

# Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints  
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages  
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## Jesus' Early Miracles in Matthew

*"Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23).*

Matthew's Gospel begins with a genealogy of Jesus, showing that his legal guardian, Joseph, was descended from Abraham, and from David. In Chapter Two is an account of Jesus' miraculous birth. In Chapter Three is a brief account of the work of John the Baptist and then the baptism of Jesus himself, by John. Chapter Four recounts Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness for meditation and testing. Matthew 4:12 then jumps to the time that John had been imprisoned, whereupon Jesus travelled northward to Galilee where he had an extensive service.

"His fame went throughout all Syria ... and he healed them ... And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:24,25). Thus, though Jesus remained in the north, people from all parts of Israel flocked to him, intent on seeking his Godly leadership, teachings, and healings.

Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 then narrate the "Sermon on the Mount." Probably these three chapters of admonitions aggregate to one narrative things that Jesus spoke on various occasions, because they were thematically related. That was the style of Matthew's account. He grouped things by topic. That explains, for example, why the Lord's Great Prophecy of Matthew 24 contains elements that Luke's account shows to have been said on various occasions, split in Luke's account between chapters 12, 17, and 21.

Then, in Chapter 8, Matthew begins to narrate specific events in the ministry of Jesus that evidently followed Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. These were healings and teachings that were individually identified, and continue until Matthew 9:9 which then turns to other kinds of testimonies — the calling of Matthew himself, and various specific teachings of Jesus.

This isolates, or rather segregates, the experiences of Matthew 8:1 through 9:8 as a unit. Presumably Matthew himself was witness to the experiences he records here, even though he did not follow Jesus on a regular basis until he was called away from his job "at the receipt of custom" in Matthew 9:9.

### **MATTHEW 8:1-9:8 — SIX EPISODES**

There are six episodes recorded in this section. It is the first detailed record of specific activities of Jesus in Matthew's account. It appears that these form a consecutive series of pictures that have a deeper meaning about the progression of blessings, first through the Gospel Age, and subsequently into the Kingdom.

### **(1) MATTHEW 8:1-4 — BLESSINGS TO JEWISH BELIEVERS**

Matthew 8:1 begins, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him." This introduction perhaps has a spiritual meaning introducing the ministry of Jesus. When he came down from the heavenly kingdom, to serve here, many followed him.

Those served first by Jesus were the Jewish people, and the first miracle evidently pertains to them. "There came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." We are all lepers, in the sense that leprosy represents sin, and we are infected

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with sin through being children of Adam. We recognize that in Jesus, we can be cleansed. Jesus agreed to assist him, reached out to touch the leper, and “immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (verse 3).

Whereupon Jesus said, “Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.” It is this part of the interchange that indicates this first healing pertains to the Jewish people whom Jesus came to serve first. The Jewish people, and in this case the Jewish authorities, were the first to see the evidence that Jesus was God’s means for curing the sin sick world.

## **(2) MATTHEW 8:5-13 — BLESSINGS TO GENTILE BELIEVERS**

The next beneficiary was a centurion, who would have been a Roman, a Gentile. After the Jewish people, the gospel went out next to Gentiles, formally beginning with Cornelius as recorded in Acts chapter 10 — a person who himself also was a centurion. Thus the healing on behalf of this centurion is an apt way to represent the reach of the Gospel later to the Gentiles from Cornelius forward.

Other Gentiles had come to Jesus even during his ministry. The Syro-Phoenician woman of Mark 7:26-29 appealed to Jesus for her daughter, and after expressing her humility with the metaphor of seeking scraps from the children’s table, Jesus blessed her with her request.

Later, in the last week of Jesus’ life, John 12:20,21 records, “There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast ... saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.” Philip introduced them to our Lord, and his reaction was meaningful. “Jesus answered them, saying, the Hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified” (verse 22). Jesus knew that Christianity would extend world wide. The Gentiles then seeking his favor were a token that this expansion of his service was near at hand.

“It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob ... I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

The centurion in Matthew 8:6 had asked some relief on behalf of his servant, who “lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.” The Gentile world was under the thralldom of sin as much as the Jewish world, but without hope; they were by comparison “grievously tormented.”

Feeling unworthy of the personal presence of the Master, the centurion requested him merely to “speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed” (verse 8). Indeed, when the Gospel of Jesus would heal the Gentiles, it would not be through Jesus’ personal presence with them, as he had ministered to so many of the Israelites in their synagogues. It would be through the word of Jesus, going out through so many devoted emissaries. “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and



*Jesus healed the Centurion’s servant of palsy, from a distance.*

they are life” (John 6:63). Those words would be carried throughout the Gentile world, after the departing of Jesus, bringing blessings to all who trusted in it.

Jesus marveled at the Centurion’s faith. Even among his Jewish followers he did not find this kind of conviction, that merely to have the command for healing from the lips of the master, would suffice. Jesus granted the request, “And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.” In commending this Gentile believer’s faith, Jesus then said the following:

“Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out” (Matthew 8:11,12). When Jesus spoke these words, he meant that many Gentiles would embrace the hopes of the Abrahamic Covenant, during the Gospel Age, while many natural Israelites, “children of the kingdom” by heritage, would forsake the privilege and be replaced.

Jesus’ words respecting the Gentiles are similar to Psalms 107:3, which speaks prophetically about the call to the Church class, mostly out of the Gentile world. God would “gather them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south.” That is — lands removed far from Israel, the center of Jewish culture and heritage.

## **(3) MATTHEW 8:14-22 — INCREASE IN NUMBERS**

The next episode began with removing a fever from Peter’s wife’s mother, but expanded into multitudes “when even was come.” Suppose that the first episode above, chiefly about Jewish believers, refers to the Jewish Harvest period. And that the second episode refers to the even greater expansion of the Christian community into the Gentile world of the Roman Empire. In this case, perhaps this third experience begins with the Pergamos phase of the church, the third church of Revelation.

In that period, from perhaps 325 AD (the Council of Nicea) until 1157 AD (the time of Peter Waldo), the expansion of the Gospel brought multitudes more into the Christian community. This would be so because now the powers of the state became nominally Christian, and they

would magnify the spread of Christianity throughout their domain. However, it was not as pure a form of Christianity as had multiplied earlier.

Early in that church period the work was among the already Christian community, a “family” affair as it were, just as the third episode in Matthew was internal to the family of believers. But by “even” many came, being relieved chiefly of devils. So the expansion of the Gospel work in the third period relieved multitudes of the doctrines of devils, paganism, that had formerly maintained.

But with this increase, came a dilution in the quality of faith among them. In Matthew 8:18, “Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.” It was that way in the third church as well. Numbers increased greatly, but the true saints among them seemed compelled to separate themselves, fleeing into a wilderness condition. This is expressed also in Revelation 12:9,14. After Paganism had been cast out as a controlling influence in the ecclesiastical heavens, the true church was required to flee into the wilderness “for a time, and times, and half a time.” {1}

In Matthew 8:19, “a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Jesus replied that the foxes had holes, the birds had nests, but “the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” So it was, symbolically, of saints fleeing into the wilderness during this period of Christian history.

In the fourth period of the Church, Thyatira, spiritual conditions declined further in the mass of Christendom so that there was little spiritual life and rampant spiritual death (Revelation 6:8, 2:23). In Matthew 8:21 a disciple who wished to follow Jesus requested that first he wait long enough to “bury my father” — probably meaning that he would remain with his father until his passing. Jesus’ reply was “let the dead bury their dead,” and during the darkest part of the dark ages spiritual death was epidemic. It was for conscientious followers to move onward with the words of life, and not linger.

#### **(4) MATTHEW 8:23-27 — STORMY SEA**

The disciples followed Jesus into a ship, perhaps representing the Christian community within the countries of Christendom, the “ship of state.” There “arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep” (verse 24). Wars stirred up the “sea class” of Europe with many distresses. The “Hundred Years’ War” from 1337 to 1453, the “Thirty Years’ War” from 1618 to 1648, and the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), were among these.

Jesus predicted that this would occur during the Gospel Age. “Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... these things

must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:6,7). It might have seemed to the saints that Jesus was unmindful of these distresses, symbolized in the narrative by “he was asleep” (Matthew 8:24). But Jesus rose, calmed the seas, and encouraged their faith. By the time the end of the age did arrive, the surges of war had calmed.

#### **(5) MATTHEW 8:28-34 — DEMON INFLUENCE REMOVED**

Jesus came ashore, perhaps representing the end of the age, the time of his presence. Two persons “possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce ... cried out ... What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God”? Art thou come higher to torment us before the time? (verses 28,29).

If the devils earlier represented the false spiritual influences of paganism, perhaps these two possessed of “devils” represent two false spiritual systems and their illicit influences that are active during the Harvest. Revelation 16:13 speaks of three forces — dragon, beast, false prophet — the first of these is Satan’s influence through political forces, but the last two are false religious systems. They are scheduled for the lake of fire by the end of the harvest (Revelation 19:20). But the harvest message at the outset was a torment (literally, a testing) before this destined time.

The spirit of these devils subsequently cost the loss of a herd of swine — an unclean animal that the Israelites should not have been tending — whereupon “the whole city ... besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.” The harvest message, cleansing unclean influences from Christian doctrine, brought disruption. The city of Christendom did not welcome it.

#### **(6) MATTHEW 9:1-8 — SINS OF THIS WORLD**

Jesus entered into a ship again and “came into his own city.” We now move in picture to the Millennial Kingdom. The ship of state is the Kingdom administration, and Jesus is in “his own city,” spiritually his own administration, New Jerusalem.

The Centurion’s servant earlier was afflicted with “palsy,” and that is the plight of the sick man brought to Jesus now for healing. The earlier servant represented Gentile believers, and this man afflicted of palsy represents the Gentile world — all of mankind — in need of the healing touch of Jesus in the Millennium.

In this case Jesus said something that we did not encounter earlier. Rather than heal the man immediately, Jesus began with “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” This is



*Jesus healed Peter’s wife’s mother.*

how the Kingdom will begin. The first step is to remove the curse, the sin of the world that came through Adam's transgression. Thereafter, relief from the aggregate sufferings will ensue.

When Jesus said this, "certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth" (Matthew 9:3). Religious leaders passing into the Kingdom may also resist the new leaders of the Kingdom. Bishops and Cardinals will not readily recognize the authority of the Ancient Worthies, directing affairs in Israel of a formerly non-Christian people.

Jesus asked whether it was easier to say "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or "arise, and walk"? Then he turned to the afflicted one, directed him to "arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" — and he did. The restoring work in the Kingdom will evidence the authority of the new administration. "The multitudes saw it" and they marveled. Just as the world will witness remarkable things, and marvel.

— *Extracted and expanded from a study by Br. John Kennedy, India*

(1) Editor's note: The 1260 "days" of 539-1799, the "time, and times, and half a time," were the "fleeing" of the true church from the Christian Roman church-state system under Justinian and successors. The third church, Pergamos, started ~313 with vanquishing Paganism as a controlling influence in the ecclesiastical heavens. See more in the article following.

## Constantine and Christianity

### *A remarkable turn of events in 313 AD*

The Edict of Milan was one of the first documents in the history of the world to promote freedom of religion. It was a boon for Christians who up until that point had been severely persecuted during a ten year policy of intolerance initiated by the emperor Diocletian. The document was beneficial for all parties. It gave those who served pagan gods freedom to worship as they wished, but it was even more advantageous for Christians, whose faith had previously been outlawed. The Roman policy of intolerance was over.

Both Constantine and Licinius, another co-emperor of Rome (ruling Thrace, Pannonia, and Illyricum), marked their victory as new emperors over the Roman Empire by agreeing to an Edict in the city of Milan during the month of February 313 AD. In June of that year Licinius published and spread the law to the people of the empire. It was a momentous document which would be remembered until the end of the empire.

### **THE TEN YEARS OF REVELATION 2:10**

The ten year period of intolerance was one of the most severe persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire.

### **Excerpt from the Edict of Milan**

"When you see that this has been granted to [Christians] by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made that we may not seem to detract from any dignity of any religion."<sup>1</sup>

This tribulation upon the Lord's people was foretold in Revelation 2:10, which refers to a ten year period from 303 to 313 AD that began during the reign of Diocletian, ending with the Edict of Milan. This relieved the Church of a period of savage persecution. However, in the aftermath, rulers of the empire would intrude further upon the Church. Eventually true Christians were again persecuted, under policies that originated from the church state system that would follow later.

### **CONSTANTINE'S CONVERSION?**

After his huge victory at the Milvian Bridge against Maxentius in October 312, Constantine claimed conversion to Christianity. Three years later, in 315, he had this event marked with the construction of an arch in Rome to commemorate the battle. Upon his rise to power he attempted to unite different portions of the empire and started a campaign against those who disputed his power.

The story that Constantine told his personal historian, Eusebius, about his conversion, was first recorded about seven years later. He stated that he saw a cross in the sky in the noonday sun and that the Lord Jesus appeared to him later that night during a dream to explain the vision to him. Constantine said that after hearing the words "by this sign conquer," he had the sign of the cross painted on the shields of each of his soldiers. He further alleged that it was both the vision and the dream that helped inspire the battle victory. However, on the arch Constantine built to record the triumph, no such vision appears.

A close inspection of Constantine's arch shows that there are no Christian symbols on it at all. It does not show a cross in the sky, no banner lifted high with the cross, nor any crosses painted on the shields of his warriors. If this is really what happened, we should expect to see it detailed for us on the arch itself, since it was created was to memorialize the momentous battle at the Milvian bridge that caused his conversion.

The arch was built shortly after Constantine's victory, and before the version that Eusebius recorded. Near the top of the arch is a frieze that contains the original story Constantine told, depicting his victory. The story on this frieze illustrates the generals and pagan gods



Constantine

Constantine attributed to helping him win. Pagan gods from the Roman pantheon are depicted all over the arch, but none as prominently as *Sol Invictus*, the sun god of the Roman Empire. Instead of Jesus Christ, the arch depicts the god of the river Tiber, a winged goddess of victory, and *Roma*, the goddess of Rome.

Three former pagan Emperors are also shown on the arch with reliefs taken from other arches, including the Philosopher Marcus Aurelius, the Conqueror Trajan, and the Statesman Hadrian. Above the pagan sun god, *Sol Invictus*, is an inscription commissioned by Constantine which reads: “To the emperor Caesar Flavius Constantine Maximus, Pius Felix Augustus, since through divine inspiration and great wisdom he has delivered the state from the tyrant and all his factions, by his army and noble arms, the Senate and the Roman People, dedicate this arch decorated with triumphal insignia.”

### A CHANGING AND EVOLVING STORY

This story evolved over time. Rather than the story about the cross in the sky that Eusebius recorded years later, the Arch shows that Constantine saw himself as divinely inspired by *Sol Invictus*. Later, in Eusebius’ first account, no mention is made of Constantine’s vision or dream. This version of the story appeared in versions of the story years later.

The arch is the earliest record of this battle, but there is another record. The emperor also minted a coin depicting himself with (and as) *Sol Invictus*. The imperial tradition was that the emperors were under the teaching of the god Apollo, and that they were associated with *Sol Invictus*, the Unconquered Sun. Several contemporary portraits, coins, and sculptures commissioned by Constantine depict him with the rayed crown of *Sol Invictus*. Years after his conversion to Christianity, Constantine continued to mint coins with himself as this pagan Sun God. This symbol appears on most of his coins between 313 and 317.

When Constantine had the arch built, he also topped it off with a frieze and a statue of himself in a four horse chariot just like the Sun God Apollo. This statue has not survived as it was destroyed centuries ago, but the frieze remains. This image was also used by Constantine’s sons after the death of their father when they minted a coin

suggesting the deceased emperor’s ascent to heaven in a four horse chariot, with the hand of the Sun God in the heavens reaching towards the late emperor to accept him into the pantheon.

This well illustrates the beginning of the period of time prophesied about in Revelation 6:1-8, which also portrayed four horses — four horses which symbolized the degradation of the papal doctrine and its alliance with the state.

When Constantine founded a new city in the East, he did not name it after Jesus or the Apostles, but after himself. In his great city of Constantinople he also built a giant stature of Apollo the Sun God, but replaced the face of Apollo with his own. Constantine chose not to be baptized until he was near death. Before he died he arranged to have himself buried with twelve coffins that he called the Twelve Apostles, with himself as the thirteenth.

### THE RISE OF THE 1260 DAYS

The rise of the church-state alliance proceeded through many stages — from the Edict of Milan in 313, the Edict of Theodosius in 381, the Code of Justinian, conquering the last of the Arian tribes at Ravenna in 539, to the crowning of Charlemagne as emperor in 800. This period was not only illustrated on the coin of Constantine’s ascent to the throne of God with four horses, but was also predicted in the vision of the woman and the man-child in Revelation 12. In this vision the man-child ascended to the throne of God before the beginning of the 1260 year period.

The text says that the woman “gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne” (Revelation 12:5-6 NAS).

Just as the woman called Zion travailed and brought forth a man-child in the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 66:7,8), the woman in this text is the early Jewish Christian Church (1 Corinthians 12:12) which found itself at a new beginning after the death and resurrection of Christ in the spring of 33 AD. In this prophetic vision the woman gave birth to a child whose life was imperilled by a great red dragon (Pagan Rome), but delivered from this threat by being caught up to safety.

All seemed well. But thereafter the woman required to flee into the wilderness, where she would be nourished and cared for by God for 1260 years (from 539 to 1799).

In Revelation 12:10, after a war in heaven in which the Dragon lost its control of the ecclesiastical heavens, there is a loud declaration that “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God ... for the accuser of our brethren is cast down.”



Coin depicting Sol Invictus and Constantine



Coin minted showing Constantine ascending in a four horse chariot.

However, this victory of Christianity over paganism corrupted. The Christian victory was exercised through the nominal Church that gained influence with political rulers such as Justinian, and the woman (the true Church) found herself in continued persecution for 1260 years.

If the woman is the true Church, as an institution, then her various children would be its members, subject to continuing persecution. “The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). Ultimately the saints obtain dominion at the end of the age (Revelation 2:27, 19:15). But Christian rulership during the Gospel Age was exercised by the nominal Church, rather than the true Church.

The dragon in this vision has seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems (Revelation 12:3). Comparing these symbols with those of the beasts in Daniel 7 (who have a total of seven heads and 10 horns), we see that the dragon of Revelation pictures pagan Rome, which succeeded the other empires and aggregated their substance into itself. This dragon is described as a serpent, a deceiver, because the trouble from the dragon originated with Satan.

Constantine connected his victory to the intervention of God, thus indicating that he had his authority by divine right. However, his mixing of state influence with the Church would lead by steps to the persecution of the Church during 1260 years of Papal supremacy.<sup>2</sup> Then would come a dreadful persecution of the saints by the nominal church supported by governmental power, represented by the rule of Jezebel and Ahab (compare Revelation 2:20).

After Jesus was raised, frustrating Satan’s efforts to destroy Christ, Satan then attempted to kill the body of Christ from the time of the apostles, to Diocletian’s edict of intolerance, to Milan’s edict of tolerance, to the time of Justinian, through the middle ages, the Crusades, and the Reformation. The dragon, pagan Rome, lost its power to persecute the Church in 313 because of the Edict of Milan. This year may also was a culmination of a period of gestation indicated in Revelation 12:4, “The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

### REVELATION SYMBOLS IN ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Many of the symbols of Revelation are also found in the history of Rome. Constantine’s coins, mentioned earlier, show how the emperor viewed himself as ascending to

the heavens and divinely inspired. In Revelation 1:16 Jesus is depicted as having seven stars in his right hand, representing seven messengers to whom the message of the seven church are directed (Revelation 2, 3).

It is fascinating to note that at the time John was writing Revelation, the emperor Domitian (81-96 AD) minted a coin which depicted his son standing on the earth ascending to heaven with seven stars around him. In Revelation 17:1-4, the harlot woman of the false church is described as having a golden cup in her hand and sitting on the waters. Incredibly, this scene is illustrated on a Papal coin showing how Papacy viewed itself.

To determine the meaning of the prophecy of the pregnancy in Revelation twelve, we need to determine its length. Human pregnancies are 40 weeks in length, which would be 280 days. Starting with the beginning of the Church after the death of Christ in the spring of 33 AD, and adding 280 years, takes us to the spring of 313 and the Edict of Milan — the year ending the 10 years of Revelation 2:10. This is the time the child was “born” and “caught up” for protection from the threat of the dragon.



Domitian’s son with 7 stars

### SYMBOLIC NUMBERS

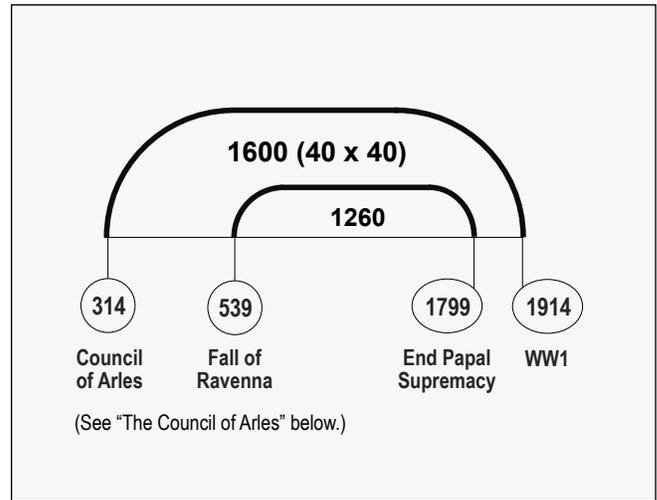
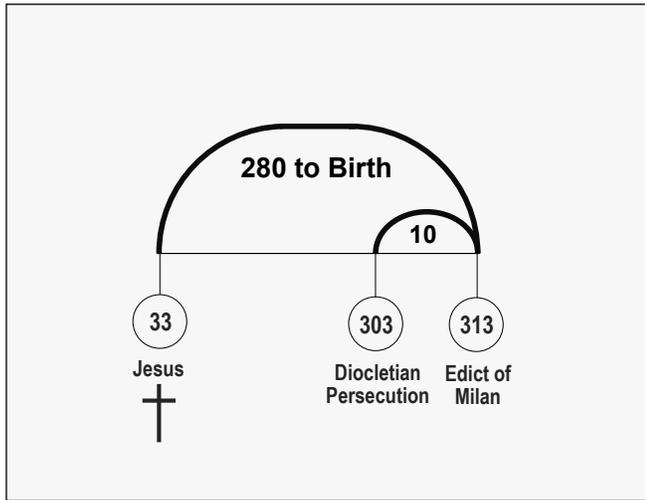
The numbers used to compute this period of time can add to our understanding of this prophecy. Seven in Scripture denotes something complete or perfect, sometimes applied to Jesus, or his Church, which is developed in seven stages during the Gospel Age. The number forty signifies a period of trial.

These two numbers together indicate a trial upon the Church, passing through many experiences for the incipient Christian community that threatened its very life. This period of time, culminating in ten years of special distress for the Church, was foretold three centuries before, right to the very year.

### A CHRONOLOGICAL POSSIBILITY FOR THE 1600 FURLONGS

The harvest chapter of Revelation 14 also references the date 313. “And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs” (Revelation 14:20 ASV).

In Scripture, horses sometimes represent doctrines. In retribution against Christianity, those in charge of doctrine will be replace. Zechariah 14:20 says, “in that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘HOLY TO THE LORD.’ ” The doctrines will be vibrant, holy, and refreshing. The old dogmas of Christendom will be removed and refreshed with Holiness.



This number **1600** is forty squared (40 x 40). The square of a number emphasizes and intensifies the underlying symbol, in this case 40, trial, testing, or judgment. Perhaps here the 1600 furlongs indicates a period of 1600 years when judgment would fall on the systems of Christendom in World War I.

In 314 Constantine defeated Licinius, and though the latter continued for some years, this was a step in the consolidation of power under Constantine. Thereafter, 1600 years bring us to 1914, when the image of Daniel 2 was smitten on its feet, and the toes of iron (political) and clay (Papal) began to be removed in the summer winds of the harvest (Daniel 2:35). (See an additional suggestion in the article following, on "The Council of Arles.")

## SUMMARY

The Edict of Milan in 313 AD closed out the 10 year "great persecution" initiated by Diocletian, that ranged from 303 to 313. With the close of this period the "man child" escaped the threatened destruction from the dragon of Revelation 12:4, as the organized persecution of the

incipient Christian community was stopped. Thus the man-child was "born" 40 weeks of years, 280 years in all, after the fledgling Church began in the year 33 AD. From Constantine's victory over his rival Licinius the next year, 1600 years take us to 1914 when the 10 toes, the remnants of Roman domination, were brought into judgment.

Thus in the Edict of Milan and its aftermath we have three independent methods which touch upon times of prophetic fulfillment. Seeing prophecy fulfilled in the historical record should increase our faith that what God has promised has come true, and will continue to come true.<sup>3</sup>

— Br. Jeff Mezera

(1) "Edict of Milan," Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* (De Mortibus Persecutorum), chapter 48, opera, ed. O. F. Fritzsche, II, page 288 sq. (Bibl Patr. Ecc. Lat. XI).

(2) Editor's note: This period of 1260 years, from 539 to 1799, began during the time of Emperor Justinian, who reigned from 1 August 527 to 14 November 565.

(3) Editor's note: A related article on this subject, by Br. Tom Gilbert, is "Development of the 'Trinity Doctrine,'" *Beauties of the Truth* (November 2010).

# The Council of Arles

(August 1, 314) — World War I (August 1, 1914)

Starting in the 1880s, the brethren expected that in 1914, a Great War would bring down the failed Church-State systems of Christendom. This dating was later refined to begin with the Civil Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) in October. However, hostilities for the Great War broke out two months earlier on August 1, not October 1. One possible reason was that this date of August 1, 1914 is significant to the Jews since that was observance of the 9th of Av during for 1914. (See "The 9th of Av," *Beauties of the Truth*, November 2006.)

The chronology link suggested in this article raises another fascinating correlation. The **1600** furlongs as the square of 40 x 40 is examined, but if the dating starts with the Edict of Milan in 313, the ending date is 1913. The Edict of Milan of itself freed Christians from the horrific attacks by the Civil Roman Dragon. Of itself, this edict only set forward a sensible policy for freedom of worship that today would be claimed as a "human right."

## PEACE DID NOT REIGN IN THE CHURCH

In the way of background, as soon as the Diocletian persecution ceased, the Church Hierarchy continued its internal arguments in the Donatist controversy. The following is an accurate summation from Wikipedia:

“Donatism was a schism in the Church of Carthage from the fourth to the sixth centuries AD. Donatists argued that Christian clergy must be faultless for their ministry to be effective and their prayers and sacraments to be valid. Donatism had its roots [when] ... The Roman governor of North Africa, lenient to the large Christian minority under his rule throughout the [Diocletian] persecutions, was satisfied when Christians handed over their scriptures as a token repudiation of faith. When the persecution ended, Christians who did so were called *traditors* — ‘those who handed (the holy things) over’ — by their critics (who were mainly from the poorer classes).”



Arles, in southern France, with its ancient amphitheater

The Church Hierarchy argued that the holy sacraments were sufficient to effect forgiveness and reconciliation of the *traditors*. The Donatists wanted to either exclude these from service, or extract a great deal more penitence. After a failed attempt by Constantine in October 313 to bring peace by calling together a handful of the chief bishops from North Africa and their opponents, in the presence of the Bishop of Rome (there was no title of “Pope” at this historical time), the first general synod of the Church was *commanded* by the Roman Civil Government. This seems to be the start of formal Church-State linkage. The date was August 1, 314. How remarkable that the Council of Arles was 1600 years to the very day<sup>1</sup> when Great War broke out!

Following is a relevant extract about these times, from Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 10.5.21-24 ([www.newadvent.org/fathers/250110.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250110.htm)).

(21) Constantine Augustus to Chrestus, bishop of Syracuse.<sup>2</sup> When some began wickedly and perversely to disagree among themselves in regard to the holy worship and celestial power and Catholic doctrine, wishing to put an end to such disputes among them, I formerly gave command that certain bishops should be sent from Gaul, and that the opposing parties who were contending persistently and incessantly with each other, should be summoned from Africa; that in their presence, and in the presence of the bishop of Rome, the matter which appeared to be causing the disturbance might be examined and decided with all care.

(22) But since, as it happens, some, forgetful both of their own salvation and of the reverence due to the most holy religion, do not even yet bring hostilities to an end, and are unwilling to conform to the judgment already passed, and assert that those who expressed their opinions and decisions were few, or that they had been too hasty and precipitate in giving judgment, before all the things which ought to have been accurately investigated had been examined — on account of all this it has happened

that those very ones who ought to hold brotherly and harmonious relations toward each other, are shamefully, or rather abominably, divided among themselves, and give occasion for ridicule to those men whose souls are aliens to this most holy religion. Wherefore it has seemed necessary to me to provide that this dissension, which

ought to have ceased after the judgment had been already given by their own voluntary agreement, should now, if possible, be brought to an end by the presence of many.

(23) Since, therefore, we have commanded a number of bishops from a great many different places to assemble in the city of Arles, before the kalends of August [Note: August 1 — with the uncertainties of travel, a date was set by which the meeting needed to start even if all had not arrived], we have thought proper to write to you also that you should secure from the most illustrious Latronianus, corrector of Sicily, a public vehicle, and that you should take with you two others of the second rank, whom you yourself shall choose, together with three servants who may serve you on the way, and betake yourself to the above-mentioned place before the appointed day; that by your firmness, and by the wise unanimity and harmony of the others present, this dispute, which has disgracefully continued until the present time, in consequence of certain shameful strifes, after all has been heard which those have to say who are now at variance with one another, and whom we have likewise commanded to be present, may be settled in accordance with the proper faith, and that brotherly harmony, though it be but gradually, may be restored.

(24) May the Almighty God preserve you in health for many years.

— Br. Richard Doctor

(1) Adjustments to the Roman calendar over the centuries would shift dates. However, we remember and celebrate anniversaries on the same month day, notwithstanding such adjustments. The assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC will always be “the ides of March” (March 15).

(2) The bishop of Rome, Miltiades, died in January 314 and was succeeded by the more famous Sylvester, however, Sylvester may not have succeeded to the appointment as bishop of Rome at the time the synod was called, or was too new to the office to be entrusted with this delicate task.

## Financial Report

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 5,278.30  | Balance January 1, 2017                 |
| 1,927.48  | Donations                               |
| -1,829.56 | Expenses                                |
| <hr/>     |   |
| 5,376.22  | Balance January 1, 2018                 |
| 625       | Mail subscribers, Email subscribers 355 |