

BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

Vol. V, No. 4

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April, 1993

JUBILEE PART 3

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

The Seventy Years of Sabbaths

2 Chronicles 36:20-21 reads: "And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and there they were slaves to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah; until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath to fulfill seventy years." This text is usually linked with Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11, to the effect that Israel would be captive to Nebuchadnezzar for 70 years - and rightly so. However, this does not mean that the 70 years of sabbaths are the same as the 70 years of Babylon's rule, which misinterpretation I was guilty of back in *Biblical Chronology* 2:11.

In fact, the 70 years of sabbaths for the land began with the deportation of Israel from the land, and did not end until the Temple was rebuilt in the sixth year of Darius: A.M. 3424-3494. Let us first of all consider this period.

First, Nebuchadnezzar took all but the poorest people into captivity. In other words, the people who should have been released from debt and servitude in the sabbath years got to enjoy 70 years of sabbath years in repayment. For the full impact of this, read Jeremiah 39:10, "But some of the poorest people who had nothing, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard left behind in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields on that day." It was the *Babylonians* who honored the sabbath year! (Nebuzaradan might have been one of Daniel's converts; his treatment of Jeremiah certainly suggests it.)

Second, though Jewa returned to the land after the decree of Cyrus, they did not enjoy the fruits of it (Hag. 1:1-11). They were still alienated from the land. They did not really occupy it until they rebuilt the Temple, which was completed in the sixth year of Darius, 20 years later.

Now let us consider the fact that these 70 years of sabbath were compensation for the fact that Israel did not observe the sabbaths and jubilees (which were also sabbath years) on 70 occasions. If we consider that 3021 was the first sabbath year not kept, and no sabbaths and jubilees were kept during the entire Kingdom period, with 3420 as the last sabbath year not kept, we come up with 67 unobserved sabbaths. We

I suggest that the sabbaths of 3000, 3007, and 3014 were not observed either. In 3000 the Temple was finished and 3014 was the sabbath inaugurated by the consecration of the Temple. These were not observed, even under Solomon's rule.

What does this mean? It means that Solomon ended the people began to depart from the Lord immediately after the Temple was consecrated! This is not a surprise. Israel departed from the Lord immediately after being given the Ten Words at Mount Sinai (Ex. 32). Adam departed from the Lord as soon as the Lord gave him the garden (Gen. 2-3).

Solomon's departure from the Lord is implied in 1 Kings 9:10-14. There we read that Hiram, the God-fearing king of Tyre, had greatly helped build the Temple. Immediately after the Temple was completed, Solomon "rewarded" Hiram with 20 trashy cities, and Hiram was displeased. In this way, Solomon departed from David's covenant with Hiram (which was also the Lord's covenant with him), and failed to carry forward the gentile mission to which Israel had been called as a nation of priests. The next paragraph, 2 Kings 9:15ff., begins a discussion of the "forced labor" to which Solomon subjected the people, a form of bondage not in keeping with the principle of the sabbath year. Both of these paragraphs immediately follow God's warning to Solomon not to depart from the law (1 Ki. 9:1-9).

The Sabbath Year and Jubilee in the Restoration Period

Because Israel was neither in the land nor was the Temple in operation, both sabbath years and jubilees seem to have been suspended for the 70 years of rest for the land. We can figure out how they started up again by a careful consideration of information found in Ezra. (You may wish to review *Biblical Chronology* 3:2-5 before proceeding.)

The Temple was finished in Darius year 6, month 12 (Ezr. 6:15; Esth. 3:7): A.M. 3494. In the following month, month 1, which is still Darius Year 6, the Temple was consecrated and Passover was celebrated. The following year, Ezra set out for Jerusalem and arrived. This was 3495.

I am going to assume that this is the first year of the new sabbath year cycle. It is Darius-Artaxerxes Year 7. These are the sabbath years:

3501 - Darius 13

- Nehemiah arrives to rebuild wall.

miah's work completed.

But, Daniel's 49 years start with the decree of Cyrus. Thus, we can backdate the new sabbatical cycle to the decree of Cyrus, anticipating its full implementation 20 years later:

3474- Cyrus 1 - first year of cycle
3480- Cambyses 1 - sabbath
3487- Cambyses 8
3494- Darius 6

So then, when did the jubilee cycle start? One way to try and answer that question is to see if we get any amazing coincidences with one system or the other. Before we do that, however, let us consider the possibility that the sabbath years and jubilees were not suspended (or contracted) during the 70 years of sabbath years, but continued right on through without re-starting.

If we make that assumption, we get none of the coincidences just mentioned; in other words, we don't get the 7th and 34th years of Darius as significant sabbatically, and we have no tie to Daniel's 49 years. Also, we wind up with the year 3959 as a sabbath year. Jesus was crucified in 3960. He was "working" throughout the previous three years, and I don't think it is theologically appropriate for a sabbath year

So, the sabbaths clearly can start up either with Cyrus's 1st or Darius's 7th years. What about the jubilee? Well, as it happens, no jubilee falls in any significant year if we begin the cycle with Darius's 7th year (A.M. 3495). The year after Daniel's 49th year would not be a jubilee, and nothing in the New Testament would be either.

If, however, we start with Cyrus's 1st year, we get the year after Daniel's 49 years, which is the year after Darius's 34th year, as a jubilee. Thus, a jubilee comes right after Nehemiah has finished his work.

Also, the year 3962 is a jubilee. Jesus was crucified in A.M. 3960, and the following year is a sabbath. Paul was converted in 3960, and then after three years, in 3962, he went to Jerusalem and thereafter began his ministry (Gal. 2:18-24). This was the first beginning of the worldwide gentile mission of the Church, and is a fitting jubilee event. Thus, I conclude that the jubilee cycle was re-set after the exile, and kicked off with the decree of Cyrus in 3474.

It might be objected that a jubilee could not be celebrated before the rebuilding of the Temple in 3494. True, but no jubilee came up until 3523, at which time the Temple service was back in operation.

(Note: In Luke 4:19, when Jesus proclaimed the coming of the true Jubilee, this was not a jubilee year or a sabbath year on any scheme of reckoning. The text has to be taken theologically, and not chronologically.)