

1914

**The Touchstone
of the Watchtower**

Max Hatton

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MAX HATTON'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY

The story begins fifty years ago when I was the Shire Clerk in the lovely town of Denmark, Western Australia. It was necessary that the Council appoint an Assistant Shire Clerk. A young man by the name of Ray¹ was appointed and he and his wife Ivy² and my wife Merle and I soon became close friends.

One evening they were at our home for the evening meal and in our conversation I mentioned that in a couple of weeks we were going over to Collie where our son Rodney would be christened in the Methodist Church. It would be a sort of dual christening for a daughter of my sister Joyce and her husband John would also be christened. Ray asked us why we were having Rodney Christened? This stunned us quite a bit so we simply responded along the lines that this is the thing to do. It seemed to us that this is what everyone did in those days. I was then asked did I have a Bible for Ray would like to show us that there is nothing in the Bible requiring the christening or baptizing of infants. People are encouraged there to make their own decision when they arrive at an age where they are sufficiently mature to make such an important decision.

We were far from being religious people but eventually found a Bible in an old tin trunk. We were shown that Jesus was about thirty years of age before He was baptised. We were also shown sufficient other items to convince us that baptism of infants was a tradition not based upon the Word of God. We decided that we would not go ahead with the intended christening and this caused quite a disturbance in my family.

The insight we had received concerning baptism caused us to agree to study other matters with Ray and Ivy who revealed to us that they had about a year before become Jehovah's Witnesses. We were shown the sections of Scripture that reveal that Jesus is to return to this Earth in the near future. We discovered that the Immortal Soul and Hellfire concepts were also without foundation in the Bible but had come into the early Christian Church from Paganism. We had never heard of such things before and it seemed to us that other things Jehovah's Witnesses stand for were also in harmony with Scripture (we always had our doubts about their stand on Blood-transfusion). Eventually, we accepted the Watch Tower teachings hook, line, and sinker so we decided to become baptised ourselves. We were baptised at a Convention in Bunbury, West Australia on November 14, 1959.

An appeal was made by the Head of the Watch Tower Society in Australia for many Jehovah's Witnesses in Western Australia to move to places shown on a map in the Eastern States for the purpose of serving where the need was great. Merle and I and Ray and Ivy all decided that we should go. We had become very dedicated to the cause and because we had three children chose to move to Melbourne rather than to a country town because of the greater prospect of gaining suitable work in the city.

Regulations required that I give a month's notice of my resignation from the Council and during that time we sold our furniture and most other possessions. Not long before we left I met a very earnest Seventh-day Adventist named Geoff Rogerson. He gave me a quite small paper "An Appeal to Jehovah's Witnesses" written by Pastor Arthur Patrick, also a Seventh-day Adventist. I explained to Geoff that I was far too busy just then to study the paper, but I promised to write to him about it after settling in Melbourne. The paper challenged the Watch Tower teaching on their chronology leading to the year A.D. 1914, the vital year in Watch Tower history.

Shortly after arriving in Melbourne I wrote to Geoff re the paper. This began a protracted study of the subject on the part of both of us for we really didn't know very much on the

¹ This is not his real name.

² This is not her real name.

subject at that time. Geoff turned out to be a very intelligent and capable Bible student and quite voluminous correspondence was sent back and forth and this went on for a couple of years until Geoff became convinced that what he had provided me should have been sufficient. However, he could not read my mind. I had staunchly defended the Watch Tower position but by now I was becoming quite concerned. However, I was nowhere near ready to capitulate, I needed to do more study yet. Geoff refused to continue the discussion. For my part I continued studying and wrote to several Scholars who were competent to be of help on matters related to their field of speciality. I found that there were several Scholars in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who were leaders in the field of Biblical chronology, both Siegfried Horn and Edwin R. Thiele offered helpful information.

I also wrote to the Watch Tower headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, on several occasions but received no help whatsoever. On one occasion I was informed that they were too busy to spend the time that would be necessary to study for answers to my questions. This response obviously shocked me for I had been convinced that they were the real experts and were completely conversant with the subject of chronology. On another occasion they just counselled me to give less attention to chronology and rely on the signs they said confirmed their 1914 date.

My confidence in the Watch Tower Society being God's Channel of Communication was greatly shaken to say the least. Some of my friends and associates tried to assure me that if the Society didn't have the answers to my questions now, they would one day be revealed in Jehovah's due time. It was evident to me that if you accept this delusive reasoning, which was fostered by the Society, it could never be wrong - Jehovah will sort it out for you one day.

In those days I was interested in the Australian Institute of Archaeology, their headquarters was situated in Collins Street, Melbourne. I learned of the Annual Lecture Series for 1964 and was tempted to attend. It is quite out of order for a Jehovah's Witness to attend such meetings and particularly for me, because the meetings were on Tuesday evenings and I was conducting a book study for the local Congregation on those evenings, I managed to stay away, well, at least until the night of the final lecture when I felt compelled to attend. As I look back now I am quite sure it was providential that I should be at the meeting for the lecturer highlighted chronological information for the Neo-Babylonian Empire supplied on a Stele by the Lady Adda-guppi the mother of Nabonidus, the last King of Babylon. This Stele provides the names of the Kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and provides the length of reign for each king. This evidence corresponds exactly with all of the various other items that construct a chronology for the period. The evidence is so inextricably woven together that it cannot possibly be in error. I was absolutely amazed and now deeply impressed with the fact that I had been misled, and deliberately so, by the Watch Tower Society.

I had accepted that the Watch Tower was God's Channel of Truth and had supported its claim that there had to be seventy complete years of desolation of the land of Judah, that it had to be completely empty for seventy years of both man and beast. The evidence they provide had become much more than shaky according to my investigations and this last piece of contrary evidence was just too much for me. It was the last straw, so to speak, and I wended my way home that evening now completely convinced that I had been following a false prophet rather than God's Channel of truth. A false prophet that deliberately kept its mind controlled adherents in darkness by deliberately denying evidence and lying to them. I prepared a letter of resignation from Jehovah's Witnesses on August 16, 1964 and delivered it to the local Congregational leader.

From then on we were completely ostracised by the Jehovah's Witnesses, they didn't want to speak to us or have anything to do with us. The bottom had dropped out of our world so we decided to return home to Western Australia. We concluded that we had been wrong, it was not God who was wrong nor the Bible. We would start again and find out without any

mind control from the Watch Tower people or from anyone else what God really wants us to believe and to do.

A little later, after being re-established in Western Australia I decided to put all my findings about JW chronology and their 1914 down on paper and send it to my former friends in Melbourne. Many of them must have been puzzled why we left the Watch Tower. Some, we thought, may not even have known that we had left.

Shortly after I distributed my paper, "1914, THE TOUCHSTONE OF THE WATCHTOWER" one of the senior Jehovah's Witnesses was sent from Sydney to interview me and ask me to attend a meeting of the local Congregation in order to consider my actions. My response was that I had resigned nine months earlier and had no intentions of attending any inquisition the Watch Tower might like to set up. A few days later I received a letter advising that both Merle and I had been disfellowshipped. Disfellowshipping is used by the Watch Tower as a device to shut up those who are able to expose their errors. Now no Jehovah's Witness will have anything to do with us in any way or else they could be disfellowshipped. My own parents had become Jehovah's Witnesses due to my influence but were disfellowshipped for having spiritual association with me, their son, a disfellowshipped person. By this time they didn't mind for I had been able to show them the deliberate errors propagated by the Watch Tower Society.

A few years ago, about forty years after I resigned from Jehovah's Witnesses, we discovered that Ray and Ivy were living in Western Australia. We picked up their phone number from the Directory and I decided to ring them to see if they had changed their stance at all. Ray answered the phone and when he discovered it was me calling he said he couldn't talk to me and hung up the phone. Ray had once been my best friend but he is still obviously mesmerised by the Watch Tower Society. We were extremely sad about this.

The Watch Tower wheel of deception rolls on - it captivates new innocent people and maintains its spell over its adherents. It used to teach that the generation that saw the signs begin in 1914 would still be alive when Jesus comes back at Armageddon. Recently, that claim looked ridiculous so it was quietly dropped. It doesn't take long for all the twists and turns of the Society to be left in the background and forgotten and newer people are never informed of all the meanderings of the Society in the past.

Merle and I have no respect whatever for the Watch Tower Society and its leaders. We are sorry for and respect the ordinary Jehovah's Witness who allow themselves to be mind-controlled by the Watch Tower Society.

Max Hatton
Sydney
September 2009

1914-THE TOUCHSTONE OF THE WATCHTOWER

The Summary of an Investigation by Max Hatton

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Max Hatton completed this Study in 1965. I owe Max a great debt for his research, since his work enabled me to respond to Jehovah's Witnesses who were calling at my door at the time. This work, along with that produced by Geoff Rogerson, launched my ongoing interest.

Few people have access to Max's original document. Indeed it is possible that he and I own the only original copies.

Max's work needs to be read today, for his information remains relevant. As well as exposing the errors of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTS), the existence of Max's Study shows that the WTS has long been aware of the failings of its false neo-Babylonian chronology, which it is compelled to hold on to. Should they admit that their dates for the period are in error, then the WTS loses its claim to being the sole voice on earth of God's heavenly government.

The facilities provided by Word Processors enabled me to reformat his original document. Given the frailties of OCR scanning and my limitations, it is possible that the transcription process has resulted in a few errors creeping in. I take full responsibility for these unintended changes. I anticipate they are minimal, and I am certain they do not impact on the thrust of Max's Study. Please address comments about any such needed corrections to me, not to Max.

Since Max refers to WTS publications written in 1963, I provide scans of the pages that Max refers to from the WTS books *All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial* and *"Babylon The Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules*.

I also provide copies of related correspondence with the WTS at the time that Max was conducting his research.

I shall be pleased to forward comments about the Study on to Max.

It has been a pleasure to be able to transfer this Study onto the modern media for him.

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All Scriptures quoted, unless otherwise indicated, are quoted from The New World Translation published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York Inc., in 1961.

Abbreviations

AV	The King James or Authorised Version
ASV	The American Standard Version
RSV	The Revised Standard Version
The Society	The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
BF	"Babylon The Great Has Fallen!" Gods Kingdom Rules
SI	"All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial"
NS	"Let Your Name Be Sanctified"
YW	"Your Will Be Done On Earth"
CCK	Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 BC) in the British Museum, by D J Wiseman
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research

INTRODUCTION

Max Hatton, 1965

Several years ago I became an adherent of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and consequently I assumed the name assumed by all other members of the Society since 1931, I called myself a "Jehovah's Witness".

After becoming associated with the Society I did about all I could to spread its teachings because I was certain that it taught the truth. Yet at all times I recognized my personal responsibility to "Make sure of all things hold fast to what is fine". (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

About four years ago, I commenced a study of the Society's doctrines connected with the Society's teachings on 1914, for the year 1914 is of prime importance to the Society today. It is this year that, according to the Society, the Times of the Gentiles, or the time of uninterrupted Gentile domination of the Earth, ended and Christ began his second presence as King of the promised Kingdom of God. A very short while ago I completed this study completely convinced that the Society has no genuine foundation whatever for its 1914 platform and consequently for a large portion of its teachings which have developed from this. The 1914 of the Watchtower is a forgery.

Being absolutely sure that this doctrine and all that goes with it is falsehood, there were only two alternatives available to me. I could close my eyes to all the evidence and remain stubborn like the criminal who said, "That's my story and I'm sticking to it!" or I could remain firm in my devotion to the truth and refuse to continue to spread this falsehood. I chose the latter and resigned my position as a Servant in the Organization.

To illustrate what has transpired since then I will borrow two passages from the book of "Job". A few Witnesses, no doubt in a sincere desire to help me, have called and appealed to such things as the love in the organization and have not been prepared to solve my problems which involve Chronology and Prophecy. This is only avoiding the issue and although I appreciate their efforts to help me, the problems still remain. Job put it this way, "How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?" (Job 21:34 AV.) While the falsehood remains, there can be no comfort.

Many do not know why I have stopped walking with the Society; indeed many friends do not know that I have done so. For many reasons, I am setting the whole problem down on paper, asking, "really now, who will make me out a liar. Or reduce my word to nothing?" (Job 24:25 AV.)

It has been suggested and no doubt will be suggested again that the knowledge I have gained has gone to my head. Let it be noted therefore right from the beginning, that I claim no special credit for any information contained in this consideration. I have made no new discoveries, I am raising no new problem for the Society. For example, The Watchtower magazine carried many articles attempting to justify the Society's Chronology during the year 1922. The following are a few quotations of interest:

May 1, 1922, page 131 "About a year ago there began some agitation concerning chronology, the crux of the argument being that Brother Russell was wrong concerning chronology and particularly in error with reference to the gentile times."

Page 132 "Agitation concerning the error in chronology has continued to increase throughout the year".

Page 139 complains that if the Society's chronology was changed it "would put out of joint all our chronology, and destroy the value of the dates 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, and 1918."

May 15, 1922 "We have no doubt whatever in regard to the chronology relating to the dates of 1874, 1914, 1918, and 1925." The Society has more doubts today than it obviously had in 1922 concerning the dates 1874 and 1925, for it no longer accepts these dates as having any special significance.

Other articles published throughout the year in an effort to shield the Society's chronology and discredit anyone or anything that might tend to prove it wrong were as follows:-

June 1, 1922, "SEVENTY YEAR'S DESOLATION (PART I)"

June 15, 1922. "SEVENTY YEARS' DESOLATION (PART II)"

July 1, 1922. "END OF THE SEVENTY YEARS' DESOLATION"

July 15, 1922. "THE STRONG CABLE OF CHRONOLOGY"

November 15, 1922. "DIVINELY-GIVEN CHRONOLOGICAL PARALLELISMS (PART 1)"

Numerous facts have come to light since 1922 which prove that the objections raised against the Society's chronology back there were correct. On the other hand, the arguments the Society put forward have been refuted beyond a doubt. The course that the Society follows therefore on these matters today is one of silence. They avoid these problems. You can prove this for yourself if you care to by asking them selected questions raised at the conclusion of this consideration.

CHAPTER ONE. PASTOR RUSSELL'S 1914

The most recent publication setting out the Society's Chronology etc. leading to 1914 AD is "Babylon The Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules, published in 1963. However, to fully appreciate the truth as it relates to this doctrine, we have to go right back to Pastor Russell, the founder of the Watch Tower Society. Russell wrote a series of volumes which later became known as Studies In The Scriptures. Volume 2 of this series bears the title "The Time Is At Hand", and it contains the alleged proof that the Gentile Times would expire in 1914 AD. In Study IV on pages 76 and 77 Russell wrote,

In this chapter we present the Bible evidence proving that the full end of the times of the Gentiles i.e., the full end of their lease of dominion will be reached in AD 1914; and that that date will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men. (underlining supplied).

On page 77 Russell advised that, "if this is shown to be a fact firmly established by the Scriptures it will prove:-" He then set out 7 items which were briefly as follows:

1. The Kingdom of God would be set up in 1914.
2. Christ would be present in 1914, "but it will also prove that he will be present for a considerable period before that date."
3. That some time before the end of 1914 all of the Church of Christ would be glorified, "because every member is to reign with Christ, being a joint-heir with him of the Kingdom, and it cannot be fully 'set up' without every member."
4. At the end of the Gentile Times (1914 AD) Jerusalem would rise to a position of honor.
5. By 1914 Israel's blindness would be turned away. (Romans 11:25.)
6. That the great time of trouble "such as never was since there was a nation" would reach its culmination.
7. "before that date God's Kingdom, organized in power, will be in the earth and then smite and crush the Gentile image (Dan 2:34) - and fully consume the power of these kings." (The reference here should obviously have been Daniel 2:44.)

It will be readily recognized by those conversant with the doctrines of the Society today that of these 7 claims, only the 1st is maintained today.

On page 79 we are told,

The Bible evidence is clear and strong that the 'Times of the Gentiles' is a period of 2520 years from the year 606 BC up to and including AD 1914. This lease of universal dominion to Gentile governments, as we have already seen, began with Nebuchadnezzar – not when his reign began, but when the typical kingdom of the Lord passed away, and the dominion of the whole world was left in the hands of the Gentiles. The date for the beginning of the Gentile Times is, therefore, definitely marked as at the time of the removal of the crown of God's typical kingdom, from Zedekiah, their last king. ... With these facts before us, we readily find the date for the beginning of the Gentile Times of dominion, for the first year of the reign of Cyrus is a very clearly fixed date – both secular and religious histories with marked unanimity agreeing with Ptolemy's Canon, which places it BC 536. And if BC 536 was the year in which the seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation ended and the restoration of the Jews began, it follows that their kingdom was over-thrown just seventy years before BC 536, i.e., 536 plus 70, or BC 606. This gives us the date of the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles – BC 606.

I will continue to quote from Russell's work and as points requiring examination appear, I will number them for later consideration, points here are :

1. 1st year of: Cyrus 536 BC?
2. Overthrow of Kingdom 70 years before restoration?

On page 87 we are counselled to

“bear in mind the date already found for the beginning of these Gentile Times – viz., BC 606 – while we proceed to examine the evidence proving their length to be 2520 years, ending AD 1914.”

Then the punishment mentioned in Leviticus is referred to at page 88,

“Then I will punish you seven times more (further) for your sins.” – Lev. 26:17, 18, 24, 28. These seven times therefore refer to the length of time during which the Gentiles should rule over them. And to this period of ‘seven times’ our Lord undoubtedly referred when speaking of ‘the Times of the Gentiles.’” (Luke 21:24.)

Pages 92 and 93 claim that “The world is witness to the fact that Israel's punishment under the dominion of the Gentiles has been continuous since BC 606, that it still continues, and that there is no reason to expect their national re-organization sooner than AD 1914, the limit of their ‘seven times’ – 2520 years.”

Concerning the 7 times, we are advised on page 93, under the heading, “Another Line of Testimony” that,

Another view of the Gentile Times is presented by Daniel Chapter 4.

If we read Daniel 4, we find that the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, suffered a period of madness and lived with the Beasts of the field for a period of seven times. On page 96 Russell claims,

The degradation of Nebuchadnezzar was typical of human degradation under beastly governments during seven symbolic times or years – a year for a day, 2520 years – from his day onward. And be it observed that this corresponds exactly with the seven times foretold upon Israel, which as we have just seen, end AD 1914.

Consideration 3 then, should be. The seven times, Are they a period of punishment upon Israel and at the same time a period of domination by Gentile Governments? If so, is it legitimate to claim that this period extends over 2520 years?

A few more quotations from Russell and then we can proceed to examine the basis for the Society's 1914 teaching and observe how it evolved.

page 245. “the forty years of the Gospel age harvest will end October 1914, and that likewise the overthrow of ‘Christendom’, so-called, must be expected to immediately follow.”

page 242. “The ‘Gentile Times’ prove that the present governments must all be overturned about the close of AD 1914.”

page 170. “In the preceding chapter we presented evidence showing that the ‘Times of the Gentiles’, or their lease of domination, will run fully out with the year AD 1914, and that at that time they will all be overturned and Christ's Kingdom fully established.”

page 99. “In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished near the end of AD 1915”

page 101. “the ‘battle of the great day of God Almighty’ (Rev. 16:14), which will end in AD 1915, with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced.”

This gives us a brief outline of what the Society expected and it is not necessary to comment on these quotations. The Watchtower of 1907 page 295, summed up the Society's attitude to the Chronology by asking,

But let us suppose a case far from our expectations: suppose that AD 1915 should pass with the world's affairs all serene and with evidence that the 'very elect' had not all been 'changed' and without the restoration of natural Israel to favour under the New Covenant (Rom. 11:12, 15). What then? Would not that prove our chronology wrong? Yes, surely! (*This article was reprinted in The Watchtower, 15th December 1913, pages 374 and 375.*)

Of course 1915 AD did pass without all these events taking place, so did not that prove the Chronology wrong? Yes, surely! When the War started in 1914, it would be reasonable for Russell and his followers to consider this to be the great trouble that they were expecting, however it was NOT, and the expectations of Russell have now been virtually all dropped. BUT 1914 has been maintained and the prophecies of the Bible have been maintained, but they have been re-arranged to fit in with the history of the Society and events since that date.

By no stretch of the imagination can the 1st World War and the trouble Russell was expecting to wind everything up in 1914 or 1915 be construed as being the same event. And yet it was in 1914 not evidently different, as is so obvious today. So we cannot blame Russell and Co. too much for the Straw that they grasped at. Nevertheless it was mere coincidence that this insignificant little group arrived at 1914 for the end of the "Gentile Times", the same year as the World War. Don't take my word for this, for the following chapters will prove this beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Before passing from our review of Pastor Russell's 1914, we note the interesting comment on the War which appears on page 327, The Watchtower, November 1, 1914. (After the War had commenced.)

This leads us to expect that the remaining prophetic periods will have a similar fulfilment, and that September 20 of this year, 1914, probably marked the end of the Gentile Times. If so, what we are witnessing now amongst the nations is a conflict to their finish. This is exactly what we should expect. Evidently the Lord is behind the matter; the Lord's Kingdom will manifest itself more and more. ... we might expect the transition to run on a good many years. We might expect it to be five, ten or twenty years. But there is something on the other hand that leads us to anticipate that it will not be very long. The Lord has told us that He will make a short work of it. ... It was in the year following the expiration of forty years of the Jewish Harvest that the end of the Jewish polity came – at the destruction of their city.

And so the parallels would lead us to suppose that one year from the present time would finish this short parallel period, this great work of disaster upon the world, the overthrow of the nations and usher in Messiah's Kingdom.

Evidently at this time 1915 still retained its same place.

CHAPTER TWO. 536 BC OR NOT 536 BC? THAT IS THE QUESTION

Russell demonstrated again his dependence upon Ptolemy's Canon on page 51 of Vol. 2, Studies in the Scriptures,

The period from the time of the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, at the close of the seventy years desolation of their land, in the first year of Cyrus, down to the date known as AD 1, is not covered by Bible history. But, as before stated, it is well established by secular history as a period of 536 years. Ptolemy, a learned Greek-Egyptian, a geometer and astronomer, has well established these figures. They are generally accepted by scholars and known as Ptolemy's Canon.

The unfortunate part about all this is that Ptolemy's Canon does NOT give 536 BC as the 1st year of Cyrus. (See the "Appendix B: Ptolemy's Canon" which shows Cyrus' year 1 to have been 538 BC). Now, if Russell had commenced his 2520 years from 538 BC he obviously would not have arrived at 1914 AD. Why did Russell say that the year was 536 BC? I am sure that what follows provides the solution.

On page 67 of the same Volume of Russell's writings, he mentions "Dr. Hales' work on chronology." Dr. Hales' work is entitled A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy. The second edition of 4 volumes was published in 1830. Hales gives considerable information on the Canon of Ptolemy and on page 168 he comments, "the Canon dates the accession of Cyrus ... 538 BC." On pages 166 and 167 he discussed an adjustment made by Historians to Ptolemy's Canon to make Cyrus' first year 536 BC. This was performed out of respect for the Scriptures, but Hales explains this, so I quote from his page 166:

It must, however, be acknowledged that accurate as authentic copies of the Canon unquestionably are everywhere else in this single period: a small correction is necessary to accommodate it to Scripture; for, according to the Canon, from the first of Nabokolassar or Nebuchadnezzar, BC 604, to the first of Cyrus, BC 538, is an interval of only 66 years; and therefore, if the Captivity began, in the end of the third, or or commencement of the fourth year of Jehoiakim, BC 605, Dan, 1:1; 2 Kings XXIV:1; Jer XXV:1; from thence, to the accession of Cyrus, was only 67 years complete, or 68 current.

On page 167 he says,

Chronologers Scalinger, Petavius, Usher, Prideaux, Jackson &c. have adopted this interpolation as indispensably necessary to reconcile the Canon to Holy Writ, which is effectually done thereby; for from the commencement of the Captivity, BC 605, to the corrected first of Cyrus, BC 536 is 69 years complete, or 70 years current.

The interesting point here is that Cyrus' 1st year was changed to 536 BC to make it 70 years current from 605 BC, which was regarded as the beginning of the 70 years. A perusal of Dan. 1:1; 2 Kings 24:1 and Jer. 25:1 as cited by Hales makes it obvious that the 70 years were regarded by these Chronologists as commencing at the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and not in his 19th year as insisted on by Russell and the Society today. The ironical part is that Russell utilized the date 536 BC, which was calculated from the date 605 BC which Russell positively would not accept. He counted 70 years back from 536 BC to 606 BC which he then claimed was Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year, and then 2520 years forward to 1914.

The plain unadulterated truth is that Russell made a definite error here. Although he arrived at 1914 AD, surely the Society is not justified in making the point that its publications had pointed to that date years before 1914, e.g. NS page 305,

As far back as 1877 the book Three Worlds and The Harvest of This World, of which C. T. Russell was the co-publisher said ... 'Hence, it

was in BC 606, that God's kingdom ended, the diadem was removed, and all the earth given up to the Gentiles. 2520 years from BC 606, will end in AD 1914, or forty years from 1874. ... Besides repeated reference to AD 1914 in the Watch Tower magazine, the book The Time is at Hand, published in 1889, dealt with the subject at length, in its Study IV, entitled 'The Times of the Gentiles.'

If Russell had commenced with 538 BC as the 1st year of Cyrus, he would have counted back 70 years to 608 BC, and then 2520 years forward to 1912 AD. But this is not the only blunder that Charles Taze Russell made. He was wrong on several other points related to this same doctrine, two of them have been discussed by the Society and their comments on them are, to say the least, very revealing.

The Zero Year

The Watchtower of May 1st, 1952, comments on page 271,

At this point some will enquire why Charles T Russell in 1877 used the date 606 BC for the fall of Jerusalem whereas The Watchtower of late years has been using 607 BC This is because, in the light of modern scholarship, two slight errors were discovered to have been made which cancel each other out and make for the same result, namely 1914. Concerning the first error, Russell and others considered 1 BC to AD 1 as being two years whereas in fact this is only one year because, as has been said above, there is no 'zero' year in the BC-AD system for counting years.

This statement is definitely misleading because Russell was aware that he may not be correct in counting the zero but he suggested no alteration to 606 BC. If the zero year was not counted, he suggested that it would push the concluding date of his 2520 years forward to 1915. (Not the commencing date back to 607 BC). The following is a quotation from The Watchtower 1st December, 1912.

Coming now to a very critical examination of the date 536 BC, there is an open question: Shall we call it 536 full years to AD or 535 full years? The difference in time between October 1st and January 1st would be the fourth of a year; hence our query is respecting $536\frac{1}{4}$ or $535\frac{1}{4}$ years BC. What is the proper method of calculation, is in dispute. If we count the first year BC as 0, then the date $536\frac{1}{4}$ BC is the proper one for the end of the seventy years of captivity. But if we begin to reckon it by counting the first year before the Christian era as BC 1, then evidently the desolation ended $535\frac{1}{4}$ years BC.

As to the methods of counting, Encyclopaedia Britannica says, "Astronomers denote the year which preceded the first of our era as 0 and the year previous to that as BC -1, the previous year BC -2, and so on."

Whichever of these ways we undertake to calculate the matter the difference between the results is one year. The seventy years of Jewish captivity ended October, 536 BC, and if there were $536\frac{1}{4}$ years BC, then to complete the 2,520 years' cycle of the Times of the Gentiles would require $1913\frac{3}{4}$ years of AD, or to October, 1914. But if the other way of reckoning were used, then there were but $535\frac{1}{4}$ years of the period BC and the remainder of the 2,520 years would reach to AD 1914 $\frac{3}{4}$ years, otherwise October, 1915. (Emphasis supplied.)

A little further on in this article it was stated,

Many of our readers will recall our reference to this subject in a sermon preached at Allegheny, PA, January 11, 1904, and published in the Pittsburgh Gazette. We make an extract from that sermon as follows:

We find, then, that the Seven Times of Israel's punishment and the Seven Times of Gentile dominion are the same; and that they began with the captivity of Zedekiah, and as will be seen from the Chart, they terminate with the year 1915. According to the best obtainable evidences on the subject, synchronized with the Scriptural testimony, Zedekiah's captivity took place in October, 605¼ years before AD 1. If we will add to this 1914¾ years, we will have the year October 1915 as the date for the end of Gentile supremacy in the world ...

There surely is room for slight differences of opinion on this subject and it behoves us to grant each other the widest latitude. The lease of power to the Gentiles may end in October 1914 or in October 1915. And the period of intense strife and anarchy 'such as never was since there was a nation' may be the final ending of the Gentile Times or the beginning of Messiah's reign.

Russell knew about the zero year alright but was not as concerned to preserve 1914 as the Society is. As we shall continue to see, the Society is prepared to move Heaven and Earth, but it will not move from 1914.

When the Society makes the misleading statement that "Russell and others considered 1 BC to AD 1 as being two years", it does not tell us who the others were. Doubtless there were others but it cannot be considered for a moment that ALL others made such an error. Russell had at least access to Hales' work and he could have found on page 57 of Vol.1, advice that no zero year should have been counted.

We have conclusive proof that the Society's attributing an error to Russell concerning the zero year is not true. The Society is only using this as an excuse to justify its adjustment of 536 BC to 537 BC. It knew that something would have to be done to get over the zero year problem. It could either alter the terminal date 1914 to 1915 as Russell suggested, or push 536 back to 537. This would not interfere with 1914 and so this was what was done. It was not "because, in the light of modern scholarship, two slight errors were discovered to have been made which cancel each other out and make for the same result, namely 1914."

Just while we are on this point, Russell makes further reference to Hales on page 67 of Vol. 2 of Studies in the Scriptures. He refers to Hales as giving the true date of Nehemiah's commission as 454 BC. (See also BF page 387.) Now the Society used to count the 69 weeks of Daniel 9:25 from 454 BC and arrive at AD 29 as the year of the appearance of the Messiah. (See BF page 388.)

When the Society decided it must no longer count the zero year, it also had to amend the count of the 69 weeks. The overall situation was that it could make 1914, 1915 and AD 29, AD 30, or as an alternative it could shift 606 BC back to 607 BC and consequently 536 BC back to 537 BC, and also 454 BC back to 455 BC. Then AD 1914 and AD 29 would be maintained. BF page 387 bears witness to the fact that 454 BC was changed to 455 BC, and as far as I have been able to ascertain no excuse has ever been offered in order to justify this change. The reason is obvious, it was the Zero Year.

The 536 BC to 537 BC Juggle

We recall that The Watchtower of 1st May 1952, page 271, claimed that "in the light of modern scholarship, two slight errors were discovered to have been made which cancel each other out and make for the same result, namely 1914." We found that "modern scholarship" wasn't necessary to bring to the light facts on the zero year, for Hales work was written about 50 years prior to those of

Russell. And besides Russell was aware of the problem apparently as far back as 1904. The Watchtower continued,

The second error had to do with not beginning the count of the 2,520 years at the right point in view of historic facts and circumstances.

This claimed error is explained in more precise terms on page 94 of The Watchtower, February 1st, 1955.

Jehovah's witness from 1877 up to and including the publishing of 'The Truth Shall Make You Free' of 1943 considered 536 BC as the year for the return of the Jews to Palestine, basing their calculations for the fall of Babylon on secular histories that were inaccurate, not up to date on archaeological evidences. This meant that Jeremiah's seventy years of desolation for Jerusalem ran back from 536 BC, to 606 BC, instead of more correctly as now known from 537 BC, to 607 BC

The Truth Shall Make You Free, contends on page 151 that

It is well established that two years after the overthrow of Babylon in 538 BC, by Darius the Mede and his nephew, Cyrus the Persian, the first year of Cyrus' exclusive rule began, which year was 536 BC

During the following year, the book The Kingdom Is At Hand was published (1944). This stated on page 195,

According to the most accurate histories, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, his nephew, jointly took the capital of the Babylonian empire in 539 BC After Darius' brief rule there, Cyrus came to power in 537 BC.

It is now considered by the Society that Cyrus came to power late in the year 538 BC (see BF page 366). As will be shown later, the Society makes many contradictory statements on the matter. It should be noted that Babylonian Chronology 626 BC-AD 45 by Parker and Dubberstein was first published in 1942 and this was no doubt the source from which the Society suddenly discovered the correct date 539 BC for the fall of Babylon. (See "Appendix C: Absolute Dates.")

Page 239 of The Truth Shall Make You Free does not contain much truth but it does provide some very interesting reading. First of all I will quote the section concerned and then we can analyse it.

In Nebuchadnezzar's time, the year began counting from the fall of the year, or about October 1 our time. Since he destroyed Jerusalem in the summer of 606 BC, that year had its beginning in the fall of 607 BC, and its ending in the fall of 606 BC

Inasmuch as the count of the Gentile, 'seven times' began its first year at the fall of 607 BC, it is simple to calculate when they end. From the fall of 607 BC to the fall of BC is exactly 606 years. From the fall of BC 1 to the fall of AD 1 is one year, do not forget. Hence from the fall of BC 1 to the fall of AD 1914 is 1,914 years. Add now 606 years and 1,914 years, and the sum total is 2,520 years, ending in the fall of AD 1914.

I said the quotation was interesting and in case the significance of my statement has not become apparent to you, I will summarise my reasons for saying so.

1. Note the comment that, "In Nebuchadnezzar's time the year began counting from the fall of the year." This statement is not strictly correct, for in Babylon the year began in Spring (Nisan). However in Judah two methods of observing the year were practiced. One calculation beginning in Nisan (similar to Babylon) and the other commencing in Tishri

(Fall). I will later call attention to the Society's recognition of the Tishri Calendar (see "Appendix A: The Tishri Calendar").

2. The fact that from 1 BC to 1 AD is only 1 year was acknowledged. However, 536 BC and 606 BC were still maintained. The slight error (zero year) was cancelled out in another way. At this stage the compensation juggle of 536 to 537 had not been made.
3. Instead of counting the 2520 years from what the Society claims to have been the desolation of Judah, Tishri in 606 BC (which as Russell pointed out would conclude the Gentile Times in AD 1915), it was claimed "that year had its beginning in the fall of 607 BC" and the 2520 years were counted from the beginning of the year in which Jerusalem was destroyed. (For today's commencing date at the destruction, see SI page 284). This is a further clear case of juggling in order to maintain that year.
4. We have a sample of the Society's recognition of the system commonly referred to as "Inclusive Reckoning." The period of Gentile domination on the above basis would have been only 2519 years plus 2 months. (See later for further comments on "Inclusive Reckoning" and the Society's recognition of this system of reckoning.)
5. It should be evident why the Society had to say a Tishri calendar was used (see point 1). If the Society said that a Nisan calendar had been used, it would have been impossible to throw the commencement of the year from 606 BC back into 607 BC, for Nisan began in approx. April and therefore the beginning of the year in which the month Tishri was situated in 606 BC if the calendar beginning in Nisan was used, was Nisan 606 BC.

N.B. If the count began when the Society says the land became desolate (as it does today), it would not have been possible to throw the beginning date back into 607 BC either, for Tishri was the commencing month of the New Year under the fall-to-fall calendar. (See BF page 166.)

It cannot be disputed that much juggling was necessary, but at least as far as the Society was concerned, 1914 was saved. All this though was obviously a most unsatisfactory set-up, so in the following year (1944) when The Kingdom Is At Hand was published the compensating slight error was discovered and 536 BC was made 537 BC. This allowed 606 BC to become 607 BC with less difficulty.

How legitimate was this switch? Is it actually true that the Jews returned to Judah in 537 BC and not in 536 BC? The plain truth is that it is not known with any certainty which is the correct year. Some give the year as 538 BC, some 537 BC, and some 536 BC. Professor Joseph P Free, Professor of Bible and Archaeology at Wheaton College., Illinois, U.S.A, commences chapter 21 of his book Archaeology and Bible History (1962 Edition), "The Return From Exile, 536-458 BC" on page 237, "the actual return must have gotten under way at least by 537 or 536 BC".

The Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia (1956) says on page 232, "536 Edict of Cyrus and end of Babylonian Exile".

These statements would indicate that it was NOT necessary to switch 536 to 537 BC, except to compensate for the zero year which was no longer counted.

After an intense study of this period of Jewish and Babylonian History, I was unable to locate any record of recent archaeological discoveries that would tend to support the switch of dates. Remember that the Society said that 536 BC was based on "secular histories that were inaccurate, not up to date on archaeological evidences."

I wondered at this statement at the time because the Society has shown no inclination to alter any of its other dates because of "archaeological evidences" and yet it seemed anxious to amend 536 BC. So I wrote, querying what the new evidence was? To my surprise, I received advice that it was the "Nabonidus Chronicle". The letter dated October 19, 1964 advises that "Years ago this information was not available and so up until 1943 Jehovah's servants considered 536 BC as the year of the return of the Jews to Palestine". It is certainly true that years ago "this information was not available", but it

was available long before 1943 when the Society suddenly discovered the error that they claim compensates the zero year.

SI page 282 reports,

A prominent event recorded both in the Bible and in pagan secular history is the overthrow of the city of Babylon by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus. The Bible records this event at Daniel 5:30. The pagan record was made by King Nabonidus, and it has been dated by him in what is known as the Nabonidus Chronicle, discovered in 1879 and now preserved in the British Museum, London. (See also SI page 335.)

John C Whitcomb Jr. advised on page 20 of his book Darius The Mede, “the Nabonidus Chronicle was first published by Theophilus G Pinches in TSBA, VII (1882).”

It is true that the year for the fall of Babylon used to be given as 536 BC and later as 538 BC, but as has been demonstrated above, the Society gained the year 536 BC for the return to Judah by an error in calculating the first year of Cyrus. The “Nabonidus Chronicle” has not changed the first year of Cyrus and there is no valid reason to shift from 536 BC. If it were not for the fact that the removal of the zero year needed to be compensated, the Society would still assert that the return took place in 536 BC

Before what I have quoted from Hales work becomes too stale in your mind, notice that he and all the other Chronologists that he mentions were prepared to amend the years of the reign of Cyrus, but they did not interfere with those of Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, Russell intended to maintain Cyrus’ reign but relocate that of Nebuchadnezzar.

This raises a very interesting question. In the light of the knowledge we now have of this period of Ancient History, is the reign of Cyrus positively fixed and that of Nebuchadnezzar uncertain? (The Society obviously would have us believe this for it maintains the location of Cyrus’ reign and unhesitatingly shifts that of Nebuchadnezzar.) The answer is No! Both reigns are quite positively fixed but there is more evidence to support the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. (See “Appendix C: Absolute Dates.”)

We have noted the shift by the Society of 536 BC to 537 BC for the year of the return to Judah by the Jews. Therefore we have yet the interesting task of examining the Society’s evidence for 537 BC and the prospects for 536 BC.

The Watchtower and 537 BC

2 Chronicles 36:22, 23 and Ezra 1:1-4 contain the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return to their native land, which is dated the 1st year of Cyrus.

BF page 364 commences a discussion of this historic event and on page 366 we are confronted with a very confusing section concerning the 1st year of Cyrus and the 1st year of Darius the Mede. We are informed that the Society is prepared to “accept from secular historians the year 539 BC as a fixed date marking the downfall of Babylon.” SI page 282 provides the date, which was October 11-12, 539 BC

BF page 366 continues,

But the Bible introduces immediately after the fall of Babylon in that year of 539 BC, the reign at Babylon of Darius the Mede (Daniel 5:30, 31). The prophet Daniel, who was there at Babylon, speaks of the “first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes, who had been made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 9:1; 11:1; 6: 1, 6, 9, 25, 28). In harmony with the Bible, we must accept at least one year, with possibly part of a second year for King Darius the Mede. Hence, at the earliest the first year of King

Cyrus the Persian may not have begun till late in the year 538 BC, to extend over into the following year of 537 BC.

We read in SI:

When a king succeeded to the throne, the intervening months until the next spring month of Nisan were referred to as his Accession year, during which he filled out the regnal term of rulership for his predecessor. However, his own official regnal term was counted as beginning on the next Nisan 1. (SI page 283.)

In view of this statement, the period from Oct. 11-12, 539 BC to Nisan 1st 538 BC would be Darius' "accession year." From Nisan 538 BC to Nisan 537 BC would be his 1st "regnal year". If he reigned part of a 2nd year this would extend from Nisan 537 BC to Nisan 536 BC. If Cyrus acceded to the throne during this year, the period to Nisan 536 BC would be his "accession year" and then to Nisan 535 BC would be his first regnal year.

Compare this analysis with the statement on page 366 of BF:

Hence, at the earliest, the first year of King Cyrus the Persian may not have begun till late in the year 538 BC to extend over into the following year of 537 BC.

Even if Darius reigned during just a part of one "regnal year", we could shift Cyrus' 1st regnal year not further back than one year (from Nisan 537 BC to Nisan 536 BC). Obviously there is something inconsistent with the Society's statements.

SI page 8 adds to the confusion by advising that "in the following year beginning in March 538, Cyrus began his first complete regnal year." (March 24th, 538 BC was Nisan 1st.) Page 335 insists that "secular history definitely establishes that Cyrus was a key figure in the conquest of Babylon and that thereafter ruled there as king." This AGAIN contradicts BF. (See also The Watchtower 1st February 1964, page 80 and The Watchtower 1st May 1952, page 271.)

On page 364 of BF, several authorities are quoted as giving the year 537 BC as the year of the return. Without doubt all of these authorities would utilise the cuneiform inscriptions in their calculations. BF page 367 suggests that these contradict the Bible by saying, "if we proceed according to the cuneiform inscriptions rather than the Bible, we have to take the position that Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian reigned concurrently for a time." BF suggests that Darius ruled prior to Cyrus yet it uses those who would not agree with this to support their date. YW says on page 119, "Cyrus the Great who reigned jointly for a time with his uncle Darius the Mede."

One feels entitled to enquire how these amendments can be made without the date 537 BC being affected?

The view that Darius the Mede was an uncle of Cyrus is an old one and is based largely upon the statements of the ancient Greek Historian Xenophon in his Cyropaedia. This identification makes Cyaxares II, the uncle of Cyrus, Darius the Mede. There are several strong objections to all of the suggested identifications of Darius and this one is no exception, but it cannot be discarded from the list of possibles.

Whatever the identity of Darius the Mede may really have been, it is possible that Daniel and Ezra, or even the Jews in general, reckoned the reigns of Darius and Cyrus to have been successive, even though the Babylonian Documents recognise only Cyrus. Daniel 6:28 can be taken to support successive reigns and Daniel 9:1 mentioning the 1st year of Darius and Daniel 1:21 referring to the 1st year of Cyrus, can be interpreted as applying to different years.

As has been adequately demonstrated, if the reigns were successive, the Society's Chronology cannot stand. It would now appear that the Society favours a different identification for Darius the Mede, for it now asks,

Who was this Darius? There is yet some difficulty in proving this in the uninspired pagan cuneiform inscriptions and other historical

writings. But the argument is strong that he was the same as Cyrus' governor named Gubaru. (BF page 239, where the footnote refers to chapter 7 of Darius the Mede by John C. Whitcomb, Jr.)

If Darius was Cyrus' Governor, why shouldn't we take the position that Darius and Cyrus reigned concurrently for a time? If Darius was Cyrus' Governor, we have Cyrus who was the Sovereign of the Persian Empire and Darius who was made by Cyrus ruler over the kingdom of Belshazzar. (Daniel 5: 30-31; 9:1.)

Because Daniel dated some events in Cyrus' reign and some in that of Darius does not necessarily require successive rulerships. We have something of an analogy in the case of Belshazzar and Nabonidus who were co-regents. It should be noted however that Daniel dated events only in the name of Belshazzar. Daniel 6: 28 does not necessarily suggest that there was not a dual reign. There are no legitimate reasons for dogmatically refusing to accept that Cyrus and Darius reigned concurrently, for this is also a possibility. Of course Darius would have been subordinate to Cyrus and so the cuneiform inscriptions would date business transactions in the years of Cyrus' reign, and they do.

There is no difficulty in ascertaining how the authorities that the Society quotes arrive at 537 BC. According to the cuneiform inscriptions, Cyrus' accession year extended to Nisan 538 BC, when his 1st regnal year commenced. Seeing that according to Ezra 1:1-4, the decree by Cyrus permitting the Jews to return to their homeland was issued in his 1st year, the return on the basis of this arrangement must have been possible some time in the period Nisan 538 BC – Nisan 537 BC. It is assumed that the journey was made in Spring of 537 BC (See BF page 367), so that when the 7th Jewish Month Tishri began, the people had resettled in Judah (BF page 371). The Society wants to squeeze a lone reign by Darius the Mede into all this but it still wants to maintain these dates. All this is according to the reconstructed Babylonian Calendar, which dated the years of a King from Nisan-to-Nisan.

Prospects for 536 BC

Another question that the Society has failed to deal with is "Who said that Ezra used the Babylonian (or Persian) Calendar?" There is no evidence to prove that Ezra used the Nisan Calendar, but there is evidence to suggest that he more likely used the Jewish Calendar that extended from the 7th Month Tishri-to-Tishri. Here I must digress for a while to offer reasons for this statement.

The Society accepts that Ezra wrote both books of Chronicles (SI page 75) and of course the book of "Ezra". So it was he who in fact tells us of the decree in Cyrus' 1st year. It accepts that Nehemiah wrote the book now bearing his name, but on page 88 of SI we have the interesting comment,

Originally, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were one book, called "Ezra". Later, the Jews divided the book into First and Second Ezra, and later still Second Ezra became known as Nehemiah.

But what has this to do with Ezra using a Tishri Calendar? Simply this. BF page 386 states quite unequivocally that

According to Nehemiah's reckoning of the lunar year, the year began with the month Tishri (which Jews today recognize as the beginning of their civil year) and ended with the month Elul as the twelfth month.

On this use of the Tishri-to-Tishri Calendar by Bible writers, see "Appendix A: The Tishri Calendar."

As Nehemiah definitely used the Jewish calendar beginning in Tishri, is it not just as likely that Ezra his contemporary also used this calendar? As was the case with Nehemiah, Ezra wrote for the benefit of Jews in Judah. So he surely would not restrict himself to the Calendar of the Babylonians.

The above-mentioned "Appendix" article indicates that papyri found at Elephantine in Egypt suggests the use of a calendar commencing in Tishri in Ezra's time. The nationalistic spirit existing in the recently re-established state of Judah would surely have inspired Ezra to utilise its Calendar system in lieu of that of the Persian Empire or Babylon.

Can you imagine yourself going to Jerusalem today and trying to converse with everyone in English when you knew the native tongue? If not, then can you imagine Ezra writing for Jews in Judah using the Babylonian and Persian Calendar when the natives of Judah used a different Calendar? If your answer is No! then you will also agree that the evidence is in favour of Ezra using a Tishri-to-Tishri Calendar.

Viewing the reign of Cyrus then, and noting that his reign over Babylon could commence only after he conquered it in Tishri of 539 BC, Ezra could have counted the period to Tishri 538 BC as his “accession year”. His first year on this basis would extend to Tishri 537 BC.

Ezra doesn’t tell us exactly when Cyrus gave his decree, he merely confines it to his 1st year. Therefore, the decree could have been issued just prior to Tishri, about Autumn of 537 BC.

I suggested a moment ago, doing some imagining. Could I suggest again that you now imagine yourself as one of the Jews in Babylon. Of course, only a portion of the Jews chose to return. Daniel for instance, even though he had prayed for the restoration (Daniel 9:1-19) chose to remain in Babylon. However, you are a Jew who wishes to return, perhaps you are one who became one of the leaders such as Shesh-bazzar (Ezra 1:11) or Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2).

You have a long and dangerous journey ahead of you. BF page 296: “Measured by travel routes and travel time away back in those days, that city was far away, say a land journey of four or five months.” Ezra tells us that it took him 4 months to make the trip (Ezra 7:8, 9).

What would you do? There are thousands of people to get together, there are preparations to be made. You’re going back to a ruined land which will afford little shelter for the people until repairs have been carried out. There are no crops, so food will present a problem. And what about the Winter, only weeks away? The obvious thing for you to do would be to make preparations during the Winter. Yes! be all ready by Spring. This will allow you ample time for your 4 or 5 month journey and to get accommodation settled for all those people when you get there. Crops of course are of prime importance so you will also make sure that they are in and all this before the Autumn rains.

You will have to agree that all of this is the only reasonable arrangement if the decree was issued late in Cyrus’ 1st year on the basis of the Tishri Calendar and if his accession year was reckoned by Ezra to have commenced in 539 BC. As no one can say that it wasn’t, this arrangement must be regarded as a definite possibility.

As will be realised later on when the 70 years is discussed, 536 BC is almost certainly the correct year, for from 605 BC to 536 BC is 70 years according to the system commonly called “Inclusive Reckoning” which was so often employed by the Jews.

The dates would then be:

Decree Cyrus’ 1st year 538 – 537 BC

Return in Spring (about Nisan 536 BC) 537 – 536 BC

Having set out in Nisan of 536 BC, you would arrive in Jerusalem during, say Ab, the 5th Month. You would then have time to repair dwellings and prepare fields and plant crops before the Autumn rains.

Ezra 3:1 proves that the Jews arrived before the 7th Month (Tishri) began and gathered to Jerusalem before the 7th Month began for, as can be seen by the Chart on SI page 280, this was the first Month containing Festival dates since they arrived home. And what a Month. In many respects this was the most sacred Month of the Year. Notice that of the eight Festivals listed in SI page 280, four were held in Tishri.

Just two points of explanation before concluding this section.

1. It might be argued that the 7th Month of Ezra 3:1 refers to the 7th Month of Cyrus’ 1st year, whereas according to the arrangement disclosed above it would be the 7th Month in the Year of the return. I just want to say that the Scripture in its context refers to the 7th Month and obviously relates to the year of the return. If the year of the return was not the 1st of Cyrus, then neither was the 7th Month. As the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (1907)

says, when discussing this verse, “Probably the 7th month in the first year of the Return, since the next recorded date (ver. 8) is the 2nd month ‘in the second year of their coming unto the house of God’.”

2. Edwin R. Thiele states on page 31 of The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings,

In the Hebrew scriptures, the months are numbered from Nisan, regardless of whether the reckoning of the year was from the spring or fall.

Therefore Tishri was still called the 7th Month in Ezra 3:1 even though it was still called the beginning of the New Year. (See also D. N. Freedman, The Bible and the Ancient Near East, page 31.)

Taking all of the Society’s statements into consideration, we cannot escape the conclusion that if Cyrus and Darius the Mede did reign during separate periods, the return took place in the year 536 BC. No matter what the circumstances were, 536 BC is stamped as the possible and probable year.

CHAPTER THREE. OVERTHROW OF KINGDOM 70 YEARS BEFORE RESTORATION?

In Russell's day the overthrow of the Kingdom of Judah was dated by the Society as taking place in 606 BC, and the return was said to have been an event of 536 BC. Today it is 607 BC and 537 BC.

I have already quoted Dr. Hales as saying "chronologers, Scalinger, Petavius, Usher, Prideaux, Jackson &c" made an adjustment to Ptolemy's Canon "to reconcile the Canon to Holy Writ, which is effectually done thereby; for from the commencement of the Captivity, BC 605 to the corrected first of Cyrus BC 536 is 69 year complete, or 70 years Current".

There can be no doubt then that these men were quite satisfied that the dates 605 BC and 536 BC were fully in harmony with the Scriptures. Russell did not accept this arrangement, in fact it may be assumed that he didn't even know what they had done, for it is evident that he did not absorb other information provided by Hales and he may have only selected a few dates from his work.

606 BC is not much different to 605 BC, and at first glance it may seem that there is only one year between the two dates. We can see, however, that there is approx 20 years difference when we again refer to Russell's writings. Studies in the Scriptures Vol 2 again and on page 52 Russell said:

Usher dates the seventy years desolation eighteen years earlier than shown above i.e. before the dethronement of Zedekiah, Judah's last king – because the king of Babylon took many of the people captive at that time (2 Chron 36:9, 10, 17, 21; 2 King 24:8-16). He evidently made the not uncommon mistake of regarding those seventy years as the period of captivity, whereas the Lord expressly declares them to be seventy years of desolation of the land, that the land should lie "desolate without an inhabitant". Such was not the case prior to Zedekiah's dethronement.

587 BC or 586 BC? That is Another Question

Before proceeding further, I will clear up the point mentioned concerning Usher commencing the 70 years 18 years prior to the dethronement of Zedekiah. I will have to be excused for speculating here, but Usher apparently considered that the destruction of Jerusalem took place in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar, at least 18 years from the Battle of Carchemish (Jer 46:2). My purpose in explaining this is to enlighten those who may wonder why some historians date the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC and some in 586 BC.

The problem is very briefly this. Jeremiah 52:28, 29 date a captivity in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar and again in his 18th year. 2 Kings 24:12 refers to a captivity in his 8th year while 2 Kings 25:8 dates a captivity in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year.

Some seek to explain that the captivity of the 7th and 8th years were the same, as were those referred to as the 18th and 19th years (e.g., the Society, see BF page 137.) Some historians say that the destruction really took place in 587 BC, in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year.

As Nebuchadnezzar was leading the Babylonian army while his father was apparently ill, a year before he actually became King, he was recognised by some as King a year earlier, therefore his 19th was really 18th. Others say that the 19th year is counted without an "accession year." Yet others say that the Captivities of the 7th and 18th years were minor captivities. This seems very likely to be the solution, because when we compare the captives taken according to Jeremiah 52:28 with 2 Kings 24:14-16 and the captives of Jeremiah 52:29 with 2 Kings 25:11, we find a vast discrepancy. Surely, the captivities mentioned by Jeremiah cannot be the major events recorded in 2 Kings!

It is agreed by all Historians that the question must remain unsettled until further evidence such as "Babylonian Chronicles" (same as the Nabonidus Chronicle) which cover the periods are discovered. The use of a Nisan Calendar would suggest 587 BC, whereas a Tishri Calendar would recommend a date in 586 BC, but all this is really outside the field of our discussion. It is really an unsolved problem similar to 537 BC or 536 BC. Which?

Back to Russell's charge concerning Usher:

He evidently made the not uncommon mistake of regarding those seventy years as the period of captivity, whereas the Lord expressly declares them to be seventy years of desolation of the land, that the land should lie "desolate without an inhabitant". Such was not the case prior to Zedekiah's enthronement.

Hales said the 70 years began in 605 BC, which is approx 18 or 19 years before Nebuchadnezzar dethroned Zedekiah, and if it was not uncommon to calculate in this manner in Russell's day, it is just as common today.

On the other hand, the Society still follows Russell in this matter and considers all others to be in error. BF page 372:

Since we have determined the year and the month in which the desolation ended, it is simple mathematics calculate when the desolation began upon the land of Judah. All we have to do is measure back seventy years, forasmuch as the desolation was foretold to last seventy years and it actually lasted seventy years. Seventy years back from the seventh month (Tishri) of the year 537 BC brings us to the month Tishri of the year 607 BC.

Inspection of "Appendix C: Absolute Dates" leaves us in no doubt as to the correct location of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The reign of Cyrus has nowhere near the incontestable evidence that is available to locate Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

Therefore the question immediately comes up, "If we have to have seventy years of Complete Desolation of Judah, would it not be more reasonable to accept the better attested dates and date the 70 years from 586 BC to 516 BC?" I have written to the Society on several occasions on the subject of Chronology, submitting this question along with others, but they were just brushed aside.

The Watchtower June 1, 1922, when discussing the Seventy Years' Desolation, mentions that if one considers that he has found error in the Society's teaching, he should "communicate with the Society, which could help". In the absence of assistance in my case, I can only consider that the Society was bluffing then or has changed its policy since. I have my opinion, for I know that the Society cannot answer many questions on this subject.

Why is it that Historians date the 70 years from 605 BC, when the land was still inhabited? Is it Scriptural to do this, or do they just ignore the Scriptures referring to the desolation?

I will have to first of all review what took place in Judah and Palestine from 605 BC onwards and then we can see if the 70 years from 605 BC – 536 BC is in harmony with the Holy Scriptures.

The Subjection of Judah by Babylon

Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar died in 605 BC, and consequently after becoming King, the remainder of the year was termed Nebuchadnezzar's "accession year".

His first "regal year" began on Nisan 1st 604 BC. In 1956, D J Wiseman, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum, published a translation of several newly discovered Babylonian Chronicles, Chronicles of Chaldean Kings in the British Museum (hereafter referred to as CCK).

These Chronicles are of the same type as the "Nabonidus Chronicle", and were hailed the World 'round, for these new Chronicles mention the Battle of Carchemish (Jer. 46:2), the death of Nabopolassar, the accession of Nebuchadnezzar, the capture of Jehoiachin, the setting up of Zedekiah as a "puppet King", and many more items of information that illuminate and confirm the Bible record. These tablets have been the subject of wide discussion among Scholars, and there have been articles on them in numerous Journals throughout the World. The Society however, has not so much as mentioned them.

It continues to speak in glowing terms of the “famous Nabonidus Chronicle” but it ignores the others. Why do you think this would be? The reason is obvious when it is realised that those Chronicles provide other “Absolute Dates” which contradict the Society’s arrangement. Those who know only what the Society teaches them still think that there is only one “Absolute Date” for the period. SI on page 282 continues to give only the 539 BC date for the fall of Babylon under the heading “Absolute Date for the Hebrew Scriptures.”

I cannot describe this action in any other way than to say it is dishonest. Why work back from 539 BC when two other “Absolute Dates” in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign are known with absolute certainty? (See “Appendix C: Absolute Dates.”) The answer is, of course, because the Society could not then maintain its Chronology leading to AD 1914.

The following is the translation on page 67 of CCK of the tablet identified as BM 21946.

1. In the twenty-first year, the king of Akkad stayed in his own land, Nebuchadnezzar his eldest son, the crown prince
2. mustered (the Babylonian army) and took command of his troops; he marched to Carchemish which is on the bank of the Euphrates,
3. and crossed the river (to go) against the Egyptian army which lay in Carchemish.
4. fought with each other and the Egyptian army withdrew before him.
5. He accomplished their defeat and to non-existence (beat?) them. As for the rest of the Egyptian army
6. which had escaped from the defeat (so quickly that) no weapon had reached them, in the district of Hamath
7. the Babylonian troops overtook and defeated them so that not a single man escaped to his own country.
8. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area of the Hatti-country.
9. For twenty-one years Nabopolassar had been king of Babylon.
10. On the 8th of the month of Ab he died (lit. ‘the fates’); in the month of Elul Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon
11. and on the first day of the month of Elul he sat on the royal throne in Babylon.”

The following is also a portion of the same tablet as translated on page 73 CCK:

11. In the seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched to the Hatti-land
12. and encamped against (i.e. besieged) the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king.
13. He appointed there a king of his own choice (lit. heart), received its heavy tribute and sent (them) to Babylon.

(Compare this with 2 Kings 2:10-17.)

On page 25, Wiseman comments, “the geographical term Hatti including at this period, the whole of Syria and Palestine.” Obviously it included Judah for we just read, “marched to the Hatti-land and encamped against (i.e. besieged) the city of Judah.”

We can determine by reference to “Appendix C: Absolute Dates” that Nebuchadnezzar’s 1st year commenced Nisan 1st 604 BC. Therefore it was during the previous year 605 BC that his father Nabopolassar died, and just prior to this Nebuchadnezzar had defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish.

Having this knowledge we are able to determine that Jeremiah 46:2 applies to the year 605 BC, for it too mentions the Battle of Carchemish and dates it the 4th year of Jehoiakim.

In chapter 25 verse 1, Jeremiah equates Jehoiakim’s 4th year with “the first year of Nebuchadnezzar.” Some may find a problem here for it is accepted that the Battle of Carchemish was in Nebuchadnezzar’s “accession year”. This too was Jehoiakim’s 4th year and yet Jeremiah 25:1 said Jehoiakim’s 4th year was the same as Nebuchadnezzar’s 1st year.

Obviously Carchemish couldn’t have been fought in Nebuchadnezzar’s “accession year” and his “first year” at the same time as it did not extend from one year into another. But this problem is more apparent than real. I won’t go into a long explanation of it, but as Jack Finegan points out on page 202 of Handbook of Biblical Chronology (1964) “the phrase in Jer 25:1 probably also means the ‘beginning year’, i.e. the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar.” He points out that the phrase used here is not used anywhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures (see also Hayim Tadmor, Journal of Near Eastern Studies XV (1956) page 228 and W F Albright Journal of Biblical Literature LI, 1932, page 102).

I have already referred to the suggestion that Nebuchadnezzar may have been given an extra year by the Jews so that his 1st regnal year was counted as 605 BC. E R Thiele suggests on page 24 of BASOR 143 that Jeremiah might have counted Nebuchadnezzar’s years according to the Egyptian Calendar. (Remember that Judah had been under the heel of Egypt until Nebuchadnezzar defeated them at Carchemish and won mastery as the new World Power.) At present there is no conclusive answer to this problem although there are several possibilities.

The Babylonian Chronicle says that, “At that time Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area of the Hatti-country.” As Judah was included in this term, it is obvious that it too fell to Nebuchadnezzar at that time. The Babylonian Historian Berosus (3rd Century BC) mentions prisoners at this time “from the Jews, and Phoenicians, and Syrians, and of the nations belonging to Egypt.” (Josephus, Against Apion 1:19 and Antiquities 10:11:1). These prisoners would include those mentioned in the 1st Chapter of Daniel.

The Society’s Objection to the Record of Daniel 1:1, 2

Daniel 1:1, 2 reports what happened while Nebuchadnezzar was on his campaign in the Hatti-land.

In the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and proceeded to lay siege to it. In time, Jehovah gave into his hand Jehoiakim the king of Judah and a part of the utensils of the house of the (true) God, so that he brought them to the land of Shinar etc.

Although it makes the discussion more cumbersome, I think we had better deal with the objections that the Society raises as we go along. In doing so, I trust that the continuity of thought will not be lost.

The first point requiring some clarification is the discrepancy of one year between the record of Daniel (3rd year of Jehoiakim) and Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2 (4th year of Jehoiakim). The solution is very simple. We have already seen on page 6 that the Society acknowledges the Tishri (fall-to-fall) Calendar (see also “Appendix A: The Tishri Calendar”). Of course, the Nisan (spring-to-spring) Calendar was also used (SI page 283).

Edwin R Thiele in BASOR 143 (1956) advises that

In Dan 1:1 the first conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, evidently during the same campaign of 605 in which Egypt was decisively defeated at Carchemish and Hamath, and in which Nebuchadnezzar “conquered the whole area of the Hatti-country” – is dated in the third

year of Jehoiakim. The third year dating for this campaign on a Tishri basis would be the same as the fourth year on a Nisan basis.

There is no mystery about it. It is as simple as that. Daniel used a Tishri Calendar, while Jeremiah used a Nisan Calendar. (These Calendars overlapped by approx. half a year.)

However BF page 133 says,

In the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim's reign Jeremiah 36:9, 29 speaks of Babylon's king as yet to come into the land of Judah to ruin it. So, if King Jehoiakim was 'servant for three years' to the king of Babylon and then rebelled, these must have been the last three years of King Jehoiakim's reign of eleven years. [*see 2 Kings 24:1*] In view of this, it must have been toward the end of the eighth year of Jehoiakim's reign at Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem for the first time and made King Jehoiakim his vassal.

At some time in Jehoiakim's 4th year (Jer. 36:1), Jeremiah had written on a roll what he had been told by Jehovah. In Jehoiakim's 5th year (Verse 9), Jehoiakim burned the roll, saying

Why is it that you have written on it, saying: 'The king of Babylon will come without fail and will certainly bring this land to ruin and cause man and beast to cease from it'. (Jeremiah 36:29)

Nebuchadnezzar certainly did not bring Judah, "to ruin and cause man and beast to cease from it" in 605 BC. But then neither did he do this in Jehoiakim's 8th year or his 11th year. This passage could not be applied to any event prior to Zedekiah's 11th year (if then). So where is the objection? Will the Society argue that Nebuchadnezzar never came to Judah before Zedekiah's 11th year?

Judah came under the domination of Babylon in 605 BC, it became a vassal, and no one claims that in this year Nebuchadnezzar ruined it and caused man and beast to cease from it.

Certainly Judah was not in the complete sense desolate, yet it had fallen into Nebuchadnezzar's hands, because Daniel 1:1 says it did. Nevertheless, complete desolation would be the fruitage if the Nation continued in its wayward course (Jer. 36:29). What is spoken of in Daniel 1:1 was merely the beginning of the process of bringing about the complete punishment spoken of in Jeremiah 36:29.

The Society explains Daniel 1:1,

The expression "in the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim the king of Judah" means in the third year of Jehoiakim as a vassal king paying tribute to Babylon. Since his vassalage began after he reigned eight years in Jerusalem, this third year of his reign as Babylon's vassal would be the eleventh year of his entire reign at Jerusalem. (BF page 136.)

There is no reason to enter into the field of conjecture and guess what "the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim" means. Surely it simply means his 3rd year as King. Remember that the Babylonian Chronicle shows that Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole of Hatti-land at that time.

The Society's arrangement on the other hand causes problems with the Scriptures. Notice that BF page 134 says

However, Nebuchadnezzar never did take King Jehoiakim alive. Jehoiakim did not make peace with Nebuchadnezzar or surrender to him but died inside Jerusalem.

BF page 135 advises that it was Jehoiachin (the Son of Jehoiakim) who surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar at this time. It also reports that "Jehoiachin reigned just three months and ten days." (see 2 Kings 24:8-12, particularly verse 10, which indicates that Jerusalem was besieged during Jehoiachin's reign.

Note also BF 287 which reports,

After being besieged three months at Jerusalem, the young king Jehoiachin went out in surrender to Nebuchadnezzar.

Well then, what about Daniel 1:1, 2? If the 3rd year of Jehoiakim was really his 11th year, how can verse 2 be explained which comments concerning then siege, “In time Jehovah gave into his hand Jehoiakim the king of Judah?” Interfering with the Scriptures does not solve problems, it causes them. The Scriptural records for the events of 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Hatti-country, are rather meagre but evidently Jehoiakim did acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar’s masterhood and according to Daniel 1:2, Nebuchadnezzar took “a part of the utensils of the house of the (true) God, so that he brought them to the land of Shinar to the house of his god.”

That these utensils were taken during Jehoiakim’s reign is positively stated in 2 Chronicles 36:7. (Note that verses 6 and 8 refer to his reign.) This verse must also then apply to the same events as described in Daniel 1:1, 2. A further problem for the Society is obvious, for if Jehoiakim’s 3rd year was really his 11th and he was dead before Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem after Jehoiachin’s surrender, when did he take these utensils?

The Society’s only escape from this predicament seems to be to try and confuse the taking of part of the utensils as described in Daniel 1:2 with the taking of the vessels recorded at 2 Kings 24:13, which I quote for comparison.

Then he brought out from there all the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the treasures of the king’s house, and went on to cut to pieces all the gold utensils that Solomon the king of Israel had made in the temple of Jehovah.

Removal of the utensils this time was during Jehoiachin’s reign, as is evident from the context. The only logical conclusion that does justice to the Scriptures is to accept that Daniel 1:1 applies to the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, just as Daniel faithfully recorded it.

When Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and then his son Jehoiachin carried on with this opposition, it was natural that Nebuchadnezzar should place a “puppet king” on the throne, and he did in the person of Zedekiah. In 605 BC, however, when Judah first became subject to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar had nothing against Jehoiakim and as he apparently submitted with virtually no opposition, he was permitted to maintain his position as King, but as a vassal.

The Babylonian Chronicle for Nebuchadnezzar’s 1st year (regnal) 604 BC, as translated by Wiseman, describes his triumphant return to the Hatti-land. “All the kings of the Hatti-land came before him and he received their heavy tribute.” Doubtless Jehoiakim, king of the vassal state Judah, was one of these kings.

2 Kings 24:1 has been aligned by the Society with Daniel 1:1, because it mentions 3 years of Jehoiakim’s reign, and as the 3rd year of Daniel 1:1 is counted as the last year of his reign, the 3 years of 2 Kings 24:1 are considered to be the same, for the record says that after these 3 years, Jehoiakim rebelled.

In his days Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came up, and so Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. However, he turned back and rebelled against him. (2 Kings 24:1)

First of all, let it be noted that although Daniel 1:1 is firmly fixed to the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, 2 Kings 24:1 is left floating around in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to a time described as when he “came up.” He “came up” in 605 BC, as witnessed to by Daniel, the Babylonian Chronicle and Berossus, which could be the occasion referred to. The Babylonian Chronicle also refers to other times when he “came up” such as in 604 BC, also in 603 BC, and 602 BC. These visits were designed to emphasise his mastery and to collect dues from his tributary states.

It is probable that 2 Kings 24:1 refers to the years 604 BC, 603 BC, and 602 BC, for it was during each of these 3 years that Jehoiakim apparently paid tribute.

The Babylonian Chronicle for Nebuchadnezzar, 4th year (601 BC) states:

In the fourth year the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to the Hatti-land. In the Hatti-land they marched unopposed.

In the month of Kislev he took the lead of his army and marched to Egypt. The King of Egypt heard (it) and mustered his army.

In open battle they smote the breast (of) each other and inflicted great havoc on each other. The king of Akkad and his troops turned back and returned to Babylon.

The record for the 5th year advises that the Babylonian army did not venture from the borders of Babylon because of the necessity to reorganise after the heavy losses in the conflict with Egypt.

In the 6th year, Nebuchadnezzar returned to the Hatti-land but no mention is made of tribute, although he probably collected it from some states.

During the following year, Jerusalem was besieged, Jehoiachin was captured, Zedekiah was placed on the throne and the record says of Nebuchadnezzar, he “received its heavy tribute.” (I have already quoted the Chronicle for this year.)

From all this, it is quite reasonable to assume that 3 the years that Jehoiakim served (paid tribute) to Babylon were 604 BC, 603 BC, and 602 BC. It is quite unreasonable to assume that Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar’s Servant the third year before Jerusalem was captured under Jehoiachin.

Reviewing what the Babylonian Chronicle says. The 3rd year would correspond with Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th, as this was the year according to the Chronicle when Jerusalem was captured. The 1st year would on this basis be Nebuchadnezzar’s 5th.

So that there can be no mistake, I will quote what the Chronicle says:

In the fifth year, the king of Akkad (Nebuchadnezzar) stayed in his own land and gathered together his horses and chariots in great numbers.

After the Babylonians had suffered at the hands of the Egyptians, can you imagine Jehoiakim trotting off to Babylon to surrender? He would have had to, for Nebuchadnezzar did not venture from Babylon during this year. If you can imagine this you are still wrong, for 2 Kings 24:1 refers to when “Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came up.” It doesn’t say “Jehoiakim came up to Babylon.” The Society’s arrangement is contradicted from all angles.

Because the Babylonians suffered at the hands of Egypt in 601 BC (in what must have been a drawn contest), Jehoiakim appears have rebelled against Babylon and to have changed his loyalty to Egypt again. (It was Egypt that first placed Jehoiakim on the throne see 2 Kings 24:34 and it was Egypt that was looked to for help when Jerusalem was under its final siege by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 37:7, 11.) Jehoiakim’s faith in Egypt was not rewarded because Judah was again brought under subjection in 597 BC by Babylon.

It should be obvious from all this that the 3 years that Jehoiakim was “tributary King” to Babylon were NOT the last 3 years of his reign, as the Society asserts. There is evidence to prove that whoever wrote page 166 of BF has been confused by all the evidence available for the period, for this page makes the point that,

When King Jehoiakim was in open revolt against vassalage to Nebuchadnezzar and held out against him in the final three years of his reign in Jerusalem, the Jewish nation could not be considered as captive to Babylon.

On page 136 BF, we are told that the 3 years of vassalage were the last of Jehoiakim’s reign, whereas on page 166 we are told they were not. I wrote to the Society asking for clarification of the statement on page 136 and the reply quite clearly supported the claim that Jehoiakim’s revolt was during his last 3 years. I noted with interest that the reference to the final 3 years was dropped when an article on this

section of BF appeared on pages 734 and 735 of The Watchtower 1st December 1964. The contradiction must have been noticed.

The Society has always been perplexed with statements of Daniel 1:1. The interesting quotation that follows is extracted from The Watchtower May 15 1922:

At the end of the three years Jehoiakim rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar took the city, Jehoiakim died, and Nebuchadnezzar left Jehoiachin, a son of Jehoiakim, on the throne. He ruled only three months and was carried captive to Babylon.

Those who accept what the Bible says find that Daniel 1:1, 2 fits perfectly into the 3rd year of Jehoiakim. It is true that critics who do not accept Daniel as being a true historical record written in the 6th Century BC do not have sufficient confidence in Daniel 1:1 to support it. (They consider it to have been written in the 2nd Century BC.)

Joseph P Free 5 on page 224 of Archaeology and Bible History states:

Bible Scholars in the past have usually held that there were three deportations of the people of Judah, who were taken from Palestine to Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar in 606-605, 597 and 586 BC. Some liberals have doubted the fact of a deportation in 606-605 BC.

I could list quite a string of Conservative Bible Scholars who find no difficulty in accepting the clear historical record of Daniel 1:1, unfortunately the Society would have to be listed with the Liberals.

There are other objections that the Society has to what Daniel records at Daniel 1:1. There is no need to avoid these objections, for when met head on by the truth they soon dissolve. We proceed then, examining further objections raised by the Society in the light of the facts.

The Society's Objection to the Record of Daniel Chapter 2

Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne in 605 BC, his 2nd "regal year" was therefore 603 BC. Daniel Chapter 2 is dated to Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd year (verse 1). Verses 37 and 38 show quite definitely that in his 2nd year, Nebuchadnezzar held a position of World Domination as head of the Gentile Image.

The Society cannot have the Gentile Image coming into being before the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, neither does it want the Babylonian domination over Judah to commence in 605 BC, for 70 years by "Inclusive Reckoning" from that date brings the concluding date of this dominance over Judah to 536 BC, the year the Jews returned from Exile.

We have examined the Society's attempt to dispose of Daniel 1:1, and BF page 172 provides the Society's solution to the problem of Daniel 2:1 which, as we shall see, does NOT hold water either.

The following is quoted from BF page 172.

Hebrew scholars propose that the Hebrew text of Daniel 2 should be "twelfth year" instead of "second year". (*Footnote on Daniel 2:1 in Biblia Hebraica*, by Rudolf Kittel, ninth edition of 1954. Also see the footnote in the *Cross-Reference Bible, Variorum Edition*, by Harold E Monser B.A. edition of 1910.) However, the most reasonable and fitting suggestion is that this refers to the "second year" from a marked event, namely from Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 607 BC. That is when the king of Babylon came to be the first one to hold world domination by God's permission.

In opposing both of these suggestions, I feel obliged to ask, "Are we going to believe two Hebrew Scholars, or Daniel?" Daniel quite clearly said it was "the second year". I will provide references from two Old Testament Scholars shortly both of whom accept what Daniel said. For those who accept God's Word, there is no confusion. Once we start guessing, we can arrange almost anything.

Flavius Josephus, for example, in Antiquities of the Jews 10:10:3 placed the events of Daniel 2 “two years after the destruction of Egypt”. The Expositors Bible on “TheBook of Daniel”, page 143 refers to “Rashi”, a Jewish Scholar of the 11th Century AD who said that the meaning was “the second year after the destruction of the Temple. This of course is the same as the Society’s guess: the “second year” from a marked event, namely from Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem in 607 BC.

Is it really true that “That is when the king of Babylon came to be the first one to hold World Domination by God’s permission?” That Babylon was the “World Power” long before Jerusalem was destroyed is certified by the Society on page 84 SI:

Eliakim, whose name is changed to Jehoiakim and during whose reign Judah is subjugated by the new world power, Babylon. (emphasis supplied).

So Babylon was the “World Power” in Jehoiakim’s day!

Jeremiah 27:5-7 proves that Nebuchadnezzar had received “World Domination” at Jehovah’s hands at least in the reign of Zedekiah, for verse 6 says,

And now I myself have given all these lands into the hands Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant. (Emphasis supplied.)

These verses are further considered in Chapter 4 when Jeremiah 25:11-12 are being reviewed. In the meantime, compare them with Daniel 2:38 and Jeremiah 28:14. The similarity of language is striking and so is the fact that they all demand that Nebuchadnezzar was holding World Domination by God’s permission long before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Why shouldn’t we accept Daniel’s word that it was in Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year, which would have been 603/602 BC?

SI page 139 refers to Daniel chapter 2 as “In the second year of his kingship as world ruler.” As Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the “world power” in Jehoiakim’s day (SI page 84, quoted above), there is no reason that it was not Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year. But clearly we have here just another mistake on the Society’s part, so we turn to one of the Society’s earlier publications, Equipped for Every Good Work (1946), where on pages 226 and 227 we find another objection:

The time of this dream and its interpretation is stated as the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Actually, Nebuchadnezzar had been reigning over Babylon alone much longer than two years.

Why, at the time of this dream the young captive Daniel had completed his three years of special court training and had been introduced to Nebuchadnezzar and had gained quite a reputation for wisdom, particularly in dreams and visions.

The essence of all this is, really, that Daniel and his associates must have completed their 3 years training prior to the events of Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year. If Daniel and Co. were taken captive in Nebuchadnezzar’s “accession year, as I have claimed, how could they squeeze this 3 years training prior to the events described as having taken place in his 2nd year? I promised to quote from two Old Testament Scholars who do accept Daniel’s word, to match the two who don’t.

John C Whitcomb, Jr. in Darius the Mede (see BF page 239 footnote) says:

Daniel’s fame for righteousness and wisdom had been established in Babylonia as early as 603/602 BC (Dan. 2:1). Quoted from page 63.

E J, Young, on page 56 of his The Prophecy of Daniel states:

It is perfectly possible that the third year of training might fall in the second year of the kingship of Neb. A table will make this clear.

Years of training	Nebuchadnezzar
First year	Year of Accession
Second year	First Year
Third year	Second year (in which dream occurred)

I have already referred to the fact that The Truth Shall Make You Free page 239 makes use of “Inclusive Reckoning”. This is also the system employed by Daniel in Chapter 2. This system allowed for the first and last units of a group, even if only parts of a whole unit, to be counted as a whole. For example the siege of Samaria is described in 2 Kings 18:9 as commencing in the 4th year of Hezekiah. Verse 10 says it was captured “at the end of three years” and this was “in the sixth year of Hezekiah.” No mistake is possible here because we have a double check by the reign of Hoshea. The siege began in his 7th year and ended in his 9th year.

For numerous other examples see Awake 22nd May 1960, pages 27 and 28. The Society recognises this method when it corresponds the 3 years of 2 Kings 24:1, when Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar’s Servant, with the parts of 3 years mentioned in Daniel 1:1.

Can it deny then that the 3 years of Daniel 2 could also be part of 3 years? There is simply no valid reason to shift Daniel Chapter 2 away from Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year. Neither can a reason be found to shift Daniel 1:1, 2 away from Jehoiakim’s 3rd year. Problems are easily dissolved when we view these Scriptures in the light of the methods employed by the Ancient Hebrews.

More Society objections to Daniel 1:1

Before moving on from these objections, there are two small problems (raised on page 225 of Equipped For Every Good Work) which relate to Daniel 1:1. A brief inspection of these and we will have dealt with them all.

The clear historical record at 2 Kings 24 and 25 shows there were only two occasions when conquering Babylon carried captives from Jerusalem and Judah.

These are claimed to have been “at the close of Jehoiachin’s brief reign” and “eleven years later at the time of Zedekiah’s fall and Jerusalem’s complete overthrow.” The inference here is, of course, that as no mention is made in “Kings” of captives being taken in Jehoiakim’s 3rd (or 4th) year, Daniel must have been taken prisoner in one of the groups that are mentioned in “Kings”. This, at first glance, seems reasonable.

But are we to assume that because an historical event is not recorded in “Kings”, it didn’t happen? 2 Kings 24:1 certainly shows that Nebuchadnezzar “came up” at least on one further occasion and there is no evidence to say that this was not in the year recorded by Daniel.

Because “Kings” does not mention the taking of captives on this occasion does not mean that none were taken. Daniel 1:3 indicates that the hostages were only few in number and probably for this reason they are not mentioned in “Kings”? Indeed, there is evidence to support this contention for the captivities recorded in Jeremiah 52:28-30, in the 7th, 18th, and 23rd years of Nebuchadnezzar are not recorded in 2 Kings 24 and 25 either.

I have already pointed out that the captives of 2 Kings 24:14-16 can hardly be compared with the number recorded in Jeremiah 52:29, and 2 Kings 25:11 compared with Jeremiah 52:29 reveals a huge discrepancy.

It must be considered, therefore, that the minor captivities of Jehoiakim’s 3rd (or 4th) year and of Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th and 18th years, were not of sufficient significance to be recorded by the compiler of Kings.

The fact that Daniel 1:2 (supported by 2 Chronicles 36:5-8) insists that Jehoiakim was at least in Nebuchadnezzar's hands during his reign and that Temple Vessels were also taken at this time, proves that Daniel 1:1 and the prisoners mentioned therein have nothing to do with events which occurred during the reign of either Jehoiachin or Zedekiah. Therefore Daniel 1:1 quite positively is Chronologically accurate.

I have deliberately withheld comments on the captivity which occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year (Jeremiah 52:30), to a later portion of this investigation. It should be apparent that this captivity cannot be aligned with either of the 2 captivities recorded in 2 Kings 24 or 25.

The final objection throws the spotlight on the wording of Daniel 1:1.

In the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and proceeded to lay siege to it.

"This could not be", says page 225 of Equipped For Every Good Work "because Nebuchadnezzar was not enthroned till the following year."

It is perfectly true that in 605 BC, when he conquered the whole of the Hatti-land, Nebuchadnezzar was not "the king of Babylon." Nevertheless, attention has already been drawn to the fact that he was fulfilling the roll of King, by leading the Babylonian army, in the absence of his father who was apparently ill. Consequently he may have been regarded as King in the Hatti-land a year before he was actually crowned. But the solution is probably as Young points out, "the statement is not inaccurate, but is used proleptically, ... as we say 'In the childhood of President Washington.'" The Prophecy of Daniel, page 35. Daniel probably recorded these events years after they took place. Maybe even after Nebuchadnezzar was dead. It would be no strange thing for him to refer to Nebuchadnezzar then as "the King of Babylon," even if at the time referred to, he was not entitled to that status.

Summary of the Last Years of Judah

Seeing that the necessity to examine objections has caused our discussion to become somewhat disjointed, I will briefly summarise what did happen and then perhaps we can disregard what did NOT happen.

The Babylonian Chronicle discloses that Nebuchadnezzar was on an expedition in 605 BC, and during this time he encountered and defeated the Egyptian forces at Carchemish. At the same time he gained mastery over the whole area, thus becoming the new "World Power".

Judah was besieged and although the events are not given in detail, we know from Daniel 1:1-3 and 2 Chronicles 36:5-8 that Jehoiakim was somehow taken by Nebuchadnezzar and despite the fact that he intended to take him captive he apparently relented and Jehoiakim was permitted to retain his kingship, but as a Vassal to Babylon. Some of the Temple Vessels were taken to the Babylonian Temple, probably as an offering indicating Nebuchadnezzar's gratitude for his success. Prisoners, or Hostages including Daniel were taken to Babylon and these are mentioned in the fragments of the writings of the Ancient Babylonian Historian, Berossus. (Josephus Against Apion, 1:19.)

After serving Babylon as a tributary king for three years, faithfully paying his annual tribute, Jehoiakim was incited to rebellion by the successful show of force by Egypt in 601 BC (2 Kings 24:1). Jehoiakim finally died in mysterious circumstances and after a short siege during the reign of his son Jehoiachin, Jerusalem surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar on the 15/16th of March, 597 BC.

At least as early as the reign of Zedekiah we found that Jehovah had given the World Rule to Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 27:5-7), and Daniel 2:1, 37 and 38 show that he had this authority in the 2nd year of his rule, making it certain that this power was gained when he defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish and conquered the whole of the Hatti-country in 605 BC.

BF page 137 reports in a footnote:

After his victory at that place (Carchemish) Nebuchadnezzar had all Palestine at his mercy. Telling what followed this, 2 Kings 24:7 says 'Never again did the king of Egypt come out from his land for the king of Babylon had taken all that happened to belong to the king of Egypt from the torrent valley of Egypt up to the river Euphrates.'

This is perfectly true and Judah had belonged to Egypt so it was taken by Babylon as a result of the Battle of Carchemish and the triumphant sweep through the land by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. This is really opposed to the Society's teaching and is just another of their contradictory statements.

Before concluding this chapter, it just remains to draw attention to the fact that the evidence maintains its harmonious and distinct trend toward situating the 70 years in a Chronological framework (605 BC-536 BC) which completely puts to rout the arrangement of events which the Society puts forward and upon which it shakily sits.

CHAPTER FOUR. JUDAH 70 YEARS DESOLATE, OR 70 YEARS WITHOUT INHABITANTS?

The crux of the matter here is that the Society confuses the period of servitude to Babylon, which is defined as 70 years, with the period of total desolation which is not defined and the length of which is not certain. As we have seen and will see, there is no conclusive evidence to prove exactly when the land became totally desolate or exactly when it again gained occupants.

As one searches Babylon the Great has Fallen and All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial it becomes evident that there are only 5 Scriptures that the Society uses to teach the complete desolation of Judah for 70 years. Each of these does refer to a 70 year period. They are Jeremiah 25:11; 25:12; 29:10; Daniel 9:2; and 2 Chronicles 36:21. Jeremiah was the Prophet who gave notice of the 70-year period; Daniel and the Chronicler merely referred to Jeremiah in their writings years later. Logically then, we should review Jeremiah's predictions first.

Jeremiah 25:11, 12

These verses together read,

“And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it must occur that when seventy years have been fulfilled I shall call to account against the king of Babylon and against that nation,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “their error, even against the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it desolate wastes to time indefinite.”

The setting of these verses is, as verse 1 testifies, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. This was of course 605 BC, the year when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area and took Daniel and Co. to Babylon.

BF page 127 comments:

Thus, while the Land of Judah lay uninhabited seventy years, the whole nation was to serve the kings of Babylon.

Why did the land of Judah have to lay uninhabited for the nation to serve the king of Babylon?

SI page 127, when commenting on Jeremiah 25, says:

First, Nebuchadnezzar is identified as Jehovah's servant to devastate Judah and the surrounding nations, “and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” Then it will be Babylon's turn, and she will become desolate wastes to time indefinite.

The two passages quoted are extracted from Jeremiah 25:11 and 12. The question that immediately comes to mind is, “Did the other nations have to lie uninhabited for seventy years for the whole of the nations to serve the kings of Babylon?”

When Babylon gained its ascendancy under Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC and became the new “World Power”, the other nations were obviously dominated by or serving Babylon. The “Cyrus Cylinder”, part of which is quoted in SI page 336, certifies that these captives were released early in Cyrus' reign, as were the Jews, but surely the Society will not insist that they all had to be in Babylon for 70 years to serve the Kings of Babylon while their lands lay uninhabited.

There is no need to discuss this further for the Society will have to admit that this was not necessary. The same concession must also be allowed for Judah. It was not necessary for the land to be uninhabited for the whole nation to serve the kings of Babylon 70 years. This is not mere guesswork, it is the clear Scriptural Teaching!

Daniel 2:37, 38 prove that Nebuchadnezzar was the King of the “World Power” and as such all the Nations were his servants. The argument is not dependant on Daniel chapter 2 however, and as the Society contests the validity of the date supplied by Daniel, we will pass on to what is other positive

evidence anyway, and which proves that Judah was serving Babylon long before Jerusalem was destroyed in Zedekiah's 11th year. These passages are provided by the same writer that spoke of the 70 years of service to Babylon, namely Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 27:1 locates a message as being given, "In the beginning of the kingdom of Jehoiakim". Verse 3 though, refers to events in Zedekiah's reign and it may be that a copyist has corrupted the text, so that it reads "Jehoiakim" instead of "Zedekiah" in Verse 1. (See the New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures Vol. IV (1953), page 27. Footnote: "e", which refers to several manuscripts which do contain "Zedekiah" in verse 1.) Whatever the circumstances, it cannot be disputed that the time is fixed long before the destruction of Jerusalem.

It seems that a further revolt against Babylon was being planned and a conference had been held in Jerusalem. When the messengers were about to return to their respective masters, Jeremiah was inspired to prophesy against further futile opposition to Babylon. Jeremiah gave each of them a "yoke" to take home to their "King" (Jeremiah 27:1-4). He also passed on to them a message:

I myself have made the earth, mankind and the beasts that are upon the surface of the earth by my stretched-out arm; and I have given it to whom it has proved right in my eyes. And now I myself have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon my servant; and even the wild beasts of the field I have given him to serve him. And all the nations must serve even him and his son and his grandson until the time even of his own land comes, and many nations and great kings must exploit him as a servant. (Jeremiah 27:5-7)

The following verses show that they would continue to serve Babylon, either by consent or by compulsion. If by consent, they could stay in their own land (verse 12). Then the land would not become desolate in the complete sense (see verse 13). Verse 14 onwards speak of false prophets who advised against serving Babylon. They said, "Look! The utensils of the house of Jehovah are being brought back from Babylon soon now!" (verse 16). In other words, do not continue to serve voluntarily, for the power of Babylon will soon be broken.

If they really were servants of Jehovah, they should beseech him that the remaining utensils should not be taken to Babylon (verse 18). This would stop the progress of God's judgement against them. The judgement could have remained comparatively light if they would submit, but it would get continually worse if they did not. But more on this progressive judgement as we consider other passages.

The objective of referring to Jeremiah 27 was to emphasise verse 6.

And now I myself have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. (emphasis mine)

What Jehovah spoke of here was an accomplished fact, the lands had been given to Nebuchadnezzar and they must serve him as He had required through Jeremiah's utterance at Jeremiah 25:11.

Can it be denied after an honest examination of this chapter that the Land of Judah did NOT have to be uninhabited for the nation to serve the king of Babylon?

There is more that can be said of this "yoke" of servitude to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:2, 12).

Attention is drawn to Jeremiah 28. Here we have the record of another false prophet Hananiah who said:

This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said, "I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years more I am bringing back to this place all the utensils of the house of Jehovah that Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon took from this place, that he might bring them to Babylon." (Jeremiah 28:2, 3)

The true prophet said they would serve 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11). The false prophet said that inside 2 years, the servitude would end. But it did not end, they were serving Babylon then and they continued to do so until the 70 years expired.

There was to be a change in this servitude though, for in verses 10 and 11 we are informed of Hananiah's bold move in breaking the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah and prophesying that Jehovah would "break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon within two full years more from off the neck of all the nations" (verse 11).

Jeremiah was instructed to say:

Yoke bars of wood you have broken, and instead of them you will have to make yoke bars of iron. For this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said, "A yoke of iron I will put upon the neck of all these nations, to serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and they must serve him."

Here again we have evidence of the progressive judgement. They could submit voluntarily or suffer the iron-like servitude by compulsion, which resulted in the complete desolation of the land.

At this juncture, I think it fair to say that there is nothing in Jeremiah 25:11 to contradict the contention that Judah was serving Babylon from 605 BC. Can't we imagine Jeremiah, shortly after the Battle of Carchemish, surveying the situation and saying that Judah would have to remain subject to Babylon for 70 years?

Surely nothing could be clearer than Jeremiah 27:17:

Serve the king of Babylon and keep on living. Why should this city become a devastated place?

The answer was of course that it did not have to become desolate in the complete sense if they served voluntarily. Rebellion would result in serving by compulsion.

Quite clearly the 70 years of Jeremiah 25:11 commenced in 605 BC, so we move on to examine

Jeremiah 25:12

When seventy years have been fulfilled, I shall call to account against the king of Babylon.

That Babylon gained its dominant position in 605 BC has been proven beyond doubt. When the iron yoke of enforced servitude was finally brought down upon the Jews, the majority of them were taken to Babylon. For the 70 year period of dominance to end, the oppressor itself must be oppressed and in accordance with God's purpose, the last shadow of Babylonian dominance was removed from Judah when in 536 BC the land was repopulated by God-fearing Jews. That the 70-year period of Babylonian dominance began in 605 BC is beyond question. The evidence continues to be clear and consistent but we have much more yet.

What of Jeremiah 29:10?

About 10 years before Jerusalem was destroyed, Nebuchadnezzar carried a large number of Jews, including King Jehoiachin, into exile at Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1).

Once again difficulty was being experienced with false prophets, but this time at Babylon (verses 8 and 9). The true prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon in order to clarify their position. Verses from 4 onward contain the text of the letter, which advised them to settle down in Babylon, build houses, carry on in the usual way by marrying and having families:

For this is what Jehovah has said, "In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I shall turn my attention to you people, and I will establish toward you my good word in bringing you back to this place". (verse 10)

The intent of the message was clearly to inform them not to expect early deliverance and so to be content to remain in Babylon until Jehovah permitted their release in harmony with his purpose to accomplish 70 years at (or for) Babylon. Clearly they were being reminded of the limit of Babylonian domination, which was to last for 70 years. This period had already commenced and there was no hope of averting it or of cutting it short. These people were in Babylon and must stay there until the period expired.

In a great number of translations the expression “for Babylon” is presented (e.g., ASV), but the New World Translation of the Society has “at Babylon.” If “for Babylon” should be accepted then it obviously refers to the period of Babylonian domination. If it refers to a period at Babylon then obviously the period had started years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

There had been Captives at Babylon since the deportation of Daniel and his companions in 605 BC, but the Scripture doesn’t necessarily say that Captives had to be at Babylon for 70 years. The Society obviously translates it “at Babylon” with a view toward suggesting that this took place after the destruction and so the land was empty for 70 years while the people were at Babylon.

BF page 137 puts forward such a claim, and comments concerning the captivity of Jehoiachin and various others:

The vast majority of the people remained, and Jerusalem and the other Judean cities remained populated, and the land was by no means left an uninhabited desolation. Not all the people of Judah were then doing service at Babylon to the king of Babylon.

This statement was made in an endeavour to prove that the 70 year period had not begun. BUT all of the people did not have to be at Babylon in order to serve the king of Babylon.

The prediction at Jeremiah 25:11 concerned “these nations” who would serve the king of Babylon 70 years. The truth is that all of the people never did go to Babylon. Many fled to Egypt as Jeremiah 43:5-7 testifies, and Jeremiah 44:28 provides evidence that some would return to Judah from that Country. Therefore, if all the people had to be at Babylon, as the Society insists, before the king of Babylon could be served, we must conclude that the prophecy was never fulfilled.

We need not fret though, for quite clearly the people of Judah served Babylon from 605 BC, and for a while at least, in Judah.

Vetus Testamentum V1:3 (a quarterly published by the International Organization of Old Testament Scholars) contains an interesting article by Avigdor Orr, “The Seventy Years Of Babylon.” While I do not want to give the impression that I agree with the entire article, I was struck with the similarity between what I have written on Jeremiah 25:11, 12 and 29:10 above and what Orr wrote concerning these Scriptures on page 305. The following is the section concerned

We read in Jer. XXIX 10: “After seventy years will be accomplished for Babylon I will visit you”. The sense of the Hebrew original might even be rendered thus: “After seventy years of (the rule of) Babylon are accomplished etc.” The seventy years counted here evidently refer to Babylon and NOT to the Judeans or to their captivity. They mean seventy years of Babylonian rule, the end of which will see the redemption of the exiles.

The question may be raised how these seventy years of Babylonian rule are to be calculated. The second relevant passage, Jer. XXV 9-12, makes this quite clear. According to the date in XXV 1, this passage was spoken in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. in 605. Verse 9 speaks of Jahveh’s bringing the families of the north and the king of Babylon against ‘this land’ (i.e. Judah) and against all the nations round about, and predates their destruction.

According to v.11b, these people shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years, while v.12 states that the king of Babylon will be punished at the end of seventy years. It follows from v.11b that seventy years begin from the imposition of the Babylonian yoke on Judah and its neighbours. This took place as a result of the battle of Carchemish in 605, and is therefore in accord with the (genuine or attributed) date of the prophecy.

Orr is just one of the numerous Old Testament Scholars who finds no difficulties in commencing the 70 years while the land was still occupied. But then, unlike the Society, he has no axe to grind.

The Desolation of Judah from 605 BC Continual and Increasing

Before passing on to Daniel 9:2, I want to emphasise the very important truth that when Babylon commenced its period of ascendancy in 605 BC, the people of Judah could have remained in Judah and submitted to Babylon during this period. They need never have been deported to Babylon and would not have been, except for their rebellion. This is a conclusion from which there is just no escape.

Perhaps you are thinking to yourself; “What about the prophecy’s saying that the land would become completely desolate without man or domestic animals?” Well, what about them? The answer is of course that they need never have been fulfilled if the nation had submitted as Jeremiah constantly pleaded with them to. My authority for saying this is again Jeremiah. Please read Chapter 18:1-11. The following are verses 7 and 8:

At any moment that I may speak against a nation and against a kingdom to uproot (it) and to pull (it) down and to destroy (it), and that nation actually turns back from its badness against which I spoke, I will also feel regret over the calamity that I had thought to execute upon it!

Jehovah is just and merciful and we have an example of a reversal of promised judgement in the case of the people of Ninevah (see Jonah 3:1-10). Jonah 3:10 says:

And the (true) God got to see their works, that they had turned back from their bad way; and so the (true) God felt regret over the calamity that he had spoken of causing to them; and he did not cause (it).

Note the similarity of language between this passage and Jeremiah 18:7 and 8 just quoted. Judah could have been saved similarly.

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:1), Jeremiah implored the people of Judah:

Make your ways and your dealings good, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God, and Jehovah will feel regret for the calamity that he has spoken against you. (Jer. 26:13)

Even in the 4th year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 36:1), a similar plea was made.

Perhaps those of the house of Judah will listen to all the calamity that I am thinking of doing to them, to the end that they may return, each one from his bad way, and that I may actually forgive their error and their sin.

During this same year, the calamity began to come upon them (Jer. 25:1 and 29 – please read these verses). The subjection to Babylon began.

In the 10th year of Zedekiah (Jer. 32:1), the calamity which was coming upon them was serious indeed, for Jerusalem was under its final siege (verse 2). Jeremiah said:

All the things that you commanded them to do they did not do, so that you caused all this calamity to befall them. (Jer. 32:23)

The Nation was reaping the fruits of disobedience. Even then, submission to Babylon would have lessened the severity of the punishment.

If you will without fail go out to the princes of the king of Babylon, your soul will also certainly keep living and this city itself will not be burned with fire, and you, yourself and your household will certainly keep living. (Jer. 38:17)

But Zedekiah did not submit. The city was burned (Jer. 39:8) and a large number of people were taken to Babylon (verse 9). However some people remained (verse 10).

Despite all that had happened, Jehovah was still prepared for Judah to remain inhabited. Compare Jeremiah 18:7 and 8 – which I have already quoted – with Jeremiah 42:10:

If you will without fail keep dwelling in this land I will also build you up and I shall not tear (you) down, and I will plant you and I shall not uproot (you); for I shall certainly feel regret over the calamity that I have caused to you.

These words were spoken to the small group that remained in the land after the destruction of Jerusalem under Zedekiah, and so it was still possible that the land would not become desolate in the complete sense. Typically, the people disobeyed and went to Egypt (Jer. 43:7).

The simple lesson to be learned from all this is that those to whom Jeremiah addressed his letter about 10 years before Jerusalem was destroyed (Jer. 29:10) did not have to wait in Babylon for 70 years after Judah became empty, because after they had been taken into exile, there was still the prospect that the land would never be completely emptied. The fact that Prophets including Jeremiah had foretold its desolation in the complete sense provides no grounds for argument, because promised judgements can be set aside.

The events of the last years of Judah show that the complete emptying of Judah was a progressive affair which was brought about in several stages, but at the same time it could have been halted at any time because of Jehovah's mercy.

The Society has unfortunately withheld these points from its followers as it has also much other relative information. Those who are considering these points for the first time may be beginning to see the light. But then light hurts sore eyes, and we can always shut them if the light hurts.

Daniel 9:2

In the first year of his reigning I myself, Daniel discerned by the books the number of the years concerning which the word of Jehovah had occurred to Jeremiah the prophet, for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem (namely) seventy years.

This was spoken in 538 BC, Babylon had now fallen and Cyrus was King of the new “World Empire” (see Isa 44:28). Perhaps it was this that influenced Daniel to inquire of the prophecy of Jeremiah, just how soon release from Babylonish bondage would be possible.

He said he was able to observe from “books” how long Jehovah had told Jeremiah the devastations of Jerusalem would last. What these “books” were is uncertain, but it is reasonable to assume that they were at least parts of what today comprises the book of Jeremiah. Seeing that there are only two chapters in which Jeremiah mentions the 70 years (chapters 25 and 29), it seems certain Daniel had at least one of these.

It is interesting to note that the word translated “letter” at Jeremiah 29:1 is the same word translated “books” at Daniel 9:2. But then at Jeremiah 25:13, Jeremiah calls his prophecy related to the 70 years “this book”, the word again being the same.

So perhaps Daniel had all that Jeremiah had written plus other portions of the writings that comprised the Scriptures at that time. It matters not, but it does matter what it was that Daniel “discerned”. He said it was “the number of the years.” This would be from either or both Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10.

The number was of course 70 (years). During this time “the devastations of Jerusalem” would be fulfilled or the devastated condition would be completed at the end of the 70 years. To ascertain what Daniel discerned we have to inquire, what is meant by “the devastations of Jerusalem”?

The Society uses this Scripture as though it was a description of Jerusalem when it was without man and domestic animal. Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary reveals that the word used by Daniel is the Hebrew expression CHORBAH, which is translated “decayed place”, “desolate”, “desolation”, “destruction” and “waste”.

There are several other Hebrew words closely related to this word, which are also translated “desolate”. Daniel used CHORBAH in the plural sense, which is usually translated “desolations”. The Society translates it “devastations”, or “devastated place”.

Seeing that this (9:2) is the only occurrence of CHORBAH” in the whole of Daniel’s writings it seems very likely that Daniel had just read Jeremiah chapter 25, for there this word is used in relation to Jerusalem and the 70 years. Jeremiah 25:11 says:

And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Our attention is directed here to two facts:

1. The land would become a devastated place.
2. The nations would serve Babylon 70 years.

We have already acknowledged that SI page 127 refers this passage to “Judah and the surrounding nations” (see Jeremiah 25:9). When did the land become a “devastated place”, or a “desolation” as other translations have it?

As we cast our eyes a little further in the 25th chapter of Jeremiah, we encounter a symbolic cup in verse 15 containing the wine of Jehovah’s rage which Jeremiah was to pass to various nations. Their drinking from this cup symbolised their receiving judgement from Jehovah, The cup is handed first of all to “Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and her kings, her princes, to make them a devastated place, an object of astonishment, something to whistle at and a malediction, just as at this day” (emphasis supplied).

Were Jerusalem and Judah already a devastated place as at that day (in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, 605 BC, Jeremiah 25:1)?

Jamieson, Faussett and Brown (Commentary) remark on this verse:

The accomplishment of the curse had already begun under Jehoiakim. This clause may, however, have been inserted by Jeremiah at his revision of the prophecies in Egypt.

(There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that Jeremiah added this clause and the only persons that would insist on this would be those who have some particular theory to maintain.)

The Commentary of Matthew Henry says:

This part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished; this is denoted by that melancholy parenthesis (as it is this day), for in the fourth year of Jehoiakim things had come into a very bad posture, and all the foundations were out of course.

Earlier in our discussion we found that the desolation of Judah in the complete sense was brought about progressively. This is in fact what had happened in the 4th year of Jehoiakim (605 BC), the land had commenced to become desolate, Judah had fallen into the hands of Babylon. After other devastations at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and apparently because of other factors, the land finally became completely desolate.

The Society claims the desolation began after the murder of Gedeliah and the departure of the Jews to Egypt. SI page 284 claims that:

Then only, from about October 1, 607, was the land in the complete sense “lying desolated ... to fulfil seventy years.” (emphasis supplied).

If the Society does not recognise that the land was desolate in an “incomplete sense” prior to the events mentioned, why does it qualify desolate by saying “in the complete sense”? How can they deny that the land was desolate for a period at least in an incomplete sense?

If you are not convinced that the land could be “desolate” or “devastated” without being void of inhabitants, I suggest that you refer again to the Bible and this time to Ezekiel 33:27, 28, so that all doubt will be removed:

This is what you should say to them, “This is what the Lord Jehovah has said: ‘As I am alive, surely the ones who are in the devastated places will fall by the sword itself; and the one who is upon the surface of the field’ (etc.).”

The Hebrew word for “devastated” is again CHORBAH, and verse 28 reveals that this “devastated” land would be the subject of further “devastation” or “desolation”. There is no alternative but to accept that land in CHORBAH condition can still have occupants. That is of course if we accept what the Bible says.

The Interpreters Bible, when commenting on the word CHORBAH at Daniel 9:2, states:

A word often employed to describe the state of a devastated land after the armies of an enemy have passed.

The only sane conclusion to arrive at then is that Daniel was not referring to a period when the land of Judah was empty without man or domestic animal.

I realise that to Jehovah’s Witnesses in general, the thought of Judah lying desolate but at the same time having inhabitants, is a new one. Therefore, a further demonstration of this possibility might help.

You will recall that Jehovah at Jeremiah 25:12 promised to also make Babylon “desolate”. BF around page 395 gives evidence of the progressive desolation of Babylon and on page 396 asserts that:

In spite of these continued activities at and about Babylon, the prophetic word of Jehovah God against Babylon had to be fulfilled finally to the letter.

T G Pinches in The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia wrote a chapter, “The Decline of Babylon”. On page 477 we are informed:

The Babylonians could not have regarded the continual and increasing desolation of their city with indifference.

Page 479 emphasises the point:

Notwithstanding the desolation of the city, however, a certain number of people continued to inhabit the site.

Further on, reference is made “to those who inhabited Babylon’s desolation.”

Without doubt, Daniel looked back to the first devastation of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in the year when he was taken captive (605 B.C.), then the desolation began and in 538 BC, the 70 years had almost expired.

The comment that follows is from The Prophecy of Daniel by Edward J Young, a conservative Old Testament Scholar, when commenting on Daniel 9:2 on pages 183 and 184:

The thought may be paraphrased: “With respect to the desolation of Jerusalem, 70 years must be completed.” This desolation began with

the captivity of Daniel and the first devastation of Jerusalem in 606 BC, the third year of Jehoiakim. Hence, in the first year of Darius, the period of desolation would be almost expired. This seems to be the reckoning in 2 Chr. 36:21-23; Ezra 1:1ff.

Professor Young finds nothing strange when Daniel is referring to the devastations of Jerusalem commencing when the land was occupied. His book was published in 1949, which year was of course before the publishing of the new “Babylonian Chronicles”. It could be assumed that the reference to 606 BC would now be corrected to 605 BC. In any case, this minor matter does not make any difference to the conclusions reached above.

There is no specific statement in the Bible stating when the 70 years began, but the evidence continues to be clear and consistent that they began in 605 BC.

God’s mercy is also a factor to be taken into consideration and in this regard, the comment of Mathew Henry in his Commentary is very interesting:

It is a great doubt when these seventy years commences; some date them from the captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and first of Nebuchadnezzar, others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after. I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to serve the king of Babylon and because usually God has taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the 400 years servitude in Egypt. And if so, eighteen or nineteen years of the seventy had run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. (Comment on Jeremiah 25:11, 12, etc)

If we read just Exodus 12:40, 41, we would gain the impression that the sons of Israel dwelt in Egypt for 430 years. In actual fact they only dwelt there about 215 years. A careful analysis of all the information available on the subject shows that Jehovah counted the period from right back in the days of Abraham (Genesis 12:4). See SI page 285 for further details of this period.

This is not direct evidence bearing on the 70 years, but it is worth considering that Jehovah would count the 70-year period from the earliest possible moment. All the evidence so far proves conclusively that He did.

2 Chronicles 36:21

Many years after Jeremiah and Daniel had passed from the scene, there lived another prominent Servant of Jehovah in Judah called Ezra. Ezra wrote the final passage that we have to consider among those used by the Society to teach their 70-year arrangement. 2 Chronicles 36:21 says:

To fulfill Jehovah’s word by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its sabbaths. All the days of lying desolated it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

SI page 84 comments:

The closing verses of 2 Chronicles (36:17-23) give conclusive proof of the fulfilling of Jeremiah 25:12 and in addition, show that a full seventy years must be counted from the complete desolation of the land to the restoration of Jehovah’s worship at Jerusalem in 537 BCE. This desolation therefore begins 607 BCE, and not 586 BCE, as some Bible chronologies assert.

If this passage in 2 Chronicles does give “conclusive proof” of what is claimed, then it is manifest that it contradicts everything else that we have observed. Before proceeding further, attention is drawn to two further peculiarities in the Society’s statement.

1. “The complete desolation of the land”, confirming that the Society recognises a degree of desolation to be possible.
2. “607 BCE, and not 586 BCE.” Again we are encouraged to believe that adjustment should be made to the commencing date of the 70 years. Why not 516 BCE, and not 537 BCE?
Unfortunately the Society will not be tempted into providing an answer to this question.

Before making up our minds whether 2 Chronicles 36:21 does provide conclusive proof of what the Society asserts, we should follow the wise course and have a good look at the Scripture.

Awake of March 8, 1965 page 28 offers some suggestions that should be applied in our investigation. Surely the Society will not object to our use of the methods it suggests. I quote the passage for our guidance:

A person can find contradictions in practically any piece of literature if statements are taken out of context. So if he is looking for such contradictions in the Bible, he will find many examples to satisfy his mind. On the other hand, if one considers the writer’s viewpoint, the circumstances at the time of writing, and the context in which the material is set, he will find the Bible to be wonderfully harmonious and accurate.

From this point of view, we will approach 2 Chronicles 36:21.

The Society accepts that Ezra wrote both books of Chronicles and stressed the “priestly element” and emphasised the “levitical spirit” (SI page 75). While these books contain Chronological details, they were never intended to be strict Historical Books (see SI page 75).

SI page 75 paras 2 and 3 provide further suggestions by the Society on why the books were written. These books omit entirely the history of the 10 tribe Kingdom, but the lineage of Judah is recorded.

He depicted Judah’s greatest kings as engaged in building or restoring the temple and zealously leading in the worship of God. He pointed out the religious sins that led to the kingdom’s overthrow, while emphasizing also God’s promises of restoration. He stressed the importance of pure worship by focusing attention on the many details pertaining to the temple, its priests, the Levites, the masters of song, and so on. (SI page 75).

The period of captivity is left blank and then Ezra takes up the history of his nation again in the book bearing his own name.

In considering a little further Ezra’s “viewpoint” and “the circumstances at the time of writing”, I quote a little more from SI page 75:

Why was Chronicles written? Consider the setting. The captivity to Babylon had ended about seventy-seven years before. The Jews were resettled in their land. However, there was a dangerous trend away from Jehovah’s worship at the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. ... In view of Jehovah’s prophecies regarding the Kingdom, it was also vital to have a clear and dependable record of the lineage of Judah and of David.

If we have in mind the reason for Ezra’s statements, we should not be surprised if we find that his statement at 2 Chronicles 36:21 is ambiguous from a Chronological point of view.

We have to acknowledge that something happened “to fulfil Jehovah’s word by the mouth of Jeremiah”, but what was fulfilled as prophesied by Jeremiah? The Society confines it to 2 Chronicles 36:17-23, “giving conclusive proof of the fulfilling of Jeremiah 25:12” (25:11 is apparently intended here).

What had been reported in these verses undoubtedly fulfilled what Jehovah said through Jeremiah, BUT not in verse 11 (or 12), for events fulfilling this verse began in verse 6 of 2 Chronicles 36. What were the events then that the Chronicler referred to? Who can say for sure? If it was Jeremiah 25:11; 36:29-31; etc., then he commenced his description of it in verse 6. If he was referring to such predictions as Jeremiah 38:18, they were fulfilled in 2 Chronicles 36:17-19.

The next claim is that these verses show “that a full seventy years must be counted from the complete desolation of the land to the restoration of Jehovah’s worship at Jerusalem.” Evidently verse 20 is being referred to here. This says:

Furthermore, he carried off those remaining from the sword captive to Babylon, and they came to be servants to him and his sons until the royalty of Persia began to reign.

Is this the fulfilment of Jeremiah 25:11 (or 12)? Most Bibles, even the New World Translation, provides a marginal cross reference from this verse to Jeremiah 27:7, which we have already discussed and found to be in the process of fulfilment in Zedekiah’s day.

It is noteworthy that in verse 20, the Chronicler speaks of 2 events:

1. Captives going to Babylon after the destruction.
2. When the royalty of Persia began to reign.

These two events are really what the Society was pointing to when it referred to Jeremiah 25:11 (or 12) and claimed that “in addition, show that a full seventy years must be counted from the complete desolation of the land to the restoration of Jehovah’s worship at Jerusalem.” That the Society’s claim does not match this Scripture even in the way the Society wants to interpret it should be obvious, for the Society does not teach that Judah became desolate immediately at the destruction in Zedekiah’s 11th year.

It is true that it used to, but this was also changed, e.g. The Watchtower May 15, 1922, after quoting 2 Chronicles 36:18-21 commented “the desolation began at the downfall of Zedekiah, 606 B.C.” On this basis, their 2520 years would expire in August 1914 AD.

The Watchtower May 1, 1922 stated on page 139:

God granted to the gentiles a lease of dominion for a term of 2520 years, which term or lease ended about August, 1914.

Today we are told that the 70 years and the 2520 years began in approx. October 1, which is 2 months later than the destruction. (See BF page 372)

When we consider point 2 above, we also find a discrepancy between what is said and what the Society would like to have been said. The royalty of Persia began to reign in 539 BC. (The Society sometimes says 538 BC), whereas according to the Chronology of the Society, the 70 years ended in 537 BC. Unfortunately for the Society, 2 Chronicles 36:21 does not fit their picture even in the way that they suggest interpreting it.

How then can it be understood in harmony with all the rest of the Bible evidence, having in mind also Ezra’s “viewpoint, the circumstances at the time of writing, and the context in which the material is set”?

Ezra was interested in pure worship and observance of Jehovah’s Laws, which he knew very well (Ezra 7:6). Possibly when he wrote of the destruction of Jerusalem, he thought of the later complete desolation and he saw in it a fulfilment of Leviticus 26:34. It is rather vague what he intended, though from a chronological point of view because he could hardly know that in a few thousand years time his utterance would become the basis of a chronological dispute.

In this regard too, it should be noted that he doesn’t even mention the people who did not go captive to Babylon and remained in Judah under Gedeliah, but finally fled into Egypt.

So, if he was referring to the period when the land became completely desolate he does not identify when this period began.

It is of more than passing interest too, to observe that although the Chronicler refers to the Sabbath rest of the land at the same time as he refers to Jeremiah's 70 years, Jeremiah gave not the slightest indication that the land was to enjoy a Sabbath rest.

Certainly too, the 70 years of Jeremiah began long before the land became completely desolate.

After refreshing our minds on what Ezra said about the Sabbath rest, we can consider a probable solution to its application.

All the days of lying desolated it kept sabbath to fulfil seventy years.

The translation of Isaac Leeser translates it:

To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had satisfied its Sabbaths; all the days of its desolation it rested; till seventy years were completed.

An American Translation has it:

In order that the words of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of the desolation it kept sabbath, to complete the seventy years.

The Douay Version (2 Paralipomenon) corresponds with the thought being obtained

That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremias might be fulfilled, and the land might keep her sabbaths. For all the days of the desolation she kept a sabbath, till the seventy years were expired.

The fact that these versions do not require a 70 year period of complete desolation must be clear to all. The Bible doesn't say anything anywhere else about a 70 year Sabbath rest and there is no need to insist upon it here.

The 70 year period commenced in 605 BC and if the Sabbath rest could not commence until the land was completely empty, then it commenced years later and the land rested until the 70 years were completed.

Ezra's comment was obviously intended to draw attention to the fulfilment of a threat because of the nation's wayward course. He had no thought of providing any information that would assist for Chronological discussion.

The Kingdom is at Hand (1944) states on page 171 in a footnote:

IMPORTANT: In the book "The Truth Shall Make You Free", published in 1943, the chronology on pages 150, 151 concerning the kings of Jerusalem from Solomon's successor to Zedekiah is based on the book of 2 Chronicles, chapters 12 to 36: This appears to show the reigns of those kings as successive, end to end.

Actually, however, this was not so, as is plainly shown in the books of 1 and 2 Kings, which books give us a countercheck on the successors of Solomon by a comparison of these kings of Judah with the neighbor kings of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. The chronological TABLE OF CONTEMPORARY KINGS AND PROPHETS AND RELATED EVENTS on the next four pages shows how the books of 1 and 2 Kings give a more accurate check on the reigns of the kings of Judah than does 2 Chronicles.

I think that we could be excused if we take this statement to indicate that the Society does not consider that 2 Chronicles was written for Chronological purposes. From this point of view it should not surprise us if we find that it is not clear when the Sabbath rest actually began or how long it lasted

or for that matter whether the land had to be completely desolate. These chronological aspects were unimportant to Ezra, he merely wanted to point out that the Sabbath rest had been enjoyed by the land.

Why should the land have to have a 70 year sabbath rest? There is no way of showing how many sabbath years the land was deprived of. That the rest each 7th year permitted the land was observed up to the end of the period of the Judges, can surely be taken for granted. God-fearing kings such as David, Solomon and Jehoshaphat would surely have observed this law and it is difficult to imagine when 70 Sabbaths had not been observed.

The Society claims on page 372 BF,

“Almighty God decreed that the land had to lie unworked, uninhabited for seventy years in order to enjoy a relatively perfect number of sabbaths, that is to say, ten times seven sabbaths (etc.).”

This is very interesting and while it suits the Society’s theories, it presents a problem, for God decreed no such thing. The only time that a Sabbath rest for the land is referred to as having taken place during any phase of the desolation is at 2 Chronicles 36:21, and this cannot by any stretch of the imagination be construed as a decree. It was the record of an event recognised years after it occurred. We might find it ambiguous, but it was evidently understandable to those of the 5th Century BC, for whom it was primarily intended.

As Jeremiah’s prophecy is the crux of the matter, we need have no difficulty in discerning the chronological aspect of it for if the 70 years are the same as those referred to by Jeremiah, they commenced in 605 BC.

Before passing on to another possible interpretation of the Chronicler’s statement, I will offer a couple of relevant thoughts. If it was Gods purpose (as the Society suggests) for the land to become completely empty and enjoy Sabbath rest, why did he invite Vine-dressers to stay in the land after the destruction referred to by the Chronicler? (see 2 Kings 25:12 and my page 33)

If there is similarity between 2 Chronicles 36:21 and Leviticus 26:34, there is also contradiction between Leviticus 26:32 and what the Society teaches, for Jehovah said,

I, for my part, will lay the land desolate, and your enemies who are dwelling in it will simply stare in amazement over it. (Leviticus 26:32, emphasis is mine.)

In all respects, what Ezra referred to did not fulfil Leviticus 26, although he seems to have seen in Judah’s desolation a sabbath rest for the land and such a rest is mentioned in Leviticus 26, so it is assumed that he referred to this portion of Moses writings.

Additionally, it is also of interest to note that the whole land to which Moses was undoubtedly referring, never did gain a Sabbath rest, for the area occupied by the 10 tribe kingdom was never completely desolated and so never did gain compensation for Sabbaths not kept (see BF page 167).

Such a conclusion depends of course on the assumption that the land had to be completely empty for the Sabbath rest to be observed. But is this a correct assumption? What about Leviticus 26:32 (just quoted)?

This raises another possible understanding for 2 Chronicles 36:21. Perhaps I should first point out that the word “desolated” appearing in 2 Chronicles 36:21 is an English translation of the Hebrew word SHAMEM.

The Authorised Version presents Matthew 23:38 as “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”. Here we have a clear reference to Jeremiah 12:7. (The New World Translation has a cross-reference to this passage.) Jesus’ words were spoken almost 40 years before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, and it is evident that Jeremiah chapter 12 applies to a period before Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, although it is not specifically dated.

The Watchtower of April 1st, 1958 refers to these passages as though the land was inhabited at the time, and an examination of it shows that it was. Jeremiah 12:7 discloses Jehovah's abandoning Judah:

I have left my house; I have deserted my inheritance; I have given the beloved one of my soul into the palm of her enemies.

In verse 11, SHAMEM is used in reference to Judah:

One has made it a desolate waste [shamem]; it has withered away; it is desolated [shamem] to me. The whole land has been made desolate [shamem], because there is no man that has taken [it] to heart.

On all the beaten paths through the wilderness the despoilers have come. For the sword belonging to Jehovah is devouring from one end of the land even to the other end of the land. There is no peace for any flesh.

They have sown wheat, but thorns are what they have reaped. They have worked themselves sick; they will be of no benefit. And they will certainly be ashamed of the products of you people because of the burning anger of Jehovah. (Jer. 12:11-13)

Evidently all this was brought about by nomadic bands friendly to the Chaldeans (see 2 Kings 24:2).

A perusal of Jeremiah 12:7-12 would assist in appreciating that the land experienced considerable relief from exploitation during the portion of the 70 years when it was occupied. The sieges that occurred in the days of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin would have prevented agricultural pursuits and of course before Jerusalem was finally ravished in Zedekiah's day, there was a siege of almost 2 years duration. The shortage of food is emphasised on page 157 BF.

The conclusion that is possible in view of this evidence is that the Sabbath rest, if it has to be 70 years in duration, could have been counted from 605 BC, because of the considerable rest that the land was enjoying. SHAMEM does not require that the land be empty.

SHEMAMAH is a word very closely related to SHAMEM and it used at Ezekiel 29:12:

And I will make the land of Egypt a desolate waste in the midst of desolated lands; and its own cities will become a desolate waste in the very midst of devastated cities for forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the Lands.

Events fulfilling this prophecy are unknown either in the Bible or in secular History and there is the possibility that a lot of this type of language is figurative. (This is only mentioned as a possibility.) Isaiah 1:7 also provides evidence for the use of SHEMAMAH.

Jehovah's mercy is again a factor that cannot be overlooked. If we place any confidence in Jehovah's mercy, we will see the possibility of the land enjoying Sabbath rest before the complete desolation. (That is, if we insist that it had to be for 70 years.)

Just as we cannot understand Exodus 12:40 on its own, we need Jeremiah to clarify 2 Chronicles 36:21. Although the 70 years are clearly located, nothing quite positive can be said of the period when the land kept sabbath.

Two further scriptures that emphasise this difficulty are Jeremiah 52:30 and Ezekiel 33:21. These passages indicate that there were people in Judah long after the Society said the land was empty. You see, Jerusalem was destroyed in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, whereas Jeremiah 52:30 informs that prisoners were taken in Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year. BF page 167 says:

These, however, were not taken off the land of Judah, but were captured when Nebuchadnezzar, as Jehovah's symbolic cup, made nations that bordered on the desolated land of Judah drink the bitter potion of being violently conquered.

The difficulty that the Society faces in making such a statement is that the Bible does not say that these prisoners came from other lands.

There is very little difference in the language of verse 30 and verse 28. The Society claims that the prisoners of verse 28 came from Judah (see [BF](#) 138 footnote), so why not the prisoners of verse 30? Could such reason be suited to a theory? Jeremiah 52:30 requires that there were people in the land long after the Society commences the 70 year period of complete desolation.

Ezekiel 33:21 speaks of the 12th year of the prophet Ezekiel's Exile. This would be according to the Society's Chronology, 606 BC.

It occurred in the twelfth year, in the tenth [month], on the fifth day of the month of our exile, that there came to me the escaped one from Jerusalem, saying: 'The city has been struck down!'

Jehovah then began to prophecy through Ezekiel that the land would yet become completely desolate (see verses 22-29). When the land actually came into this condition of completely being desolate, we cannot say with any degree of certainty.

The Society's answer to Ezekiel 33:21 is difficult to understand at the present time. It used to suggest that the mention of 12th year was an error and it should be 11th year ([Equipped For Every Good Work](#) page 223). This arrangement puts Jehovah in the position of saying the land would become completely desolate after the Society says this event occurred. All this was hardly satisfactory, so at the present time the meaning of this verse is clouded by claiming the 12th year to be "by a certain calculation" (see [BF](#) page 167). What this "certain calculation" is remains a mystery because the Society has not chosen to disclose it.

I have spent a considerable amount of time on the consideration of 2 Chronicles 36:21, but this is considered necessary because it is the verse upon which the Society places greatest emphasis. A little more space will therefore be devoted to it and particularly to the possibility of the Sabbath rest to the land extending over the whole of the 70 years.

It might assist if we look at the principle behind the Law requiring rest for the land. By consulting Leviticus 25:1-7 we can determine this underlying principle. It is that the land never really belonged to the Israelite (Lev. 25:23). It really belonged to God. Nevertheless, He had offered it to them and they could live in it, BUT it was not to be exploited. This was not intended to be a land on which some got rich and subsequently oppressed the less fortunate.

On each 7th year the land was to lie fallow. This would keep them in mind of Jehovah's purpose for the land. During the Sabbath year the spontaneous produce of the land could be enjoyed by all (Exodus 23:11), but it was not to be harvested (Lev. 25:5). That is, the value from the land on that year could not be gathered for profit. The equalising tendency of this year is also emphasised in Exodus 21:2-6, which allows freedom to slaves if they desire it and debts too were to be remitted (Deut. 15:1-3).

Here we gain a clearer view of the intent of the law. Although the land itself would have benefited from the rest each 7th year, a rest over a period of 70 years would be quite unnecessary.

As we examine what did take place during the 70 years from 605 BC – 536 BC, it becomes clearly evident that the Jews were no longer able to exploit the land. What they were able to gather from the land was virtually what grew spontaneously. No doubt they were able to grow some crops but these would not allow their greed to be satisfied or allow them to gain excessively from the produce gathered. In fact quite the reverse was obviously the case, for there was insufficient for their needs.

When the Chronicler reviewed the period then, it is quite possible that the point that came to the fore in his mind was that when God's anger started to burn against the nation, when the 70 years was running its course, the object of the sabbath law for the land was also the result. The people were no longer able to exploit their God-given land.

From 605 BC through the 70 years, Jehovah had withdrawn the precious right formerly theirs to possess the promised land. It was really no longer theirs, for He said,

“I myself have given all these lands into the hand Nebuchadnezzar.”
(Jeremiah 27:6 and Daniel 2:38).

Even the promised land had been given to Nebuchadnezzar and during the time he was’ entitled to it, it was certainly not exploited by the people of Judah.

This is a reasonable summary of what Ezra may have had in mind, however we can only consider any conclusion reached is at best problematical. As an alternative, we have another possibility which is just as reasonable and it is that Ezra might have thought of the land resting completely, because we know that the primary meaning of the word “sabbath” is to “desist” or “rest”. The sabbath would then be until the 70 years were completed.

2 Chronicles 36:21 has to be understood both by the Society when it offers its interpretation and by others when offering theirs. There is no doubt that it can best be understood in the light of the writings of Jeremiah to which this passage specifically refers.

The Society’s arrangement puts them in the unfortunate position of having to explain away Daniel 1:1; 2:1; Jeremiah 52:30; Ezekiel 33:21; and many others. We have no idea how it would try and get around Jeremiah 25:18; 12:7-12; 18:7, 8; 42:10; etc. It also has the problem of being entirely at variance with absolute secular chronology and being without answers to the problems this position places them in. The Society has to ignore the problems and try and discredit all those who cannot agree with them.

Russell was wrong in insisting that the land had to be completely desolate for 70 years and the Society is wrong in perpetuating that error. The head of the Image (Daniel 2) was unquestionably in existence in Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year which, according to the Society’s chronology, was about 624 BC, and this would bring the end of the “Gentile Times” to about 1897AD, if reckoned as a period of 2520 years.

Daniel chapter 1 contains another point of more than casual interest. The opening and closing verses refer to the Historic events that were responsible for the terminal dates of the 70 years.

Daniel 1:1 is the record of the event which brought about the beginning of the servitude to Babylon and verse 21 reports that “Daniel continued on until the first year of Cyrus the king.” The 1st year of Cyrus was of course the year in which he made it possible for the Jews to be released from servitude. This would almost certainly be the reason for the mention of Cyrus’ year 1 in Daniel 1:21. It would not have been to indicate Daniel’s great age or something of that nature, for in chapter 10:1 we have reference to Daniel in the 3rd year of Cyrus. Reasonably, the reference refers to an event.

SI page 139 says of this verse:

The last verse, which may have been added long after the preceding portion was written, indicates that Daniel was still in royal service some eighty years after his going into exile, or about 538 BCE.

While it is no doubt true that Daniel was still in “royal service” in the 1st year of Cyrus, the verse was hardly included for that reason. It is more reasonable to assume that this verse (1:21) makes its blunt statement to draw attention to the fact that Daniel saw the concluding events of the 70 years as well as the event that marked the commencement, which had been alluded to just prior to this statement, (compare Ezra 1:1).

Alternative 70 Years

There is some merit to the suggestion that the 70 years need not be taken literally. Many authorities have adopted this view. They point to the fact that Jeremiah 29:10 was part of a letter written about 10 years after Jeremiah 25:11 and they consider that there are two or maybe more 70 year periods, or they find another interpretation for “seventy years.”

They consider that 2 Chronicles 36:21 can refer to another period. Such persons also notice that in Jeremiah 27:7, the Babylonian rule is spoken of as though lasting three generations. Jeremiah 25:12 also provided room for thought, for when the 70 years are taken literally, a problem rears its head, as the King of Babylon fell to the Persians in less than 70 years.

Using the dates compiled by the Society, we have 607 BC as the beginning of the 70 years and 539 BC as the year when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians.

As well as all this there are other references to a period of 70 years. (Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5). These also concern Judah. Then there is Isaiah 23:15-18, which has nothing to do with Judah directly. This reference concerns a disaster to befall Tyre, but here it refers to 70 years as “the same as the days of one king”.

Other references to 70 which may not be literal are, for example, the 70 members of the household of Jacob who went down to Egypt (Genesis 26:27). We also have a period of 70 days when the Egyptians wept for Jacob (Gen 50:3). Gideon and Ahab had 70 sons (Judges 9:2; 2 Kings 10:1).

Some also find indications that 40 is a round number, e.g. Ezekiel 29:12-14. 70 is referred to in Psalm 90:10 as about the length of a man’s lifetime.

Some see in the number 70 years reference to an appropriate period of punishment.

R Borger in The Journal of Near Eastern Studies Vol XVIII page 74 refers to an inscription of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, “in which it is stated that the desolation of Babylon after its destruction by Sennacherib should originally have lasted seventy years according to a decision of the god Marduk.” This is referred to as indicating that “seventy years was a perfectly proper period for an ancient oriental city to lie desolate.”

On the “Moabite Stone” we find reference to a 40 year period of punishment of Moab by Chemosh.

If the 70 years are not taken literally, then the problem with Jer. 25:12 is removed and it matters not when the 70 years began. Even now the only one vitally concerned with the matter is the Society, for it is vitally concerned that it be 607 BC. This date, however, is impossible.

Is the Society so concerned with say the desolation of Egypt, to which we have already made reference (Ezekiel 29:12-14)? BF page 183 refers to the conquest of Egypt, but no desolation is mentioned.

No one else appears to have found any reason to alter the firm Chronology of the period. Even a man like Martin Anstey who wrote 2 large Volumes The Romance of Bible Chronology and who altered the chronology of the Persian period onward without hesitation in order to suit his theories on Prophecy, found no difficulty in accepting the pattern usually accepted for the 70 years.

Nowhere in the Bible is it even suggested that Judah would be without man and beast for 70 years. It was 70 years desolate from 605-536 BC.

CHAPTER FIVE. CHARACTERISTIC OBJECTIONS

Shakespeare is credited with the poetic words, “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances and one man in his time plays many parts.”

As we view the stage and think of 70 year periods, we realise that there are many in the Society that have been playing their part for approx. this long. Although they may not have played many parts in the broad sense, they have probably played many parts in the activities of the Society. Some of these, such as F W Franz, are unquestionably closely associated with the publications of the Society. As Russell and then Rutherford made their exit from the Stage, so have many of their Doctrinal opinions and yet all this time the Chronology, although continually interfered with, has remained the focal point for Society Doctrine.

It goes without saying that persons who occupy responsible positions in the organisation and who have had long associations therewith, must have spent countless hours in meditating and studying in order to present the best possible arguments in favour of their Chronology and also in an endeavour to find weaknesses in the normal Chronology.

The book Babylon the Great Has Fallen! God’s Kingdom Rules must be the culmination of all their efforts in this regard. It must be the best that they can offer. As it is, the Chronology presented cannot stand examination, but how does the normal Chronology stand in the face of the attacks made against it by the Society in its book? Surely these too must be the most destructive the Society is capable of producing.

The purpose of this Chapter is to closely scrutinise these objections in the light of the facts. Having done this, we will ring the curtain down on the Chronology of the 70 years and pass onto another aspect of our discussion.

Objection 1 BF page 160.

“Judah went into exile from off its soil”. Judah had not done this nineteen years before this during King Jehoiakim’s reign. (A portion of Jeremiah 52:27 was quoted here).

Answer Who said it did? The nation had not in its entirety gone into exile 19 years before, but the process had commenced.

The very next three verses in Jeremiah 52 (verses 28, 29 and 30) list captives taken on 3 occasions. The final group being taken 4 years later than the above-mentioned group. The land was not completely desolate when Jeremiah said “Judah went into exile”, because verse 16 of this same Chapter says distinctly that “vine dressers” were left in the land.

The objective of the Society’s statement was of course to give the impression that the people of Judah had to be in Babylon in Exile for 70 years while Judah lay desolate. Again though on examination, the Scripture does not fit the picture and no one can produce a Scripture to say that the people had to be in Exile for 70 years while the land lay completely desolate.

Objection. 2 BF page 166 refers to the Captivity of Jehoiachin and others, and comments:

Only some thousands of the Jews went into Babylonian captivity, not the whole Jewish nation. (See also BF page 287)

Answer No one disagrees with this, the nation was to serve Babylon in Judah as a Vassal State. The Bible does not say that everyone had to go to Babylon, to serve for 70 years. Most of the people were progressively exiled in Babylon, but only a small group, consisting of Daniel and associates, was there for the full 70 years.

Objection 3 BF pages 166 and 165 states:

Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century of our Common Era, is in harmony with the Holy Bible when he writes the following about the length of Jerusalem’s desolation:

“He [*the Chaldean historian Berosus in the third century BC*] gives us a catalogue of the posterity of Noah, who adds the years of their chronology, from Noah himself to Nabulassar king of the Babylonians and Chaldeans with an account of this king’s exploits. He tells us that he sent his son Nabuchodonsor with a mighty army into Egypt and Judea where, upon his being informed of a revolt, he reduced the people to subjection, set fire to our temple at Jerusalem, and carried off our whole nation in captivity to Babylon. After this our city lay desolate during an interval of seventy years, till the days of Cyrus, King of Persia.”

The reference given is “Book 1, section 36, of *To Apophroditus on the Antiquities of the Jews in Answer to Apion*. We are not informed which Translation is utilized here. It is certainly not Whiston’s Translation, from which a quotation immediately follows, Book 10 chapter 9 last paragraph of *Antiquities of the Jews*. The paragraph of the unknown translation is identified by Whiston as “Against Apion 1:19”.

After these quotations, BF continues:

Thus the seventy years that Jeremiah foretold was a period occupied completely by the desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Judah. They did not include a period of captivity of part of the Jewish nation in Babylonia.

Answer Russell was not very impressed with Josephus and when discussing Herod’s death on page 57 of Vol. 2 of Studies In the Scriptures, he stated,

Unfortunately, the time of Herod’s death is not given by a reliable historian. Josephus gives some important periods in his history and the dates of some events, but these dates are not trustworthy.

Further on, Russell quotes Appleton’s Cyclopaedia as stating under the subject “Chronology”,

Josephus also gives dates, but he is altogether too careless to be taken into account.

In 1944, the magazine Consolation (predecessor of Awake) was published in Australia. The issue of July 5, 1944 commented on page 30 concerning Josephus:

His books are highly esteemed, and contain much of value and interest, although they are not always accurate. They sometimes contain material (such as legend and wrong chronology) that is hardly creditable to a Jewish historian.

Being assured that the Society is aware of the situation concerning Josephus, it is surprising that unqualified use would be made of his record at “Against Apion” 1:19. Such a course is nothing short of amazing when we find Josephus saying at “Against Apion” 1:21 (only 2 verses later) concerning this same Berosus:

These accounts agree with the true history in our books; for in them it is written that Nebuchadnezzar, in the eighteenth year of his reign, laid our temple desolate, and so it lay in that state of obscurity for fifty years. (Whiston’s Translation and emphasis supplied.)

What was the correct duration of the complete desolation? There is no difficulty if we analyse what the Society quotes Josephus was saying.

Nabulassar (Nabopolassar) was the father of Nebuchadnezzar and it was he who sent his son as commander of the Babylonian forces to combat the Egyptians in 605 BC. We recall that according to Jeremiah 46:2 and the “Babylonian Chronicle”, they met in battle at Carchemish. During this same year, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne.

From this period onwards, the City was desolate in an incomplete sense (CHORBAH). 19 years later the majority of those remaining in Judah were carried off to Babylon after the Temple etc. had been burned (2 Kings 25:8,9).

Does the Society agree that the 70 years began in the year that Nabopolassar died? Clearly Josephus was mistaken in suggesting that the Temple was burned in this year and surely the Society knows this. Josephus was quite accurate in his other statement that the Temple was desolate for fifty years. (586 BC-536 BC = 50 years.)

The Society says that Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year was 626 BC, so his father sent him on the expedition before this, yet the Society says the Temple etc., were destroyed in 607 BC.

Josephus can be called to give his testimony, but as he was not a historian contemporary with the events of the 6th Century before Christ, we would be unreasonable to use him as an authority when he contradicts the Bible and the contemporary and reliable "Babylonian Chronicle." (Josephus lived in the 1st Century AD.) When we view his testimony with an unbiased mind, we can appreciate how foolish it is to try and use him to support a particular theory when he gives evidence contradicting that theory elsewhere.

Counting the 70 years from Nabopolassar's last year is completely opposed to Watchtower Chronology and completely in harmony with the true a chronology for the period.

Objection 4 BF page 138:

It is because of making the mistake of dating the beginning of the seventy-year period for the desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Judah after king Jehoiakim reigned at Jerusalem but three years that the chronologers in Christendom throw their time schedule of history at least nineteen years out of order, shortening up the stream of time by that many years.

They do this because of trying to harmonize the Bible records with the astronomical Canon of Claudius Ptolemy, an Alexandrian or Egyptian astronomer of the second century after Christ but whose system of astronomy has long since been exploded. In this we do not go along with such chronologers.

Answer "Appendix C: Absolute Dates" demonstrates beyond question that there is a great deal more to the matter than "Ptolemy's Canon". Proof has been offered from the work of William Hales that chronologers were more concerned with the Bible record than the Canon, but surely they should not be condemned just because they don't agree with the Society's endeavours to maintain 1914 AD. This is the real reason why the Chronology of the Society and the chronologers in Christendom differ. How could a competent chronologist agree with the Society?

When it is realised that the Society is completely dependent on "Ptolemy's Canon" for the 539 BC date, its statement is astounding The authority for this absolute date is given on page 282 **SI** as **Babylonian Chronology**, 1956, Parker and Dubberstein. Page 10 of this book informs:

The general basis for the chronology of the period here treated is furnished by the Ptolemaic Canon, with help from classical sources.

Clearly the Society's statement is unjust. It relies on Ptolemy itself. In 1922, June 15th, an article appearing in the **Watchtower**, "Seventy Years' Desolation (Part II)" was written with the objective of discrediting all of the secular evidence that clearly proves the Society's Chronology to be erroneous.

The headings of the various sections give an indication of this. I will quote them as a point of interest:

EARLY PAGAN "HISTORY" UNRELIABLE.
GUESSES OF "AUTHORITIES".
SUPPOSITIONS, THEORIES, CONJECTURES.
RECORDS FALSIFIED BY KINGS.

UNTRUSTWORTHINESS OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS.
DOUBTS, AND MORE DOUBTS.

As can be seen, the opposition got the treatment. Under the section GUESSES OF “AUTHORITIES”, we are told:

Ptolemy, ancient Greek “historian”, made up a list called “Ptolemy’s Canon” like a chronological table, which has been much used. This list, however, is unreliable in the dates of all events except those marked by an eclipse or other astronomical phenomenon which can be checked as to date by astronomical calculation.

Now the inference is clear, the dates marked by an eclipse etc. CAN be relied upon!

Professor Edwin R Thiele, (the author of The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings) was kind enough to write to me on October 25, 1964, and I will quote from this letter some information that is noteworthy in view of the Society’s statement:

Concerning the time of the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. First of all, allow me to say that there is not the slightest question as to when that reign began. No other date in ancient history is more firmly established than this. That is because of the two eclipses involved. First there is an eclipse of April 22, 621, which took place in the 5th year of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar. Since Nabopolassar reigned twenty-one years, his death would thus have taken place in 605, when his son Nebuchadnezzar began to reign. Then we also have the eclipse which took place in the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, 568, which once more establishes 605 as the beginning of his reign. There could be no evidence more positive than this.

Reference to the “Appendix C: Absolute Dates” reveals that the Eclipse of 621 BC is taken from Ptolemy and the 568 BC eclipse is calculated from a Babylonian observation tablet. The above-mentioned Watchtower suggests that we should accept 621 BC as the 21st year of Nabopolassar while the Awake of 22nd April, 1963, page 17 says:

Mathematicians can calculate the date of tablets by the astronomical data they contain.

There is no doubt then that Nebuchadnezzar’s 37th year was 568 BC.

Notice on the same page of this Awake reference to Dr O. Neugebauer of Brown University. This man is one of the greatest authorities on Ancient Astronomy and Mathematics living. One of his many and most popular works on these subjects is “The Exact Sciences in Antiquity”. The Society could not but regard this man as capable of calculating the date of a Babylonian Astronomical Tablet.

I wrote to Neugebauer and queried whether there was any doubt as to the accuracy of calculations from this tablet, which insist upon it being related to the year 568 BC. I received a reply dated October 9th 1964, which stated:

The astronomically determined date which you mention in your letter of Oct. 2 is absolutely certain.

Here we have two experts saying that there is not a shadow of a doubt about these two dates, and the Society agrees that their methods are quite in order, but they prove the Society to be 100% in error.

The Watchtower dated 1st February, 1955 contains a question on Chronology. This apparently suited the Society’s purpose for it wrote a reply covering much more than the question deserved, covering several pages of the Watchtower. Some questions I have submitted have not received so much as one word in reply. Page 93 of this journal advises:

The accuracy of astronomy tables containing the eclipses of the moon away back to 1207 BC establishes such an Absolute date. These tables prove that an eclipse of the moon occurred Friday, April 3, AD 33, Julian calendar (or April 1 according to our present Gregorian calendar), at six minutes past 3 pm, Greenwich time. (Footnote refers to *Canon der Finsternisse*, by T. R. Oppolzer, Vienna 1877, Vol. II, p3.)

In 1962, an English translation of this work was made and is known as The Dover Edition (translated by O Gingerich). On page 33 of this Edition, Oppolzer's tables show that an Eclipse of the Moon took place on 22nd April, 621 BC and also on 4th July, 568 BC, which was the exact date of the Eclipse mentioned on the Astronomical Tablet (see "Appendix C: Absolute Dates").

All of the objections of the Society have the same characteristics, they all wither in the light of the facts and usually back-fire on themselves. It is astonishing that the very evidence that the Society provides itself, shoots down its own missiles.

What possible answer could the Society give to the Astronomical Tablet related to Nebuchadnezzar 37th year? They agree that "Mathematics can calculate the date of tablets by the astronomical data they contain."

The chronologists Hood and Wood in their The Chronology of Ezra 7 page 12 state:

Archaeologists have found a document from the time of Nebuchadnezzar giving a series of astronomical observations for his 37th year that locate that BC year unmistakably.

On page 94 they provide more exact information as to the actual dates obtained.

One of these anchor points, from which we can locate other relative dates, is furnished by an astronomical tablet bearing a series of observations dated in the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. These fix the year as having begun on April 22/23, 568 BC, and ended April 11/12, 567 BC.

To summarise the situation here is but to call attention again to the dates obtained from the eclipses and compare this information with the "Babylonian Chronicle" for the period. We have first of all 621 BC as the 5th year of Nabopolassar. Compare this with the portion of the "Babylonian Chronicle" quoted on my page 18.

This establishes that Nabopolassar reigned for 21 years. If his 5th year was 621 BC (the eclipse proves that it was), then his 21st year (16 years later) must have been 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne in this year. The other eclipse shows that the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar was 568 BC. (37th is of course 36 years plus some months.)

His 1st year then must have been 604 BC, and the year of his coming to the throne, or his "Accession Year", was the year before, 605 BC. Thus we have each eclipse providing corroborative evidence of the correct location of the other.

In the face of all his conclusive evidence, and there is much more contained in the Appendix, all the Society can say is that Ptolemy's "system of astronomy has long since been exploded". Whatever has this to do with his Canon of Kings? We might as well say that Isaac Newton's theories on Astronomy are not all accepted any more, so his comments on the book of Daniel are all wrong.

The only information taken from Ptolemy's writings on Astronomy for chronological purposes is the records of observations of eclipses, etc.

Because Ptolemy's system of astronomy, which regarded the Earth as the centre of the universe, has been found to be wrong, does not say that the observations of the ancient Babylonians recorded in his works are wrong. To draw such a conclusion would be very crooked thinking indeed.

There are so many forms of evidence available that substantiate that the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar was 604 BC, that this date is just not open to question.

The Appendix “Ptolemy’s Canon” discloses that:

Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years between 604 BC and 562 BC.
Amel-Marduk reigned for 2 years between 561 BC and 560 BC.
Nergal-shar-usur reigned for 4 years between 559 BC and 556 BC.
Nabonidus reigned for 17 years between 555 BC and 539 BC.

You will be surprised when we extract details from the Society’s literature regarding Babylonian kings for this period and summarise them in the same fashion as above.

First of all we have 539 BC, the year accepted by the Society as Nabonidus’ last year. SI page 139 relates the year 553 BC to his 3rd year. 555 BC must therefore have been his 1st year. (See also Nabonidus Chronicle).

Nabonidus reigned for 17 years between 539 BC and 555 BC
(BF page 184) Labashi-Marduk reigned a few months 555 BC
(BF page 184) Neriglissar reigned 4 years 556 BC – 559 BC
(BF page 184) Amel-Marduk reigned 2 years 560 – 561 BC
(BF page 279) Nebuchadnezzar reigned 43 years 562 BC – 604 BC.

In this summary we have a duplicate of Ptolemy’s Canon, and yet on page 126 BF it is stated:

In the fourth year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, or in 625 BC, Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon.

According to the summary, it would have been 605 BC.

Endeavours to maintain Russell’s chronology in the midst of so many facts that prove it wrong have once again caused confusion to whoever wrote this part of the Babylon book. On the one hand it is suggested that Ptolemy’s Canon is “at least nineteen years out of order”. On the other hand we are provided data which corresponds exactly with the Canon and contradicts what the Society would like us to believe.

Notice that BF page 183 claims that Amel-Marduk “succeeded Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon’s throne in 581 BC.” From the Table we have compiled from the Society’s figures, we can see that such a date for the accession of Amel-Marduk is impossible.

Someone might claim that justice is not being done to the Society, and we could work from 581 BC, as the Society does. This is acceptable; let us see what happens.

Nebuchadnezzar	
Amel-Marduk reigned for 2 years from	581 BC-580 BC
Neriglissar reigned for 4 years from	579 BC-576 BC
Labashi-Marduk reigned for a few months	576 BC
Nabonidus	575 BC-539 BC

BF does not disclose how long Nabonidus reigned for, it merely states on page 184:

Nabonidus ... now took the throne and had a fairly glorious reign till Babylon fell in 539.B.C.

On this basis he would have reigned for 37 years approx. But if he commenced to reign in approx. 576 BC and 575 BC was his first “regnal year”, how can the Society say his 3rd year was 553 BCE (SI page 139)? If 553 BC was his 3rd year then 555 BC obviously was his 1st. This is what is accepted by everyone else and usually by the Society too, so they just cannot make his reign span approx. 37 years.

The Society gives another line of indirect evidence which proves that it accepts that 555 BC was Nabonidus' 1st "regnal year". This is contained in BF page 197:

In an article entitled "The Last Days of Babylon", D. J. Wiseman, head of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities of the British Museum, describes the discovery of a stone monument inscribed in Babylonian which gives King Nabonidus' own account of events during his reign over Babylonia. In this monument, the Harran stele, King Nabonidus of Babylon makes reference to the king of the Medes in the year 546 BC.

It is very interesting that the year 546 BC should be mentioned, in fact it is very interesting that the Society should mention this article at all, for it deals largely with the new "Babylonian Chronicles", published by Wiseman in his book Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings, which provide so much illuminating evidence on the last years of Judah.

The Society has not passed on this valuable information, nor has it passed on other valuable information referred to by Wiseman which, as BF page 197 confirms, was published in Christianity Today Vol 11, No. 4, November 25, 1957. On page 9, Wiseman refers to the newly discovered Stele and advises:

The three Harran texts all tell of events in the reign of the same Nabonidus. One of the newly found inscriptions purports to be the autobiography of the Lady Adad-guppi, the mother of Nabonidus. This remarkable old lady enumerates her pious deeds done at Harran to the gods Sin, Nergal, Nusku and Sadarnunna; it seems she gave great gifts to these gods in return for the benefits bestowed on her during her many years of service. She names the eight kings of Assyria and Babylonia in whose reigns she acted as the high priestess of the moon-god at Harran.

When referring to Nabonidus, BF page 184 reports:

He (Nabonidus) is reported to have been the son of a priestess of the moon at Harran.

The salient point here is that not only does this lady name the 8 kings, but she ties their reigns into a given period (the length of her life) which proves that there were no gaps between their reigns. Each of the Kings from Nebuchadnezzar onward is described and complete agreement with Ptolemy's Canon is found. (For further particulars, see "Appendix C: Absolute Dates").

Our concern at present though is the Society's reference to "the king of the Medes in the year 546 BC". Where is this data obtained from? Wiseman does not mention this date in Christianity Today. However, he does mention such a date in Documents from Old Testament Times. On page 83, he says:

The recent discovery of a text of Nabonidus from Harran which refers to the 'King of the Medes' in 546B.C.

In Christianity Today, Wiseman does mention the text of the Stele which refers to "the kings of Egypt, of the Medes and of the Arabs ... in the tenth year of Nabonidus' reign."

It is evident from a consideration of the facts that "the tenth year of Nabonidus' reign" and 546 BC are synonymous. (See also Whitcomb's Darius the Mede page 47.) If Nabonidus' 10th year was 546 BC, and BF page 197 agrees with this, then his 1st year was 555 BC, and so what the Society would have us believe is bewildering indeed.

Other Objections. There are a few other objections raised by the Society against the Absolute Chronology for the 6th Century BC, but these have either already been dealt with or have been explained indirectly (e.g. Daniel 1:1 and 2:1).

There are also other peculiarities involved in the Society's Chronology. Perhaps I will mention one or two of these when we discuss the 2520 years (7 times).

At this stage I submit that we have to admit that The Society's Chronology has fallen! Truth Rules! By this time too, we should have gained a view of the Society's Character from a different angle. At the conclusion of this entire consideration, it will have to be admitted that the evidence shows that the chronology for the period of the 70 years is inextricably bound together and there is conclusive evidence that the Society's chronology is absolutely impossible.

CHAPTER SIX. THE SEVEN TIMES

Are the “Seven Times” a period of punishment upon Israel and at the same time a period of domination by Gentile Governments? If so, is it legitimise to claim that this period extends over 2520 years?

We originally felt compelled to ask these questions as a result of references by Russell to Leviticus 26:17, 18, 24, 28. We also read excerpts from his Vol. 2 of Studies in the Scriptures, pages 87, 88, 92, 93 and 96.

Russell placed his confidence in the record of Leviticus relating that the Jews would be punished 7 times. He saw in Daniel 4 what he described a “Another Line of Testimony.”

On October 9, 1910, Pastor Russell addressed a Jewish Mass Meeting. His address, “Zionism In Prophecy” was published by the Society in a book Pastor Russell’s Sermons. On pages 478 and 479 of this book we are informed that Russell said:

The whole period of time in which these various Gentile governments would dominate the world would last until Messiah’s promised Kingdom. And this period is symbolically stated to have been ‘seven times’; that is, seven years - evidently not literal years, but symbolical. - Dan. 2:28-45; Lev. 26:18, 24, 28.

At their end, the lease of earthly power of Gentile governments will terminate in the great Time of Trouble foretold by Daniel (12:1). Then Messiah shall stand up in the sense of assuming control of earth’s affairs and Gentile governments will cease; for all nations shall serve and obey Messiah. Then God’s Chosen People, Israel, will come to the front in the world’s affairs: for they will become the representatives and instruments amongst men of Messiah’s Kingdom (etc.).

It is significant that in his entire discussion, Russell never once referred to Daniel 4. There is no doubt that his confidence rested largely on the 26th chapter of Leviticus. (See also Government chapter VI, written by Rutherford, published 1928.)

If you consider yourself a “careful student”, you will be interested in the advice of The Watchtower May 1, 1922, page 133:

It must be apparent to all careful students that the period of the gentile times would be a period of great punishment to Israel, and that that period of time must begin with some specific punishment marking the beginning of the gentile times (etc.).

The Society today does not accept this and so is not a “careful student”? No, the Society no longer uses the 26th chapter of Leviticus to support its contention for 7 times of Gentile domination. The last reference I can find to these verses used in this manner is in the book The New World, published by the Society in 1942 and which states on page 66:

The Lord God used Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, as his executioner to do the overturning. That was in 606 BC, and there the ‘seven times’, the ‘times of the Gentiles’, began. (Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32; Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28; Luke 21:24)

Why is it today that Leviticus 26, which was the basis for Russell’s 7 times, has been dropped and today only Daniel 4, which was formerly only supporting evidence, is all that is used? (See for example, BF pages 349 and 372.)

This appears to be another mystery similar to the shift from 454 BC to 455 BC for the 20th year of Artaxerxes and other strange manoeuvres we have encountered, As far as the answer to the question is concerned, I can only suggest possibilities.

1. The Watchtower March 15, 1963, enlightens us on the Society's change of view as to the Jews' position in Jehovah's purpose:

It was not until 1932 that it was realized that we had been following a false trail with respect to the natural Jews. Like many others we had expected them to return to Palestine and then be restored to God's favour. ... It was only in 1932 that it began to be clearly seen that the true 'Israel of God', the chosen instrument for the major fulfillment of the many Hebrew prophecies of restoration, would be composed, not of natural Jews circumcised in the flesh, but of spiritual Jews or Israelites, that is, spirit begotten Christians.

Russell had looked for blessings to come upon the Jewish Race, and on page 90 of Vol. 2 of Studies in the Scriptures, he said that 1914 would be followed by "the blessings recorded in the latter part of the same chapter (Lev. 26:44, 45)".

If the Jews were no longer to receive these blessings from after 1914, it would be rather difficult to maintain that their punishment would extend to this year. And yet 10 years later, in 1942 we find these verses still being used to support the "7 times" in The New World. No wonder reference is not made to the use of these verses in this publication by the Watch Tower Publications Index 1930-1960.

2. A possible reason for dispensing with the 7 times of Leviticus 26 is the change of Administration of the Society. All books written by Judge Rutherford up to the printing of Children in 1941 acknowledged his authorship.

Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose reports on page 194 that Rutherford died on January 8, 1942. On page 199, the book The New World is referred to as "a Scriptural study of the prophetic narrative of Job, enlarging and developing the theme of the talk 'Integrity', which Brother Rutherford had given as his opening discourse at his last assembly, the year previous".

The New World does not acknowledge Rutherford as author, and subsequent policy was for authorship of publications to be concealed. If he was not the author at least he was the originator of the theme which comprised one of his talks. Perhaps the new administration, which has shown less inclination toward following Russell, dropped Leviticus 26, realising that it could not be used because of the point raised under possibility 1. It is noteworthy that The Truth Shall Make You Free, published in the following year, makes no reference to Leviticus 26 but it does use Daniel 4.

3. There is yet an obvious third probability why it was abandoned and that is that it should never have been used in the first place. Read in their context, these verses refer to the intensity of the punishment, i.e. sevenfold.

Once again we have evidence of a switch, of method of calculation down through the years for the base doctrine of 1914.

Luke 21: 24

And Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.

What the "appointed times of the nations" or "times of the Gentiles" are, or when they commence, or their duration, is nowhere explicitly stated in the Bible. There are several feasible interpretations but one thing seems clear and that is that they must occur sometime after Jesus referred to them for he said, "Jerusalem will be trampled", NOT "is being trampled", or "will continue to be trampled". Therefore it was an event for the future, not the continuation of a situation already in existence for 600 years. Read Luke 21:20-24 for yourself, you will have no difficulty in recognizing this.

Daniel 4

The onus is already on the Society to justify the way it uses the Scriptures of the Hebrews and Christian (Greek language) disciples, known as the Holy Bible to support its teachings. As Leviticus 26 has been discarded, we can forget that, but what about Daniel 4? Does this Chapter say anything about 2520 years of Gentile domination? As Daniel makes no reference to any such thing, indeed the Bible in its entirety contains no such teaching, the Society faces an uphill battle.

It is a well known fact that when an eagle is teaching its young to fly, it encourages the tardy ones by pulling the nest to pieces bit by bit. Finally the eaglet is forced to fly or crash to the ground below. If we pull the nest of the 2520 years to bits, will it stay aloft or will it fall like so much litter to the ground? How can we tell until we pull the nest to bits?

The tree of Daniel 4:10 undoubtedly referred to Nebuchadnezzar (verses 20-22). However, we go beyond the clear intent of the Scripture if we make the tree also mean “world sovereignty” or “world dominion” as the Society does in BF page 176. Surely this point alone is a large piece out of the nest!

Daniel chapter 4 applies to Nebuchadnezzar and to nothing else or to no one else. When this has been proved I will consider that the 2520 years has crumbled.

I will make no attempt to interpret the King’s dream, for Daniel, with the aid of the God of heaven, revealed this secret. In verse 24 Daniel commenced the interpretation of the dream and in verse 28 assures us (all of us) that the interpretation had its fulfilment upon Nebuchadnezzar:

All this befell Nebuchadnezzar the king.

At that moment the word itself was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar
(verse 33).

There is no suggestion anywhere that anything should be learned from Daniel 4 other than what Nebuchadnezzar learned:

Seven times will pass over you, until you know that the Most High is
Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that to the one whom he wants
to he gives it. (verse 25)

Nebuchadnezzar was humbled and this taught him that

[God’s] rulership is a rulership to time indefinite and his kingdom is
for generation after generation (verse 34).

Those who are walking in pride he is able to humble (verse 37).

Closely examining, Daniel 4 (the *nest*), we may be astonished to note that there is nothing to suggest 2520 years of Gentile domination of the Earth without interference from God’s kingdom. So why bother to pull the nest to bits further?

In fairness to the Society, I will mention that they are not the only ones that have applied Daniel 4 to a period of 2520 years. Neither was Russell the first to do so. I know of two expositors who wrote at the beginning of the 19th century who considered that Nebuchadnezzar’s 7 times of madness represented the Gentile Times. (E. B. Elliott, Horae Apocalypticæ Vol 3, page 247 and Birks, Elements of Prophecy page 353.) Of course they did not interpret Daniel 4 exactly the same as the Society does, but then neither did Russell. It is evident though that no special revelation was given to Russell, he probably only copied someone else.

The type of reasoning necessary in the use of Daniel 4 is well demonstrated in BF page 178:

Jehovah’s taking up his power to rule by establishing a kingdom of
God for this earth came long after Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged
Jehovah to be ‘King of the Heavens’. It is clear, therefore, that the
‘seven times’ or seven literal years in Nebuchadnezzar’s personal
experience were symbolic.

This is not clear to me. Who said Jehovah was to take up his power to rule at the end of a period of seven times? What is supposed to be clear rests purely on an unfounded assumption. Is such a specious reasoning to be the basis for a foundation Doctrine of an organisation? Obviously it is, in this case.

Some read to prove a preadopted Creed,
Thus understand but little of what they read,
And every passage in the Book they bend,
To make it suit that all important end.

The Society has often accused others of reading into the Bible instead of learning from it. I cannot see how the conclusion can be escaped that the Society reads into Daniel 4.

When Leviticus 26 was used to teach 7 times of punishment to Israel, which was at the hands of the Gentiles, it would not have been so bad to read into Daniel support for this. Now though when Leviticus is no longer used, there is not the slightest excuse for using Daniel 4 in this manner.

It is being used to maintain what was formerly taught on the basis of Leviticus 26. This is a theory, a theory which no longer has a basis and so an attempt is made to use what was formerly support for the theory, as the basis.

A house with wooden stumps as the foundation is no uncommon sight. Sometimes to add a little extra support to the floor, etc., wooden wedges are driven in between the floor and the stumps. These wedges are not stumps however. If the stumps are removed, the structure will fall down. Daniel was only a supporting wedge for Leviticus 26 and now that this (the foundation stumps) has been removed, the wedge is of no use. It doesn't look like a stump and no one should expect it to support the doctrine.

Needless to say, the Society would be completely stumped without it.

Prophetic Time

If we turn the page mentioned above of BE, we find reference on page 179 to:

A symbolic or prophetic year, the number of days is fixed at the unchanging number of 360, and each day thereof stands for a whole year. "A day for a year, a day for a year". Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6.

In the prophetic book of "Revelation", a thousand two hundred and sixty days are spoken of as being equal to a "time and times and half a time", or three and a half times. (Revelation 12:6, 14) If we divide three and a half (3.5) into a thousand two hundred and sixty days, it gives us three hundred and sixty (360) days to a time.

Accordingly, a symbolic or prophetic 'time' would Scripturally equal three hundred and sixty (360) years. If, now, three and a half symbolic "times" amounted to 1,260 symbolic days, that is to say, 1,260 years, then twice three and a half (or seven) symbolic "times" would be twice 1,260 years, that is to say, 2520 years.

This of course illustrates the use of the 7 times of Daniel 4, and could be considered as a satisfactory arrangement if it was proven that Daniel 4 has to do with others beside Nebuchadnezzar.

The 7 times passed over Nebuchadnezzar. I am sure that everyone would like to know why the 3½ times mentioned by the Society do not represent 1260 years? Can it be considered anything but unreasonable to arbitrarily choose to use the "day for a year" principle with some prophetic periods and not with others? Can such a procedure be justified? Obviously it cannot!

Russell applied the "day for a year" principle to all these prophecies and on page 64 of Vol. 3 of Studies in the Scriptures he wrote:

The time, times and half a time, or three and a half times or years (360 X 3½ = 1260 days, symbolic time – 1260 literal years), here mentioned, are elsewhere shown to be the period of Papacy's power. Compare Dan. 7:25; 12:7 and Rev 12:14 with Rev. 12:6; 13:5.

Rutherford supported these methods for a while and in his book The Harp of God written in 1927, informs us that

Applying the same rule, then, of a day for a year, 1335 days after 539 AD brings us to AD 1874, at which time, according to Bible chronology, the Lord's second presence is due. If this calculation is correct, from that time forward we ought to be able to find some evidences marking the Lord's presence.

It is not the purpose of this writing to enter into a detailed statement of Biblical chronology. The searcher for truth can find an extensive treatment of this question in Volumes 2 and 3 of *Studies In The Scriptures*. (Quoted from page 230; the 1335 days are those of Daniel 12:12.)

Today these time prophecies are calculated as referring to literal days (except the 7 times and the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:25) and are all applied to various events that have occurred in the history of the Society since 1914.

I am of the definite opinion that one of the main reasons that Russell had for plugging for 70 years of complete desolation of Judah, was because this brought the concluding date of his Gentile times to 1914. This date was 40 years from 1874 AD, and fitted in with his understanding of Prophetic parallels etc.

Examination of the alleged fulfilments on the literal day basis reveals them to have been forced. Take as an example the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14. Your Will Be Done on Earth states on page 215:

Count now from the beginning of this International Convention of London on May 25, 1926, and we shall find that the 2,300 days of evenings and mornings bring us to October 15, 1932.

A review of pages 212 to 214 indicates that the "transgression causing desolation" of Daniel 8:13 was the act of the Nations in not heeding the Society's condemnation of the League of Nations contained in a resolution adopted at the above-mentioned Convention. Now as we have learned, the count begins "from the beginning of this International Convention of London on May 25, 1926." (See also World Recovery page 55.)

Why would anyone count from the beginning of the Convention? The Resolution wasn't even mentioned until the Friday (May 28) according to paragraph 41 on page 212, and wasn't make public until the following Sunday night (para. 42, page 213) in an address given at the Convention. World-wide publicity must have been very limited, according to para. 43.

Daniel 8: 14 says:

Until two thousand three hundred evenings (and) mornings; and (the) holy place will certainly be brought into its right condition.

The fulfilment of this is explained on page 215 of the above-mentioned book:

How was Jehovah's sanctuary cleansed vindicated or restored to its rightful state by that date? Examine the official journal of Jehovah's witnesses, *The Watchtower* as of that date. Note page 319. That page sets out the Resolution adopted by the New York company of Jehovah's witnesses on October 5, 1932. It called for a cleansing of the congregational organization, a restoring of it to the rightful state of Jehovah's sanctuary class. How? By the ridding of the organization of 'elective elders', or elders that had been elected to the office of

eldership by the stretching out of the hands. (*In other words, by the democratic method.*)

Page 216 claims:

The announcement in *The Watchtower* magazine of October 15, 1932, at the end of 2,300 evenings and mornings was the official notification made by Jehovah through his visible channel of communication that his sanctuary of anointed 'living stones' had been cleansed, vindicated and justified.

All this is so obviously tailored that it is difficult to believe that anyone could seriously believe it. Unfortunately, in its efforts to maintain 1914, the Society must make these other prophecies fit too. I shouldn't have to mention that they are designed to strengthen the Society's position too.

Although the Society tries to minimize the importance of the Chronology today, it is only too true that it is the Chronology that is the basis of the prophetic interpretations. When things didn't turn out as expected in 1914 and later it was becoming too long a period since 1874, parts of the whole chronological arrangement were dropped. Christ's presence was shifted forward to 1914 etc., and the 2300 days. Also, the prophetic days were treated as literal days. The above arrangement is apparently the best the Society can do.

The Watchtower May 1, 1914, made no secret that it was the Chronology that was the basis of the prophetic interpretations, page 134 says:

We have pointed out that the chronology is the basis of nearly all the suggestions of prophetic interpretations set forth in STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES.

When the chronology of the Scripture Studies was interfered with, the prophetic interpretations of necessity were also altered. As the Chronology is wrong what else could we expect but confusion? The Watchtower has often said that Jehovah is not a God of confusion. This is unquestionably true, The Society then could not possibly be the organisation of Jehovah, despite its continually telling us that it is the "visible channel of communication".

It is unfortunately true that what is really false can appear to be true and so appealing. Paul advised that what is false can "spread like gangrene" (2 Tim. 2:17).

It was so satisfying to be among those who called themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses". I felt so secure and content. I was among some of the most sincere and devoted people you could hope to be in company with.

But that was not enough, it is the truth that must always be our goal. I am so glad that I followed the admonition "Make Sure Of All Things; Hold Fast To What Is Right" (1 Thess. 5:21).

When I discovered that much of what I had been spreading was not right, I could no longer "hold fast" to it. I realized that I had really been only carrying on a lie. If I carried on in it, I would have been demonstrating to God that I did not want the truth, but liked the lie.

Revelation 22:15 contains specific condemnation of such a practice, applying this condemnation to "those who practice spiritism and the fornicators and the murderers and idolaters and everyone liking and carrying on a lie."

Breaking away has meant the severing of association with so many dear friends. I hope they will understand better after having read this volume.

Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth,
Such as men give and take from day to day,
Comes in the common walk of easy life,
Blown by the careless wind across our way.

Great truths are dearly won; not found by chance,
Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream;

But grasped in the struggle of the soul,
Hard buffeting with adverse wind and stream.

Sometimes, 'mid conflict, turmoil, fear and grief,
When the strong hand of God, put forth in might,
Ploughs up the subsoil of the stagnant heart,
It brings some buried truth-seeds to the light.

Not in the general mart, 'mid corn and wine;
Not in the merchandise of gold and gems;
Not in the world's gay hall of midnight mirth,
Nor 'mid the blaze of regal diadems;

Not in the general clash of human creeds,
Nor in the merchandise 'twixt church and world,
Is truth's fair treasure found, 'mongst tares and weeds;
Nor her fair banner in their midst unfurled.

Truth springs like harvest from the well-ploughed fields,
Rewarding patient toil, and faith, and zeal.
To those thus seeking her, she ever yields
Her richest treasures for their lasting weal.

Longfellow was the writer of this piece of poetry and it was printed in Poems of Dawn published by the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1912.

CHAPTER SEVEN. 6000 YEARS FROM ADAM'S CREATION?

A few of the Witnesses who have approached me on my present stand have queried whether I believe that it will soon be 6000 years since Adam's creation? They have insisted that this period will soon expire and have asked, doesn't this prove that Armageddon must come in the next few years? The suggestion is that this is supporting proof for 1914 AD, and that Armageddon will occur and the 6000 years expire within a generation from 1914 (Matthew 24:34).

The thousand year reign of Christ following Armageddon is said to make up a period of 7000 years. The 7th day upon which God rested (Genesis 2:2) is said to expire at the conclusion of the Millennium and therefore to be 7000 years long.

The basis of this is really a Jewish tradition. George L Murray says on page 194 of Millennial Studies:

Barnabas patterned his eschatological plan on the week of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. God worked for six days and rested on the seventh. The present world order would continue in operation for six thousand years, and the seventh millennium would be one of rest, holiness and peace. (*Barnabas lived in the first century.*)

The following is a quotation from the writings of Barnabas, also provided by Murray:

Behold, today will be a thousand years. Therefore, my children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, all things will be finished. "And he rested on the seventh day", this meaneth when His son coming shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly and change the sun and the moon and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day.

What the Society teaches is a variation of this. There seems to be no reason to doubt that what Barnabas said is the basis for the statement appearing on page 378 of The Watchtower June 15, 1961, which I quote:

That God's rest day consists of seven 1,000-year days was also observed by some Jewish rabbis several hundred years ago. In 1626 Henry Ainsworth quoted one of them in his Annotations upon the First Booke of Moses Called Genesis as saying: "If we expound the seventh day, of the seventh thousand of years, which is the world to come, the exposition is, and he blessed, because in the seventh thousand, all souls shall be bound in the bundell of life ... so our Rabbins of blessed memory, have sayd in their commentarie; God blessed the seventh day, the holy God blessed the world to come, which beginneth in the seventh thousand (of years)."

Russell presented his attitude to this tradition on page 39 of Vol. 2 Studies in the Scriptures. He said:

Here we furnish the evidence that from the creation of Adam to AD 1873 was six thousand years. And though the Bible contains no direct statement that the seventh thousand will be the epoch of Christ's reign, the great Sabbath Day of restitution to the world, yet the venerable tradition is not without a reasonable foundation.

If 1872 AD saw the end of 6000 years from Adams creation, then Russell's date for this event must have been 4128 BC.

The Truth Shall Make You Free page 152 provides the date for Adam's creation as 4,028 BC.

The Kingdom Is At Hand page 171 mentions an adjustment to 4026 BC.

New Heavens And A New Earth page 364 shows that the date had been adjusted to 4025 BC.

Now it is 4026 BC again. See BF page 682 and SI page 285.

While I do not suggest that adjustments should not be made to dates when errors have been discovered in a chronological framework, I do suggest that we have definite proof that Adam's creation date is uncertain.

BF page 634 informs:

Measuring by means of the Bible timetable from the first man's creation in the garden of Eden, we are now close to the end of six thousand years from Adam's creation.

First off, as the Society points out on page 95 of The Watchtower, February 1st, 1955:

No one today is able to find out how much time Adam and later Eve lived during the closing days of the sixth creative period, so no one can now determine when six thousand years of Jehovah's present rest day come to an end.

This must apply if the days of Creation are not accepted as literal days. There is also another problem which is involved with ascertaining the date of Adam's creation and that is that the Bible apparently was never intended to be used for such a purpose. Although we may be able to ascertain approximately when Adam was created, we have no guarantee that any date calculated is not in error, perhaps even to the extent of hundreds of years.

We have already seen that the Society chooses one of the "Absolute Dates" in the BC period and works backwards from that. Immediately, its chronology is in error because of the mistake in stretching the period of 70 years to about 90. Then there is the complex period of the Hebrew Kings.

Most systems of recent date give a date for the schism approximately 60 years different to that of the Society. For example, the monumental work of Professor E. R. Thiele, The Mysterious Numbers Of The Hebrew Kings, quoted in The Watchtower February 1, 1955, page 94, and by A. H. Macmillan in Faith on the March gives the date of the schism as 931 BC. The Society says it was 997 BC (SI page 284).

I will mention in passing that A. H. Macmillan wrote his book after approximately 60 years association with the Society. He should have known better than to say on page 229:

Although the archaeological evidences referred to here were not known in 1914, they have since only served to refine and corroborate Russell's calculations.

This is psychologically interesting, for there is not one piece of archaeological evidence that corroborates Russell's calculations. On the contrary, it tears them to shreds. Macmillan himself does not allow a period for the reign of Darius the Mede.

I am absolutely convinced that the Society's chronology for the 70 years is all wrong. I am positive that its chronology for the period of the Kings is wrong, and I know that there are other very great difficulties to overcome before a solid chain of dates can be set down and which connect the date of the creation of Adam to an "Absolute Date".

Probably the greatest difficulties are to be found in the Genealogies, for it seems certain that there are gaps in the Biblical Genealogies. Their main purpose apparently was to give a line of descent rather than to be used to give a strict chain of dates

Luke, in providing Jesus' genealogy, includes Cainan between Shelah and Arphaxad (Luke 3:35, 36). When reading these verses, one would naturally assume that Arphaxad was the Father of Cainan, who was the Father of Shelah. Now, when we read Genesis 11:13 we find that no mention is made of Cainan but it is stated that, "after his fathering Shelah, Arphachshad continued to live four hundred years". This proves that gaps could exist in other genealogies too.

SI page 285 contains a chain of dates compiled by the Society which extend from Arphachshad to the death of Terah. No mention is made of Cainan. What are we to do with Luke 3:35 and 36 then? On this same page of SI (285), reference is made to "the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint, both of

which are based on Hebrew texts older than the Masoretic". If the Society wants to recommend the value of the Septuagint in the matter under review, it has to contend with the fact that the Septuagint does include Cainan at Genesis 11:13, and this gives a period of 130 years from between the birth of Cainan and Shelah. It also gives the period between the birth of Arpachshad and Cainan as 135 years.

There is no need to go into a long explanation of all this, as the evidence on the chronology to 1914 conclusively proves the Society to be totally wrong. Already I have shown that this matter of 6000 years to the Millennium etc., is nothing more than something that sounds good on the surface. When we scratch the veneer off, it is very frail material that we find beneath.

Further evidence can be found by those interested, in The Genesis Flood by John C Whitcomb, Jr., and in Archaeology and Bible History by Joseph P Free. The following quotations are from pages 17 and 18 of the book by Free:

The genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 omits three kings (Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah) and indicates that Joram begat Uzziah, who was his great-grandson (Matt. 1:8)

One of the illustrations of a compressed genealogy in the Old Testament is found in Ezra 7:3, where six generations are omitted (which are given in a more complete genealogy in 1 Chronicles, 7:7ff). Such occurrences give evidence that the Bible may not give a complete record in a genealogy, but rather an indication of the line of descent.

The term "son" is also used in the sense of "descendant", shown by the fact that some of those referred to in Genesis 46:18 as the "sons of Zilpah" were actually her grandchildren, and furthermore it is said that she "bore" them, or begat them. Thus we see that the word "begat" may sometimes be used in the sense of "to have as a descendant".

My attitude in view of all this, is I am not sure that it is possible to ascertain how long ago it was when Adam was created. I am prepared to accept that it was in the vicinity of 6000 years ago. It would not surprise me if 6000 years have passed since that event already, neither would I be surprised if 6000 years since Adam's creation expire after Armageddon. I have no confidence at all in any tradition (or whatever else it may be called) which claims that there will be a period of 6000 years from the commencement of the 7th day, on which God rested, to Armageddon. I fail to see how anyone can claim that the 7th day must be 7000 years long.

In concluding this Chapter, I would point out something that be more than a coincidence. I think it is. Note that the date Russell gave for the end of the 6000 years – AD 1873 – fitted in exactly with his scheme of things. I am convinced that the same thing applies to the Society and 1914, etc., for the date has been bumped up about 100 years.

CHAPTER EIGHT. SIGNS OF WHAT?

Although we have established beyond question beyond that the “Times of the Gentiles” do not comprise a period of 2520 years stretching from 607 BC to 1914 AD, there is one final subject that if not reviewed, would leave our consideration incomplete.

BF page 180 claims:

[These 2520 years] would end about the middle of the month Tishri (or near October 1), AD 1914. That is an unforgettable year, for in 1914 World War 1 broke out and the Gentile system of things has never been the same since then.

Page 503 extends this thought a little further by reporting that:

The months wore on until November 11, 1918, when an armistice brought World War 1 to an end, with Christendom in particular bleeding from terrible wounds, suffering also from earthquakes, pestilences and famines with also a shameful record of religious persecution. All this was tangible proof that the Gentile Times had ended in 1914 and that God’s kingdom had been born in the heavens, and His Messianic King the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, had stood up in power on the heavenly Mount Zion.

Here we have our final point requiring examination highlighted. “All this” (i.e., World War 1, earthquakes, pestilences, famines, persecution) is said to prove that the Gentile Times had ended and God’s Kingdom had been set up. Obviously the claim made here is rather vague, however the booklet, Gods -Kingdom Rules – is the World’s End Near? published by the Society in 1958, provides information that clarifies what the Society’s claim really is. After claiming that God’s Kingdom had been born in 1914, page 23 commences a section headed “Factual Evidences”, and the following suggestion is made:

We do not ask you to accept the mere date 1914 as proof that God’s kingdom rules. There is more to the matter than the mere date. We ask you to accept what came with that date and what therefore confirms that date.

When prophesying about the world’s end, Jesus gave no date. He gave what may be more convincing than a date by which we could know that God’s kingdom has begun to rule. Jesus foretold the world’s happenings and conditions. Three Bible writers give us separate accounts of what Jesus said.

Then World War 1, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, etc. are again mentioned, and on page 25 it is claimed:

This long series of world-distressing events did not begin accidentally in 1914. It began in 1914 because the ‘times of the Gentiles’ ran out that year. Its beginning in that year stamped 1914 as the year when the “times of the Gentiles” ended ... World events from 1914 onwards prove not only that Jesus Christ was a true prophet but that in 1914 he came into the Kingdom power to which he had a right and that his presence in the heavenly kingdom began then.

What we have just read illustrates again the Society’s minimizing the importance of the chronology today. If it minimizes the chronology, what does it do to the signs? Does it exaggerate the signs? Don’t let us be presumptive, let us see.

If we strip these statements of all verbosity, we can appreciate that what the Society is really claiming here is that all of its chronological claims leading to 1914 must be correct because all of the events that have occurred since that date are said to be the Signs given to the Apostles by Jesus and recorded

in Matthew 24, etc. Jesus gave these signs in response to a question by his Apostles as he sat upon the Mount of Olives as recorded at Matthew 24:3.

They asked, according to the Authorised Version of the Holy Bible, “what shall be the sign of thy coming”. The Society translates this passage in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, “what will be the sign of your presence.” Here we find a problem requiring the consideration of the word “parousia”.

Parousia

“Parousia”, should it be rendered “PRESENCE” or “COMING” at Matthew 24:3? Whether these signs began fulfilment in 1914 or not is really immaterial, the problem is – do they show Jesus to be PRESENT or COMING? If it should be COMING, it matters: not when they commenced fulfilment. If it should be COMING, then all hope of saving the 1914 platform, upon which so many sincere people build their hopes, and upon which the Society stands or falls, will be gone.

This does not mean that all HOPE is gone, for God and Jesus still exist and will remain faithful to their promises. It only means that one has to change his way of thinking and of obeying the Almighty.

The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures (1950) says in the “Appendix”, page 779 on the word PAROUSIA:

The tendency of many translators is to render it here “coming” or “arrival”. But throughout the 34 occurrences of the word (par-ou-si’a) from its first occurrence at Matthew 24:3 to its last occurrence at 1 John 2:28, we have consistently rendered it ‘presence’. From the comparison of the par-ou-si’a of the Son of man with the days of Noah at Matthew 24:37-39, it is very evident that the meaning of the word is as we have rendered it. And from the contrast that is made between the presence and the absence of the apostle at 2 Corinthians 10:10, 11 and at Philippians 2:12, the meaning of par-ou-si’a is so plain that it is beyond dispute by other translators.

It is true, as shown by Dr Adolf Deissmann in his Light from the Ancient East on pages 368, 369, that from the Ptolemaic period down into the 2nd century AD, one of the Eastern technical meanings of par-ou-si’a was the arrival or visit of a king or emperor. However, this does not deny or disprove that in the Christian Greek Scriptures the word has the meaning of PRESENCE where it is used in connection with Jesus Christ and others. To prove what a word means the Scriptural context is more decisive than any papyrus usage of the word in a technical way.

In analysing the Society’s case for the rendering of this word as PRESENCE, we are first of all confronted with the fact that “The tendency of many translators is to render it here ‘coming’ or ‘arrival’.”

Why is this? Is it because translators are not aware that the word can be translated “PRESENCE”? No, that could not be true for several times in the King James Version of 1611 for example, the word is translated PRESENCE. Then do translators refuse to render it PRESENCE at Matthew 24:3 just to oppose the Watchtower? Such a claim would be unreasonable for the King James Version was published in 1611, long before Charles Taze Russell ever settled upon this rendering in 1876.

It is obvious that Scholars have no sinister motive in rendering PAROUSIA as COMING or ARRIVAL and that the blanket translation to PRESENCE as insisted on by the Society is not necessary.

Could it be that the Society is the one with the axe to grind in this matter? If the word can be translated in more than one way it would be unwise to maintain that it must be translated just one way because it is acceptable in some or even most texts.

Dr Joseph F Thayer on page 490 of his Greek - English Lexicon advises that the word can be rendered “presence” or “the presence of one coming, hence THE COMING, ARRIVAL, ADVENT.” He says:

In the N.T. esp. of The ADVENT, i.e. the future, visible RETURN from heaven of Jesus, the Messiah, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously kingdom of God: Mt. XXIV. 35.

The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible when commenting on PAROUSIA reports:

The Word ‘Parousia’ was used in classical and Koine Greek in the general sense of ‘presence’ but also of ‘arrival’ or ‘coming’. It occurs four (five?) times in the LXX with these meanings (Neh. 2:6 (text?); Jud. 10:18; II Macc 8:12; 15:21; III Macc 3:17).

As for the “comparison of the par-ou-sia of the Son of man with the days of Noah at Matthew 24:37-39”, it is evident that Jesus was emphasizing the unpreparedness of people in general at his return and the consequent execution of judgement. He said in verse 39 that just as the flood came suddenly on people in this state in Noah’s day, so would his PAROUSIA occur at a like time.

PLEASE NOTE that what Jesus said concerning Noah’s day follows on from his advice that the signs would show that he is near at the doors (verse 33) but yet no one knows the day and hour when he will come (verse 36). Despite some being aware that he will come at any time, although not knowing exactly when, the general condition will be as it was in Noah’s day, when he arrives (verses 38 and 39).

As though taking us forward in time to the actual scene, Jesus illustrated the unpreparedness by reference to two men in a field and two women grinding away on the hand mill (verses 40 and 41). He then further emphasized his warning on unpreparedness by saying “Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day YOUR Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42).

The next point mentioned in the “Appendix” to The New World Translation is the contrast mentioned “between the presence and the absence of the apostle both at 2 Corinthians 10:10, 11 and at Philippians 2:12.”

This is an interesting situation for we have PAROUSIA contrasted with ABSENCE (being away or somewhere else) and obviously the opposite to ABSENCE is PRESENCE (being there).

No one disputes that PRESENCE is the correct reading here. However this is not the only interesting thought to be drawn from this comparison. Does the Society stick to the strict literalness of this word and say that Christ is actually PRESENT? Obviously NO! Awake of May 8, 1962, page 8 reports that:

He comes to earth in that he turns his attention to the things of earth.

Before commenting on this claim, I think a quotation from the book Faith On the March (A. H. Macmillan) might help:

The mistake C. T. Russell had made, I pointed out was not as to the time, 1914, but his error was only as to WHERE the kingdom had been established – in heaven instead of on earth.

Obviously when 1914 came and went and the Kingdom had not been established on Earth and then more years passed by, the thing to do was to say it had been established in Heaven. It is an obvious fact that Christ could not be PRESENT at the Earth and ruling from Heaven at the same time. Therefore the literal rendering of PAROUSIA as PRESENCE (opposite to ABSENCE) finds the Society’s arrangement wanting.

Referring back to what Macmillan said, it is obvious that if C T Russell HAD made a mistake as to the time (and it is so obvious that he did) then it is still possible that the Kingdom will be established on Earth.

On page 9 of his book, Macmillan quotes Russell as saying:

If October 1915 should pass and we should find ourselves still here and matters going on very much as they are at present ... then we would think, Have we been expecting the wrong thing at the right time?

Did the Chronology deserve such confidence? Obviously not, and consequently another alternative would be more likely. Perhaps they were expecting the RIGHT THING at the WRONG TIME?

Back to The New World Translation “Appendix” where mention is made of Deissmann’s book Light from the Ancient East pages 368, 369 and the Society says,

It is true that from the Ptolemaic period down into the 2nd century AD, one of the Eastern technical meanings of par-ou-si’a was the arrival or visit of a king or emperor.

The Watchtower July 1, 1949, page 197 provides extracted portions from these pages and I re-quote them as follows:

From the Ptolemaic period down into the 2nd century AD we are able to trace the word in the East as a technical expression for the arrival or the visit of the king or emperor. The parusia of the sovereign must have been something well known even to the people, as shown by the facts that special payments in kind and taxes to defray the cost of the parusia were exacted, that in Greece a new era was reckoned from the parusia of the Emperor Hadrian, that all over the world advent coins were struck after a parusia of the emperor, and that we are even able to quote examples of advent-sacrifices. The subject of parusia dues and taxes in Egypt has been treated in detail by Wilcken. The oldest passage he mentions is in the Flinders Petrie Papyrus II 39e of the 3rd century BC where, according to his ingenious interpretation, contributions are noted for a crown of gold to be presented to the king at his parusia.

The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, in its discussion of PAROUSIA also refers to the technical usage of the term, as does George Milligan, DD on page 145 of his St Paul’s Epistles to the Thessalonians. However, the Society acknowledges the technical usage of the word, so there is no point in providing further quotations.

What we do need to consider is the claim made by the Society in the “Appendix” mentioned above:

To prove what a word means, the Scriptural context is more decisive than any outside papyrus usage of the word in a technical way.

While we are considering the context, I consider it to be of interest to review why I used to consider Matthew 24:3 to refer to an invisible PRESENCE of Jesus and how I thought the context taught this.

If we examine this Scripture, we are not left in doubt as to who used this word PAROUSIA. It was Jesus’ Disciples asking for Signs of his PAROUSIA. I was influenced to reason that the word PAROUSIA should only be rendered PRESENCE. If this PRESENCE was to be visible, why would his followers need signs? Alternatively, if he was to return invisibly, then of course they would ask for Signs. As he was invisible they would need signs. A couple of reference that reflect this attitude are found in the two publications mentioned hereafter.

Jehovah’s Witnesses the New World Society by Marley Cole (a book favourable to Jehovah’s Witnesses, published in 1956, which is available for purchase from the Society). On page 153, a chapter discussing “Doctrines of the New World” is commenced. This chapter consists of a discussion between Cole and “Thomas James Sullivan ... Director and Superintendent of Ministers and Evangelists.” On page 167 Sullivan asks,

Did you know that the Disciples did not expect Christ to return visibly? In Matthew 24:3; they asked Jesus: ‘What will be the SIGN of your presence and of the consummation of the system of things?’ And Jesus told them that there would be world wars, food shortages, (etc.)”.

On page 215 of The Watchtower July 15, 1949 it is explained that:

When the apostles asked Jesus for the sign of his coming and of the end of this world, they were really asking for the evidence of the establishment of Kingdom as having taken place in the heavens.

Of course, if these statements were true it would be reasonable to translate PAROUSIA as PRESENCE. These statements are not true however, as The Watchtower of September 15, 1964, now admits. On page 576 it states concerning these Disciples:

They did not appreciate that he would not sit on an earthly throne; they had no idea that he would rule as a glorious spirit from the heavens and therefore did not know that his second presence would be invisible.

So then, considering this question in its context, we have the Disciples expecting the Messiah to literally return to the Earth, visibly as their King. They would have been conversant with the technical usage of the word PAROUSIA referring to the visit of a King, and they expected their King to return visibly. They were asking for signs that would indicate when to expect this visit as king. Therefore I was wrong in thinking that their asking for signs indicated that they expected Jesus’ PAROUSIA to be invisible.

How can we conclude otherwise than that the rendering COMING is quite legitimate? The only reason for translating PAROUSIA to PRESENCE would be if the Disciples understood that Jesus’ visible return would be perceived only by signs. In other words, he would be unknown to them and his visit would be a secret one. This is manifestly incorrect, for Jesus gave explicit warning against such visits by those who claimed to be the Messiah at Matt. 24:23-26 and in verse 27 he made it abundantly clear that his PAROUSIA would be no secret affair, but would be visible to all. It would be as evident as a flash of lightning in the Sky.

The undisguised situation is that the question of the Disciples cannot be used to teach an invisible PRESENCE of their King.

Christs’ Return Visible and Personal

When I first considered becoming one of Jehovah’s Witnesses and I was first studying the Doctrines of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, I found this Doctrine concerning the return of Christ the most difficult to accept. Now that I have reconsidered the question and given it more thorough consideration, I find that the Bible is just full of the teaching of a personal, visible return of Christ. Consider the following examples, all of course taken from The New World Translation.

At Luke 19:12, Jesus likened himself to a man of noble birth who travelled to a distant land to secure kingly power for himself AND TO RETURN. Not to just turn his attention from that distant land to his own. Verse 15 says:

Eventually when he got back after having secured the kingly power.
(emphasis supplied)

Jesus made it quite clear that he was COMING BACK.

At John 14:3, he said: “I am coming again.” He was with them then and he promised to REPEAT his visit by COMING AGAIN.

How can we possibly deny the testimony of Acts 3:20, 21?

And that he may send forth the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven, indeed, must hold within itself until the times of restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time.

There are numerous other examples. Why not examine Matthew 16:27; 24:27; 30, 42, 46; 25:19, 31; Luke 9:26; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:2, 3; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 22:12, etc., for yourself?

I have reserved consideration of Acts 1:11 until last because I would now like to comment briefly on the objections usually raised by the Society to the suggestion that Christ will personally and visibly return. Acts 1:11 reveals the advice of the Angels:

This Jesus who was received up from you into the sky will come thus in the same manner as you have beheld him going into the sky.

How did he go into the sky? Verse 9 answers:

While they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud caught him up from their vision.

The Scripture teaches, then, that He went VISIBLY and PERSONALLY in the CLOUDS. As he literally WENT AWAY, then he must literally RETURN, PERSONALLY, VISIBLY, and in the CLOUDS. For the Angel said he “will come”, and he surely will.

One of the latest aids provided by the Society so that its adherents may spread its teachings to others and overcome objections, is a small booklet called Sermon Outlines. Page 26 suggests when referring to Acts 1:11, “Only disciples saw ascension; return similar”. The Angel did not say that his return would be “similar”. He did say that he will:

Come thus in the same manner as you have beheld him going.

John confirmed this testimony at Revelation 1:7 by saying:

Look! he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.

Does that sound as though only disciples will see him? The Society says that Jesus’ coming is beheld with the eyes of understanding. Did the disciples behold Jesus going to Heaven with the eyes of understanding? Certainly not. If he is to return in the same manner as they saw him go, he will return so that his disciples can see him, VISIBLY, PERSONALLY and in the CLOUDS. Other objections that are said to support an “invisible parousia or presence” are:

Told disciples world would see him no more. John 14:19.

This Scripture reads, according to the New World Translation:

A little longer and the world will behold me no more, but you will behold me, because I live and you will live.

I think it fair to say that this is the key Scripture in the defence of the invisible presence theory of the Society. Jesus spoke these words prior to the Crucifixion, but of course he knew it would shortly take place. After the resurrection, he did not appear to those alienated from God but only to his followers. Hence his words are clear. He referred to the World of that time and said nothing to indicate that he meant for all time (see also John 16:16).

In Acts 20:25 and 38, Paul told some of his friends that they would see him no more, surely he had no thought of suggesting to them that they would not see him again, even in the resurrection. Neither must we lose sight of the fact that in this same 14th Chapter of John, verse 3, we have the promise that he is COMING AGAIN.

A good deal of space is devoted in the Society's discussions to the claim that Christ gave his human life as a Ransom and was raised an invisible spirit. Whether these claims are true or not is another question, but these claims would not prevent Christ returning visibly and personally.

There are one or two other objections of a minor nature but if one is prepared to give these unbiased consideration too, it will readily be observed that they are of no "real substance either.

A Glance at the History and Peculiarities of this Doctrine

This subject was introduced for discussion because the Society suggests that the Signs confirm their Chronology. The "Christadelphians" also claim that "The Times of the Gentiles" expired in 1914 and arrive at this date by the use of a chronological arrangement (which also collapses under examination) different to that of the Society and which is opposed to that of the Society. Now if the Signs confirm the Society's arrangement, then they must also confirm that of the Christadelphians, but how can they, when each system contradicts the other? Incidentally, Christadelphians claim that Christ will YET RETURN VISIBLY.

A position is usually arrived at after due consideration of the evidence (all of it). Contrary to this principle, the Society has decided upon conclusions and has constantly changed its understanding of the evidence which is supposed to demand the conclusion, in order to maintain the conclusion. The following are just a few more points that clearly demonstrate my assertion. The product that the Society produces is a counterfeit 1914.

Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose reports on page 18 that it was in the year 1876 that Charles Taze Russell became convinced that Christ's 2nd presence had commenced in 1874. (For Russell's own report on the matter, see The Watchtower June 1st, 1916.) Having this conviction, when Russell began publishing a Magazine in 1879, he called it Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christs Presence. Of course what it was heralding is now understood to have been incorrect, as Christ's presence has been brought forward from 1874 to 1914.

Vol. 2, page 160 of Studies in the Scriptures demonstrates Russell's attitude toward the Signs etc. contained in Matthew chapter 24. He believed that verses 1 to 14 cover the entire Gospel Age and verses 15 to 22 have a double application – literally to the close of the Jewish age and figuratively to the end of the Gospel age, of which the Jewish age was a shadow. Verses 23-26 contain words of warning against false Christs, etc. According to this arrangement the preaching of the Kingdom mentioned in verse 14 had taken place throughout the Gospel Age.

In the book Pastor Russell's Sermons on page 678, Russell is recorded as saying concerning Matthew 24:14:

The Gospel is the announcement beforehand that the Kingdom is coming. When the Kingdom comes, of course the preaching that it is coming will be at an end; for the entire object of this preaching is to prepare for this coming Kingdom of God.

Russell died in 1916 and Judge Rutherford became the new President of the Watchtower Society. In 1921 the Society published a book written by Rutherford entitled The Harp of God. On page 244, Rutherford claimed that Christ received power to reign in 1914. However, he wrote:

It would be reasonable to expect him to be present some time before he would take unto himself his great power to reign. His presence beginning in 1874.

On pages 245 and 246 of his book, the Signs of Matthew 24 are considered, where it is stated:

These, said the Master, mark the beginning of the end of the world, which takes place during the time of his presence.

At this time, it was maintained that the Signs commenced in 1914 although Christ was present since 1874. Today we are urged to accept the Signs as identifying 1914 as the beginning of Christ's Presence. If the Society thought that it was not necessary to believe this in 1921, why is it necessary to believe it now? In 1927, Rutherford had another book published by the Society, the title being Creation. This book provides evidence that the Society had changed its view slightly, however 1874 and 1914 were still maintained.

On page 324 we read:

The period of the Gentile times must end in 1914 AD. That marks the due time for the coming of "him whose right it is" to take over the affairs of the world. That, of course, would mean the presence of the Lord taking action in things pertaining to the world.

On page 325 it is asserted:

The facts hereinbefore considered show that the Lord was present from 1874 forward, in this, that he was doing a special work concerning his church, to wit gathering together the saints (etc.).

So we have Christ present from 1874 and commencing a different phase of his presence in 1914

Prophecy published in 1929 stated:

The Scriptural proof is that the second presence of the Lord Jesus Christ began in 1874 AD. (page 65)

Preparation published in 1933, says on page 231 that Jehovah's organisation was:

Doing the Elijah work under the leadership of Christ Jesus from 1874 to 1918.

Having dropped the Chronology leading to 1874, the Society now says that Christ's presence began in 1914, because of Chronology which is still maintained and because of the Signs which formerly did NOT demand this. Once again we have clear evidence that it is the Chronology that is the basis of the Society's understanding of matters. Seeing that that is wrong, what of what is left? 1914 and all that goes with it is counterfeit.

If a sheet of paper, on which a key has been laid, be exposed for some minutes to the sunshine, and then instantaneously viewed in the dark, the key being removed, a fading spectre of the key will be visible. Let this paper be put aside for many months where nothing can disturb it, and then in darkness be laid on a plate of hot metal, the spectre of the key will again appear. In the case of bodies more highly phosphorescent than paper, the spectres of many different objects which may have been laid on in succession will, on warming, emerge in their proper order.

This is equally true of the record of the Society. It is unfortunately the result when this record is exposed to the light of truth that we see the stain of so much confusion, adjusting, and twisting in order to maintain 1914 and its position of authority over its adherents.

CHAPTER NINE. SIGNS OF PREJUDICE

The Society claims that the Signs identify 1914 positively. Others see no truthfulness in this claim whatever. What is the true position? We have the confusing situation where the Society claims to be telling the truth but then so do the others. Obviously, someone could not possibly be telling the truth, for the Signs either identify 1914 or they do not.

It is told of Alexander the Great that he had a soldier in his army who bore his own name but was a great coward. The emperor, enraged at his conduct, justly said to him, "Either change your name or learn to honour it." Can we also ask that whoever is not telling the truth, should admit it or else start doing so?

For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.
(Matthew. 24:7)

This is really the Scripture that the Society uses to identify 1914, because that was the year when World War 1 broke out, and the Society says that this was the fulfilment of the Prophecy.

In considering this claim, let it first of all be noted that it is not necessary to connect this Scripture with 1914, for if we follow the interpretation suggested by Russell (and others), we have up to verse 14 of Matthew chapter 24 applying to the whole Gospel Age. When we also consider verse 6 of this chapter, we can understand better.

You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not terrified. For these things must take place, but the end is not yet.

Verse 7 commences "For". Now as everyone knows, the word "For" is a conjunction (joining verses 6 and 7 together). Therefore verse can be taken as explaining verse 6. In other words, we have Jesus saying that his followers would hear of wars but not to be worried, as these would not bring about the end, and they were not to the end because of Wars. There would be many wars before the end, FOR (or because) nation will rise against nation etc. Then follows the quick resume of history down through the Gospel Age.

Of course, if we followed the Society's suggestion and aligned these verses with World War 1 and other events which have taken place since 1914, we would really have 1914 identified ONLY by the 1st World War. If it is reasonable to say that 1914 must be the year because of the War beginning in that year, then to follow this line of logic to its logical conclusion we should also be able to ascertain, beside the year, the Month, the Day and so on.

BF page 180 points out that

[The] appointed times of the nations (Gentile Times) would end about the middle of the month Tishri (or near October 1), AD 1914. That is an unforgettable year, for in 1914 World War 1 broke out and the Gentile system of things has never been the same since then.

The inference is that God certifies this Chronology by beginning the Signs then too. The Watchtower October 15, 1961, page 620, says:

It was not merely accidental, it was not by mere miscalculation on the part of some maniac, that World War 1 broke out in 1914 and that the world has never been the same since then. It was because the "appointed times of the nations" ended in 1914.

That year was God's own chosen time to renew the kingdom of God over the earth and put his self-sacrificing Son Jesus Christ on the heavenly throne to rule mankind and to destroy the enemies of God and of man. By means of the Bible's time schedule, together with historical chronology, we can calculate the date 1914 exactly, as being 2520 years from Jerusalem's destruction in 607 BC. But even if

we did not have the means to calculate the date, we have the visible evidences foretold by divine prophecy to prove the date.

The mention of the “date” here is very vague because the end of the “appointed times of the nations” (according to the Society’s reckoning) and the beginning of the Signs (according to the Society’s interpretation), cannot be brought closer together than in the same year, because World War 1 began long before October 1st, 1914.

Your Will be Done on Earth reveals on page 271 that Austria-Hungary declared War on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Germany declared war on Russia on August 1st and upon France on August 3rd. Britain declared war upon Germany on August 4th. The rising of Nation against Nation and Kingdom against Kingdom in 1914 began therefore, long before October 1st.

If the following of one Nation after another into the conflict in 1914 was the beginning of the Signs, and if the beginning of the Signs point to the time when Christ began his PRESENCE, we have him present before Jehovah’s appointed time, according to the Society’s Chronology. This would mean, according to the Society, that he was turning his attention toward the affairs of the Earth before he was supposed to. Does this seem likely to you?

Obviously Jesus’ second presence could only begin once, and so any semblance of confirmation of the Chronology by the Signs is one of appearances only, which too cannot stand examination.

I have already demonstrated that whether the signs began fulfilment in 1914 or not is really immaterial because they are signs of Jesus’ coming. There can be no doubt that the Society has repeatedly changed its interpretation of the Bible and World events to favour 1914 because it is prejudiced toward that date. It is influenced by this prejudice.

Chemists tell us that a single grain of the substance called iodine will impart colours to seven thousand times its weight of water. It is nothing short of amazing how the few leaders of the Society have succeeded in staining or prejudicing the minds of so many others in favour of 1914. I am sure that it can be said quite truthfully that there are 3 basic reasons for this.

1. The Society has repeatedly stated that the Signs commenced in 1914.
2. The Society claims this in a confident insistent way, ridiculing all those who do not agree.
3. The Society enjoys a position of absolute authority in the eyes of Jehovah’s Witnesses. They believe whatever the Society tells them. It is a common expression among Jehovah’s Witnesses that the Watchtower says this or the Watchtower says that, as though if this is true, the matter is settled.

It is indisputably true that Jehovah’s Witnesses have been given what appear to be very good arguments in favour of the teaching that the Signs began in 1914. It is true too that as they go from door to door, victory after victory is gained by using these arguments, and so to the Witness these arguments become even more convincing. Yet, though these arguments are able to score victories, even convince others of their factualness, they are not necessarily true.

It is very easy for a person to become convinced of something which is pleasing to him, or in which he wants to believe. If it was true that Jesus Christ has been present in Kingly power since 1914, it would be a wonderful thing. Particularly if one was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses who were to gain eternal life at any time since that date. Can any one of Jehovah’s Witnesses deny that this is pleasing to him and is what he wants to believe?

Think of those who formulate the Doctrines. Do you think that they want to believe this? Do you think that they want to believe that they will rule as Kings with Jesus? They have constantly arranged their thoughts to fit in with this hope.

It is not difficult to construct good arguments in support of what we want to believe, BUT unfortunately the beliefs don’t follow from the arguments. The arguments follow from the beliefs.

There are many other examples of such prejudice in other religions, not the least of which is the belief in the British Israel theory by some people. So it is with 1914, arguments have been continually

raised, dropped and amended so that the belief is retained. The Society refuses to accept any facts which prove their belief to be in error. I cannot go along with them in this.

If you have found yourself growing angry at my suggestions, may I suggest to you that you have proof of your prejudice. If you consider that you can consider facts that prove that the signs did not commence in 1914, and that the Society's claims are the result of prejudice, with a clear mind, I offer the following for your consideration.

World War 1

We have first for consideration the World War which commenced in 1914 but which, as has already been observed, did not commence at the time when the Society claims the "Times of the Gentiles" ended. In any event, Jesus made no mention of World Wars. He merely referred to Nation rising against Nation and Kingdom against Kingdom as explanation of his statement to his followers that they would hear of Wars and rumours of Wars.

However, for the purpose of considering whether the Society is prejudiced or not, we can assume that Jesus referred to an International War as beginning the Signs. Was the 1st World War the one to which he referred?

In answer, I suggest that we refer to Encyclopedia Britannica 1961 edition, and consider the article "War" in Vol. 23. pages 321-335. Page 323 provides some very enlightening information.

In a list of 278 wars participated in by the members of the modern community of nations from 1480 to World War II, 135 were international, 65 imperial add 78 civil. (see Q Wright, *A Study of War*, 1942, pp. 64lff.) These wars varied greatly in magnitude from relatively minor episodes involving only two small countries and lasting only a few months, to such events as the Thirty Years' war, the Seven Years' War, the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars I and II, involving all of the great powers, many other states, millions of casualties and, with the exception of the first, extending all over the world.

The civil wars, including the French Huguenot wars of the 16th century, the Great Rebellion, and the German Thirty Years' War in the 17th century, the French Revolution in the 18th century, the American Civil War and the Chinese Taiping rebellion in the 19th century, and the Russian and Chinese revolutions in the 20th century, were extraordinarily costly in life.

Imperial wars were as a rule the least costly in life because of the usual marked disparity in military power between the belligerents.

Each of 15 International wars during the modern period (four in the 17th, seven in the 18th, two in the 19th, and two in the 20th century) included substantially all of the great powers as belligerents. (emphases supplied)

Several other quotations from this same article could be produced as evidence that by no stretch of the imagination can it be claimed that Nation rose against Nation and Kingdom against Kingdom for the first time in 1914.

No one denies that the 1914 World War was greater in magnitude than any War that preceded it. No doubt it was named as a "World War" because of its magnitude. Nevertheless, the second "World War" was greater in magnitude again and was more truly a "World War" than "World War 1" or any of the conflicts mentioned above. It seems reasonable to assume that the next War will have even more to recommend it as a "World War".

The following is a further quotation from page 323 of the abovementioned Vol. of Britannica

Wars showed a slight tendency to decrease in length during the modern period, but in all other aspects they tended to increase in magnitude. There were more battles, more participants, larger forces, larger numbers of casualties, more extensive areas of occupation and greater mechanization resulting in much heavier economic costs. This tendency was by no means continuous. The costs of the Thirty Years' War of the 17th century were very great. World War II, however, was greater in all these respects than any other war in history. (emphasis again supplied.)

I submit that the selection of World War 1 as the time of Nation rising against Nation and Kingdom against Kingdom is the product of prejudiced reasoning designed to support 1914.

The Melbourne Newspaper, The Sun in its issue Sept. 5, 1962, contained an article, "DISASTER and what it costs". This article was inspired by the terrible Earthquake that shook Persia only four days earlier. It stated that:

In terms of human lives, injuries, devastation, cost and misery, the world's greatest, and worst disaster was World War II.

Why not commence the signs in 1939? This article gave information on other "DISASTERS" to which I will refer, e.g:

Earthquakes and volcanoes are among the worst disasters man has to suffer, but they are not the greatest takers of life.

The Black Death, which swept Asia and Europe in the 14th century, took about 40 million lives.

But still within memory of many today was the influenza epidemic of 1918 which was believed to have killed more than 21 million as it swept the world. The scourge "depopulated" India. In China more than 13 million were said to have died. At sea, ships were regularly found floating with everyone dead on board.

For the present, we will content ourselves with the next sign:

Food Shortages

Reference to any Encyclopaedia or other authoritative work on Famines will not disclose a famine (of any consequence anyway) during the year 1914. There were famines before that year and there have been famines since that year. There is no doubt that largely because of the huge increase among the population of the world, there is a great shortage of food in many places today. Among the many disasters that would occur as Signs of Jesus' coming, as given by him, were Famines or Food Shortages.

Information on subjects such as these is usually easiest to find in an Encyclopaedia. Encyclopedia Americana, for example provides some interesting information, the 1963 edition Vol. 2 pages 8 and 9 provides some details that I will summarize. The relevant sections, anyway.

Famines during the latter part of the last Century included Ireland's "Potato Famine" of 1846-47, one million died.

Famines occurred in India in 1861, 1869, 1876-1878 (which took a toll of 5,000,000 victims), 1899-1901, 1943 and 1952.

Russia has suffered two major famines since the establishment of the Soviet regime. 1921-23 and 1932-1933.

Perhaps the most lethal of all modern famines occurred in North China in 1877-1878 when floods destroyed food stocks over a vast area, thus dooming to starvation some nine million inhabitants.

On what grounds can we say that these famines were not included in Jesus' prophecy? Would it be because they would not then match the Chronology?

Encyclopaedia Britannica, under the heading "Famine" gives a long list of famines, 12 of which occurred during the 19th Century. How anyone could identify Famines or Food Shortages with 1914 is a question that requires answering.

One might not object to a claim that a general food shortage has been becoming more evident in the World. What though has this to do with 1914? Did this food shortage commence in 1914, or 1800, or 1880, or some other date? It cannot be claimed that Famines or Food Shortages point to 1914. I suppose it can be claimed what I should have said is that such a claim cannot be supported by evidence, logic, or reason.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes demand our attention next.

The above-mentioned newspaper, The Sun, advises that:

The most disastrous earthquake on record was the one in the Shensi province of China that occurred in 1556 and took an estimated 830,000 lives.

But this has been exceeded over the years by Sicily's notorious volcano, Mt. Etna. Since its first recorded "blast" in 476 BC, it has accounted for more than one million lives.

Recorded history's greatest natural upheaval occurred at 10 a.m. on Monday, August 27, 1883 – the mighty Krakatoa explosion, a blow that literally shook the world.

Krakatoa was a 3000 ft volcano in the Straits of Sunda, between Java and Sumatra. On August 26, after lying dormant many years, it began erupting. Every few minutes, came earth-tremoring detonations.

The noise was heard thousands of miles away – in South Australia, New Guinea, Ceylon. It set off tidal waves more than 100 ft. High. As far away as England strange twilights and sunsets were seen for a year. The tidal waves carried round the world three times.

Krakatoa's outburst wiped out towns and villages. The tidal waves sank ships far away at sea. The death toll has been recorded as 35,500.

The Genesis Flood by Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb Jr. (1964) mentions this catastrophe and others. On page 264:

The great Krakatoa earthquake in the East Indies in 1883 created immense waves at least 100 feet high and travelling up to 450 miles per hour, inundating neighbouring islands and drowning nearly 40,000 people. A tsunami from this quake was still two feet as it passed Ceylon and nine inches high at Aden beyond the Arabian Sea.

In 1946, a tsunami originating in a quake in the Aleutian Island region traveled 470 miles per hour across the Pacific, creating a 19-foot high "tidal" wave on the shores of Hawaii, with great destruction. A wave that swept across the Bay of Bengal in 1876 left 200,000 people dead.

Ripleys' Believe it or Not (8th Series) refers to:

The Seamen who were drowned by a catastrophe 5000 miles away!
Several hundred sailors lost their lives and 16 ships were wrecked in
Broughton Bay, Wales, on Jan. 6, 1868 by a Tidal Wave created by
an earthquake in South America.

Australasian Post May 14, 1964 contains an article, "The GIANT jolts". It says:

The intensity of an earthquake is rated by its effects on rock and earth
and on man and his works.

This is why it is difficult to state which earthquake has been the
greatest as each must be judged in terms of loss of life and property
damage in the human world, or marked changes in the earth's
formation.

It is generally conceded in modern times that the most famous 'quake
was the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, although since then there have
been the terrible jolt at Tokyo in 1923 and the recent Alaskan disaster,
said to be the strongest ever.

Did destructive earthquakes start to occur only in 1914 AD? Doubtless as population and building etc.
has increased, so has the potential for earthquakes to kill and destroy increased.

Nevertheless, reference to encyclopaedias etc., shows that numerous destructive earthquakes took
place before 1914. The well known earthquake which occurred in San Francisco in 1906, just a few
years prior to 1914, is one of these.

Earthquakes (1957) by G A Eiby provides some interesting statistics in the Appendix, which I will
present for consideration. These statistics prove that it is absolutely impossible to identify 1914 by
earthquakes.

Important Earthquakes since 1904.

This list begins in 1904 because that is the first year which
instrumental magnitudes are available. It contains all shocks with a
magnitude of 8 or more, together with the most important
intermediate and deep shocks, which generally have somewhat
smaller magnitude than the shallow ones.

In addition, it contains shocks of less intensity that have been the
subject of important researches or have attracted unusual public
attention. As in the list of earlier shocks, proper names have been
given in capitals. Magnitudes have been taken from the lists in
Gutenberg and Richter's Seismicity of the Earth from USCGS
Epicentre cards from Pacedena station Bulletins, and in a few cases
from the bulletin of the New Zealand network.

Date	Epicentral Region	Magnitude	Focal depth
1904 Jan. 20	Panama	7¾	
June 25	Kamchatka	8	
June 25	Kamchatka	8.1	
June 27	Kamchatka	7.9	
Aug 27	KOLYMA, Siberia	7¾	
Dec 20	Costa Rica	7¾	

Date		Epicentral Region	Magnitude	Focal depth
1905	Apr 4	KANGRA, India	8	340 km
	July 9	SW of Lake Baikal	8¼	
	July 23	SW of Lake Baikal	8¼	
1906	Jan 21	HONSHU, Japan	8	340 km
	Jan 31	Colombia, Ecuador	8.6	
	Apr 18	SAN FRANCISCO, California	8¼	
	Aug 17	Aleutians	8	
	Aug 17	Chile	8.4	
	Sep 14	New Guinea	8.1	
	Dec 22	SIKIANG, China	7.9	
	Apr 15	Mexico	8.1	
	Oct 21	KARATAG	8	
1908	Dec 28	MESSINA	7½	100 km
1910	Jun 16	Loyalty Islands	8.1	
1911	Jan 3	TIEN SHAN, Turkestan	8.4	
	Feb 18	FERGHANA, Pamirs	7¾	160 km
	Jun 15	Ryukyu, Japan	8.2	
1912	May 23	Burma	8	
1913	Mar 14	Moluccas	7.9	110 km
1914	May 26	New Guinea	7.9	
	Nov 24	Marianas	8.1	
1915	May 1	Kamchatka	7.9	110 km
	Oct 3	NEVADA, USA	7¾	
1916	Jan 13	New Guinea	7.8	110 km
1917	May 1	Tonga	8	
	Jun 26	SW of Hawaii	8.3	110 km
1918	Aug 15	Caroline Is.	8¼	
	Sept 7	Kurile Is.	8¼	110 km
1919	Apr 30	Tonga	8.3	

The list continues but we do not need follow it further for we are mainly interested to see if anything happened in 1914 to identify that year as the beginning of a series. Can you see anything to support the Society's contention?

There have been several serious earthquakes in recent years, and this is acknowledged. There is nothing to suggest however, that Jesus' promise that there would be "earthquakes in one place after another" commenced its fulfilment in 1914 AD.

Were there not “earthquakes in one place after another” in 1906 AD, for example? Eiby lists 7 earthquakes in that year that occurred in various localities all over the World.

If earthquakes have been occurring with greater frequency or in greater magnitude, what evidence is there to tie the commencement of this sudden change with the year 1914 AD? Obviously there has been no sudden change. If there has been an increase, it has been a gradual change over recent centuries.

Pestilences

The Society draws attention to pestilences that have occurred since 1914, particularly to the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919.

If this epidemic occurred since 1914, is it not true that it occurred also since 1906 or 1844 or any other previous date? Why insist that it identifies 1914? Why not 1918?

It is obvious that the Society is biased in this matter too when it is considered that “The Plague” has been occurring off and on throughout the Earth for centuries. Has the Society mentioned anything about the outbreak during the years immediately prior to 1914? Encyclopaedia Britannica (1961) Vol. 17 page 991 reports,

Ports in south China became plague distribution centres, and between 1894 and 1922 the disease spread throughout the whole world, more widely than during any great foregoing epidemics ... The reported number of deaths between 1896 and 1917 was 9,841,396; the maximum reached in 1907 was 1,315,892 – a rate of 5.16 per 1,000 of the population. Fortunately, in the ensuing 25 years the incidence curve turned downward towards greatly diminished prevalence. (emphasis supplied)

(Please refer to my page 74 for the comments I drew attention appearing in the Melbourne newspaper The Sun.)

Surely, on the basis of the brief evidence provided here alone, it cannot be denied that only the items that might tend to support 1914 are considered or fed to readers of the Society’s Publications.

Darkened Sun and Moon

Consideration could also be given to the darkened Sun and the Moon not giving its light mentioned in Matthew 24:29, for the Society has great difficulty in providing a literal interpretation of this prophecy. The interested reader is referred to The Watchtower of April 1st, 1962 and Your Will Be Done On Earth page 320.

There is no doubt that all of the evidence is made up to present a 1914 which is unknown either to the Bible or to History. Like all counterfeits it can be detected as such upon close examination.

Generation

In an endeavour to try and convince that the Signs must all occur in one cluster (in other words, since 1914) the Society tries to make gain of Matthew 24:34 “Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (See also Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32.)

The Society claims that all the Signs must occur in one generation so that one generation can see them all. We would have to be sure that a generation meant a group of people living over a certain period before we could be sure of the claim made. What did the word “generation” mean?

Awake September 22, 1962 asks,

Was Jesus using the word “generation” in a symbolic way? No, we should not say that the word “generation” here has a symbolic meaning and that it refers, for example, to persons of the spiritual body of Christ exclusively, or only to the true Christian organization itself.

The word 'generation' at Matthew 24:34 is to be viewed in an ordinary sense, as at Acts 13:36 and Mark 8:12. Acts 13:36 speaks of David's very own generation, a literal generation. The generation of persons living in Jesus' time, persons who sought a sign, according to Mark 8:12, was a literal generation.

That a symbolic application to a "generation" of wicked persons is not meant at Matthew 24:34 is apparent when we read the preceding verse, "Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors".

Need I say that all this fits in very well with the Society's arrangement. But does it fit in with the facts? Is it necessary to derive this meaning from Jesus' words?

As we scan through the record of the life of Jesus, we find that he used this expression on many occasions, "this generation". An examination of these seems to indicate quite clearly that it was his custom to often refer to the Jews in this manner (see Matt. 11:16; 12:41; 23:36; Mark 8:12; Luke 7:31; 11:29-32 and 50, 51; 17:25.) Therefore there seems to be justification in applying his expression at Matthew 24:34 to the Jews or the people then living. He would have then been referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Magazine People, dated November 25, 1959 refers to this subject and comments,

The early Christians thought the end was near, basing their belief on the words of Christ, Who, speaking about the end of the world, said: "Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."

Later, it was explained that the words of the Gospel have been misinterpreted. By "generation" a period of about 1,000 years was to be understood. The final catastrophe, it was declared, would occur in AD 1000.

In fact, in the year 1000 everyone expected the end of the world. Many documents dating from the end of the first millennium begin with the words 'On the eve of the end of the world.'

In Europe at that time there was a general desire for atonement, and many of the rich gave away their possessions.

This interpretation stretches a "generation" to a period of 1,000 years. The Society has it at about 70 or 80 years usually, but the abovementioned Awake was more cautious and did not suggest a definite number of years, although it suggested that Armageddon comes "Within the span of a generation, the generation experiencing the realization of the events foretold in Jesus' prophecy". Therefore a generation would be about the length of a man's lifetime.

Collins National Dictionary says that a generation is "usually calculated at 33 years."

Some point out that the primary definition of the Greek word for generation, *genea*, is "race, kind, family, stock, breed". They claim that the promise is that the generation – nation or family of Israel - will be preserved until the signs etc. have been fulfilled. (See Scofield Reference Bible.) This is also a reasonable possibility and it is rather wonderful when one thinks of it that although being scattered for centuries, the Jewish race maintained its identity.

Others say Jesus referred to "the generation of believers", as though Jesus was saying that true believers would continue until all the things he mentioned had expired. This does not seem an unreasonable interpretation either, for the word sometimes refers to certain types or people possessing similar characteristics, e.g. Jesus spoke of "the sons of this system of things" at Luke 16:8 as being "wiser in a practical way toward their own generation (or types) than the sons of the light are." (see Thayer's Greek Lexicon and W E Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.)

There other possible interpretations and I have an open mind on the subject. I prefer the suggestion that Jesus referred to the Jewish Race. Whatever one's conclusions are, it is clear that that they are not able to be positive and are probably influenced by some other factor. This applies to the Society too. Its interpretation is once again in favour of 1914 and is only one among several possibilities. As its understanding of the basic matter (1914) is in error, it is more than likely that its interpretation of this matter is in error too.

Faithful and Discreet Slave

After mentioning various signs etc. related to his PAROUSIA in Matt. 24, Jesus gave a series of parables intended to inculcate preparedness for the crisis associated with his return (see also the comments on my page 65).

In verses 43 and 44, we learn of the Thief in the Night. Verses 45-51 contain a parable related to Faithful and Unfaithful Servants. Chapter 25:1-13 describes the parable of the Ten Virgins. Following on from this we learn of Waiting Servants Entrusted with "Talents".

The Society has taken the parable concerning the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants, saying that it itself is the Faithful and Discreet Slave (Faithful and Wise Servant) of verse 45.

The Watchtower of June 1st, 1963, advises,

We have gained all this knowledge through the arrangement Jehovah is pleased to use at the present time, namely through his anointed spirit-begotten witnesses, comprising the 'faithful and discreet slave' class described by Jesus at Matthew 24:45-47. This slave class has used the Watch Tower Society as its legal instrument since 1884, and the chief publication of dissemination of Bible truth since 1879 has been the Watchtower. It is so even to this day. Develop deep respect for this arrangement, for this is pleasing in the eyes of Jehovah.

I lost any respect I ever had for the Society when I learned the truth of this matter under review. I know that any respect that one had for the Society and its "Bible truth" would not be "pleasing in the eyes of Jehovah."

The parable being considered here can also be read at Luke 12:42-46. When reading the parable, we can see quite clearly that the emphasis is upon the contrasting behaviour of two servants. One faithfully performs his duties, the other displays a lax attitude, thinking that he can satisfy his own lusts at a time when he is sure his Master will not come back. Probably he thinks he can straighten himself out before his Master comes but, being lax and unprepared, he will get caught.

So when Jesus asked in verse 45 "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave?" the answer obviously is *The Servant who all the time, that is every hour of every day, attends to his duties just as though his Master would return at that very minute*. The Faithful Servant justly receives a reward described in verse 47. The highest reward a Servant can get is probably to be made overseer of all that belongs to his Master. What a high honour! Likewise, a faithful Christian will receive the greatest honour and reward held out by God. The Unfaithful Servant will in contrast receive the severest punishment as signified in verse 51.

The parables concerning the "Virgins" and the "Talents" also demonstrate the reward of watchfulness or preparedness, and the Society has no right to seize upon one of these parables to provide itself with credentials so that it can set itself up as an organisation claiming the right to tell everyone else what they must believe. That the Society is NOT entitled to do this is emphasised by the fact that the basis for much of its teaching is false. This has been amply demonstrated both in this section on Signs and in the section on Chronology etc.

It is interesting to note that Pastor Russell used to be identified as the Faithful Servant by his followers. As time went on after Russell died, the position of authority had to be assumed by the Society. On page 239 of The Harp of God, Rutherford said,

Without doubt Pastor Russell filled the office for which the Lord provided and about which he spoke, and was therefore that wise and faithful servant, ministering to the household of faith meat in due season.

Without a doubt? (see also Watchtower page 74, 1/3/922)

Being the spokesman for a God is virtually as good as being that God yourself. Many men have realised this down through the centuries and have exploited the position. The Priests in many Pagan religions are examples, and perhaps the Pope of the Roman Catholics is the most notable. Ripley's Believe it or Not! contains a very interesting tit bit:

The War Council that was Ruled For 8 Years By An Empty Chair

GENERAL EUMENES, secretary to Alexander the Great, dominated the other Generals after Alexander's death by convincing them the Monarch had appeared in a dream and ordered the council to hold all future meetings in the Royal Tent – in the presence of Alexander's Throne, Crown and Scepter. Eumenes was obeyed as spokesman for the Royal Ghost from 323 BC, the year of Alexander's death, until 315 BC – when the General himself was slain.

Apparently the others never found out. Having this position, the Society maintains a position of absolute authority in the eyes of Jehovah's Witnesses. Consequently, they study what the Society says the Bible says, rather than the Bible. Their study is prepared for them always, it is really just a process of continuous indoctrination.

I cannot see where the Society is Faithful or Discreet. I can see where it is prejudiced.

It is as though the Society were in a labyrinth, as long as it refuses to commence in all but one direction (1914) it will remain forever lost.

All those who remain alive and do not realise this beforehand will have this proved to them one day. Whichever way it goes, I hope that you will have made your decision in the light of the facts.

CONCLUSION

The Society has provided conclusive evidence of its meandering all over the place down through the years in order to maintain 1914 and the position of the absolute authority it has usurped as God's organisation and his only channel of communication. A case is presented but continually amended in order to maintain the conclusion and a beautiful picture is built up.

BUT we find on examination that the artful expedient of leaving out some of the facts is resorted to, and it is unfortunately also true that the consideration of these facts exposes the Society's picture as a mere illusion.

Will their lack of faith perhaps make the faithfulness of God without effect? Never may that happen! But let God be found true, though every man be found a liar. (Romans 3:3, 4)

A rich man once entertained a friend whom he had not seen since childhood. A great feast was prepared and the tables were laden with the most delicate dishes. Gold and silver was everywhere. The rich man took an apple from a golden dish which was large and smooth and rosy, and as he handed it to his friend, he said, "Look at this apple, it lay upon a dish of pure gold and it is a beautiful sight to see." His overwhelmed friend took the apple and cut it through, but alas there was a worm at the core.

So it is with many Doctrines of religious organisations. They are served in the brilliance of the Scriptures as though they were of the greatest value. When taken and cut to the core and examined closely many of them are found to be unfit for consumption. They are found to be rotten at the heart irrespective of how they are dressed up and irrespective of their being recommended to us by others.

YW page 363 instructs that:

All who become Jesus' disciples by dedicating themselves to Jehovah God as he did must obey the command to be baptized in water. They must also accept teaching that God provides through his visible organization on earth.

Once we accept the teachings of the Society that conflict with the Bible it is obvious that we cannot at the same time "let God be found true". Once we accept the Society as the authority to tell us what we should or should not believe, we are entirely at their mercy.

Its teachings are made to appear plausible but they are insidious and untrue. If the Society was teaching the truth on this matter, it would welcome any queries such as I have raised. I have written to the Society on several occasions, begging help on several of these matters, but you will not read these questions and the answers given in The Watchtower. My questions were avoided and no assistance whatever was given.

You should not take my word for this, you have the responsibility yourself to "let God be found true" and to "make sure of all things." Have you made sure of your beliefs related to 1914? If you have, you should have no difficulties in solving the problems I have raised. If you have not, then you will no doubt want to do so for your eternal welfare may depend on it and you are no doubt aware of your responsibility to those for whom you are responsible.

If you cannot find the answer to these problems, why not try getting clarification from the Society? If you wish to do this, then here are some of your problems.

1. Can 539 BC be calculated without the use of Ptolemy's Canon?
2. What evidence is there that Ptolemy's Canon is in error in 604 BC (Nebuchadnezzar's 1st regnal year) and is not in error in 539 BC?
3. Why is 539 BC an "Absolute Date" yet 604 BC and 597 BC are not?
4. Why not date the COMPLETE desolation of Judah from 586 BC to 516 BC, if it has to be 70 years?

5. As Astronomers can calculate the date of Tablets containing Astronomical data, why doesn't the Society accept the positive Astronomical evidence that Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year was 568 BC?
6. How can the Society account for the fact that thousands and thousands of cuneiform tablets have been unearthed which date the reigns of the New Babylonian Kings in complete harmony with Ptolemy's Canon and not a scrap of evidence has been found anywhere to suggest an extra 20 years approx?
7. The Stele of the lady Adda-guppi agrees exactly with Ptolemy's Canon and proves that there were no gaps between the reigns of the New Babylonian Kings. We also have exact confirmation from Berosus. How can this evidence be denied?
8. How can the Society explain its list of New-Babylonian Kings, as when we compare this list with the dates given, we find them irreconcilable?
9. If the "Nabonidus Chronicle" makes the 539 BC date absolute, why doesn't the other "Babylonian Chronicle" make other dates absolute, such as 604 BC and 597 BC?
10. Is it not possible that Ezra used the Tishri (or Civil Year) Calendar when reckoning the 1st year of Cyrus? Could not the return have taken place in 536 BC?
11. If Cyrus' reign was counted as beginning after that of Darius the Mede, how can his regnal years begin counting before 537-536 BC?
12. If we want to count 70 years back from 536 BC or 537 BC, how do we prove that the 70 years were full years and not inclusively reckoned?
13. According to the "figure specialists" Parker and Dubberstein (Babylonian Chronology 626 BC-AD 75), the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar was 582 BC. As Jeremiah 52:30 reports, the final group of Captives being taken in this year, why not commence the desolation and the 2520 year period from 582 BC? We would then arrive at AD 1939 for the end of the "Times of the Gentiles" and this was the year when the greatest War ever broke out. Maybe around 1984 or 1994, the Society will switch to an arrangement like this. That is, if it still exists.
14. Does not Jeremiah 27:6, 7 indicate that the servitude to Babylon began long before the 11th year of Zedekiah? And what about Jeremiah 29:10?
15. Does not the Society's reference to desolation in "the complete sense" indicate that there can be desolation in an INCOMPLETE sense? (cf. SI page 284 as an example.)
16. Could not the Jews have served Babylon in their own land?
17. How can Daniel 1:2 be explained if it relates to Jehoiakim's 11th year?
18. What proof do we have that Daniel did not use the Tishri Calendar at Daniel 1:1?
19. Why cannot the 3 years training of Daniel 2 be reckoned inclusively?
20. Cannot the Hebrew expression CHORBAH refer to an occupied land? (cf Jeremiah 25:18 and Ezekiel 33: 27, 28.)
21. Cannot 2 Chronicles 36:21 be saying that the land lay at rest for the final 50 years of Judah's desolation until the full period came its end?
22. What evidence is there that 2 Chronicles 36:21 fulfilled Leviticus 26?
23. Is it not true that 2 Chronicles 36:21 does not fit the Society's Chronology even in the way it wants to interpret it?
24. Do not Jeremiah 18:7-10 and 42:7-13 prove that the land need never have become desolate "in the complete sense"?

25. Why does Daniel use the plural of CHORBAH (“devastations”) if he referred to a period of complete desolation over 70 years? Would it not be that he was referring to the successive devastations that brought Judah to a state of complete desolation?
26. What PROOF is there that Daniel 4 applies to a period of 2520 years of Gentile Domination without interference from God’s Kingdom? What principles of interpretation are employed in discerning this?
27. What authority has the Society to apply the year-day principle to some time prophecies and not to others?
28. Seeing that the Disciples expected a personal, visible visit by their King, how can their question concerning his PAROUSIA be construed to teach an “invisible presence”?
29. What significant Sign occurred on or about October 1st to identify it as the end of the “times of the Gentiles”? (i.e. in AD 1914.)

There are countless other problems, as a reading of this volume will have revealed, and there are a lot more points that could be raised.

Jehovah’s Witnesses are acknowledged as having great zeal and I know from personal experience that the ordinary Witness is sincerely desirous of serving God. However, if they are teaching what the Society says, and this is not true, then they are not witnessing for Jehovah, they are witnessing for the Society. They are WATCHTOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY WITNESSES, not Jehovah’s Witnesses. I have stopped witnessing for the Watchtower.

I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to accurate knowledge. (Romans 10:2.)

I have witnessed the zeal and sincerity of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and I know that this usually applies from the local Branch Servant down through the District and Circuit Servants to the common Publisher. Whoever it is, or whoever they are, that devise what is supposed to be channelled from God cannot be regarded in the same esteem. How can they be, in view of all the evidence? These people seem to have engaged in a hate campaign against all those who, after considering the evidence, cannot agree with them. Why should they follow the Society? Jesus said,

If then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.
(Matthew 15:14)

The Society is so obviously wrong, yet its writings are all slanted toward inclining us to believe that everyone else is wrong. Testimony proving my assertion is not hard to find. Take as an example The Watchtower 15th February, 1959, page 103.

At the end of the “seven times” about October 1, 1914, the nations of Christendom were engaged in the madness and beastliness of World War 1.

By that time the nations that professed to be Christian should have lived up to their claim. They should have shown themselves better than heathen Nebuchadnezzar and should have made an acknowledgment of Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe and the only rightful Ruler of the earth.

Ah, but could it be that they did not know that in the fall of 1914 the Gentile times or the “appointed times of the nations” had run out? No! Rather, they should have known that at the expiring of those “times” about October 1, 1914 Jehovah would bring to birth his promised kingdom in the heavens by seating his anointed Son, Jesus Christ on the throne of the Kingdom to rule in the midst of his enemies.

They should have known this, not just because the Bible was on hand in millions of copies in many languages and because there were hundreds of thousands of clergymen paid to explain the Bible; but because, since 1877, the anointed remnant Jehovah's witnesses were proclaiming the coming of those things in 1914.

As this article continues, we reach such statements as,

Surely, Christendom should have known! ... The worldly rulers particularly those of Christendom, are without excuse. They had opportunity to learn from God's widely published Word, the Bible, and by means of his Witnesses on earth.

As I read this Watchtower, I reflect that it was early in 1959 that I first attended the Watchtower Study at a "Kingdom Hall" of Jehovah's Witnesses. Perhaps this Watchtower was one of the first I studied. No doubt I then considered the material to be deep and scholarly, as some would consider the Babylon Book.

Now I find it to be rather pitiful. Why should Christendom have known? What the Society teaches concerning "the Times of the Gentiles" was not scriptural in 1914 and even though it has changed considerably, it is not true now. The false prophets of Jeremiah's day claimed to be speaking the truth on Jehovah's behalf, but that did not make it so, although they apparently were enjoying a measure of success. We as individuals have a responsibility before God NOT TO MISREPRESENT HIM.

On December 17th, 1962, the Society sent a circular letter to all members of the Clergy and this accompanied the booklet, The Word – Who Is He? According to John. The penultimate paragraph made the following plea:

As you are well aware, heavy responsibility falls on those who are teachers of the Word of God. Some are inclined to preach things that, as the apostle Paul said, would suit the liking of their congregations. Others feel themselves bound to the dogmas of their church. But each one will have to render an account to the One upon whom the life of all creation depends, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

No adherent of the Society is exempt from this responsibility. NO ONE should feel bound to the dogmas of the Society. This will not excuse anyone, for "each one will have to render an account."

I recognise my responsibility to present this exposure to all that I know who need it. May I conclude then by again borrowing from the Book of Job 5:27:

Look! This is what we have investigated. So is it. Hear it, and you — know it for yourself.

APPENDIX A: THE TISHRI CALENDAR

SI page 280 provides a table “The Year Of The Israelites”. Two years are disclosed, the “Sacred Year” beginning in NISAN and the “Secular Year” beginning in TISHRI. Paragraph 19 states,

According to the ancient Biblical reckoning, the year ran from autumn to autumn. This was particularly suited to an agricultural life, the year beginning with plowing and sowing about October 1, and ending with the gathering in of the harvest. ... To this day, many peoples of the earth still start their new year in the autumn.

At the time of the exodus from Egypt, in 1513 BCE, Jehovah decreed that Abib (Nisan) should become “the start of the months” for the Jews, so that they now had a “sacred year” running from spring to spring. (Ex. 12:2)

However, the Jews in this day observe a secular or civil year beginning in the autumn, Tishri being the first month. (see also The Watchtower July 15, 1951 page 447)

It is recognised by all authorities that the year in early times ran from autumn to autumn. There is the obvious requirement at Exodus 12:2 for the Israelites to commence the Months in Nisan. Thus the “Sacred Year” was born.

But this does not even suggest that the old autumn to autumn year did not continue, indeed there is very clear evidence that it did. All that is suggested is that the nation now had a year running from Nisan to Nisan for the location of Festivals. This fact was recognised in the days of Josephus:

Moses appointed that Nisan, which is the same with Xanthicus, should be the first month for their festivals, because he brought them out of Egypt in that month: so that this month began the year as to all solemnities they observed to the honour of God, although he preserved the original order of the months as to selling and buying, and other ordinary affairs. (Antiquities 1:3:3, Whiston’s Translation.)

The Tishri Calendar was not peculiar to just the Hebrews.

The Assyrians, like the Jews, had two new year days – Nisan for the sacred year, Tishri for the civil. The Seleucid year began in Nisan, the Arsacidan with Tishri. (Epping and Strassmaier, *Astronomisches aus Babylon*, p. 177.). (Hastings Dictionary of the Bible (1902) Vol. 4, page 765.)

Jack Finegan states, on page 92, of Handbook of Biblical Chronology,

In summary, we find ourselves concerned chiefly with two Jewish Years, one beginning in the spring on Nisan 1, one beginning in the fall on Tishri 1. Regardless of which year is used, numbering of the months is normally in sequence from Nisan. (see also my page 15)

Some may consider it strange to have a system such as this. However, as David Noel Freedman points out on page 226 of The Bible And The Ancient Near East,

A modern illustration would be the overlapping civil and fiscal calendars of the U.S. Government. In practice, a dual calendar poses no particular difficulties; the problem for the scholar is to determine the calendrical basis of the preserved figures.

Australians too know that business organisations in this country find no difficulty with a “Financial Year” beginning in the 7th Month.

SI page 283 claims that the years of a King “were generally counted from Nisan to Nisan”. The truth is that some reigns were counted from Nisan to Nisan while others were reckoned by years commencing in Tishri. The Bible does not state which method was used and as Freedman says, the problem is to “determine the calendrical basis for the preserved figures.” W F Albright stated on page 102 of Interpretation January 1952.

We do not know directly whether the civil year began in the spring (Abib and Nisan), like the religious year (at least in certain periods), or in the autumn, like the Phoenician Year, the year of the Gezer Calendar, and the later Jewish religious year.” (Albright is referred to in SI page 86.)

I repeat, the Bible does not say directly that either one Calendar or the other was used in a specific instance but we do have clear evidence that both Calendars existed. As the Society uses only the Nisan Calendar for the last days of Judah and has not revealed that Daniel 1:1 and Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2 can be reconciled by recognising that Daniel used a Tishri Calendar while Jeremiah used a Nisan Calendar, I will provide further evidence for the use of a Tishri Calendar.

The Gezer Calendar

W F ALBRIGHT translated the text of a small plaque of soft limestone commonly referred to as “The Gezer Calendar” in BASOR 92, December 1943. This plaque is dated to the 10th Century BC. Albright considers that the tablet was written on by a schoolboy as a school exercise. The Tablet is only approx. 4 inches long and 3 inches wide.

The Gezer Calendar relates the months to the tasks to be performed in the successive phases of agricultural work. (Finegan op. cit. page 17)

Albright says on page 22 of the above-mentioned article,

The scribe was almost certainly an Israelite, since the language is good Biblical Hebrew.

The following is Albright’s translation of the text:

His two months are (olive) harvest;	(Sept.-Nov.)
his two months are grain-planting;	(Nov.-Jan.)
his two months are late planting;	(Jan.-March)
his month is hoeing up of flax;	(March-April)
his month is barley harvest;	(April—May)
his month is (wheat) harvest and festivity;	(May-June)
his two months are vine-tending;	(June -Aug.)
his month is summers-fruit.	(Aug.-Sept.)

It is quite evident that in Palestine in the 10th Century BC, the Calendar began in the fall (Tishri) and if we add up the months of the Gezer Calendar, we can see that there were 12 months in the Calendar.

The Tishri Calendar in Solomon’s Day

1 Kings 6:1 explains that it was in the 2nd month of the 4th year of Solomon that he proceeded to build the Temple. Verse 38 carefully records that it was completed in the 8th month of the 11th year of this King, “so that he was seven years at building it”.

We have already observed that the Hebrews used the “Inclusive” method of reckoning when adding numbers, and also that they began the count of their months from Spring, irrespective of which Calendar was used (Spring or Fall).

If the construction began in the 2nd month of a NISAN year (the 4th of Solomon) and ceased in the 8th month, 7 years later (the 11th year of Solomon), it is obvious that the Temple would have taken 7½ years in building. Inclusively reckoned it would have taken 8 years to build. (See my page 25 concerning “Inclusive Reckoning”.)

Conversely, if the reckoning was according to the Tishri Calendar, we would have the 2nd month of the 4th year of Solomon falling 7 months after the commencement of his year 1. On this same basis, the 8th month of his 11th year would fall only 1 month after the year began. (Tishri being the 7th month.) Therefore the building project would have taken less than 7 years, but it would have been termed 7 years according to the practice of the Hebrews to reckon inclusively. It was not their practice to call 7½ years, 7 years. This would have been termed 8 years.

When we say Jesus was in the grave from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning, we refer to the period involved as 3 days. This is the same method, and we have evidence that the reckoning in 1 Kings 6 was according to the Tishri Calendar.

The Society is clearly in error when it states on page 101 of BF:

At the end of seven and a half years this costly temple ... was completed.

It is worthy of note that the Gezer Calendar and Solomon's Temple building both belong to the 10th Century BC.

The Tishri Calendar in Josiah's Day

Confirmation of reckoning by the fall year is found as late as in the eighteenth year of King Josiah. In his eighteenth year (II K 22:3), the "book of the law" was found in the house of the Lord (II K 22:8) and in the self-same eighteenth year the Passover was celebrated (II K 23:23).

The numerous intervening events between the finding of the law book and the observance of the Passover could hardly have been concentrated within the two weeks between Nisan 1 and Nisan 14 as would have been necessary if Josiah's eighteenth year had only begun on Nisan 1; therefore his eighteenth year must have begun the preceding Tishri 1. (Finegan op, cite page 201)

We know that the Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of Nisan. If Josiah's year began on Nisan 1st, the maximum period for all of the events mentioned in 2 Kings 22 and 23 to have been carried out would have been 14 days. This was obviously impossible.

It cannot be disputed then that Josiah's 18th year began before Nisan 1st, and that Tishri 1st was the date. At least 6 months would then be available for the activities referred to.

It is reasonable to insist that the Tishri Calendar was in use in Josiah's day. Josiah lived at the same time as Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar.

The Truth Shall Make You Free (see my page 9) states on page 239:

In Nebuchadnezzar's time the year began counting from the fall of the year, or about October 1, our time.

The Tishri Calendar in Nehemiah's Day

Attention was drawn on my page 13 to the fact that BF page 386 reports that,

According to Nehemiah's reckoning of the lunar year, the year began with the month Tishri (which Jews today recognize as the beginning of their civil year) and ended with the month Elul as the twelfth month.

Although Elul was the 12th month by count, it was referred to as the 6th Month.

The evidence for the Tishri Calendar in this instance is clearly contained in Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1. Nehemiah refers to events in the month of Chisleu in the 20th year of Artaxerxes. Later, he refers to

further events in this same 20th year but this time in the Month of Nisan. If a New Year commenced in Nisan, the events would have been in the 21st year of Artaxerxes.

To those who accept what the Bible says, there is clear indication of use of the Tishri Calendar, for Artaxerxes 20th year obviously continued beyond Nisan until Tishri.

Some are not satisfied with the Bible statement. Hayim Tadmor suggests on page 227 of the Journal of Near Eastern Studies XV (1956)

The discrepancy that Nisan, the first month of the year, is still included within year 20 may be explained in several ways. The simplest one is that Nehemiah carelessly carried over “Year 20” although Nisan was already the beginning of Year 21. A second possibility is that the “5” of the “25” years present in the parallel passage in Josephus, Ant. XI. 168, has dropped out.

If anyone wants to follow the Chronology of Josephus in preference to Nehemiah, they are welcome to. The suggestion that Nehemiah made a mistake is not very appealing to a Bible believer either, particularly in view of the fact that the Jewish copyists never corrected the error and the translators of the Septuagint, who apparently adjusted the Chronology of the Hebrew writers to correspond with their own calculations, translated this passage so that it is still in accord with the Hebrew.

Horn and Wood point out on page 70 of The Chronology Ezra 7 that

Rudolf Kittel (GESCHICHTE DES VOLKES ISRAEL, Vol. 3, p. 616) thinks that the words “in the twentieth year” of Neh. 1:1 were mistakenly taken over from chapter 2:1.

See my page 23 where BF page 172 is referred to as citing Kittel as one of the Hebrew scholars who propose that the Hebrew text of Daniel 2:1 should be “twelfth year” instead of “second year”.

Kittel obviously has very little respect for the accuracy of the Masoretic text and one would have to be very careful before placing any confidence in his advice.

The Elephantine Papyri

When referring to the Tishri Calendar, Edwin R Thiele comments:

The Jewish Aramaic Papyri from Elephantine also provide evidence that the same method was employed in Egypt in secondary datings for the years of Persian Kings. (BASOR 143, October, 1956.)

In concluding our brief consideration of some of the evidence for a Tishri calendar, we can consider a few points relating to the Elephantine Papyri.

A discussion of the methods of dating employed on these Papyri is contained in an article by S H Horn and L H Wood, “The Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine”, Journal of Near Eastern Studies XIII, No. 1 (1954) pp 1 ff. Practically all of this article appears as an Appendix to the book by these same authors, The Chronology of Ezra 7.

The Papyri identified as “Kraeling 6” clearly demands the use of a Tishri Calendar by the Jewish Colony on the island of Elephantine in Upper Egypt, who lived at the same time as Nehemiah.

It is true that Richard A Parker, another expert in these matters, disputes the conclusions of Horn and Wood in this matter. He disagrees that a Tishri Calendar is definitely demanded, in his article also contained in the Journal of Near Eastern Studies but in Vol. XIV (1955). Nevertheless, Horn and Wood could only be wrong if “Kraeling 6” contains a scribal error, and Parker asserts that it does. He admits on page 273 of this Journal,

All that is required to accept their result is the absolute correctness of the date as written.

On page 275 he says,

The year number must be Jewish if no scribal error be present.

The evidence for the Tishri Calendar is inescapable and there is every justification for the claim that Daniel calculated by this Calendar at Daniel 1:1. There is no justification for ignoring this evidence and making his 3rd year, his 11th.

APPENDIX B: PTOLEMY'S CANON

What is termed "Ptolemy's Canon" is a list of Kings commencing with Nabonassar, a King of Babylon, in 747 BC. It continues to the end of the Neo (New) Babylonian Empire, listing the Babylonian Kings, followed by the Persian Kings until that Empire was overthrown by Greece.

The name of Alexander the Great then appears, followed by the Ptolemaic Rulers of Egypt. Finally, the Roman Rulers are recorded, bringing the list down to the 2nd Century AD, to the day of its compiler, Claudius Ptolemy, who lived in Alexandria.

Ptolemy is famous as a geographer, a mathematician and as an astronomer. Because of his writings on Astronomy, he compiled his Canon of Kings and later gained fame as a chronologist. His most famous work on Astronomy is best known by its title in Arabic, the "Almagest".

The *Almagest* contains a considerable amount of information on the motions of the moon and planets, and in order to demonstrate his theories on these motions, Ptolemy compared various Eclipses, Planetary positions, etc., of his day with those recorded by the ancients.

It is obvious that for the consideration of motions, the time period that lapsed between the various positions of heavenly bodies he referred to, was of vital importance. For example, A History of Astronomy by A Pannekoek (1951) page 151, says concerning Ptolemy,

To find the return to the apogee (the "anamolistic period"), he made use of three Babylonian eclipses from 721 and 720 BC, and compared them with three observed by himself in AD 133, 134 and 136.

Page 155 contains further observations by Pannekoek on Ptolemy's motives.

He took two lunar eclipses observed at Babylon, so chosen that the moon was at its greatest distance from the earth. One was the eclipse of April 22, 621 BC, one-fourth of the moon's diameter was eclipsed; computation showed the moon to be at a distance ... At the other eclipse, July 16, 523 BC, half its diameter was eclipsed and with a distance ... (etc)

Historians today locate the date of the Astronomical data referred to by Ptolemy as so many years "BC" e.g., April 22, 621 BC. Ptolemy, to accomplish his purpose of indicating the interval between observations, provided his list of Kings. As the Canon commenced with Nabonassar in 747 BC, Ptolemy, when listing subsequent Kings, gave not only the number of years of their reign, but also the number of years since 747 BC, or the first of Nabonassar and this is termed the "Nabonassar Era".

The following is a list of the Kings of the Neo Babylonian Empire from Nabopolassar to Nabonidus and then Cyrus and Cambyes of the Persian Empire, as listed by Ptolemy:

Nabopolassar	reigned 21 years	123-143 years of Nabonassar Era
Nebuchadnezzar	43 years	144-186 years of Nabonassar Era
Amel-Marduk	2 years	187-188 years of Nabonassar Era
Nergal-shar-usur	4 years	189-192 years of Nabonassar Era
Nabonidus	17 years	193-209 years of Nabonassar Era
Cyrus	9 years	210-218 years of Nabonassar Era
Cambyes	8 years	219-226 years of Nabonassar Era

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1962) Vol. 2 page 574 states,

The Greek astronomer Ptolemy says that Mesopotamian records of eclipses were available from a date expressed as 747 BC.

The value of the Canon for historical purposes is very simply expressed by E R Thiele on page 46 of The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings.

What makes the canon of such great importance is the large amount of astronomical material recorded by Ptolemy in his *Almagest*,

making possible checks as to its accuracy at almost every step from beginning to end.

Over eighty solar, lunar, and planetary positions, with their dates, are recorded in the *Almagest* which have been verified by modern astronomers. The details concerning eclipses are given with such minuteness as to leave no question concerning the exact identification of the particular phenomenon referred to, and making possible the most positive verification.

Horn and Wood provide further information of value on pages 43, 44 of The Chronology of Ezra 7:

As to the possibility of confusing any of these eclipses with others occurring on the same date of different years, it is to be noted that a lunar eclipse come only at full moon. A full moon can occur on the same date in our calendar only every 19 years but can recur in the Egyptian calendar, which shifts backward through the seasons only about every 25 years. ... Besides, not all full moons can be eclipsed; this can take place only about twice a year. Therefore the possibility of a lunar eclipse recurring on the same Egyptian date is reduced still more.

Further, Ptolemy's 19 eclipses, dated by year, day, and even hour, are all in mutual agreement, and various astronomers who have calculated these eclipses by modern methods have all agreed on their dates, varying only slightly as to the hour. Oppolzer's tables of lunar eclipses show that the average variance between his computations and Ptolemy's statements is about ten minutes.

For other comments on the accuracy of the eclipse records, etc, see the "Appendix: Absolute Dates".

The eclipses recorded by Ptolemy for the period we are concerned with took place on 22nd April, 621 BC, in the 5th year of Nabopolassar (the father of Nebuchadnezzar) and 16th July, 523 BC, the 7th year of Cambyses (the son of Cyrus).

It is of great interest to note that what was probably the original record of this last mentioned eclipse has been discovered on a clay tablet. The following is quoted from page 26 of New Light On The Bible and the Holy Land (1892) by Basil T A Evetts, M.A.

Ptolemy says, "In the seventh year of Cambyses, which is the two hundred and twenty-fifth year of Nabonassar, in the Egyptian month of Phamenoth, in the night of the seventeenth-eighteenth, one hour before midnight, according to the hour of Babylon, the moon was eclipsed, beginning by the north, to the half of her diameter".

In the cuneiform text inscribed upon the clay tablet from Babylonia we read: "In the year seven (of Cambyses), in the night of Tammuz the fourteenth, three hours and one third after nightfall, there was an eclipse of the moon. At its maximum, half of the diameter disappeared, beginning by the north".

The two statements fully agree and Ptolemy, or rather, Hipparchus, from whom he derived his knowledge of Babylonian astronomy, probably borrowed his record of this eclipse from the very cuneiform text, a copy of which is now in the British Museum.

See also Olmstead, History of the Persian Empire page 202.

Absolute proof is available then that Ptolemy provided correct details of ancient astronomical observations, despite the fact that his "system of astronomy has long since been exploded". (cf. BF page 138 and my page 47 ff.)

Note that Ptolemy used the Egyptian Calendar for the seventh year of Cambyses ("Egyptian month of Phamenoth"). He consistently used this calendar when referring to the Kings, irrespective of the system employed in the country concerned. There is no problem in converting dates given in an Egyptian year to our own because the Egyptians consistently used a year of 365 days. It therefore falls a day behind the Julian Calendar (which is used for BC dating) every four years.

If we look to "Ptolemy's Canon" for the name of a King who reigned less than a year we will be disappointed. Remember that Ptolemy's purpose was to have a means of identifying years or dates in the past. A King who reigned for only part of a year would not serve this purpose. The few months he may have reigned would be counted in the years of his predecessor. There are 10 Kings who reigned less than a year whose names have been omitted from the Canon. (See Hales A New Analysis of Chronology Vol. 1 page 172.)

We can be confident that what James B. Lindsay said in his Chronoastrolabe (1858) concerning Ptolemy's Canon is true, "a foundation is laid for chronology sure as the stars."

APPENDIX C: ABSOLUTE DATES

Reference to the Watch Tower Publications Index 1930-1960 directs us to three Watchtower magazines providing information on “Absolute Dates”. These were printed in the years 1952, 1955 and 1959. The Watchtower referred to for the year 1959 discusses the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar and therefore there is no need to concern ourselves with it here.

The Index for each of the years 1961 and 1962 provide no references to “Absolute Dates”. For the year 1963, attention is drawn to SI pages 85, 281-2, 284-285, 335 and the Report on “Everlasting Good News” Assembly of Jehovah’s Witnesses page 56.

So that we can appreciate what the term “Absolute Date” means to the Society, I will quote from the sections mentioned and offer brief comments after each quotation.

The Watchtower May 1, 1952, page 271.

Almost all early Bible chronology ties in with secular history at the year 539 BC, in which year the fall of Babylon to Darius and Cyrus of the Medes and the Persians occurred. In late years, several cuneiform tablets have been discovered pertaining to the fall of Babylon which peg both Biblical and secular historic dates.

The one tablet known as the “Nabunaid Chronicle” gives the date for the fall of Babylon, which specialists have ascertained as being October 12-13, 539 BC, Julian Calendar, or October 6-7, 539 BC, according to our present Gregorian Calendar. [*History of the Persian Empire*, by Olmstead, 1948, p. 50; also *Light From The Ancient Past*, by Finegan, 1946. p. 190]. This tablet also says that Cyrus made his triumphant entry into Babylon 16 days after its fall to his army. Thus his accession year commenced in October, 539 BC.

However, in another cuneiform tablet called “Strassmaier, Cyrus No. 11”, Cyrus’ first regnal year is mentioned and was determined to have begun March 17-18, 538 BC, and to have concluded March 4-5, 537 BC. It was in this first regnal year of Cyrus that he issued his decree to permit the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (Ezra 1:1) The decree may have been made in late 538 BC or before March 4-5, 537 B.C. [*Babylonian Chronology 626 BC-AD 45*, by Parker and Dubberstein, 1942, pp. 11, 27.]

At this stage I consider it necessary to draw attention to the fact that the Society does not provide information anywhere as to HOW the date in 539 BC is calculated. It merely refers to the tablets of the Babylonians and to authorities who calculate the date. I cannot see how we can interpret their method otherwise than to assume that they recommend these authorities to us as completely authoritative on dates.

The puzzling situation that arises is that these very same authorities, using the very same methods and the very same type of material, produce other dates which conflict entirely with the Society’s Chronology. The old question comes up, “How can we accept one of these dates as reliable and not the others?”

For example, the figure specialists Parker and Dubberstein on page 12 of Babylonian Chronology 626 BC-AD 75 (the latest edition of their work) give evidence for the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign in 605 BC, and consequently for the Battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:2). The tablets referred to also “peg both Biblical and secular historic dates”. Several tablets are utilised, one being the Babylonian Chronicle and one other being BM92472 Strassmaier, Nabuchodonosor, No. 2.

Strassmaier was a Catholic Priest who spent a tremendous amount of time copying cuneiform tablets. So on each hand we have the Chronicle and details of a tablet, the text being provided by Strassmaier.

The same figure specialists determine the date but the Society will only accept the 539 BC date. This they say is accurate because these figure specialists are authoritative on these matters. The other dates are not accepted because it conflicts with their arrangement and so the tablets used for calculating these dates are branded as “incomplete or inaccurate secular accounts”. (Awake March 22, 1960, page 7). The figure specialists are no longer accurate but are regarded like those

Chronologers in Christendom (who) throw their time schedule of history at least nineteen years out of order. ...They do this because of trying to harmonize the Bible records with the astronomical Canon of Claudius Ptolemy. (BF page 138)

What a contrast! There is nothing more incomplete or inaccurate about the tablets related to 605 BC than there is about those related to 539 BC.

On my page 47 I drew attention to the fact that on page 10 of their work, Parker and Dubberstein say,

The general basis for the chronology of the period here treated is furnished by the Ptolemaic Canon, with help from classical sources.

The ordinary Witness is unfortunately led to believe that “Ptolemy’s Canon” is not necessary for the calculation of 539 BC. He reads statements such as that already quoted which casts reflections upon the accuracy of “Ptolemy’s Canon” and also those such as the following quoted from The Watchtower February 1, 1955, page 94 (which is the next reference we come to in the Watchtower Index):

The outstanding Absolute date for the BC period of the Hebrew Scriptures is that for the fall of Babylon as the capital city of the third world power at the hands of Cyrus, king of the Persians, October 13, 539 BC, Julian calendar (or October 7 by our present Gregorian calendar), which event is referred to at Isaiah 45:1. This date is made Absolute by reason of the archaeological discovery and deciphering of the famous *Nabunaid Chronicle*, which itself gives a date for the fall of Babylon and which figure specialists have determined equals October 13, 539 BC, according to the Julian calendar of the Romans. [*Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—A.D. 45*, by Parker and Dubberstein, 1942, p. 11.] (emphases are supplied)

The figure specialists again are found to be Parker and Dubberstein. Note that the writer is cautious enough to say that this is the “outstanding Absolute date”, NOT the only one. It could not be the “outstanding” one if there were not others. The only reason why it is “outstanding” is because it is the ONE used by the Society.

The ordinary Witness, when reading this statement, would think that the Nabunaid Chronicle itself gives the date 539 BC. Several have told me that this is what they understood. The truth is that it gives no such thing. How could it? The Babylonians knew nothing about the Christian Era. What the tablet does say is disclosed in part on page 335 of SI.

In the month of Tashritu (Tishri, Hebrew 7th month), when Cyrus attacked the army of Akkad in Opis on the Tigris ... the 15th day, Sippar was seized without battle. Nabonidus fled. The 16th day (October 11-12, 539 BCE Julian or October 5-6 Gregorian) Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Gutium and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle.

Obviously the tablet only provided the date, the 16th of Tashritu for the fall of Babylon to the figure specialists.

How then is the year determined by them? Please note the quotation from their work page 10 just mentioned on my page 95. It is all very simple, the tablet relates to the last year of Nabonidus, which was his 17th. According to “Ptolemy’s Canon”, this 17th year was 539 BC. (see “Appendix B: Ptolemy’s Canon”).

On page 13 of their book on Babylonian Chronology, Parker and Dubberstein give as evidence for the last year of Nabonidus, being 539 BC, the “Nabonidus Chronicle.” Several other tablets are referred to, one being published by Strassmaier. Parker and Dubberstein obtained the year (539 BC) of course from Ptolemy’s Canon.

Perhaps I should elaborate a little here for the year 539 BC can be, and has been calculated without reference to “Ptolemy’s Canon” at this point. It would help if I explained how Parker and Dubberstein’s work on the cuneiform tablets has been arranged and so what follows is a brief report on this.

Cuneiform Tablets

The dates of the new moon in ancient Babylon can be calculated astronomically. A new moon of course meant a new month. Therefore, tables can be compiled of the months of the Babylonian years. For our convenience, the years can be identified in terms we understand, so many years before the Christian Era. (There are various problems involved such as the identification of the years containing embolismic months, but these can usually be identified from information contained on the tablets themselves. We do not need to go into all that here.)

We have already noted (cf my page 48) that it has been established that the 5th year of Nabopolassar was 621 BC, because of the Eclipse mentioned by Ptolemy. (See also “Appendix B: Ptolemy’s Canon”.) Here we have a definite anchor point from which to work, but how can we move from here?

Encyclopaedia Britannica (1961) Vol. 5, page 655 informs,

There are two sources for the Chronology of the New Babylonian and Persian Empires, the canon of the Greek historian Ptolemy, and the reckoning which can be traced almost month by month and day by day; the tablets give names of rebels against Persian kings (etc.).

And so our attention is drawn to the Cuneiform tablets as a source for Babylonian Chronology. “Strassmaier, Cyrus No. 11” is just one of the thousands of tablets available for this purpose.

Parker and Dubberstein have listed the various Kings in the order given by Ptolemy and summarised their reigns by reference to tablets dated earliest and latest in each reign. This is not always possible later in the Persian period as when Papyrus became more popular for recording purposes fewer clay tablets are available. Nevertheless, this does not apply in the period from Nabopolassar to Cambyses, these years are fully checked by the clay tablets. The practice was to date business documents on a certain date in the particular year of whoever was the King. For example:

Cause ... iron implements (and) 80 KUDUTUM to be taken to Nergal-sarra-usur by the hands of Nabu-sum-iddina, secretary of Nergal-sarra-usur. Month Iyyar, day 12th, year 43rd, Nabu-rudurri-usur king of Babylon. (The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia by T G Pinches, page 440.

This tablet is one of the many that prove that Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years. It is not used by Parker and Dubberstein as there are three tablets dated approx. 6 months later in Nebuchadnezzar’s 43rd year. The very latest tablets of his reign and the very earliest of his successors help to establish to within a few days when he died. Parker and Dubberstein state on their page 12,

The first tablet dated to Amel-Marduk (see below) comes from Sippar(?) and is dated on the same day as the last tablet of Nebuchadnezzar from Uruk. Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar died during the first days of October, 562.

The Society doesn’t accept the date here mentioned. I have used Nebuchadnezzar as an example. By following this process, Parker and Dubberstein have summarised the evidence of the cuneiform tablets and an examination of the results obtained reveals that they agree exactly with “Ptolemy’s Canon”.

There are literally thousands of these tablets and they provide no evidence whatsoever for a gap of at least 19 years between the reigns of the Babylonian Kings somewhere. This gap between the Society's Chronology and every other piece of evidence would have to be accounted for somehow if the Society's Chronology was correct. What a strange situation! (Or is it?)

Calculation from 621 BC (the date provided by the eclipse record) by adding the years of the Babylonian Kings brings us to 539 BC as the last year of Nabonidus and for the fall of Babylon. We have Nabopolassar's reign positively located by the eclipse and we know that he died in 605 BC because of the statements of the Babylonian Chronicle, and because the clay tablets substantiate that he reigned for 21 years. Therefore we could calculate from 605 BC.

Cambridge Ancient History page 224 (I think it was Vol. 2) states,

The date 539 for the Fall of Babylon has been reckoned from the latest dates on the contracts of each king in this period, counting from the end of Nabopolassar's reign in 605 BC, viz. Nebuchadnezzar 43: Amel Marduk 2: Nergal-shar-usar 4: Labashi-Marduk (accession only): Nabonidus 17 = 66.

Please observe that once again we have conclusive evidence that although Ptolemy's "system of astronomy has long since been exploded", his Canon of Kings is still accurate. (cf. BF page 138)

Our next reference to the Society's "Absolute Date" is found in SI page 85.

This date 539 BCE is an absolute date, that is, a date fixed, proved and accepted by secular history.

Just prior to this statement several quotations are provided from authorities that mention this date. The Society's definition of an "Absolute Date" is a correct one but there are other dates such as 605 BC for the Battle of Carchemish and the accession of Nebuchadnezzar, and 597 BC for the capture of Jerusalem under Jehoiachin, which are "proved and accepted by secular history". Furthermore, they are accepted by the very same authorities that the Society refers to as mentioning 539 BC. Werner Keller is one of these. On pages 272 and 273 of the London edition of his The Bible as History he provides the dates 605 BC and 597 BC for the events I have mentioned. If we are to be influenced by his providing 539 BC, why shouldn't we also be influenced by his providing 605 BC and 597 BC as dates for Bible events?

SI pages 281 and 282 add nothing to our knowledge of "Absolute Dates". We are merely informed that,

An absolute date is a calendar date that is proved by secular history to be the actual date of an event recorded in the Bible.

605 BC and 597 BC contain dates of events "recorded in the Bible", but the Society refuses to accept them. Our attention is directed this time only to the "Nabonidus Chronicle" and again to Parker and Dubberstein as the "Modern authorities." We recall that they are not considered as authoritative by the Society for dates that contradict their arrangement. SI page 284 claims under the heading "Counting Back To Adam's Creation" that

The absolute date for this calculation is that of Cyrus' overthrow of the Babylonian dynasty 539 BCE.

Why is this the "absolute date"? Why not another further back in time? (Proof was given on my pages 60 to 62 that it is not reasonable to claim to be able to count the years back to Adam.)

SI page 285 does not appear to contain any information on the subject and SI page 335 contains the portion of the text of the Nabonidus Chronicle which we have already considered.

Finally, we have for consideration the item on page 56 of the Report on 'Everlasting Good News' Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. Brief mention of a visit to the British Museum is made.

Of special interest to the conventioners was the Nabonidus Chronicle, which the Museum authorities placed on show just for the period of the “Everlasting Good News” Assembly. Because this chronicle helps date the fall of Babylon in the year 539 BC it is of great importance, and most of the Witnesses saw it here for the first time.

No doubt the Society asked for the Nabonidus Chronicle to be put on display. What a pity it did not ask for the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle to be also displayed, for this chronicle is also of “great importance” as it helps date the Battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar’s accession date, the capture of Jerusalem under Jehoiachin etc.

It is also contained in the British Museum and I am sure that not only would it have been the first time most of the Witnesses had seen it, I would venture to say that it would have been the first they had ever even heard of it. They do however hear and read plenty about the Nabonidus Chronicle.

In our consideration of the Society’s definition of an “Absolute Date”, we have found nothing incompatible with the definition that might be provided by anyone else. We have noted however that they have chosen only one date for the Hebrew Scriptures and ignore the others. The Watchtower February 1, 1955, page 95 stresses that,

It is well to understand that all Bible chronology dates for events prior to 539 BC must be figured backward from the Absolute date of 539 BC.

When we do “understand” this matter of “Absolute Dates” it is not well for the Society for such a practice is NOT necessary at all. The Society is forced into adopting such a false procedure in order to protect its Chronology. It will make no endeavour to make clear why the “Absolute Dates” 605 BC and 597 BC should be ignored in favour of 539 BC. Could it be that it just happens to suit the Society this way?

On my page 6, I referred to Pastor Russell who advised that Bible History does not cover the period from 539 BC down to the Christian Era. Therefore, whether we like it or not, we must rely on the Pagan Nations to provide us dates.

In order to ascertain whether this information can be relied upon (surely this must be admitted already for the period we are investigating), I will provide further information on the sources available for the Chronology of the Babylonian Kings. In doing so, I will again draw attention to a suggestion made by the Society and upon which I am sure every adherent of the Society will wish to ponder. The Watchtower July 15, 1922, page 217:

When a date is indicated by several lines of evidence it is strongly established. The scientific law of probabilities imparts a united strength to the strands of the cable of chronology far greater than the sum of the individual lines of evidence. This is a law which is implicitly relied upon in important affairs: viz., that when a thing is indicated in only one way it may be by chance; if it is indicated in two ways, it is almost certain to be true; and if in more than two ways, it is usually impossible that it is by chance, or that it is not true; and the addition of more proofs removes it entirely from the realm of chance into that of proven certainty.

I believe in this principle. Without any reservations, I state that this principle, when applied to the sources that establish the Chronology for the period under review, shows that this Chronology is proved beyond question. The evidence is so varied and inextricably bound together, that it is not even possible for it to be wrong.

The sources we have examined so far for the period are:

1. Ptolemy's Canon (see "Appendix B: Ptolemy's Canon").
2. The Cuneiform Tablets which certify the number of years shown by Ptolemy, from Nabopolassar to Cambyses, to be absolutely correct.

The next source (#3) that I wish to draw attention to is Berosus, the Babylonian.

Berosus

The Society puts forward the record of Berosus as preserved by Josephus to substantiate a point concerning the 70 years on pages 164 and 165 of BF. The section quoted is identified in Whiston's Translation as Against Apion 1:19. The Society will probably never make public why it will not accept Josephus' quotation from Berosus, Against Apion 1:20:

Berosus ... says in his third book: "Nabuchodonosor, after he had begun to build the fore-mentioned wall, fell sick, and departed this life, when he had reigned forty-three years; whereupon his son Evilmerodach obtained the kingdom. He governed public affairs after an illegal and impure manner, and had a plot laid against him by Neriglissor, his sister's husband and was slain by him when he had reigned but two years.

After he was slain, Neriglissor, the person who plotted against him, succeeded him in the kingdom, and reigned four years; his son Laborosoarchod obtained the kingdom, though he was but a child, and kept it nine months; but by reason of the very ill-temper and ill practices he exhibited to the world, a plot was laid against him also by his friends, and he was tormented to death. After his death, the conspirators got together, and by common consent put the crown upon the head of Nabonnedus, a man of Babylon ... when he was come to the seventeenth year of his reign, Cyrus came out of Persia with a great army; and having already conquered all the rest of Asia, he came hastily to Babylonia. (etc.)."

A summary of the Chronology Berosus provides is a duplicate of "Ptolemy's Canon".

Nabuchodonosor	reigned	43 years
Evilmerodach	reigned	2 years
Neriglissor	reigned	4 years
Laborosoarchod	reigned	9 months
Nabonnedus	reigned	17 years.

Ptolemy does not mention Laborosoarchod because, as has already been observed, a reign of less than a year was of no use in counting years. (see my page 93). Speaking of the Canon of Ptolemy, Robert William Rogers comments on page 333 of Vol 1 History of Babylonia and Assyria (1902),

It begins with Nabonassar and extends to Alexander the Great. It was plainly made for astronomical and not for historical purposes, and therefore only contains the names of those kings who began to reign with the beginning of a year and continued to its end. Kings who came to the throne after the beginning of the year and reigned but a few months are not named at all.

Berosus was a Babylonian of the 3rd Century BC (see BF page 164). It would obviously be a mistake to accuse him of being one of the "chronologers in Christendom" who try to "harmonize the Bible records with the astronomical Canon of Claudius Ptolemy". How could Berosus try and harmonize anything with Ptolemy seeing that Berosus lived several hundred years before him? Yet there is complete harmony between his list of Babylonian Kings and that of Ptolemy.

The next source (#4) that I wish to draw attention to is the Adda-guppi Stelae

The Adda-guppi Stelae

Basil T A.Evetts provides on page 310 of his New Light on the Bible and the Holy Land (1892), a portion of the text of the Nabonidus Chronicle for the 9th year of Nabonidus,

On the fifth of Nisan, the king's mother died in the town of Durkarashu, on the banks of the Euphrates, above Sippara.

BF page 184 reports that

[Nabonidus] is reported to have been the son of a priestess of the moon at Harran.

At Harran, in 1956, Dr. D S Rice discovered three basalt stelae. The translation of the inscriptions on these was published in 1958 by Dr. C J Gadd (Anatolian Studies Vol. VIII, pages 35ff.) Two of these inscriptions relate to the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus, and one to his mother, the lady Adda-guppi. It is worth noting this inscription for it provides details confirming the Chronology of the Chaldean dynasty. The inscription is identified as H1.B.

There is no doubt that Adda-guppi was a "priestess of the moon at Harran", for the inscription says she was. As far as I am aware, the Society could only have made this observation from knowledge gained from this text. To me at least, this is very interesting. (See also my page 51.)

The following are a few lines from the Stelae as translated by Gadd. The numbers at the commencement of each line are not in the text, but this is the usual way of identifying the lines of inscriptions.

1. I (am) the lady Adda-guppi! mother
2. of Nabium-na'id, king of Babylon ...
29. From the 20th year of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, that I was born (in)
30. until the 42nd year of Assurbanipal, the 3rd year of Assur-etillu-ili",
31. his son, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar
32. the 2nd year of Awel-Marduk, the 4th year of Neriglissar,
33. in 95 years of the god Sin, king of the gods of heaven and earth.

The quotation just given was from column 1. What follows is quoted from column 2:

26. From the time of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the 9th year
27. of Nabu-na'id king of Babylon, the son, offspring of my womb
28. 104 year of happiness, with the reverence which Sin, king of the gods
29. placed in me, he made me flourish, my own self.

(NB. Sin was the Moon God).

An arithmetical summary covering the Kings mentioned is as follows:

Col. 1, lines 29-35 Adda-guppi was born in the 20th year of Assurbanipal and lived beyond his 42nd year. Therefore:

20th to 42nd year of Assurbanipal	=	22 years
Reign of Assur-etilluili	=	3 years
Nabopolassar	=	21 years
Nebuchadnezzar	=	43 years
Evil-Merodach	=	2 years
Neriglissar	=	<u>4 years</u>
Line 33 says this totals		95 years
Col II line 26 takes us down to the 9th year of Nabonidus		<u>9 years</u>
Line 28 provides the total as 104 years		<u>104 years</u>

The 9th year of Nabunaid agrees with the Nabonidus Chronicle, for this was the year in which Adda-guppi died at the ripe old age of 104 years.

Adda-guppi, like Ptolemy, does not mention the short reign of Labashi-Marduk, who reigned only for a couple of months between Neriglissar and Nabonidus. The point is again that a reign of only a couple of months was of no value in counting a number of years.

Seeing that the length of these Kings' reigns are tied into 104 years, there is no possibility of gaps existing between the Kings. Again we have perfect agreement between "Ptolemy's Canon", Berosus, the summary of details calculated from the Babylonian business documents presented by Parker and Dubberstein and now the evidence provided by the Adda-guppi Stelae.

Did Adda-Gupp make the mistake of following Ptolemy too? Hardly, she was living at the same time as the Chaldean Kings. Ptolemy's Astronomy was erroneous but not his Canon of Kings.

Two years after this Inscription was published, the Society branded the records that prove its Chronology to be in error, "incomplete or inaccurate secular accounts" Awake March 22, 1960, page 7.

What is incomplete or inaccurate about these records? Remember that the principle suggested by the Society requires that if a date is suggested "in more than two ways, it is usually impossible that it is by chance or that it is not true; and the addition of more proofs removes it entirely from the realm of chance into that of proven certainty."

We have complied with all of these requirements. So far, we have produced four lines of evidence which positively substantiate each other. If the evidence produced is not sufficient to convince that the Society is wrong, nothing will.

We have proved that "Ptolemy's Canon" for the period between Nabopolassar and Cyrus is in the realm of "proven certainty." The only item that conflicts is the Society's Chronology and this has been exposed as in error in countless ways.

On my page 49, I dealt briefly with Astronomical Evidence. I shall now pass on to provide a few further details on this interesting subject, which provides a further strong link in our chain of Chronology. Before doing so though, I want to stress that while I have only been concerned to prove the Chronology for the Babylonian Kings, the Chronology for the Assyrian Kings before them is also quite accurate.

Encyclopedia Americana (1963) Vol. 6, page 640 reports concerning Assyrian Chronology.

This is founded upon abundant sources of information which are for the most part corroborative. As a result, the period from 911 to 626 BC is established with possible discrepancies amounting to one year in some reigns. From 911 to 1068 BC, the margin of error may be as much as ten years, and beyond the latter date the possibility of error increases.

The next source (#5) that I wish to draw attention to is Astronomical Evidence.

Astronomical Evidence

(See also my page 49)

After commenting on eclipses of the Sun mentioned in Assyrian Tablets and eclipses of the Moon recorded by Ptolemy, Samuel Alfred Mitchell in his Eclipses of the Sun (1951) stated:

These eclipses of sun and moon fix the dates of Eastern chronology with great exactness.

H. Grattan Guinness, Light for the Last Days (1888) page 37:

When we reach the chronological question, we enter a region where there is much less room for opinion or for difference of judgement, as

the results depend on astronomically verified data, and exact arithmetical calculation.

Chronology of the Times of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah (1848) by James Whatman Bosanquet:

Concerning Ptolemy's Canon, Dr. Prideaux has observed, "The truth of it may at any time be demonstrated by astronomical calculations, and no one has ever calculated those eclipses, that hath not found them fall right in the times where placed; and therefore, this being the surest guide which we have in the chronology".

Referring to the reigns of Cambyses and Darius Hystaspis, Sir Isaac Newton acknowledged in his book Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel:

The reigns of these two kings are determined by three eclipses of the moon observed at Babylon, and recorded by Ptolemy; so that it cannot be disputed.

Newton died in 1727 AD. These statements have been provided in order to indicate how, over the years, men who have been experts in the fields of Astronomy and Mathematics have realised the exactness that Astronomical evidence gives to Chronology. Quotations such as these could be multiplied many times, but these span several centuries and are sufficient.

All Christians know that our God has in the heavens a masterpiece of precision, and Mathematicians, whether they are Christian or not, admit this also, for they are able to calculate with great exactness the position of the Planets for thousands of years either forward or backwards.

The Babylonians slowly realised that Eclipses etc. occurred at frequent intervals and they called the interval between the beginning and the end of a series of Eclipses, which takes approx. 18 years and 11 days, a "Saros".

Hugh Godfrey has some comments of interest on the "Saros" in his A Treatise on Astronomy (1934) page 250,

This method is still used to determine at what new-moons, or full-moons, eclipses will occur – the strictly accurate modern methods being afterwards employed to calculate the character and details.

From what has been stated in the previous articles, we infer that when the sun, the moon, and the node return to the same relative positions, the same eclipses may recur. ... If, therefore, during one of these cycles of 18 years 11 days, a record be made of all the eclipses which occur, they will be found approximately to repeat themselves. This period was known to the Chaldeans and called Saros.

O Neugebauer wrote in The Exact Sciences in Antiquity (1962 Edition) page 101:

Around 700 BC, under the Assyrian empire, we meet with systematic observational reports of astronomers to the court. ... We should recall here Ptolemy's statements that eclipse records were available to him from the time of Nabonassar (747 BC) onwards.

On my page 49 I drew attention to the Society's acceptance of the Canon der Finsternisse by T R Oppolzer (Dover edition in English) which provides calculation of the dates of eclipses away back to 1207 BC. The Ancients recorded them, the Moderns can identify them.

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (1962) Vol. 1 page 585 says concerning "Ptolemy's Canon":

The Canon of Ptolemy, though coming from the second century AD, records the reigns of Babylonian kings back to Nabonassar in 747 BC, as well as the reigns of later Persian, Ptolemaic, and Roman rulers. Its accuracy has been established by Ptolemy's mention in another writing of numerous solar, lunar, and planetary positions,

including eclipses, all dated in the reigns of the various kings mentioned in his canon. In every case, astronomers have confirmed these dates exactly.

In the “Appendix B: Ptolemy’s Canon”, I drew attention to the tablet which provides details of the same eclipse recorded by Ptolemy for the 7th year of Cambyses. Cambyses was the son of Cyrus (see [BF](#) page 188) and as this eclipse took place in the 7th year of Cambyses (16th July, 523 BC) his first year must have been 529 BC. According to the Cuneiform tablets, Cyrus reigned as King over Babylon for 9 years (see [BF](#) page 365). His first year was then 538 BC. His accession year according to these tablets was therefore 539 BC. (Remember that the Jews did not necessarily date from this year.)

Similar comments on the relationship of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar have already been offered. Ptolemy recorded an eclipse in 621 BC, the 5th year of Nabopolassar. [The Babylonian Chronicle](#) proves that he died in his 21st year. Therefore this was in 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar, his son began to reign in this year and also became “World Ruler” in this year.

On this evidence presented, 605 BC and 539 BC are of practically equal certainty. I think it would be fair to say that 605 BC is more certain because we can attach the Babylonian Chronicle, as well as the Cuneiform Tablets to Nabopolassar’s reign, whereas we only have the cuneiform tablets to add on to the eclipse year in Cambyses reign.

Nebuchadnezzar’s years are therefore AT LEAST as firmly fixed as those of Cyrus. [The Nabonidus Chronicle](#) is of no help because it relates to the reign of Nabonidus and if we have to work down from the eclipse in the 21st year of Nabopolassar or work up from the Eclipse in the 7th year of Cambyses as we do to calculate the years of his reign, it is obvious that there is a greater margin for error.

There is only one other way that the reigns of the Kings for this period can be located. That is to utilise the Astronomical Tablet related to Nebuchadnezzar’s 37th year. The evidence of this Tablet swings the weight of evidence very heavily in favour of Nebuchadnezzar’s years being more positively located than those of Cyrus. The accuracy of the location of Cyrus’ reign is not however, disputed.

To more or less sum up the position on Absolute Dates so far, and to introduce us to our final source of evidence for the period concerned, I quote from [The Chronology of Ezra 7](#) by Horn and Wood, pages 94 and 95:

One of these anchor points, from which we can locate other relative dates, is furnished by an astronomical tablet bearing a series of observations dated in the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. These fix the year as having begun on April 22/23, 568 BC and ended on April 11/12, 567 BC.

Another astronomical tablet of equal importance has established that the 7th year of Cambyses lasted from April 6/7, 523 to March 25/26, 522 BC. With the help of the Canon of Ptolemy and thousands of dated cuneiform documents written on clay tablets, which agree throughout as to the total of regnal years for each king, it is possible to arrive at exact dates for each of the kings reigning in the period between the two astronomical tablets.

See also A T Olmstead, [History of the Persian Empire](#), pages 201 and 202, and [The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures](#) Vol. LV April 1938, pages 121 and 122.

The Astronomical Text Dated to Nebuchadnezzar’s 37th Year

[Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) (1961) Vol. 7, page 914, briefly mentions the eclipse which took place in Nebuchadnezzar’s 37th year:

In a Babylonian observation tablet of 568 BC, mention is made of failure to observe a predicted eclipse of the moon. The eclipse is

found by computation to have been real but invisible at Babylon. It was doubtless predicted by cycle.

The Tablet is contained in Berlin Museum and a complete translation and consideration of it is contained in a German publication. Neugebauer, Paul V. and Weidner, Ernst F. wrote the article “Ein astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnezars II (-567/66)”. An English translation of this article title is *An astronomical observation text from the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar (-567/66)*. The title of the book in which this is contained is Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-hist.-Klasse 67 (1915), part 2, pp. 29-89. (*Reports Concerning the Proceedings of the Royal Saxon Society of Science at Leipzig.*)

On page 29, the authors advise that the Tablet is identified as VAT4956. On page 35, the portion of the Tablet which reports that the predicted Lunar eclipse was not seen, is translated. (It did occur but was not visible at Babylon.)

On page 50, the date of the eclipse is disclosed as SIVAN 15, or according to calculation, July 4th, 568 BC. The Babylonian Astronomer obviously made his calculation on the basis of a cycle known to him, most likely it was the “Saros”.

From the information derived from the Tablet, Neugebauer and Weidner were able to calculate the first day of many of the Months of the year (Spring to Spring in Babylon). The result of this calculation appears on page 66:

Nebukadnezar	Jahr 36	Schaltader	1	=	-567	Marz	24/25
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 37	Nisan	1	=	-567	April	22/23
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 37	Airu	1	=	-567	Mai	22/23
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 37	Sivan	1	=	-567	Juni	20/21
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 37	Tebet	1	=	-566	Januar	14/15
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 37	Sebat	1	=	-566	Februar	12/13
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 37	Adar	1	=	-566	Marz	14/15
Nebukadnezar	Jahr 38	Nisan	1	=	-566	April	12/13

The Tables presented by Parker and Dubberstein in Babylonian Chronology 626 BC - AD 75 for 568 BC agree exactly with these results and of course were calculated quite independently and from other sources.

Some will no doubt have noticed that the dates mentioned in relation to this tablet have not been Classed as BC but have been prefixed by a minus sign. The reason for this is explained by Jack Finegan on page 133 of Handbook of Biblical Chronology:

Mathematically speaking, the omission of zero in a sequence of numbers involves an error and accordingly, in astronomical reckoning, the first year before AD 1 is designated as year Zero and from there on back the years are marked with a minus sign, while the years moving forward from Year Zero are marked with a plus sign.

An example of the two methods is as follows:-

<u>Historical</u>		<u>Astronomical</u>
AD 2	=	+2
AD 1	=	+1
BC 1	=	0
BC 2	=	-1
BC 3	=	-2

This helps us to appreciate that the -567 of the Astronomer is equal to the 568 BC of the Historian.

The double dating (e.g. 24/25) arises because:

The Babylonian day of 24 hours was reckoned from sundown to sundown. (J Philip Hyatt, Journal of Biblical Literature LXXV, 1956 page 277.)

Therefore parts of two of our days cover one day of the Babylonians. (The same thing applied to the Jews.)

Reference to the list of Month beginnings reveals that the 1st of Sivan was the same as 20/21 of June in -567 (568B.C.) and therefore the 15th of Sivan, when the watch was made for the Eclipse, was 4/5 of July. These calculated Month beginnings also then corroborate the result of the Eclipse computation.

Oppolzer's Canon der Finsternisse proves that an eclipse of the Moon took place on July 4th, 568 BC, but it was daytime at Babylon, when the Moon was eclipsed in a position visible from further around the Earth. (Where it was of course, night time.) This accounts for the notation of the Babylonian Astronomer that he failed to witness the eclipse.

Commencing on page 72, Neugebauer and Weidner provide details of the position of the planets on various dates as recorded on the Tablet. The location of Saturn, Jupiter, Venus, Mars and Mercury are provided.

BF page 331 informs us,

Much information has been systematically collected by the Babylonians and from it we have here the beginning of astronomy. The groups of stars which now bear the name 'Twelve Signs of the Zodiac' were mapped out for the first time, and the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn were known.

We can see then that the Tablet provides observed positions of all the known planets. The observations were not haphazardly recorded either.

Chaldean observations may be illustrated by an ephemeris prepared in 568. ... Already the course of the planets is definitely fixed in degrees and minutes with reference to the constellations and stars. (A T Olmstead, page 200 History of the Persian Empire, and page 120 The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures Vol. LV, April 1938.

The groups of stars mentioned by BF are the "constellations" referred to by Olmstead. And There Was Light by Rudolph Thiel confirms on page 15, "There are twelve constellations in the Zodiac."

On the following page of each reference given, Olmstead observes

Not only were the cycles of all the planets but Mercury known with astonishing precision, but the astronomers were not satisfied with their results and were seeking to make them more precise.

The cycles of the planets (i.e., the period each planet takes on one revolution about the Sun) are disclosed on page 128 of the Encyclopaedia Britannica Atlas (1961) "Modern Space Map."

Mercury	88 days
Venus	224.7 days
Earth	365.25 days
Mars	1.88 years
Jupiter	11.86 years
Saturn	29.46 years
Uranus	84.02 years
Neptune	164.79 years
Pluto	248.43 years

Seeing that the position and date of the position of each of the Planets known in those days is definitely recorded on the tablet, and Astronomers say that the Tablet relates to the year 568 BC. We have the 37th Year of Nebuchadnezzar definitely located by the several lines of evidence on the Tablet.

The Planets did stand in the relation to each other recorded on the Tablet in 568 BC. Remember that the Society is satisfied that Astronomers can calculate the date of tablets from the Astronomical data that they contain. (See my page 48 and Awake, April 22nd, 1963 page 17.)

Now picture what the situation would have to be for this Tablet to fit another year with which the observation details on the tablet coincided.

To do this, it is necessary first of all to consider the peculiarities related to each planet. For convenience sake, we will start with the Earth and we will station ourselves at Babylon where the original observations were made. As the positions of the Planets are located with reference to the Constellations, the Earth would have to be back in its same relation to them as it was on the date of the record on the Tablet. This only happens at the end of each complete revolution around the Sun and therefore once a year. So if an alternative year is to be found for the planets to stand in the same relation to each other, it would have to be very nearly in exact multiples of 365.25 days away from the dates in 568 BC. This point may be better understood when the positions of the planets are being considered.

A paragraph from the book A Key to the Heavens by Leo Mattersdorf might also help, page 83:

Hence, the constellations for ages have presented the same formations, and those we see on a spring evening, let us say, we shall see at the same time the next spring. The stars become old looked-for friends, and the rising of the springtime star groups presages the advent of another season of warmth, flowers, and blossoms. The evening stars of other times of the year are similarly identified with their respective seasons, and actually present for us an infallible celestial calendar.

Of all the planets known to the Babylonians, Saturn has the cycle taking the longest period of time, ie., 29.46 years. Therefore it would be back in its required position almost $29\frac{1}{2}$ years before or after 568 BC.

Obviously though, the Earth would have completed $29\frac{1}{2}$ cycles in this time and though Saturn would be in position, the Earth would be half-way on its journey around the Sun again. And what about the other planets? Let us take the planet with the next largest orbit, Jupiter (11.86 years). At the end of $29\frac{1}{2}$ years it would be nowhere near its required position on the specified date, for it would have circled the Sun twice (23.72 years) and have been nearly half-way around the Sun again. There is no need to consider the other planets, for clearly a date approx. $29\frac{1}{2}$ years away from 568 BC would be absolutely impossible.

On page 200 of History of the Persian Empire, Olmstead cites an Astronomical Textbook of the Babylonians dated to 577 BC. On it the scribe stated, "Saturn comes back in 59 years." This is not absolutely correct for as we can see $29.46 \times 2 = 58.92$. Nevertheless, in approx. cycles of 59 years, Saturn was again observable in the same location. Let us then consider the position that would exist each 59 years.

The Earth, as the Babylonian Textbook testifies, would be in its required position, (because the cycle is of complete years.) Saturn of course is in a favourable position. Now, what about Jupiter? Is it going to fit in on its due-date? Unfortunately, No! It would have completed a total of 4 revolutions about the Sun in this time and would almost have almost completed its 5th. Almost but not quite, for on its prescribed date it would be roughly $4\frac{1}{2}$ months away from its required position.

When we consider that the Society's Chronology is approx. 20 years at variance with the Absolute Chronology for the period it becomes apparent that it requires Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year to be about 588 BC.

When we again refer to the cycles of the planets, we can see that it is absolutely impossible for the planets to have stood in the correct relationship to each other in that year.

To determine another year when all the planets did stand in the required relationship to each other at the prescribed intervals, we have to calculate the Lowest Common Multiple of all the cycle periods. For example, if Jupiter's Cycle took 12 years instead of 11.86, and Saturn's was 30 years instead of 29.46, it would take 60 years for the Planets to again stand in the same relation to each other as required by the Tablet. The Earth would again too be in its required location with reference to the Constellations. (Anyone with a basic knowledge of Mathematics knows that 60 is the Least Common Multiple of 12 and 30. There is not one number less than 60 that they will both divide into evenly.)

During this time, Saturn would have made 2 revolutions around the Sun and Jupiter 5. But the problem is not so simple, for the observations of Mercury, Venus and Mars are also recorded and these too would have to be back in their recorded positions on given dates. Besides this, we do not want the Lowest Common Multiple of 12 and 30, we want it of 29.46 years, 11.86 years, 1.88 years, 1 year, 224.7 days and 88 days.

If you calculate the Lowest Common Multiple of just 1 year, 11.86 years and 29.46 years you will arrive at the figure 1,746,978 years. It makes one's head swim to even think what the Lowest Common Multiple of all the Cycle periods would be.

I am not suggesting that the observations of the planets by the Babylonians were absolutely accurate, but slight errors would not alter the situation. The eclipse and the planetary positions fix this year quite positively.

Is it any wonder that Otto Neugebauer wrote to me and said that the year was absolutely certain? (See my page 48)

It is no wonder either that the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states, concerning this tablet,

Modern Astronomers who have checked this information by astronomical computation say that the combination of data for the sun, moon, and planets which all move in differing cycles, cannot be duplicated in any other year.

Incidentally, in a year 59 years away from 568 BC, Mars would have been at least 7 months or approx. one-third of its Cycle out of position on its due date. I just mention this in case someone was thinking that 59 years was near enough. It is nowhere near a sufficient period.

There is no reason to doubt the veracity of the statements of the experts who correspond the Tablet with the year 568 BC, and the conclusion that this year was Nebuchadnezzar's 37th is inescapable.

If the Society wants to relocate the reign of either Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus, it is very apparent that the reign of Nebuchadnezzar cannot be interfered with. But then neither can that of Cyrus, really. The problems for the Society are perplexing. Indeed it seems the only course it can possibly adopt is to just bluff their way along and rely on the hold that they have over their adherents. This is exactly what the Society is doing.

As 568 BC was Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year, his accession year was 605 BC. And it will be appreciated that this date can be calculated without reference to "Ptolemy's Canon". It must be obvious that the statement that Chronologers shorten up the stream of time because of "Ptolemy's Canon" is entirely at variance with the facts.

The Babylonian Chronicle records the fall of Jerusalem in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar. It is quite positive that it fell under Jehoiachin in 597 BC (see my page 26.) All authorities accept this date and I quote just as a sample, D J Wiseman, from page 81 of Documents from Old Testament Times (1958):

16 March 597 BC, thus giving a firm date in both OT and Babylonian chronology.

In concluding our investigation of Absolute Dates, I want to say that it is Absolute Foolishness and irresponsible to arbitrarily select one date from this period and just continue as though the rest do not exist.

Whether we shut our eyes to them or not, the fact remains that they exist. In considering the Society's attitude on this matter, we must realise that the Society has not taken its stand because of faithfulness to the Bible. This is true despite the claims of the Society to the contrary. The Bible does not record any of these dates and so the Society is obliged when selecting just one of the Absolute Dates to justify its action. This it cannot do.

If it is conducting itself in harmony with truth, it is obliged to justify its course, in the interests of God's good name, because it claims to be His Mouthpiece.

It is also obliged to justify its action because the lives of so many people who are content to just follow it, are in its hands. I say to all that it is impossible for the Society to justify its actions. The Society stands exposed to all aware of the facts as the perpetrator of a hoax. For this offence against God and Man it stands condemned, there is no excuse.

APPENDIX D: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE 70 YEARS

621	5th year of Nabopolassar. 22nd April. Eclipse of the Moon recorded by Ptolemy.
605	21st year of Nabopolassar, in which he dies. Sept. 6 Nebuchadnezzar becomes King. Pharaoh Necho defeated at Carchemish. <u>Chronicle</u> and Jeremiah 46:2. Nebuchadnezzar over-runs whole area. <u>Chronicle</u> . Babylon's 70 years begin. Nebuchadnezzar comes to Jerusalem. Daniel 1:1 and 2 Kings 24:1. Prisoners and Temple utensils taken. Daniel 1:2 and 2 Chronicles 36:6-8. also Berosus in Josephus; <u>Against Apion</u> 1:19. Upon hearing of the death of his father, Nebuchadnezzar returns to Babylon and claims throne. <u>Chronicle</u> . Jeremiah surveys the situation and advises that the new World Power (Daniel 2:28) would suppress for 70 years and that whole area would be a devastated place. In fact a devastation had already been suffered (Daniel 9:2) and Judah was already in a sorrowful condition, desolate to a degree. Jeremiah 25:1, 11, 18. Nebuchadnezzar returned to the scene of his conquests. <u>Chronicle</u> .
604	The 1st Regnal Year of Nebuchadnezzar. (Babylonian Chronology 626 BC-AD75 by Parker and Dubberstein (hereafter referred to as P and D). Nebuchadnezzar again visits Palestine and all the Kings pay tribute. <u>Chronicle</u> . Jehoiakim remains faithful for three years. 2 Kings 24:1.
603	Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Giant Image. Daniel 2.
603	Jehoiakim remains faithful to Babylon. 2 Kings 24:1
602	Jehoiakim remains faithful to Babylon. 2 Kings 24:1
601	Babylonian Army badly mauled by Egyptians. <u>Chronicle</u> . Jehoiakim, apparently impressed by show of force by Egyptians and rebels against Babylon. 2Kings 24:1
600	Babylonian Army does not venture from Babylon. Army reorganising in progress. <u>Chronicle</u> . Jehoiakim continues rebellion.
599	Possibly in this year the marauding Bands were sent against Judah. 2 Kings 24 and Jeremiah 12. Nebuchadnezzar engaged in subduing Arabs. <u>Chronicle</u> .
598	Nebuchadnezzar apparently took 3,023 Jews captive in a campaign preliminary to the major campaign of the following year Jer 52:28. Jehoiakim dies. 2 Chronicles 36:5, 9.
597	Jerusalem falls to Babylonians 16th March 597 BC. Jehoiachin taken captive to Babylon. <u>Chronicle</u> . 2 Kings 24:8-15. Zedekiah made King by Nebuchadnezzar. <u>Chronicle</u> and 2 Kings 24:17. He too began to plot against Babylon. Jeremiah 27 and 28
588	Final siege of Jerusalem began on January 15th. 2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4. Late in this year the Egyptian forces caused the Babylonians to lift their siege temporarily. Jeremiah 37:7, 11. This may be when Babylonians took 832 Jews captive. Jeremiah 52:29.
586	Jerusalem falls after 2½ years siege. 2 Kings 25:2, 3; Jeremiah 39:2; 52:5-7. August 15, destruction of City begins. 2 Kings 25:8-10. Governor appointed (Gedaliah) but murdered. Jeremiah 41:2. Jews take Jeremiah to Egypt. Jeremiah 43:7.
585	January 8. Word of the fall reaches Ezekiel in Babylon. Ezekiel 33:21. Ezekiel advises of further desolation. Ezekiel 33:22 ff.
582	Final captivity of Jews. Jeremiah 52:30.
568	37th Year of Nebuchadnezzar commenced 23rd April. Eclipse of the Moon July 4th. Babylonian Observation Tablet VAT4956.
561	1st Regnal Year of Evil-Merodach. (P and D)
559	1st Regnal Year of Neriglissar. (P and D)
556	Labashi-Marduk reigns for few Months. (P and D)
555	1st Regnal Year of Nabonidus. (P and D) Adda-guppi dies 547 BC.
553	Belshazzar entrusted with Kingship. <u>BF</u> page 186. <u>SI</u> pages 139, 140.
539	Daniel interprets handwriting on Wall. Belshazzar slain. Daniel 5:30. October 12, Babylon falls to Medes and Persians. The Babylonian records recognise the King of the Persian Empire, Cyrus, as King of Babylon, while Jews apparently recognised Darius the Mede as having 1 regnal year (this point is uncertain).
Cyrus' Year 1. If the Jews regarded it as from Tishri 538 BC, return to Judah most likely 536 BC. (Decree Ezra 1:1-3; 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23. If Darius the Mede allowed 1 year (538-537 BC) Cyrus 1st year would = 537-536 BC, and the return certainly in 536 BC.	
536	Return of the Jews to Judah. Possible year of Cyrus' Decree. End of the 70 year (by Inclusive Reckoning.)
529	1st Regnal Year of Cambyses. (P and D)
523	7th Year of Cambyses commenced 7th April. Eclipse 16th July.

APPENDIX E: SELECTED PAGES FROM THE BOOK
“ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD” (1963 EDITION)

**"ALL SCRIPTURE IS
INSPIRED OF GOD
AND BENEFICIAL"**

Bible Book

Number Thirteen—

1 Chronicles

Writer: Ezra
 Place Written: Jerusalem (?)
 Time of Writing: c. 460 B.C.E.
 Time Covered: 1077-1037 B.C.E.

IS FIRST Chronicles just a dry list of genealogies? Is it merely a repetition of the books of Samuel and Kings? Far from it! Here is an illuminating and essential part of the divine record—essential in the day of its writing in reorganizing the nation and its worship, and essential and beneficial in showing a pattern of divine worship for later days, including this present day. First Chronicles contains some of the most beautiful expressions of praise to Jehovah to be found in all Scripture. It provides wonderful foregleams of Jehovah's kingdom of righteousness, and is to be studied with profit by all who hope in that kingdom. The two books of Chronicles have been treasured by Jews and Christians alike through the ages. The Bible translator Jerome had such an exalted opinion of First and Second Chronicles that he considered them an "epitome of the Old Testament," and asserted that "they are of such high moment and importance, that he who supposes himself to be acquainted with the sacred writings, and does not know them, only deceives himself."^a

²The two books of Chronicles were originally one book or roll, which was later divided for convenience. Why was Chronicles written? Consider the setting. The captivity to Babylon had ended about seventy-seven years before. The Jews were resettled in their land. However, there was a dangerous trend away from Jehovah's worship at the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Ezra had been commissioned by the king of Persia to appoint judges and teachers of the law of God and to beautify the house of Jehovah. Accurate genealogical lists were necessary to assure that only legitimate persons served in the priesthood, and also to confirm the tribal inheritances whence the priesthood gained its support. In view of Jehovah's prophecies regarding the Kingdom, it was also vital to have a clear and dependable record of the lineage of Judah and of David.

³Ezra was earnestly desirous of arousing the

^a *Clarke's Commentary*, Volume II, page 574.

1. Why is First Chronicles an essential and beneficial part of the divine record?
2. Why was Chronicles written?
3. (a) What was Ezra desirous of infusing in the Jews?
 (b) Why did he highlight the history of Judah and the priestly element?

restored Jews from their apathy, and of infusing in them the realization that they were indeed the inheritors of Jehovah's covenanted loving-kindness. In the Chronicles, therefore, he set before them a full account of the nation's history, and of the origins of mankind, going back as far as the first man Adam. Since the kingdom of David was the focal point, he highlighted the history of Judah, omitting almost entirely the absolutely unredeeming record of the ten-tribe kingdom. He depicted Judah's greatest kings as engaged in building or restoring the temple and zealously leading in the worship of God. He pointed out the religious sins that led to the kingdom's overthrow, while emphasizing also God's promises of restoration. He stressed the importance of pure worship by focusing attention on the many details pertaining to the temple, its priests, the Levites, the masters of song, and so on. Whereas in Kings the prophet Jeremiah had stressed the prophetic element, the priest Ezra stressed the priestly element in Chronicles.

⁴What is the evidence that Ezra wrote Chronicles? One strong reason has already been suggested, in its emphasis on the Levitical spirit. Ezra would give this emphasis, for he is described as a descendant "of Aaron the high priest—the said Ezra himself went up from Babylon; and he was a skilled copyist in the law of Moses." (Ezra 7:1-7) The closing two verses of Second Chronicles are the same as the opening two verses of Ezra, and Second Chronicles ends in the middle of a sentence that is finished in Ezra 1:3. The writer of Chronicles must therefore have been the writer also of Ezra. This is further borne out in that the style, language, wording and spelling of Chronicles and Ezra are the same. Some of the expressions in these two books are found in no other Bible books. Ezra, who wrote the book of Ezra, must also have written Chronicles. Jewish tradition supports this conclusion.

⁵No one was better qualified than Ezra to compile this authentic and accurate history. "For Ezra himself had prepared his heart to consult the law of Jehovah and to do it and to teach in Israel regulation and justice." (Ezra 7:10) Jehovah aided him by holy spirit. The

4. What evidence favors Ezra as the writer?
5. What were Ezra's spiritual and secular qualifications?

ship again. After two years, his own servants put him to death.

³¹ Josiah's courageous reign (34:1-35:27). Youthful Josiah, the son of Amon, makes a courageous attempt to restore true worship. He has the altars of the Baals and graven images pulled down, and repairs the house of Jehovah, where a copy of the law of Moses is found. Yet he is told that calamity will come on the land for the unfaithfulness that has already occurred, but not in righteous Josiah's day. In the eighteenth year of his reign he arranges an outstanding passover celebration. After a thirty-one-year reign Josiah meets his death in a vain attempt to prevent the Egyptian hosts from passing through the land on their way to the Euphrates.

³² Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah and Jerusalem's desolation (36:1-23). The wickedness of the last four Judean kings quickly carries the nation to its disastrous end. Josiah's son Jehoahaz rules only three months, being removed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. He is replaced by his brother Eliakim, whose name is changed to Jehoiakim, and during whose reign Judah is subjugated by the new world power, Babylon. (2 Ki. 24:1) When he rebels, Nebuchadnezzar comes up to Jerusalem to punish him in 618 B.C.E., but Jehoiakim dies this same year, after reigning eleven years. He is replaced by his eighteen-year-old son Jehoiachin, who surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar after a reign of scarcely three months and is carried away captive to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar now places a third son of Josiah, Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah, on the throne. Zedekiah reigns badly for eleven years, refusing to "humble himself on account of Jeremiah the prophet at the order of Jehovah." (2 Chron. 36:12) In large-scale unfaithfulness, priests and people alike defile the house of Jehovah.

³³ Finally, Zedekiah rebels against Babylon's yoke, and this time Nebuchadnezzar shows no mercy. Jehovah's rage is full, and there is no healing. Jerusalem falls, its temple is looted and burned, and the survivors of the eighteen-month siege are carried as captives to Babylon. Judah is left desolate. Thus in this very year of 607 B.C.E. begins the desolation "to fulfill Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jere-

miah, . . . to fulfill seventy years." (36:21) The chronicler then leaps this gap of nearly seventy years, to record in the last two verses the historic decree of Cyrus in 537 B.C.E. The Jewish captives are to be set free! Jerusalem must rise again!

WHY BENEFICIAL

³⁴ Second Chronicles adds its powerful testimony to that of other witnesses concerning this eventful period, 1037-537 B.C.E. Moreover, it gives valuable supplementary information not found in other canonical histories, for example, at 2 Chronicles chapters 19, 20 and 29-31. Ezra's selection of material emphasized the fundamental and permanent elements in the history of the nation, such as the priesthood and its service, the temple and the kingdom covenant. This was beneficial in holding the nation together in hope of the Messiah and his kingdom.

³⁵ The closing verses of Second Chronicles (36:17-23) give conclusive proof of the fulfillment of Jeremiah 25:12, and, in addition, show that a full seventy years must be counted from the complete desolation of the land to the restoration of Jehovah's worship at Jerusalem in 537 B.C.E. This desolation therefore begins 607 B.C.E., and not 586 B.C.E., as some Bible chronologies assert.—Jer. 29:10; 2 Ki. 25:1-26; Ezra 3:1-6.

³⁶ Second Chronicles contains powerful admonitions for those walking in Christian faith. So many of the kings of Judah started well but then lapsed into wicked ways. We should be warned therefore not to be "the sort that shrink back to destruction, but the sort that have faith to the preserving alive of the soul." (Heb. 10:39) Even faithful King Hezekiah became haughty on recovering from his sickness, and it was only because he quickly humbled himself that he was able to avoid Jehovah's indignation. Second Chronicles magnifies Jehovah's wonderful qualities and extols his name and sovereignty. The entire history is presented from the standpoint of exclusive devotion to Jehovah. As it lays emphasis also upon the royal line of Judah, it strengthens our expectation of seeing pure worship exalted under the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ, the loyal "son of David."—Acts 15:16, 17.

31. What are the highlights of Josiah's courageous reign?

32. How do the last four kings lead Judah to its disastrous end?

33. (a) How does the seventy-year desolation begin, "to fulfill Jehovah's word"? (b) What historic decree is recorded in the last two verses?

34. What is emphasized in Ezra's selection of material, and how was this beneficial to the nation?

35. What important points are proved in the closing verses?

36. (a) What powerful admonitions are contained in Second Chronicles? (b) How does it strengthen expectation concerning the Kingdom?

Bible Book Number Fifteen— Ezra

Writer: Ezra
Place Written: Jerusalem
Writing Completed: c. 460 B.C.E.
Time Covered: 537-467 B.C.E.

THE end of the prophesied seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation under Babylon was drawing near. True, it was Babylon's reputation that she never released her captives, but Jehovah's word would prove stronger than Babylonian might. Release of Jehovah's people was in sight. Jehovah's temple that had been laid low would be rebuilt and Jehovah's altar would again receive sacrifices of atonement. Jerusalem would again know the shout and praise of the true worshiper of Jehovah. Jeremiah had prophesied the length of the desolation, and Isaiah had prophesied how the release of captives would come about. Isaiah had even named Cyrus of Persia as 'the shepherd of Jehovah,' who would tumble haughty Babylon from her position as the third world power of Bible history.—Jer. 25:12; Isa. 44:28; 45:1, 2.

* This disaster befell Babylon on the night of October 5-6, 539 B.C.E., as the Babylonian king Belshazzar and his grandees were drinking toasts to their demon gods. Adding to their pagan debauchery, they were using the holy vessels from Jehovah's temple as their cups of drunkenness! How fitting that Cyrus was there that night to fulfill the prophecy! "B.C. 539 Cyrus takes Babylon," says the *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*. (1944 Ed., page 108) "In 539 B.C. Cyrus turned his attack against Nabonidus [father and coregent of Belshazzar], and the Babylonian army was defeated," says Werner Keller in *The Bible as History* (1956, page 310, N.Y. Ed.; page 297, London Ed.). To which *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, Vol. 7, page 707, adds its testimony: "Why the war with Babylon, which had become inevitable, was delayed until 539, we do not know. Here too Cyrus in a single campaign destroyed a mighty state. The army of Nabonidus was defeated; Babylon itself attempted no resistance, but surrendered on the 16th Tishri . . . 539, to the Persian general Gobryas."

* This date 539 B.C.E. is an absolute date, that is, a date fixed, proved and accepted by

secular history. In the following year, beginning in 538, Cyrus began his first complete year as world ruler, and it was during this year, some time before the spring of 537, that Cyrus "caused a cry to pass through all his realm," authorizing the Jews to go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of Jehovah.⁴ A faithful remnant journeyed back in time to set up the altar and offer the first sacrifices in the "seventh [Jewish] month," corresponding to September-October 537, seventy years to the month after Judah and Jerusalem's desolation by Nebuchadnezzar.—Ezra 1:1-3; 3:1-6.

* Restoration! This provides the setting of the book of Ezra. The use of the first person, "I," in the narration from chapter 7, verse 28, onward clearly shows that the writer was Ezra. As "a skilled copyist in the law of Moses" and a man of practical faith who "prepared his heart to consult the law of Jehovah and to do it and to teach" it, Ezra was well qualified to record this history, even as he had recorded Chronicles. (Ezra 7:6, 10) Since the book of Ezra is a continuation of Chronicles, it is generally believed to have been written at the same time, about 460 B.C.E. It covers seventy years, from the time that the Jews were a broken, scattered nation marked as "sons of death," to the completion of the second temple and the cleansing of the priesthood after Ezra's return to Jerusalem.—Ezra 1:1; 7:7; 10:17; Ps. 102:20, NW footnote, 1957 Edition.

* The Hebrew name Ezra means "The Help." The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one scroll. (Neh. 3:32, NW footnote, 1955 Edition) Later the Jews divided this scroll, and called it First and Second Ezra. Modern Hebrew Bibles call the two books Ezra and Nehemiah, as do other modern Bibles. Part of the book of Ezra (4:8 to 6:18, and 7:12-26) was written in Aramaic, and the remainder in Hebrew, Ezra being skilled in both languages.

* Ezra had been charged with carrying out
^a *Babylonian Chronology*, 1956, Parker and Dubberstein, page 29.

1. What prophecies gave assurance of Jerusalem's restoration?
2. What were the time and occasion of Babylon's fall?
3. What proclamation by Cyrus made it possible to restore Jehovah's worship exactly seventy years after the desolation began?

4. (a) What is the setting of the book, and who wrote it? (b) When was it written, and what period does it cover?
5. What relation has the book of Ezra to the book of Nehemiah, and in what languages was it written?
6. With regard to Ezra's record, what has archaeology confirmed?

the imperial decree to instruct the Jews in the law of Jehovah. (7:25) Archaeological evidence supports the record in Ezra, showing that he performed this task thoroughly. For example, papyrus finds as far south as Elephantine, in southern Egypt, have been found to contain instructions from King Darius II of Persia to the Jews there, on how to observe the passover properly.⁴ Concerning the canonicity of Ezra, W. F. Albright writes in his treatise *The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology*: "Archaeological data have thus demonstrated the substantial originality of the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, of Ezra and Nehemiah beyond doubt; they have confirmed the traditional picture of events, as well as their order."

⁷ Though the book of Ezra may not be quoted or referred to directly by the Greek Scripture writers, yet there is no question about its place in the canon of the Bible, carrying as it does the record of Jehovah's dealings with the Jews down to the time of the assembling of the Hebrew catalogue, which work was largely accomplished by Ezra, according to Jewish tradition. Moreover, the book of Ezra so vindicates all the prophecies concerning the restoration as to prove that it is indeed an integral part of the divine record, with which it also harmonizes completely, honoring pure worship and sanctifying the great name of Jehovah God.

CONTENTS OF EZRA

⁸ A remnant returns (1:1-3:6). His spirit roused by Jehovah, Cyrus king of Persia issues the decree for the Jews to return and build the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem. He urges those Jews who may remain in Babylon to contribute freely toward the project, and arranges for the returning Jews to take back the utensils of the original temple. A leader from the royal tribe of Judah, and lineal descendant of King David, Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar), is assigned as governor to lead the released ones, and Jeshua (or Joshua) is the high priest. (Ezra 1:8; 5:2; Zech. 3:1) A remnant of nearly fifty thousand faithful servants of Jehovah, including priests, Levites and non-Israelite slaves and temple workers, make the journey of about a thousand miles. By the seventh month, according to the Jewish calendar, they are settled in their cities, and then they gather at Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the site of the temple altar and to celebrate the festival of booths in the fall of 537 B.C.E. Thus the seventy years' desolation ends exactly on time!

⁴ *The Bible as History*, 1956, Werner Keller, page 318 N.Y. Ed., page 304 London Ed.

7. How is the book of Ezra shown truly to be a part of the divine record?

8. Describe the train of events leading to the end of the seventy years' desolation.

⁹ Rebuilding the temple (3:7-6:22). Materials are assembled, and in the second year of their return the foundation of the temple of Jehovah is laid amid shouts of joy, and amid the weeping of the older men who had seen the former house. The neighboring peoples, adversaries, offer to help with the construction, saying they are seeking the same God, but the Jewish remnant flatly refuse any alliance with them. The adversaries continually try to weaken and dishearten the Jews and frustrate their work, from the reign of Cyrus down to that of Darius. Finally, in the days of "Artaxerxes" (Magian Gaumata, 522 B.C.E., the usurper who preceded Darius), they have the work forcibly stopped by royal command. This ban continues "until the second year of the reign of Darius the king of Persia," which is over fifteen years after the laying of the foundation.—4:4-7, 24.

¹⁰ Jehovah now sends his prophets Haggai and Zechariah to arouse Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the building work is taken up with renewed zeal. Again the adversaries complain to the king, but the work goes on with unabated vigor. Darius I (Hystaspis), after referring to Cyrus' original decree, orders the work to continue without interference, and even commands the opposers to supply materials to facilitate construction. With continued encouragement from Jehovah's prophets, the builders complete the temple in less than five years. This is in the month Adar of the sixth year of Darius or near the spring of 516 B.C.E., and the entire construction has taken just about twenty years. (6:14, 15) The house of God is now inaugurated with great joy and with appropriate sacrifices. Then the people celebrate the passover and go on to hold "the festival of unleavened cakes seven days with rejoicing." (6:22) Yes, joy and rejoicing mark the dedication of this second temple to Jehovah's praise.

¹¹ Ezra returns to Jerusalem (7:1-8:36). Almost fifty years elapse, bringing us down to 468 B.C.E., the seventh year of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I (known as "Longimanus," due to having his right hand longer than his left). The king grants the skilled copyist Ezra "all his request" with respect to a journey to Jerusalem to render much-needed aid there. In commissioning him, the king encourages the Jews to go with him, and grants Ezra silver and gold vessels for temple use, and provisions of wheat, wine, oil and salt. He exempts the

9. How does the temple work begin, but what happens in the years that follow?

10. (a) How does encouragement from God's prophets combine with the king's order in getting the work completed? (b) What joy marks the second temple dedication?

11. How does the king grant Ezra "all his request," and what is Ezra's response?

expectation that Jehovah would in due course produce his promised King in the line of David. The restored nation was now in position to guard the sacred pronouncements and worship of God until the time of Messiah's appearing. If this remnant had not responded in faith, in

returning to their land, to whom would Messiah have come? Truly, the events of the book of Ezra are an important part of the history leading to the appearance of the Messiah and King! It is all most beneficial for our study today.

Bible Book ***Number Sixteen—*** ***Nehemiah***

Writer: Nehemiah
Place Written: Jerusalem
Writing Completed: After 443 B.C.E.
Time Covered: 456—after 443 B.C.E.

NEHEMIAH, whose name means "Jah Is Comfort," was a Jewish servant of the Persian king Artaxerxes I. He was cupbearer to the king. This was a position of great trust and honor, and one to be desired, for it gave access to the king at times when he was in a happy frame of mind and ready to grant favors. However, Nehemiah was one of those faithful exiles who preferred Jerusalem above any personal "cause for rejoicing." (Ps. 137:5, 6) It was not position or material wealth that was uppermost in Nehemiah's thoughts, but, rather, the restoration of Jehovah's worship.

² In 456 B.C.E. those "left over from the captivity," the Jewish remnant that had returned to Jerusalem, were not prospering. They were in a lamentable condition. The wall of the city was rubble, and the people were a reproach in the eyes of their ever-present adversaries. Nehemiah was grieved. However, it was Jehovah's appointed time for something to be done about the walls of Jerusalem. Enemies or no enemies, Jerusalem with its protective wall must be built as a time marker in connection with a prophecy that Jehovah had given Daniel concerning the coming of Messiah. (Dan. 9:24-27) Accordingly, Jehovah directed events, using the faithful and zealous Nehemiah to carry out the divine will.

³ Nehemiah is undoubtedly the writer of the book that bears his name. The opening statement, "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah," and the fact that he wrote mostly in the first person, clearly prove this. Originally the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were one

book, called "Ezra." Later, the Jews divided the book into First and Second Ezra, and later still Second Ezra became known as Nehemiah. An interval of about twelve years lies between the closing events of Ezra and the opening events of Nehemiah, whose history then covers the period of 456 till after 443 B.C.E.—Neh. 1:1; 5:14; 13:6.

⁴ The book of Nehemiah harmonizes with the rest of inspired Scripture, with which it rightfully belongs. It names eleven of the twelve gates in the restored Jerusalem, the remaining gate being named by Ezra at 2 Chronicles 25:23. There are also twelve gates in the Revelation vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. (Neh. 2:13, 14; 3:3, 6, 26, 28, 31, 32; 12:39; Rev. 21:21) Further, the book marks the beginning of the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, but not without opposition "in the straits of the times." (Dan. 9:25) Yes, in just fifty-two days; and archaeological investigation supports this in revealing a hurriedly built wall, made of unusually small stones cemented with clay plaster mixed with stone chips.^a

⁵ What about the date of 455 B.C.E. for Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem to rebuild the city wall? Testimony by the Greek historian Thucydides, who lived during the reign of Artaxerxes I, taken with the chronology of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus of the first century B.C.E., pinpoints the beginning of Artaxerxes' rule as 474 B.C.E.^b This would make

^a *The Bible as History*, 1956, Werner Keller, page 317 N.Y. Ed., pages 303, 304 London Ed.

^b *The Watchtower*, 1946, page 360, footnote.

1. What position of trust did Nehemiah hold, and what was uppermost in his mind?

2. What sorry condition grieved Nehemiah, but what appointed time was drawing near?

3. (a) What proves Nehemiah to be the writer, and how did the book come to be called "Nehemiah"? (b) What interval separates this book from the book of Ezra, and what years does the book of Nehemiah cover?

4. (a) How does the book harmonize with the rest of the Scriptures? (b) How does archaeology confirm the record?

5. (a) What testimony pinpoints the beginning of Artaxerxes' reign as 474 B.C.E.? (b) What date marks his twentieth year? (c) How do the books of Nehemiah and Luke tie in with Daniel's prophecy in a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy?

(Coniah) will be hurled out of Judah to die in Babylon.

²⁰ Hope in a "righteous sprout" (23:1-24:10). Jehovah promises real shepherds to replace the false shepherds and a "righteous sprout" out of the stock of David, a king who "will certainly reign and act with discretion and execute justice and righteousness in the land." His name? "He will be called, Jehovah Is Our Righteousness." He will gather the dispersed remnant. (23:5, 6) If the prophets had stood in Jehovah's intimate group, they would have caused the people to hear and turn back from their bad way. Instead, says Jehovah, they "cause my people to wander about because of their falsehoods." (23:22, 32) "Look! Two baskets of figs." Jeremiah uses the good and the bad figs to illustrate a faithful remnant returning to their land in God's favor, and another class perishing in captivity.—24:1, 5, 8.

²¹ Jehovah's controversy with the nations (25:1-38). This chapter is a summary of judgments that appear in greater detail in chapters 45 to 49. By three parallel prophecies Jehovah now pronounces calamity for all the nations on earth. First, Nebuchadnezzar is identified as Jehovah's servant to devastate Judah and the surrounding nations, "and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years." Then it will be Babylon's turn, and she will become "desolate wastes to time indefinite."—25:1-14.

²² The second prophecy is the vision of the 'cup of wine of Jehovah's rage.' Jeremiah must take this cup to the nations, and "they must drink and shake back and forth and act like crazed men" because of Jehovah's destruction coming against them. First, to Jerusalem and Judah! Then on to Egypt, back to Phillistia, across to Edom, up to Tyre, to lands near and far, "and all the other kingdoms of the earth that are on the surface of the ground; and the king of Sheshach himself will drink after them." They shall drink and puke and fall. None will be spared.—25:15-29.

²³ In the third prophecy Jeremiah rises to magnificent poetic heights. "From on high Jehovah himself will roar . . . against all the inhabitants of the earth." A noise, a calamity, a great tempest! "And those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth." No lamenting, no funerals. They will be

as manure on the ground. The false shepherds will be slaughtered, along with the majestic ones of their flock. There is no escape for them. Listen to their howling! Jehovah himself "is despoiling their pasturage . . . because of his burning anger."—25:30-38.

²⁴ Jeremiah vindicated against false prophets (26:1-28:17). The rulers and people conspire to put Jeremiah to death. Jeremiah makes his defense. It is the word of Jehovah that he has spoken. If they kill him, they will kill an innocent man. The verdict: Not guilty. The older men introduce the precedents of the prophets Micah and Urijah in contrasting Jeremiah's course. Jehovah next commands Jeremiah to make bands and yokes, put them upon his neck, and then send them to the nations round about as symbols that they must serve the king of Babylon for three generations of rulers. Hananiah, one of the false prophets, opposes Jeremiah. He declares that the yoke of Babylon will be broken within two years and pictures this by breaking the wooden yoke. Jehovah underlines his prophecy by having Jeremiah put on iron yokes, and by foretelling that Hananiah must die that year. He does.

²⁵ Comfort for the exiles in Babylon (29:1-31:40). Jeremiah writes to the exiles taken to Babylon with Jehoiachin (Jeconiah): Settle down there, for there is coming a period of seventy years of exile before Jehovah brings you back. Jehovah commands Jeremiah to write of their return in a book: Jehovah will break their yoke and "they will certainly serve Jehovah their God and David their king, whom I [Jehovah] shall raise up for them." (30:9) Rachel must hold her voice back from weeping, for her sons "will certainly return from the land of the enemy." (31:16) And now, a reassuring declaration by Jehovah! He will conclude with the houses of Judah and Israel a new covenant. Far grander this than the covenant they have broken! Jehovah will write his law deep down inside, on their hearts. "And I will become their God, and they themselves will become my people." From the least to the greatest all will know Jehovah, and he will forgive their error. (31:31-34) Their city will be rebuilt as something holy to Jehovah.

²⁶ Jehovah's kingdom covenant sure (32:1-34:22). During Nebuchadnezzar's final siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah is under restraint.

20. What does Jeremiah prophesy concerning a "righteous sprout," and what is illustrated by the two baskets of figs?

21. How does Jehovah use Babylon as his servant, but what, in turn, will be her fate?

22. Who must drink of the cup of Jehovah's rage? With what result?

23. In what great calamity will Jehovah's burning anger be expressed?

24. (a) What conspiracy is formed against Jeremiah, what is his defense, and what precedents are referred to in acquitting him? (b) How does Jeremiah enact the coming Babylonian bondage, and what prophecy concerning Hananiah comes true?

25. (a) What message does Jeremiah send to the exiles in Babylon? (b) With whom will Jehovah conclude a new covenant, and how will this prove to be grander than the former covenant?

26. How is the certainty of Israel's restoration emphasized, and what news does the word of Jehovah bring?

place in history stands clearly revealed. There are many texts which indicate that Belshazzar almost equaled Nabonidus in position and prestige. Dual rulership during most of the last Neo-Babylonian reign is an established fact. Nabonidus exercised supreme authority from his court in Tema in Arabia, while Belshazzar acted as coregent in the homeland with Babylon as his center of influence. It is evident that Belshazzar was not a feeble viceroy; he was entrusted with 'the kingship.'^a

^b Some have tried to discredit Daniel's accounts of the fiery furnace and the lions' pit (chapters 3 and 6), saying that these are legendary inventions. However, remarkable confirmations have again come from the archaeologists, digging in the ruins at Babylon. One discovery was thought to be a brick kiln, until an inscription at the base was found to read: "This is the place of burning where men who blasphemed the gods of Chaldea died by fire." In another place a deep pit was unearthed, bearing the inscription: "The place of execution where men who angered the king died torn by wild animals." Though these are not necessarily the identical places mentioned in the book of Daniel, they confirm that such places existed in Daniel's time.^b

^c *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* nicely sums up the situation with the book of Daniel, in these words: "The asserted historical inaccuracies in Daniel are not statements which are disproved by history, but only statements which have seemed difficult to harmonize with the meager accounts of secular historians. The asserted historical inaccuracies have, moreover, been steadily diminishing before the increasing knowledge of the times of Cyrus. . . . The growth of our knowledge of this period shows how cautious one should be in doubting the historical accuracy of the Biblical records." —1944, page 130.

^d The Jews included his book, not with the Prophets, but with the Writings. However, the English Bible follows the catalogue order of the Greek *Septuagint* and the Latin *Vulgate* by placing Daniel between the major and the minor prophets. There are actually two parts to the book. The first of these, chapters one to six, gives in chronological order the experiences of Daniel and his companions in governmental service from 617 to 538 B.C.E. (Dan. 1:1, 21) The second part, comprising chapters seven to twelve, is written in the first person by Daniel

himself as recorder and describes private visions and angelic interviews that Daniel had from 553^e to 536 B.C.E. (Dan. 7:2, 28; 8:2; 9:2; 12:5, 7, 8) The two parts together make up the one harmonious book of Daniel.

CONTENTS OF DANIEL

^e **Preparation for State service (1:1-21).** In 617 B.C.E. Daniel comes to Babylon with the captive Jews. The sacred utensils from Jerusalem's temple come also, to be stored in a pagan treasure-house. Daniel and his three Hebrew companions are among the royal Judean youths chosen for a three-year course of training in the king's palace. Resolved in his heart not to pollute himself with the king's pagan delicacies and wine, Daniel proposes a ten-day test of a vegetable diet. The test turns out in favor of Daniel and his companions, and God gives them knowledge and wisdom. Nebuchadnezzar appoints the four to stand before him as counselors. The last verse, which may have been added long after the preceding portion was written, indicates that Daniel was still in royal service some eighty years after his going into exile, or about 538 B.C.E.

^f **Dream of the dreadful image (2:1-49).** In the second year of his kingship as world ruler, 606-605 B.C.E., Nebuchadnezzar is agitated by a dream. On awakening he is unable to remember it and calls in his magic-practicing priests to tell him the dream and its interpretation. He offers them great gifts, but they protest that no one but the gods can show the king the thing that he is asking. The king becomes furious and orders the wise men to be put to death. Since the four Hebrews are included in this decree, Daniel asks for time to reveal the dream. They pray to Jehovah for guidance. Jehovah reveals the dream and its meaning to Daniel, who then goes before the king and says: "There exists a God in the heavens who is a Revealer of secrets, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what is to occur in the final part of the days." (2:28) Daniel describes the dream. It is about an immense image. Its head is of gold, its breasts and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of copper and its legs of iron, with feet partly iron, partly clay. A stone strikes and crushes the image and becomes a large mountain to fill the whole earth. What does this mean? Daniel makes known that the king of Babylon

^g According to *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, 1944, page 64, and *Babylonian Chronology*, 1956, Parker and Dubberstein, pages 13, 29, Belshazzar began to reign as coregent in the third regnal year of Nabonidus (Nabunaid), which was 553 B.C.E.; Daniel 7:1.

^a *The Yale Oriental Series - Researches*, Vol. XV, 1929.
^b *Dead Men Tell Tales*, 1946, Harry Rimmer, pages 325-327.

5. What other inscriptions have given support to the record?

6. What has the growth of knowledge shown concerning this period?

7. What two parts make up the book?

8. What leads to Daniel and his companions' entering Babylonian governmental service?

9. What dream and interpretation does God reveal to Daniel, and how does Nebuchadnezzar show his appreciation?

THE YEAR OF THE ISRAELITES							
Name of Month Abib or Nisan	Corresponds to March - April	Sacred Year 1st Month	Secular Year 7th Month	Citations Ex. 12: 4; Neh. 2: 1	Festivals		
					Nisan 14 Nisan 15-21	Passover Festival of unleavened cakes	
					Nisan 16	Offering of firstfruits	
Ziv or Iyyar	April - May	2d	8th	1 Ki. 6: 1			
Sivan	May - June	3d	9th	Esther 8: 9	Sivan 6	Feast of weeks (Pentecost)	
Tammuz	June - July	4th	10th	Jer. 52: 6			
Ab	July - August	5th	11th	Ezra 7: 8			
Elul	August - September	6th	12th	Neh. 6: 15			
Ethanim or Tishri	September - October	7th	1st	1 Ki. 9: 2	Ethanim 1	Day of the trumpet blast	
					Ethanim 10	Day of atonement	
					Ethanim 15-21	Festival of booths	
					Ethanim 22	Solemn assembly	
Bul or Heshvan	October - November	8th	2d	1 Ki. 6: 38			
Chislev	November - December	9th	3d	Neh. 1: 1			
Tebeth	December - January	10th	4th	Esther 2: 16			
Shebat	January - February	11th	5th	Zech. 1: 7			
Adar	February - March	12th	6th	Esther 3: 7			
V'adar	(Intercalary month)	13th					

¹⁸ **Year.** Our study of time in the Bible now brings us to the *year*. From the beginning of man's history there is mention of the *year*. (Gen. 1:14) The Hebrew word for "year" is *shanáh*, which literally means "repetition."^a This was appropriate since each year the cycle of seasons was repeated. An earthly year is the time it takes for the earth to make one complete revolution or trip around the sun. The actual time that it takes for us here on earth to complete this trip is 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes 46 seconds, or approximately 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days. This is called the true solar year, "sun" in Latin being *sol*.

¹⁹ **Bible Years.** According to the ancient Biblical reckoning, the year ran from autumn to autumn. This was particularly suited to an agricultural life, the year beginning with plowing and sowing about October 1, and ending with the gathering in of the harvest. Noah counted the year as beginning in the autumn. He recorded the Deluge as beginning "in the second month," which would correspond to the latter half of October and the first half of November. (Gen. 7:11)^b To this day, many peoples of the earth still start their new year in the autumn. At the time of the exodus from Egypt, in 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah decreed that Abib (Nisan) should become "the start of the months" for the Jews, so that they now had a "sacred year," running from spring to spring. (Ex. 12:2) However, the Jews in this day observe a secular or civil year beginning in the autumn, Tishri being the first month.

^a *Young's Concordance*, under "year."

^b See NW footnote, 1953 Edition.

18. (a) Why is the meaning of the Hebrew word for "year" appropriate? (b) What is the true solar year as regards the earth?

19. (a) How were ancient Bible years reckoned? (b) What "sacred year" did Jehovah later decree?

²⁰ **Lunisolar Year.** Up until the time of Christ most nations used lunar years for counting time, using various ways of adjusting the year to coincide more or less with the solar year. The common lunar year of twelve lunar months has 354 days, with the months having twenty-nine or thirty days, depending on the appearance of each new moon. The lunar year is therefore about eleven days short of the true solar year of 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days. The Hebrews followed the lunar year. Just how they adjusted this year to coincide with the solar year and the seasons is not explained in the Bible, but they must have added additional or *intercalary* months when needed. The arrangement of intercalary months was later systematized in the fifth century B.C.E. into what is now known as the Metonic cycle. This allowed for the intercalary month to be added seven times every nineteen years, and in the Jewish calendar it was added after the twelfth month Adar and called *V'Adar*, or "second Adar." As the lunar calendar is thus adjusted to the sun, the years, of twelve or thirteen months, are known as "bound years" or "lunisolar years."

²¹ **Julian and Gregorian Calendars.** A calendar is a system of fixing the beginning, length and divisions of the secular or civil year, and arranging these divisions in order. The Julian Calendar was introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.E., to give the Roman people a solar-year time arrangement in place of the lunar year. The Julian Calendar consists of 365 days in a year, with the exception that on each fourth year ("leap year") one day is added, to make it 366 days. However, in the course of

20. How was the lunar year adjusted to correspond with the solar year, and what are "lunisolar years"? 21, 22. (a) What is the Julian Calendar? (b) Why is the Gregorian Calendar more accurate? (c) What is now the time difference between the two?

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time it was found that the Julian Calendar fell behind about one day in each 128 years. This was because the Julian Calendar is actually 11 minutes longer than the true solar year. Thus, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced a slight revision, instituting what is now known as the Gregorian Calendar. This provides that centuries not divisible by 400 are not to be considered leap years. For example, no day was added in 1900 to make it a leap year, but it is planned to add a leap-year day in the year 2000, as this is divisible by 400. The Gregorian Calendar is now the one in general use in Western countries.

²² Historians usually employ the Julian Calendar for events prior to the sixteenth century of the Common Era, but the Gregorian Calendar in dating events after A.D. 1600. As an illustration, the Memorial of Jesus' death for 1963 was celebrated on April 8, 1963, according to the Gregorian Calendar, but this same day was March 26 according to the Julian Calendar. Today, there is a thirteen-day difference between the two calendars.

²³ **A Bible "Time."** A prophetic "time" in the Bible, whether literal or symbolic, is always taken as a year of twelve months, each month having thirty days, for a total of 360 days. Note what one authority says in commenting on Ezekiel 4:5 and Daniel 12:11: "We must suppose that Ezekiel knew a year of 360 days. This is neither a true solar year nor is it a lunar year. It is an 'average' year in which each month has 30 days. . . . The 1290 days in Daniel must be interpreted as $3\frac{1}{2} \times 360$ days + 30 days (of an intercalary month)."^a

²⁴ A study of Revelation 11:2, 3 and 12:6, 14 reveals how one "time" is reckoned as 360 days.

²⁵ **No Zero Year.** Ancient peoples, including the learned Greeks, the Romans and the Jews of Jesus' day, had no conception of a *zero*. To them, everything began from *one*. When you studied Roman numerals at school (I, II, III, IV, V, X, etc.) did you learn a figure for *zero*? No, because the Romans had none. It was for this reason that the Christian era began, not with a *zero*, but with A.D. 1. This also gave rise to the ordinal arrangement of numbers, such as first (1st), second (2d), third (3d), tenth (10th), hundredth (100th), and so forth. In modern mathematics, which was largely designed by the Arabs, man conceives of everything as starting from nothing, or *zero*. The *zero* was invented by the Hindus about

A.D. 150, and then introduced by the Arabs into Europe some centuries later.^b

²⁶ Thus it is that whenever *ordinal* numbers are used, we must always subtract one to get the full number. For example, this is called the twentieth century. Does this mean there have been a full twenty centuries? No, it means nineteen full centuries plus some years. To express full numbers the Bible, as well as modern mathematics, has the *cardinal* numbers, such as 1, 2, 3, 10, 100, and so forth. These are also called "whole numbers."

²⁷ Now, since the Christian era did not begin with the year zero, but began with A.D. 1, and the calendar for the years before the Christian era did not count back from a zero year, but began with 1 B.C.E., the figure used for the year in any date is in reality an ordinal number. That is, A.D. 1960 really represents 1959 full years since the beginning of the Christian era, and the date July 1, 1960, represents 1959 $\frac{1}{2}$ years since the beginning of the Christian era. The same principle applies to B.C.E. dates. So to figure how many years elapsed between October 1, 607 B.C.E., and October 1, A.D. 1914, add 606 years (plus the last three months of the previous year) to 1913 (plus the first nine months of the next year), and the result is 2519 (plus twelve months), or 2520 years. Or if you want to figure what date would be 2520 years after October 1, 607 B.C.E., remember that 607 is an ordinal number; it really represents 606 full years, and since we are counting, not from December 31, 607 B.C.E., but from October 1, 607 B.C.E., we must add to 606 the three months at the end of 607 B.C.E. Now subtract 606 $\frac{1}{4}$ from 2520 years. The remainder is 1913 $\frac{3}{4}$. That means that 2520 years from October 1, 607 B.C.E., takes us 1913 $\frac{3}{4}$ years into the Christian era. Nineteen hundred and thirteen full years brings us to the beginning of A.D. 1914; $\frac{3}{4}$ of a year in addition brings us to October 1, A.D. 1914.

²⁸ **Absolute Dates.** Reliable Bible chronology is based on certain *absolute dates*. An *absolute date* is a calendar date that is proved by secular history to be the actual date of an event recorded in the Bible. It can then be used as the starting point from which a series of Bible events can be located on the calendar with certainty. Once this *absolute date* is fixed, calculations forward or backward from this date are made from accurate records in the Bible

^a *Mathematics for the Million*, 1940, by Lancelot Hogben, pages 51, 281, 288.

²⁶ How do ordinal numbers differ from cardinal numbers?

²⁷ How would you figure (a) the years from October 1, 607 B.C.E., to October 1, 1914 A.D.? (b) 2,520 years from October 1, 607 B.C.E.?

²⁸ What are absolute dates, and why are they of great value?

^a *Biblical Calendars*, 1959, by J. Van Goudoever, page 75.

23, 24. What is a prophetic "time"?

25. How did the various ancient peoples start their counting?

itself, such as the stated life-spans of people, or the duration of the reigns of kings. Thus, starting from a pegged point, we can use the reliable internal chronology of the Bible itself in dating many Bible events.

²⁹ **Absolute Date for the Hebrew Scriptures.** A prominent event recorded both in the Bible and in pagan secular history is the overthrow of the city of Babylon by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus. The Bible records this event at Daniel 5:30. The pagan record was made by King Nabonidus, and it has been dated by him in what is known as the Nabonidus Chronicle, discovered in 1879 and now preserved in the British Museum, London.^a Modern authorities have set this absolute date for the fall of Babylon as October 11-12, 539 B.C.E., according to the Julian Calendar, or October 5-6 by the Gregorian Calendar. (Like the Hebrew day, the Babylonian day began at 6 p.m.)^b

³⁰ Following the overthrow of Babylon, as the Bible record shows, "Darius the Mede himself received the kingdom." And since Daniel refers to "the first year of Darius," the inference is that he was king for at least one full year. (Dan. 5:31; 9:1) But apparently by late in 538 B.C.E. Cyrus acceded to the throne, and during his first year, at least before spring of 537 B.C.E., he issued his famous edict, or decree, permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of Jehovah. This would give ample opportunity for the Jews to resettle in their homeland, and to come up to Jerusalem to restore the worship of Jehovah in "the seventh month," or about October 1, 537 B.C.E.—Ezra 1:1-3; 3:1-6.

³¹ **Absolute Date for the Christian Greek Scriptures.** An absolute date for the Christian Greek Scriptures is determined by Tiberius Caesar's succession to Emperor Augustus. This was August 19, A.D. 14, according to the Julian Calendar. It is stated in Luke 3:1, 3 that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius' reign. From the absolute date we can therefore calculate the fifteenth year of Tiberius' actual rule to have run from August 19, A.D. 28, to August 18, A.D. 29. Soon after this, Jesus, who was about six months younger than John the Baptist, came to be baptized, when he was "about thirty years old." (Luke 3:2, 21-23; 1:34-38) This agrees with the fact that, according to Daniel 9:25, sixty-nine

"weeks" (prophetic "weeks" of seven years each, thus totaling 483 years) would elapse after the decree was issued for the rebuilding of Jerusalem with its wall until the appearance of Messiah. That decree was issued by Artaxerxes I in 455 B.C.E., taking effect in the latter part of that year. And 483 years later, in the latter part of A.D. 29, when Jesus was baptized by John he was also anointed by holy spirit from God, thus becoming the Messiah or Anointed One. That Jesus was baptized and began his ministry in the latter part of the year also agrees with the fact that he was to be cut off "at the half of the week" (or after three and a half years). (Dan. 9:27) Since he died in the spring, his ministry of three and a half years must have begun toward the fall of A.D. 29. Incidentally, these two lines of evidence also prove that Jesus was born in the autumn of 2 B.C.E., and not, as some commentators say, several years before that, since Luke 3:23 shows that Jesus was about thirty years of age when he commenced his work.

³² **How Time Moves Faster.** There is an old saying that "a watched kettle never boils." It is true that when we are watching time, when we are conscious of it, when we are waiting for something to happen, then it passes ever so slowly. However, if we are busy, if we are interested and preoccupied in what we are doing, then it really appears that "time flies." Moreover, with old people, time seems to pass much more quickly than with young people. Why is this? One year added to the life of a one-year-old means a 100-percent increase in life's experiences. One year added to the life of a fifty-year-old means just 2 percent more. To the child, a year seems a long, long time. The older person, if busy and in good health, finds the years flying faster and faster. He comes to a deeper understanding of Solomon's words: "There is nothing new under the sun." On the other hand, young people still have the slower, formative years with them. Instead of "striving after wind" with a materialistic world, they may use these years profitably in piling up a wealth of godly experience. Timely are Solomon's further words: "Remember, now, your grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: 'I have no delight in them.'"—Eccl. 1:9, 14; 12:1.

³³ **Time when Living Forever.** However, there are joyous days ahead that will be far from calamitous. Lovers of righteousness, whose "times are in Jehovah's hand," may look for-

^a See Study 9, paragraphs 17, 18.

^b *Babylonian Chronology*, 1956, Parker and Dubberstein, pages 13, 14, 29.

29. What absolute date is provided for the Hebrew Scriptures?

30. When was Cyrus' decree issued, allowing opportunity for what?

31. How does an absolute date along with fulfilled prophecy fix the time of Jesus' baptism, and of his birth?

32. (a) Why does the speed of time appear to vary? (b) What advantage do young people therefore have?

33. How may humans come to appreciate more fully Jehovah's view of time?

STUDY THREE—MEASURING EVENTS IN THE STREAM OF TIME

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ward to everlasting life in the realm of God's kingdom. (Ps. 31:14-16; Matt. 25:34, 46) Under the Kingdom, death will be no more. (Rev. 21:4) Idleness, illness, boredom and vanity will have vanished. There will be work to do, absorbing and intriguing, challenging man's perfect abilities, and bringing intense satisfaction in accomplishment. The years will seem to flow faster and faster, and appreciative and retentive minds will be continually enriched with memories of happy events. As millenniums pass, humans on this earth will no doubt come to appreciate more fully Jehovah's view

of time: 'For a thousand years in Jehovah's eyes are but as yesterday when it is past.'—Ps. 90:4.

³⁴ Viewing the stream of time from our present human standpoint, and taking into account God's promise of a new world of righteousness, how joyous in prospect are the blessings of that day: "For there Jehovah commanded the blessing to be, even life to time indefinite!"—Ps. 133:3.

34. With regard to time, what blessing has Jehovah commanded?

Study Three— Measuring Events in the Stream of Time

The counting of time in Bible days, and a discussion of the chronology of outstanding events of both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

IN GIVING Daniel the vision of the "king of the north" and the "king of the south," Jehovah's angel several times used the expression "the time appointed." (Dan. 11:27, 29, 35) There are many other scriptures, too, that indicate Jehovah is an accurate timekeeper, who accomplishes his purposes exactly on time. (Luke 21:24; 1 Thess. 5:1, 2) In his Word the Bible he has provided a number of "guideposts" that help us locate important happenings in the stream of time. In recent years much progress has been made in the understanding of Bible chronology. Archaeological and other research continues to shed light on various problems, enabling us to determine the timing of key events of the Bible record.—Prov. 4:18.

Ordinal and Cardinal Numbers. In the previous study (paragraphs 25 and 26) we learned that there is a difference between cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers. Now, let us apply this understanding to Jeremiah 52:31. Here it speaks of "the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin the king of Judah." Note that "thirty-seventh" is an *ordinal* number. This indicates thirty-six full years plus some months. The exile of Jehoiachin began early in the year 617 B.C.E. The thirty-seventh year began, not after thirty-seven years had passed, but after thirty-six full years had elapsed, or early in the year 581. However, it is noted that the event spoken of in this verse

occurred "in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month," or almost a full year after the beginning of the thirty-seventh year. Since this year began early in 581, the twelfth month would carry us over into the early part of 580 B.C.E. (In contrast to the ordinal number thirty-seventh, thirty-six is used as a *cardinal* number. It does not end with "th," and so represents a full thirty-six.)

Regnal and Accession Years. The Bible refers to state records of the governments of Judah and Israel, as well as to state matters of Babylon and Persia. In all four of these kingdoms, state chronology was accurately reckoned according to the rulerships of the kings, and the same system of reckoning has been carried over into the Bible. Very often the Bible gives the name of the document quoted, as, for example, "the book of the affairs of Solomon." (1 Ki. 11:41) The reign of a king would cover part of an accession year, to be followed by a complete number of regnal years. In all these countries the *regnal* years were the official years in the kingship, and were generally counted from Nisan to Nisan, or from spring to spring. When a king succeeded to the throne, the intervening months until the next spring month of Nisan were referred to as his *accession* year, during which he filled out the regnal term of rulership for his predecessor. However, his own official regnal term was counted as beginning on the next Nisan 1.

1. (a) What indicates that Jehovah is an accurate timekeeper? (b) What recent progress has been made in understanding Bible chronology?

2. Give an example of reckoning with ordinal numbers.

3. (a) What state records assist in reckoning Bible dates? (b) How were regnal and accession years observed in ancient times?

⁴As an example, it appears that Solomon had an *accession* year starting sometime before Nisan of 1037 B.C.E., while David was still living. Shortly afterward David died. (1 Ki. 1: 39, 40; 2:10) However, David's last regnal year continued down to the spring of 1037 B.C.E., still being counted as part of his forty years' administration. Solomon had an accession year lasting until the spring of 1037 B.C.E., and this could not be counted as a regnal year, as he was still filling out his father's term of administration. Therefore Solomon's first full regnal year did not begin until Nisan, 1037 B.C.E. (1 Ki. 2:12) Eventually, forty full regnal years were credited to Solomon's administration as king. (1 Ki. 11:42) By keeping the *regnal* years apart from *accession* years in this way, it is possible to calculate Bible chronology accurately.

COUNTING BACK TO ADAM'S CREATION

⁵**Starting from the Absolute Date.** The absolute date for this calculation is that of Cyrus' overthrow of the Babylonian dynasty, 539 B.C.E.^a Cyrus issued his decree of liberation for the Jews during his first year, before spring of 537 B.C.E. Ezra 3:1 reports that the sons of Israel were back in Jerusalem by the seventh month, or the early autumn. So the autumn of 537 is reckoned for the date of the restoration of Jehovah's worship in Jerusalem.

⁶This restoration of Jehovah's worship in the autumn of 537 marked the end of a prophetic period. What period? It was the "seventy years" during which the Promised Land "must become a devastated place," and concerning which Jehovah also said, "In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I shall turn my attention to you people, and I will establish toward you my good word in bringing you back to this place." (Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10) Daniel, who was well acquainted with this prophecy, acted in harmony with it as the "seventy years" drew to a close. (Dan. 9:1-3) The "seventy years" that ended in the autumn of the year 537 must have begun, then, in the autumn of 607 B.C.E. The facts bear this out. Jeremiah chapter 52 describes the momentous events of the siege of Jerusalem, the Babylonian breakthrough and the capture of King Zedekiah, 607 B.C.E. Then, as verse 12 states, "in the fifth month, on the tenth day," that is, Ab 10, the Babylonians burned the temple

and the city. However, this was not yet the starting point of the "seventy years." Some vestige of Jewish sovereignty still remained in the person of Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor of the remaining Jewish settlements. "In the seventh month" Gedaliah and some others were assassinated, so that the remaining Jews fled in fear to Egypt. Then only, from about October 1, 607, was the land in the complete sense "lying desolated . . . to fulfill seventy years."—2 Ki. 25:22-26; 2 Chron. 36:20, 21.

⁷**From 607 to 997 B.C.E.** The calculation for this period back from the fall of Jerusalem to the time of the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death presents many difficulties. However, a comparison of the reigns of the kings of Israel and of Judah as recorded in First and Second Kings indicates that this time period covers 390 years. A strong evidence that this is the correct figure is the prophecy of Ezekiel 4:1-13. As shown in this prophecy itself, it is pointing to the time when Jerusalem would be besieged and its inhabitants taken captive by the nations, which occurred in 607 B.C.E. So the forty years spoken of in the case of Judah terminated with Jerusalem's desolation. The 390 years spoken of in the case of Israel did not end when Samaria was destroyed, because that was long past when Ezekiel prophesied, and the prophecy plainly says that it is pointing to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. So it, too, terminated in 607 B.C.E. Counting back from this date, we see that the "error of the house of Israel" began in 997 B.C.E. It was in that year, then, that Jeroboam, on the death of Solomon, broke with the house of David and "proceeded to part Israel from following Jehovah, and he caused them to sin with a great sin."—2 Ki. 17:21.

⁸**From 997 to 1513 B.C.E.** Since the last of Solomon's forty full regnal years ended in the spring of 997, it follows that his first regnal year must have commenced in the spring of 1037 B.C.E. (1 Ki. 11:42) The Bible record says that Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem in the second month of the fourth year of his reign. This means three full years and one complete month of his reign had elapsed, bringing us to April-May, 1034 B.C.E., for the start of the temple building. However, the same scripture at 1 Kings 6:1 states that this was also "the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out from the land of Egypt." Again, 480th is an *ordinal* number, representing 479 complete years.

^a Study 2, paragraphs 29, 30.

4. Show how Bible chronology may be counted according to regnal years.

5. How is the date for the restoration reckoned?

6. (a) What foretold period ended in the autumn of 537? (b) When must that period have begun, and how do the facts support this?

7. (a) How may the years be calculated back to Solomon's death? (b) What support is supplied by Ezekiel's prophecy?

8. (a) How are the years then reckoned back to the exodus? (b) What change affects Bible chronology about this time?

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Hence, 479 added to 1034 gives the date 1513 B.C.E. as the year that Israel came out of Egypt.^a Paragraph 19 of Study Two explains how from the year 1513 B.C.E. Abib (Nisan) was to be reckoned as "the first of the months of the year" for Israel (Ex. 12:2), and that previously a year beginning in the autumn, with the month Tishri, was followed. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1957, Vol. 12, page 474, comments: "The reckoning of the regnal years of the kings is based upon the year which began in the spring, and is parallel to the Babylonian method in which this prevailed." Whenever the change, from commencing the year from the autumn to commencing the year from the spring, began to be applied to periods of time in the Bible, this would involve a loss or gain of six months somewhere in the counting of time.

^aFrom 1513 to 1943 B.C.E. At Exodus 12:40, 41, Moses records that "the dwelling of the sons of Israel, who had dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." From the above wording it is apparent that not all this "dwelling" was in Egypt. This time period begins with Abraham's departure from Haran for Canaan, at which time Jehovah's covenant with Abraham went into effect. The first 215 years of this "dwelling" was in Canaan, and then an equal period was spent in Egypt, until Israel became completely independent of all Egyptian control and dependency, in 1513 B.C.E.^b The *New World Translation* footnote (1953 Edition) on Exodus 12:40 shows that the Samaritan *Pentateuch* and the *Septuagint*, both of which are based on Hebrew texts older than the Masoretic, add the words "and in the land of Canaan" to "Egypt." Galatians 3:17, which also mentions the 430 years, confirms that this period started with the making of the Abrahamic covenant, at the time that Abraham moved into Canaan. This was therefore in 1943 B.C.E., when Abraham was seventy-five years old.—Gen. 12:4.

¹⁰Another line of evidence supports the above reckoning: At Acts 7:6 mention is made of the seed of Abraham as being afflicted four hundred years. Since Jehovah removed the affliction by Egypt in 1513 B.C.E., the beginning

of affliction must have been in 1913 B.C.E. This was five years after the birth of Isaac, and corresponds with Ishmael's "poking fun" at Isaac on the occasion of his weaning.—Gen. 15:13; 21:8, 9.

¹¹From 1943 to 2370 B.C.E. We have seen that Abraham was seventy-five years old when he entered Canaan in 1943 B.C.E. Now it is possible to date the stream of time farther back, to the days of Noah. This is done by use of the time periods supplied for us in Genesis 11:10 to 12:4. This reckoning, which gives a total of 427 years, is made as follows:

From the beginning of the	
Flood to Arpachshad's birth	2 years
Then to the birth of Shelah	35 "
To the birth of Eber	30 "
To the birth of Peleg	34 "
To the birth of Reu	30 "
To the birth of Serug	32 "
To the birth of Nahor	30 "
To the birth of Terah	29 "
To the death of Terah, when	
Abraham was 75 years old	205 "
Total	427 years

Adding 427 years to 1943 B.C.E. brings us to 2370 B.C.E. Thus the timetable of the Bible shows that the flood of Noah's day began in 2370 B.C.E.

¹²From 2370 to 4026 B.C.E. Going still farther back in the stream of time, we find that the Bible dates the period from the Flood all the way to Adam's creation. This is determined by Genesis 5:3-29; 7:11, and the time count is summarized below:

From Adam's creation to	
the birth of Seth	130 years
Then to the birth of Enosh	105 "
To the birth of Kenan	90 "
To the birth of Mahalalel	70 "
To the birth of Jared	65 "
To the birth of Enoch	162 "
To the birth of Methuselah	65 "
To the birth of Lamech	187 "
To the birth of Noah	182 "
To the Flood	600 "
Total	1,656 years

Adding 1,656 years to our previous date of 2370, we arrive at 4026 B.C.E. for the creation of Adam, perhaps in the fall, since it is in the fall that the year began on the most ancient calendars.

11. How does the Bible timetable carry us back to the date of the Flood?

12. What is the time count back to Adam's creation?

^a *The Watchtower*, 1948, pages 92-94.

^b From Abraham's leaving Haran to Isaac's birth is 25 years; then to Jacob's birth, 60 years; Jacob was 130 years old when he went down to Egypt.—Gen. 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 47:9.

9. (a) How is the record dated back to the Abrahamic covenant? (b) How are the first 215 years of this period accounted for? (c) How old was Abraham when he left Haran?

10. What other line of evidence supports the chronology of Abraham's time?

STUDY NINE—ARCHAEOLOGY SUPPORTS THE INSPIRED RECORD

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hold out against Nebuchadnezzar, being reduced to a pile of charred ruins in 609-607 B.C.E. The letters reflect the urgency of the times. They appear to be letters written from remaining outposts of Judean troops to Ya'osh, a military commander at Lachish. One of these reads in part: "May YHWH [Tetragrammaton, Jehovah] let my lord hear even now tidings of good. . . . we are watching for the signal-stations of Lachish, according to all the signs which my lord gives, because we do not see Azekah." This is a striking confirmation of Jeremiah 34:7, which mentions Lachish and Azekah as the last two fortified cities left remaining. According to this letter, Azekah had now fallen. The divine name, in the form of the tetragrammaton, appears frequently in the letters, showing that the Jews were not at that time averse to using the name.

¹⁶ Another letter commences as follows: "May the Lord [YHWH] cause my lord to hear tidings of peace! . . . And it hath been reported to thy servant saying, 'The commander of the host, Coniah son of Elnathan, hath come down in order to go into Egypt and unto Hodaviah son of Ahijah and his men hath he sent to obtain [supplies] from him.'" This letter confirms that Judah went down to Egypt for assistance, in violation of Jehovah's command, and to her own destruction. (Isa. 31:1; Jer. 46:25, 26) The Elnathan of this letter may be the one mentioned at Jeremiah 36:12. Hoshaiiah is named as the writer of one of these letters, and may be the Hoshaiiah of Jeremiah 42:1 and 43:2. Three other persons referred to in the letters appear to be mentioned in the Bible book of Jeremiah. They are Gemariah (36:10), Neriah (32:12) and Jaazaniah (35:3). Thus, in many respects, the Lachish Letters give striking support to Jeremiah's writings in the Bible.^a

¹⁷ **The Nabonidus Chronicle.** In the latter half of the nineteenth century excavations near modern Baghdad produced many finds of clay

^a *Light from the Ancient Past*, pages 160-162; *The Bible and Archaeology*, pages 195-197.

^{17, 18.} What does the Nabonidus Chronicle describe, and why is it of special value?

tablets and cylinders that threw much light on the history of ancient Babylon. One of these was the very valuable document known as the Nabonidus Chronicle, or Nabunaid Chronicle, which is now in the British Museum. King Nabonidus of Babylon was the father of his coregent Belshazzar. He outlived his son, who was killed on the night that troops of Cyrus the Persian took Babylon, October 5-6, 539 B.C.E. (Dan. 5:30, 31) Nabonidus' remarkably well-dated record of the fall of Babylon is our means of establishing on what day this event occurred. Following

is a translation of a small part of the Nabonidus Chronicle: "In the month of Tashritu [Tishri, Hebrew 7th month], when Cyrus attacked the army of Akkad in Opis on the Tigris . . . the 15th day, Sippar was seized without battle. Nabonidus fled. The 16th day [October 11-12, 539 B.C.E., Julian or October 5-6, Gregorian] Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Gutium and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle. Afterwards Nabonidus was arrested in Babylon when he returned (there). . . . In the month of Arahshmanu [Heshvan, Hebrew 8th month], the 3rd day [October 28-29, Julian], Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs were spread in front of him—the state of 'Peace' (Sulmu) was imposed upon the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon. Gobryas, his governor, installed (sub-)governors in Babylon. . . . In the month of Arahshmanu on the night of the 11th day [November 5-6, 539 B.C.E., Julian] Gobryas died."^b

¹⁸ It may be noted that Darius the Mede is not mentioned in this chronicle, and, thus far, no mention has been found of this Darius in any historical document outside the Bible. Some have therefore suggested that he might be the Gobryas mentioned in the above account, but there is objection to this. In any event, secular history definitely establishes that Cyrus

^b *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 1955, J. B. Pritchard, pages 305-307.



The Nabonidus Chronicle
(Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

was a key figure in the conquest of Babylon and that he thereafter ruled there as king.

¹⁹ **The Cyrus Cylinder.** Some time after he began ruling as king of the Persian world power, Cyrus recorded on a clay cylinder his capture of Babylon in 539 B.C.E., mentioning also some of the evils that he corrected there. This outstanding document was found at the ancient site of Sippar, on the Euphrates and about twenty miles from Baghdad, and is also preserved in the British Museum. A part of the translated text follows: "I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world . . . When I made my triumphal entrance into Babylon, with joy and rejoicing I took up my lordly residence in the royal palace, Marduk, the great lord, moved the noble heart of the inhabitants of Babylon to me, while I gave daily care to his worship. My numerous troops marched peacefully into Babylon. . . . The needs of Babylon and all its cities I gladly took heed to . . . the gods, who dwell in them, I brought them back to their places, and caused them to dwell in a habitation for all time. All their inhabitants I collected and restored them to their dwelling places. . . . May all the gods, whom I brought into their cities pray daily for long life for me."^a

²⁰ The Cyrus Cylinder thus makes known the king's policy of restoring captive peoples and their gods to their former places, in harmony with which he issued his decree for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of Jehovah there. Once again the Bible stands vindicated as true, this time by the testimony of Cyrus, whom Jehovah had foretold by name two hundred years previously as the one who would take Babylon and bring about the restoration of Jehovah's people.—Isa. 44:28; 45:1; 2 Chron. 36:23.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES

²¹ As with the Hebrew Scriptures, so with the Christian Greek Scriptures, archaeology has brought to light many interesting artifacts in support of the inspired record.

²² **Denarius Coin with Tiberius' Inscription.** The Bible shows clearly that Jesus' ministry took place during the rule of Tiberius Caesar. (Luke 3:1) Some of Jesus' opposers tried to

trap him on the matter of paying head tax to Caesar. The record reads: "Detecting their hypocrisy, he said to them: 'Why do you put me to the test? Bring me a denarius to look at.' They brought one. And he said to them: 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to him: 'Caesar's.' Jesus then said: 'Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God.' And they began to marvel at him." (Mark 12:15-17) Now, archaeology has come up with a silver denarius coin, bearing the head of Tiberius Caesar! It was put in circulation A.D. 15.^b This is consistent with Tiberius' ruling as emperor from August 19, A.D. 14, and brings added confirmation to the record stating that John the Baptist's ministry commenced in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, or the spring of A.D. 29.—Luke 3:1, 2.

²³ **Pontius Pilate Inscription.** It was in 1961 that the first archaeological find was made with reference to Pontius Pilate. This was a stone slab located at Caesarea, which bore the Latin names *Pontius Pilatus* and *Tiberius*.^c

²⁴ **The Areopagus.** Paul delivered one of his most famous recorded speeches in Athens, Greece, A.D. 50. (Acts 17:16-34) This was on the occasion when he was brought to the Areopagus before the council composed of city fathers. The Areopagus, or Hill of Ares ("Mars Hill"), is the name of a bare, rocky hill, about 370 feet high, immediately northwest of the Acropolis of Athens. Steps cut in the rock lead to the top, where rough, rock-hewn benches, forming three sides of a square, can still be seen. The Areopagus still remains, to confirm the Bible's recorded setting for Paul's historic speech.

²⁵ **The Arch of Titus.** Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by the Romans under Titus, A.D. 70. The next year, in Rome, Titus celebrated his triumph, together with his father, Emperor Vespasian. Seven hundred Jewish prisoners were marched in the triumphal procession. Loads of the spoils of war were also paraded, including temple treasures. Titus himself became emperor, from A.D. 79 to 81, and after his death a large monument, the Arch of Titus, was completed and dedicated *divo Tito* ("to the deified Titus"). His triumphant procession is represented in bas-relief, carved on each side of the passage through the Arch. On the one side there are depicted the Roman soldiers, without weapons

^a *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 1912, R. W. Rogers, pages 380-383.

¹⁹ Where was the Cyrus Cylinder found, where is it preserved, and what is recorded on it?

²⁰ How does this harmonize with and vindicate the Bible?

²¹ What does archaeology have to tell us in connection with the Greek Scriptures?

²² How does archaeology support Jesus' discussion of the tax question?

^b *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1952, pages 456, 758.

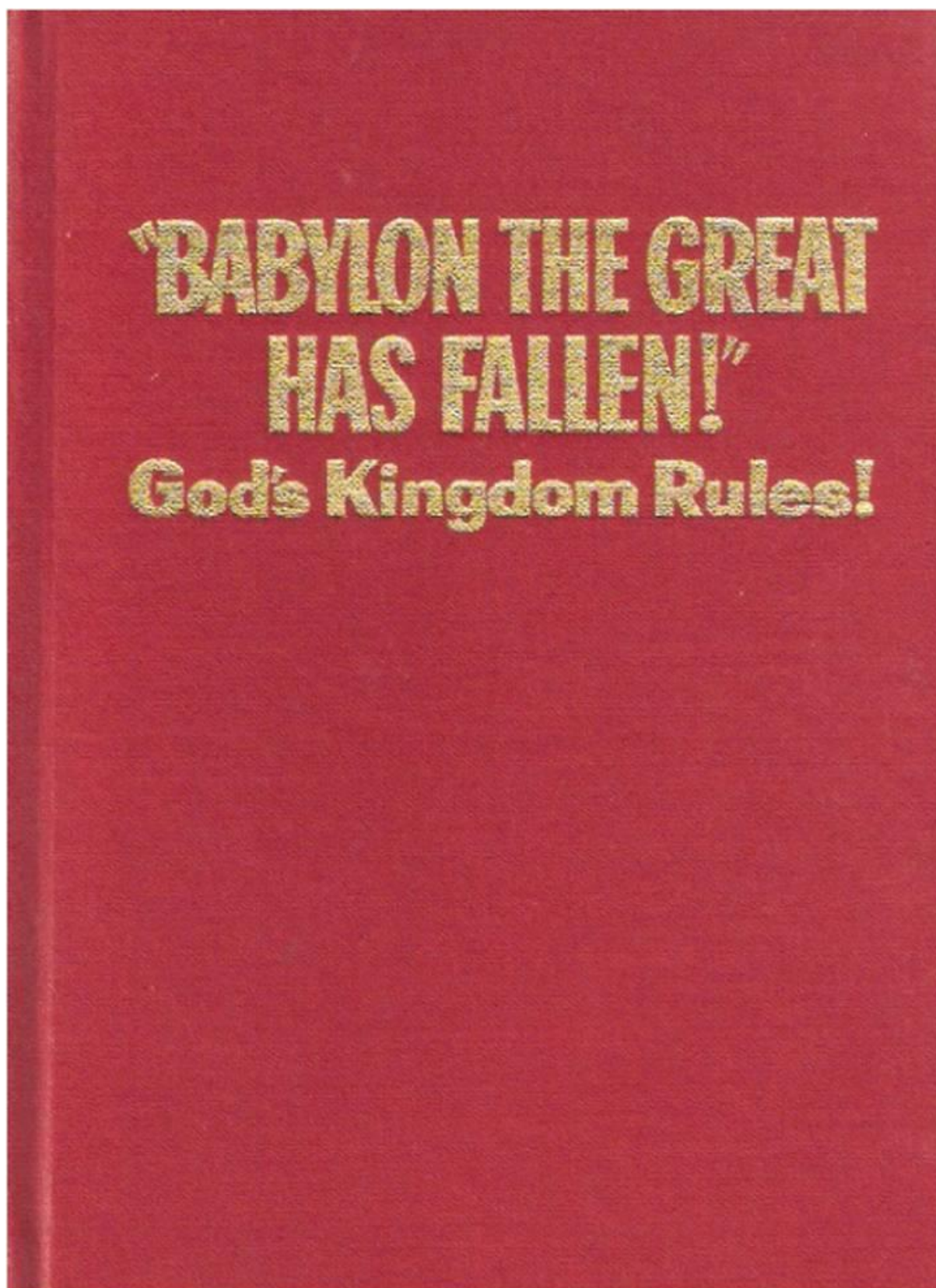
^c *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962, J. D. Douglas, page 997.

²³ What find has been made with reference to Pontius Pilate?

²⁴ What still remains to confirm the setting of Acts 17:16-34?

²⁵ To what does the Arch of Titus continue to testify, and how?

**APPENDIX F: SELECTED PAGES FROM THE BOOK
"BABYLON THE GREAT HAS FALLEN!" (1963 EDITION)**



A SMALL-SCALE KINGDOM OF GOD BEGINS

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tion, Ophel was, of course, walled in also and was fortified. Jehovah's temple would therefore be on a lofty elevation, over 2,400 feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea, and from any direction the worshipers would have to go *up* to it.—Psalm 122:1-4; Isaiah 2:2.

To prevent his ambitious fourth son Adonijah from taking over the throne, the aged King David had his beloved son Solomon suddenly anointed as king at Gihon, a well just outside the eastern wall of Zion, the City of David. (1 Kings 1:1-40) Later, after King David had given his final instructions concerning the building of God's temple on Mount Moriah, all the people who were assembled at the capital city "proceeded a second time to make Solomon the son of David king and to anoint him to Jehovah as leader and also Zadok as priest." David's death is reported as occurring shortly after this. (1 Chronicles 28:1; 29:20-28) Thus began the forty-year rule of Solomon as king, sitting on "Jehovah's throne" in the City of David on Mount Zion, in 1037 B.C.

TEMPLE REPLACES TABERNACLE

In the spring of the fourth year of Solomon's reign he began to build Jehovah's temple, not in the City of David on Mount Zion, but to the north on Mount Moriah. This action was said to be "in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, that is, the second month, after Solomon became king over Israel." That would be in 1034 B.C. (1 Kings 6:1) Because of all the advance preparation the temple building proceeded with noteworthy ease. At the end of seven and a half years of work this costly temple, which was built on a grander scale than the tabernacle built by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, was completed. During all this time Jehovah's ark of

Jerusalem, and he pleased Pharaoh of Egypt by being against Babylon. (2 Chronicles 36:1-5; 2 Kings 23:30-37) Like his brother Jehoahaz he was a bad king.

At the beginning of King Jehoiakim's rule the prophet Jeremiah stood in the courtyard of Jehovah's temple and predicted that Jehovah would make that magnificent house like the tabernacle set up in the city of Shiloh, forever bereft of the sacred ark of God's covenant. The priests, prophets and people considered this treason and laid hold of Jeremiah, saying: "You will positively die. Why is it that you have prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, 'Like that in Shiloh is how this house will become, and this very city will be devastated so as to be without an inhabitant'?" Before the princes of Judah Jeremiah made his defense, but they found no basis for putting him to death. "It was the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan that proved to be with Jeremiah, in order not to give him into the hand of the people to have him put to death." So Jeremiah went free, for the time being.—Jeremiah 26:1-24; 7:1-34.

THE SYMBOLIC "CUP OF THE WINE OF RAGE"

In the fourth year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, or in 625 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon, to become the greatest king of this the Third World Power. In that same year Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Nechoh the king of Egypt in battle at Carchemish by the Euphrates River. (Jeremiah 46:1, 2) After that he pushed Pharaoh Nechoh all the way into Egypt, for we read: "And never again did the king of Egypt come out from his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that happened to belong to the king of Egypt from the torrent valley of Egypt up to the river Euphrates." (2 Kings 24:7) In the year of this event, also, Jeremiah gave his prophecy concerning the executorial work that Nebuchadnezzar would do as the "servant" or instrument of Jehovah, whose time

had come for executing judgment upon evildoers.
—Jeremiah 25:8, 9.

Jeremiah foretold a seventy-year-long desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Judah. He said: "Therefore this is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'For the reason that you did not obey my words, here I am sending and I will take all the families of the north,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'even sending to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will devote them to destruction and make them an object of astonishment and something to whistle at and places devastated to time indefinite. And I will destroy out of them the sound of exultation and the sound of rejoicing, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the hand mill and the light of the lamp. And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years.' " (Jeremiah 25:1-11) Thus, while the land of Judah lay uninhabited seventy years, the *whole* nation was to serve the kings of Babylon.

Jehovah then likened King Nebuchadnezzar to a drinking cup. He likened his own rage against the condemned nations to wine, which he would make them drink by means of the symbolic cup, Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah goes on to say: "This is what Jehovah the God of Israel said to me: 'Take this cup of the wine of rage out of my hand, and you must make all the nations to whom I am sending you drink it. And they must drink and shake back and forth and act like crazed men because of the sword [of Nebuchadnezzar] that I am sending among them.' "

In a symbolic way, that is, by prophesying, Jeremiah passed the cup to the nations, making them drink the prophetic message before drinking its fulfillment: "I proceeded to take the cup out of the hand of Jehovah

against him. And Jehovah began to send against him marauder bands of Chaldeans and marauder bands of Syrians and marauder bands of Moabites and marauder bands of the sons of Ammon, and he kept sending them against Judah to destroy it, according to Jehovah's word that he had spoken by means of his servants the prophets. It was only by the order of Jehovah that it took place against Judah, to remove it from his sight for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done; and also for the innocent blood that he had shed, so that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and Jehovah did not consent to grant forgiveness. As for the rest of the affairs of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the affairs of the days of the kings of Judah? Finally Jehoiakim lay down with his forefathers, and Jehoiachin his son began to reign in place of him."—2 Kings 24:1-6.

Those words in 2 Kings 24:1-6 must not be misread. They do not say that Nebuchadnezzar came up against King Jehoiakim at Jerusalem in the first year of Jehoiakim's reign (628 B.C.) and made him tributary to Babylon. They do not say that Jehoiakim continued as a vassal to Babylon for the first three years of his reign and then rebelled against the king of Babylon in the fourth year of his reign and kept up this rebellion for eight years, till the eleventh and final year of his reign. This could not be the case, for in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim's reign Jeremiah 36:9, 29 speaks of Babylon's king as yet to come into the land of Judah to ruin it. So, if King Jehoiakim was "servant for three years" to the king of Babylon and then rebelled, these must have been the last three years of King Jehoiakim's reign of eleven years.

In view of this, it must have been toward the end of the eighth year of Jehoiakim's reign at Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem for the first time and made King Jehoiakim his vassal. Hence the ninth year of Jehoiakim's reign at Jerusalem, or 620 B.C.,

was the first year of his vassalage to Babylon. In the third year after that, the third year of Jehoiakim's vassalage, he rebelled and stopped paying tribute to Babylon. For this reason Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem the second time, to punish the rebel king. That was in 618 B.C.—See *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, by M. S. and J. L. Miller, edition of 1952, page 306, under "Jehoiakim."

However, Nebuchadnezzar never did take King Jehoiakim alive. Jehoiakim did not make peace with Nebuchadnezzar or surrender to him but died inside Jerusalem. How, the Bible does not disclose. He was not given an honorable burial, to fulfill Jehovah's prediction: "With the burial of a he-ass he will be buried, with a dragging about and a throwing away, out beyond the gates of Jerusalem." Lying unattended out there, his corpse became exposed to the sun's heat by day and to the frost by night.—Jeremiah 22:18, 19; 36:30.

It had been the intention of Nebuchadnezzar to take King Jehoiakim alive and in fetters to Babylon as a captive. To this effect 2 Chronicles 36:5-8 reads: "For eleven years he reigned in Jerusalem; and he continued to do what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah his God. Against him Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came up that he might bind him with two fetters of copper to carry him off to Babylon. And some of the utensils of the house of Jehovah Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon and then put them in his palace in Babylon. As for the rest of the affairs of Jehoiakim and his detestable things that he did and what was to be found against him, there they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah; and Jehoiachin his son began to reign in place of him."

Since Jehoiachin came to the throne of his father Jehoiakim, how does this harmonize with Jehovah's declaration that Jehoiakim would have no one sitting on the throne of David at Jerusalem? (Jeremiah 36:

30) It does not contradict Jehovah's declaration, because, in fact, Jehoiachin reigned just three months and ten days, and this short period is hardly to be taken into account. (2 Chronicles 36:9, 10) In harmony with what the prophet Jeremiah had been advising the people, Jehoiachin surrendered quickly to Nebuchadnezzar. For this reason it did not go too hard with him. We read:

"Eighteen years old was Jehoiachin when he began to reign, and for three months he reigned in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he continued to do what was bad in Jehovah's eyes, according to all that his father had done. During that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, so that the city came under siege. And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon proceeded to come against the city, while his servants were laying siege against it. At length Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he with his mother and his servants and his princes and his court officials; and the king of Babylon got to take him in the eighth year of his being king." The eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was from Nisan 1, 618 B.C., to Adar 29, 617 B.C., or March 19, 617 B.C.

On this occasion Nebuchadnezzar took much treasure from Jehovah's temple and from the king's house. He also took back with him into exile in Babylon all the principal men of Jerusalem and the skilled workmen and the military men and builders. "No one had been left behind except the lowly class of the people of the land. Thus he took Jehoiachin into exile to Babylon; and the king's mother and the king's wives and his court officials and the foremost men of the land he led away as exiled people from Jerusalem to Babylon. . . . Further, the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his uncle king in place of him. Then he changed his name to Zedekiah."—2 Kings 24:8-17.

It was at that time that the young Daniel and three special companions were taken exile to Babylon. In Daniel 1:1 he writes about it: "In the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and proceeded to lay siege to it." This was after King Jehoiakim had rebelled against the king of Babylon, after being a vassal for about three years.

Hence the expression "in the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim the king of Judah" means in the third year of Jehoiakim as a vassal king paying tribute to Babylon. Since his vassalage began after he reigned eight years in Jerusalem, this third year of his reign as Babylon's vassal would be the eleventh year of his entire reign at Jerusalem and would be due to end by the Jewish lunar calendar on Adar 29, 617 B.C., or March 19, 617 B.C. Jehoiakim's unexplained death evidently did not permit him to live to the end of this eleventh year at that date.*

Plainly, then, Daniel and his three companions did not go into exile at Babylon in the third year of Jehoi-

* In agreement with this, Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 10, chapter 6, says, in part: "In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, one whose name was Nebuchadnezzar took the government over the Babylonians, who at the same time went up with a great army to the city Carchemish, which was at Euphrates; upon a resolution that he had taken to fight with Necho king of Egypt, under whom all Syria then was. . . . But when Nebuchadnezzar had already reigned four years, which was the eighth of Jehoiakim's government over the Hebrews, the king of Babylon made an expedition with mighty forces against the Jews, and required tribute of Jehoiakim; threatening upon his refusal to make war against him. He was affrighted at this threatening, and bought his peace with money; and brought the tribute he was ordered to bring for three years.

"But on the third year, upon hearing that the king of Babylon made an expedition against the Egyptians, he did not pay tribute; yet was he disappointed of his hope, for the Egyptians durst not fight at this time. . . .

"A little time afterward, the king of Babylon made an expedition against Jehoiakim; . . . and made his son Jeholachin king of the country, and of the city; he also took the principal persons in dignity for captives, three thousand in number, and led them away to Babylon. Among whom was the prophet Ezekiel, who was then but young. And this was the end of king Jehoiakim, when he had lived thirty-six years and reigned eleven. But he was succeeded in the kingdom by Jeholachin, . . ."

akim's reign at Jerusalem independent of Babylon, which third year of independent rule was from Nisan 1, 626 B.C., to Adar 29, 625 B.C. (March 17, 625 B.C.) It was after King Jehoiakim had died in disgrace in the eleventh year of his entire reign some time prior to March 19, 617 B.C., that Daniel was taken into exile to Babylon. It was evidently when Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, after reigning at Jerusalem for three months and ten days, was taken into exile in 617 B.C. that Daniel was taken along as an exile from Jerusalem.

So, then, as regards the captivity of Jews at Babylon, the exile and captivity of even part of the Jews at Babylon did not begin in 625 B.C. at the end of the third independent year of rule of King Jehoiakim at Jerusalem. Likewise, the seventy-year period that was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah did not begin in that year of 625 B.C. Certainly the land of Judah was not then turned upside down like a vessel and emptied of all its inhabitants. Even eight years later, in 617 B.C., when young King Jehoiachin was taken exile to Babylon, only a small portion of the people were taken along with him. The vast majority of the people remained, and Jerusalem and the other Judean cities remained populated, and the land was by no means left an uninhabited desolation. Not *all* the people of Judah were then doing service at Babylon to the king of Babylon.*

* In Jeremiah 52:28 we read: "These are the people whom Nebuchadnezzar took into exile: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three Jews." This "seventh year" may mean the seventh year *after* the year of his victory over Pharaoh Nechoh at Carchemish in 625 B.C., for *after* his victory at that place Nebuchadnezzar had all Palestine at his mercy. Telling what followed this, 2 Kings 24:7 says: "Never again did the king of Egypt come out from his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that happened to belong to the king of Egypt from the torrent valley of Egypt up to the river Euphrates."

Hence, with a special threat to Jerusalem and Judah, the reign of Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon might be counted as starting in 624 B.C., or the year after his victory over Pharaoh Nechoh at Carchemish. From this standpoint the "seventh year" mentioned in Jeremiah 52:28 would be 618-617 B.C., which was also the eleventh year of Jerusalem's king Jehoiakim. But, from when Nebuchadnezzar actually began to reign in Babylon, 618-617 B.C. [continued on next page]

It is because of making the mistake of dating the beginning of the seventy-year period for the desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Judah after King Jehoiakim reigned at Jerusalem but three years that the chronologers in Christendom throw their time schedule of history at least nineteen years out of order, shortening up the stream of time by that many years. They do this because of trying to harmonize the Bible records with the astronomical Canon of Claudius Ptolemy, an Alexandrian or Egyptian astronomer of the second century after Christ, but whose system of astronomy has long since been exploded. In this we do not go along with such chronologers.

After King Jehoiachin, his princes and young Daniel and the priest named Ezekiel the son of Buzi were deported to Babylon, the beginning of the seventy years of Judah's desolation had yet eleven years to wait. (Ezekiel 1:1-3) They began after the last king, Zedekiah the uncle of Jehoiachin, was dethroned and when the land of Judah was left desolate. When, in 617 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah on the throne of Jerusalem as a vassal king, he "made him swear by God." Hence Jehovah God considered Zedekiah's oath of faithful submission to Nebuchadnezzar as an oath made to him. (2 Chronicles 36:13) On this matter Ezekiel 17:12-14 has this to say:

"Look! The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and proceeded to take its king [Jehoiachin] and its princes and bring them to himself at Babylon. Furthermore, he took one of the royal seed [Mattaniah, or Zedekiah] and concluded a covenant with him and brought him

[continued from page 137] would be the "eighth year" of his reign. (2 Kings 24:12) So, then, it was actually in the eighth year of his reign in Babylon that he took into exile the above-mentioned 3,023 Jews, evidently not counting in their wives and families, numbering thousands.—2 Kings 24:14-16.

Parallel with the above, the "eighteenth year" of Nebuchadnezzar spoken of in Jeremiah 52:29 would be the "eighteenth year" of his domination over Palestine, but the "nineteenth year" of his entire reign in Babylon, as mentioned in 2 Kings 25: 8.

Jehovah. And even against King Nebuchadnezzar he rebelled, who had made him swear by God; and he kept stiffening his neck and hardening his heart so as not to return to Jehovah the God of Israel. Even all the chiefs of the priests and the people themselves committed unfaithfulness on a large scale, according to all the detestable things of the nations, so that they defiled the house of Jehovah which he had sanctified." —2 Chronicles 36:11-14.

The siege of Jerusalem had now kept up for more than 520 days, more than seventeen lunar months, from the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, the tenth month, the tenth day, and it went into the fourth month of the eleventh year of his reign. The famine in the city had become severe; there was no bread for the people. (2 Kings 25:1-3) Mothers were eating their own babies. (Lamentations 2:19, 20) How was the prophet Jeremiah faring as a prisoner?

Came the ninth day of this fourth month (Tammuz). Ah, at last success! A breach was made in Jerusalem's resistant wall! "And all the princes of the king of Babylon proceeded to come in and sit down in the Middle Gate." No self-surrender now for King Zedekiah! By nightfall he and his men of war got out of Jerusalem by the way of the king's garden, by the gate between the double wall, and they fled northeastward toward Jericho near the Jordan River. But in vain! "A military force of the Chaldeans went chasing after them, and they got to overtake Zedekiah in the desert plains of Jericho. Then they took him and brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath that he might pronounce upon him judicial decisions. And the king of Babylon proceeded to slaughter the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes, and all the nobles of Judah the king of Babylon slaughtered. And the eyes of Zedekiah he blinded, after which he bound him with copper fetters, in order to bring him to Babylon."—Jeremiah 39:2-7.

king, who were found in the city, and the secretary of the chief of the army, the one mustering the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the midst of the city. So these Nebuzar-adan the chief of the bodyguard took and conducted them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. And these the king of Babylon proceeded to strike down and to put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah went into exile from off its soil." Judah had not done this nineteen years before this during King Jehoiakim's reign.—Jeremiah 52:24-28; 2 Kings 24:1.

Some Jewish princes were hanged up by just their hand. The women were raped right in Zion itself. (Lamentations 4:2; 5:11, 12) How shocking this was! But when the king himself was captured and deported, even though for his sin, it was like stifling those who had respect for the royal line of David: "The very breath of our nostrils, the anointed one [LXX, *christós*] of Jehovah, has been captured in their large pit, the one of whom we have said: 'In his shade we shall live among the nations.'" (Lamentations 4:20) This was especially so, since the king sat on Jehovah's throne at Jerusalem.

Providentially, although all of Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered before his eyes, leaving him without a male heir, he had a nephew in captivity, the former king, Jehoiachin, through whom the royal line could be continued. In fact, Jehoiachin had sons at Babylon, Shealtiel, Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah. Of these sons Shealtiel was *reckoned* as the father of Zerubbabel, who became governor of Judah under Persia and who rebuilt the temple at restored Jerusalem.—1 Chronicles 3:15-19; Ezra 3:2, 8; Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27.

Similarly when Nebuchadnezzar struck down the Jewish high priest Seraiah in death. (2 Kings 25:18-21) This high priest had a son named Jehozadak, who

Egypt and left the land of Judah utterly desolate and without human inhabitant, a place to be shunned by passersby, the land must have heaved a sigh of relief, as it were. Now it began to enjoy an uninterrupted run of sabbath years in compensation for all the sabbath years that the disobedient Israelites had failed to keep. How many years of sabbath rest was the land to enjoy? Figuratively, a perfect number of years—seventy. We read:

"So he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, . . . And he proceeded to burn the house of the true God and pull down the wall of Jerusalem; and all its dwelling towers they burned with fire and also all its desirable articles, so as to cause ruin. Furthermore, he carried off those remaining from the sword captive to Babylon, and they came to be servants to him and his sons until the royalty of Persia began to reign; to fulfill Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its sabbaths. All the days of lying desolated it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. And in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah roused the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia, so that he caused a cry to pass through all his kingdom, and also in writing, saying: "This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has said, "All the kingdoms of the earth Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me, and he himself has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, Jehovah his God be with him. So let him go up."'"—2 Chronicles 36:17-23; compare also Daniel 9:1, 2.

Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century of our Common Era, is in harmony with the Holy Bible when he writes the following about the length of Jerusalem's desolation:

He [the Chaldean historian Berosus in the third century B.C.] gives us a catalogue of the posterity of Noah,

who adds the years of their chronology, from Noah himself to Nabulassar king of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, with an account of this king's exploits. He tells us that he sent his son Nabuchodonosor with a mighty army into Egypt and Judea where, upon his being informed of a revolt, he reduced the people to subjection, set fire to our temple at Jerusalem, and carried off our whole nation in captivity to Babylon. After this our city lay desolate during an interval of seventy years, till the days of Cyrus, King of Persia.—Book 1, section 36, of *To Epaphroditus on the Antiquities of the Jews in Answer to Apion*.

And such was the end of the nation of the Hebrews; it having twice gone beyond Euphrates. For the people of the ten tribes were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians, in the days of King Hoshea. After which the people of the two tribes, that remained after Jerusalem was taken, were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon and Chaldea. Now as to Shalmaneser, he removed the Israelites out of their country, and placed therein the nation of Cutheans who had formerly belonged to the interior of Persia and Media; but were then called Samaritans; by taking the name of the country to which they were removed. But 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.—Book 10, chapter 9, last paragraph, of *Antiquities of the Jews*, edition by Whiston.

Thus the seventy years that Jeremiah foretold was a period occupied completely by the desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Judah. They did not include a period of captivity of *part* of the Jewish nation in Babylonia. Even captivity of some Jews in Babylonia did not begin in the third year of King Jehoiakim, or in 606 B.C. Jehoiakim reigned eleven years, or into the eighth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, which year ran from Nisan 1, 606 B.C., to Adar 29, 605 B.C. Shortly before this eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar ended on Adar 29, 605 B.C., Jehoiakim's son and successor, Jehoiachin, went out from Jerusalem in self-

surrender to Nebuchadnezzar who was besieging the city.

Evidently Jehoiachin was not taken away as captive from the land of Judah immediately, but before he and the other Jewish captives were taken away the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule ran out and the ninth year of his rule began on Nisan 1, 617 B.C. (2 Chronicles 36:9, 10) It was on that date, Nisan 1, 617 B.C., that the first regnal year began for Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, whom Nebuchadnezzar made king of Jerusalem in place of Jehoiachin. (2 Kings 24:12-18) So in 617 B.C. only some thousands of the Jews went into Babylonian captivity, not the *whole* Jewish nation.*

Certainly, when King Jehoiakim was in open revolt against vassalage to Nebuchadnezzar and held out against him in the final three years of his reign in Jerusalem, the Jewish nation could not be considered as captive to Babylon. Neither could the *nation* be considered captive when its last king, Zedekiah, broke his oath and revolted against Nebuchadnezzar and held out against him for parts of three years. Thus there could not be said to be any seventy years of unbroken captivity to Babylon from the reign of King Jehoiakim down till the captive Jews were released by Cyrus the Persian in 537 B.C. First when Jerusalem was destroyed and the land of Judah was completely desolated, first then the Jews as a nation went into exile at Babylon, without a king at Jerusalem. This exile was for an *uninterrupted* period of seventy years.—Daniel 9:1, 2.

The lowly people that King Nebuchadnezzar left behind in the land of Judah had a governor appointed by him over them, namely, Gedaliah. However, he was killed in the seventh month (Tishri), and then the remaining Jews fled down to Egypt out of fear of Babylon, but only to have the hand of the king of Babylon reach them down there later on. In this way the land

* See footnote (*) on page 137 of this book.

was left desolate in the seventh month, without man or beast, as Jeremiah had foretold.

Five years after Jerusalem was destroyed the king of Babylon is reported as deporting Jews to Babylonia. Jeremiah 52:30 says: "In the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan the chief of the body-guard took Jews into exile, seven hundred and forty-five souls." These, however, were not taken off the land of Judah but were captured when Nebuchadnezzar, as Jehovah's symbolic cup, made nations that bordered on the desolated land of Judah drink the bitter potion of being violently conquered.—Jeremiah 25: 17-29.

In 537 B.C., when King Cyrus released a Jewish remnant and they left Babylon and began to repopulate the land of Judah and break its desolation, the foretold seventy-year period ended. Since the period ended in that year, it must have begun in 607 B.C., when Jerusalem was destroyed and the land of Judah was completely depopulated. If, then, after the deporting of the Jews to Babylon, Jehovah God had let King Nebuchadnezzar import people from Gentile lands and settle them on the land of Judah, what? In that case, the land would not have enjoyed its seventy years of keeping sabbath or resting, as Jehovah had decreed. The land of Judah would have become like the land of Samaria, which the king of Assyria settled with peoples imported from heathen lands. However, by a miracle, Almighty God kept the land of Judah a complete desolation, that it might rest seventy years.—2 Chronicles 36:21-23.

Jerusalem fell in the eleventh year of the prophet Ezekiel's exile in Babylonia. Some months later, evidently before Nebuchadnezzar's victorious troops got back from Jerusalem, Ezekiel heard about it from a Jewish fugitive. He says: "At length it occurred in the twelfth year [by a certain calculation], in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month of our exile, that

wisdom and understanding that the king inquired about from them, he even got to find them ten times better than all the magic-practicing priests and the conjurers that were in all his royal realm. And Daniel continued on until the first year of Cyrus the [Persian] king."—Daniel 1:1-21.

It could not have been before the twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar's kingship that he held such examination and found Daniel to be exceptionally bright. How, then, shall we understand the statement in Daniel 2:1? It reads: "And in the *second* year of the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit began to feel agitated, and his very sleep was made to be something beyond him." Since the king forgot the dream and Daniel finally volunteered both to recall the dream and to interpret it, Hebrew scholars propose that the Hebrew text of Daniel 2:1 should be "twelfth year" instead of "second year."* However, the most reasonable and fitting suggestion is that this refers to the "second year" from a marked event, namely, from Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C. That is when the king of Babylon came to be the first one to hold world domination by God's permission.

In view of that fact, Daniel, when interpreting to Nebuchadnezzar his dream of the immense image with a golden head, could say to him: "You, O king, the king of kings, you to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the might, and the strength and the dignity, and into whose hand he has given, wherever the sons of mankind are dwelling, the beasts of the field and the winged creatures of the heavens, and whom he has made ruler over all of them, you yourself are the head of gold."—Daniel 2:37, 38.

The dynasty of kings of the Semite race that Nebuchadnezzar established over Babylon was the golden

* See footnote on Daniel 2:1 in *Biblia Hebraica*, by Rudolf Kittel, ninth edition of 1954. Also see the footnote in *The Cross-Reference Bible*, Variorum Edition, by Harold E. Monser, B.A., edition of 1910.

Then a voice from heaven announced that the tree dream would be fulfilled upon him now. He was seized with madness such as marks the disease of lycanthropy. He did not want to sit down on his glorious throne but wanted to go out into the field and eat grass like a bull. Out there is where he was driven. Out there he stayed for "seven times" or seven years. At the end of that period his understanding came back to him. He now praised the Most High God rather than himself as a king: "His rulership is a rulership to time indefinite and his kingdom is for generation after generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are being considered as merely nothing, and he is doing according to his own will among the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth. And there exists no one that can check his hand or that can say to him, 'What have you been doing?' "

On learning of Nebuchadnezzar's recovery his royal officers and grandees came for him and reinstated him on his throne. Says he: "I was re-established upon my own kingdom, and greatness extraordinary was added to me." He confessed that the Most High God is the "King of the heavens, because all his works are truth and his ways are justice, and because those who are walking in pride he is able to humiliate."—Daniel 4:19-37.

Both the dream and its direct fulfillment upon Nebuchadnezzar were prophetic. That is why this experience of his is recorded in the Bible. In this greater fulfillment what does the immense tree picture? At the time of the dream King Nebuchadnezzar held world domination and also had served as Jehovah's instrument or "cup" of judgment. Hence the tree as represented in this king of the Third World Power pictured world sovereignty or domination. In support of this explanation, Daniel 4:26 says: "Because they said to leave the *rootstock of the tree*, your *kingdom* will be sure to you."

What was really meant was the world sovereignty or domination exercised by the kingdom of God. For years the typical kingdom of Judah had stood as a block or hindrance to King Nebuchadnezzar's exercising world domination, as the leading governmental power on earth. Inasmuch as the king of Judah, from the days of King David, sat on "Jehovah's throne" in Zion or Jerusalem, Jehovah the Universal Sovereign was ruling through that typical kingdom of God on the earth. Jehovah was thus showing that he rules in the kingdom of mankind and gives it to the one to whom he wants to give it, to one in the line of King David. Thus the world domination depended upon the Most High God, Jehovah, "the King of the heavens." World domination as regards the earth Jehovah held in his hands.

In Ezekiel 21:25-27, which is addressed to King Zedekiah of Jerusalem, Jehovah declared that He would ruin the typical kingdom of God and would overturn matters by bringing low the high one who occupied "Jehovah's throne" in Zion and putting on high what was low, namely, the Gentile world power. This is what Jehovah did in 607 B.C. by letting the king of Babylon take Zedekiah captive and destroy Jerusalem and its temple. So the *world domination* as symbolized by God's typical kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, was cut down like the immense tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Jehovah even used King Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument in chopping it down. In this way world domination as typically symbolized in the kingdom of Judah was transferred from the king on "Jehovah's throne" in Zion to the victorious Gentile world power. In this way Gentile Babylon, as ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar, took up the world domination and had no more interference from the kingdom of Judah. Thus Babylon's king became a symbol of world domination by God's arrangement.

In the dream the tree stump was left in the ground. Why? To symbolize that the one who originally held the world domination had not forever let go of it. He would take it up again, but not before a certain time interval of self-restraint would expire. This restraining himself from wielding world domination by a kingdom of God for ruling the earth was pictured by the banding of the tree stump with iron and copper, the two strongest metals then known.

How long was this self-restraint from exercising world power over the earth by a kingdom of God decreed to last? How long would the tree stump symbolizing "kingdom" (Daniel 4:26) be banded? The length of time was indicated by the time from when Nebuchadnezzar became mad and was driven from Babylon's throne until God restored Nebuchadnezzar's sanity and he was resealed on Babylon's throne to exercise world domination. That period of his being humbled to the grass of the earth was seven times. In Nebuchadnezzar's case that period was a total of seven lunar years. At the end of that time the symbolic banding was taken off. Then the symbolic stump was allowed to grow a royal sprout, as pictured by Nebuchadnezzar's resuming the kingship with extraordinary greatness.—Compare Ezekiel 17:22-24; Job 14:7-9.

When Nebuchadnezzar's madness ended and he was reinstated on Babylon's throne, Jehovah God did not resume his own world domination and reestablish a typical kingdom of God on earth at Jerusalem with a king sitting on "Jehovah's throne." At that time, all that Jehovah God did was to get a confession from the restored Nebuchadnezzar that the Most High God was the "King of the heavens." Jehovah's taking up his power to rule by establishing a kingdom of God for this earth came long after Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged Jehovah to be the "King of the heavens." It is clear, therefore, that the "seven times" or seven literal years in Nebuchadnezzar's personal experience were

symbolic. They symbolized a greater period of time in the fulfillment of the larger meaning of the dream. Now, how much time does the Bible show that actually to be?

The years spoken of in the Bible were lunar years. In order for the lunar (moon) year to keep pace with the solar (sun) year, the lunar year has to change every so often from a twelve-month year of 355 days (with 50 or 51 sabbaths) to a thirteen-month year of 383, 384 or 385 days. But in a symbolic or prophetic year, the number of days is fixed at the unchanging number of 360, and each day thereof stands for a whole year. "A day for a year, a day for a year."—Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6.

In the prophetic book of Revelation a thousand two hundred and sixty days are spoken of as being equal to a "time and times and half a time," or three and a half times. (Revelation 12:6, 14) If we divide three and a half (3.5) into a thousand two hundred and sixty days, it gives us three hundred and sixty (360) days to a "time."

Accordingly, a symbolic or prophetic "time" would Scripturally equal three hundred and sixty (360) years. If, now, three and a half symbolic "times" amounted to 1,260 symbolic days, that is to say, 1,260 years, then twice three and a half (or seven) symbolic "times" would be twice 1,260 years, that is to say, 2,520 years. Thus the "seven times" that are mentioned in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 in connection with the tree dream would stand for two thousand five hundred and twenty literal years. In that period of time the lunar years, by means of their regular thirteen-month years, would balance off with the solar years and would equal 2,520 solar years.

When, though, would those "seven times," or 2,520 years begin to count? In the tree dream the "seven times" counted from when the tree was cut down and the tree stump was banded.

In Nebuchadnezzar's case the "seven times" counted from when he turned mad and was driven from his throne. In the fulfillment of the greater prophetic meaning, the "seven times" of 2,520 years began to count when Jehovah God let go the world domination as represented by his typical kingdom on earth. That was when Jehovah used Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem and its temple, chase King Zedekiah off "Jehovah's throne" and take him into exile, after which the fear of the Chaldeans caused the lowly people left behind to flee down into Egypt, leaving the territory of Judah desolate, with no governor there. Thus desolation was accomplished in the seventh lunar month of the year 607 B.C. First *then*, Jerusalem, as representative of God's kingdom, began to be trodden down and thus the Gentile Times, "the appointed times of the nations," began. Now Gentile domination, without interference of God's kingdom, swayed the earth. Moreover, the Gentile world powers acted beastly, like Nebuchadnezzar during his "seven times" of madness.

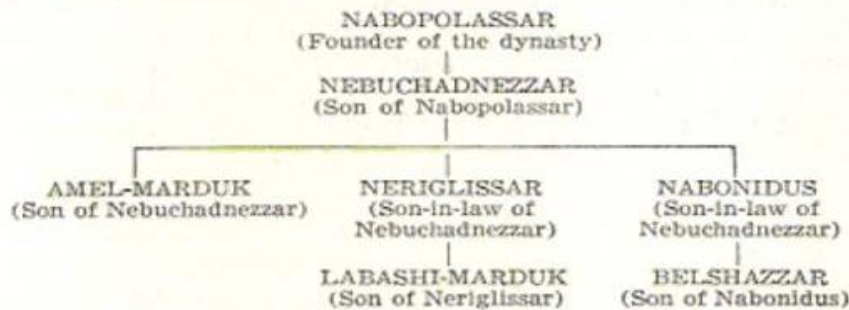
By count, then, those Gentile Times, those "appointed times of the nations," would end 2,520 years from near the middle of the seventh lunar month (Tishri) of 607 B.C. So they would end about the middle of the month Tishri (or near October 1), A.D. 1914. That is an unforgettable year, for in 1914 World War I broke out and the Gentile system of things has never been the same since then.

In autumn of A.D. 1914 was therefore the time for Jehovah to remove the bands from the symbolic tree of world domination by God's kingdom. It was the time for the symbolic tree stump to sprout again by Jehovah's taking up the universal domination and setting up a theocratic kingdom.—Revelation 11:15-18; Luke 21:24.

This government was no typical kingdom set up again among the natural Jews. It was the real kingdom in the hands of the Shiloh to whom it belongs. He is

over the land of Egypt itself. This he did in the year 588 B.C.—Ezekiel 29:17-20; Jeremiah 44:29, 30.

As for King Nebuchadnezzar's family affairs, his Median queen was named Amytis, and his oldest son was named Evil-merodach, who was to become his father's immediate successor. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar also had daughters, and it appears that the husbands of two of these were also to occupy the throne, as history worked out. One of these sons-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar was named Neriglissar and the other Nabonidus. According to the book *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, by R. P. Dougherty (page 79), certain circumstances favor the view that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar named Nitocris, who was the daughter of his Egyptian wife of the same name. By this Nitocris Nebuchadnezzar's favorite son-in-law Nabonidus had a son named Belshazzar. In this way Belshazzar was really a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar and a great-grandson of Nabopolassar, the founder of the last dynasty of Semite kings of Babylon. The table below sets out this dynasty of Neo-Babylonian kings corresponding to the table drawn up by Professor R. P. Dougherty:



Amel-Marduk (Evil-merodach) as the oldest son succeeded Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon's throne in 581 B.C. This king, though reportedly wicked, receives mention in the Bible as doing a kindness to the exiled Jewish

king whose line of descent was to run down to Joseph the foster father of Jesus Christ. We read: "It came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin the king of Judah, in the twelfth month [Adar], on the twenty-seventh day of the month [in 580 B.C.], Evil-merodach the king of Babylon, in the year of his becoming king, raised up the head of Jehoiachin the king of Judah out of the house of detention; and he began to speak good things with him, and then put his throne higher than the thrones of the kings that were with him in Babylon. And he took off his prison garments; and he ate bread constantly before him all the days of his life. As for his allowance, an allowance was constantly given him from the king, daily as due, all the days of his life." (2 Kings 25:27-30) Jehoiachin (or Jeconiah) had seven sons in Babylonia, including Shealtiel, whose nominal son Zerubbabel became governor of rebuilt Jerusalem.—1 Chronicles 3:17-19; Haggai 1:1; 2:23; Ezra 5:1, 2; Matthew 1:12.

After reigning but two years King Evil-merodach was murdered by his brother-in-law Neriglissar. According to the inscriptions that have been found, this usurper of the throne spent most of his time in building operations and reigned four years. When he died, his son Labashi-Marduk, though not yet of age, succeeded him. He was a vicious boy, and within nine months he had his throat cut by an assassin. Nabonidus, who had served as Governor of Babylon and who had been Nebuchadnezzar's favorite son-in-law, now took the throne and had a fairly glorious reign till Babylon fell in 539 B.C. He was given to literature, art and religion. He is reported to have been the son of a priestess of the moon at Harran (Haran), which fact had endeared him to Nebuchadnezzar. Says *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Volume 2, page 441:

He was an enthusiastic religionist and antiquarian. He built and rebuilt many temples in the principal cities of his kingdom. Nabonidus' enthusiasm carried

horns stands for the kings of Media and Persia. And the hairy he-goat stands for the king of Greece; and as for the great horn that was between its eyes, it stands for the first king [Alexander the Great]." So, by this vision also God foretold that the Medo-Persian World Power, the Fourth World Power of history, was to fall before the Fifth World Power, the Macedonian or Grecian Empire.*—Daniel 8:2-22.

BABYLON'S CONQUEROR FORETOLD BY NAME

Early in his reign King Nabonidus of Babylon entered into a defensive and offensive alliance with the Lydian Empire and Egypt against the rising power of Persia. We remember that his father-in-law Nebuchadnezzar as crown prince of Babylon had shared with the Medes and the Scythians in destroying the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, in 633 B.C. Two years later the Median king dealt the final blow to the Assyrian army by defeating it at Haran (Harran). He was thus able to take over all of northern Mesopotamia, whereas the king of Babylon held the lower Mesopotamian valley. The Median king also met the Lydians in Asia Minor and set up a common border between the Median Empire and the Lydian Empire.

The Persian kings who held territory to the east of the Persian Gulf were vassals to the Median Empire, but they held the province of Elam and its important city Anshan or Anzan.† The Persian King Cyrus I, ruler of the city Anshan, had a son named Cambyses, who succeeded him to the throne. Cambyses I married Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, who succeeded to the throne of the Median Empire. Another daughter of the Median King Astyages was Amytis, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon married her. It was in order to satisfy the homesickness of Amytis for the mountains

* See *"Your Will Be Done on Earth,"* chapter 9.

† Elam was also called Susiana by the classical geographers, from its capital city Susa, or Shushan.

The expression "the Medes" in Isaiah 13:17 must be understood as including the Persians.* Jehovah's naming of the Medes calls to mind, of course, Darius the Mede, who, according to Daniel 5:28, 31, "received the kingdom" after Babylon fell and was "divided and given to the Medes and the Persians." However, according to the ancient historian Herodotus (I,95), a Median was the mother of Cyrus the Great. She was Mandane, the daughter of King Astyages, the ruler of the Median Empire. She was given in marriage to the Persian Cambyses I, the son of Cyrus I. The offspring of this marriage was named Cyrus, after his grandfather. Thus Cyrus II, the Persian, had Median blood in him. After he rebelled and conquered the kingdom of his grandfather Astyages, the Medes became his loyal allies and supporters in his military operations. Along with the Medes, the Elamites were also to take part in conquering Babylon, according to the words of Isaiah 21:2-9.

The Medes, including the Persians, were expert bowmen. Says *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, Volume 21, edition of 1911, page 207:

The chief weapon of the Persians, as of all Iranians, was the bow, which accordingly the king himself holds in his portraits, for example, on the Behistun rock and the coins (darics). In addition to the bow, the Persians carried short lances and short daggers. But it was not by these weapons, nor by hand to hand fighting, that the Persian victories were won. They overwhelmed their enemy under a hail of arrows, and never allowed him

* In an article entitled "The Last Days of Babylon," D. J. Wiseman, head of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities of the British Museum, describes the discovery of a stone monument, inscribed in Babylonian, which gives King Nabonidus' own account of events during his reign over Babylonia. In this monument, the Harran stele, King Nabonidus of Babylon makes reference to the king of the Medes in the year 546 B.C., which was some years before Cyrus the Great had absorbed the Median Empire. Quite properly, then, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to Babylon's conquerors as "Medes." Though Daniel's prophecy speaks of the kingdom of Darius the Mede, it does not mean an independent Median kingdom, with its capital at Ecbatana, after Babylon fell. Wiseman's article was published in *Christianity Today*, Volume II, No. 4, November 25, 1957.

As for Belshazzar's father, King Nabonidus, he survived his son. He had taken refuge in the nearby city of Borsippa, and in order to besiege him, Cyrus the conqueror moved against him. Nabonidus, however, did not choose to defend himself but surrendered to Cyrus. He received mercy at Cyrus' hands and was merely deported to the province of Carmania, of which he was even made governor. At his death he left behind inscriptions, including the so-called Nabonidus Chronicle. —*Am¹*, Volume 19, page 677.*

Although Babylon fell to Cyrus' troops on Tishri 16 (October 5-6), 539 B.C., he himself did not enter the city till seventeen days after it fell and had been occupied by his troops, namely, on the third day of the month Marchesvan (October 22-23). The conquered Babylonians gave him a good welcome. He, in turn, proclaimed peace to all the city. Eight days later his main general, Ugbaru (Gobryas), died, and a period of mourning followed. King Cyrus had a governor with him, namely, Gubaru; and when Cyrus made his entry, this Gubaru appointed governors in Babylon.†

Daniel 5:31 says that Darius the Mede "received the kingdom" at the age of sixty-two years. Who was this Darius? There is yet some difficulty in proving this in the uninspired pagan cuneiform inscriptions and other historical writings. But the argument is strong that he was the same as Cyrus' governor named Gubaru.‡ New documents that may yet be discovered by archaeologists will either confirm or disprove this. In the

* See also Berosus, a Babylonian priest of Bel, about 250 B.C. He wrote about his people with the aid of cuneiform sources, but wrote in Greek. His works have disappeared, but the Jewish historian Josephus and also historian Eusebius Pamphilius have preserved fragments of Berosus' writings. See *Contra Apionem*, Book I, section 20, by Josephus. *ISBE*, Volume 1, page 368a, says Nabonidus was imprisoned.

† See *Babylonian Problems* (page 201), by W. H. Lane, 1923 Edition.

‡ See chapter 7 of *Darius the Mede*, published in 1959 in the United States of America, by John C. Whitcomb, Jr.

you I will dash man and woman to pieces, and by you I will dash old man and boy to pieces, and by you I will dash young man and virgin to pieces. And by you I will dash shepherd and his drove to pieces, and by you I will dash farmer and his span of animals to pieces, and by you I will dash governors and deputy rulers to pieces. And I will pay back to Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their badness that they have committed in Zion before the eyes of you people,' is the utterance of Jehovah."

Those words, in Jeremiah 51:20-24, were addressed particularly to King Nebuchadnezzar as the leading representative of Babylon, in the twelfth year of his reign. So seven years remained before he would bring Zion and her temple to ruin, kill the main priests, slaughter King Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, kill certain prominent government functionaries and deport Zedekiah and hundreds of other surviving Jews to Babylon, leaving the care of the land of Judah to the poorest people prior to its complete desolation. (Jeremiah 52:12-29) But prior to this Nebuchadnezzar had defeated the Egyptian Pharaoh and taken part in destroying Nineveh, Assyria's capital. He reigned for forty-three years. So after destroying Zion he had more than twenty years in which to fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah 25:17-26 concerning other nations and peoples roundabout.

Thus, under him particularly, Babylon was used as Jehovah's war club of judgment to dash to pieces nations, kingdoms, horses and riders, chariots and riders, men and women, old men and boys, young men and virgins, shepherds and their droves, farmers and their spans of draft animals, and governors and deputy rulers. After Nebuchadnezzar died, Babylon continued as the Third World Power for about half a century.

Jehovah had used Babylon and the inhabitants of Chaldea as his war club to dash Jerusalem and its kingdom to pieces. But Babylon did not knowingly serve Jehovah in this way. She did not do it to please

against Jerusalem and made King Jehoiakim a vassal king under oath to pay tribute to Babylon. Three years later, after Jehoiakim rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar came again against Jerusalem. In the eleventh year of his reign Jehoiakim died at Jerusalem and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin.

After being besieged three months at Jerusalem, the young king Jehoiachin went out in surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. Then ten thousand Jews, including the king and the families of the men selected, were deported to Babylon. It was no deportation of the whole nation. So by no means did the *nation* of Judah go into Babylonian captivity in 617 B.C. It was only after Nebuchadnezzar came back again and, after a siege of eighteen months, destroyed Jerusalem and her temple in 607 B.C., that the nation of Judah vanished from the God-given land. (2 Kings 24:1 to 25:26; 2 Chronicles 36:1-20; Jeremiah 52:1-29) Without a reigning king and while exiles in Babylon, the Jewish people were now in their greatest confusion.

Nebuchadnezzar set the land of Judah "as an empty vessel," turning it upside down and leaving nothing inside. He not only deported a further number of surviving Jews but also inspired such terror in the poor, insignificant people left behind that these fled down to Egypt. The whole land of Judah was left like an empty vessel turned upside down, emptied of *all* its inhabitants. Thus the most of the surviving Jews were swallowed up within Babylon's domains, as if by a big snake or sea monster. Nebuchadnezzar had acted like the dragon or *sirrush*, which was the symbol of the god Marduk (Merodach) whom he worshiped. As a symbolic big snake he had filled himself with the Jewish nation's "pleasant things," the precious utensils of Jehovah's holy temple in particular. He rinsed the nation off its home territory as if it were something unclean.

For all the violence done by Nebuchadnezzar to her and to her royal organism or structure, the "inhab-

pressor the triumph of their God Jehovah and the just paying back to the oppressive imperial city what she deserved. She had made thousands of the sons of Israel fall in violent death in the land of Judah. But her sin was still greater, for she also bore a bloodguilt for the "slain ones of all the earth," those slain because of her carrying on her program of world conquest. Why should not all righteous men rejoice over the despoiling of such a bloodguilty organization? It was her own fault that the children of her own organization fell slain at her overthrow in 539 B.C.

The exiled Israelites took no part in Babylon's military campaigns or in defending her against the Medes and Persians. They properly escaped slaughter by the sword when Babylon fell. Whereas they had just cause for crying out joyfully over the fall of their oppressor, it was also the time for them to think of another capital city, Zion, the city where their God had placed his name. Measured by travel routes and travel time away back in those days, that city was far away, say a land journey of four or five months. Yet they should remember Jehovah, though the place where he had put his name was far away. The remembrance of that holy place, the location of Zion, was to serve as an incentive to start them going there and to keep on going until at last they reached the place.

In anticipation of the decree of release that Jehovah would put it into the heart of Cyrus the Persian to issue, Jehovah says to his protected and spared people: "You escapees from the sword, keep going. Do not stand still. From far away remember Jehovah, and may Jerusalem herself come up into your heart." (Jeremiah 51:50) The freed Israelites were not to be like the wife of Lot and stop and look back. (Luke 17:32) They were to look ahead and return to the holy mountain of Jehovah's worship as quickly as they could. They should get as far away from Babylon as they could do so.

One modern historical work* tells of the effect of this, in the following words:

The Chaldeans made great progress in the study of astronomy through an effort to discover the future in the stars. This art we call "astrology". Much information has been systematically collected by the Babylonians and from it we have here the beginning of astronomy. The groups of stars which now bear the name "Twelve Signs of the Zodiac" were mapped out for the first time, and the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn were known. Since these planets were thought to have special powers over the lives of men, they were named for the five leading gods and goddesses. We refer to these planets by their Roman names, but the Romans had adopted the Babylonian terms and simply translated them into their equivalents in Rome. Thus the planet of Ishtar, the goddess of love, became Venus, and that of the god Marduk was changed to Jupiter.

How they finally reached the Italian peninsula can be traced by a close study of historical information by worldly authorities. In the work entitled "Lares and Penates of Cilicia," by Barker and Ainsworth, chapter 8, page 232, we read: "The defeated Chaldeans fled to Asia Minor and fixed their central college at Pergamos."† This is the Pergamum or Pergamos mentioned in Revelation 2:12 as the location of a Christian congregation in the first century A.D. Earlier, in 133 B.C., King Attalus III, on his deathbed, bequeathed Pergamum and its territory to the Romans, all of which later became a Roman province under the name

* See pages 230, 232 of *The Dawn of Civilization and Life in the Ancient East* (1940 edition), by R. M. Engberg and F. C. Cole.

† That ancient Pergamos (Pergamum) was a city of considerable wealth and stature in the fifth century B.C., is seen in the fact that "It had been striking coins since 420 B.C. at latest." Before Xenophon (about 430-355 B.C.) mentions it in his *Anabasis*, VII, viii, 8, and *Hellenica*, III, i, 6, little is known of this cosmopolitan city but mythology.—*Br*, Volume 17, page 507; also *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume II, page 666, edition of 1911.

The celebrated and much frequented temple of Aesculapius was located in Pergamos. Aesculapius was called the god of Pergamos, and the mythology in connection with his worship smacks of the religion of Babylon. He was worshiped in the form of a living serpent, fed in the temple and being considered as its divinity.

because his chosen people, of whom she was the capital city, had kept on contending with him instead of agreeing with him and lovingly, trustingly obeying him as their God. But there was a limit to his rage at her. After disciplining her he was pleased to show her pity and his forgiving spirit.

This meant that his rage was to turn away from Jerusalem and was to be directed against the organization that had mercilessly brought all this affliction upon her, namely, Babylon and its allies. These had irritated Jerusalem. They had humiliated her. They had razed her to the ground. They had made her, as it were, lie face down to the ground and flatten herself to the ground, that they might walk heavily over her, use her like a city street. (Psalm 137:7; Obadiah 11-14) Thus, in 607 B.C., Jerusalem began to be trodden down by the Gentile nations. There the "seven times," "the times of the Gentiles," began, to continue until into A.D. 1914.—Luke 21:24, *AV*; Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

For this reason the Gentiles deserved to have the cup of Jehovah's rage filled up and handed over to them to drink. Jerusalem was not to drink such a cup again by means of Babylon and its anti-Jewish allies. As a retribution, Jehovah in his own due time takes the cup out of Jerusalem's hand and gives it to those who irritated and debased her, subjugated her. As he had done with Jerusalem, so he did with her persecutors. He forced them to drink the cup of divine rage. In 539 B.C., at Babylon's fall, they began drinking. To this end Jehovah used the Medes and Persians as his symbolic cup. Babylon was to go down, dead drunk, but Zion was to rise!

It was entirely reasonable to expect that, after her God took the emptied cup of his rage out of her hand, he should call upon her to get up from her prone condition in the dust. Absolutely certain that she would, at his command, rise up as a beautiful city again, he inspired Isaiah two hundred years in advance to cry out:

Getting Out of the Midst of Babylon

IN OBEDIENCE to the divine command, a remnant of faithful Jews quit their exile in Babylonia and made their way back to their God-given homeland. Their eyes were specially fixed on Zion, Jerusalem. Concerning the date of this, *The Graphic Historical Atlas of Palestine** says, on page 34, that in 538 B.C. Cyrus the Persian issued his proclamation freeing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its temple, and that they reached their desolate homeland in 537 B.C. Under the heading "Babylonian Captivity," *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (eleventh edition), Volume 3, page 115b, says: "After the overthrow of Babylonia by the Persians, Cyrus gave the Jews permission to return to their native land (537 B.C.), and more than forty thousand are said to have availed themselves of the privilege."†

* Published by Dr. J. Szapiro, editor, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 1941, English edition.

† Says *Br.*, Volume 10, page 108a, under the heading "Books of Ezra and Nehemiah": "The period of history covered by the books of Ezra and Nehemiah extended from the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel in 537-536 B.C. to Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem . . ."

Under the heading "Book of Ezra" *Am.*, Volume 10, page 689a, says: "The book of Ezra covers the history from 537 B.C. to 458, although some would substitute another date for the latter one."

The book *The Monuments and the Old Testament* (1958), by Price, Sellers and Carlson, says, on page 319, that it was "about 538 or 537 B.C." that Cyrus published his decree in Babylon for captive peoples to go back to their homelands, the Jews receiving special help by the authorities. Under the heading "The Ancient Dates Employed" it says, on page 414, regarding the year B.C., "537-536 Hebrew Exiles Return."

That the year of the return of the Jewish remnant to Judah and Jerusalem was marked in God's time schedule, we have the proof in Ezra 1:1-4. This reads: "And in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that Jehovah's word from the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah roused the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia so that he caused a cry to pass through all his realm, and also in writing, saying: 'This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has said, "All the kingdoms of the earth Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me, and he himself has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—he is the true God—which was in Jerusalem. As for anyone that is left from all the places where he is residing as an alien, let the men of his place assist him with silver and with gold and with goods and with domestic animals along with the voluntary offering for the house of the true God, which was in Jerusalem." ' "

This decree by Cyrus did not apply to the fugitive Jews in Egypt. The land of Egypt was first added to the Persian Empire after Cyrus' death by his son and successor, Cambyses, this bringing the entire Mesopotamian-Egyptian region under Persian control by 525 B.C. But Cyrus could make a decree affecting the land of Judah in Palestine, because, when he captured Babylon in 539 B.C., he got possession not only of Babylonia itself but also of its foreign holdings, which included Syria, Palestine and the part of Assyria that Cyrus did not already hold. He fell in death about 530 B.C. while in battle northeast of the Caspian Sea. To his son and successor Cambyses he left an empire that extended from the Aegean Sea on the west to the Indies in the east—the Fourth World Power.

In calculating the "first year of Cyrus the king of Persia," we must faithfully proceed according to the inspired Word of Jehovah God. We accept from secular historians the year 539 B.C. as a fixed date, marking the downfall of Babylon, the Third World Power. But the Bible introduces, immediately after the fall of Babylon in that year of 539 B.C., the reign at Babylon of Darius the Mede. (Daniel 5:30, 31) The prophet Daniel, who was there at Babylon, speaks of the "first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes, who had been made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans." (Daniel 9:1; 11:1; 6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28) In harmony with the Bible we must accept at least one year, with possibly part of a second year, for King Darius the Mede. Hence, at the earliest, the first year of King Cyrus the Persian may not have begun till late in the year 538 B.C. to extend over into the following year of 537 B.C.*

Cyrus' decree was evidently not issued before the first year of Darius the Mede was disposed of and Cyrus became sole ruler of Babylon. The Bible does not say that it was in the first year of the reign of King Darius the Mede that Cyrus issued his decree, nor does the Bible say that Jerusalem's desolation came to an end in the first year of King Darius' reign. It was in the first year of his reign that the prophet Daniel studied Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Jerusalem's desolation, and this study on Daniel's part must have been before

* On page 404 of Volume 4, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says: "Cyrus always conformed to the traditions of the thrones he usurped, and, together with his son Cambyzes, rendered homage to the native deities. On the first day of the year, Nisan 1 (March 20), 538, in conformity with Babylonian custom, he grasped the hands of the golden statue of Bel-Marduk, and thus became consecrated as monarch. From this ceremony dates the first year of his reign as 'King of Babylon, King of all the Lands.'" Cyrus thus had himself proclaimed as king of Babylon and as the legitimate successor to the deposed King Nabonidus. By doing this he did not have to reconquer the Babylonian Empire. Babylon's foreign possessions, Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine and the borderlands of the desert, all came to be tributary to Cyrus.—See *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible* (1956), page 75, paragraph 3.

Cyrus issued his decree in his own name in his own first year of his reign aside from Darius the Mede. —Daniel 9:1-18.

In view of the time that it took the homesick Jews to get ready and then make the trek back to Judah and Jerusalem, the decree of Cyrus must have been made toward the close of winter and the beginning of spring of 537 B.C. This agrees with the date fixed by the authorities quoted or referred to above.

It is very important to fix this date, for by means of it we are able to fix the date for the beginning of the desolation of the land of Judah and the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles," or, "the appointed times of the nations." (Luke 21:24, *AV*; *NW*)* The Bible leaves us in no uncertainty as to how long the desolation of the land of Judah and its capital was to be. That it was to be for a certain number of years and that it was to be ended as a result of Cyrus' decree is plainly stated for us in 2 Chronicles 36:20-23, after that chapter tells of how King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem. The above-cited verses read:

"Furthermore, he carried off those remaining from the sword captive to Babylon, and they came to be servants to him and his sons until the royalty of Persia began to reign; to fulfill Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its sabbaths.

* If we proceed according to the cuneiform inscriptions, rather than the Bible, we have to take the position that Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian reigned concurrently for a time. According to this, the accession year (an incomplete lunar year) of Cyrus as king of Babylon began on October 23 of 539 B.C., when he entered the city (by day) after its capture by his troops. Hence his first regnal year (a full lunar year) began on Nisan 1 of 538 B.C., or on March 17/18 of 538 B.C., Gregorian time.

The cuneiform tablet entitled "Strassmaier, Cyrus No. 11" mentions Cyrus' first regnal year. By this tablet it is calculated that this year began March 17/18, 538 B.C., and it ended on March 4/5 of 537 B.C., Gregorian time. So Cyrus' second regnal year began the next day, on March 5/6, 537 B.C. In this case Cyrus' decree must have been made before this latter date, that is, late in the year 538 or early in 537 B.C. See pages 14, 29 of *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. - A.D. 75*, edition of 1956, by Parker and Dubberstein.

Nebuchadnezzar had stored them after stealing them from Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:7-11) The Jewish high priest, Joshua (or Jeshua) the son of Jehozadak, was most interested in their safe delivery, and he accompanied Governor Zerubbabel back to the site of the holy city. All together a congregation of 42,360 faithful Jews left Babylon. They were accompanied by thousands of non-Jewish associates, namely, 7,337 men slaves and slave girls, and 200 male and female singers. (Ezra 2:1-67) For them it was a four-month-long journey to Jerusalem, as early after Cyrus' decree as possible.

SEVENTY YEARS' DESOLATION ENDS

So, in the year 537 B.C., the land of Judah began to be once again inhabited by man and domestic beast. There was no one in the land to keep them out. Almighty God had preserved the land unoccupied in order that it might enjoy the sabbath years of complete rest that it deserved, with no one on it to cultivate or work it. Every year of its lying thus desolate was the equivalent of a sabbath year according to Jehovah's law through Moses. (Leviticus 25:1-12) Regarding this re peopling of the land of Judah we read: "And the priests and the Levites and some of the people, and the singers and the gatekeepers and the Nethinim took up dwelling in their cities, and all Israel in their cities. When the seventh month [Tishri] arrived the sons of Israel were in their cities."—Ezra 2:70; 3:1.

How remarkable this was! Why? Well, in the seventh Jewish month of the year of Jerusalem's destruction the land of Judah was left completely desolate by the flight of the poor Jews who had not been deported, taking the prophet Jeremiah with them down into Egypt. (2 Kings 25:22-26; Jeremiah 41:1 to 43:8) That was also the very month in which sabbath years and Jubilee years began, namely, "in the seventh month on the tenth of the month; on the day of atonement." (Leviticus 25:9, 10) Since the desolation had begun in the seventh month, the desolation of the land

ought to end officially in that same month; and Ezra 3:1 officially declares that it ended in that month.

Since we have determined the year and the month in which the desolation ended, it is simple mathematics to calculate when the desolation began upon the land of Judah. All we have to do is to measure back seventy years, forasmuch as the desolation was foretold to last seventy years and it actually lasted seventy years. Seventy years back from the seventh month (Tishri) of the year 537 B.C. brings us to the month Tishri of the year 607 B.C.

In 607 B.C. the month Tishri began on September 22/23, the day for the observance of the festival of the new moon. In that month of 607 B.C. the "seven times," or, "the times of the Gentiles," "the appointed times of the nations," began.* (Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32; Luke 21:24, *AV*; *NW*) This was two months after Jerusalem had been destroyed and its temple plundered, wrecked and burned down, after which its two principal priests were killed.—2 Kings 25:5-21.

Jehovah God is thus proved to be an accurate Time-keeper. If we follow his system of counting time, according to his written Word, we shall make no mistakes in our calculations. We cannot therefore go along with the chronologers of Christendom who date Jerusalem's destruction as occurring in 587 B.C. and who thereby limit the desolation of the land of Judah without man or domestic animal to merely fifty years. Almighty God decreed that the land had to lie unworked, uninhabited for seventy years in order to enjoy a relatively perfect number of sabbaths, that is to say, ten times seven sabbaths. Had the land enjoyed less than this perfect number of seventy years, it would not have enjoyed its full number of sabbaths. God's decree could not be broken or set aside, and, true to his decree, the land of Judah did rest uninhabited seventy years, from

* See page 178, paragraph 2, to page 180, paragraph 3.

shall be abandoned by many, and for half of the week sacrifice and offering shall cease, while in their place there shall be a desolating abomination, till at the end the doom that is determined shall be poured out upon the desolating thing.'"—Daniel 9:24-27.—See also Dr. James Moffatt's translation.

The going forth of the word or commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem took place in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes. His Jewish butler named Nehemiah was the one that put this word or commandment into effect that same year. According to Nehemiah's reckoning of the lunar year, the year began with the month Tishri (which Jews today recognize as the beginning of their civil year) and ended with the month Elul as the twelfth month. The month Chislev was the third month from Tishri and fell part in November and part in December. In the lunar month of Chislev of the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes Nehemiah heard bad news about the physical state of Jerusalem in the land of Judah. He tells us:

"Now it came about in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, that I myself happened to be in Shushan the castle. Then Hanani, one of my brothers, came in, he and other men from Judah, and I proceeded to ask about the Jews, those who had escaped, who had been left over of the captivity, and also about Jerusalem. Accordingly they said to me: 'Those left over, who have been left over from the captivity, there in the jurisdictional district, are in a very bad plight and in reproach; and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its very gates have been burned with fire.' . . . Now I myself happened to be cupbearer to the king."—Nehemiah 1: 1-3, 11.

Nehemiah prayed to Jehovah about the matter, desiring to be used in bringing relief to Jerusalem. His opportunity came in that same twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, in its seventh month (Nisan, according to Nehemiah's reckoning), in 455 B.C.,* for he tells us:

* On page 67 of *The Time Is at Hand* (1889 Edition), by C. T. Russell, we read: "The date of Nehemiah's [continued on next page]"

"And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him, and I as usual took up the wine and gave it to the king. But never had I happened to be gloomy before him. So the king said to me: 'Why is your face gloomy when you yourself are not sick? This is nothing but a gloominess of heart.' At this I became very much afraid."
—Nehemiah 2:1, 2.

Nehemiah then explained the reason for his gloominess, and, after silent prayer to Jehovah God, he asked for the king to send him to rebuild Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes was agreeable to this and asked Nehemiah: "How long will your journey come to be and when will you return?" Nehemiah then told the king, with this result:

"So it seemed good before the king that he should send me, when I gave him the appointed time. And I went on to say to the king: 'If to the king it does seem good, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the River [Euphrates], that they may let me pass until I come to Judah; also a letter to Asaph the keeper of the park that belongs to the king, that he may give me trees to build with timber the gates of the Castle that belongs to the house, and for the wall of the city and for the house into which I am to enter.' So the king gave them to me, according to the good hand of my God upon me."—Nehemiah 2:3-8.

About four months after leaving Shushan the king's winter capital, Nehemiah reached Jerusalem about the beginning of the lunar month Ab (the eleventh month according to his reckoning). After three days of resting up and of conferences he inspected the city walls by night and then gave the orders to build. (Nehemiah 2:11-18) This was about the third or fourth day of Ab of 455 B.C., or about July 26-27 or 27-28, 455 B.C.,

[continued from page 386] commission is ordinarily stated to be B.C. 445. But Dr. Hale's work on chronology (pages 449 and 531) and Dr. Priestlie's treatise on the 'Harmony of the Evangelists' (pages 24-38) show this common view to be nine years short, which would give B.C. 454 as the true date of Nehemiah's commission; and with this date Daniel's prediction (Chapter 9: 25), concerning the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem, agrees."

still in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes. There the commandment or word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem *took effect*.^{*} The sixty-nine weeks of years till the coming of Messiah the Princely Leader did not begin to count before then.

According to this count the Messiah or Christ was to be brought forth in the year 29 of our Common Era, for the sixty-nine weeks of years, or 483 years, began to count in 455 B.C. and ended A.D. 29. History proves that it was in that year that John baptized Jesus from Nazareth in the Jordan River and the holy spirit descended from heaven upon Jesus to anoint him and make him the Messiah or Christ, the Anointed One. (Luke 3:1, 2, 21-23) It is very interesting to note that the year in which the sixty-nine weeks had their start began, not in the month Nisan, but in Tishri, which is the month in which Jesus was baptized and anointed.

As Daniel 9:25 had foretold, the rebuilding work was to be done "in the straits of the times," and Nehemiah and his fellow builders did experience threats and opposition from the non-Jewish people roundabout. But by faith and trust in Almighty God and by arming themselves against attack and refusing to be drawn away from the work, they built the defensive walls around Zion or Jerusalem within two months. Nehemiah 6:15 reports: "At length the wall came to completion on the twenty-fifth day of Elul [the twelfth month], in fifty-two days." Since the month Ab, which preceded Elul, has thirty days, the building work must have begun on the fourth of Ab, 455 B.C., or July 27-28, and must have ended on September 16-17, 455 B.C., still

^{*} Volume 9 of M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* deals with the "Seventy Weeks of Daniel's Prophecy," and on page 602, under the heading "1. The Date of the Edict," it says: "We have supposed this to be from the time of its taking effect at Jerusalem rather than from that of its nominal issue at Babylon. The difference, however (being only four months), will not seriously affect the argument."

of the province of Judea and once made it a vassal state. During the reign of the Parthian king, Artabanus III, from 16 to 42 (A.D.), there occurred a terrible massacre of more than fifty thousand Jewish colonists in Mesopotamia, as is reported by the Jewish historian Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, chapter 9, paragraphs 7-9.

According to the report of Acts 2:5-11, on the Jewish festival day of Pentecost in the year 33 (A.D.), among those present at Jerusalem for the celebration there were Jews and proselytes from the "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia," in other words, people from the Parthian Empire. These were among the thousands who heard Peter and the other Christian apostles preach and who were baptized as converts to Christianity. Of course, when these returned to Mesopotamia and other parts of the Parthian Empire, they carried the Christian faith back with them.

It appears that the city of Babylon in lower Mesopotamia kept up some sort of existence down into the era of Christianity. In proof of this, Josephus tells of the actions of Herod the Great, who reigned in Jerusalem from 37 B.C. till shortly after Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem. A certain Jewish priest named Hyrcanus had been captured by the Parthians and carried away to their country. Says Josephus in his *Antiquities*, Book 15, chapter 2, paragraph 2:

But when Hyrcanus was brought into Parthia, the king Phraates treated him after a very gentle manner; as having already learned of what an illustrious family he was. On which account he set him free from his bonds; and gave him a habitation at Babylon, where there were Jews in great numbers. The Jews honoured Hyrcanus as their high-priest, and king; as did all the Jewish nation that dwelt as far as Euphrates.

King Herod successfully arranged for the king of Parthia to restore priest Hyrcanus to Judea, Herod's dominion. However, King Herod did not bestow the

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who were putting out the literature published by the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society. On July 17, 1917, this Society published and put into their hands the book entitled "The Finished Mystery," which gave an explanation of the entire book of Revelation (Apocalypse). On Sunday, December 30, 1917, there was a general distribution of the large, four-page tract, *Bible Students Monthly* No. 99, with the feature article "The Fall of Babylon," with quotations from *The Finished Mystery*. Within two months from then that book and the *Bible Students Monthly* were banned in Canada. Shortly afterward the banning of these in the United States followed. Then came the arrest and trial of the president of the Watch Tower Society and seven others of the office personnel of the Society. On June 21, 1918, they were sentenced each to eighty years' imprisonment in a Federal penitentiary. The persecution of the Christian Bible Students outside of the prisons became intense in Canada and America, egged on by the religious clergy.

The months wore on until November 11, 1918, when an armistice brought World War I to an end, with Christendom in particular bleeding from terrible wounds, suffering also from earthquakes, pestilences and famines, with also a shameful record of religious persecution. All this was tangible proof that the Gentile Times had ended in 1914 and that God's kingdom had been born in the heavens and His Messianic King, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, had stood up in power on the heavenly Mount Zion, to be joined there soon by his 144,000 faithful followers.—Matthew 24:7-13; Revelation 12:5-10.

The outcome of World War I showed that it had not been fought in behalf of God's kingdom, even though the nations of Christendom had been the principal fighters. Rather, the war had been over world domination by one part of Christendom over the other part. The war left the Anglo-American World Power still

He is the starlike One who has the "key of the pit of the abyss" and who lets loose from it a swarm of pestilential creatures upon men who do not have the seal of God. When on earth as a man, he was entreated by the unclean spirit demons not to be ordered to go then into the abyss. At his death as a perfect man he himself descended into the abyss, but Almighty God raised him out of it on the third day and gave to him the "keys of death and of Hades." Hence he is God's "angel" or "messenger" to bind and hurl Satan the Devil and his demons into the abyss and seal them up there for a whole millennium.—Revelation 9:1-4; 1:18; Luke 8:31; Romans 10:7.

It is not into Hades or Sheol that Satan and his demons are hurled, inasmuch as Hades or Sheol is the common grave of dead humans and is in the ground of our earth. Since Satan and his demons are not human and not earthly, they are hurled into an abyss, not into Hades, Sheol or "hell." The binding and abyssing of Satan and his demons will be something invisible to the eyes of earthly survivors of the "war of the great day of God the Almighty," just as their being cast out of heaven and down to this earth was invisible to us. If we judge from the condition of the murdered Jesus Christ in the abyss, the condition of the chained Satan and his demons in the abyss will be a deathlike one, likely an unconscious state, with no ability to "mislead the nations any more." That will allow for a devil-free order of things over man, for a thousand years.

Measuring by means of the Bible timetable from the first man's creation in the garden of Eden, we are now close to the end of six thousand years from Adam's creation, not to speak of his later fall into sin after the Original Serpent had misled Adam's wife into sin and death. So by adding a thousand years for the approaching reign of the Messiah unopposed by the Original Serpent and his seed, we measure close to the end of seven thousand years from man's creation in Eden.

**CHART OF DATES FROM CREATION TO CURRENT
DATE (A.D. 1963) OF BABYLON THE GREAT**

DATE	EVENT	REFERENCE
4026 B.C.	Adam's creation (in the autumn)	Gen. 2:7
a. 4026 B.C.	Edenic covenant made, first prophecy	Gen. 3:15
b. 3896 B.C.	Cain slays Abel	Gen. 4:8
3896 B.C.	Birth of Seth	Gen. 5:3
3404 B.C.	Birth of righteous Enoch	Gen. 5:18
3339 B.C.	Birth of Methuselah	Gen. 5:21
3152 B.C.	Birth of Lamech	Gen. 5:25
3096 B.C.	Death of Adam	Gen. 5:5
3039 B.C.	Transference of Enoch; ends his period of prophesying	Gen. 5:23, 24; Jude 14
2970 B.C.	Birth of Noah	Gen. 5:28, 29
2490 B.C.	God's pronouncement as to mankind	Gen. 6:3
2470 B.C.	Birth of Japheth	Gen. 5:32; 9:24; 10:21
2468 B.C.	Birth of Shem	Gen. 7:11; 11:10
2370 B.C.	Death of Methuselah	Gen. 5:27
	Floodwaters fall (in November)	Gen. 7:6, 11
2369 B.C.	Making of the covenant after the Flood	Gen. 8:13; 9:16
2368 B.C.	Birth of Arpachshad	Gen. 11:10
a. 2239 B.C.	Building of the Tower of Babel in land of Shinar; Nimrod king of Babel	Gen. 11:4
2020 B.C.	Death of Noah	Gen. 9:28, 29
2018 B.C.	Birth of Abraham	Gen. 11:26, 32; 12:4
1943 B.C.	Abraham crosses Euphrates River for Canaan; Abrahamic covenant made; beginning of the 430-year period till law covenant	Gen. 12:4, 7; Ex. 12:40; Gal. 3:17
b. 1933 B.C.	Lot rescued from king of Shinar and allies; Abraham visits Melchizedek	Gen. 14:16, 18; 16:3
1932 B.C.	Ishmael born	Gen. 16:15, 16
1919 B.C.	Covenant of circumcision made	Gen. 17:1, 10, 24
	Judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah	Gen. 19:24
1918 B.C.	Birth of Isaac the true heir; beginning of the "about 450 years"	Gen. 21:2, 5; Acts 13:17-20
1913 B.C.	Weaning of Isaac; Ishmael sent away; beginning of the 400-year affliction	Gen. 21:8; 15:13; Acts 7:6
1881 B.C.	Death of Sarah	Gen. 17:17; 23:1
1878 B.C.	Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah	Gen. 23:20
1868 B.C.	Death of Shem	Gen. 11:11
1858 B.C.	Birth of Esau and Jacob	Gen. 25:26
1843 B.C.	Death of Abraham	Gen. 25:7
1818 B.C.	Esau marries first two wives	Gen. 26:34
1795 B.C.	Death of Ishmael	Gen. 25:17
1781 B.C.	Jacob flees to Haran; his vision at Bethel	Gen. 28:2, 13, 19
1774 B.C.	Jacob marries Leah and Rachel	Gen. 29:23-30
1767 B.C.	Birth of Joseph	Gen. 30:23, 24
1761 B.C.	Jacob returns to Canaan from Haran	Gen. 31:18, 41
c. 1761 B.C.	Jacob wrestles angel; is named Israel	Gen. 32:24-28
1750 B.C.	Joseph sold as a slave by his brothers	Gen. 37:2, 28
1738 B.C.	Death of Isaac	Gen. 35:28, 29

APPENDIX G: CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

MAIN 8-1840



CABLE WATCHTOWER

EG:EI

May 15, 1963

Mr. Max Hatton
2 Wasnock Street
Broadmeadows
Victoria, Australia

Dear Brother Hatton:

Your letter of April 12 pertaining to Biblical chronology has our attention, and we are pleased to acknowledge receipt of it at this time.

As you can undoubtedly appreciate, what you have outlined would require considerable research. At the present time a great deal of work is being done here in preparation for the "Everlasting Good News" assembly. Since the Society's headquarters staff is being used for the preparation of the assembly, undoubtedly you can appreciate the fact that it is not possible for us to undertake the extensive research that would be required to answer your letter at the present time. We are sure you understand that it is more important to continue in our work in preparation for the assembly than to stop for such a research project as this one. Yet we can appreciate the fact that you are interested in these matters, and no doubt the Society will have more to say on matters of chronology in future publications. At that time you will be able to benefit from the published material along with all other fellow servants of Jehovah and readers of the Society's literature.

We wish to give you the assurance of our Christian love.

With you, keeping our friendship with God,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

MAIN B-1240

WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

117 ADAMS STREET, BROOKLYN 1, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

AB/AG August 12, 1964

Max Hatton
21 Warnock Street
Broadmeadows
Victoria, Australia

Dear Brother Hatton:

From your letter of the 31st of July on the subject of chronology, especially as it relates to the books "All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial" and "Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules!, we note that you have worked yourself up into a state of uncertainty and you have weakened your confidence in the Society.

We regret to observe this. We can assure you that a very great amount of research, including that on chronology, has gone into the composition of the two books above mentioned by not one individual but by many. The various problems were considered and the conclusions arrived at were those that are set forth in these publications. The first thing to do is put confidence in the inspired Word of God and in its chronology and in some respects the secular chronologies of the ancient nations are found to adjust themselves to the Bible chronology. From the Bible it is very evident that the Times of the Gentiles began with Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E., and that accordingly these 2,520 years ended in 1914 C.E. This was fully corroborated with the outbreak of World War I and all of its concomitants as foretold by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Seventy-Year desolation was brought to an end by the reoccupation of the land by its formerly exiled people. This must have occurred in 537 B.C.E. The Babylon book shows how this can be figured out. These are the main considerations and there is no reason to quibble about them and to feel obliged personally to do a lot of private digging around into secular chronologies and giving them the place of first importance, thereby upsetting oneself mentally and spiritually, giving more credence to worldly, secular authorities and reducing one's confidence in the conscientious, carefully handled research done by dedicated brothers who are trying to please the Most High God, the inspirer of the Holy Bible and who are trying to get ahead with His work before the end of this system of things comes upon the nations and the mandatory work of preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations ends.

So the condition in which your letter indicates you to be just moves us in a brotherly way to counsel you to give less atten-

Max Hatton
21 Warnock Street
Broadmeadows
Victoria, Australia

August 12, 1964, Page Two

tion to this matter of chronology, although it has its proper place in God's Word, and concern yourself more with the facts of the day which are in fulfillment and in corroboration of Bible prophecy and with renewed confidence join in carrying forward Jehovah's prescribed work with his visible organization to the glorious end.

Yours in the proclaiming of the "everlasting
good news,"

Watchtower B. T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

MAIN 8-1240



CABLE WATCHTOWER

October 23, 1964

M. F. Hatton
2 Warnock Street
Broadmeadows
Victoria, Australia

Dear Brother Hatton:

Your letter of September 8 continues in your course of ~~making reference to outside, reputed Bible authorities~~ and their exposition of the Scriptures in favor of a complete desolation of the land of Judah for less than seventy years and page four of your letter says in favor of those outside authorities: "I find no conflict between secular and Bible chronology." Well, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society does find conflict and it explains the conflict in the book entitled "Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules! And it is because of its finding of conflict between those who do not take the Bible for what it says and who follow the line of reasoning of their religious authorities in Christendom that you feel obliged to write the Society repeatedly about this matter of chronology, showing that you are not in agreement with the Society's latest book on Babylon the Great. That book was written with full knowledge of what the authorities of Christendom have to say upon this vital point of chronology and if the reader will carefully examine into what the book has to say upon this critical point in chronology he will see that it answers these outside authorities of Christendom and harmonizes with all of the Scriptures. Please read again Isaiah chapter twenty-four in which Jehovah predicts that he will turn the land of Judah upside down like a bowl and empty out all of its inhabitants, thus bringing about a complete ~~desolation of the land as far as human inhabitants are concerned~~ together with their domestic beasts and making the land one of taboo that no superstitious pagan who believed in ghosts and haunted places would want to occupy and inhabit, but would whistle at it in order to counteract the ghosts and demons supposedly haunting the place, and would pass by the land, fearfully avoiding it.

Trusting the above clearly sets forth our position, based upon what is published in detail in the Babylon book, we remain,

Faithfully yours in speaking God's word with boldness,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.