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THE BABYLONIAN CONNECTION

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The Fall of Jerusalem we have dated (provisionally) at 3426 Anno Mundi. In current B.C. dates this is 586 B.C. From this point forward in ~~Biblical~~ chronology we are required to make use of prophetic numbers rather than historical ones. Jeremiah prophesied that the captivity would last 70 years, but we are not given a record of the events in these 70 years, nor except for Zechariah 1:12 are we told at any point after the captivity that the duration was this or that number of years.

Moreover, such dates as are given in Scripture for events during and after the captivity are given in terms of the years of the reigning World Emperor, not in terms of Israelite historical events. The Bible itself, however, does not tell how long each of these Emperors reigned.

There are some important theological implications for all of this. Since humanity was created as God's image-bearer, and as God's child in a creaturely sense, the Bible shows God progressively giving more and more control over the world to man, as a parent gradually gives control of affairs over to a maturing child. In the Flood, for instance, God destroyed the enemy without Noah's doing anything. Later, at the Exodus, God destroyed the Egyptians, but Moses had to raise his staff. God worked miracles to conquer Canaan, but the people had to fight too. In David's day, David occasionally glimpsed the angelic army fighting alongside his own (2 Samuel 5:24), but was largely on his own. From this we can see the Lord of Hosts training His men to fight. (For a fuller discussion, see my eight-cassette lecture series, "The Biblical Doctrine of War," available from Biblical Horizons, Box 132011, Tyler, TX 75713; \$30.00.)

Similarly, the chronology is easy to follow in the early years of humanity, but becomes more difficult during the period of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Now in the time of "Gentile domination," it seems that God is passing responsibility for record-keeping more largely over to humanity. No longer will He provide an inspired and infallible chronology, at least not in the form of historical recounting.

Another dimension of this transition in history is that at this point we enter into a new covenant, the Restoration Covenant. As the Hebrews had been led by Patriarchs, and as the Israelites had been governed by Judges, and as the Kingdoms had been ruled by Kings, now the Jews (their new name) are going to be ruled by World Emperors. The interface between the people of God and these secular Emperors is an all-important theme in the Restoration period, especially seen in Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Esther. (For more on the nature of the Restoration period, see chapter 17 of my book *Through New Eyes*, available from Biblical Horizons for \$12.00.)

of view, the God who predestines and orders history is the same as the God who predestines and orders the future. He knows the end from the beginning. Thus, in one sense prophecy is simply history written in advance.

Of course, prophecy is generally given in the form of symbolism, while history is generally recorded in the form of events. Again, however, from a Biblical point of view, the historical events of the covenant history are all typologically related to later events in the fullness of the kingdom, so that the symbolic language of prophecy is actually derived typologically from the events of previous history. Similarly, while prophecy may be recoded in symbolic language, prophecy does not deal in generalities but always involves the prediction of particular events.

Because of the typological character of history, one prophetic oracle may point to more than one future event, having a near "confirming" fulfillment and another fuller fulfillment in the New Covenant. A clear illustration of this is Isaiah 7:1-19, which is immediately fulfilled in Isaiah 8:3-4, but receives a fuller fulfillment in Matthew 1. History, however, is no different, as the exodus from Egypt was preceded by several preliminary exoduses recorded in Genesis, and was followed by other exoduses recorded in later books of the Bible. (On the topological character of history, and on these various exoduses, see again Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, chapters 13-19.)

Thus, when we understand that both history and prophecy are typological, we can see that prophecy is indeed history written in advance. Still, because prophecy uses the language of symbol, we have to ask whether the chronological prophecies of the future found in Jeremiah and Daniel are designed to be taken literally or not.

Four 70 Year Periods

As regards the seventy years of captivity, we are on safe ground in taking these literally, but there are three different and overlapping periods of 70 years mentioned in the text of Scripture, and a fourth unstated one. The first of these comes from Jeremiah 25:1 & 12, which states that from the 4th year of Jehoiakim, which is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, until the end of the captivity would be 70 years. This 70 years is the duration of the Neo-Babylonian Empire from Nebuchadnezzar to its end. The B.C. date for this is 605 B.C. This was the year Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and made Jerusalem a vassal city. It was the year Daniel went into captivity (Dan. 1:1). (Daniel 1:1 calls this the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, using a non-accession year method of dating, evidently the Babylonian method.)

in the first year of Darius the Mede, which wee the year Cyrus took Babyton, Daniel was meditating on the completion of these 70 yeare, but at this point Darius the Mede was ruling Babylon. It seems that Cyrus conquered Babylon and left Darius the Mede to run it for a couple of years. Secular chronologists put Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C. After a few years, Cyrus returned to rule in Babylon and issued his decree in 536 B.C. (A.M. 3476). The people probably got back to the land in 535 B.C., exactly 70 yeare after the first exile. Evidence that Darius and Cyrus ruled over Babylon in (friendly) succession comes from Daniel 6:28 and 8:3 + 20. (For a fuller discussion, see Keil & Delitzsch, *O/d Testament Commentaries: Jeremiah I:372ff.*)

Jeremiah indicates that this 70 year period would be a time of "desolations," but he does not say that the entire period would experience the fulness of desolation (Jer. 25:6-11). There is a beginning of desolation at the inception of this period, however, as 2 Chronicles 36:7 states that "Nebuchadnezzar also brought some of the articles of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his temple at Babylon." It is "abominations" that cause "desolation" in Scripture, and the following verse speaks of "the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and the abominations which he did." A full reading of Jeremiah 25:1-11 makes clear that it was abominations that called down the desolating wrath of God and that initiated the term of Jeremiah's 70 year prophecy.

The articles taken from the house of God represent God's presence. Their captivity indicates the legal transfer of rule from Israel to Babylon at the beginning of the World Imperial stage of history. With them went Daniel and the flower of Israel's youth. These articles and men made "holy war" on Babylon during the 70 years, and it was Belshazzar's contemptuous abuse of precisely these articles that precipitated the downfall of Babylon toward the end of this period (Daniel 5:2-3).

The second period of 70 years is mentioned in Zechariah 1:12, which is in the second year of Darius. This is at the beginning of Zechariah's Night Visions, during which the prophet was shown God inaugurating a new covenant and returning His presence to the Temple. The beginning of this 70 year period is recorded in Ezekiel 8-11, when God departed the Temple of Solomon and left it desolate. Ezekiel 8:1 dates the vision of the abominations in the Temple, and God's subsequent desolation thereof, in the 6th year of Zedekiah, or 591 B.C. The second year of Darius is set at 520 B.C., the year after the completion of the 70 years of desolation.

Zechariah 1:12 reads: "How long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou has been indignant these seventy yeare?" It is sometimes thought that this period of indignation refers to the actual destruction of the city (586 B. C.) or to its initial investiture (588 B.C.). In the context of Zechariah, it is the dwelling of God with His people that is in view, not

recorded in Ezekiel 8, which alone also provides us with 70 full yeare. (Moreover, the word "indignation," in Hebrew *zahan*, is closely connected with the words for cursing, as we see in Numbers 23:7-8 where several such quasi-synonyms are put together. The word has a strongly juridical cast.)

The third period of 70 yeare comes from Zechariah 7:1 and 5, which tell us that in the 4th year of Darius the people asked whether they should continue to mourn the events of the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred 70 yeare earlier. The events spoken of took place in the 9th-11th years of Zedekiah, 586-566 B.C. The fourth year of Darius is set at 518 B.C. Thus, the 70 yeare spoken of here begin with the investiture of Jerusalem, not with her full destruction (cf. Ezk. 24:1-2; 2 Kings 25:1-2).

The fasts spoken of in Zechariah 7 & 8 are listed in 8:19: "The fast of the 4th month (commemorating the city smitten on the 9th day of the 4th month in the 11th year of Zedekiah), and the fast of the 5th month (commemorating the burning of the Temple on the 7th day of the 5th month of Zedekiah 11), and the fast of the 7th month (commemorating the slaying of Gedaliah in the 7th month of Zedekiah 11), and the fast of the 10th month (commemorating the inception of the siege on the 10th day of the 10th month of Zedekiah 9)." Thus, the first commemoration was in the 9th year of Zedekiah, and the 70 years of commemorations begin at this point.

For those of you who are studying Biblical chronology along with me in these newsletters, I should add that Anstay and most others have misinterpreted these second and third cycles of 70 yeare. This is because they have focused attention on the externals of siege and sack, and have completely overlooked Ezekiel 8-11. In fact, Ezekiel 8-11 records in detail exactly what an "abomination of desolation" is. Abominations that cause desolation are acts of idolatry and sacrilege performed in God's Temple before His face that cause Him to leave the Temple. After God leaves, the enemy is free to invade. God's departure, however, is the crucial event. It is an error to think that the "abominations of desolation" mentioned in Daniel are brought about by secular kings like Antiochus and Titus. Rather, it is the sins of the priests and people that are the abominations. The Gentile army's attack is but an aftermath. (For another example of abominations that cause desolation, read 1 Samuel 1-4.)

Anstay and other chronologers associate the 70 years of Zechariah 1 and 7 with the siege and sack of Jerusalem respectively, and this means that they only have 68 years. Anstay heroically tries to stretch these to 70, but fails dramatically to do so.

The unstated fourth period of 70 years runs from the 11th year of Zedekiah, when the Temple was destroyed, to the 6th year of Darius, when the physical Restoration Temple was finished (Ezra 6:14-15). This is A.M. 3496 (provisionally).