

# BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

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## Daniel: Historical & Chronological Comments (II)

by James B. Jordan

### 2. Chronological Difficulties Concerning Nebuchadnezzar's Investitures of Jerusalem (Daniel 1:1-2)

*(continued from previous issue)*

Some have said, though, that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar did not start until April, and thus overlaps only the second half of **Jehoiakim's** 4th year. Thus, Jeremiah had to be prophesying after Nebuchadnezzar became king officially, and had entered into his **official** first year. This argument assumes that Jeremiah is using the fall-to-fall reckoning for the kings of Judah and the spring-to-spring reckoning for Nebuchadnezzar. I don't believe there is any reason to accept this line of **thinking**. The Bible itself teaches that national years are solar, and thus are reckoning from autumnal equinox to autumnal equinox, while religious months are **lunar** and are reckoned from vernal equinox to vernal equinox. There is no reason to think that Jeremiah or any other **Bible** writer would shift from the accepted way of reckoning years and adopt the Babylonian method, without a statement to that effect.

A more serious challenge comes from Jeremiah **46:2**, which reads:

To Egypt. Against the **army** of Pharaoh **Neco**, king of Egypt, who went to the River Euphrates at Carchemish, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated, in the 4th year of **Jehoiakim** son of Josiah king of Judah.

As this statement reads, it could mean that Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, or it could mean that the oracle is dated the 4th year of **Jehoiakim**. If the former, we have a problem, since it seems clear that Nebuchadnezzar defeated **Neco** at **Carchemish** in the 3rd year of **Jehoiakim**. This is not a likely interpretation, however. Virtually every other oracle and prophecy in Jeremiah is dated, and thus the date (4th year of **Jehoiakim**) is almost certainly the date of this **oracle**.

Now, the oracle itself begins with a description of the battle of **Carchemish** (**Jer. 46:3-12**), but since the heading of the letter has already stated that Pharaoh was defeated at **Carchemish**, the oracle must be taken as describing an event that has already taken place. In other words, at the beginning of the letter, Pharaoh **Neco** is addressed as someone who has already been defeated at Carchemish; this would make no sense if the battle had not already happened. Verses 3-4 call on the Egyptians to make ready for war, while verses 5-6 mock them for running away from the battle. Verses 7-9 describe the "rising of the Nile" as Egypt's move into Babylonian territory four years previously, while verse 10 says that Egypt's defeat was from the hand of Yahweh God. In verse 11 Egypt is invited to convert to the worship of Yahweh, while verses 11b and 12 state that their defeat has been visible to all the world.

Having described the defeat at **Carchemish** at the hands of Yahweh and His servant Nebuchadnezzar, Yahweh now tells Egypt **that in the future** Nebuchadnezzar will invade and conquer her (vv. 13-26). The point of the oracle seems to be this: God says, "I've defeated you once already, and I'm going to do so again. Repent and turn to Me!"

At this point let me explain why we are going through this exercise. The "contradictions" we have examined so far have often been explained by saying that some **Bible** writers count the first year of a king as his year of **accession**, while other Bible writers give the year of accession to the preceding monarch, and do not begin the count of the new king's year until the fall of the year he became king. Thus, they say, **Jehoiakim's** 3rd year in Daniel 1:1 and his 4th year in Jeremiah 25 are the same year, but the Daniel calls **Jehoiakim's** accession year as Year O, while Jeremiah calls it Year 1. Or, worse yet, some say that Jeremiah is using a spring-to-spring year, such as the Babylonians used, while other authors are **using a fall-to-**

fall year.

In my opinion, these kinds of explanations are highly incredible. We are supposed to believe that various Biblical writers, living at the same time and in the same culture, used different calendars to describe events. In fact, as we shall see in a moment, we are supposed to believe that in Jeremiah 52, two different calendars are used only a few verses apart. I suppose that if there is absolutely no other possible explanation, then some such bizarre thesis would emerge as likely; but since there are very reasonable other possibilities, there is really no reason to entertain them.

The older way of dealing with chronological **difficulties** and apparent contradictions in the text of the Bible was to look carefully at the context and meaning of the passages involved. By this method, virtually **all difficulties** are easily explained. The modern method is either to say that the difficulty is due to a "**scribal error**" or that various conflicting calendars are in use by different authors, or (worse) in different "sources" that lie behind the author's work (which he was too stupid to reconcile in his final product). The idea that the author of the book of Kings, for instance, hops around between accession-year and **non-accession-year** dating, and between fall and spring years, means that the author was drawing from various "sources" that used different **calendars**, and that the author was too stupid to work out a coherent plan for his own book.

Consider: The author of Kings is drawing from various chronicles of various kings. He finds that these chronicles use different calendar systems. He is very interested in chronology himself, so he includes all the chronological data in Kings as he composes the book. Even though he is interested in chronology, however, he doesn't bother to reconcile the data in these various sources, nor does he inform the reader when he switches from one system to another, with the result that his chronology is full of contractions and **errors**. For an author who is plainly interested in chronology, this is a monumental y stupid error. Moreover, none of the author's original readers picked up on this problem, so nobody brought it to his attention, or if they did, he refused to correct it.

I think that this way of dealing with apparent chronological difficulties is absurd. The older method is far preferable.

**Let** us consider Jeremiah 52. Verse 12 says that Nebuchadnezzar conquered and burned Jerusalem in his **19th** year. Verses 28-30 read as follows:

28. These are the **people** whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away into exile: in the 7th year 3023 Jews.

29. In the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar 832 persons from Jerusalem.

30. In the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar, **Nebuzaradan** the captain of the guard **carried** into exile 745 Jewish people; there were 4600 **persons** in all.

Nebuchadnezzar, when he took 3023 Jews captive, is the same as the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar, when he besieged Jerusalem and took **Jehoiachin** into captivity (2 **Ki.** 24:10-12); and that the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar in **Jer.** **52:29** is the same as the **19th** year of Nebuchadnezzar in **Jer.** **52:12 (!)** and 2 Kings **25:8**.

Now, just how credible is this interpretation? **First** of all, we have to assume that Jeremiah (or the "final redactor" of Jeremiah) was so stupid that he did not notice the contradiction between verses 12 & 29 of his final **pericope**; or if he did notice the contradiction, he did not care. He was using two "sources" that used two different calendars, one of which said 19 and the other of which said 18. But consider: If Jeremiah wrote this, would he not have **in his own mind the** calendar that he was accustomed to? How could he even make this mistake? Moreover, what need did Jeremiah have for "sources"? He was present on the scene throughout this history.

Moreover, as regards the 7th and 8th years, 2 Kings 24:14 says that Nebuchadnezzar carried away 10,000 people in his 8th year, while Jeremiah **52:28** says only 3023 in his 7th year. The usual explanation for this contradiction is that 3023 were nobility, or men, while the rest were non-nobility or women and children. 2 Kings 24:14-16, however, says that of the 10,000 captives **7000** were men of valor and 1000 were craftsmen and smiths. Certainly the 7000 were nobility, and **all** 8000 were men!

**These** explanations only make matters worse. The older explanation makes a whole lot more sense. We know that Jehoiakim served Nebuchadnezzar for 3 years, but then rebelled against him and realigned with Egypt. This is because Egypt had fought Babylon to a draw in 601 **BC**. Nebuchadnezzar was not able right away to put down this revolt. In the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar, which was **Jehoiakim's 10th** year, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem and settled matters. This event is not mentioned in Kings, but is what Jeremiah **52:28** is speaking of. Apparently Nebuchadnezzar allowed **Jehoiakim** to remain on the throne.

The next year Jehoiakim died and **Jehoiachin**, his son, came to the throne. The Bible says that he did evil, and Nebuchadnezzar came up against him and conquered **Jerusalem**, which obviously means **Jehoiachin** had led Judah in revolt again. **Jehoiachin** and 10,000 people were taken into captivity, among them Ezekiel (**Ezk.** 1: 1-2; 40: 1) and **Mordecai** (**Esth.** 2:5-6). Nebuchadnezzar left **Zedekiah** on the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar was eventually **forced** to sack and destroy Jerusalem. The siege began in 9th year, **10th** month, of **Zedekiah** and ended in his 11th year, 4th month (2 **Ki.** 25: 1ff.). This is said to be Nebuchadnezzar's **19th** year. Since the entire city was destroyed, it is clear that far more than merely 832 persons were taken into captivity. The Lamentations of Jeremiah certainly is not about only 832 persons! Jeremiah **52:29** is speaking of **people** who were taken captive the year before, during the siege. These were people who managed to **get** out of the city and

Recent commentators routinely assume that the 7th year of

surrender to the Babylonians. They, or people like them, are referred to in 2 Kings 25:11 as “the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon.”

What I have just described is a completely coherent picture of events, which requires none of the chronological gymnastics **practised** by modern commentators. **There** is no

need to reconcile any contradictions, because there are no contradictions. Here is a chart delineating events as they probably happened. I have used information from **Babylonian** records as provided by the Fully Revised edition of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1986), article on Nebuchadnezzar.

**608 BC** Death of Josiah fighting for Babylon

Three month rule of **Jehoahaz**

Accession of **Jehoiakim**

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 1.** This is the first year of the 70 years of Babylonian world dominance spoken of in Jer. 25.

**607 BC**

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 2.**

**606 BC**

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 3.**

**605 BC**

**2nd Quarter:** Egyptians defeated at **Carchemish**.

**3rd Quarter: Nebuchadnezzar** conquers Palestine and Jerusalem. Daniel and **Jehoiakim** are sent back to Babylon. Daniel's 1st (partial) year of education begins. Nebuchadnezzar hears of father's death and flies to Babylon.

**4th Quarter:** Beginning of 4th year of **Jehoiakim**. By Jewish reckoning, Nebuchadnezzar's first year begins. Prophecy of Jeremiah 25. Daniel's 2nd year of education, corresponding with Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year of rule. **Jehoiakim** serves Nebuchadnezzar this whole year, but it is evidently not counted as one of the three years he served, probably because the revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's **rule** as God's servant was not given through Jeremiah until after **this** year began.

**604 BC**

**1st Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar completes conquest of Palestine.

**2nd Quarter:** By Babylonian reckoning, Nebuchadnezzar's first year begins here.

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 5** begins. Nebuchadnezzar **2J** (2 by Jewish reckoning). Daniel's 3rd year of education begins. **First** full year of **Jehoiakim's** servitude.

**603 BC**

**2nd Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **2B** (2 by Babylonian reckoning).

**3rd Quarter:** Daniel's graduation. Daniel interprets dreams and is elevated to power (Dan. 2).

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 6** begins. Nebuchadnezzar **3J**. Second year of **Jehoiakim's** servitude.

**602 BC**

**2nd Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **3B**.

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 7** begins. Nebuchadnezzar **4J**. Third year of **Jehoiakim's** servitude.

**601 BC**

**2nd Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **4B**

**4th Quarter:** **Jehoiakim 8**. Nebuchadnezzar **5J**. Nebuchadnezzar stalemated by Egypt (in December). **Jehoiakim** revolts.

**600 BC**

**2nd Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **5B**

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 9**. Nebuchadnezzar **6J**

**599 BC**

**2nd Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **6B**

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 10**. Nebuchadnezzar **7J**. Nebuchadnezzar invades Palestine; takes 3023 Jews captive; Jeremiah **52:28**.

**598 BC**

**1st Quarter:** End of Palestinian campaign. 3023 Jews taken captive to Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year.

**2nd Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **7B**

**4th Quarter: Jehoiakim 11**. Nebuchadnezzar **8J**. **Jehoiakim** dies. **Jehoiachin** becomes king (December 9; 2 Chron. 36:9), rebels against Nebuchadnezzar. Siege of Jerusalem (begins December)

597 BC

**1st Quarter:** Completion of Siege (Mar. 16). End of Jehoiachin's 3-month reign. 10,CM)O taken captive, including Ezekiel (Jeremiah **52:29**; Ezekiel 1:1 -3). **Zedekiah** put on throne. (Biblical records say this is in Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year, while Babylonian records put it in his 7th year because his 8th year does not begin until spring.)

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 8B

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 1. Nebuchadnezzar 9J

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592 BC

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 13B

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 6. Nebuchadnezzar 14J

591 BC

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 14B

3rd **Quarter:**

6th month, 5th **day:** God abandons Temple, Ezekiel 8: **1ff.**

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 7. Nebuchadnezzar **15J**. First year of God's desolation of the Temple.

590 BC

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **15B**

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 8. Nebuchadnezzar **16J**

589 BC

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 16B

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 9. Nebuchadnezzar 17J

588 BC

1st **Quarter:**

10th month, 10th day: Investiture of Jerusalem begins, (Jan. 15). This begins God's "indignation against the cities of Judah" that surrounded Jerusalem, **Zechariah** 1:12.

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar **17B**

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 10. Nebuchadnezzar 18J

587 BC -832 Jews taken captive during siege; Jeremiah **52:29**.

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 18B

4th **Quarter:** **Zedekiah** 11. Nebuchadnezzar 19J

586 BC

2nd **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 19B

3rd **Quarter:**

4th month, 9th &y: Fall of Jerusalem (July 18).

5th month, 7th-10th day: Burning of Jerusalem and Temple (Aug. 12-15). (Note that even by Babylonian reckoning, Jerusalem fell in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year.)

4th **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 20J.

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583 BC

4th **Quarter:** Nebuchadnezzar 23J. Sometime during this year, 745 Jews taken into captivity; Jeremiah **52:30**.