

BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

Vol. IV, No. 8

©James B. Jordan, 1992

August, 1982

A SUMMARY OF OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY

by James B. Jordan

This newsletter summarizes everything that has been written and argued in *Biblical Chronology* to date. Back issues of *Bib/ice/Chronology* can be obtained either from the Institute for Christian Economics (Box 8006, Tyler, TX 75711), or from Biblical Horizons (Box 1096, Niceville, FL 32588). A donation is required to cover expenses.

The Bible is filled with chronological information. Some would dismiss the idea that this chronological information can and should be systematized. We have to say, however, that if the scattered information about the triunity of God can and should be systematized, then there is no good reason to refuse to systematize any other information in the Bible, including chronological information (BC 1:1). The Church, until recently, has always accepted the chronology of the Bible (BC 1:2 & 2:1).

Problems With Previous Efforts

Since the late 19th century, the prevailing opinion in evangelical scholarship is that there are gaps in the chronology of the Old Testament. We saw that there is no foundation in the text of the Bible for this notion. The Bible provides no gaps, and clearly intends to provide an accurate chronology from the date of creation to the destruction of Jerusalem (BC 2:2).

Theologically, the chronology is tied to the Old Covenant in this way: The Old Covenant was characterized by a heaven, an earth, and a priest-king. The old heavens were calendrically regulated by the sun and moon, according to Genesis 1:14. The old earth had a geographically central sanctuary, according to Genesis 2. The old priest-king was genealogically descended from and related to the first Adam. These three aspects of the first creation continued until they were judicially transformed at the resurrection of Christ, and the vestiges of these three aspects were eliminated in A.D. 70. Sacred time, sacred space, and sacred personage were transformed in Christ into new modes. The chronology of the Old Testament is the chronology of the first Adam. In the new age of the gospel, the chronology exists in union with Christ. The new earth (assembly of people), the new heavens (calendar of liturgical events) and the new priest-kings are determined on a new principle (BC 1:3).

Earlier works delineating Old Covenant chronology have been flawed in several ways, and this is why a new attempt has been required.

1. Martin Anstey's *Romance of Bible Chronology*, also published as *Chronology of the Old Testament*, though by far the best and most valuable (yea, indispensable) work on the subject, is marred by his use of "spiritual years" to account for the reigns of

tionalistic oddities common to many late-19th century evangelicals (not the province only of the followers of Darby or Scofield) (BC 2:2).

2. Philip Mauro's *Wonders of Bible Chronology* is a summary of Anstey's work, without the dispensationalism. Mauro continues to promote the idea of "spiritual years" during the period of the Judges, however (BC 2:2).
3. The work of E.W. Faulstich is interesting and challenging at some points, but Faulstich is naively committed to the notion that there have been absolutely no changes whatsoever in the rotation and revolution of the earth during the last 6000 years, an idea completely at variance with known facts. The earth-moon system does undergo slight accelerations and decelerations in motion due to tidal and other forces. Faulstich's commitment to questionable ancient eclipse data and his reliance on computer dating methods force the data of history into a procrustean mold. Additionally, Faulstich repeatedly plays havoc with Biblical statements in order to make them square with his computer chronology and his unique and bizarre prophetic and numerological schema (BC 2:1, 5, & 7).
4. As concerns the period of the kings of Israel and Judah, Edwin R. Thiele's *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (various editions) has been very influential in evangelical circles, but is more a curiosity than anything else. Thiele's system is *prima facie* incredible, "and is tied to an erroneous interpretation of data from ancient Assyria. O.T. Allis long ago pointed out the errors here (BC 2:9, 10; 4:1, 2, & 3).
5. Finally, C.G. Ozzane's *The First 7000 Years*, while containing a valuable critique of Thiele, is marred by extreme schematizing and another curious prophetic scheme (BC 2:5 & 6).

One of the sadder aspects of almost all previous chronological work, I found, is that author after author is committed to some kind of date-setting approach to the second coming of Christ. There is a general failure to understand that the chronological principle is tied to the Old Covenant genealogical principle, the history of the first man.

I will be so bold as to write here that detailed prophetic predictions are also part and parcel of the Old Covenant order, in that they are always phrased in terms of the old heavens and earth, and in terms of the chronological principles. The New Testament predictions that are detailed all have to do, I am convinced, with the events leading down to A.D. 70. (This includes, I believe, not only the

eral terms.

General Findings and Tentative Positions

Since *Biblical Chronology* has involved me in a progressive study over three years, there are errors in earlier essays that have been corrected in later ones. The following tentative conclusions reflect my latest findings:

1. Genesis 1 must be taken as six normal days; there is no gap between Genesis 1:1 & 2; and there are no gaps in the chronology of Genesis 5. This puts the Flood in the year Anno Mundi (year of the world) 1656 (BC 2:3 & 3:6).
2. There are no gaps in the chronology of Genesis 11, and a comparison of Genesis 11:26 with Acts 7:4 puts the birth of Abram in A.M. 2008 (BC 2:4,5, & 6).
3. Exodus 12:40-41 says that Israel was in Egypt 430 years, and a careful study of Genesis, together with Numbers 26:59 and Galatians 3:17 reveals that the Egyptian domination began with Abram's first descent into Egypt (Genesis 12). The exodus from Egypt came in A.M. 2513 (BC 2:7).
4. 1 Kings 6:1 states that the fourth year of Solomon was the 460th year after the exodus from Egypt. In this year, A.M. 2993, the foundations of the Temple were laid. The Temple was completed seven years later, A.M. 3000 (1 Kings 6:38). If we add up the years of the judges in the book of Judges, we come up with more than 460 years, but a careful reading of Judges shows which judges ruled coterminously (6C 2:8; 3:7 & 8).
5. A careful study of the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah yielded the following results. First, the definitive "Adamic chronology" is tied to the Temple-maintaining kings of Judah. Second, the destruction of Jerusalem came in A.M. 3425 (or thereabouts) (6C 3:9 - 4:7). Third, current Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias err in the way they attempt to reconcile Biblical chronology with the Assyrian King Lists (6C 4:1-3).

the people of God, focussing on the coming of the last Adam. The first, 49 years in length, carries through the reign of good emperor Darius, who is also the Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah, and probably also the Ahasuerus of Esther (6C 3:2-5).

7. Daniel's 70 weeks. should be seen as weeks of years, and should be taken literally. They must start with the decree of Cyrus in A.M. 3474 (or thereabouts). The chronology of the time between Cyrus and Christ that has been used in the Church for centuries is based on the very questionable chronology of Ptolemy. There are many reasons to question it, and good reasons to favor taking Daniel 9's chronology literally (6C 2:1, 11 & 12; 3:1).
8. The chronology carries us to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ mid-way through the 70th week of Daniel 9:24-27, which is A.M. 3960. If this happened in A.D. 30, the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, which was in A.D. 70, happened in A.M. 4000 (BC 4:7).

Whither Biblical Chronology?

The next few issues of this newsletter will deal with New Testament chronology and perhaps a couple of extra details from the Old Testament. Then, if the newsletter continues, I shall summarize various revisionist approaches that are currently in the wind, which will be of interest to those who wish to pursue this topic further.

What is needed beyond this is for a number of scholars (perhaps graduate students) who have studied the ancient Near East in detail and who have access to the relevant material, to integrate Biblical chronology with what is known of ancient history. This is not my field, and even if it were, I have access to nothing here in Niceville, Florida. If such a project interests you, however, I ask that you write me % Biblical Horizons, Box 1096, Niceville, FL 32566. Our long-term goal must be the production of an ancient history text that is true to the Bible and useable in Christian schools and Christian home schools.