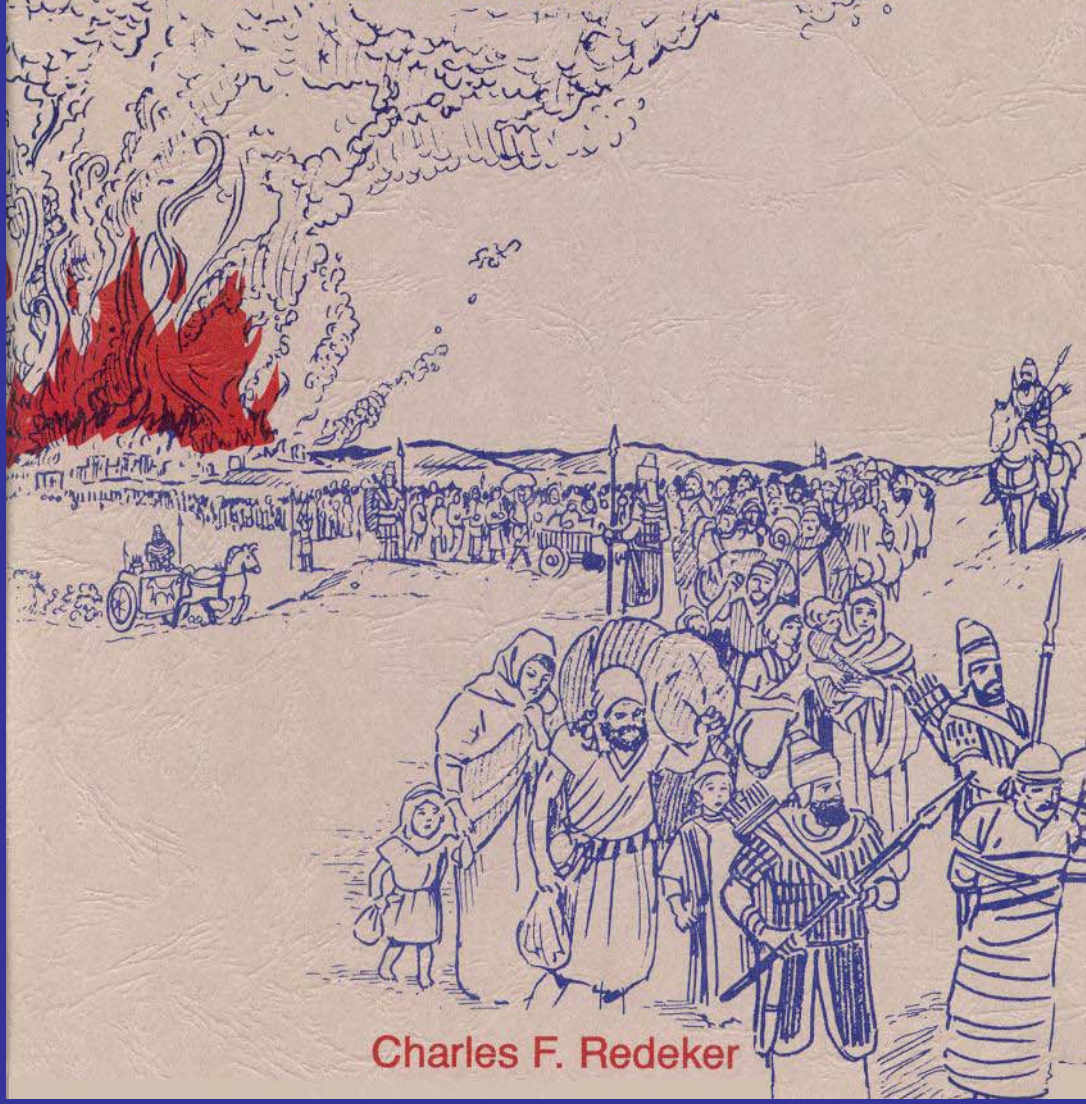


# THE BIBLICAL 70 YEARS

A LOOK AT THE EXILE  
AND DESOLATION PERIODS



Charles F. Redeker

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and Desolation Periods**

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*The author wishes to express grateful appreciation to the following brethren who contributed in one way or another to the present work:*

*To Bros. Charles Thornton and Fred Williams, Sr., for alerting us at an early date to developments in this area and motivating us to send out a clarion call to other interested brethren. To Bros. Ric Cunningham and Jerry Leslie for producing excellent treatises expounding the Bible Student position. These both provided the inspiration to pursue the Scriptural defense yet further and to follow through on lines of reasoning that were suggested. Bro. Leslie's scholarly Dating the Desolation also renewed our interest in the views of earlier advocates of a 70 year desolation period. In addition, our gratitude extends to Bros. Eugene Burns, Michael Koterba, Paul Mezera and Dick Salyards with whom correspondence and communication yielded fruitful results and further encouragement. As always, my dear wife Elaine deserves special appreciation for her cheerful labors in typing, proofreading and constructive suggestions for improving both content and grammatical form.*

*Once again, Bro, Michael Nekora has given generously of his time and computer skills in converting the manuscript and charts into an inviting format and additionally offered valuable suggestions for strengthening the presentation. We are indebted to Bro. David Vickery for the dramatic cover design. And finally, we thank the publisher, Bro. Charles Thornton, for all of his behind-the-scenes efforts and diligence in bringing the project to completion in practical form for the reader.*

*It is indeed an encouraging and gratifying experience to labor together with such enthusiastic hearts and hands. May these united efforts of consecrated brethren bring praise to our Heavenly Father and strengthen the faith of His people in these critical times.*

## FOREWORD

The main thrust of this study is as the title indicates--a look at the Jewish exile and desolation periods, taking us back more than 2,500 years. A number of Scriptures deal both directly and indirectly with this area and it is our intention to examine each one thoroughly. Such a subject may seem rather remote to many in this modern era, yet a bit of reflection shows that much more than mere academic interest is involved. This inquiry has become very vital to the Bible student cognizant of the end times in which we live, for, as it turns out, a preponderance of the chronological and prophetic calculations associated with the Gospel Harvest period are inexorably dependent upon it.

The implications of this linkage are such that any minor change in the length of the 70 years that has been equated with the desolation produces significant alterations in prophetic fulfillments, parallels, and type-antitype relationships ending in our day. All of these will be explored at length to outline the serious nature of these consequences. Truth is Truth and is absolute in whatever field it touches. It shines forth in a brilliance which can only be enhanced by discovery of related facts that bear upon it. For this reason, we need not fear honest inquiry, but are to invite all such efforts. At the same time, it is needful to evaluate correctly the results of such considerations and to be absolutely certain that they are in harmony with the Divine Wisdom to the extent that this has been revealed.

In the present investigation, we desire first of all to examine all pertinent Scriptures to determine if a clear-cut Biblical consensus can be formed. If such is indeed the case, the Divine Truth must be followed to wherever it leads and utilized to evaluate all that comes in contact with it. When all the facts from any valid field of endeavor are uncovered--such as historical, archeological, or religious--they should be found to harmonize with each other, since all Truth is given by the hand of the same Author. If at any stage of comparison this is not so, we have the right to suspect that all the facts have not yet been revealed and that further clarification will be forthcoming. We believe this is the situation with respect to the present seeming conflict between the Biblical view of the 70 years and that offered by the Babylonian records.

We have also sought the counsel and judgments of earlier prominent Bible Students, including Pastor C. T. Russell, founder of the movement. It was during his ministry that the Bible chronology depicting a 70 year desolation period was promulgated extensively and enjoyed widespread acceptance.

The 70 years figured prominently in many of his end-time calculations and prophetic expectations, which became almost a trademark for the beliefs of the movement as a whole, particularly in respect to the year 1914.

Another section of this presentation attempts to convey the mood of the desolation and captivity periods by portraying highlights in the careers of the outstanding personalities of the day--just prior to, during, and after these events. Insights are thus gained into the lives of Judah's haughty last kings who reigned in the illustrious line of Solomon and David; of faithful prophets such as

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; and of the courageous leaders of the post exile period, such as Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah.

The roles of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus are also explored in this vein. Finally, an extensive Appendix is included to round out the presentation. This provides a basic defense of Bible Student chronology, examines in depth some of the consequences of change, and specifically analyzes the "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy. Another highlight is the section on "Chronology Patterns" which expands on earlier works of the Edgars to utilize major Biblical dates in the construction of symmetrical, harmonizing circles drawn to scale. These can then be used to evaluate the relative accuracy of various dates that may be advanced, such as for the destruction of Jerusalem or other events.

It is our earnest hope that this study will contribute to a better understanding of THE BIBLICAL 70 YEARS and encourage many of our brethren to remain steadfast and unwavering in the faith which they have developed. We believe such strengthening is especially appropriate at the present hour, when our faith is being tested in so many directions.

At the same time, it is incumbent upon us to realize the broad nature of "Present Truth," to appreciate its overall influence, and to grasp the concept of essential versus lesser-essential doctrines as enumerated by Bro. Russell. This will help us to keep this subject in proper balance and to deter any divisiveness from developing amongst our brethren.

C. F. R.  
Temple City, California  
June, 1993

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## **PART I.**

# **THE BIBLE TEACHING**

## INTRODUCTION

There are a number of instances in the Old Testament where the writers make reference to a 70 year period which appears to be associated with the Babylonian captivity of Judah. It is not always clear from individual accounts precisely how this period relates to the main events of the time, including several distinct devastations of Jerusalem. A careful study of all pertinent texts relating to the issue is obviously in order, to determine if a clear-cut, harmonious Biblical view can be obtained.

The traditional Bible Student understanding has been to reckon the main Babylonian captivity as starting with Zedekiah's overthrow and Jerusalem's destruction and reaching to the first year of Cyrus.

It specifies a full 70 years for both the captivity and the desolation of the land, which are considered contemporaneous events. On the other hand, proponents of the civil historian view (based on the Neo-Babylonian chronology) shorten the length of the desolation to only 50 years; they find an earlier starting point for the captivity, then bring both periods to a simultaneous close. Under this reckoning, it is not readily possible to find a starting point that pertains directly to Judah. Hence the 70 year period is applied to the period of Babylon's supremacy over surrounding nations, from 609 B.C. to 539 B.C. This covers the period from the year it is thought Assyria (Babylon's chief rival) first began losing power to Babylon, to the eventual collapse of the Babylonian empire. This reckoning shifts the emphasis from a Babylonian conquest of Judah (for 70 years) to a general supremacy exerted over all the surrounding nations.

Of special concern in such a view is depicting the desolation period as merely 50 years in length and starting the official captivity of Judah prior to Jerusalem's fall. This opens up focal points of investigation that invite Scriptural inquiry for confirmation and for independent testimony into the true sequence of events that occurred. Valid questions that need to be addressed are: Have the Scriptures been misinterpreted in the past? Is their combined testimony sufficiently clear and consistent to be labelled "the Biblical view" of the exile and desolation periods? And if so, can it be reasonably harmonized with the civil view, or are they hopelessly irreconcilable?

As recognized by historians, the Bible provides the most detailed and complete accounts of all records yet extant for the period under review. It should therefore be a rewarding and interesting experience for us to probe the Scriptures to determine if these chronological issues can be resolved. Let us go on, then, to the Scriptural study, making a diligent effort to ferret out, compare and evaluate the data that it provides.

## SCRIPTURAL STUDY

### Jeremiah 25:8-11

*v. 8: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,*

*v. 9: "Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar<sup>1</sup> the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.*

*v.10: "Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.*

*v.11: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."*

Jeremiah's prophecy here is the earliest to mention the 70 years directly, although, as we shall note later, Moses had already foreseen the grave consequences of the Israelites turning from their God. (Lev.26) Jeremiah, however, was used of the Lord to spell out in more specific and urgent terms what would shortly befall their nation at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, unless they repented of their ways. Hence this opening text is very basic to the concept of THE 70 YEAR PERIOD and needs to be examined very carefully.

Let us note at the onset that Jeremiah's first emphasis overwhelmingly is upon the destruction and desolation that shall come upon Judah and its people. It was "against this land and against the inhabitants thereof" that the "desolation" would come. The word "desolation" in the verses quoted here is from the Hebrew *chorbah*, defined as a "drought, dry or waste place." (Young)

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1 Nebuchadrezzar, the name used in Jer. 25:9, is thought by most authorities to be a Hebrew variant form of the more common Nebuchadnezzar.

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Another frequently used Hebrew word for "desolation" in parallel texts is *shemamah*, such as in Jer. 34:22, where Jehovah warned that He would cause the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, "burn it with fire," and to "make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant." Strong defines this word (#8077) as "devastation," and indicates it is from a root that means "ruined." As may be seen, Jer. 34:22 plainly gives the Bible's own definition as "without an inhabitant," when applied to Jerusalem and Judah.

Only after describing the severity of the impending desolation in considerable detail does the prophet mention the captivity of the people, almost as an afterthought, and expressed as a consequence of the destruction preceding it. From this aspect, THE 70 YEAR PERIOD that he

specifies properly concerns the major activity he is describing and its aftermath-the cataclysmic destruction wrought by the Babylonian hordes and the length of time its impact would be felt. If the major captivity of the people followed the devastation of the city, such captivity would of course be contemporaneous with the length of the desolation of the land. Regardless of the sequence in which Jeremiah happened to mention the 70 years, it seems evident that he intended that number to apply both to the length of the desolation and of the exile.

That this is the simplest and most straightforward reading of these verses seems confirmed by later Bible writers. As we shall subsequently see, the chronicler applied the 70 years to the time that the land would lie desolate; and Daniel, to the period that Jerusalem and its Temple would be in ruins. Both authors stated clearly that they based their conclusions on the statements of the prophet Jeremiah, which we are now considering; and neither of them applied THE 70 YEARS to the period of Babylonian supremacy over the nations.

Critics object to this understanding, arguing that the prophecy does not actually state in so many words that the foretold period of 70 years would pertain to the desolation of the land or that the 70 years would follow the total destruction of Jerusalem. It merely states that "these nations"-Judah and others-would serve Babylon for the 70 years. But in addition to what we have already said, we would point out that the sequence of events as given strongly implies that the 70 years captivity would immediately follow the utter desolation of Judah. Note the order of events: (a) Nebuchadnezzar brought against Judah and the nations; (b) Judah and the nations destroyed and made desolate; (c) an elaboration of the extent of the desolation, both upon the land and the activities of the people; and (d) the nations to serve Babylon for 70 years. A normal, direct reading of the account favors a sequential, progressive occurrence of these events and thus implies a totality of destruction, desolation and captivity lasting for 70 years. There is no hint here that the national captivity and desolation of the land would not be contemporaneous events.

A further objection by critics is that the prophecy does not specifically say that Judah was to serve Babylon for the 70 years merely that "these nations" would do so. Yet it is evident that Jeremiah's words were directed to his own people and came about as a culmination of many years' disobedience to Jehovah. The focus of the prophecy is squarely upon Judah, because only that nation was under the Law Covenant and directly in line for the cursings and chastisements promised for willfully walking contrary to its requirements. Therefore, it appears quite reasonable that the 70 years mentioned in the prophecy, though expressed in a general way, had direct application to Judah, with fixed starting and ending points. The other nations round about would also be victims of the growing power of Babylon, but might not necessarily be included in the exact number of years of desolation and captivity which seemingly were spelled out for Judah. (Cunningham, p. 1)

In summary, we note the decisive tone with which Jeremiah sets forth his prophecy concerning THE 70 YEAR PERIOD. It would seem to us that only by artificially dissecting his words and laboring to rearrange his thoughts is it possible to suggest any misgivings in the prophet's intended application.

But let us go on.

## **2 Chronicles 36:11-12,17,20-21**

*v.11: "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.*

*v.12: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord.*

*v.17: "Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age; he gave them all into his hand.*

*v.20: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:*

*v.21: "To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.*

In this passage, the chronicler reviewed the punishment which God directed upon Judah and affirmed that this was the fulfillment of an earlier prophecy of Jeremiah, presumably of the desolation and exile in Jer. 25:11. Whereas Jeremiah's prophecy does not tie in the Sabbath rest of the land directly with the desolation and captivity, verse 21 of this passage in 2 Chronicles provides a direct correlation of the Sabbath rest with the length of the desolation. It is as if the chronicler were saying directly, "Whereas Jeremiah spoke only in terms of the desolation, this clearly also pertains to the Sabbath rest, for 'as long as [the land] lay desolate, she kept Sabbath.'" The time period for this rest is then specifically spelled out as being 70 years-"to fulfill threescore and ten years. "

This information is helpful in establishing when the 70 year period applies, for a Sabbath rest of the land was total and meant that the land could not be worked agriculturally for gain. This condition of total rest was forced upon the Israelites for their earlier negligence of the Jubilee law. It could not have begun in the partial captivities that preceded the full destruction of Jerusalem, for the obvious reason that the land continued to be worked until that event. Only after the utter destruction of the city, the burning of the Temple, and the scattering of the inhabitants, was the condition of total rest for the land satisfied. Hence, the 70 years of desolation, which the chronicler identifies as the 70 years of Sabbath rest, must properly be applied after the fall of Jerusalem.

Critics would argue that the 70 years began during the period of earlier captivities preceding Jerusalem's destruction. They would paraphrase the text, "all the days of its desolation (whatever the allotted time-50 years is suggested) it rested, till seventy years (of the captivity in Babylon) were completed." But again, such an understanding is not based upon a normal reading of the text and requires a forced and unnatural interpretation of the final phrase. (Leslie, p. 23)

The seventy years, according to the construction of the text, is placed squarely alongside the desolation of the land, and certainly appears to be describing the length of time of the enforced resting of the land. To make it apply to something else seems like a distortion of the chronicler's intention and normal use of language to convey thought. The immediate context strongly favors the traditional view that the 70 years apply to the utter desolation of the land. If this was not what was intended, the wording is most ambiguous and could easily have been modified to clarify the thought.

There is yet another line of reasoning that opens up from meditating upon the significance of the Sabbath rest of the land as mentioned in 2 Chron. 36:21. It establishes and corroborates the length of the period of desolation from the standpoint of a prophecy of divine intention and of type/antitype relationship. If the desolation period was permitted upon Judah so that the land could enjoy her Sabbaths, it becomes evident that God foreordained a special period in the experiences of Israel in which a fixed number of Sabbath cycles would occur. In the usual reckoning, these are understood to be the 70 referred to by the partial captivities that preceded the full destruction of Jerusalem, for the obvious reason that the land continued to be worked until that event. Only after the utter destruction of the city, the burning of the Temple, and the scattering of the inhabitants, was the condition of total rest for the land satisfied. Hence, the 70 years of desolation, which the chronicler identifies as the 70 years of Sabbath rest, must properly be applied after the fall of Jerusalem.

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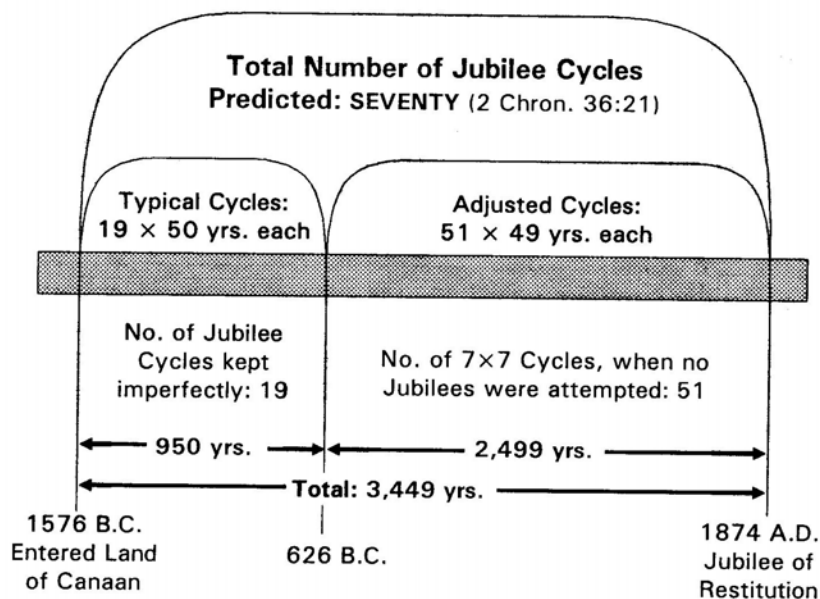
To comprehend the significance of the 70 years, we need to know what Sabbath cycle was being referenced in 2 Chron. 36:21. Then we can identify how many of these typical cycles had already transpired and how many were yet future. This would allow the year of the fulfillment to be calculated and permit an evaluation of the reasonableness of such an occurrence in respect to end-time conditions relating to Israel and the world. If such a type/antitype/prophetic outcome is recognizable by the student of the prophecies, it would lend obvious credence to the literal 70 year period of Sabbath rest/desolation of the land, which formed the basis of the calculation.

The Sabbath years of 2 Chron. 36:21 could not have applied to the regular cycles of rest for the land, which occurred every seventh year, since at the time of Jerusalem's fall many more than 70 had already been attempted. According to the Bowen/ Russell chronology, the Israelites would already have occupied Canaan for 969 years (1576 B.C. to 607 B.C.). This would have permitted at least 138 such regular cycles to have transpired. Therefore, the Sabbath cycles alluded to in the text under consideration must have pertained to the 50 year Jubilee cycles.

During the 969 year period of occupying the land, it is evident that only 19 cycles of Jubilee with the rest year added (50 years each) could have been kept. This would leave a balance of 51 cycles remaining, to fulfill the total number of typical rest cycles enjoined upon Israel. Stated another way, the total number of typical Jubilee cycles consisted of two parts: first, those that had already been kept (19), and second, those which had not been attempted (51). These two portions then need to be added together in terms of actual years to point forward to the beginning of the antitype.

The first part of the equation is simple enough: 19 cycles x 50 950 years, beginning with the entering of the land of Canaan in

**Exhibit A: Jubilee Cycles Based on Prophetic View**



1576 B.C. But in the second part, we shall multiply the 51 remaining cycles by 49, omitting the Jubilee rest year in each cycle, because none of these Sabbaths could even have been attempted and credit for them, so to speak, cannot be given. This gives 51 cycles x 49 = 2,499 years, ending in 1874 A.D. This may be depicted diagrammatically as shown above.

The foregoing depiction of the Jubilee system is referred to as the prophetic view, based upon the foreordained number of cycles (70), as contrasted with the Jubilee viewed as a type or shadow under the Mosaic Law.<sup>2</sup> It marks the year 1874 as the commencement of the grand fulfillment of the Jubilee, when liberty for the people and the great Times of Restitution for the world

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<sup>2</sup> For a complete discussion of the entire subject of the Jubilee, see C.T. Russell, *The Time Is At Hand*, Study VI., pp. 173-200.

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would be due. Discerning Bible students have long noted the correlation of this year with the 1,335 day prophecy of Daniel 12:12, heralding the beginning of the *parousia* of our Lord, and with the start of "the times of restitution of all things" that were to begin at his return. (Acts 3:21) They believe that global events since that year have demonstrated in a remarkable way the unfolding and restoration of rights and liberties to the people, preparatory to the full establishment of God's Kingdom and the further blessings of restitution due to uplift all mankind.

Now let us bring these facts to bear upon the question of the 70 years. If indeed we can discern the prophetic fulfillment of the Jubilee in the world-shaking events that are transpiring all about us, as the antitypical Jubilee trump of liberty is sounding, consider the obvious effect upon the length of the original desolation/ Sabbath rest period. Since the entire Jubilee calculation as enumerated above is based upon the assumption of a literal 70 years of Sabbath rest/desolation of the land, spanning the period from Jerusalem's fall to the edict of restoration in the first year of Cyrus, we have here nothing less than a remarkable corroboration of the length of this period. Had the fulfillment of the Jubilee cycles viewed as a prophecy ended at some inappropriate point in the world's history, we would have had strong grounds for rejecting the concept or the 70 year period underlying its calculation.

By way of contrast, let us note what would occur if we applied the Jubilee concept to a 587 B.C. date for the fall of Jerusalem and a consequent 50 year period of desolation. In this instance, the foreordained number of Sabbath cycles would be reduced to only 50, "as long as [the land] lay desolate." This would reduce the adjusted cycles when no Jubilees were attempted to merely 31; 31 times 49 years each, equals 1,519 years. Adding the 1,519 years to the previous 950 years when the Jubilee cycles were actually attempted, totals 2,469 years. That many years extended from 1556 B.C., the date the Israelites entered the land according to this view, would yield 914 A.D. as the fulfillment of the Jubilee cycles viewed as a prophecy.

Such a projected fulfillment is obviously not tenable as it would completely demolish the picture.



Instead of introducing the day of liberty for the people and restitution of all things, that time frame marked the beginning of the "Dark Ages" when civilization was under severe restraint at the hands of the wicked Antichrist system. How this accentuates the remarkable fulfillment of the Jubilee prophecy which has actually occurred in our day! And all of this highlights the reality and critical requirement of a literal 70 year period of desolation/Sabbath rest for the land, subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem.

In summary, we have seen how the text in 2 Chron. 36:21 stands as a bulwark in support of the thought that the utter desolation of the land that followed the destruction of Jerusalem must have been for a full 70 years. And we noted how this conclusion was arrived at, using two separate, though related, lines of reasoning, each supporting the other.

## **Leviticus 26:27-28, 31-35**

*v.27: "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;*

*v.28: "Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.*

*v.31: "And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.*

*v.32: "And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.*

*v.33: "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.*

*v.34: "Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.*

*v.35: "As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it."*

Now we need to expand this inquiry to determine if there are any Bible texts that actually equate the length of the captivity with the period of desolation. If so, this would certainly disprove the contention that the land lay desolate for only 50 years while the captivity lasted for 70. Let us turn to Leviticus chapter 26 to open this phase of the discussion. Moses here is depicted as being given a preview of events that he passed on to the children of Israel.

God reviewed the special relationship which existed between Himself and His covenant people. When they sought to honor Him and obey His just commandments, they were to be blessed in basket and store. But conversely, when they disobeyed and fell into sin, they were to be severely chastised as a nation. Further, if after repeated warnings by their prophets to reform, they continued to despise God's judgments and pursued a course of willful disobedience and unfaithfulness, they were to be inflicted with severe punishment that would last "seven times."

Bible students have linked the "seven times" duration of this severe punishment with Jesus' prediction that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This is understood to have reference to a long period of 2,520 years, during which Gentile nations would have supremacy over Israel.<sup>3</sup> In the background/context of Lev. chapter 26, it may be seen that the captivity and the desolation described there mark the beginning of the foretold period of punishment-the "seven times" of Lev. 26 and the "times of the Gentiles" of Jesus' prophecy.

Here we would particularly like to call attention to verses 29-35 of this same chapter. The prescribed punishment was to consist of several parts: there would be starvation among the beleaguered inhabitants, the images of false gods and idols would be destroyed, their cities and sanctuaries would be wasted, they would be carried off into captivity in their enemies' land, and the land would be made desolate so that it could "rest and enjoy her sabbaths." No specific time

period for the desolation or captivity is mentioned in this connection and yet, as we analyze the verses, certain conclusions may readily be drawn.

The desolation of the land which is mentioned here is described several times as a "sabbath rest," in terms very similar to that of 2 Chron. 36:21. Very clearly, then, the desolation being spoken of was a condition of total rest for the land when it could not be worked for productive gain. This enforced rest was required because the Israelites had not properly carried out the Jubilee year requirements when they dwelt upon the land. (Lev. 26:35) As noted earlier, this desolation and condition of total rest could only have occurred after the total destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the inhabitants of the land.

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3 This is based on a "time" of Lev. 26 = a symbolic year; 1 symbolic year 360 symbolic days- "7 times" thus =  $7 \times 360 = 2,520$  symbolic days; and, according to the year/day principle of prophetic interpretation, 2,520 symbolic days = 2,520 literal years. (See Appendix D for further elaboration.)

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Now let us bring the particular verses in Lev. 26:31-34 to bear on this. These verses connect three things together-the exiling of the people, the desolation of their sanctuaries and land, and the Sabbath rest of the land. Any normal reading of the text gives the clear impression that all three of these events covered the same time period. On this premise, if the length of any of these events can be demonstrated, then the others must be equivalent. This opens up two avenues of reasoning: First, since it is generally conceded that at least the captivity lasted for a full 70 years, then on the basis of Lev. 26:34 the desolation and Sabbath rest of the land would necessarily be of equal lengths. And second, we need merely to follow through on the earlier discussion of 2 Chron. 36:21, where it became evident that 70 years were marked out prophetically to delineate a cycle of Sabbath rest years of the land. If this typical cycle of rest years was indeed fixed at 70, then on the basis of Lev. 26:33-34 the exile and desolation are likewise depicted as being of similar length and contemporaneous with each other.

In summary, we consider Moses' preview to be very significant in its contribution to this subject, even without specifically noting the lengths of the periods. For, as we have seen, this passage seems to show that the captivity and desolation of the land were equivalent and contemporaneous events, regardless of the extent of time assigned to them.

## **Jeremiah 25:12 –13**

*v. 12: "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaideans, and will make it perpetual desolations.*

*v.13: "And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations."*

This text raises two problems which need to be addressed. The first concerns the timing of the punishment that God would inflict upon the king of Babylon: the wording seems to state this would take place after the 70 years had expired ("are completed"Leeser; "are fulfilled"-Rotherham). Yet in fact the fall of Babylon and death of the last king Belshazzar occurred prior to the time that Cyrus issued his decree that officially ended the 70 years of captivity. Such a textual sequence is puzzling and does not permit a ready solution, since it appears to be a couple of years out of harmony with what actually transpired.

A possible harmonization is based on the meaning and usage of the Hebrew word *mâlê'*, which is here translated "accomplished," etc. Strong defines it (#4390 and #4392) as "a primary root, to fill" or "be full of"; also "full" or "filling" and "fullness" or "fully," "in a wide application." Two examples of its usage where the fullness is ongoing and has not quite reached its peak or full ending point are Jer. 6:11 and Eccl. 11:5. In the first instance, the text reads: "Even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days." In the second example, it reads: "Thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is [filled] with child." Both of these Scriptures are using the same Hebrew word of our main text (Jer. 25:12) in a time sense where the application has run to maturity, though not quite to its full completion. He that was "full of days" would yet be alive when he was "taken"; the mother's womb was carrying the fetus (already called a "child"), but it had not yet come to full term.

From these usages, it seems apparent that it is not necessary to insist that THE 70 YEARS of Jer. 25:12 be fully expired before the king of Babylon would be deposed. Rather it would be quite in harmony with these other instances of the use of the Hebrew *mâlê'* to render the passage thus: "It shall come to pass, when seventy years are (almost) accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon."

The other problem concerns the destruction that God promised to bring upon the land of the Chaideans. This is described as "perpetual desolations" (K. J. and Leeser), or "everlasting desolations" (American Standard margin), which on the surface seems like a gross overstatement. Rotherham's translation seems to lessen the degree of severity: "I will turn it into age-abiding desolations." The Hebrew words here are *olam* (Strong's #5769) rendered "long (time)" and "lasting"; and *shemamah* (Strong's #8077) rendered "devastation."

Certainly Jeremiah's prophecy was not fulfilled at once. Cyrus' overthrow of Babylon was in marked contrast to the harsh fate it had suffered on earlier occasions. Although ordering the destruction of the outer walls of the capital city, he was generous to his defeated foes and showed respect for their shrines and deities. Not until more than 200 years later, when the Persian Empire fell before Alexander the Great, was Babylon utterly destroyed. Even then it remained a habitable site till about the start of the Christian era, when it was at last deserted. And thus the glory of mighty Babylon was finally reduced to ashes, not at once, but over a period of several hundred years.

Interestingly enough, in our day efforts are being made by President Saddam Hussein of Iraq to rebuild a section of the northern city and to use it as the focal point of a revived nationalism and an attempted leadership role among Arab nations. But Babylon as a thriving metropolis is not being rebuilt. About the only accomplishments are the construction of a scale model of the famous Ishtar Gate, a likeness of one of Nebuchadnezzar's palaces, two small temples, and a Greek theater; in all, the equivalent of a huge entertainment center or archeological park, designed to attract foreign tourists. Even here the plan met with interruption, frustration and abandonment as Iraqi resources were diverted elsewhere, particularly as a consequence of the Persian Gulf war. Certainly there is no population shift back to Babylon, a reborn city is not rising out of the sand, and there is no danger that Baghdad will soon cease to be the Iraqi capital. Thus Jeremiah's prophecy of "age-abiding desolations" (25:12), that "Babylon shall become heaps . . . without an inhabitant" (51:37) and parallel predictions by Isaiah that "it shall never be inhabited [nor] ... dwelt in from generation to generation" (13:20) continue to look very impressive indeed.

## **Jeremiah 29:10-14**

*v. 10: "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.*

*v. 11: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

*v. 12: "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.*

*v. 13: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

*v. 14: "And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive."*

Jeremiah was here addressing the contingent of Jewish captives taken at the dethronement of Jehoiachin by a letter delivered to them by messengers supplied by Zedekiah the king. (vs. 1-3) The prophet was especially concerned with the teaching of certain false prophets in their midst who apparently were predicting an imminent release of the captives back to their homeland. To counter this false expectation, Jeremiah urged them to prepare for a lengthy stay in Babylon by building homes and raising families and planting gardens. It would not be until "after 70 years be accomplished for Babylon" (a more accurate rendering of verse 10)<sup>4</sup> that God would remember His word and allow them to return. But what did Jeremiah mean by this phrase and when would this period begin?

Was the prophet saying that this period had begun at the time of Jehoiachin with the removal of the captives, whom he was

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<sup>4</sup> See translations such as Revised Standard, New American Standard, Leeser, and Amplified Bible.

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addressing in this letter? Hardly, for such a starting point would not delineate a 70 year period, regardless of what chronology was followed. To demonstrate this, we would suggest turning to Exhibit B, "Devastations by Nebuchadnezzar" (p. 80) and to Exhibit E, "The Seventy Years: Captivity, Desolation, Supremacy" (p. 86). Note that the dethronement of Jehoiachin occurred in 597 B.C. according to civil history, or 617 B.C. according to the B/R chronology. With an ending point in the first year of Cyrus (537 B.C.), these starting points would produce a 60 year period or an 80 year period, respectively, neither of which would satisfy the requirement of THE 70 YEAR PERIOD.

What then did the prophet have in mind? We would suggest he was saying that after 70 years of absolute dominion of Babylon over Judah had expired, then, and only then, would God permit

them to go free. How would it be known when this period of absolute dominion had begun? A keen insight into this is furnished in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah.

After reviewing the deplorable conditions of idolatry and social injustice that would precipitate the foretold judgment of God, Jeremiah in the seventh chapter specifically detailed what in God's sight would constitute appropriate punishment. In verses 4 and 10 through 15, the emphasis is placed upon "the temple of the Lord," and "God's house"-the heart and soul of Jewish worship, the center of all activities and the very essence of their identity as a nation. As long as the Temple remained intact, Jewish hopes were yet alive and no ultimate evil had befallen. But the prophet went on to show that this very unthinkable thing would indeed occur and that soon the Temple would be utterly demolished. Then in verses 14-15 he revealed that only after this had occurred would God regard His word as having been fulfilled and Judah as "cast out of His sight." Only then would the period of utter destruction, THE 70 YEAR PERIOD of Jeremiah's prophecy, have fully commenced.

Coming back to Jeremiah chapter 29, we would suggest a careful rereading of verse 10. Note that Jeremiah was not starting to count the years with the early captives, but was reminding them that only after THE 70 YEAR PERIOD had expired could there be hope of release. Individually they were not included in, nor associated with, the beginning of the 70 years; otherwise it would have been incumbent upon Jeremiah to have qualified Jehovah's words by saying, "after the 70 years of **your** captivity be accomplished, " etc.

But such is not the case in verse 10. Only later in verse 14 is this expression used, but there "your captivity" refers to the time of their release rather than of their initial deportation. (Leslie, p. 19) Hence it becomes evident that the period of absolute dominion of Babylon over Judah had not even begun at the time of Jeremiah's letter to the early captives. Not until Judah had been "cast out of [Jehovah's] sight" by the foreordained destruction of Jerusalem, the demolishing of the Temple, the dethronement of its last king, the deporting of all the people and the land being left utterly desolate, could this be said officially to have occurred. Only then could THE 70 YEAR PERIOD of Jeremiah's prophecy have commenced; and only the B/R chronology allows for a full 70 years to intervene between this point and the release of the captives in the first year of Cyrus.

## **Daniel 9:1 -3,17 -18**

*v. 1: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;*

*v. 2: "In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

*v.3: "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*

*v. 17: "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.*

*v.18: "O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies."*

Daniel, the prophet of God who was greatly beloved for his faithfulness and devotion throughout the long years of his stay in Babylon, is depicted here as being very mindful of the prophecy of Jeremiah of THE 70 YEAR PERIOD. Realizing that the set number of years of punishment upon Judah was about to end, he was moved to call upon Jehovah to plead that His promise of mercy now be fulfilled, and that the reproach upon Jerusalem and the Holy Sanctuary be removed.

Our first observation is that Daniel linked THE 70 YEAR PERIOD directly with Jerusalem and, as previously mentioned, we note that its bearing upon the surrounding nations was only secondary-so much so that they were not even mentioned here. Hence, any effort to change this emphasis and to apply THE 70 YEARS to an arbitrary period of Babylonian supremacy over the nations is seen to be in conflict with the Scriptural focus. Secondly, we need to look more carefully at the King James rendering of Dan. 9:2, that "seventy years [be] accomplish[ed] in the desolations of Jerusalem." This is somewhat vague, and needs help from other translations to clarify the thought:

*Leeser reads: "I Daniel searched in the books for understanding concerning the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would let pass full seventy years over the ruins of Jerusalem."*

*The New Berkeley Version (revised edition) expresses it: that Jerusalem would lie desolate for seventy years."*

*The New English translation puts it: "I Daniel was . . . reflecting on the seventy years which ...were to pass while Jerusalem lay in ruins."*

It is evident from these translations that the desolation described herein is more than merely a series of increasingly severe attacks upon Jerusalem; rather, they definitely favor a cataclysmic



devastation of the city that was to last for the full 70 years. Clearly, this does not square with the civil historian approach.

To grasp this fully, let us refer to Exhibit E, "The Seventy Years: Captivity, Desolation, Supremacy" (p. 86), and Exhibit B, "Devastations by Nebuchadnezzar" (p. 80). Dan. 9:2, the text under consideration, thus reveals that whatever the dates assigned to any of the devastations of Jerusalem, the city was to be utterly desolate for a full 70 years. In contrast to this, notice what periods would develop if the civil view were accepted: from 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's first year (and first incursion of Jerusalem), there would be 68 years to the release by Cyrus; from 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year (and second incursion of the city), there would be 60 years; or from 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year<sup>5</sup> (and final incursion at the destruction of the Temple), there would be only 50 years. But

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5 Nebuchadnezzar's years are shown here by Jewish reckoning rather than Babylonian.

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none of these match the length of THE 70 YEAR PERIOD of prophecy nor the specific requirement that the city of Jerusalem was to "lie in ruins" for this full number of years.

Adding to the weight of the above evidence is verse 17 of our text. Here Daniel seems to elaborate on the totality of the desolation of Jerusalem to which he was referring. It is true that a measure of damage was inflicted in each of Nebuchadnezzar's devastations of the city, as summarized in the table referred to above. But Daniel evidently is clarifying the point from which he understood THE 70 YEAR PERIOD to begin, when he specifically referred to the sanctuary (or Temple) that had been laid desolate. Not until it had been destroyed and the central Jewish system of worship interrupted was the desolation of Jerusalem considered complete. And only then could the period in question begin to be reckoned.

A final observation from the text in Dan. 9:2 is that it conveys to us Daniel's inspired insight into the meaning of Jeremiah's earlier prophecy. From his paraphrase of Jeremiah, it is evident that Daniel is quoting from Jer. 25: 11, since it is the only text in Jeremiah that relates Jerusalem's desolation period with the 70 years. Of the three instances in which Jeremiah mentions THE 70 YEAR PERIOD, only in this latter text are the "desolation" and the "70 years" brought together. (Rutherford, p. 161) Hence, by this means we are given the assurance that Daniel, as the inspired prophet of the Lord, specifically understood this all important earlier prophecy of Jeremiah to equate the 70 years not merely to the length of the captivity (as the civil view would have it) but to the desolation as well. This conclusion is dramatic and can only be circumvented by what appear to be fanciful and improper interpretations of the text.

## **Jeremiah 36:1-32**

*vs.1-3: In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the Lord directed Jeremiah to write on a scroll all the words that [He had] spoken against Israel and against Judah and against all the nations." Perhaps in rehearing Jeremiah's prophecy of impending doom, the nation would relent, turn from its evil way, receive the Lord's forgiveness and not be punished.*

*vs.8-24: The scroll of Jeremiah was read in the Temple, with the result that in the fifth year of Jehoiakim a "fast before the Lord" was proclaimed to all the people in Jerusalem. It was then read in the higher court in the scribes' chamber before all the princes, who were likewise dutifully impressed. Finally it was read to the king himself, but he refused to repent, and instead defiantly cut the scroll and cast it into the fireplace.*

*vs.27-32: Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to rewrite the scroll of his prophecy of judgment and solemnly to confront the king with it, assuring him that all that was spoken would indeed come to pass.*

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah indicated that God was yet offering Judah an opportunity to repent from its evil way and thereby avoid the dire punishments foretold. The common people received the news gladly and took part in a "fast before the Lord" in Jehoiakim's fifth year. So at least at that point, the foretold captivity and destruction were yet future and could still be averted. (Edgar, p. 28)

But how does this square with the now generally accepted civil historian view which begins the captivity with Nebuchadnezzar's first incursion in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when a handful of promising youth and some temple vessels were removed to Babylon?<sup>6</sup> From the Lord's standpoint and that of His prophet, this first assault of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem was so minor as not to receive any recognition whatever and was not considered to be a fulfillment in any sense. This was verified by

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<sup>6</sup> See Exhibit B, "Devastations by Nebuchadnezzar" (p. 80).

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Jeremiah later as recorded in chapter 52:28-30, where the prophet summarized the number of nobles taken in each of the captivities: none at all were stated for the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

Thus according to the Biblical view, the first official partial captivity did not occur until Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year by Jewish reckoning (seventh year by Babylonian reckoning) when Jehoiachin was deposed. And the major captivity did not occur until Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year (18th by Babylonian reckoning), when Jerusalem was destroyed. But these starting points would allow only 60 years or 50 years, respectively, for the captivity of Judah according to the civil view and such lengths are in obvious conflict with THE 70 YEAR PERIOD of Jeremiah's prophecy (chapter 25), with its particular emphasis upon Judah.<sup>7</sup> (Even if

Nebuchadnezzar's first raid on Jerusalem were taken as a starting point, it would project a maximum possible length of only 68 years for the captivity according to the civil view.)

In addition, we notice from Jer. 36:2 that the restatement of Jehovah's prophecies of impending judgment which Jeremiah was instructed to write on the scroll, was directed "against all the nations" as well as "against Judah." The intimation is that none of the foretold punishment had yet been carried out, a conclusion confirmed in Jeremiah chapter 27 which describes events during Zedekiah's reign, future to this setting (and shortly to be added to our discussion). Since the "words . . . spoken . . . against Judah and against all the [surrounding] nations" (as further enumerated in chapter 27) included both destruction and captivity, and were treated together as a single message of warning, it would seem to be wresting this Scripture to attempt to separate the captivity aspect and insist that it had already begun as far as Judah was concerned.

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7 See Exhibit E, "The Seventy Years: Captivity, Desolation, Supremacy" (p. 86).

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As our Scriptural study has unfolded thus far, we have been able to appreciate more fully the correlation of the various texts that mention THE 70 YEAR PERIOD: the Babylonian supremacy of Jer. 29: 10, the servitude of Jer. 25: 11 and the Sabbath/rest/desolation of 2 Chron. 36:21. It is becoming increasingly clear that all of these texts refer to the same period and all have the same starting point at the destruction of Jerusalem.

The civil historian, in contrast, finds the greatest difficulty in attempting to construct a 70 year period that ends either with Cyrus' decree to release the Jews or with the fall of Babylon. (This is especially evident in Exhibit E, "The Seventy Years: Captivity, Desolation, Supremacy," p. 86.) In the first instance, it would have to begin two years prior to Nebuchadnezzar's being installed as king (and two years prior to his deposing of Jehoiachin); and in the second, it would have to start in 609 B.C. during the power struggle between Babylon and Assyria. In neither case, however, is there any definitive Scriptural tie-in point for such a beginning. How utterly strange and unreasonable this would be, with such heavy Scriptural emphasis on the impending judgment of God and exact delineation of the length and ending point (in the first year of Cyrus), yet without any demonstrable event to pinpoint its beginning!

## **Jeremiah 27:1-21**

*vs.1 -11: Early in the reign of Judah's last king, Zedekiah,<sup>8</sup> the Lord instructed Jeremiah to make symbols of bonds and yokes to be worn about the neck and to send them to the surrounding nations with a special warning. This was to be carried out "by the hand of the [very] messengers which [are] come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah." The message*

*was that God had decreed that all the nations should serve Babylon for a season and that any who refused would be severely punished. They would be slain "with the sword and pestilence," driven from their lands and not permitted to work them any longer.*

*vs.12-21: Jeremiah then specifically turned his attention to Zedekiah and repeated the same warning to him. "Why," he asked, "will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?" Jeremiah warned that the king should not listen to the false prophets who were saying that the vessels of the Temple that had been removed at the time of Jehoiachin would shortly be brought back from Babylon - "for they prophesy a lie. " Then he concluded with, "Serve the king of Babylon and live; wherefore should this city be laid waste?"*

The setting for this text is very significant in that it reveals that even in Zedekiah's reign the foretold punishment, both for Judah and the surrounding nations, had not yet taken place. Once again Jehovah was providing ample warning to each nation through His prophet and giving one final opportunity to repent. The message was simple: The nations that would serve the king of Babylon and recognize his God-given position of supremacy

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8 Many translators insert "Zedekiah" in place of "Jehoiakim" in Jer. 27:1, citing the context in 27:3,12,20 and 28:1, as well as ancient codices. These include Fenton, Moffatt, Revised Standard, and footnote in American Standard; Rotherham in a footnote refers to Ginsburg, s Hebrew Notes. Other authorities who agree cite specifically the Syriac and Arabic versions and Kennicott's MSS, and list other expositors. (See Clarke; Jamieson, Fausset & Brown; Halley, Pocket Bible Handbook; etc.)

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would be permitted to "remain yet in their own land . . . to till it and dwell therein." The nations that would not become subservient to him would be punished "by the Lord," "with the sword, and with famine, and with pestilence" until they were "consumed and driven out," with the land left completely desolate.

This message was the final repetition of Jeremiah's prophecy pertaining to THE 70 YEAR PERIOD. It is abundantly clear from this chapter that the "destruction," "desolation," and captivity ("serving the king of Babylon") for 70 years as mentioned in Jeremiah's earlier forecast (Jer. 25:9, 1 1), here symbolized by the bonds and yokes to be worn about the neck, had not yet

come to pass. Besides Judah, the nations at risk were specifically identified here (Jer. chapter 27) as Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyrus (Tyre), and Zidon (Sidon). Thus it becomes evident that the partial captivity and devastation that occurred earlier in Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year when Jehoiachin was deposed was not recognized as part of THE 70 YEAR PERIOD of prophecy.

This now confirms for us what has been becoming increasingly more apparent, that we are heading for an inescapable showdown with the civil historian view. There is simply no acceptable Scriptural ground for starting 70 years, whether of captivity or desolation, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year; this would be the next major event in Zedekiah's reign, which Jeremiah in our text was hoping to forestall by urging the king to submit to Babylon. The Scriptural requirements in this chapter are just too restrictive and exacting to permit a chronological framework that begins the foretold punishment at an earlier time. And so at last we see the contrast between the Scriptural and civil view standing out in bold relief with no possibility of reconciliation.

## **Zechariah 1:7,12**

*v. 7: "Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah ... the prophet ...*

*v. 12: "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"*

This text is another of the Old Testament passages that mentions THE 70 YEARS, here identifying it as the period of God's indignation "against Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah." The angel's words were addressed in the form of a question to the Lord of hosts, asking how long He would withhold pouring out His full mercy upon Judah, whom He had already punished with the foretold 70 years of desolation. These are significant words from several standpoints.

First, they confirm what we have already seen the Scriptures to teach, that the foretold period of punishment was to consist not merely of 70 years of captivity, but of 70 years of actual desolation as well. Jerusalem with its Temple, the heart and soul of Jewish worship, and all the other cities of Judah, were specifically cited as failing under this wrath, which we have seen formally commenced with Zedekiah's overthrow.

Second, by raising this question as to how long God's full mercies would be delayed, the angel's words were defining yet more clearly when THE 70 YEAR PERIOD had actually transpired. There obviously was no doubt in the angel's mind or that of his hearers when the full indignation upon Judah had begun or when it had ended, since they were knowledgeable of these events. What he fittingly was asking was, since the foretold 70 years of God's indignation had already ended (about 18 years earlier, according to verse 1, which tells us that the angel spoke in the second year of Darius), how much longer would be required before God's full mercies would return? Considerable progress had been made in the return of the exiles to the land, the soil had been worked again for some gain, and the foundations of the Temple had just been laid two months earlier. (Hag. 2:18) Nevertheless, the Temple remained unfinished, Jerusalem and the surrounding cities were mostly in ruins, and its walls remained in a state of disrepair, subjecting the inhabitants to hostile attack. With God's full mercies and blessings in evident restraint, the angel's inquiry seems most appropriate indeed. (Rutherford, p. 173)

Happily, the Lord responded with "good words and comfortable words" and indicated that He was yet "jealous for Jerusalem" and that soon the Temple, "His house," would be completed; that indeed He would "return to Jerusalem with mercies," the cities of Judah would again prosper fully, and "the Lord [would] yet comfort Zion." - Zech. 1: 13 - 17

Returning to the text in Zech. 1: 12, we find that a better translation throws yet more light on the angel's words, and substantiates that THE 70 YEAR PERIOD was already past history. It has been shown that the construction of the Hebrew in Zech. 1: 12 is exactly the same as in Zech. 7:5, where it is more clearly (and just as properly) rendered "**those** seventy years" instead of

"these threescore and ten years." (Rutherford, pp. 172- 173) This translation helps in demonstrating that the 70 years desolation alluded to both in 1: 12 and 7:5 had already been completed some time in the past on each occasion when these expressions were originally uttered, that is, prior to Feb. 519 B.C. (Zech 1:12) and Nov. or Dec. 518 B.C. -Zech. 7:5

Critics of this view attempt to detract from the uniqueness of THE 70 YEAR PERIOD by suggesting that there was another divinely appointed 70 years, termed "indignation" as contrasted with "captivity, " which was only terminating at the very time that the angel of the Lord had raised his question. But if this were so, would this not have been a strange, or even haughty question to ask of the Almighty, seeing how clearly He had revealed through his prophets Jeremiah and Daniel that the period of devastation would last just 70 years, no more and no less? It seems unthinkable that the angel of the Lord would not have been aware of this and would have posed such a faithless question. On the other hand, we have already seen how appropriate the question would become with THE 70 YEARS as past history, in the face of the unfavorable circumstances which existed during the time span that followed.

Now let us note another problem that arises with the civil historian attempt to end a 70 year period of "indignation" at the time of the angel's question in Zech. 1:12 (Feb. 519 B.C. in Darius' second year). If the 587 B.C. date for Jerusalem's fall is used as the starting point, there would be only 68 years in this period, not 70. Hence, in order to comprise a full 70 years, there would need to be a starting point two years prior to the destruction of the city. But obviously these two years would not be characterized by the total destruction and desolation that followed, and then only for 50 years, not 70. Certainly the 18 years or so beyond the restoration in Cyrus' first year (537 B.C.) could not be included in the 70 years desolation. During the period of God's indignation, it was predicted that the land would rest completely (Lev. 26:34,35) and that no one would remain there to till the soil. (Lev. 26:34 and 43) Yet in the return from the exile, an immediate effort was made to work the ground and make it productive again, though with mixed success. (Hag. 1:6) It is evident, then, that the period of desolation and rest of the land must already have ended in 537 B.C., when the return from Babylonia began. (Rutherford, p. 174)

In summary, we have seen how this first passage in Zechariah harmonizes perfectly with what earlier prophets wrote concerning THE 70 YEAR PROPHECY. "Those seventy years," the preferred translation here, seems to identify that period which had expired 18 years or so earlier, in which Jerusalem had been devastated and lay in ruins. In the interval preceding the angel's question, the Lord had permitted some progress to be made in restoring Jerusalem, but His full mercies had seemingly been restrained. However, we should not confuse this situation with THE 70 YEARS of punishment that had already expired.

## **Zechariah 7:1 –7**

- v. 1: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisieu;*
- v. 2: "When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmetech, and their men, to pray before the Lord,*
- v.3: "And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?*
- v. 4: "Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying,*
- v. 5: "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?*
- v. 6: "And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*
- v. 7: "Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?"*

This quotation appears to be yet another reference to THE 70 YEAR PROPHECY, describing what had become ritualistic practices of fasting by the Jews in captivity. The fast in the fifth month was evidently connected with the burning of the Temple; and in the seventh month with a commemoration of the assassination of Governor Gedaliah. Mourning and fasting while in captivity would seem proper enough, but perhaps not after the release from exile had occurred; it might even display a lack of faith in what God was doing for His people. Hence, in the aftermath of the release from Babylon, it might have been an appropriate question to settle by approaching the priests and Zechariah. (Leslie, p. 20)

God's answer through the prophet took the form of very searching questions: On the occasions of their fasting, was it done merely in ritualistic ceremony bemoaning their losses, or was it a time for true penitence and remembrance of their God? And when they ate and drank in the captivity, was it in gratefulness, turning their thoughts to Him as their faithful God and Provider? The main lesson was to be found neither in fasting nor eating and drinking; rather, in "hearing the words of the Lord," in "exe cutting true judgment , and in "showing mercy and compassions every man to his brother." (vs. 7,9) From this standpoint, the fasting question could be understood in much broader perspective and focused attention on more fundamental issues of concern to God.

Now let us discuss the exact application of these 70 years in Zech. 7:5, and attempt a correlation with Zech. 1:5. First to be noted is that only by applying it consistently to THE 70 YEAR PROPHECY already delineated (607 B.C. to 537 B.C.) can it be tied in precisely with the earlier account (in Zech. 1:5). By ending it at the time the question of fasting was raised in the fourth year of Darius, it is possible to come up with a 70 year period from 587 B.C., but then it would not coincide with the earlier Zechariah text, which was made to end with the angel's question in the second year of Darius.



Hence we can see the inevitable result of attempting to circumvent the simple and obvious: a complex, multiple pattern of 70 years (or not quite 70) emerges, consisting of various attempts to find such time periods in the span of pertinent history, but each with certain drawbacks not quite satisfying the specifications of Scripture. Exhibit E, "The Seventy Years: Captivity, Desolation, Supremacy" (p. 86), helps to dramatize this, with the various 70 (or near 70) year periods projected by the civil historian view (near the top) in sharp contrast to the one all encompassing 70 years of the Bowen/Russell chronology (at the bottom). This in itself seems to speak volumes!

What, then, would be a simple, satisfying explanation of the verses in our text? During the years of captivity following Jerusalem's destruction, the fasting in the fifth and seventh months took place. When the 70 years expired and Cyrus restored the Jews to their land, evidently some were inclined to continue the practice and others questioned it, especially after the foundations of the Temple had been laid. This led some of the people to request a formal hearing before the priests. The expression "these so many years" (7:3) might apply to that faction who had elected to continue the practice (even beyond the exile), whereas the Lord's words "even those seventy years" (7:5) might apply more strictly to the entire nation during the actual period of their captivity. Nothing in the wording here would seem to preclude such an explanation. Therefore, it does not seem necessary to insist, as some critics contend, that the fasting occurred only in a 70 year period ending in 517 B.C. And, if the ending point cannot be clearly substantiated, then the beginning 587 B.C. date for Jerusalem's overthrow is likewise without support.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we have attempted to bring to bear all the Scriptures that mention THE 70 YEAR PERIOD directly, as well as others that relate to the event in a significant way without mentioning the number 70. In so doing, we have seen a definite pattern emerge which clearly can be labeled "the Biblical view." It expressly holds:

- (1) That Jerusalem and its Temple were completely destroyed and lay in ruins for the full 70 years.
- (2) That the period of captivity, while involving many nations, pertained directly to Judah as God's disobedient covenant people and lasted for 70 years after her last king Zedekiah was dethroned.
- (3) That contemporaneous with these events, the land of Judah was utterly desolate for the full 70 years and could not be worked for agricultural gain as punishment for failure to keep the Jubilee rests.

These are the harmonious conclusions of the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, foreseen by Moses, confirmed in the Chronicles, and consistent with Zechariah's testimony. They form a tightly knit, interwoven band of teaching that cannot be altered without doing violence to the whole. Regardless of how this view be received, it should at least be recognized as unmistakable and decisive, and worthy of being termed "the Biblical view" of the exile and desolation periods.

The civil view, on the other hand, appears openly contradictory to this. It does not allow for 70 years desolation of the land, it places the overthrow of Jerusalem only 50 years prior to Cyrus' decree, and it offers no appropriate starting point for the 70 years captivity. It is inharmonious with Scripture after Scripture, both with those specifically spelling out 70 years and with others detailing related events. It thus stands out in sharp contrast to the Biblical view and simply cannot be reconciled with it.

The difference in views amounts to a period of exactly 20 Years duration. From the standpoint of man's history on earth, this may not seem that significant; but when thought of from the standpoint of implications to prophetic and typical calculations that bear on end-time events, the matter takes on more weight. Then, too, these are 20 years that seemingly cannot be accounted for historically in the Babylonian records. This poses a problem of no mean proportion, especially since most secular historians now believe that all the dates in the Neo-Babylonian period have been worked out on an absolute basis and are unchallengeable.

It has not been our province here to address the details of this question, which must be left to those having expertise in both the Biblical and secular fields to pursue.<sup>9</sup> Yet on the weight of the Apostle Paul's testimony, that "all Scripture . . . given by inspiration of God . . . is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be

perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16,17), the position of the believer remains clear. This text obviously would be negated if the Scriptural teaching on the 70 years were incorrect or if it were dependent on the civil findings for major modification.

Thus the chronological issues involved in this discussion may be seen to resolve themselves to a fundamental judgment of reliability of sources. Do we accept the testimony of the Bible, with its unique interwoven line of evidence through Leviticus, Jeremiah, Chronicles, Daniel and Zechariah, or do we turn to the standard interpretation of the fragmented Babylonian records which are not altogether consistent with the Biblical data? For the man of faith, in those areas where the teaching of Scripture is clear

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9 Jerry Leslie, in *Dating the Desolation*, includes an evaluation of Neo-Babylonian chronology which outlines both its strengths and weaknesses. Contrary to most secular authorities, areas of uncertainty remain in the fragmented Babylonian records and certain poignant questions have not yet even answered.

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and harmonious such as respecting THE 70 YEAR PERIOD, this decision should not be difficult.

Perhaps at some future time new light will be thrown on the Babylonian fragments which will allow for a reconciliation with the Biblical teaching. In the meantime, our judgment rests confidently that the Biblical view has been correctly discerned and remains absolute.

In closing, we think it appropriate to be reminded that the element of faith remains a vital part of the life of the believer and of the truths which he holds dear. Yet in the area under discussion, we find that the Biblical view is further enhanced by the clear outworking of prophetic calculations based upon THE 70 YEAR PERIOD. There have been remarkable corroborations of the Biblical view and correlations with Bible Student expectations in the Harvest time, in the prophecies of the Jubilee and the Times of the Gentiles, with ending points in 1874 and 1914 respectively. Surely such precise fulfillments and tie-in points are not merely coincidental; they seem to have been designed to complement the faith of the believer. And so to our mind, the Biblical view of THE 70 YEARS remains very strong and plausible indeed.

**PART II.**

**CORROBORATIVE VIEWS**

**OF THE 70 YEARS**

## **Pastor Charles T. Russell (1852-1916)**

Pastor Russell was the zealous, energetic founder of the Bible Student movement in the 1870's, author of six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*, as well as editor of the journal, *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, for almost 40 years. Hundreds of autonomous Bible study groups across the country elected him as their beloved pastor and regarded him as the "Laodicean Messenger" to the church at the end of the age. He became widely known by weekly syndicated sermons appearing in 2,000 city newspapers across the United States and in extensive public showings of "The Photodrama of Creation." His ministry continues through the Harvest period via the printed page and in the hearts of those enlightened by his lucid teachings on the divine plan of the ages.

Regarding the Biblical 70 years, Pastor Russell found 2 Chron. 36:17-23 the key text defining the period. He said it taught that "Nebuchadnezzar carried away the treasures of Jerusalem, broke down its walls, burned its palaces, and carried its people captive to Babylon; . . . that this desolation of the land and the city was in fulfillment of prophecy, the word of the Lord by Jeremiah, that the land should lie desolate and keep a Sabbath of rest seventy years. It also declares that this seventy years' desolation was brought to an end by the decree of Cyrus in the first year of his reign. Thus has the Lord clearly marked the beginning of the seventy years and their end; yet we find that chronologists in general reject this plain statement of the Scriptures." (Tower Reprints, p - 2509)

He also strongly believed that the 70 years pertained to the total desolation of the land rather than merely to the captivity of the people by Babylon. He concluded that any scheme of reckoning which shortened the total desolation period to less than 70 years was seriously in error and not in harmony with the exact "Bible record." He accepted the Bible definition of "desolate" as without an inhabitant" (Jer. 34:22), and found that this could only be the case after Zedekiah's overthrow and the destruction of Jerusalem. He believed there was a definite reason why Jehovah required that the land lie desolate for the 70 year period: that it was to compensate for the careless enforcement of the Jubilee Sabbaths in earlier years. (Vol. 2, pp. 51-52, 191-193, and *Tower Reprints*, pp. 1372, 3437)

Regarding the several devastations of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Pastor Russell felt that "there were three distinct captivities." He pointed out that in the first year of Cyrus, when the Jewish captives in Babylon were given the liberty to return to Palestine, only a few were so disposed. "The vast majority, however, were evidently well pleased with their foreign home, in which some of them had been living for seventy years, some for seventy-eight years, and some for eighty-nine years (those carried away captive at the same time as Daniel)."<sup>10</sup> According to his chronology, these three captivities would have occurred in 625 B.C. (first year of Nebuchadnezzar and fourth year of Jehoiakim), in 617 B.C. (eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar and third month of Jehoiachin), and the most significant in 607 B.C. (19<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar and 11th year of Zedekiah). (Tower Reprints, p. 2509) Exhibit B, "Devastations by

Nebuchadnezzar" (p. 80), summarizes these events. Pastor Russell was convinced that "the uncertain dates of secular history [should be made to] conform to the positive statements of the Bible," and not the other way around. Regarding the Bible chronology, he found it to proceed in an unbroken chain from Creation, through the Pre-flood era, to the Abrahamic Covenant, to the Exodus, through the period of the Judges and the Kings, totaling 3,522 years. He then regarded the 70 year period of

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10 It is not clear how the "seventy-eight" year figure for the second captivity was deduced. The third month of Jehoiachin's reign (just before Zedekiah was made king in his stead) was either in 618 or 617 B.C. (B/R chronology). Either starting point would have allowed more than 78 years to have elapsed to 536 B.C.

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desolation as the vital bridge connecting the sacred with the secular chronologies, making it possible to relate the Bible record with events of our day; because the year of release for the Jewish captives in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-3), which brought to an end the desolation of the land, was considered a well authenticated date in secular history-536 B.C.<sup>11</sup> Hence, he then concluded that there would have been 3,522 + 70 (= 3,592 years) from Creation to the first year of Cyrus in 536 B.C. and could then project another 2,408 years to the ending of the 6,000 years from Creation in 1872 A.D. (Vol. 2, p. 42, and Tower Reprints, pp. 1974-1975; also Leslie, p. 4) The 70 year period of desolation figured prominently in many of Pastor Russell's end-time calculations and prophetic expectations. These related to confirming the dates of Jesus' *parousia*, the Jubilees leading to the commencement of the Times of Restitution, the Jewish Double prophecy and the ending of the Gentile Times in 1914. Any shortening of the 70 year period would therefore radically impact upon all of these events, either eliminating them altogether or requiring a major restructuring.

(See Appendix A, "A Challenge to Bible Students," for an elaboration of the consequences of having the period shortened by adopting the civil date of 587 B.C. for the fall of Jerusalem instead of 607 B.C.)

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11 Contemporary scholars now favor 538-537 B.C. as Cyrus' first official year as king in Babylon. A method of harmonizing the 537 B.C. date with the Bowen/Russell chronology is discussed in *A Confirmation of the True Bible Chronology*, by C.F. Redeker, pp. 41-46.

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## **Morton Edgar (1861-1950)**

Bro. Morton Edgar, together with his younger brother John Edgar, was coauthor of the exhaustive work, *Great Pyramid Passages*, first published in 1912 in Scotland. Both were stalwart supporters of Pastor Russell's ministry and found many confirmations of its chronological basis in their study of history, and in measurements of the Great Pyramid passageway system. Their talents along mathematical lines enabled them to draw exacting diagrams depicting various harmonizing and corroborative features of the divine plan of the ages which were utilized by Pastor Russell and included in the official Reference Bible of the Watch Tower Society. Bro. Edgar firmly believed that the desolation period following the destruction of Jerusalem was a full 70 years in length; and only by "accepting the united testimony of the sacred writers" to this effect could "the chronological data of the Scriptures [be found] harmonious." He commented further that while "the teaching of the Scriptures regarding this period of 70 years desolation is very clear, it has been strangely obscured by Ussher and other chronologers." (Edgar, p. 27 and footnote p. 3 1) Based upon a careful collation of Bible texts in Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah, he worked out a systematic chronology for the period from Jehoiakim to the first year of Cyrus. Some specific points he suggested were:

(a) That there were just two main captivities: the first in Jehoiachin's brief reign, which ended with the placement of Zedekiah on the throne in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar; and the second, at Zedekiah's overthrow 11 years later when the city was totally destroyed, in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar.

He felt the Scriptures did not recognize any deportation in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and that in fact not until after the death of that king did the first captivity occur. A third deportation mentioned in Jer.52:30, involving the remnant of Jews who had fled to Egypt after the murder of Gedaliah, he considered to be very minor and not on the same level as the previous two. This latter event occurred in the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, in the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar. (Edgar, p. 29)

(b) That Jehoiakim was bound by Nebuchadnezzar in Jehoiakim's sixth or seventh year (Nebuchadnezzar's third or fourth year), after he cut up Jeremiah's scroll, rather than in Jehoiakim's fourth year (Nebuchadnezzar's first), before he cut up the scroll. (Edgar, p. 28; see also Leslie, p. 15)

(c) That to harmonize this with Dan. 1: 1, he regarded the "third year of Jehoiakim" mentioned there as of "doubtful" authenticity, preferring the reading "the third year of his vassalage" to Nebuchadnezzar instead. By then assuming the "second year" mentioned in Dan. 2:1 should actually read "12th year," he was able to strike a harmony between the narrative of Daniel in these verses and the other accounts of the captivity as presented in all other verses of Scripture. (Edgar, pp. 31-32)

(d) That Jeremiah's letter recorded in chapter 29 of his book was sent to all the captives in Babylon, not just to those taken prisoner prior to Jerusalem's total destruction. He believed the key to this understanding was the word "residue" in Jer. 29: 1, which tied in with the "remnant" of Jer. 39:9 and 2 Kings 25: 1 1 (same word in Hebrew for both expressions); that the remnant which the captain of the guard took captive in the final destruction of the city was the same group he included in the subjects to whom he addressed his letter. His explanation of Jer. 29:3, which mentions the names of messengers sent by Zedekiah, is that this referred to an earlier incident that occurred seven years previously and did not describe the current time at which the letter was being sent, since by that time Zedekiah had been dethroned. (Edgar, p. 30)

Bro. Edgar considered the 70 year length of the desolation period a necessary link in the chain of Bible chronology that spanned the period from Creation to the ending of the 6,000 years in 1872 A.D. He found abundant confirmation for the length of the desolation in measurements of the passageway system of the Great Pyramid, which earlier had been discovered to corroborate the overall chronology of the Bible on an inch (Pyramid inch unit) to a year basis. The full 70 year length proved vital to many of the basic Pyramid measurements which depicted such chronological periods and prophetic parallels as the Flood to Christ's Baptism, the Law Dispensation, the Parallel of Favor and Punishment upon Israel, and many others as well. Overall, he felt the Pyramid findings were a great encouragement to the faith of the Lord's people in the chronology of the Bible, by serving as an added witness to its truthfulness. (Edgar, pp. 13-16, 58-60, 83-86, 137- 140)



## **John A. Meggison (1882-1964)**

Bro. Meggison was an able Bible student who consecrated himself to the Lord's service early in life and actively supported the ministry of Pastor Russell. He served as a zealous colporteur for the Watch Tower Society in the earlier days of the movement, then became a respected elder who served at various Bible Student conventions throughout the country for many years. He believed that the desolation began with Zedekiah's dethronement and lasted for a full 70 years. He enumerated three captivities, as follows:

(1) In 624 B.C., the third to fourth year of Jehoiakim (accepting the usual reading of Dan. 1: 1), and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, which he identified as 17 to 18 years prior to the desolation.

(2) In 616 B.C., the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, when Ezekiel was probably taken captive.- 2Kings 24:12; Jer. 52:28; Jer. 27:19-20; Ezek. 40:1

(3) In 606 B.C., the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, when the desolation began after the total destruction of Jerusalem.

Bro. Meggison estimated that Daniel was between 14 and 16 years old when taken captive in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. He concluded that in the first year of Cyrus (536 B.C.), Daniel's age was about 104 (16 when captured + 15 years to the destruction of Jerusalem + 70 years of the desolation).

There is no record of his return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian release, so "probably the Lord had more work for him to do there." (Bible study notes, Dan. 1:1,21)

## **Julian T. Gray (1886-1970)**

Bro. Gray was of keen intellect and mathematical bent and was especially interested in chronological and prophetic matters. He found many features in the Great Pyramid and Tabernacle structures corroborative of the divine plan of the ages. This was reflected in his main work, *The Authorship and Message of the Great Pyramid* (1953) and in a subsequent series of ten short articles (1960's) which found hidden meanings in the measurements of these structures, in other numbers of the Bible and in the lengths of the ages.

His book, *Which Is the True Chronology?* (1934), showed him as a strong supporter of the Bible chronology advanced by Pastor Russell. In it he set forth a unique method for identifying the true chronology of the Scriptures by demonstrating that any proposed framework must synchronize with a clear reference to a total solar eclipse that occurred in the days of the prophet Amos: astronomically this can be fixed to the year 763 B.C. (pp. 9-18)

He also devoted an entire chapter to discussing the length of the period of desolation, which he found crucial to providing the final link connecting Bible events with the generally accepted civil date for the first year of Cyrus (536 B.C.). Bro. Gray wrote:

"There should be no disagreement among those who believe in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, as to the length of the period of the desolation, for the Scriptures are as clear and definite on this point as it would seem possible for language to be. Sometimes, in their quest for the supposedly difficult and abstruse, scholars have overlooked the simple and the obvious, and this is indeed the case with reference to some of the reputedly knotty problems of chronology. "Jeremiah, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had foretold a captivity and desolation of the land, and had given its duration as 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11,12); Daniel, also under divine inspiration, stated his understanding of the words of the Lord through Jeremiah, to be that the desolations of Jerusalem must continue for 70 years [Daniel 9:21. In 2 Chron. 36:20-22 it is further stated that Jeremiah's 70 year period was to end with 'the reign of the kingdom of Persia' and that 'in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia,' he made his decree permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem, thus ending the desolation." (p. 38)

Bro. Gray then elaborated on three texts in support of his beliefs. In the first, Lev. 26:33-35, he found Moses indicating that neglect on Israel's part in keeping the Sabbath feature of the Law would result in an enforced period of rest upon the land, without actually delineating its length. The stated conditions of rest were twofold: the land would be desolate with its cities waste, and the people removed to their enemies' land.

In Jer. 25:11 he found the two conditions specified earlier by Moses: desolation of the land and servitude in Babylon. In addition, Jeremiah then revealed that these conditions would prevail for 70 years. Finally, Bro. Gray quoted 2 Chron. 36:20,21 which he felt indicated that the predicted "sabbath keeping of the land" and Jeremiah's period of "servitude and desolation" were one and

the same. He concluded that "the identity of the two [periods] is here established beyond question, for all who have faith in the testimony of the inspired Word of God." (pp. 39-40)

Bro. Gray also commented on two other Scriptures that mention 70 years, but are more difficult of application. He found both of them referring to the exact same 70 years as the earlier references. The first text is in Zechariah's prophecy, in which the angel of the Lord was heard to inquire, "O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"-Zech. 1:12

Bro. Gray noted that these words were spoken in the second year of King Darius, just after the foundations of the Temple had been laid. (Zech. 1:7) But he was convinced that the 70 years must have applied earlier to the period between the destruction of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles. The angel's question at that particular time-16 years after the Jews had returned would then become full of meaning because, despite much activity in tilling the soil and planting, the Lord's full blessing had been withheld. That is, 16 years after the expiration of the prophetic 70 year period of desolation and captivity had expired, the Jews had not yet fully received of God's mercies, and such an inquiry would have been most appropriate. (pp. 46-47)

The second obscure text that speaks of a 70 year period is found in the Book of Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot." (Isa. 23:15) This prophecy refers to a time when the important ancient city of Tyre would sink into oblivion and be forgotten by the world. Nebuchadnezzar is said to have laid siege against the city in his first year, but did not actually overthrow it until some years later, the exact date not being recorded.

Bro. Gray combined this text with Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre (Ezek. 26:7), which specifically named Nebuchadnezzar as the "king of kings" who would be brought against the city. He reasoned that not until Zedekiah was removed as the representative king on the typical throne of the Lord could Nebuchadnezzar be recognized as a king of kings-the head over the first of the four world empires that would hold sway until Shiloh came, whose right it is." The foretold 70 years would be "according to the days of one king" [or kingdom], the full period allotted to Babylon "from the Lord's standpoint, not earlier than the 11th year of Zedekiah and continuing until overthrown by Cyrus, king of Persia."

Thus, the period when Tyre was forgotten would extend from Jerusalem's fall to Babylon's overthrow, a period that Bro. Gray reckoned was just 70 years [from 606 B.C. in B/R chronology to 536 B.C., the accepted date for the first year of Cyrus]. (pp. 48-50) <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> With today's more exact dating, the reckoning would be adjusted so that instead of 606 B.C. to 536 B.C., it would become 607 B.C. to 537 B.C. (See footnote 11.)

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## **Flavius Josephus (ca. 38-100 A.D.)**

A Jewish general at the time of the Roman siege of Jerusalem, who was captured by Vespasian and cast into the role of a mediator; zealots to the Jewish cause considered him a traitor. After Jerusalem's fall he was highly favored by the Romans, and Titus encouraged him to undertake his first major historical work, *The Jewish War*. The second, *Antiquities of the Jews*, was a lengthy account of the Jewish nation, much of it closely following the Biblical narrative. His third work, *Against Apion*, was a brilliant defense of his native Jewish religion. Josephus has been rated among the five greatest Hellenic historians, along with Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Polybius.

Unfortunately his commentary on the length of the desolation period is inconsistent. In his *Antiquities*, he wrote:

"And when they were there [in Egypt], God signified to the prophet that the king of Babylon was about making an expedition against the Egyptians, and commanded him [Jeremiah] to foretell to the people that Egypt would be taken, and the king of Babylon should slay some of them, and should take others captive, and bring them to Babylon; which things came to pass accordingly; for on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar ... he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned, and set up another: and he took those Jews that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon; and such was the end of the nation of the Hebrews, as it hath been delivered down to us ... the people of the two tribes that remained after Jerusalem was taken (were carried away) by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and Chaldea . . . The king of Babylon, who brought out the two tribes, placed no other nation in their country, by which **means all Judea and Jerusalem, and the temple, continued to be a desert for seventy years.**" (*Antiquities*, X., 9:6,7; emphasis added)

This reference seems clearly to assign the 70 years to the desolation period when "all Judea, Jerusalem and the temple continued to be a desert."

A little further along Josephus again mentioned the 70 years, describing it as a period of "captivity" and "servitude." This could be taken as harmonious with the previous quote, even though it does not specifically delineate the beginning of the period other than by the expression, "the day that our people were removed out of their own land into Babylon.":

**"In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, which was the seventieth from the day that our people were removed out of their own land into Babylon, God commiserated the captivity and calamity of these poor people, according as he had foretold to them by Jeremiah the prophet, before the destruction of the city, that after they had served Nebuchadnezzar and his posterity, and after they had undergone that servitude seventy years, he would restore them**

**again to the land of their fathers**, and they should build their temple, and enjoy their ancient prosperity; and these things God did afford them." (Antiquities, XI., 1: 1; emphasis added)

Then in his work *Against Apion*, Josephus summarized what Berosus, the great Babylonian historian of antiquity, had written concerning Nebuchadnezzar's foray against Jerusalem and his subsequent captivity of the Jews. Josephus wrote:

"I will now relate what hath been written concerning us in the Chaldean histories; which records have a great agreement with our books in other things also. Berosus shall be witness to what I say ... This Berosus, therefore, following the most ancient records of that nation [Babylon], gives us a history of . . . Nabolassar, who was king of Babylon and of the Chaideans. And when he was relating the acts of this king, he describes to us how he sent his son Nabuchodonosor against Egypt, and against our land, with a great army, upon his being informed that they had revolted from him; and how, by that means, **he subdued them all, and set our temple that was at Jerusalem on fire; nay, and removed our people** entirely out of their own country, and transferred them to Babylon; when it so happened **that our city was desolate during the interval of seventy years, until the days of Cym's king of Persia.**" (Apion, I.: 19; emphasis added)

This reference seems clearly to describe both the major captivity and the desolation period as 70 years in duration. Thus we have a series of three quotations from Josephus, all of which are harmonious with each other and in agreement with the Scriptural presentation. But then, in open contradiction to all of this, almost in the very next paragraph, Josephus wrote:

"These accounts agree with true history in our books; for in them it is written that Nebuchadnezzar, in the nineteenth year of his reign, laid our temple desolate, and so it lay in that state of obscurity for fifty years; but that in the second year of the reign of Cyrus, its foundations were laid and it was finished again in the second year of Darius." (Apion, I.:21; emphasis added)

Josephus' ambiguity on this subject seems to reflect the mixed reviews that modern authorities have given him on chronological matters. It is indeed unfortunate that such a noted Jewish historian was not more careful in his labors-or could it be that the final quotation above was tampered with, which resulted in the disharmonious testimony?

## **PART III.**

### **CAREER HIGHLIGHTS**

### **OF RULERS AND PROPHETS**

**Neo-Babylonian Conqueror:**

## **Nebuchadnezzar (Nebuchadrezzar)**

Period of reign:                   625-583 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
  605-563 B.C. (civil dating)

The greatest king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire who reigned for 43 years. He was the son of Nabopolassar, a mighty general who had earlier established himself as king of Babylon and with the help of the Medes and Scythians asserted his authority over Assyria by conquering Ninevah, its capital.

Nebuchadnezzar as crown prince joined his father in battles with the remnants of Assyrian power and their Egyptian allies. About the time of his father's final illness and death, he decisively defeated Egypt at Carchemish. Syria and Judah were thereupon forced to pay tribute to Babylon. But soon Jehoiakim and Zedekiah rebelled, prompting additional Babylonian expeditions under Nebuchadnezzar to punish the Jews and pillage their capital city, Jerusalem. This culminated in the complete defeat of Judah, the dethronement of their last king, Zedekiah, the total destruction of the Temple and city, and the captivity of its people to Babylon for 70 years.

Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned prominently in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Kings and Chronicles. His kingdom was the "head of gold" referred to in the famous dream which was interpreted by Daniel, who described him as the mighty king to whom "the God of heaven" had given "a kingdom, power, and strength and glory." (Dan. 2:37-39) As such, he was undoubtedly one of the greatest monarchs of all time. His kingdom was prophesied to be the first of a series of four universal empires that would dominate the world scene until the Last Times, when "the God of heaven [would] set up [His] kingdom which [would] never be destroyed." (Dan. 2:44) The seven "times" or years of Nebuchadnezzar's degradation (Dan. 4:18-28) are thought to be typical of the larger period of the "Times of the Gentiles" ( $7 \times 360 = 2,520$  years, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem) when Israel would be subservient to the dominion of Gentile powers, ending in 1914. Nebuchadnezzar's rule was thus ordained of God and overruled to the extent that the divine purposes for that period were carried forward, even to the punishing of His own people who had strayed from their covenant, and typical of events to come.

Nebuchadnezzar was not only a brilliant military commander, but an effective civil administrator as well. His building operations were on a magnificent scale and helped elevate Babylon to a position of prominence and grandeur. Its temples, ziggurats, protective walls and gates, parks and overall layout were magnificent to behold. The famous hanging gardens were regarded by the Greeks as one of the wonders of the world. In recent years, an effort has been made to rebuild some of the points of interest in the ancient city, but with only mixed success.

**Judah's Last Rulers:**

## **Jehoiakim (Eliakim)**

Period of reign:           628-618 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
                                  608-598 B.C. (civil dating)

The second son of Josiah, set up as king of Judah by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. He was the older half-brother of Jehoahaz, who had reigned for just three months in Jerusalem after the death of the godly king Josiah. Jehoiakim was an oppressive and thoroughly evil king who seemed to delight in violence and wrong-doing. For almost four years, he reigned securely under the protection of Egypt. But the Babylonian victory at Carchemish, which spelled the end of Assyria, also meant the weakening of Egypt. Judah thereupon fell under Nebuchadnezzar's sphere and was forced to pay tribute after Jerusalem had been besieged and Jehoiakim bound.

Not only was Jehoiakim wicked in his dealings with his subjects and guilty of repeatedly attempting to kill Jeremiah, but he has the dubious distinction of showing blatant contempt for God's word as revealed by the prophet. While the people and nobles were ready to repent upon hearing Jeremiah's prophecy, the king defiantly cut up his scroll and threw it into the fireplace. (Jer. 36:20-24) Within a short time (possibly three years) he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps encouraged by Egypt's temporary repulsing of his forces. But Nebuchadnezzar regrouped and reestablished his authority, first in Syria, and then in Judah. The details of Jehoiakim's downfall are not given in Scripture, other than that he died in disgrace (Jer. 22:18,19), probably in a palace coup prompted by Nebuchadnezzar's advancing army. He had reigned for 11 years.



## **Johoiachin (Coniah, Jeconiah)**

Period of reign:           3 months in 618 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
                                  598 B.C. (civil dating)

The son of Jehoiakim who, following in his father's steps, "did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." Upon assuming the throne at the young age of 18, Jehoiachin found himself in the unhappy position of facing an imminent onslaught by Nebuchadnezzar because of his father's rebellion. He wisely offered little resistance, surrendered himself and the royal house, was dethroned by Nebuchadnezzar after only three months as king and deported to Babylon. He remained a captive there for the rest of his life, although seemingly well treated, perhaps because thought of as the legitimate king of Judah, even while in prison. In the 37th year of his captivity (2 Kings 25:27), Nebuchadnezzar died and the new monarch Evil-merodach released Jehoiachin. He thereupon was treated with dignity and respect and granted a place at the court for the remainder of his life.

## **Zedekiah (Mattaniah)**

Period of reign: 617-607 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
597-587 B.C. (civil dating)

The last king of Judah, another son of Josiah. He reigned for 11 years in Jerusalem, after being placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar to succeed Jehoiachin. His rule was likened to that of Jehoiakim and characterized as "evil in the sight of the Lord." (2 Kings 24:19) When he rebelled against the Babylonian authority, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem and within two years overwhelmed it.

Zedekiah was captured, his sons slain, himself blinded and thence carried in chains to Babylon, where he later died.

Ezekiel prophesied of Zedekiah that he would be the last of Judah's kings and that in reality it was Jehovah who was responsible for their overthrow; further, that the typical kingdom of God represented in them would be removed, with the throne of divine authority to remain vacant until "he [Christ] come whose right it is [to reign in judgment and in righteousness]." (Ezek. 21:25-27)

The year of Zedekiah's dethronement is critical in reckoning the beginning of the "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy, for not until the last king had ended his reign upon Jehovah's typical throne (1 Chron. 29:23) could this period properly begin.

## **Gedaliah**

Period of authority:           2 months in 607 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
  587 B.C. (civil dating)

The son of Shaphan, king Josiah's secretary. Nebuchadnezzar elevated him to become governor over the remaining people of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem. Gedaliah previously had sympathized with Jeremiah and had been appointed to protect the prophet after his release from prison. His brief rule of two months at Mizpah was terminated when he was treacherously slain by Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, at the behest of Baalis, king of the Ammonites. (Jer. 41:1-3) The anniversary of his murder is commemorated in Jewish tradition as a day of fasting.

**Prominent Prophets:**

## **Jeremiah**

Start of ministry: In 13th year of reign of King Josiah  
648 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
628 B.C. (civil dating)

The son of Hilkiah (not the high priest) and member of a priestly family living near Jerusalem. He is considered one of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets and lived to advise five successive Judean kings until the destruction of the nation. Many details of his life and character are known due to the autobiographical nature of his book.

While yet a young man, in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah of Judah, Jeremiah was called by the Lord to be His prophet. Moreover, the Lord revealed that even prior to his birth, he had been sanctified and ordained for that special calling. (Jer. 1:5) Although at first reluctant and expressing a shyness for such service, Jeremiah was encouraged by the Lord, who said: "I am with thee to deliver thee ... Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth . . . I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (Jer. 1:8-10) From that day forward Jeremiah never lacked courage or boldness and he became as "a defensed city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land."-Jer. 1:18

Jeremiah lived during the period of the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire under its powerful leader Nebuchadnezzar. God instructed him to predict repeatedly the downfall of Judah at the hands of the northern conqueror unless the Jews were thoroughly willing to reform their ways and return to Him. His message was not popular with either kings or people and led to his continual persecution and frequent imprisonment. The prophet's bold proclamations and faithfulness to his calling even under the worst of circumstances has commended him to all just and Godfearing people everywhere.

Jeremiah was the first of the prophets to spell out directly the 70 years of captivity of Judah and thus provided the basic framework for that period to which Daniel and Zechariah later referred. (Jer. 25:8-13; 29:10-14) Though his message was primarily of impending judgment, he also wrote of peace and prosperity and of a hopeful future for his people. (Jer. 32:36-44) This prophecy was evidently to be of double fulfillment: first, in the temporary return from the Babylonian exile, and later on a yet grander scale in the Kingdom when God would bless them, cause them to prosper greatly in the land, and establish His everlasting covenant with them.

After the downfall of Judah, Jeremiah was given the choice of accompanying the captives to Babylon or of remaining behind with the remnant in the land. He chose the latter, but after the murder of Gedaliah was forced to go to Egypt, where he eventually died. He had endured more

than 40 years of devoted service in which often he had stood almost alone in proclaiming Jehovah's judgments.

Throughout his many adversities, the Lord strengthened him and more than once providentially had delivered him from untimely death. Daniel acknowledged Jeremiah as a true prophet of God and consulted his writings. By carefully pondering his words concerning the 70 years captivity, Daniel was enabled to recognize that the appointed time was nearing its close. This gave him the boldness to plead with God on behalf of His people and to request further outpourings of favor.

## Ezekiel

Start of ministry: In fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity  
613 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
593 B.C. (civil dating)

The son of Buzi, of a priestly family, who was deported to Babylon at the time of King Jehoiachin's captivity; shortly thereafter he was called of God to become a watchman and a prophet to warn the children of Israel. He was thus contemporaneous with the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, probably younger than both. Early on, God confided to him that his mission would not be easy, for he was to minister to a "rebellious house," an "impudent" and "stiffhearted" people; nevertheless, whether they would hear or forbear, he was not to fear or hold back from proclaiming the words of the Lord.-Ezek. 2:3-7

Ezekiel was faithful to his calling and became a powerful prophet, as well as counselor and teacher of God's law. He was instructed to use various symbols and portrayals as part of his messages, and frequently acted them out personally to dramatize the solemn nature of his warnings. (Ezek. chapters 4 and 5) Like Jeremiah, his preaching was often resented, as there was little hope for the immediate future to encourage his fellow captives in Babylon. Vision after vision detailed the iniquities and idolatries being practiced in the very courts of the Temple, God's inevitable denunciation and rejection to follow, and the imminent fall of the city of Jerusalem. -Ezek. chapter 8, 11: 1-12

During the siege of Jerusalem, Ezekiel turned his attention to the surrounding pagan nations that hated Judah and were openly rejoicing in her imminent defeat. He prophesied of God's judgments to befall Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia (Ezek. chapter 25); of how the proud king of Tyre would be punished and his city sunk into the waters-also figurative of the eventual downfall of Satan (Ezek. chapters 26 through 28); and of how Nebuchadnezzar would be permitted to plunder Egypt and permanently weaken its place among the nations. -Ezek. chapters 29 through 32

As with Jeremiah, however, despite the impending judgment and years of predicted exile, there was also a favorable note to Ezekiel's message. He was permitted to raise the hopes of his fellow captives for the return of God's favor and the end of their captivity at the close of the appointed 70 years desolation of the land. To those who were Israelites indeed, the exile would serve as a period of purging and repentance, after which they would be allowed to return and rebuild their nation.

It is interesting that Ezekiel's predictions of returning favor from God and the restoration of the Jews to their land were expressed in language allowing grander fulfillments than merely the near term. (Ezek. 11:17-20; 28:25-26; 32:11-16) In a yet larger sense, Ezekiel pictured a glorious future day in which the Lord in mercy would remember His people and deliver them. They would be regathered from all corners of the earth to which they had been dispersed among the Gentiles, and restored to their own land. Under the rulership of the antitypical David, their

filthiness would be removed, they would be given hearts of flesh, and then would develop the right spirit. The Lord would once again become their God, they would become a teacher nation in the earth, and "there shall be showers of blessing" for all.-Ezek. 34:23-31

And thus Ezekiel was inspired to preview the grand day of God's earthly Kingdom arrangement, when the glory of the Lord would return to Israel and all nations would be blessed with peace and prosperity.

## Daniel

Minimum lifespan (ca.): 641-537 B.C. (B/R chronology)  
621-537 B.C. (civil dating)

Major prophet called "greatly beloved" of God because of his unswerving devotion and loyalty to Him. He was among the handful of promising young men selected to be taken to Babylon for advanced training and positions of authority. Well educated in all the wisdom of the Chaldeans, he nevertheless remained true to his faith and benefited continually from God's guidance and close supervision. He became a statesman of highest rank in the government and served as close advisor to successive kings from Nebuchadnezzar to Darius the Mede. Besides his administrative talents, God especially granted him the gift of visions and interpreting of dreams, which clearly established him as a man of God.

Daniel was the only seer in all of Babylon who was able, under divine direction, to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the four part image of a man, depicting the four universal empires that would dominate in the earth until the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. (Dan. 2) Later he was given the vision of the four terrible beasts, paralleling Nebuchadnezzar's earlier dream, depicting the pernicious persecutions which were to befall "the saints of the Most High" until the everlasting dominion was given at last to the "Son of Man." (Dan. 7) Then came the prophecies of the ram and he-goat (Persia and Greece), and the 2300 days (Dan. 8); later still the vision of significant events leading up to "the time of the end" (Dan. 11), and finally the 1260, 1290 and 1335 days. -Dan. 12

In the midst of these latter revelations, in the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel became acutely aware that the 70 year period of Jeremiah's earlier prophecy respecting "the desolations of Jerusalem" and "the sanctuary that [lay] desolate" was nearing completion. He therefore earnestly sought the Lord in prayer and offered supplications on behalf of his people Israel that the Lord might forgive their iniquities and restore His favor to them. Then followed the miraculous visit by the angel Gabriel and his message of the 70 weeks, in which Messiah was forecast to come and to "be cut off" after "confirming the covenant with many." Thus was Daniel rewarded with perhaps more insights into the future than any other servant of God, and he lived to see the return of the first contingents of Jews to Judea under the edict of Cyrus to begin the work of rebuilding the Temple.



**Persian Deliverer:**

## Cyrus

Period of reign (ca.): 560-530 B.C. (civil dating)

Founder of the Persian Empire and conqueror of Babylon, known as "Cyrus the Great." Cuneiform inscriptions record the king's own announcement of his royal genealogy: "I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four rims (of the earth), son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus [I. I . . . descendant of Teispes. . . . of a family (which) always (exercised) kingship. "

While his early history is somewhat obscure,<sup>13</sup> it is clear that shortly after Cyrus succeeded to his father's throne (about 560 B.C.), he revolted against the Medes who had dominated politically and seized their capital, Ecbatana (about 550 B.C.). He soon enlarged his control over all of the Median Empire and was able to win the loyalty of the Medes as well. Cyrus next defeated King Croesus of Lydia, captured Sardis and soon controlled all of Asia Minor. Within short order, he had established himself as an able general, popular administrator of a growing empire and chief rival to Babylon itself.

It is at this point that Cyrus began to carry out a prominent role in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Isaiah foretold how God would raise up a "shepherd" who would act on behalf of His people Israel, to punish Babylon and bring about the release of the Jewish captives in that land. "Thus saith the Lord ... That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built: and to the temple,

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13 In fact, Harold Lamb writes that, "All the verified historical data about Cyrus, including the famous Cylinder, could be translated and published in no more than six pages." (Cyrus the Great, p. 298)

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Thy foundation shall be laid." (Isa. 44:24,28) Cyrus' name was recorded here well over a century before he was actually born.

As a prototype of the greater Christ to follow, Cyrus was referred to as Jehovah's "anointed": "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him." (Isa. 45: 1) "He shall build my city and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts." (Isa. 45:13) "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country." (Isa. 46:10-11) "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. " - Isa. 48:20

In conquering Babylon, Cyrus devised a plan to divert the river Euphrates which ran through the mighty city and to send his forces along the dry waterway underneath the impregnable walls.

While the city was reveling in festive celebration with its king, Belshazzar,<sup>14</sup> Cyrus' army gained entrance secretly through the very gates of the palace, slew the king and seized control. (Dan. chapter 5)

Later in the same month (Oct. 539 B.C.) Cyrus entered the city and presented himself in the role of liberator to the people. He was noted for his policies of moderation in dealing with captive nations and of showing respect for their shrines and deities. Thus it was not out of character to issue his decree authorizing the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and- rebuild their temple. Whereas his favorable decree was dated "in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia" (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1: 1), this actually meant the first year of his rulership over Babylon. Since the Bible also refers to "the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans" (Dan. 9: 1), this event may have intervened between

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14 Firstborn son of Nabonidus and co-regent with his father in the final years of the Babylonian Empire.

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the fall of Babylon and Cyrus' first year. Or, as some authorities believe, Cyrus and Darius may have reigned as co-regents for a short time. Regardless, Cyrus' first year over Babylon is now taken as 538-537 B.C., during which his decree was issued. Probably by late in 537 B.C., exactly 70 years after the fall of Jerusalem according to Bible chronology, the Jews had returned to their land.

Cyrus' proclamation, which officially brought an end to the captivity, fulfilled his commission as the "anointed shepherd" of Jehovah. It is interesting that Cyrus himself gave recognition to the great God of the Hebrews and acknowledged that "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem." (Ezra 1:2) This does not mean that he fully embraced Jehovah, but indicates that he had been informed of the special role which the Hebrew prophets had assigned him. Isaiah 45:4-5 seems to imply that Cyrus would retain his own belief in the gods he was accustomed to worship. Yet he took seriously his responsibilities toward the worshipers of Jehovah: He willingly restored the temple treasures that earlier had been removed by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1: 7-11), gave official permission to import needed cedars from Lebanon and even authorized the expenditure of treasury funds to assist in the building effort. -Ezra 3:7

It has been speculated that the strong references to Jehovah in Cyrus' decree may reflect the influence of Daniel, who served as president under Darius the Mede and prospered under Cyrus as well.-Dan. 6:1-3,28

**Post Exile Leaders:**

## **Zerubbabel<sup>15</sup> (Sheshbazzar)**

Period of prominence: 537-515 B.C.

(B/R chronology & civil dating)

Descendant of King David, grandson of King Jehoiachin, and ancestor of Jesus Christ, called "the prince of Judah" in Ezra 1:8. An ardent servant of the Lord, he was appointed governor of the colony of Jews that returned to Judah after the release from Babylonian captivity. (537 B.C.) As such, Cyrus entrusted him with the sacred vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar had removed earlier from the Temple and he was placed in charge of the reconstruction work. - Ezra 5:13- 16

According to the Scriptural record, 42,360 Israelites, 200 singers and 7,337 slaves were willing to leave Babylon and accompany Zerubbabel on the return trip. (Ezra 2:64,65) In the seventh month of the first year, after the Jews had settled themselves in the various cities of Judah, they gathered together in Jerusalem under the direction of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest. The altar of the Temple was built and erected, and the daily burnt offerings reestablished, as well as the other sacrifices which had lain dormant for 70 years. (Ezra 3:1-6) In the second month of the second year, the foundations of the Temple were laid again and prompted a day of special joy and praise to Jehovah; some of the older Jews who remembered the first Temple both wept and shouted for joy. (Ezra 3:10-13) Thereupon the work of rebuilding the Temple proceeded in earnest.

Before long the adversaries of Judah conspired to stop the work. At first they pretended to be sympathetic and offered to assist, but Zerubbabel saw through their plot and rebuffed them. Thereafter they openly "weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and

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<sup>15</sup> The name signifies "shoot or seed of Babylon," since he was born in the captivity.

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troubled them in building." (Ezra 4:4) In another scheme, they succeeded in convincing King Artaxerxes to place an official ban on the work, pleading that the Jews in Jerusalem historically had been guilty of insurrection against the kingly authorities.-Ezra 4:11-24

This situation caused the Lord to raise up two special prophets Zechariah and Haggai-to encourage His people and urge them to continue their assigned work. Haggai reminded them that they had made comfortable homes for themselves but that the house of the Lord languished. Simply because the enemies of Judah had opposed the work, the people had hastily concluded, "The time is not come . . . that the Lord's house should be built." (Hag. 1:2) But this was the very purpose for which they had been sent to the Holy Land, and God did not want them to shrink back from their mission.

Zechariah was inspired by a vision of the golden lampstand and two olive trees and was prompted to predict that the same "hands of Zerubbabel [that] have laid the foundation of [the Temple] . . . [would] also finish it." (Zech. 4:1-3,9) Moreover, even the greatest of obstacles, such as powerful enemies or other hindrances, would not be permitted to interfere with God's purposes. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shootings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." But this was to be accomplished, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6-7)

In this, it is evident that Zerubbabel was also a type of Christ, who will complete the antitypical Temple class, clear away all obstacles to the accomplishment of God's purposes and govern the people with Justice and Equity when his Kingdom is established at last upon the earth.

Thus motivated and inspired, Zerubbabel and Joshua courageously resumed the construction of the Temple despite the formal ban against it. Continuing hostilities by the opponents of the Jews prompted a search of the Persian archives which uncovered the official record of Cyrus' earlier favorable decree and vindicated the legality of their work. (Ezra 5:7 to 6:14) In God's providence, the contemporary ruling head of Persia, King Darius, thereupon not only sanctioned the rebuilding effort, but also commanded that Judah's neighbors actively assist in defraying expenses, using funds from the King's tribute and also making available animals and other provisions needed to carry on the Temple activities. The purpose of the king's decree was declared to be, "That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savors unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." -Ezra 6: 10

With continued assurances of God's favor through the prophets, Zerubbabel was strengthened to continue directing the work until at last the Temple was completed. This was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, probably 515 B.C. A great celebration attended the dedication of the new Temple, "for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God." (Ezra 6:22) And so the work of Zerubbabel was finished. It could also be said of him that he was faithful, along with Nehemiah, in providing for the needs of the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, "every day his portion," thus upholding the arrangements of the Lord for His people. -Neh. 12:47

## Ezra

Period of prominence (ca.): 468 B.C. onward (B/R chronology)  
458 B.C. onward (civil dating)

Devoted scribe, priest, scholar and teacher of the Law, used of the Lord to bring about religious reform and revival amongst the Jews. His genealogy extends back to Aaron, the first high priest, through Seraiah, the later high priest put to death at Riblah by order of Nebuchadnezzar. No details of his early life are given in the Bible, other than that he lived in Babylon.

Ezra was not amongst those who returned to Jerusalem under the proclamation of Cyrus, for he had not yet been born. Not until some 69 years later, in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes I (about 468 B.C.), was he appointed the head of a second expedition, after requesting permission to pursue such a mission. It is not clear how he was able to influence the king to grant a formal decree not only to allow the return of another sizable group of Jews (probably about 7,000 including wives and children), but also to provide the finances and supplies to make it possible. (Ezra 7:12-26) Ezra was profoundly grateful and exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem ... And hath extended mercy unto me."- Ezra 7:27-28

Ezra's work as a reformer was cut out for him, however, as word had gotten back that the fledgling nation had drifted back into apostasy after making a good start under Zerubbabel. Many of the Jews had intermarried with their heathen neighbors, contrary to the Law of God, and oppression and immorality were rampant. The Temple, while completed earlier, was not properly furnished and its services and sacrifices were neglected. It was evident that a zealous and faithful servant of God was needed to turn the hearts of the people back to Jehovah. Ezra was the one upon whom "the good hand of his God" rested, for he had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." – Ezra 7:9, 10

The journey back to Jerusalem, a distance of 900 miles, was a perilous one and required four months to complete. Ezra had fasted and prayed for Jehovah's protection "against the enemy in the way," since they were carrying much silver and gold and vessels for the Temple, amounting to a huge treasure for the time. But Ezra's faith and courage were rewarded and the entire company made it safely back, with all their treasures intact. (Ezra 7:9; 8:21-32) This work of restoring precious vessels to the Temple, both by Zerubbabel and Ezra, has been likened to the restoration of many vital Bible truths that have accrued to the antitypical Temple class at the end of the age during the "Times of Blessedness" that accompanied the *parousia* of our Lord.

Upon his arrival, Ezra delivered the treasures to the Temple, offered sacrifices there, and carried out the various trusts committed to him. He was then ready to enter upon his great work of reform. Upon learning first hand from the princes the extent to which all classes of the Jews had forsaken their covenant and married heathen wives, he was so shocked that he rent his garments, tore his hair, and sat motionless.

In public prayer at the time of the evening sacrifice, Ezra solemnly confessed the deep sins of the people, past and present, and especially expressed his horror at the renewed lapse of obedience. How could they expect God to be merciful again, after having preserved them in exile and extended grace through the Persian rulers to deliver them to their land? (Ezra 9:5-15) So earnest was his plea, that the people "wept very sore" and willingly proposed that they put away all their foreign wives and children, to purify themselves before the Lord. Accordingly, a special divorce court was set up, which took three months to hear each case individually, clear out the uncleanness and dissolve the improper marriages. -Ezra 10: 1-17

The next mention of Ezra is when he appears on the scene with Nehemiah, some 13 years later. He may have returned to Babylon for a time, for religious conditions had again deteriorated, with corruption invading the ranks of even the priesthood. Ezra again took a leading role, carrying out strictly priestly and ecclesiastical functions. During the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles, he and his assistants carefully read and interpreted the words of the Law; the people, the chiefs of the tribes, and the Levites all gathered together before him and "wept, when they heard the words of the law." "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. " -Neh. 8:1- 9,13

In all this, Ezra helped Nehemiah in bringing about another religious reformation. Throughout his career, he never wavered in his dedicated service to God and in his uncompromising zeal for righteousness. Not a single derogatory incident can be cited to detract from this exemplary record. According to tradition, he is the author of the Book of Chronicles as well as that of Ezra.

## Nehemiah

Period of prominence (ca.): 455 B.C. onward (B/R chronology)  
445 B.C. onward (civil dating)

Cupbearer to Persian King Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) and later, governor of Judah and rebuilders of the walls of Jerusalem. Little is known of his early life, other than that he was the son of Hachaliah. The title "cupbearer" was indicative of a highly responsible office in the Persian court, an intimate associate and probably adviser of the king.

Though thus successful and prospering in the winter palace in Shushan, Nehemiah's heart was really in Jerusalem. When a company of Israelites visited him in the 20th year of Artaxerxes and described the deplorable condition of his people there and the continued ruined state of Jerusalem, he was smitten with grief. "When I heard these words. . . I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." (Neh. 1:4) He petitioned Jehovah that he might gain the approval of the Persian emperor in journeying to Jerusalem and rebuilding the walls of the city, to remove the reproach of his people there and revive their spirits. God abundantly answered, and not only did the King grant permission for him to go at once but also gave him "captains of the army and horsemen" for protection and a royal commission for securing the timber supplies needed for the project. - Neh. 2:8,9

After seeing firsthand the extensive ruins of the walls and the burned out gates, Nehemiah revealed his mission to the people, and they willingly consented to the reconstruction plan. "I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."-Neh. 2:18

The enemies of the Jews were quick to notice their effort, which they derided, and vowed to use every art and tactic to hinder it.

Nehemiah made this a matter of special prayer, which the Lord answered in the determination of the people to continue, "for the people had a mind to work." (Neh. 4:6) But again their enemies "conspired . . . together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it," whereupon Nehemiah again led prayers "unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." Neh. 4:8-9

Relentlessly, the enemies of the Jews under Sanballat, Tobiah and other leaders, attempted to stop the rebuilding work. Four times they schemed to interfere and lure Nehemiah away, but he replied, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." Next came a letter with false charges that were rebuked; followed by a scheme to frighten Nehemiah to hide in the Temple, which would have been contrary to the Law and the basis for reproach against him. By complete reliance upon Jehovah, Nehemiah saw through all these plots and remained unmoved, so that he

was able to supervise the work until it was finished-remarkably in just 52 days. "When all our enemies . . . and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down... for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."- Neh. 6:3-16

Nehemiah not only was a great builder, but also served as governor of Judea. In this role he further demonstrated his zeal for the true worship of Jehovah and wisely instituted needed reforms for the backslidden people. He rebuked the nobles and tribal rulers who were oppressing their fellow brethren by exacting usury in a time of economic hardship, and persuaded the people to enter "into an oath to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord . . . and his judgments and his statutes." (Neh. 10:29) This included observing the Sabbath, supporting the Temple service, and refraining from intermarriage with heathen wives. In all this, Nehemiah was unselfishly engaged in building up the faith of his fellow Jews and refused even to accept remuneration for his own high office.

Evidently Nehemiah served 12 years as governor of Judah before leaving to confer with King Artaxerxes, in the 32nd year of his reign, presumably on official business. (Neh. 5:14; 13:6)

When he returned to Jerusalem (after an unspecified period of time), religious deterioration had again set in. Priests and Levites were not being supported, the Sabbath was being neglected, the Temple was being desecrated and intermarriage with heathen wives was threatening the very identity of the nation. This again required a courageous and uncompromising action on his part, after being strengthened in prayer. In rapid succession, Nehemiah restored the Temple and its services to purity of worship, enforced proper observance of the Sabbath, and required the people to dissolve their illegal marriages.

Only in the power of Jehovah could he accomplish these things, as exemplified in his simple prayer: "Remember me, O my God, for good."-Neh. 13:31 Of the end of Nehemiah's life nothing is known. He had left an indelible mark upon his people. The entire account of his reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem has been likened to the work of building the fruits of character and to withstanding the relentless attacks of the world, the flesh and the Adversary.



## **PART IV.**

# **SUPPORTING DATA**

**Exhibit B:**

**Devastations by Nebuchadnezzar**

		OF JERUSALEM		OF JEWS IN EGYPT
		<b>In fourth year of Jehoiakim</b> <sup>(b)</sup> (who reigned 11 yrs.)	<b>In third month of Jehoiachin</b> (who reigned 3 mos.)	<b>In fifth year after puppet Gov. Gedaliah slain</b> <sup>(h)</sup>
<b>Year of Nebuchadnezzar's Reign</b> <sup>(a)</sup>	Jewish reckoning Babylonian reckoning	1st year (Jer. 25:1)	8th year (2 Kings 24:12)	24th year
<b>Date in Bowen/Russell Chronology</b> <sup>(e)</sup>	Accession year	7th year (Jer. 52:28) <sup>(d)</sup>	19th year (2 Kings 25:8; Jer. 52:12) <sup>(e)</sup>	23rd year (Jer. 52:30) <sup>(d)</sup>
<b>Date in Civil History</b> <sup>(f)</sup>	625 B. C.	617 B. C.	18th year (Jer. 52:29) <sup>(d)</sup>	602 B. C.
<b>Captives Taken</b>	Summer, 605 B. C.	Spring, 597 B. C.	607 B. C.	582 B. C.
	A handful "of the king's seed and of princes, wise and skillful," to be taught all the learning of the Chaldeans; including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan. 1:1-6)	The king, princes and mighty men, 10,000 total, not incl. poor (2 Kings 24:14-16)	The king, people of city, remnant, fugitives, but not poor of land (2 Kings 25:11, 12)	No details given other than 745 total (Jer. 52:30)
		Carpenters, smiths, elders, priests, prophets and people (Jer. 29:1, 2)	832 total (Jer. 52:29) <sup>(g)</sup>	Taken from remnant of Jews who fled into Egypt (2 Kings 25:26; Jer. 43:10, 11) <sup>(h)</sup>
		3,023 total (Jer. 52:28) <sup>(g)</sup>		
<b>Extent of Desolations</b>	King bound (later released to continue reign) <sup>(i)</sup> (2 Chron. 36:6, 7) Some vessels from Temple taken to Babylon (Dan. 1:1, 2)	All "treasures" of Temple and of king removed; all "golden vessels" of Solomon destroyed (2 Kings 24:13)	Kingdom of Judah ended, Zedekiah dethroned; Temple and buildings burned, city walls broken (2 Kings 25:2-10)	Jerusalem and land of Judea already desolate, "without an inhabitant" (Jer. 44:22)
		Certain precious "vessels" of the Temple and palace were left undisturbed (Jer. 27:18-22)	All treasures of Temple & palace removed (2 Chron. 36:18, Jer. 52:17, 18)	Images of Egyptian gods broken and temples burned (Jer. 43:12, 13)
<b>Descriptive Bible Texts</b>	Dan. 1:1-7 2 Kings 24:1-4 2 Chron. 36:5-8	2 Kings 24:8-16 2 Chron. 36:9, 10 Jer. 52:28	2 Kings 25:1-26 2 Chron. 36:11-21 Jer. 52:3-27, 29 Jer. 39:1-10	2 Kings 25:22-26 Jer. chapters 42-44

## Notes Accompanying Exhibit B

(a) In Babylonian reckoning, the first year of a king's reign is credited to his predecessor; this is called accession year reckoning. Jewish reckoning attributes the first year to the new king. Sir Isaac Newton explained: "If any [Jewish] King began his Reign a few days before [Nisan] began, it was reckoned to him for a whole year, and the beginning of this month was accounted the beginning of the second year of his Reign . . . According to this reckoning the first year of Jehoiakim began with the month Nisan ... tho' his Reign might not really begin 'till five or six months after." (The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms, pp. 296-297)

(b) Jer. 25: 1 equates the fourth year of Jehoiakim with the first year of Nebuchadnezzar (evidently by Jewish reckoning); but Dan. 1: 1 states Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's third year (evidently by Babylonian reckoning).

(c) According to 2 Kings chapter 25, the sequence of events in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar which led up to the death of Gedaliah and desolation of the land was:

(1) Zedekiah overthrown in fourth month (July);

(2) Temple burned in fifth month (Aug.) and many captives taken;

(3) Gedaliah slain in seventh month (Sep.) after ruling for only two months, with remaining Jews fleeing to Egypt.

(d) It has been suggested that the last section of Jeremiah chapter 52 may have been penned not by the prophet but by someone who had access to official Babylonian records and thus used the Babylonian accession method of reporting the years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

(e) Based on C.T. Russell, "True Bible Chronology Stated A.M.," Tower Reprints, pp. 1980-1981, published in 1896; see explanation in C.F. Redeker, A Confirmation of the True Bible Chronology, 1971, esp. pp. 41-46 and p. 28.

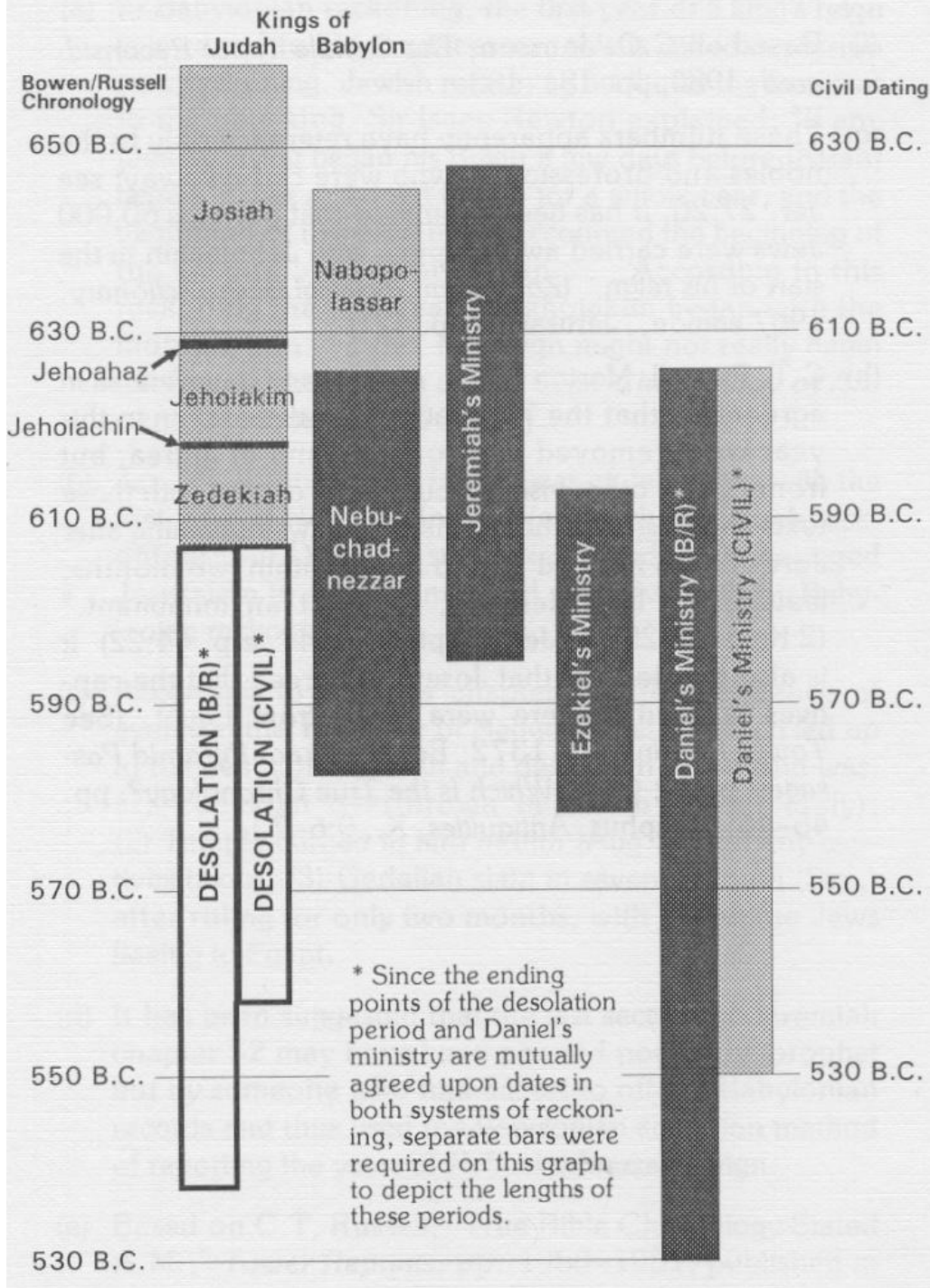
(f) Based on C.O. Jonsson, The Gentile Times Reconsidered, 1986, pp. 181-183.

(g) These numbers apparently have reference only to the nobles and professionals who were carried away; see Jer. 27:20. It has been estimated that perhaps 60,000 Jews were carried away captive with Jehoiachin in the start of his reign. (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, 1967 edition, "Jerusalem," p. 421)

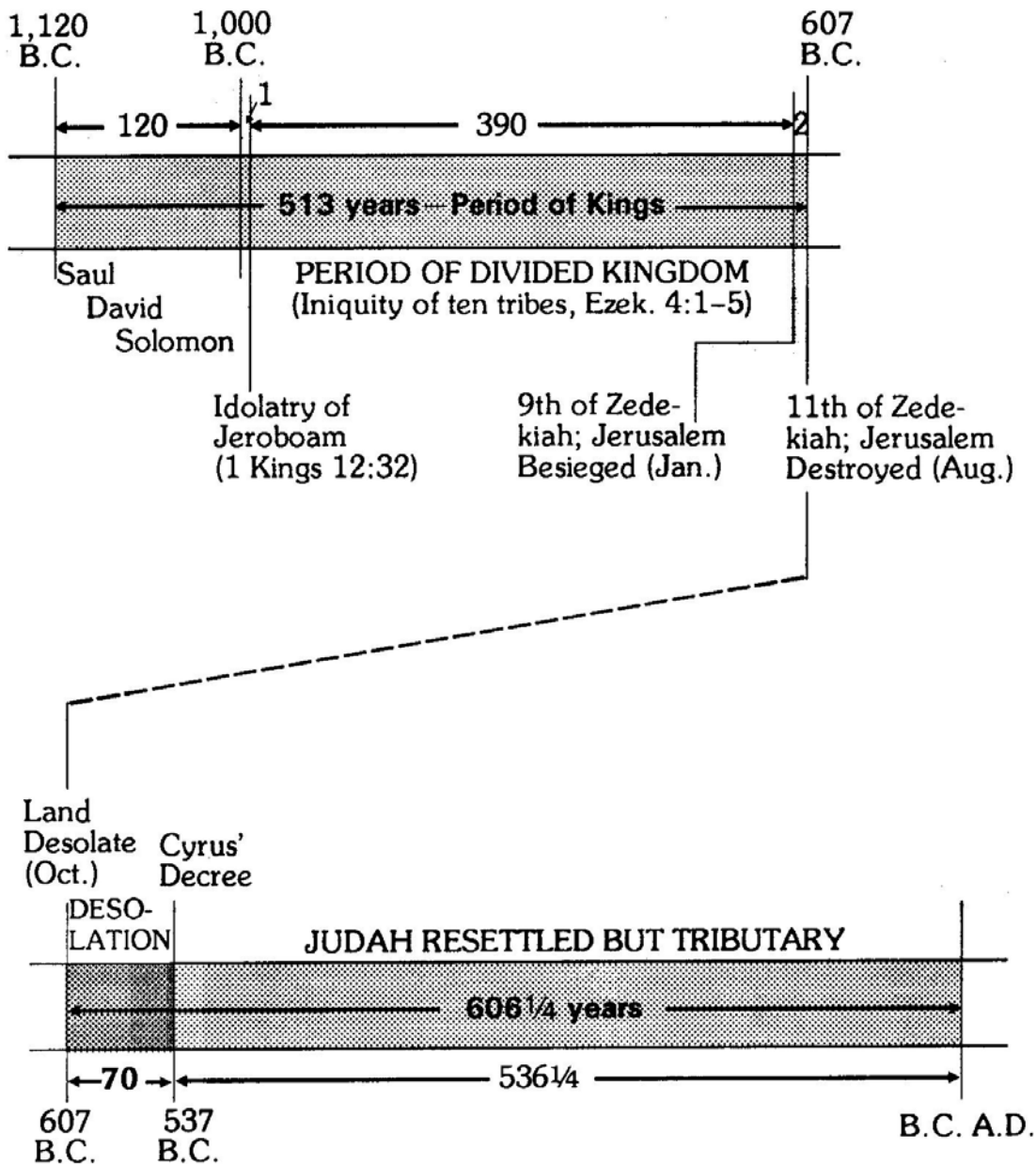
(h) C.T. Russell, Morton Edgar, and Julian Gray were all in agreement that the 745 Jewish captives taken in this year were removed not from the land of Judea, but from Egypt; otherwise it would be in conflict with those texts showing that the remnant of Jews remaining after Jerusalem's fall had fled to Egypt within two months, leaving the land desolate, "without an

inhabitant." (2 Kings 25:25,26; Jer. chapters 41-44, esp. 44:22) It is also pointed out that Josephus agreed that the captives referred to here were taken from Egypt. (See Tower Reprints, p. 1372; Edgar, Great Pyramid Passages, p. 29; Gray, Which Is the True Chronology? pp. 45-46; Josephus, Antiquities, X., 9:6-7.)

### Exhibit C: Chronological Perspective: Kings and Prophets

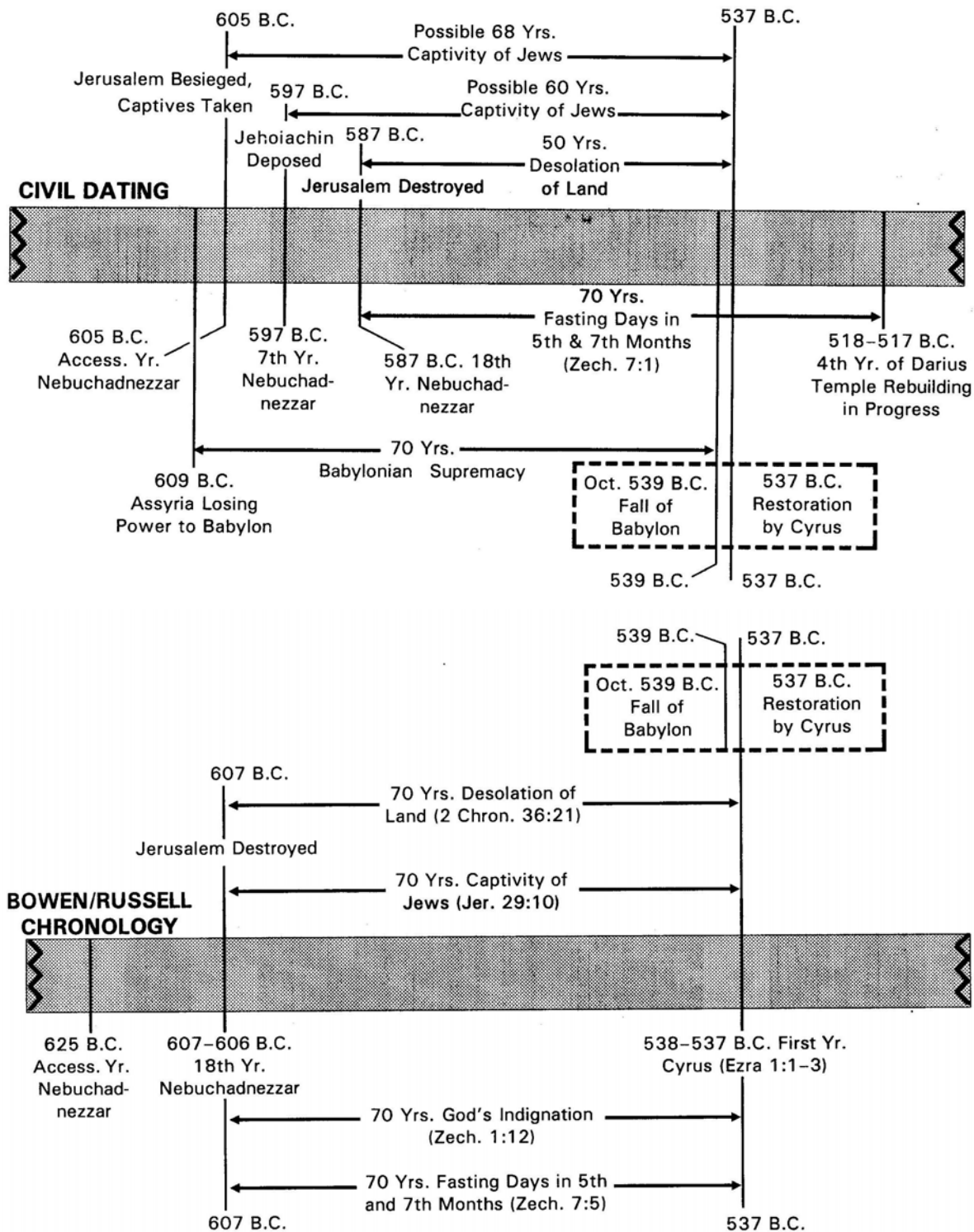


## Exhibit D: The Seventy Years on the Stream of Time (BOWEN/RUSSELL CHRONOLOGY)



**Exhibit E: The Seventy Years: Captivity, Desolation, Supremacy**

A Comparison of Views



## True Wisdom

We live in what some call "The Brain Age,"  
For men have accomplished great things.  
In science and technical know-how,  
New marvels each passing day brings.

Man's progress in physical science  
And all of his exploits in space  
Are based on adhering to precepts  
Which God, long ago, set in place.

These fixed laws must always be followed  
And treated with highest respect;  
While science can never ignore them,  
Their Author it seeks to reject.

And likewise, as scholars uncover  
The secrets of ages gone by,  
They're quick to accept supposition,  
But eager God's Word to deny.

With skill, archeologists study  
Small fragments of ancient remains.  
At times there appear to be conflicts  
With records the Bible contains.

Then science proclaims to the public,  
"The Bible's been proven untrue."  
To label the Scriptures as folklore  
Becomes the acceptable view.

But often, to skeptics' amazement,  
The people and places of old  
Are later confirmed by the findings  
And just as the Bible has told.

Can man, a mere mortal, be teacher?  
Is God the inquiring youth?  
No! God is the Sovereign Creator  
The Fountain of Wisdom and Truth.



Though some of its dates are now challenged,  
The Biblical record is sure.  
Men's concepts need frequent revision,  
But God's Word of Truth will endure.

Too often the world counts as wisdom  
So much that is false and absurd;  
True wisdom can only be founded  
On reverence for God and His Word!

E. L. R.

**"The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."**

-Prov. 9:10

**"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."**

-1 Cor. 3:19

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### A Challenge to Bible Students

(This section was originally written in late 1988 as an open letter to interested brethren in the Bible Student fellowship to stimulate their thinking and involvement in this area. Its final content, after several expansions and revisions over a period of months, is included here to provide the historical backdrop for the present study and to demonstrate the importance of the subject in relation to a wide range of Bible Student chronological beliefs.)

Have you read Carl Olof Jonsson's *The Gentile Times Reconsidered?* (Commentary Press, P.O. Box 43532, Atlanta, Georgia 30336. Second Edition, 1986, 228 pages, \$6.95, paper cover.)

In this work an effort is made to refute the basic concept that Luke 21:24 refers to a prophetic time period, considered by the Jehovah's Witnesses and ourselves to be 2,520 years in length, in which Israel would be trodden down by Gentile nations. Further, he argues that the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylonian armies occurred not in 606-607 B.C. as reckoned by the J.W.'s (and Bible Students), but in 586-587 B.C. He believes the prophecy is not valid at all; however, if we were to apply his findings to the prophecy, its starting point is set forward by 20 years, bringing the ending point to 1934 rather than 1914.

Jonsson finds substantiation for the chronology of the Babylonian Kings' list, which supports the 586-587 B.C. date, from four separate lines of evidence: ancient royal inscriptions, business and administrative documents of the period, astronomical diaries, and synchronisms with ancient Egyptian chronology.

He then fine combs through the Scriptures that mention the 70 years and concludes that this period need not be confined to strict captivity of the Jews and desolation of the land (which in his view is shortened to 50 years) but rather applies to a general period of vassalage for both Judah and surrounding nations to Babylonia, beginning about 20 years prior to Jerusalem's fall.

If Jonsson's argument is accepted, it would interfere with a number of other time-honored Bible Student chronological beliefs. These include the Jubilee calculations, the parallel dispensations, the Jewish "double" prophecies, and the ending of the 6,000 years in 1872.

It would seem that unless this line of reasoning can be countered, many of our chronological/prophetic beliefs would be weakened, particularly as they bear on end-time expectations in the Harvest. Do you concur with this conclusion or do you believe Jonsson's arguments are valid and necessitate an adjustment in our (Bible Student) thinking?

Do you think a serious effort should be made by the Bible Students to refute Jonsson's work? Do you know of any of the brethren who have given consideration to such a task?

### **An Issue Worth Pursuing?**

Some students of the Bible have wondered whether a specific challenge to our chronological beliefs, put forward by an obscure writer, is worthy of our attention. Might not our consecrated time and energy be better used in some other way? Are not our beliefs being continually put to the test by endless critics, scoffers and supposed authorities? Is there something about this particular challenge that makes it crucial for us to probe it in depth?

To assist in understanding the underlying issues involved in this challenge, we thought it helpful to outline both the immediate consequences and the fuller implications of C.O. Jonsson's views. As will become evident, this is not just a simple matter that would affect our understanding of one Bible time prophecy. A whole series of additional chronological calculations that are considered significant to Bible Students would be impacted as well.

Respecting the "Times of the Gentiles," we are considering the ending point of the only specific time prophecy with a fulfillment in the 20th century—the year 1914. That year is widely recognized as a critical turning point in the transition from an old to a modern world order. If this date is altered, it would cast a question mark upon the correct application of the 2,520 year period implied in Jesus' words in Luke 21:24 and remove the connecting link to the start of World War I and decline of Gentile dominion.

On the other end of the scale, we face an equally imposing dilemma in verifying the "absolute" historical dates needed for providing a tie-in with the sacred chronology of the Bible. Without such a clear-cut tie-in, the links of the Bible chronology would merely be relative and we could not know its bearing to the stream of history. The crucial question here is why the date for the fall of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year as provided by modern scholars does not harmonize with the 70 year period which the Bible seems to assign to the period of Judah's captivity and desolation. A 70 year period of desolation harmonizes nicely with a 539 B.C. date for the fall of Babylon and 537 B.C. for Cyrus' edict of restoration, but poses a problem for a 587 B.C. date for Jerusalem's destruction. Thus either the latter date is in error or our application of the 70 year period has been incorrect. Since all Truth is given by the hand of the same Author, whether scientific, historical, or Biblical, we believe the facts of each field must harmonize with each other, when properly understood and applied.

The challenge in this instance is to uncover the actual facts, comparing the true Biblical teaching with established events of history. It would seem that we should be able to meet this challenge and in the process find a solid substantiation for our faith along prophetic and chronological lines. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."- I Pet. 3:15

## **Consequences of Carl Olof Jonsson's Views**

The following list is submitted to alert students of Bible chronology to the full implications of these views. It assumes that no corresponding corrections in the links of the chronological chain can be applied to make up for the proposed 20-year variation in dating Jerusalem's fall.

### ***A. That Jerusalem Was Destroyed in 587 B.C. Rather Than in 607 B.C.***

1. It reduces the period of total desolation of the land of Judah and of the major captivity of the Jews following the destruction of Jerusalem to 50 years (587-537 B.C.). (The maximum possible length of the captivity, if reckoned from an earlier plundering of Jerusalem in 605 B.C., would become 68 years.)
2. This dramatically changes the emphasis of the 70 year period from pertaining to the Jewish captivity and desolation of the land of Judah to that of the period of Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) supremacy over nearby nations.
3. In applying the period of the Times of the Gentiles prophecy (2,520 years) to the new proposed date for Jerusalem's fall (587 B.C.), the ending point is extended 20 years from 1914 to 1934—a year of no apparent significance in Israel's release from Gentile supremacy.
4. It shifts the entire chain of the 6,000 year Bible chronology by 20 years. Deducting 20 years from the period before the restoration (necessitated by changing the 70 years to 50) requires adding 20 years to the period subsequent to the restoration (537 B.C.). This shifts the 6,000 years from creation (as viewed in the Bowen/ Russell chronology) from 4129 B.C.-1872 A.D. to 4109 B.C.-1892 A.D. This in turn affects the synchronization of the *parousia* with the beginning of the new day in the seventh millennium: here it would have our Lord returning 18 years prior to the ending of the 6,000 years. (But see point #7.)
5. It completely demolishes the Jubilee calculations leading to 1874 as the start of the Times of Restitution. Preliminary estimates, using a 50 year desolation of the land, show that it radically alters the dates produced by the Jubilees, both viewed as a Prophecy and as a Shadow under the Law. As a Prophecy, the adjusted cycles are reduced to 31 x 49, ending in 914 A.D.; as a Shadow, the grand antitypical cycle is ended in 1895 A.D., with the Jubilee of Restitution beginning in 1894 A.D. Such results would remove the synchronization of the Jubilees with the "Parallel Dispensations," even if the latter were calculated utilizing the proposed date for Jerusalem's fall. (See point #7.)
6. It radically affects the prophecies of the "Jewish Double"—the twin periods of favor and punishment that were to come upon the nation of Israel. Under the Bowen/Russell chronology, these periods were each 1,845 years in length, 1814 B.C.-33 A.D. and 33 A.D. - 1878. Applying a 587 B.C. date to Jerusalem's fall requires shortening these periods to 1,825 years each, reaching from 1794 B.C.-33 A.D. and 33 A.D. 1858. Again, this erases a highly visible date 1878 widely

recognized as the start of the first successful settlement in Palestine in modern times, Petah Tikvah, which led eventually to the full rebirth of Israel.

7. It negatively impacts upon the "Parallel Dispensations" that Bible Students have used indirectly to establish the dates of our Lord's *parousia*, the resurrection of the sleeping saints, and the rejection of the nominal church systems. Utilizing a 587 B.C. date for the fall of Jerusalem shortens the length of the Jewish Age and its corresponding time frame of Christian favor to 1,825 years each. This would change the date of the *parousia* to 1854, and the dates of the resurrection of the sleeping saints and Christ's judgment of the systems to 1858.

Coupling such a framework with an extension of the 6,000 years to 1892 would then have our Lord returning a full 38 years prior to the start of the new (seventh) day in earth's history. Such a pattern of dating is incompatible with known historical facts relating to the increase of inventions, the beginning of global trouble, and the ministry of that "wise and faithful servant" which are all associated with Christ's *parousia* at the later (1874) date.

### ***B. Related Views - Wider Implications.***

1. C. O. Jonsson considers it a logical follow through to refute the very concept of the Times of the Gentiles prophecy and overthrows it altogether. He simply does not believe that Jesus' words in Luke 21:24 refer to a prophetic time period of 2,520 years in which Israel would be trodden down by Gentile nations.

2. He then also finds it expedient to deny the legitimacy of the year-for-a-day principle of prophetic interpretation which has been adopted by prophetic expositors of the Bible for many centuries. This principle is the basis for understanding the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days of Daniel as well as the Times of the Gentiles. Its rejection would thus also deny fulfillments in 1799 (low point of papal prestige), 1829 (Adventist movement) and 1874 (our Lord's return).

3. Finally, the matter of the *parousia* becomes of special concern for Jonsson. He is convinced that if the concept of the Gentile Times prophecy is erroneous, then there is no clear basis for believing that our Lord's return has begun. In fact, he denies that any prophecies of the Bible were ever intended to identify end-time events, including those of Matthew 24, which are taken merely as a series of repetitious events occurring throughout the Gospel Age.

We believe these points will suffice to show the dramatic consequences of C.O. Jonsson's views on Bible Student chronotological/prophetic understandings. They deeply affect almost the entire spectrum of such fulfillments both in the past and especially during the Harvest period. It might not be an exaggeration to say that the impact of his views is profound. It is a serious challenge, because the basic appeal of his argument is along scholarly lines and to verifiable archeological and astronomical records. We believe the matter needs to be pursued to its logical conclusion, evaluating both Biblical and secular evidence bearing upon the issues.

## **For Further Study**

### *A. References.*

1. Texts pertaining to Jerusalem's devastation by Nebuchadnezzar.

**In Reign of  
Jehoiakim:**

2 Kings 24:1-4  
Dan. 1:1-4  
2 Chron. 36:5-8  
Jer. 39:1-10

**In Reign of  
Jehoiachin:**

2 Kings 24:8-16  
2Chron. 36:9-10  
Jer. 52:28

**In Reign of  
Zedekiah:**

2 Kings 25:1-26  
2 Chron. 36:11-21  
Jer. 52:3-27; 52:29

2. Texts that mention the 70 years (whether of supremacy, captivity, desolation, or indignation).

**Jeremiah** Jer. 25:8-11, 12-13; 29:10-14  
(ca. 615 B.C.)

**Daniel** Dan. 9:1-3; 9:17  
(ca. 536 B.C.)

**Zechariah** Zech. 1:7-17; 7:1-7  
(ca. 519 B.C.)

**2 Chronicles** 2 Chron. 36:11-21  
(ca. 460 B.C.)

*B. Questions.*

1. What is the basis for our selection of the year 607 B.C. as the date for the fall of Jerusalem? Is this basis justified by today's scholarship?
  2. How does this basis differ in kind from that suggested by C. O. Jonsson to substantiate his date of 587 B.C.? Or are both dates dependent on similar ancient documents, records and inscriptions?
  3. Do any authorities dissent from the 587 B.C. dating of the destruction of Jerusalem, derived from the NeoBabylonian Kings' list? What reasons do they set forth for a different date?
  4. Do Jeremiah's prophecies of the 70 years pertain to servitude only or do they also include the thought of desolation of the land? This becomes significant, since Jeremiah's prophecies are the earliest to mention the 70 years and thus are basic to the concept.
  5. Explain the apparent discrepancy of events at the end of the 70 years, in Jer. 25:12 (King of Babylon punished - 539 B.C.) vs. Jer. 29: 10 (God to visit captives and release them-537 B.C.).
  6. Is there any clear line of reasoning, based on Scripture, that would: (a) Rule out any application of the Biblical 70 years to something other than utter desolation of the land? (b) Specifically link the start of the 70 years with the destruction of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's reign and the burning of the temple?  
  
(Jonsson's reasoning applies the 70 years to Babylonian supremacy and reduces the desolation of the land to merely 50 years. The text in 2 Chron. 36:21 is seen as having a starting point 20 years prior to Jerusalem's destruction in Zedekiah's day.)
- 
7. Can references to Jerusalem in the contexts of Old Testament passages referring to the 70 years be used to confirm a Scriptural emphasis on **Jewish** events-70 years of **their** captivity and 70 years of desolation of **their** land-instead of events pertaining to Babylonian supremacy?
  8. Is there any other Scriptural line of reasoning that would require a full 70 year period between the destruction of Jerusalem and the release of the Jewish captives from Babylon?
  9. What are the views of recognized Bible commentators on the 70 year period? Do they assume that it bears directly on the Jewish desolation and/or captivity (particularly after the fall of Jerusalem) or do they apply it to the supremacy of Babylonia (originating prior to Jerusalem's fall)?
  10. Are the 70 year periods of Zechariah 1: 12 and 7:5 identical to the captivity and/or desolation of the land? Or do they apply to a distinct separate period, ending 20 years after the restoration to the land, when the temple rebuilding was almost complete? (Jonsson ends it in 517 B.C., in the fourth year of Darius.)



11. Is the start of the prophetic "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy associated with Nebuchadnezzar becoming the "head of gold" of the image, or with the removal of the crown from the typical kingdom? (See Ezek. 21:25-27 and Luke 21:24.) (If the first proposition is true, civil dating based on Babylonian chronology coincidentally dates Nebuchadnezzar's first year as 605 B.C., merely two years from the traditional Bible Student dating of Zedekiah's dethronement in 607 B.C. However, even this slight change would alter the key 1914 date for the ending of the prophecy.)

## Appendix B

# Basic Defense of Bible Student Chronology

Built Upon the Uniqueness, Harmony and Reality of its Prophetic/Chronological Unfoldings-In Support of 607-606 B.C. Dating of Jerusalem's Fall and Start of "Times of Gentiles" Prophecy.

### Introduction

Throughout the Harvest period, the chronology promulgated by Pastor Russell in his "Scripture Studies" series has received wide acceptance among Bible Students. Bro. Russell acknowledged that he had based it on the studies of an English expositor, Rev. Bowen. (*Tower Reprints*, p. 289) Recent research by Bro. A. O. Hudson has revealed that it was Christopher Bowen (1800-1850), rector of a church at Southwark, London, and a pre-millennialist, who originated the chronology about 1830.

It was not long before other chronologists adopted it, both in Europe and in this country. Edward B. Elliott published it in his *Horae Apocalypticae* (A Commentary on the Apocalypse), in London in 1851. Then followed Nelson H. Barbour, editor of "The Midnight Cry," in Rochester, New York and J.H. Paton in *Day Dawn*, published in Almont, Michigan in 1880.

Periodically through the years, this chronology has come under attack from many quarters, both within and without the Bible Student Movement. Various of its component links which make up the chain from creation (4129 B.C.) to the ending of 6,000 years in 1872 A.D. have been questioned, such as the Period of the Judges (450 years), the Period of the Kings (513 years), the length of the Desolation of the Land (70 years), etc.

Most recently, the length of the Desolation Period has again been challenged, based upon mounting historical and archeological evidence related to the reigns of the Neo-Babylonian kings. These suggest that Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year, when his army destroyed Jerusalem, was 587 B.C., 20 years later than the 607 B.C. date inferred for this event by the Bible chronology, and that thus the Period of Desolation was only 50 years in duration.

It was to address this discrepancy between the civil historian position and that of the Biblical record that this study was conceived. It is intended not as a comprehensive defense of the traditional Bible view, but as a summary outline and basic defense to give perspective to the subject and to suggest various lines of reasoning that provide solid groundwork for maintaining such a belief.

## ***1. Bible Depiction of the 70 Year Period of Captivity / Desolation.***

At least five Old Testament writers concern themselves with the 70 year period associated with the captivity and desolation of Judah. Despite numerous attempts by critics to isolate the texts and apply them to a variety of separate periods, the Bible by inspiration of the Holy Spirit remains its own consistent interpreter and sets forth its harmonious teaching on the subject. The Scriptural position is clear that the 70 years applies both to the captivity and to the utter desolation of the Temple and the land. Where the wording of a given text seems to allow for a margin of leeway, a parallel or related text has been provided to clarify the thought. Thus the Bible depiction is unmistakable and substantive and resists efforts that may be employed to wrest its teaching.

The following recent studies are recommended to pursue the details of the Scriptural testimony:

*The Times of the Gentiles and the Seventy Years' Desolation*, by Ric Cunningham, 1989, 7 pages. A brief, wide-ranging defense of the historic Bible Student position.

*Dating the Desolation*, by Jerry Leslie, 1991. A scholarly treatise of 63 pages, tracing the origin of the Bible Student position, the Scriptural basis for a 70 year Desolation Period, and corroborative views of its early advocates. It also surveys views of standard authorities and offers insights into the basis and possible deficiencies of the conflicting Neo-Babylonian chronology.

Throughout the Harvest period, the writings of Pastor Charles T. Russell have set forth a clear and uncompromising position:

*The Time Is At Hand*, p. 52, originally published in 1889.

Various *Watch Tower* articles, found in Reprints pp. 1372, 1975, 2509 and 3437, originally published from 1892 to 1904.

The importance given to the 70-year period by Bro. Russell can be seen in the fact that the very reason he adopted Bowen's chronology was that it was the only one which followed the Scriptures in specifying a full 70 years between the fall of Jerusalem and the decree of Cyrus. In addition to the foregoing, we suggest a secondary approach to this subject. Suppose for the sake of discussion we were to grant that those Scriptures dealing with the 70 years were all too vague in their wording to allow for a clear-cut, indisputable application of the period. Even under such a premise, we believe it would still be possible to appeal to the overall testimony of Scripture and to related reasoning in evaluating conflicting views of the dating of Jerusalem's destruction. In demonstration of this, the remaining points of this study are set forth. As will be seen, a 607 B.C. date is harmonious or basic to each, but a 587 B.C. date is in conflict with them all.

## ***2. Harmony of Present Truth Prophetic / Chronological Beliefs.***

First, let us note those specific fulfillments dependent upon the basic Bowen/Russell chronological framework that incorporate 607 B.C. for the destruction of Jerusalem. These include the parallel dispensations, the Jubilee calculations, "the Jewish Double" prophecies and the 6,000 year Bible chronology. They produce the following significant dates, all of which would be negated by altering the pivotal 607 B.C. date:

**1914:** Ending of Times of Gentiles and start of World War 1.

**1878:** Resurrection of sleeping saints; Christ's judgment of nominal systems; end of "Jewish Double" and start of first successful Jewish colony in Palestine.

**1874:** Start of parousia and Harvest period; end of 6,000 years since fall of man; end of Jubilee cycles, leading to start of Times of Restitution and return of Christ.

**1872:** Ending of the 6,000 years from creation of man.

Now let us observe how the foregoing fulfillments have a remarkable correlation and tie-in with other lines of prophecy that are not dependent upon the 607 B.C. date or the Bowen/Russell chronological placement of Jewish history. Specifically, we refer to the "Days of Daniel" prophecies, which yield the following dates:

**1874:** Start of times of blessedness, at close of 1335 days.

**1846:** Cleansing of sanctuary class, at close of 2300 days.

**1829:** Millerite movement, at close of 1290 days.

**1799:** Low point of papal power, at close of 1260 days.

Taken together with the earlier fulfillments of the first listing above, we believe they constitute a closely entwined, interrelated, and mutually corroborating chronological chain that is strong and impressive. It seems to stretch credibility to suggest that the close correlations and precise tie-ins are just coincidental and that the majority of them are actually fallacious. Thus an acceptance of the 587 B.C. date would not only dramatically weaken the chronological chain, but actually mutilate the major part of it. We are not talking about some minor adjustments; we are facing a profound abandonment of the greater part of our prophetic/chronological beliefs, especially those dealing with the Harvest time.

### ***3. Precise Historical Fulfillments of Prophecies Dependent Upon a 70 Year Desolation Length.***

Our chronology has brought us unerringly to the "last days" of Bible prophecy and we need not apologize for the dates it has produced. The years 1914 and 1878 stand out as historical landmarks that are universally recognized by respected authorities. The year 1914 saw the beginning of World War I, which embroiled all the great nations of the world in the conflict and witnessed the collapse of an old world order. While greatly weakening most of the participants, it set the stage for the re-establishment of Israel as a nation, through developments that produced the Balfour Declaration.

The 1878 date has turned out to be a most significant one for Israel, well recognized by their statesmen as marking the establishment of the first successful colony in Palestine --Petah Tikvah. In addition to this, as Bible Students we also recognize that the historical placement of the ministry of that "wise and faithful servant" ties in perfectly with the return of our Lord and enabled the Pastor to be used in dispensing spiritual food to the household of faith.

Such precise prophetic fulfillments especially in the significant areas of end-time events seem justifiably impressive. The combined testimony is very faith-strengthening at a time when the Word of God and especially the prophetic framework of "Present Truth" are being attacked from every direction. The pattern of fulfillments is not only decisive; it is astounding.

In defending our chronology, Bro. Eugene Burns and others have quoted the old adage, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." If the taste is right, we may be certain the ingredients were correct and properly blended. He also recalled an illustration used by Bro. Leon Norby concerning the ocean navigator: If he arrived safely at his destination and on time, he had no need to go back to question his calculations. Applying this to our present deliberations, we might say that the right things have happened at the right times. If we have witnessed such precise fulfillments, we need not doubt the major part of our calculations. We have arrived!

### ***4. Specific Corroborations of the Bowen/Russell Chronology that Refute the Babylonian Records.***

In the past, Bible Students have noted a number of important historical correlations with the Bowen/Russell chronology. A study by Bro. Julian T. Gray (*Which is the True Chronology?*, 1934) noted an astronomical tie-in of the downfall of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel with the 15th year of King Jotham of Judah. The occasion was the total solar eclipse of June 15, 763 B.C. according to astronomical reckoning, the year that King Pekah of Israel was defeated by King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria. Only the Bowen/Russell chronology can equate the 15th year of King Jotham with the year 763 B.C., the date of the eclipse. -Amos 8:9 (pp. 9-18)

Carrying this yet further, Bro. Gray was able to find exact agreement between the Bowen/Russell chronology and the Assyrian Eponym Canon (a consecutive listing of years in the history of ancient Assyria, identified not by actual dates but by the ruling officials whose names were

substituted for the years they held office). He did this by discovering that the only noted eclipse of the canon, which is used by historians to provide absolute dating for its position on the stream of time, was intentionally placed 29 years too early in the listing. Evidently this was done to satisfy religious superstitions that associated a prominent solar eclipse with misfortune and calamity, such as occurred in Assyria starting in the year to which it was assigned. By thus linking the astronomically fixed date of the eclipse (763 B.C.) to the wrong eponym, all of the dates were thrown off by 29 years.

Conversely, by proper placement of the eclipse in the campaign of Tiglath-Pileser "against Philistia," the Canon was found to agree exactly with the Bible chronology in all areas describing the same events. These included the attacks against the northern tribes (763 B.C.), the fall of Samaria (751 B.C.), and Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (732 B.C.). (pp. 141-143, 149-153)

All of these findings contradict a 587 B.C. date for the fall of Jerusalem.

Additionally, students of the Great Pyrami have foun that there **is** a precise corroboration of all the major links of the Bowen/Russell chronology in the measurements of the passageway systems of this great witness in stone. Much of this work was done by John and Morton Edgar and was recorded in their classic book, *Great Pyramid Passages*, in 1912.

In utilizing the Great Pyramid, it is evident that we are dealing with chambers, passageways and construction features that are etched in solid stone. Whereas measurement results depend upon logical methods being employed that are harmonious with the structural symbols, it is clear that such measurements are unalterable and cannot be stretched or compressed at will. They thus afford a unique way to check upon the accuracy of any system of chronology that purports to represent the overall time features of God's plan of the ages.

By selecting time periods in the Pyramid that either touch upon the critical Period of Desolation, span across it, or are dependent upon it, it is possible to check out the accuracy of the Biblical 70 years assigned to it. A few such examples are given in the following table:

## Exhibit F: Critical Pyramid Measurements Related to Period of Desolation

Chronological Period	Bowen/Russell Chronology (Years)	Pyramid Measurement (Pyramid Inches)
Flood (2473 B.C.) to Pyramid's Erection (scored lines, 2140 B.C.) (Edgar pp. 139,159)	333	333
Flood (2473 B.C.) to Christ's Baptism (29 A.D.) (Edgar pp. 139-140)	2,502	2,502
Jacob's Death (1813 B.C.) to End of "Jewish Double" (1878 A.D.) (Edgar pp. 84-86)	3,690	3,690
Law Dispensation: From the Exodus (1615 B.C.) to the Crucifixion (33 A.D.) (Edgar pp. 58-60)	1,647	1,647

As may be seen, there is precise agreement between the actual Pyramid measurements and the Bible chronology. This provides us with strong confirmation of the accuracy of the Bowen/Russell chronology and also forcibly contradicts a 587 B.C. date for Jerusalem's fall. Such a date would be disharmonious with these results and would require 20 years to be removed from each measurement. But as noted earlier, these measurements are 44 etched" in solid stone, extending from one construction feature to another, and simply will not yield to a 20 Pyramid inch correction (an inch for a year). Therefore, we must conclude that we have here a very unique and God-given witness to the accuracy of the true Bible chronology and a forceful refutation of the Babylonian records.

## ***5. Symmetry and Unique Aspects of Prophetic/Chronological Patterns.***

Many Bible Students have been impressed with the chronological charts of Bros. John and Morton Edgar which illustrated the harmony and interrelationships of various aspects of God's plan of the ages. Bro. Paul A. Mezera has built upon this general line of presentation and employed the modern computer to generate additional chronological patterns based upon the Bible Student chronology.

Specifically in the area of concern, it was found that only the Bowen/Russell chronology can produce a characteristic pattern noted both for its simplicity in design and for prophetic arcs and time intervals that intersect the significant dates of 1878 and 1914. Any deviation from the Bowen/Russell chronology, even by as little as a year, alters the simplicity of the pattern. Other technical aspects that stamp the pattern of this chronology as genuine, similar to the way fingerprints are used to identify a particular person, are pointed out in a treatise by Bro. Paul A. Mezera entitled, *The Divine Plan and Its Chronology*, 1992, pp. 1-7, 15-17, 38-46.

One note of caution needs to be raised, however, in using this technique. It is not just the symmetrical patterns produced that are of consequence, since a selection of even random dates may produce such seemingly symmetrical shapes against the backdrop of 7,000 years from Adam's fall to the restoration of mankind. Thus attention must be given to the factors enumerated above simplicity of design, synchronization with known Biblical prophetic dates, and other characteristics directly related to the divine plan which combine to create the one true and unique pattern.

## **Conclusions**

Throughout all the Harvest period, including the entire 40-plus year ministry of Pastor Russell, a full 70 year period for the Jewish captivity and desolation of the land has been the accepted and prevailing view of most brethren. Many, if not most, of our prophetic chronological beliefs rest upon such a premise, as already noted, and would be left in disarray if such were altered.

If the traditional Bible Student view is not correct, it would mean that all these brethren had been misled and given a distorted emphasis upon end-time prophecy. But does such a scenario seem reasonable in view of the fact that it would have occurred at the very time when our Lord had returned and was himself serving the refreshing meat then due? (Luke 12:37) Also, how could these brethren have been characterized as "blessed" in coming to the 1,335 days (Dan. 12:12) and "watchful and sober" respecting times and seasons (I Thess. 5:6), if they had actually been in darkness instead?

Further, it was the conviction that these very prophetic truths and expectations were firmly established that served to inspire and encourage the Pastor in his growing ministry. Are we now to look back at all of this and conclude that a series of erroneous concepts provided the basis of such stimulation to that "Wise and Faithful Servant"? -Luke 12:42,43



And finally, if a major link in the Bowen/Russell chronology from Creation to the present is considered invalid, it would mean that the correct Bible chronology has not been found and leave open the possibility of other errors in the chronological chain as well. But this does not square with the close correlation of the ending of the 6,000 years in 1872 (as evidenced by the chronology) with Christ's return as Lord of the antitypical Sabbath in 1874 (as evidenced by time prophecy) and with other events of the new prophetic day which followed. The Lord's people have been given a veritable spiritual alarm clock which has sounded at the proper time and awakened them to the privileges of the hour.

We believe our confidence in the timing of events leading to the end of the age should remain undiminished. For now, there may be some unanswered questions relating to civil historian dating, and to Babylonian records in particular, which appear to be at variance with the Bible testimony. Yet in due time, when all the facts are uncovered, we expect that harmony will be achieved at last, and the Bible record fully vindicated. We hope that day is near!

## **Appendix C**

### **Significance of Chronology Patterns**

#### **Inquiry**

It has been shown that the major dates of Bible chronology can be linked together in a pattern of symmetrical, harmonizing circles, extending from the fall of Adam to the restoration of mankind. (Edgar, pp. 24-25 and Mezera, pp. 1-7, 15-17) This in turn has led to an interesting question regarding the proposed suggestion that the traditional Bible Student chronology be modified by 20 years to reflect the civil historical date of 587 B.C. for the fall of Jerusalem: How would the acceptance of this date (in place of 606-607 B.C.) affect the symmetry and harmony of the chronological pattern?

#### **Method**

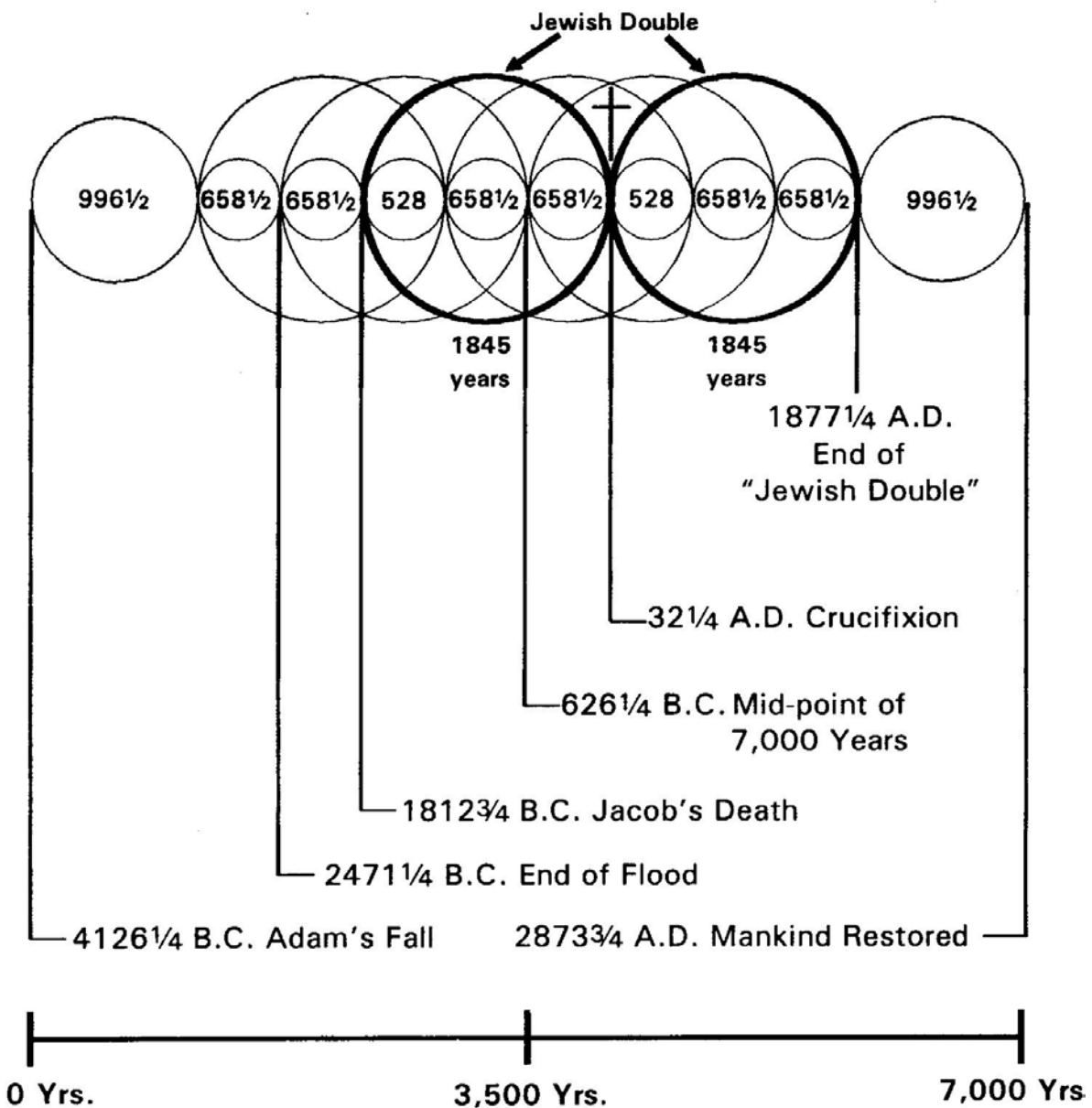
Several approaches could be used to highlight the effect of the new date. The chronological diagram might be based on one or several of the fixed relationships between significant dates that make up the overall scheme. For example, the 2,520 years of the "Seven Times" of punishment might be selected as a primary circle to be depicted; or some other significant period, such as the time interval between the flood and the mid point of the 7,000 year period might be used; or a multiple of such relationships could be selected and incorporated into one complex diagram.

In the charts that follow, we have selected just two significant lengths to portray the effect of the 20-year change. One is the length of each fold of the Jewish double, either 1,845 years (Bible Student traditional), or 1,825 years (civil historical); the other is the 1,845 year interval from the end of the flood to the mid point of the 7,000 years (same interval in both systems of reckoning). Projecting these as primary circles with their mirror images (on opposite sides of the mid point) and showing the distances between their arcs as smaller secondary circles with their own mirror images, produce the patterns of Exhibits G and H.

# Exhibit G

## Chronology Pattern

### Using 607 B.C. Date for Jerusalem's Fall



## **Analysis of Exhibit G**

1. This chart is based exclusively on two 1,845 year circles derived from the chronology. One consists of the first fold of the "Jewish Double" prophecy, extending from the death of Jacob to the crucifixion; the other spanning the interval from the end of the flood to the midst of the 7,000 year period from Adam's fall to the restoration.

2. In this portrayal of the "Jewish Double" prophecy, there would be a full 1,845 years from the death of Jacob to the crucifixion, with the desolation period (from the downfall of Jerusalem in 607 B.C. to the restoration by Cyrus in 537 B.C.) considered to be a full 70 years in length as generally accepted by Bible Students.

3. The intersections of the six larger circles with each other produced a series of ten smaller circles, of which six were identical in length (diam.), plus two other pairs of identical circles. These were:

658 1/2 years: 6 circles

528 years: 2 circles

996 1/2 years: 2 circles

4. The resulting pattern was perfectly symmetrical about the center of the chart, representing the "midst of the years" mentioned in Hab. 3:2. It also intersected seven significant dates of the Bible chronology. These are identified as:

4127 B.C. Adam's fall

2472 B.C. End of flood

18 13 B.C. Jacob's death

627 B.C. Midst of 7,000 years

33 A.D. Crucifixion

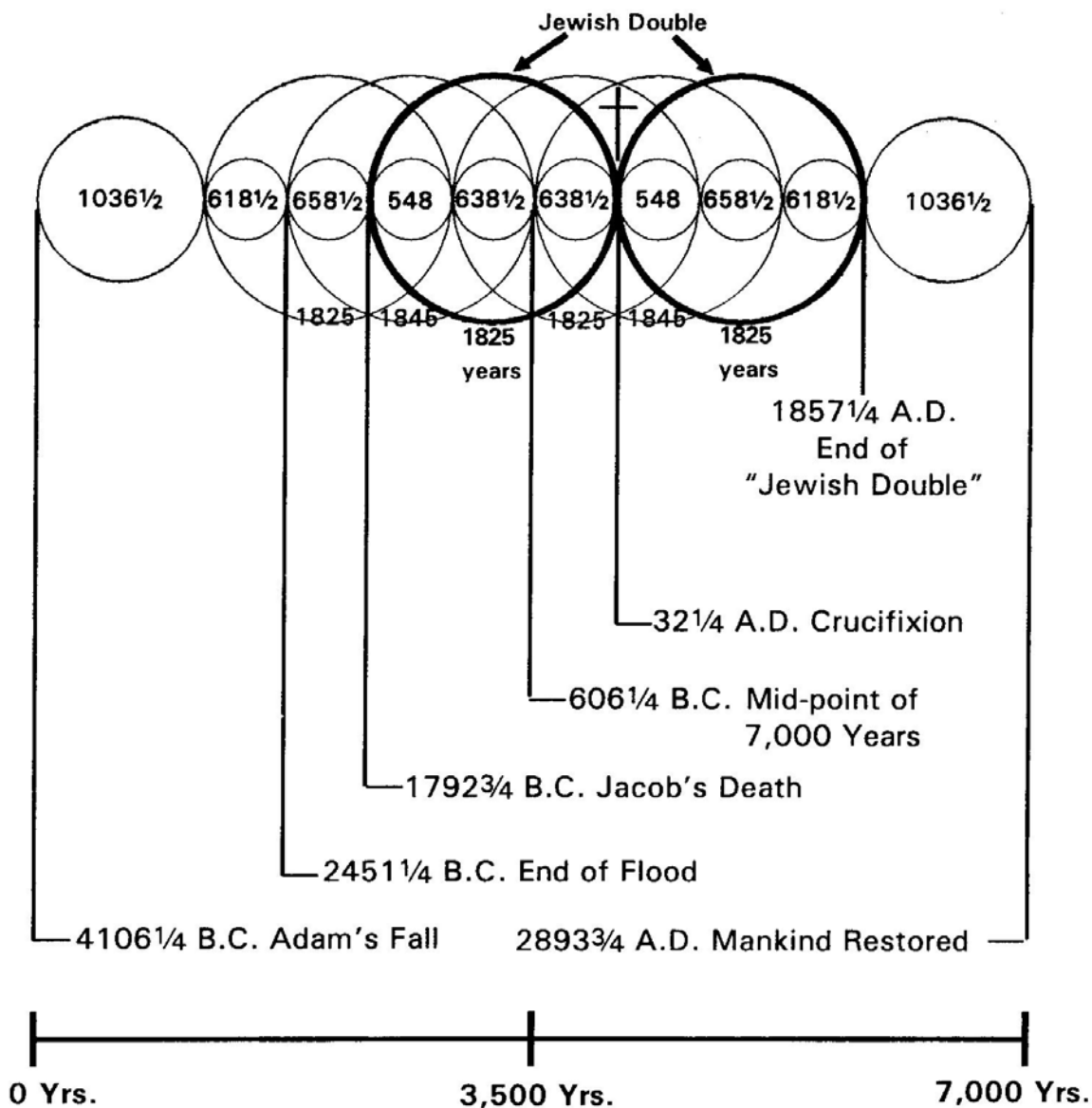
1878 A.D. End of "Jewish Double" prophecy

2874 A.D. Mankind restored

# Exhibit H

## Chronology Pattern

### Using 587 B.C. Date for Jerusalem's Fall



## **Analysis of Exhibit H**

1. This chart is based exclusively on two circles derived from the Bible chronology as modified by the civil historian date of 587 B.C. for the fall of Jerusalem. The first circle is based on the modified length of each fold of the "Jewish Double" - 1, 825 years from the death of Jacob to the crucifixion. The second circle spans the interval from the end of the flood to the midst of the 7,000 years-a period that remains 1,845 years since both dates shifted forward by 20 years.

2. In this view, it is the shortening of the desolation period to merely 50 years (from the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. to the restoration under Cyrus in 537 B.C.) that is responsible for shortening the first half of the "Jewish Double" prophecy to just 1,825 years.

3. Under this new pattern, there were still ten smaller circles produced by the intersections of the six larger circles, but all five on each half of the chart differed from one another and produced an exact mirror image on the other side. These were:

1,036V2 years: 2 circles 618V2 years: 2 circles 6581/2 years: 2 circles 548 years: 2 circles 63SV2 years: 2 circles

4. As in Exhibit G, the resulting pattern was again perfectly symmetrical about the center. There was no loss in symmetry and balance, even though six of the intersecting dates had to be altered and only the year of Christ's crucifixion remained the same:

4107 B.C. Adam's fall

2452 B.C. End of flood

1793 B.C. Jacob's death

607 B.C. Midst of 7,000 years

33 A.D. Crucifixion

1858 A.D. End of "Jewish Double" prophecy

2894 A.D. Mankind restored

## **Conclusions**

1. It is evident that an acceptance of the 587 B.C. date for the fall of Jerusalem does not destroy the appearance of overall symmetry and balance in the pattern of the 7,000 year chronology chart. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the harmony of the significant dates has been affected and that the all important ending of the true "Jewish Double" has been invalidated.

2. Of all the major Biblical dates intersected by these charts, only the crucifixion in 33 A.D. and the true ending of the "Jewish Double" in 1878 can be verified on an absolute basis. The establishment of the first permanent Jewish settlement in Petah Tikvah in the land of Palestine, which occurred in 1878, indelibly stamped that year as the beginning of the return of God's favor upon Israel and the ending of the foretold "double" of punishment. But Exhibit H, by its intrinsic construction, cannot intersect this significant date and thus betrays its shortcoming despite an overall appearance of symmetry.

3. In addition, Exhibit H necessitates employing many different sized circles as compared to the original. Instead of all the large circles remaining the same, the new version requires two different sets, two of 1,845 years and two of 1,825 years. Also, the original chart had six 658 1/2 year circles which became modified in the new version to two sets of 618 1/2 years, two of 638 1/2 years, and two of 658 1/2 years. Altogether, instead of using only four different sized circles, the modified version ends up with seven different sizes! Thus without question there has been a loss of simplicity in the design, making it less desirable from a mathematical standpoint which consistently seeks to reduce relationships to their simplest possible terms. This would tend to cast doubt on the validity of Exhibit H due to its more cumbersome chronological pattern.

4. From these standpoints, Exhibit H might be considered a clever counterfeit of the true configuration and harmony of Exhibit G. It gives an appearance of symmetry and balance, but lacks both design simplicity and the vital touchstone of correlation with truth and reality.

5. In summation, it may be said that symmetry and balance alone in the construction of a Biblical chronological chart should not be considered sufficient as an indicator of the accuracy of a given historical date. Further criteria must be utilized, including simplicity of the overall pattern and, most importantly, synchronism with known events in the Harvest period that are evident on an absolute basis.

## **Additional Approaches**

1. It should be noted here that a similar approach to the above procedure can be used with the 2,520 years of the "Seven Times" of punishment period of the "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy. Again, two charts could be constructed, one based on 606-607 B.C. for the fall of Jerusalem and start of the prophecy, the other based on the 587 B.C. date. Both charts will demonstrate apparent symmetry and balance, but only the first will coincide with the 1914 date which has proven to be such a landmark year in the end of the age.

2. Yet another procedure can be used to dramatize the detrimental effects of a shortfall of 20 years in the Bible chronology. It involves putting together on one chart the 1,845 year, 1,260 year and 2,500 year circles that are so significant in the chronological arrangements and having them intersect the dates on which they are based in the 7,000 year framework from Adam's fall to the restoration. This produces a complex but characteristic pattern that not only reflects the chief events of Biblical history but also appears to identify two unique intervals of 30 and 33 1/2 years that recur regularly throughout the pattern.

This peculiar arrangement seems to call attention to the significant chronological years in the earthly ministry of the one chosen by the Heavenly Father to bring about ultimate reconciliation of the fallen race. At 30, Jesus became of full age under the Law, was baptized of John and entered into his special ministry, culminating in the crucifixion at age 33-1/2 when the ransom sacrifice was fully consummated. This distinctive feature, seemingly giving special honor to our Lord Jesus in the chronological pattern depicting the divine plan, would be entirely lost if 20 years were removed from our chronology.

*(Appendix C was written in collaboration with Paul A. Mezera)*



## Appendix D

### The Times of the Gentiles

The prophecy of the "Times of the Gentiles," familiar to many Bible Students, should be given attention here because of its direct tie-in to the main topic of this presentation -THE BIBLICAL 70 YEARS. It is based upon a prediction that Jesus made near the close of his ministry concerning what would soon befall the venerable city of Jerusalem and his beloved people of Israel: "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) Thus it was Jesus who coined the phrase, "times of the Gentiles," which implies that God had appointed a set time that the nation of Israel would be subject to Gentile dominion. In fact, the Greek word *kairos* used here signifies just that-a fixed time.

We understand this prophecy to apply specifically to that interval of history during which Gentile powers would be given a limited permission to rule in the world and especially to exert dominance over the nation of Israel. To gain an overview of this subject, we need to determine when this period began and how long it continued, and to note the significant events that occurred at its beginning and ending. Before pursuing these specifics, a brief background sketch into God's dealings with His people Israel under the Mosaic Law arrangement will be helpful.

During the "Jewish Age," God had organized the people of Israel as His special kingdom; though under leaders such as Moses and the Judges, and later under a line of Kings, all nominally served Him as their supreme King. Israel was specifically termed "the kingdom of the Lord" (2 Chron. 13:8) and their kings were said to sit "on the throne of the Lord" (I Chron. 29:23), all in a typical sense, portraying what was to be a grander future reality under Christ's Millennial rule. (See C.T. Russell, Vol. 1, p. 248.) Not until this typical kingdom of God was brought to an official end with the removal of the crown from Zedekiah, the last of the kings in the royal line of King David, would the Gentile lease of power, or limited right to rule, begin.

#### Its Beginning

The beginning of the "Times of the Gentiles" is thus seen to occur at the point of Zedekiah's overthrow, which is also linked with the destruction of Jerusalem that followed immediately thereafter. The proper dating of this event, then, becomes critical for a correct application of the period of the prophecy in the stream of history. However, this is precisely where a 20 year discrepancy between the Bowen/Russell chronology (607 B.C.) and that of civil history (587 B.C.) is found. Such a difference in dating the beginning of the period will obviously result in a similar difference in its ending (1914 A.D. versus 1934 A.D.), assuming agreement in the length

of the period. (It should be kept in mind that some commentators, such as C.O. Jonsson in his work, *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, have overthrown faith in the prophecy altogether.) Nevertheless, we are reviewing the facts connected with the "Times of the Gentiles" in order to show that it is indeed a valid Scriptural concept and to confirm its correct application.

The starting point of this period can be ascertained by combining the Scriptural accounts of Judah's downfall with known tie-in points from secular history. Nebuchadnezzar as the head of the Babylonian Empire was God's instrument to bring Jewish independence to a violent end. He brought to reality what the prophets had foretold: that the Temple would be razed, Jerusalem destroyed, the people taken captive and the land left desolate. The beginning of Gentile dominance was thus characterized by an intensity of violence and suffering upon the Israelites that is un-mistakable in the annals of history.

The exact date of Zedekiah's overthrow, and hence the beginning of the "Times of the Gentiles," is determined as follows: Ezra 1:1-3 (repeated in 2 Chron. 36:19-23) states that the Israelites were permitted to return from the captivity in Babylon in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia. The fall of Babylon, which occurred just prior to this event, is a clearly marked date in secular chronology, which almost all historians agree occurred in October, 539 B.C. (See, for example, Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, pp. 13-14.) According to Daniel 5:30-31 and 9:1, Darius the Mede then took over the kingdom and reigned at least one year, possibly as subordinate ruler under Cyrus. In any event, Cyrus' first year on the Babylonian throne is taken as 538-537 B.C. (Lamb, *Cyrus the Great*, p. 241; Jonsson, p. 108; etc.)

According to Ezra 3: 1, the Jews who returned from the exile in Babylonia were again established in various cities of their homeland by the seventh month (Tishri or Sept. -Oct.) of the year of the return. Time restraints would seem to favor that year as being 537 B.C. rather than 538 B.C. Some reflection shows it is doubtful that there was sufficient time remaining in 538 B.C. after Cyrus gained the throne for the necessary sequence of events to occur: these would include the issuance of the decree, Zerubbabel's organizing the first contingent of returnees, the thousand mile journey to Palestine and the resettling in the land, all by the seventh month of that year. It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that 537 B.C. marked the ending of THE BIBLICAL 70 YEARS of desolation and major captivity; and seventy years earlier (the time of Judah's defeat) would then have been the year 607 B.C.

The sequence of events that occurred in that year (607 B.C.), according to 2 Kings chapter 25, was: Zedekiah's overthrow in the fourth month, the Temple burned in the fifth month and the final remnant of Jews fleeing to Egypt in the seventh month. Thus from the complete desertion of the land in the seventh month of 607 B.C. to the reestablishment of the people in the land in the seventh month of 537 B.C. would have been just 70 years, exactly as foretold.

## **Its Length**

With the date for the start of the "Times of the Gentiles" now pinpointed as the year 607 B.C., we need to determine the length of the period in order to calculate its ending point. For this we turn first to Leviticus chapter 26:

## Leviticus chapter 26:

Verse 18: "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."

Verse 21: "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins."

*Verses 23 and 24: "And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. "*

*Verses 27 and 28: "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and 1, even 1, will chastise you seven times for your sins."*

Because of their covenant relationship with Jehovah, the Israelites were held directly accountable to Him for their actions. When they made a good faith effort to follow after Him and obey His just commandments, they were blessed in basket and store. Conversely, when they disobeyed Him and turned away from true worship and the righteous principles of the Law, they were chastised in a variety of ways, such as crop losses, plagues, and humiliating military defeats. All of this was outlined earlier in the same chapter of Leviticus 26.

Starting with verse 18 of Leviticus 26, however, a much more serious punishment was outlined, specified as "seven times" (K.J. version) and repeated four times. It was made clear in these repetitions that if the earlier chastisements did not produce the needed humbling, then a much more serious period of punishment would be imposed. What was meant by the phrase "seven times"? The fourfold repetition of this expression did not imply a series of chastisements, each to consist of "seven times" of additional punishment; rather, we believe the repetition was intended to give somber emphasis to its severity, and the expression itself was a coded indication of the length of the period.

This text in Leviticus 26 thus refers to a special period of punishment for Israel, which, it turned out, subjected her to being continuously downtrodden by more powerful Gentile powers. There is a parallel Scripture in Daniel chapter 4 which likewise speaks of 44 seven times," but in this instance relates to the period in which the Gentile nations would be granted a limited right to rule in the earth and exert supremacy over Israel. This was shown in the enforced period of madness that came upon King Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride and refusal to acknowledge the providences of the Most High God in granting him the kingdom:

***"The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruieth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."-Dan. 4:31-32***

Remarkably, paralleling the number of repetitions of "seven (times)" in Leviticus 26, the essence of Daniel 4:31-32 is repeated three times in this fourth chapter of Daniel. Note verses 16, 23 and 25 in addition to verse 32 quoted above. Whereas the seven "times" of Nebuchadnezzar's degradation proved to be literal years, they are also considered to be typical of a much longer

period synchronous with the "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy. (C.T. Russell, Vol. 2, pp. 89-90) The entire account may be taken as symbolic, with Nebuchadnezzar representing all of the Gentile powers who from God's standpoint were considered abased as a ravenous beast. The length of both of these periods-the Jewish punishment in Leviticus 26 and the Gentile dominatio in Daniel 4 - is identical: "seven times." Yet it is of interest to note a subtle difference in the way this time was expressed in the original Hebrew of each account. Only in Daniel is the Hebrew word for "times"- *iddan* actually used, in all four of the instances referenced above. In all four of the Leviticus citations it is omitted and needs to be supplied.<sup>16</sup> We think it is entirely appropriate to add it, considering its consistent usage in all four of the references to seven 'times' in the Daniel account. (Russell, Vol. 2, pp. 89-90)

In the Bible, a "time" is used in the sense of a year, but whether it be literal or symbolic is dependent upon the particular usage. In the Leviticus 26 texts, it is readily apparent that seven literal years would not satisfy the prophecy; the Babylonian captivity alone lasted for seventy years. Hence, seven symbolic years must have been intended, which in Biblical code represent a much longer period of time. During this period, the Israelites were to be purged through bitter experiences and prepared to receive the blessings originally intended for them.

To determine the length of the "seven (times)" of Leviticus 26, representing the duration of the Jewish punishment, and the "seven times" of Daniel 4, representing the length of the "Times of the Gentiles," we may proceed as follows:

If a "time" of Leviticus 26 and Daniel 4 = a symbolic year, and one symbolic year = 360 days,<sup>17</sup> then 7 "times" =  $7 \times 360 = 2,520$  symbolic days.

Finally, according to the well established "year-day" principle of Biblical prophetic interpretation, 2,520 symbolic days = 2,520 literal years.

Consequently, we believe the length of this dual period to be 2,520 years-that extensive time during which Gentile powers were given a limited mandate to rule the earth and to exercise supremacy over Israel. This is what Jesus referred to when he

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16 See also Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day do I praise thee." This is another example where the Hebrew word for "times" (*iddan*) is omitted in the text but **is** supplied by the translator for clarity of thought.

17 This definition of a symbolic year is based upon a study of the principles of Biblical prophetic reckoning; 360 days also results from averaging the number of days in the solar and lunar years. See C.F. Redeker, *The Biblical Prophetic Year*, pp. 3-9.

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said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

## **Its Ending**

With the beginning of the prophetic "Times of the Gentiles" established as 607 B.C., we need merely to extend forward from this point the length of the period, shown to be 2,520 years, to determine its ending point. As illustrated in Exhibit J, this period came to an end in 1914 A.D. In any calculations that span the B.C. A.D. dividing point, such as in this one, it is necessary to keep in mind that there is no zero year.<sup>18</sup> Thus, 606-1/4 years before the dividing point plus 1,913-3/4 years after the dividing point equal a full 2,520 years, ending in the year 1914 A.D.<sup>19</sup> The significance of the year 1914 in our day is well recognized by observers of the world scene. It marked a turning point in the capitulation of an old world order and the beginning of our modern era.

The World War which began in that year indelibly affected the affairs of all nations and effectively restructured the map of Europe. From that time forward it could truly be said that "the kings have had their day," and the boast of hereditary ruling houses of their divine right to the throne came to an abrupt end. Whereas Gentile nations continue to exist since 1914, their limited divine lease of power ceased; they are now in a process of eviction and disintegration preceding the establishment of God's earthly Kingdom. (See C.T. Russell, Vol. 2, p. ix.)

As dramatic as these changes were on Gentile powers, even greater was the effect upon the Jewish people. With the ending of the "seven times" of their punishment, World War I set into motion a series of events including the Balfour Declaration which

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<sup>18</sup> For a more complete discussion of problems relating to calculations that span the B.C.-A.D. dividing point, see C.F. Redeker, *A Confirmation of the True Bible Chronology*, pp. 45, 47-48, 91-93.

<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the entire subject of the "Times of the Gentiles," see C.T. Russell, Vol. 2, pp. 73-102.

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guaranteed them the right to establish a national homeland in Palestine. Circumstances just preceding and during the Second World War then triggered a massive return of Jews from almost every nation where they had been scattered throughout the earth. In 1947 a United Nations Partition Plan cut out a small portion of land for their exclusive use, leading in 1948 to their declaration of independence and rebirth as a nation.

Since that time, the tumultuous events in the Middle East have kept the Jews almost continuously in the center stage of the world's real life drama. Israel has arisen as a vanguard of hope amid despair and strife amongst the nations. It would be difficult to refute the observation that, whereas the "Times of the Gentiles" have indeed ended, the "Times of Israel" have but begun. The Millennial Kingdom will soon manifest the full extent of the blessings which God has reserved for His people of old, as well as for all nations, in fulfillment of His promise to the patriarchs. Rom. 11:26-29, Zech. 8:13-15, Gen. 12:1-3

## Consideration of Objections

It is noted by some that Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great metallic image of a man, recorded in Daniel the second chapter, occurred in the second year of his reign, corresponding to the fifth year of Jehoiakim. (Jer. 25: 1) This event, and Daniel's interpretation of the dream, therefore, must have preceded Jerusalem's fall by 17 years, since that city was destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year. (All years shown according to Jewish reckoning, see Exhibit B, p. 80.) As part, of his interpretation of the dream, Daniel indicated to the King that "the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom . . . and made thee ruler over ... all. Thou art this head of gold." (Dan. 2:37-38) The contention is then made that it would be illogical to begin the "Times of the Gentiles" with the destruction of Jerusalem since Nebuchadnezzar had already been identified as the head of the first universal empire (Babylon, the gold of the image) 17 years earlier; therefore, an earlier historical date should be used for the start of the Gentile Times.

It is further noted that a most eventful battle occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's first year-the battle of Carchemish (on the upper Euphrates)-when he defeated the army of Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt. (Jer. 46:2) This completely altered the balance of power in the region and allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take over all Syria and Palestine. The battle of Carchemish is dated in civil history as the year 605 B.C. and is thought to be the more logical beginning for the "Times of the Gentiles." (It would not be possible to go back any further since that year -- 605 B.C. --was Nebuchadnezzar's first and it was he that was identified as the head of gold of the image.)

In considering this view, we first of all should acknowledge that it was advanced as a way of harmonizing the adoption of the civil historical dates with the Bible Student concept of the "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy. Especially was this so if the date of the battle of Carchemish was taken as 606 B.C. as given in some earlier works of history (such as McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*) and then extending the 2,520 year period of the prophecy into our own era. If the B.C.-A.D. dividing point was thought of as a zero year (rather than as a point in time), it was possible to end the prophecy in the all important year 1914, with no apparent change from the original reckoning of Pastor Russell (as far as the ending point was concerned).

However, careful reflection on this matter shows both of these premises to be incorrect. Currently the generally accepted date for the battle of Carchemish is 605 B.C., not 606 B.C. (see H.W.F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, p. 141, and most other recent historical reference works); and in fact there is no zero year between B.C. 1 and A.D. 1. Therefore if one were to begin the "Times of the Gentiles" in the year 605 B.C., the 2,520 year period would end in 1916 A.D. (not 1914 A.D.), and thus the proposed harmonization would not materialize.

Even more important than the actual dates generated, there is a basic flaw in this argument which is seriously at odds with Scripture. As explained above, this view seeks to identify the beginning of the "Times of the Gentiles" with the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, fully 18 years before the fall of Jerusalem. As reviewed earlier, Zedekiah was the last of Judah's kings in the line of David, all of whom successively had sat on the throne of Jehovah in type. Not until Zedekiah was overthrown and Jerusalem destroyed was God's typical kingdom removed (Ezek. 21:25-27), and not until then was it possible for a Gentile power to take its place. Further, as already noted,

if the civil historical date were used for this event (587 B.C.), it would produce a corresponding ending point for the "Times of the Gentiles" in 1934 A.D., which is far removed from the significant 1914 A.D. date in question.

How, then, do we harmonize Daniel's statement to Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold with the necessity of delaying the start of the Gentile Times until after Zedekiah was dethroned and Jerusalem destroyed? First of all, let us examine more closely the context of the Biblical account wherein Daniel was depicted as interpreting the meaning of the metallic image to Nebuchadnezzar. Immediately after stating that the king was the head of gold, he also said, "after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee [of silver], and another third kingdom of brass," etc. (Dan. 2:39) Yet it is clear from the historical records that in fact a whole line of Babylonian kings followed immediately after Nebuchadnezzar, before the next kingdom (which turned out to be Medo-Persia) arose on the scene.

These other Babylonian kings are enumerated as Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar, Labashi-Marduk, and Nabonidus (co-regent with his son Belshazzar when Babylon was overthrown). Therefore, Daniel's identification of Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold was not an individual one, but was intended to portray him as the representative of the Babylonian Empire. Daniel's words may properly be considered to refer to a successive line of kingdoms rather than to individual monarchs. He was simply saying that Babylon, in due course of time (17 years later when Jerusalem and God's typical kingdom were overthrown), would become the head of gold and the first of a series of universal empires that would dominate both Israel and the world scene.

As Daniel later made clear, "the most High [God] ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Dan. 4:25) Thus from the very start of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar (as well as other monarchs)<sup>20</sup> owed the position of rulership to God's overruling and sanction. (Dan. 2:37) Yet the Scriptures seem to be making a distinction between this general grant of power and the more specific lease of dominion that was given at the beginning of the "Times of the Gentiles." That special lease was for the "seven times"-a period of 2,520 years, as we have seen-and could begin only after Zedekiah was overthrown.

## **Finale**

With the ending of the "Times of the Gentiles" in 1914 and the resulting rebirth of Israel in 1948, the prophetic time clock continues relentlessly onward. Together with other ongoing fulfillments in global political, social and religious spheres, we see the plan of God moving forward toward its grand culmination in the full establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth for the blessing of all mankind.

"So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."-Luke 21:31

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<sup>20</sup> See also Prov. 2 1: 1, Rom. 13:1-3 and 1 Tim. 2:1-2.

## **Exhibit I: Significant Events in Reestablishment and Growth of Israel**

**1878** Ending of "Jewish Double" prophecy. Berlin Congress of Nations granted colonizing rights in Palestine. Petah Tikva founded.

**1897** Theodor Herzl convened first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. ("Fishers" of Jer. 16:14-16)

**1914** Ending of "Times of the Gentiles" prophecy. First World War. Jews in Palestine under Turkish rule numbered 90,000.

**1917** Turks driven out of Palestine by British. Balfour Declaration guaranteed Jews right to national homeland there.

**1923-1948** British stalled on pledge of homeland; governed Palestine under mandate from League of Nations.

**1931-1936** Anti-Semitic foes in Germany and Poland ("Hunters" of Jer. 16:14-16) triggered flight of 140,000 Jews to Palestine.

**1939-1945** Second World War accelerated Nazi persecution; six million Jews perished in holocaust.

U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine. Jews numbered 600,000.

**1948** David Ben-Gurion declared independence (sprouting "fig tree" of Mat. 24:32-33), after mandate ended. Five Arab states repulsed.

**1949** Massive waves of Jews started arriving in new state.

**1956** Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt to reopen Suez.

**1961** United Nations formally recognized state of Israel.

**1967** Jews defeated Egypt and Arabs in historic six day war. East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria regained.



**1973** Arabs repulsed in surprise attack against Israel.

**1978** Camp David accords led to Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

**1982** Jewish settlements in occupied areas actively encouraged.

**1989-1991** Jews from U.S.S.R. swelled population to five million.

**1991** Historic Arab-Israeli peace talks opened in Geneva.

### Exhibit J: The Prophetic Times of the Gentiles

("Jerusalem trodden down"—Luke 21:24)

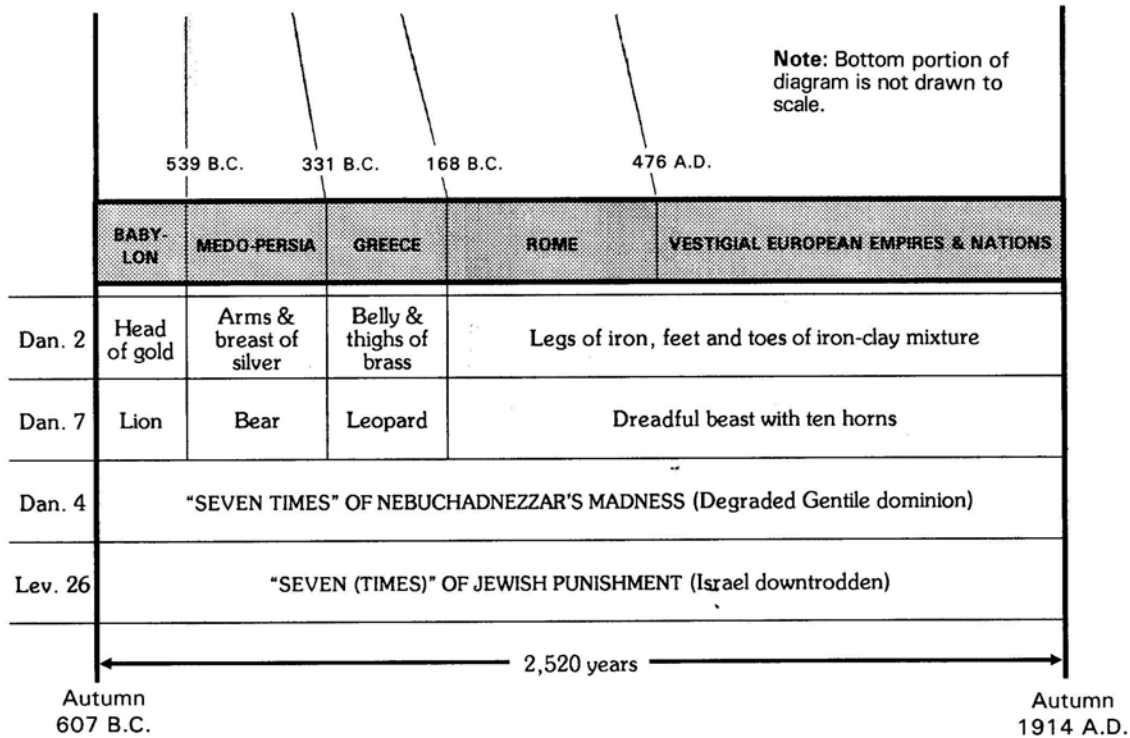
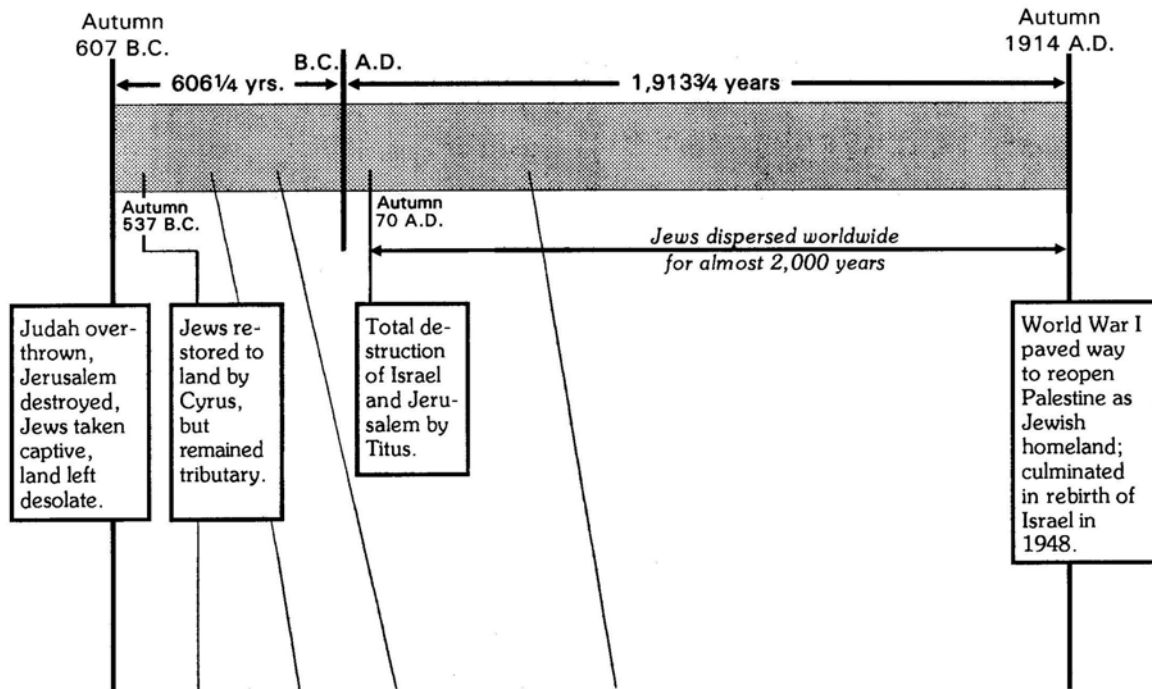
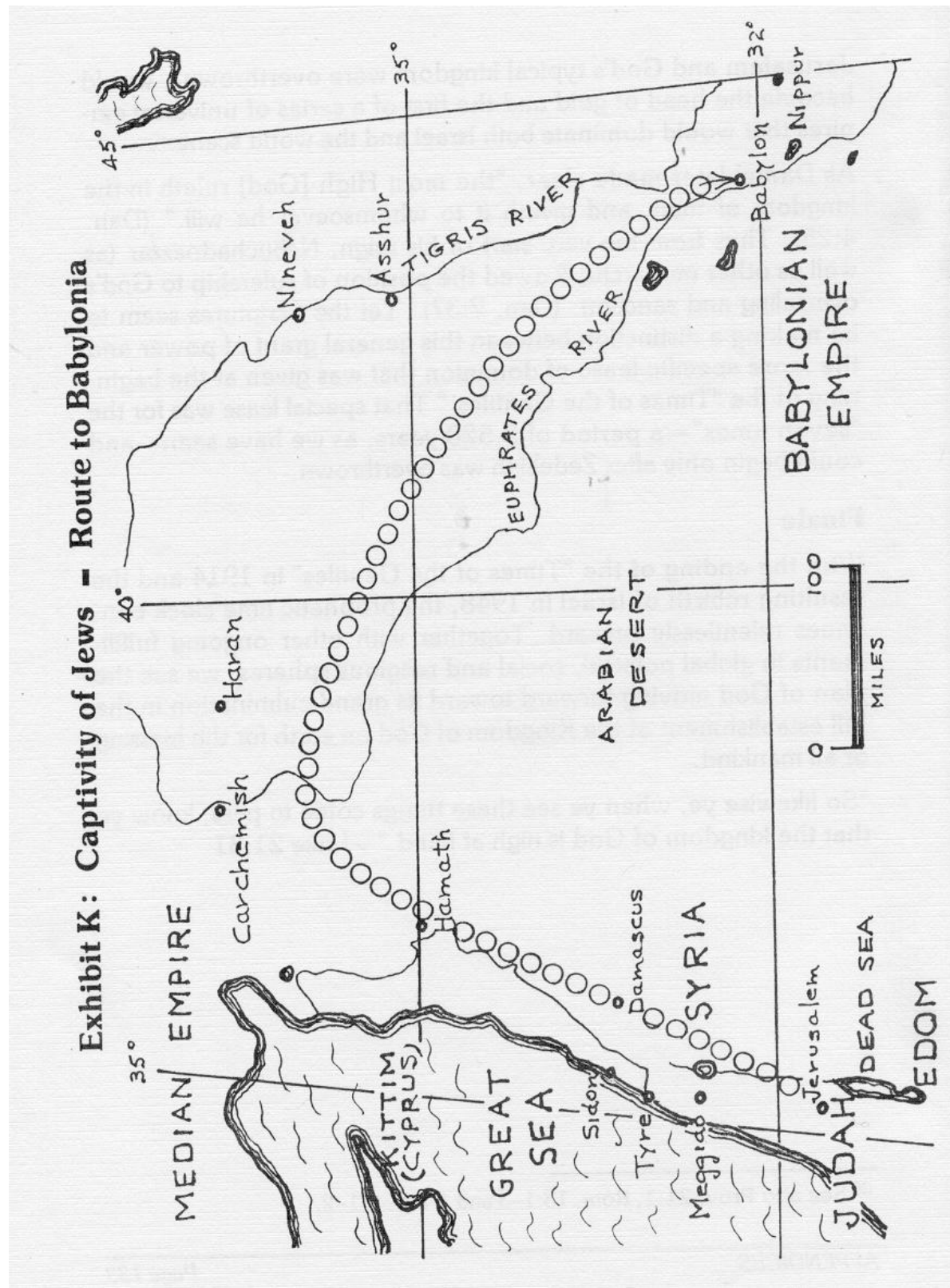


Exhibit K: Captivity of Jews - Route to Babylonia



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