is part of the fundamental doctrines *for the edification of the remnant of Israel*, which the Lord was giving to His called out remnant during the opening part of the climactic stage in God’s program with Israel.

Therefore this means that the Lord is speaking to ones who already have the forgiveness of their sins in connection with having been guilty sinners by nature as the seed of Abraham. For when they believed “the gospel of the kingdom” they received the remission of their sins and justification unto eternal life, just as that gospel declared. And they thereby became the members of the remnant of Israel, the “Israel of God,” the “called out seed of Jacob,” to whom God their Father will give the kingdom.

Wherefore what the Lord says in Matthew 6:14–15 has nothing to do with the disciples’ justification unto eternal life. For that issue was settled forever the moment they believed “the gospel of the kingdom.”

Instead what the Lord speaks about has to do with the issue of their sanctification in God’s sight. For this is something that they also received when they believed “the gospel of the kingdom” and partook of the prescription for Israel’s cleansing that God began administering to His nation through John the Baptist’s ministry.

Now it is this issue of the remnant’s sanctification that we need to know some things about in order to understand Matthew 6:14–15.

Very simply put, in view of their sanctification as the “Israel of God” the disciples are expected to live their lives in accordance with God their Father *setting them apart from any more identification with, or collaboration with, apostate and rebellious Israel*. In other words, they are no longer

to be following the corruption and contrariness of apostate Israel's vain religious system, nor pattern themselves after the example of apostate Israel's rebellious and hypocritical leadership. Instead they are to be 'doers of the law in truth,' and in so doing manifest in the midst of apostate Israel, (and then in the world), that they are the true "Israel of God," and that they are the ones who have genuine fellowship with God, and that they are the ones who are the 'friends of God,' like their father Abraham was.

Wherefore in the 'Sermon on the Mount' the Lord teaches them to be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." He therefore teaches them to 'love in truth,' to be 'kind in truth,' to be 'merciful in truth,' to be 'good in truth,' and the like, all in stark contrast to what Israel's vain religious system taught and to how its leaders lived.

In so doing the Lord teaches His disciples how to be just like their heavenly Father in His love, in His kindness, in His mercy, and in His goodness, etc. In short, as the Lord says, He teaches the remnant how to be 'the children of their Father which is in heaven,' and no longer to be followers of apostate Israel's vain religious system with all of its ungodliness, nor followers of its corrupt apostate leaders like the ungodly Pharisees, scribes, priests, etc.

So then as even a cursory reading of 'The Sermon on the Mount' shows, it is mainly composed of the fundamental teachings that the remnant needs for their establishment, so that during the climactic stage in their program they can know how to live *the specific kind of sanctified life* that God their Father wants them to live as the true "Israel of God" that they are.

Now once again *the specific kind of sanctified life* that the remnant needs to live is one that manifestly does not follow the pattern of apostate Israel's vain religious system. In fact it is one that plainly repudiates it, and in so doing clearly stands in stark contrast to the abominable and corrupt things that characterize the conduct and behavior of the followers of Israel's apostate and vain religious system.

Now along with knowing this, there is one other thing that we need to realize about the remnant's sanctification in order to understand the reason behind what the Lord says in Matthew 6:14-15. We need to realize that in the prophets God sets forth how that during the final installment in the program He will be responding to His remnant 'in kind,' so to speak, to how it is that they live their lives.

In other words, (and very simply described), in view of *the specific kind of sanctified life* that God wants His remnant to live, (and provides for them to live), if they live their lives in line with their sanctification, and deal with others accordingly, then He will respond to them 'in kind' and will treat them accordingly. But if they do not live their lives in line with their sanctification, (but continue to live and act in accordance with the ungodly teachings and practices of

Israel's vain religious system), then He will respond to them with a fitting 'in kind' measure.

This, for example, is just what David describes in the prophetic 18th Psalm about the final installment in Israel's program, when he says...

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. (Psalm 18:20-26)

In view of what David says in verses 25 and 26, if the members of the remnant are "merciful" in their walk, then God will be "merciful" to them. But if instead of being "merciful," or "upright," or "pure," they are "froward" in their walk, then God will shew Himself "froward" to them.

So then the issue is that God is going to respond to His remnant 'in kind' both during the time of the final installment in the program, and also when it comes to determining what their rewards will be in the kingdom when it is established at the conclusion of the final installment. Hence the major criterion for determining their rewards in the kingdom will be whether in their walk they have acted like 'the children of their Father which is in heaven,' or whether they have continued to operate upon the corrupt and erroneous teachings of Israel's vain religious system, and have continued to act like the unjustified and ungodly Pharisees and scribes with their vain hypocritical religion.

Wherefore the Lord Himself naturally taught His disciples about this issue of how God will be responding to them in a reciprocal 'in kind' type manner. In fact the Lord taught it to them both in 'The Sermon on the Mount' itself and on other occasions. Hence in Matthew 7 He taught...

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matthew 7:1-2)

And then later on the Lord amplified upon this saying...

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you,

what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to the evil*.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:31–38)

Now when at the end of verse 38 the Lord says, “For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again,” He cites the general ‘reciprocal response principle’ that God said He will use with His remnant, as was noted for example in Psalm 18. And just as the Lord says in verse 37, it includes the issue of forgiveness.

Wherefore when the Lord initially instructed His disciples on how to pray intelligently during the climactic stage in Israel’s program, this is why He taught them to pray...

12 And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. (Matthew 6:12)

And then to ensure their understanding of this implementation of the prophesied ‘reciprocal response principle’ He went on to explain its application by saying...

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14–15)

Now as noted earlier, this ‘reciprocal response principle’ will particularly be in effect during the final installment of Israel’s program when God will have ‘His day’ and will be judging His nation, and then also when He establishes His kingdom and rewards the members of the remnant.

Hence the way that this ‘reciprocal response principle’ will affect the remnant is basically two-fold: (1) If during the outworking of the final installment in the program they live in accordance with their sanctification and so are merciful and kind and good to others, and forgive others their trespasses against them, then they will be treated ‘in kind’ by their Fa-

ther when during that time they themselves are in need of mercy, kindness, and the like.

But if they live contrary to their sanctification, then they will be treated ‘in kind’ during that time with a measure that is fitting to their lack of mercy, kindness, forgiveness, etc. For this reason, for example, in ‘The Sermon on The Mount’ the Lord said to them...

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. (Matthew 5:25–26)

But then (2) when the kingdom gets established and God rewards the remnant, if they have not been merciful and have not forgiven others their trespasses against them, then God will not have forgiven them their own trespasses which they have committed against others. And so when it comes to rewarding them He will take their trespasses into account and will justly apply them against their rewards, with the result that in that day they will not receive the full reward that they could have received.

— K. R. Blades

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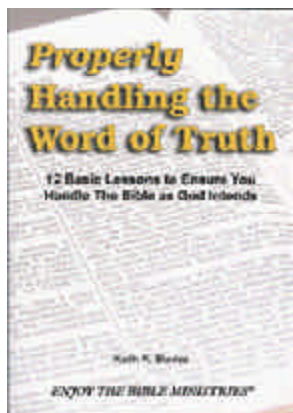
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