

thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (cf. Ps. 37; Mt. 5:5).

- 2 "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time" (Isa. 60:22). Compare this with Genesis 18:18: "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" (cf. Mic. 4:6,7).

### Conclusion

Our studies in Revelation 21 have given us a glimpse of what it will be like in the age to come,

when there will be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness". Let us "be glad and rejoice" in the knowledge that God will surely bring this to pass, and let us take every opportunity to prepare ourselves for the coming of that great day, so that we might in the grace of God be invited into that holy city when the Lamb's book of life is opened: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (v. 27).

(Concluded)

## How long is a generation?

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**T**HE TERM 'GENERATION' is usually thought of as being a period of forty years, but is this always the case? Forty years may well be a significant period of time in some cases, but the term 'generation' may also refer to the life span of the people concerned, and that lifetime may be "three score years and ten" or a hundred or, as in the case of Noah in the following passage, a great deal more: "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for *thee* have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1). *Strong's Concordance* says the Hebrew word *dore* means "properly a revolution of time, i.e. an age or generation". In the above passage, "this generation" was the evil generation contemporary with Noah, which, as we know, was far more than forty years.

In Genesis 15 we have more generations spoken about:

"And [God] said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them *four hundred years*; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in *the fourth generation* they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (vv. 13-16).

This speaks of four generations spanning 400 years, which is obviously not forty years each.

In Numbers we have a period of forty years mentioned in connection with the wicked generation who were to die in the wilderness:

"Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it . . . your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, *from twenty years old and upward*, which have murmured against Me . . . And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise" (14:22-34).

So, some of the generation that wandered in the wilderness were sixty years old and upward when they died. It is clear that God was dealing with those who saw His works in Egypt and who were of a responsible age, hence the "twenty years old and upward" of verse 29.

I wonder if this has implications further on in Scripture. For example, why was the seventy-year captivity *seventy* years? Was it because God wanted the generation who were blind to the preaching of Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:15,16), and who were wicked in their ways, to perish in Babylon?

If we go on to the time of Jesus, we have then another forty-year period, this time between his death and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.

70. Again we must remember that those who opposed or who ignored the teaching of our Lord would presumably, as with those referred to in Numbers 14, be twenty years old and upwards. Therefore those who constituted "this generation" (Mt. 24:34) would have been at least sixty, and would have had forty years to repent and consider the teaching of the apostles. They were responsible people because they saw the one who manifested the glory of the Lord; but, as we know, most perished.

Again, if we come to our own times, those Jews who witnessed the momentous events of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 should have turned to God but instead have lived in unbelief, as Brother Thomas expected. It is true that there are Orthodox Jews, and some Messianic Jews who believe in Jesus, but they are in the minority. It could be that those in unbelief will have to die out before the Lord returns. 1948 to 2018 is seventy years, and at the end of that time any remaining people who were at the age of responsibility (twenty or over) in 1948 will be in their nineties and ready to perish.

As we in 2006 see the signs of the times and believe that the end is near, it is interesting to note that when the stone hits the image in Daniel 2 the

image is standing. The two legs of the Roman Empire originally stood in Rome (in the west) and Byzantium (in the east), although after 1453 and the conquest of Byzantium (Constantinople) by the Ottoman Turks, Eastern Rome as it were moved north to Moscow (sometimes referred to as 'the third Rome') to provide a continuation of the eastern leg. However, if Turkey is accepted into the EU then it could be said that for the first time since 1453 the image is truly standing on its feet, for the EU will then incorporate both Rome and Byzantium (now Istanbul). This could occur in 2018, seventy years from 1948. Alternatively, the standing up of the image could be said to have occurred if Russia comes down into Turkey at that time. As a new generation came back from Babylon to see the Land and a new generation came into the Land under Joshua, so a new generation of Jews will see Jesus take power and the Kingdom of God established.

From all this it seems to me that a generation is not necessarily forty years, for at the end of the period 1948 to 1988 nothing in particular happened. But seventy years from 1948, in 2018, who knows what might happen? So perhaps the term 'generation' simply means the lifetime of the people involved. What do readers think?