

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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Was Jesus born on the Feast of Trumpets?

ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR

The Jewish New Year Rosh Hashanah is also called the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24) as well as the “head of the year” for it is the Jewish civil New Year. It leads up to the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the month. This first month is about renewal, inner renewal, and atonement, divine atonement. Rosh Hashanah is a Jewish holiday that is observed over two days rather than one day as is typical for most of the holidays. While in 2021 Rosh Hashanah began at sundown September 6th, recently, in 2019 its observance went from Sunday, September 29th to Tuesday, October 1st. By no coincidence, the Feast of Trumpets, September 29th to October 1st this seems to be the very time that Jesus was born.

Why was Rosh Hashanah two days? If you think back, you couldn't broadcast over the internet, or turn on the radio. Back then the Sanhedrin were the ones responsible for telling people that the Sabbath started. Then when the New Year Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets, started it was so important that they had to have two days to make sure it was proclaimed throughout the whole land.

Today Rosh Hashanah is celebrated by praying in the synagogue, and reflection. And it begins on the first day of Tishri, which is the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year. This leads up to the 10th day, which is the Day of Atonement. New Years marks the start of ten days that are called, “the ten days of repentance.” This ends with what we know today as Yom Kippur, the Day of Repentance. We call it the Day of Atonement.

The important thing is that Yom Kippur is the single holiest Jewish holiday. It is even more holy than Passover. That is important when you think about the entry of Jesus — the atoning sacrifice — into this world. Today it is a time to reconcile with your neighbors. There are a lot of good wishes one to another, and Happy New Year greetings. It is the time for visiting the graves of your relatives and friends. There is special food and dipping pieces of round Challah bread and apples into honey signifying hope for a sweet new year.

Pomegranates are eaten because of their many seeds represent the 613 commandments in the Torah. This represents the ingesting of the law as it leads up to atonement. Importantly, this celebration was inaugurated when God said to Moses, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering to the LORD.’” Leviticus 23:24,25. We see that Jews were to rest and were reminded of this rest by the blowing of trumpets, to call to a Holy convocation. They were not to do any laborious work, but to present an offering to Jehovah.

Details on the sacrificial offerings are given in Numbers, “Now in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall also have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. It will be to you a day for blowing trumpets. You shall offer a burnt offering as a soothing aroma to the LORD ... Offer one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you ... an offering by fire to the LORD.” Numbers 29:1-6

The first day of each month in the ecclesiastical year that led up to this seventh month was inaugurated by the blowing of trumpets. We read in Numbers 10:10 and Numbers 28:11-15, “Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am Jehovah,” or “the LORD your God.”

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Tishri was the last of the seven important months of the sacred year that started with the spring Equinox linked to the Passover. It ended in Tishri, the seventh month, with the fall Equinox and the Day of Atonement. The number seven is connected with sacred things. So these two important feasts bridge the ecclesiastical year, and with the seventh month, the civil year.

TRUMPETS

The Feast of Trumpets in Hebrew reads, “the day of blast,” the Greek Septuagint translates this as, “a day of signaling.” Two types of trumpets are mentioned in connection with the feasts and in the celebrations, for the breaking of camp, and for the giving of the law. These are the Ram’s horn, or Shofar (H7782), and the Silver Trumpets (H2689) originally crafted as a pair out of a solid piece of beaten silver measuring about 45 cm (17.5”) in length (Numbers 10:1,2).

For Leviticus 23:24 Jewish custom clearly supports a Shofar being blown. In the *Babylonian Talmud*, Rosh Hashanah 16a, “Sound [*tiku*] a shofar” (Psalms 81:4). Why does one sound a staccato series of shofar blasts [*terua*] in addition to a long continuous shofar blast [*tekia*]? ... “In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns [*terua*]” (Leviticus 23:24).

The next festival following the Day of Atonement, is the Feast of Booths. This was to signal a glorious time, the kingdom age, after the Day of Atonement is complete. This is when the people came to learn about the Lord. The fall of the year is always significant for events that have an anti-type in the Millennial Kingdom.

DATE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The date of the birth of Jesus is considered in detail by Bro. Russell (Volume 2, page 54). He says, “it has become customary among scholars to concede ... that our Lord was born four years previous to the year AD that is in the year 4 BC.” Where did this custom originate?

German scholar Emil Schuerer based the 4 BC date on the report of a lunar eclipse by Josephus, in relation to Herod’s death (Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19. 343-350). Schuerer’s scholarship has been held as “the consensus of the scholarly community for the last century” (Steinmann, 2009). Herod’s death was proposed to occur on March 13, 4 BC.¹

(1) From Galloway, 1869, pages 404-410 it seems that Schuerer was following the brilliant, but flawed French Jesuit scholar Denis Pétau (Petavius), 1583-1659, who set forward the 4 BC date (Petavius, 1627, see front piece on page 3). Isaac Newton was familiar with this dating from Petavius and dismissed it. Newton believed, as set forth here, that 2 BC was the correct date. Pity the labor by Petavius on calculating the lunar eclipse dates which was all the more complicated by the pre-Copernican Revolution belief that the sun revolved around the earth! (Petavius, page 699). — *Editor*

In recent decades, arguments for this position have become exceptionally weak. Bro. Russell sets forth the date 2 BC and this is an important date because it forms the basis of much of our chronology around the birth and the cutting off of Jesus, and our whole chronological system. But it was always challenged, with some scholars saying 4 BC. Pastor Russell says 2 BC, but why did he take that position?

Matthew recounts the visit of the wise men to Herod. We know that Herod then sought the life of the young child, so the lives of Jesus and Herod overlapped. Bro. Russell goes on to say that the eclipse Josephus identified in connection with Herod’s death, is not the one from 4 BC. “As it happens ... all three (eclipses) in 1 BC were total eclipses” (Volume 2, page 57). Today we have an advantage. We can go back, to NASA’s eclipse tables. NASA has calculated lunar eclipses back as far as they could go and it is available to anybody.

Review of Eclipses (Sky View Cafe)

July 5, 1 BC. — This total lunar eclipse was never visible at Jerusalem at all. The total duration of this eclipse occurred when the moon was below the horizon at Jerusalem.

December 29, 1 BC. This eclipse was not a total lunar in the customary sense. It was about 40% umbral eclipse when the moon rose at Jerusalem at 4:20 pm. That was about the maximum umbral eclipse that it attained. At no time was this eclipse a full umbral eclipse (even when it was below the horizon). The penumbra did cover the moon, but not the full umbra. By 5:50 pm the partial umbral eclipse passed, and the penumbral portion ended by 7:00 pm.

January 10, 1 BC. This appears to be the reported eclipse that preceded the death of Herod. It was a full umbral eclipse, at Jerusalem, from 12:27 am to 1:17 am — and a penumbral eclipse for even longer.

(For additional support for the death of Herod on January 10, 1 BC see Filmer 1966, and Steinmann 2009).

If January 10, 1 BC is correct for the eclipse, the death of Herod (no year zero) would be before Passover that year. With the September 29, 2 BC birth date, Jesus would have been between 4 and 7 months old when Herod died.

Let us see how this harmonizes with the account in Matthew: “Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men” (Matthew 2:16). So that’s why the 2 BC date for Jesus’ birth really makes sense, because Herod would have died early in 1 BC.

JESUS' MINISTRY STARTED AT AGE 30

Jewish law implies that Jesus started his 3½-year ministry on his 30th birthday based on Levitical and Rabbinical tradition. (Numbers 4:3) The priests were to serve in the temple, as soon as they were 30 years old until they were 50. The date our Lord was crucified was Friday, April 3, 33 AD. This seems well established: "Now from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour (3 am) there was darkness over all the land" (Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33) NASA confirms a 5½ hour lunar eclipse on Friday, April 3, 33 AD. It is possible, but arguable, that this eclipse would have been noticed (at moonrise).²

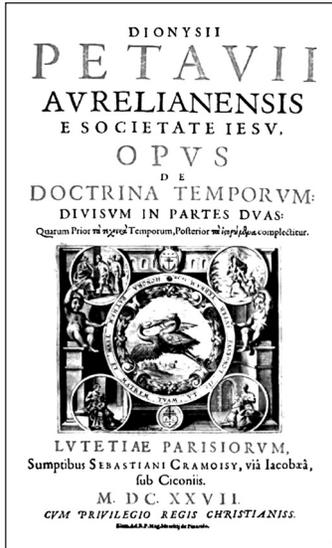
A ministry of 3½ years from age 30 would have begun in 29 AD (Volume 2, pages 67-68). Jesus' birth, was 30 years earlier, in 2 BC (29 – 30 + 1 for no year 0). The crucifixion occurred during the 70th Week of Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy (Nisan 14), 33 AD (Volume 2, page 58). If we examine years surrounding this date, 33 AD is the only one that has Nisan 14 on Friday, April 3. So if we know Jesus dies in 33 AD and we go back 33½ years remembering there is no Zero year, it takes us to that time of September/October of 2 BC again.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

There is additional support we may gather from Luke 2:7, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." In 2 BC, the Feast of Trumpets was celebrated starting September 29th, Tishrei 1. It seems reasonable that there was no room for Joseph and Mary the late afternoon of September 28, 2 BC because Bethlehem was full of visitors coming for the Feast of Trumpets. By Jewish reckoning, the new day starts after ~6:00 pm and on September 29th when Jesus was born.

Luke 2:8 recounts that there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby keeping watch over their flocks. The Talmud says that flocks were in the fields at night from March to November. Since Bethlehem is 2,550 feet (777 meters) above sea level with frost, and snow in winter, Jesus' birth must be before end of October.

Luke 2:1 reads, "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world." There has always been some controversy trying to establish this from Roman records. A few years ago, Dr. Ernest Martin, an astronomer wrote a book called, *The Star That Astonished The World*, (1991), pages 197-198: "Quirinius was then in Syria having conducted his procuratorial role of conducting a registration of peoples ...



With Saturninus gone to Rome ... Quirinius assumed the supreme command while concluding his ... duties. With Saturninus gone to Rome in late Spring of 2 BC, this would have left Quirinius as the full administrator until October or so." He had the authority to issue the census and this was the time when he ordered the registration of the people in the spring of 2 BC, which makes sense for that later period of time, Joseph and Mary are on their way to make that registration when she is taken with child.

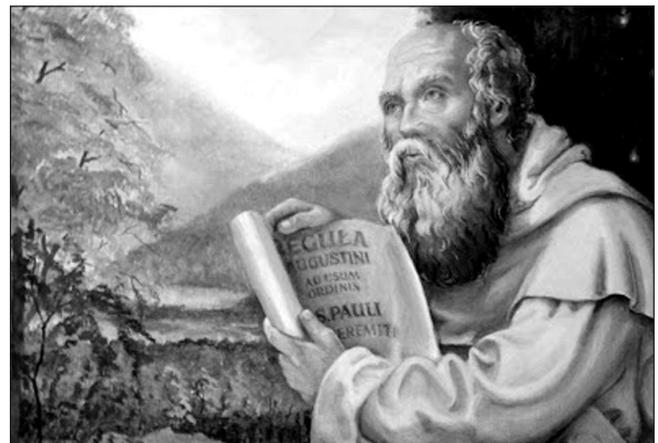
Iraenaeus, *Against Heresies* (Book III, Chapter 21.3), writing around 133 AD: "Our Lord was born about the forty-first year of the reign of Augustus." In Latin grammar, "about" when used with numbers meant "with close proximity" or, "almost exactly." The First year of Augustus' reign was 43 BC, with Jesus born in 41st year of reign, or 2 BC.

Clement of Alexandria 153-217 AD (Greek original cited in Galloway, 1869, page 410): "The nativity of Christ was in the fifteenth year before the death of Augustus." We know that Augustus died on August 19, 14 AD, hence the year of Jesus' birth 15 years before is 2 BC (adding 1 because there is no year zero.)

Tertullian in 160 AD affirms both Iraenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, writing, "Augustus began to rule 41 years before Jesus' birth," and "Augustus died 15 years after Jesus' birth." He then adds, "Jesus was born 28 years after death of Cleopatra." With Cleopatra's death in 30 BC, 28 years later takes us to 2 BC.

Eusebius (264-340 AD) writes "It was the forty-second year of the reign of Augustus and the twenty-eighth from the subjection of Egypt on the death of Antony." Augustus' rulership began in the fall of 43 BC. The 42nd year of the reign begins after 41 years are completed, or 2 BC in the fall. Egypt was incorporated into Roman Empire

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Eusebius of Caesarea

(2) Possibly he was baptized shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles, which the Law obligated him to attend. — *Editor*

The Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3 (Compiled by Br. James Parkinson)

	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum
Address	To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:	And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:	And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
Christ	These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:	These things saith the first and the last, who became dead, and lived again:	These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:
I know	I know thy works, and thy toil and patience [or steadfastness], and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; (3) and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. (4) But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.	I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy [or reviling] of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.	I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. (14) But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. (15) So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.
Counsel	Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent. (6) But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.	Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer; behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.	Repent thou therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.
Call, Promise (first 3) Promise, Call (last 4)	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise God [or my God].	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:	And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:	And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:	And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished copper [or brass, or bronze]:	These things saith he that hath the seven Sprits of God, and the seven stars:	These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth:	These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. (20) But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my bondservants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. (21) And I gave her time ... she willeth not to repent of her fornication. (22) Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. (23) And I will kill her children with death [or pestilence]; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the kidneys and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.	I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.	I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. (9) Behold, I give some of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will cause them to come and to [Greek, in order that they shall have come and shall] worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (10) Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.	I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (17) Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked:
But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden. (25) Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I shall have come.	Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God. (3) Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I shall have come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I shall have come upon thee. (4) But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.	I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.	I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. (19) As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: (27) and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the ceramic vessels are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: (28) and I will give him the morning star.	He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.	He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.	He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.
He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

immediately after Death of Cleopatra and Anthony in 30 BC, and 28 years later takes us to 2 BC.

Tradition, astronomy, and historical church writings do not prove the Bible, but they compliment the biblical evidence that we believe. Early in the truth movement it was clear that the evidence pointed to Jesus being born 2 BC in the fall somewhere around October. How striking that the time of Jesus' birth, was one announcing atonement, announcing redemption coming, and it was in that seventh month of the year, making us think of the seven trumpets of Revelation that announce an even greater time of coming atonement and redemption.

— Adapted from a discourse by Br. Len Griehs

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The Prophet Haggai and the Harvest

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest" (Haggai 1:1).

The name Haggai means "Festive" or "Festival." Haggai was one of the 12 Minor Prophets closing out the Old Testament record. He prophesied during the period of the Persian Empire. Considering the time periods of the Minor Prophets, Hoshea through Micah prophesied during the Assyrian period, Nahum to Zephaniah during the Babylonian period, and Haggai to Malachi during the Post-captivity period.

BACKGROUND

After the completion of 70 years, King Cyrus in his first year gave permission for the Israelites to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. Many people returned to Jerusalem and work began. Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, were leaders among them. When they started rebuilding the temple, complaints arose from neighboring people and the work ceased till the second year of Darius Hystaspes, king of Persia (not to be confused with Darius the Mede). God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the Israelites to resume the temple construction work.

God's message came to Haggai in the second year of Darius five times, on four different dates. The last two messages were on same date. The dates of these messages were: (1) month six day one, (2) month six day 24, (3) month seven day 21, and (4,5) month nine, day 24.

FIRST MESSAGE (HAGGAI 1:1-12)

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of Jehovah came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son

of Jehozadak, the high priest: "Thus says Jehovah of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of Jehovah.' Then the word of Jehovah came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, 'Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. Thus says Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says Jehovah. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares Jehovah of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.' Then **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel, and **Joshua** the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him. And the people feared Jehovah."

The commandment to build the temple represents the beginning of the Spiritual Temple from the day of Pentecost. The initial work on the temple at Jerusalem went well, representing that the beginning work of the Apostles building the spiritual temple, the Church, also

went well. Their work was very energetic and many came into Christ. However, the work on the temple at Jerusalem was impeded, as opposition was raised from the people of the land who were not Israelites. Soon the temple work ceased. Similarly, after the death of the apostles, many tares developed and the growth of the spiritual temple slowed. It became even worse during the Dark Ages.

As the rebuilding work was restimulated by the words of Haggai, so the effort to complete the spiritual temple was restimulated in the period of the Church prior to the Harvest. This would correspond to the sixth church, the Philadelphia period. This we can confirm by the prophecy of Daniel 12:9, 10, “He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”

Apparently, Haggai received the word of God in the sixth year of Darius, which also confirms that the antitype points to the sixth period of the Church. But Haggai received two messages in the sixth month, one at the beginning and another at the end. So, antitypically, God gave messages to the true church near the beginning of the sixth church, and another near the end of sixth church.

We suggest that in the first message, Haggai represent the sixth messenger, William Penn (compare *Beauties of the Truth*, February 2000 issue, “The Cross and The Crown: William Penn, Messenger of Brotherly Love”). Penn was a key leader in bringing the Christian ethic to America, preparing the way for the later Harvest work. It is notable Penn’s work was in Pennsylvania, the same ground from which later sprang the Harvest work under Br. Russell, from Allegheny, Pennsylvania. We suggest that Penn’s work opening up the new world as ground for the later Harvest Movement is indicated typically in the book of Haggai after the first message.

SECOND MESSAGE (HAGGAI 1:13-15)

“Then Haggai, the messenger of Jehovah, spoke to the people with Jehovah’s message, ‘I am with you, declares Jehovah.’ And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of **Joshua** the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of Jehovah of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.”

This second message also came on the sixth month, but toward the close of the month, that is, on the 24th day. Elsewhere in scripture the number 24 represents the



The Prophet Haggai

end of something particular. For example, Daniel was in fasting and prayer about the Temple for 21 days from the 3rd day of the first month, and he received a reply from God on the 24th day. The intervening 21 days reflects that the literal temple would be completed in 21 years, and parallels that completing the antitypical temple would take portions of 21 centuries.

Here in Haggai, perhaps mention of the 24th day indicates to us that the work of completing the spiritual temple is at hand. Haggai’s mention of this day is still within month six, suggesting that this message

reflects the work that was preliminary to the harvest, and in preparation for it. There was such a work toward the close of the Philadelphia period, it was the Adventist Movement, in which William Miller was the key leader.

This second message in Haggai was 23 days after the first message. Is this meaningful respecting the work of William Miller? It seems to be. The foundational time prophecy underlying the work of William Miller was the 2300 years of Daniel chapter eight. Seeing that the 2300 years were soon to expire, prompted Miller’s effort to prepare for the second advent of Christ.

This perhaps confirms that the first two messages to Haggai pertain to the sixth church period: William Penn at the beginning and William Miller at the end.

In the work of reconstructing the temple, both Zerubbabel and Joshua played an important role. Each of them represents our Lord Jesus from a different perspective. Zerubbabel was governor, Joshua was more directly a spiritual leader. Is it possible that here we have a reflection of the influence of Jesus, overseeing the rebuilding work through William Penn (a governor), and William Miller (more directly a spiritual leader).

THIRD MESSAGE (HAGGAI 2:1-9)

“In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of Jehovah came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: ‘speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares Jehovah. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares Jehovah. Work, for I am with you, declares Jehovah of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. For thus says Jehovah of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with

glory, says Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says Jehovah of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares Jehovah of hosts.”

The third message was given in the seventh month, representing the seventh stage of the Gospel Age. This is the period during which God’s house is filled with Glory. The Lord’s words through Haggai here reflect the message to God’s people in the seventh church. Haggai here represents the seventh messenger, Br. Russell. God used him to reveal His wonderful plan and the importance of Christ’s ransom sacrifice.

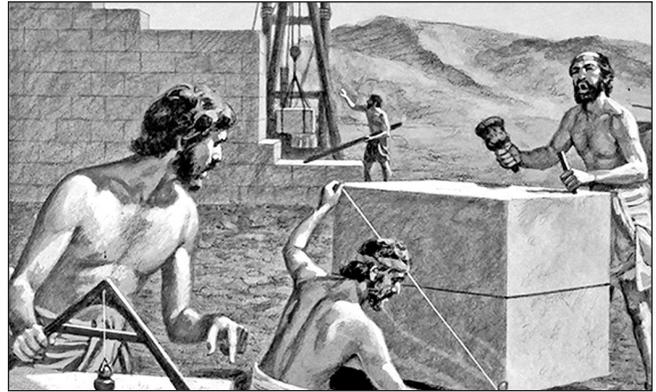
This provided a highly encouraging message to God’s people. As God said, the glory of the spiritual temple will be greater than even the glory of Solomon’s Temple. The shaking of heavens and Earth (Haggai 2:6) represents the shaking of world systems at the end of the age. At that time, gold (the true church) and silver (the Great Company class) will be the property of God. “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

This speaks of the completion of the Church and the Great Company, both spiritual classes. This vision was given on day number 21, reminding us of the completion of the heavenly temple classes. The number 21 also is the product of 3 (atonement) and 7 (seven stages of the Church), suggesting that day 21 points to the end of the first age of redemption, closing with Laodicea.

FOURTH AND FIFTH MESSAGES (HAGGAI 2:10-23)

“On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Jehovah came by Haggai the prophet, Thus says Jehovah of hosts: ‘Ask the priests about the law: If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?’ The priests answered and said, ‘No.’ Then Haggai said, ‘If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?’ The priests answered and said, ‘It does become unclean.’ Then Haggai answered and said, ‘so is it with this people ... and so with every work of their hands.

“And what they offer there is unclean. Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of Jehovah, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares Jehovah. Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of Jehovah’s temple was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.’



Temple building, supervised by Zerubbabel

“The word of Jehovah came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, ‘speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares Jehovah of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares Jehovah, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares Jehovah of hosts.’ “

The fourth message is about completing work on the temple, figurative of the spiritual temple, the Church. The fifth message, on the same day, is about the overthrow of world nations. These messages were given day number 24. As day 24 in chapter one represented the end of the sixth church period, so 24 in this chapter represents the end of the seventh church period.

Both the completion of the Church (the point of message four) and the removal of present kingdoms (the point of message five) occur at the end of the age. Hence God gave these two messages on the same day, the 24th day.

LESSONS FOR US

We all share a part in being selected for the spiritual temple. We should remember that this is not a time to develop our own desires. We need to consider whether our covenant of consecration, being baptized into Christ, is pleasing before God. If not, then as in Haggai, God warns us through our fellow Brethren, and through His words. If God’s blessing of truth is deficient within us, let us remember the period when the Church was beginning, and the zealous work of the Apostles for God. These are the encouraging tools for us to focus in spiritual development, rather than worldly goals. If we do so, we will realize the blessings of God through the truth. As Haggai insisted the people go to the mountains to bring wood for the temple, let us seek our Almighty God, refresh our faith in the ransom (the wood), and be motivated afresh to apply ourselves to building up the temple of God. Let us build a temple for God, which He will desire.

— Br. J. Joshua, India