

BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

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JUBILEE PART 2

This month we continue our survey of Biblical chronology in terms of sabbath years and jubilees. Re-read last month's issue to catch up with us.

The Building of the Temple

Solomon began work on the Temple in the second month of his fourth year. This was the year 2993, a sabbath year. He finished in the eighth month of his eleventh year, the year 3000, also a sabbath. (1 Ki. 6:1, 38). This is said to be a span of seven years (1 Ki. 6:38).

Before we go farther, I need to make the point that this passage proves that the years are being measured from Tishri to Tishri, not from Nisan to Nisan; in other words, from 7th month to 7th month, not from 1st month to 1st month. This is going to be confusing to you at first, but the point will become clear if you follow me.

Remember that the Ecclesiastical Year begins in Advent, four Sundays before Christmas. Thus, the first day of the Church Year varies from solar year to solar year, and does not coincide with the first day of the secular year. (The Eastern Church begins her Church Year in September). Thus, you are already familiar with the idea of two distinct calendars for Church and state. The same was true in the Old Creation.

To understand this, we need to understand that there were two governmental systems in Israel, one for the sanctuary and one for the land. The distinction between the two

For proof, consider the building of the Temple. Solomon begins in Year 4, month 2 and ends in Year 11, month 8. If we consider the years as beginning in the spring, in the first month, Nisan, we come up with 7 1/2 years:

Year 4 – 11 months (months 2-12)
Years 5-10 – 6 years
Year 11 – 8 months (months 1-8)

If we consider the years as beginning in the fall, in the seventh month, Tishri, we come up with 6 1/2 years:

Year 4 – 5 months (months 2-6)
Years 5-10 – 6 years
Year 11 – 2 months (months 7-8)

Now, neither of these is exactly 7 years, as the text requires. So which is it? Without demonstrating the fact, the Bible routinely counts years, months, and days inclusively, so that the three days Jesus was in the tomb were part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday. Thus, the time-span of 7 1/2 years would be called 8 years, while the span of 6 1/2 years would be called 7 years. Using Tishri years, we come up with 7 years, rounded off (i.e., rounded upwards).

There are other passages that clearly indicate that the political year was reckoned from fall to fall, but we won't go into them here.

Now, 1 Kings 7:1 and 9:10 say that Solomon took 13 more years to finish the furniture for the Temple and to build his Palace (which means that the Palace of the king was part of the furniture of God's Palace, the Temple), for a total of 20 years. Thus, the year of completion was 3013.

The Temple was dedicated, and God entered it, in the seventh month, but of which year we are not told (1 Ki. 8:2; 2 Chron. 7:1, 10). We are virtually forced to assume, however, that this was the month after the completion of the Temple and Palace, and was the first month of the next year, the year 3014. This was a sabbath year.

Did this sabbath year begin a new cycle of jubilees? My guess is that it did, but I cannot be certain. Under the old cycle, the year 3001 was a jubilee; but as I pointed out last month, the jubilee cannot be observed apart from the day of atonement, and the day of atonement was not observed during the period between Samuel and Solomon. Sabbath years could be observed, since Israel was still living in the land; and from what we have seen, the count of sabbath years almost certainly continued without a break: otherwise we would not have such a series of sab-

- s woven into the warp and woof of the laws in Leviticus. Leviticus 27 shows us that there was a sanctuary shekel that differed in weight from the ordinary shekel used in commerce. Ezekiel 40 shows us that there was a sanctuary cubit that differed in length from the ordinary cubit.

Similarly, there were two calendars, one for the priests and one for the land. The religious year began in the spring, while the national year began in the fall. The lunar months change in the spring, so that the first month of the religious year is Nisan. The years change in the fall, at the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement, so that the seventh month is the first month of the new solar and political year. We see this most clearly in that the year of jubilee, according to Leviticus 25, began in the seventh month; thus, so did all years as concerns the land. The years of the chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel are measured from fall to fall, not from spring to spring.

Thus, the official first year of a king of Judah ran from the 7th month of one religious year to the 6th month of the following year. (Any months he reigned prior to the 7th month are in his unnumbered accession year.) The

jubilee years, but as we shall see, a jubilee does come very close to the destruction of Jerusalem if we assume that the jubilee count started over again with the consecration of the Temple.

Events That Were Sabbath Years

The following events during the time of the kings happened in sabbath years:

1. The accession of good king Asa to the throne of Judah in 3049.
2. The first year of good king Jehoshaphat of Judah in 3091.
3. Jehu's destruction of the house of Ahab, deaths of Ahaziah of Judah and Jehoram of Israel, Jehu's first year; beginning of the second chronological period of kings; in 3119.
4. The death of Amaziah of Judah and the beginning of an interregnum, in 3182.
5. The accession of good king Uzziah of Judah in 3203.
6. The sabbath year 3406 was the fourth year of Jehoiakim of Judah and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar according to Israelite reckoning (Jer. 25:1) (after an accession year, Dan. 1:1).
7. The following year, 3407, was a jubilee. This was Daniel's 3rd year of captivity, the year of his graduation (Dan. 1:5). In this year, the second official year of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream (Dan. 2), a dream that indirectly predicted a jubilee of true worship and justice for all the earth. Also in this year, perhaps inspired by the calendar, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and the land was punished (2 Ki. 24:1 with Jer. 36:9, 22-23).
8. In 3413, a sabbath year, Jehoiakim died; Jehoiachin reigned for 3 months and then was taken into captivity; and Zedekiah came to the throne of Judah.

Ezekiel's message from God about the importance of the sabbath was delivered in this year. It was the "seventh" year (Ezk. 20:1; cp. w. 12-20). If this was the seventh year of Jehoiachin's exile, which Ezekiel dates by in Ezekiel 1:2, it is 3419, not 3420. If, however, it is the seventh year of Zedekiah, it is the sabbath year 3420.

Now, the reason for thinking Ezekiel is dating by Zedekiah and not Jehoiachin is this: In Ezekiel 3:26 God struck Ezekiel dumb for 430 days (Ezk. 4:5-6), at least as regards prophesying. This was Jehoiachin's Exile year 5, month 4, day 12 (Ezk. 1:1-2; 3:16). But in Ezekiel 8:1 we find Ezekiel prophesying in the sixth year, sixth month, fifth day, which is at the most 416 days later. Thus, the date in Ezekiel 8:1 is probably reckoned in terms of Zedekiah's reign rather than Jehoiachin's exile.

Also, Ezekiel 24:1's date is almost certainly in terms of Zedekiah's reign, for Zedekiah's year 9, month 10, day 10 was in fact the day the siege of Jerusalem began (2 Ki. 25:1). If Ezekiel's date is for Jehoiachin's exile, it is exactly one year early, in which case the message is a prediction; but the text does not read like a prediction.

Thus, I conclude that the elders visited Ezekiel in the sabbath year to ask when they would get to go home, at which time God rebuked them for defiling His sabbaths.

10. During the siege of Jerusalem, Zedekiah and the princes became aware that they had not been keeping the sabbath year by releasing debts and slaves. In fact, the sabbath year had not been observed for centuries. Suddenly they decided that God might smile on them if they "set the captives free." They pronounced an unofficial sabbath year, but when Nebuchadnezzar was temporarily called away, they took their slaves back again. Thus they sealed their doom (Jer. 34).