

BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

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THE TEMPLE CONNECTION

As we have seen, there is a chronological break each time a new covenant is made, which enables the new covenant to begin with a new "year zero" in a sense. The end of the period of Judges leads to a chronological break, because even though Judges gives a lot of chronological information, there is no way to link the chronology of Judges with that of Samuel directly. The book of Samuel provides chronological details concerning Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David, but does not link these with any of the people in Judges.

The statement that carries us over the break is in 1 Kings 6:1, "Now it came about in the 480th year after the sons of Israel came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord." The foundations of the Temple were laid 480 years after the Tabernacle was built.

During this era there were three phases: the wilderness wanderings and conquest, the era of the Judges, and the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon (4 years).

The Judges Problem

If we add up the years of judgeships and oppressions in the book of Judges, we come up with far too many years. The simple solution to this problem is to recognize that the judges were somewhat local, and that their periods of office overlap. There is more than one way to work out the details of the period of the judges, and it goes beyond the purposes of this newsletter to enter into a detailed discussion of the matter. (For a bit more detail, see 2:2.)

Sadly, a number of good chronological studies are marred by another approach to the problem. This approach says that the 480 years are "spiritual" years, years when Israel ruled the land. The gist of the approach is to add up all the years of all the judges and oppressions consecutively, and then subtract all the "carnal" years of oppressions, in such a way as to come out with 480 years. The actual length of the period, according to this approach, can be as high as 614 years. In fact, however, in order to make the years come out properly, those who follow this approach do some judicious juggling, and Anstey, for instance, comes up with 594 years.

It is not my purpose here to refute this approach, since we have already discussed it (2:2). It is a specious and gratuitous approach to the text, devoid of Biblical foundation. Anstey and Mauro both use this method, however, and since theirs are the most readily avail-

The Acts 13 Problem

In the Authorized Version (King James Version) we read, "And about the time of 40 years suffered He their manners in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave judges about the space of 450 years, until Samuel the prophet" (Acts 13:18-20).

Paul is speaking here, and as it reads we have him saying that the period from the conquest to Samuel was 450 years. If we add 47 years for wilderness and conquest, we are already at 497 years, and we have not yet added in an unknown number of years for Samuel, 40 for Saul (Acts 13:21), 40 for David, and 4 for Solomon!

Solutions: First, maybe Paul was wrong, and Luke simply records his sermon, warts and all. This is very unlikely, an interpretation of last resort!

Second, maybe the gap approach (spiritual and carnal years) is right after all. Paul's statement seems to lend it greater credibility. Again, however, there is no Biblical evidence for such a way of dealing with chronology. Some other solution must be found.

Third, the proper resolution takes notice of the fact that there is more than one reading for these texts. We have from the early centuries of the Church many manuscripts of the New Testament, and sadly they do not all agree with each other on every point. The necessitates a task called "lower criticism," which is the study of these various texts to try and determine which reading is correct, or most likely, at a given point of conflict. Happily there are not very many such places, and no doctrine of the faith is in question.

My own opinion regarding this task of lower criticism is that we should use as our base and starting point the text of the New Testament that God has preserved in the life of the Church and given to us, but be open to new evidence from the unearthing of other ancient copies of the text. The Received Text, from which the Authorized Version was made, is clearly corrupt in some places (a whole section of Revelation is missing, for instance, and has to be supplied from the Latin Vulgate), and so we are forced to pay attention to the other texts.

The New American Standard Bible uses a different text (Alexandria) at this point: "And for about a period of 40 years He put up with them in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance – about 450 years. And after these things [after the 450 years] He gave

- AM 2513 Exodus
 AM 2553 End of 40 years in wilderness
 AM 2560 End of Conquest (Josh. 14:7, 10; Num. 10:11-12; 13:17-20)

This is a total of 447 years, or "about 450 years."

Now, which reading is correct? Bruce M. Metzger's Texts of the New Testament (New York: United

Bible Societies, 1971), indicates that on the basis of sheer textual evidence we can go either way. On the basis of grammar, and also on the basis of comparing this verse to the clear statement of 1 Kings 6:1 (which Paul certainly knew!), there can be little doubt but that the Alexandrian-type reading is correct: that the 450 years extends from Isaac to Joshua.

One evidence of this is the fact that the two times "40 years" are mentioned in this passage are both in the accusative case, indicating duration of time (Acts 13:18, 21), while the expression "450 years" is not in the accusative case. A. T. Robertson, in his

(Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), provides two ways of looking at the "450 years." The first is that the phrase is in the locative case, indicating a block of time considered as a whole. The second is that the phrase is in the "instrumental dative" case, indicating "the time by the lapse of which anything is brought about" (pp. 523, 527). Both the Received-type and the Alexandrian-type texts have the phrase "450 years" in the locative or dative case.

Let me provide a paraphrase of Acts 13:17-20 that brings out the full sense of the numbers involved: "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and He made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it, and for about a period of 40 years duration He put up with them in the wilderness, and when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance. It took about 450 years to bring this about. [Or: This is a period of 450 years.] And after these things [everything in the preceding sentence] He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet."

Now, if we try to put the locative or instrumental dative sense of the "450 years" into the Received Text (the Authorized Version), we wind up with something that is strange and not very coherent. Compare these three readings and see which makes sense:

"And after these things – it took about 450 years to bring this about: He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet" (dative).

"And after these things – a block of about 450 years – He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet" (locative).

"And after these things – for about 450 years' duration – He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet" (accusative).

It certainly seems that the accusative is what Paul would have used if he had been talking about the period of the judges. Compare verse 18: "for about a period of 40 years' duration He put up with them in the wilderness." Now verse 21: "And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of

has been using accusative of duration, and that is what he would have used in verse 20 if the Received Text were correct.

But it is not in the accusative in the Received Text. It is in the locative or dative, which makes much less sense. - If we take it in the dative sense, Paul would be saying "after these things – it took about 450 years to bring about: He gave them judges until Samuel." This is a strange circumlocution to use, especially since the accusative was available and much clearer.

If we take the locative sense, Paul would be saying "after these things – for a block of about 450 years – He gave them judges until Samuel." Again this is a strange way to speak. Why not just use the accusative case and say, "after these things – for about 450 years – He gave them judges until Samuel"?

The conclusion is that the Received Text reading, preserved in the Authorized Version and the New King James Version, is highly ungrammatical. It does not make much sense. As it stands in context it should be an accusative of duration of time. Instead it is a locative of point of time, or an instrumental dative of culmination of time.

On the other hand, in the Alexandrian-type textual tradition, the grammar is perfectly clear. Paul uses a locative or dative at the end of a long sentence (w. 17-19) to indicate the entire block of time he has been summarizing; or to indicate the culmination of that period of time.

These considerations make it virtually certain that the King James is in error at this point. The 450 years begin with Isaac and end with Joshua. At some point, a scribe miscopied these two phrases ("450 years" and "after these things") and switched them.

Conclusion

The exodus from Egypt took place in AM 2513. The means the foundation of the Temple was laid in AM 2993. According to 1 Kings 6:38, it "took 7 years to build the Temple, so it was completed in the eighth month of the year AM 3000. Now here's a nice neat millennial number, but it emerges from a careful and precise study of the Biblical text. According to the chronology of Anstay and Mauro, which from here on is carefully worked out (though we shall have to look at it carefully), this was in 932 B.C. The Second Temple was destroyed in AD 70, almost exactly 1000 years later.

But maybe not. Only by a careful study of the details in the text of Scripture will we be able to determine how close to 1000 years later it really was – and our problem will be that from here on out the matter becomes much more complicated. The first complication is that it is hard to figure out the chronology of the Kings, and the second complication is whether or not the "seventy sevens" of Daniel 9 are to be taken literally or figuratively, and indeed, when they are supposed to begin. Anstay and Mauro take them literally, and begin them with Cyrus, which is my present inclination also.

For further reflection: Does this Temple Millennium (exact or approximate) play into the interpretation of Revelation 20? Is Revelation 20 really talking about the destruction of the Temple (unlikely)? Or is it using the first Temple millennium as a figure for the Church Age (likely)?

Stay tuned.