

Answer to Dr. Leslie McFall's Critique of 'The Time of the End'

Part 5 – Jerusalem in Ruins for Seventy Years

By Tim Warner | September 2014

In his 82-page expanded critique of my book,¹ Dr. McFall put the bulk of his efforts into emphasizing that my chronology does not line up with the secular chronology of Parker and Dubberstein. This secular chronology is based on Ptolemy's Canon,² a list of kings and the lengths of their reigns used by the ancient astronomer, Ptolemy of Alexandria. The secular chronology puts the first year of Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BC³ and the first year of Cyrus in 538 BC.⁴ Both of these dates present a significant conflict with the biblical record.

Cyrus & 538 BC

If Jesus was crucified in AD 30, and if Cyrus' decree in his first year was in 538 BC, this leaves 567 years from Cyrus to the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet, Daniel's seventy-weeks prophecy gives sixty-nine "weeks" of years between the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the cutting off of the Messiah. This assumes that the decree of Cyrus in his first year⁵ is the "command" mentioned in Daniel's vision.⁶ That works out to 492 years (if Jubilee years are intercalated) or 483 years (if Jubilee years are not intercalated).⁷ There is either a 75 or 84 year discrepancy between the Bible and the secular chronology.⁸ In *part 4* of my response⁹ to Dr. McFall, I analyzed his attempt to resolve the huge disparity between Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy and the chronology of Parker & Dubberstein. He attempted to harmonize P&D with Daniel by reinterpreting the "weeks" as merely "years" (instead of weeks of years), and claiming that "*Messiah the*

¹ http://lmf12.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/warner-critique_2ndedit1.pdf

² "The general basis for the chronology of the period here treated is furnished by the Ptolemaic Canon." Parker & Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC – AD 75*, 1956, Fourth printing, 1971, Brown University, p. 10.

³ P&D p. 27

⁴ P&D p. 29

⁵ Ezra 1:1

⁶ For proof of this, see pp. 295-309 of *The Time of the End*.

⁷ This assumes that the trigger for the seventy-weeks prophecy – the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem – was the decree of Cyrus in his first year (Ezra 1:1). For proof of this, see *The Time of the End*, pp. 293-309. The reader should note that Dr. McFall and I agree that the "command to restore and to build Jerusalem" in Daniel's prophecy must be the decree of Cyrus.

⁸ Other Young-Earth Creationists have made essentially the same claim. Creation Ministries International (creation.com) has 2 articles on this subject, one by the late Dr. Charles V. Taylor, *The Times of the 'Great Kings' of Persia*, http://creation.com/images/pdfs/tj/j03_1/j03_1_128-134.pdf, and one by David Austin, *Is Darius, the king of Ezra 6:14–15, the same king as the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7:1?* <http://creation.com/darius-is-artaxerxes>

⁹ http://www.answersinrevelation.org/chronology/4_Daniel.pdf

Prince” who was to be “*cut off, but not for Himself*” was not Jesus, but Nehemiah. His argument is consistent with claims of unbelieving Jewish interpreters, but is totally inconsistent with virtually all Christian interpretations. The fact the secular chronology cannot be harmonized with Daniel’s seventy-weeks prophecy without doing violence to the Scriptures is sufficient reason for Christians to reject the secular chronology.

Nebuchadnezzar & 604 BC

In *part 5*, we now turn our attention to the period just before Cyrus, from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Cyrus. The plain reading of Scripture indicates that Jerusalem, the Temple, and the cities of Judah lay in total ruins, without inhabitants (no one farming the land), for a full seventy years. Yet the chronology of Parker & Dubberstein allows for only forty-seven years for Jerusalem’s desolation.¹⁰

In order to reconcile the Bible with the secular chronology, most modern Christian chronologists follow the example of Ussher in dating the seventy years of Jerusalem’s “desolation”¹¹ from Nebuchadnezzar’s first year, nineteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. On the other hand, my chronology requires the seventy years of Jeremiah’s prophecy to begin with the total destruction of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year and end with the return from exile authorized by the decree of Cyrus in his first year.

Yet, even if Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy is counted from Nebuchadnezzar’s first year, the chronology of Parker & Dubberstein will not fit the Bible. P&D allow only sixty-six years from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Cyrus (604 BC – 538 BC) with the years of the Neo-Babylonian kings’ reigns as follows: Nebuchadnezzar-43; Amel-Marduk-2; Nergal-Shar-Usur-4; Nabunaid-17 = 66.¹² This is four years short of the seventy years of Jeremiah’s prophecy even if we count from Nebuchadnezzar’s first year, nineteen years before he destroyed Jerusalem.¹³

¹⁰ P&D places the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (when the Temple was destroyed – see Jer. 52:12-16) in 586 BC, and the overthrow of Babylon as 539 BC.

¹¹ Jer. 25:8-14

¹² P&D pp. 27-29

¹³ McFall and others attempt to work around this problem by counting a three-year reign of Darius the Mede prior to the “*first year of Cyrus*” when he issued his decree ending the seventy-year exile. However, Jeremiah stated plainly that the Babylonian king would be punished after the seventy years were completed, not after sixty-seven years were completed: “... *when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation*” (Jer 25:12). Daniel explained that Belshazzar was killed by the Medes and Persians the very night he saw the handwriting on the wall. Thus, the reign of Darius the Mede cannot be placed within the seventy years. This is proof that Ptolemy’s Canon and the chronology of Parker & Dubberstein are at least three years off for this period.

To understand the errors of chronologists who force Scripture to align the chronology of the Bible with Ptolemy's Canon, it is helpful to briefly reconstruct the events leading to the Babylonian exile.

The Geo-Political Powers and Alliances

The greatest enemy of Judah was the Assyrians. The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians during the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah, leaving only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. Eight years later, the king of Assyria attacked and defeated the fortified cities of Judah, and then besieged Jerusalem. *"Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, 'I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.'* And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria."¹⁴ However, the siege of Jerusalem continued. Sennacherib taunted Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem. In great distress, Hezekiah put on sackcloth and went to the Temple of God to pray for deliverance. God heard Hezekiah's prayer, and sent the Angel of the Lord to wipe out 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian army surrounding Jerusalem. When Sennacherib retreated back to Assyria, he was assassinated by his sons. His son, Esarhaddon, then took the throne of Assyria.¹⁵

After the miraculous defeat of the Assyrian army in the siege of Jerusalem, king Hezekiah became sick. Isaiah the prophet told him to set his house in order because he was going to die. However, after weeping before the Lord, God sent Isaiah back to tell Hezekiah that He had given him fifteen more years. *"Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David."'"*¹⁶

Shortly after Hezekiah's healing and God's promise to protect Jerusalem from the Assyrians for fifteen more years, Hezekiah became very friendly with the Babylonians. The greatest threat to the Assyrian Empire was the rising power of Babylon. Apparently, Hezekiah was familiar with the concept that "the enemy of my enemy is

¹⁴ 2 Kings 18:14-16

¹⁵ 2 Kings 19

¹⁶ 2 Kings 20:5-6

my friend." *"At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures — the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory — all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, 'What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?' So Hezekiah said, 'They came from a far country, from Babylon.' And he said, 'What have they seen in your house?' So Hezekiah answered, 'They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.' Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD: "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left," says the LORD. "And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."* So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, *'The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!'* For he said, *'Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?'*"¹⁷ Hezekiah enjoyed a friendly relationship with the Babylonians for the remainder of his reign.

After Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh reigned in Judah. During Manasseh's twenty-second year, the Assyrians invaded Samaria and completely crushed the remnant of the northern tribes of Israel.¹⁸ After this, *"the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen. Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters."*¹⁹ However, Manasseh repented before God in his captivity, and God brought him back to Jerusalem, restoring him as king.

Josiah – the last godly king of Judah (31 years)

Manasseh's son, Amon, reigned only two years in Jerusalem before he was assassinated by his own servants. Josiah, Amon's eight-year old son, was made king in his place. Josiah was the last godly king of Judah. Because of his reforms, God promised to delay the judgment that Isaiah had prophesied upon Jerusalem until after his death.²⁰ In the thirteenth year of Josiah,²¹ Jeremiah was called as God's prophet. He began to announce the impending destruction of Jerusalem during the remaining eighteen years of Josiah's

¹⁷ 2 Kings 20:12-19

¹⁸ Sixty-five years earlier Isaiah had prophesied to Ahaz, *"Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, So that it will not be a people."* (Isa. 7:8)

¹⁹ 2 Chron. 33:10-11

²⁰ 2 Kings 22

²¹ Jer. 1:1

reign, and through the eleven years of Jehoiakim, and the eleven years of Zedekiah²² – a total of forty years of warnings under Jeremiah.

Yet the constant threat from Assyria to the north was never far from the king Josiah's mind. News came that the Assyrians were besieging the Hittite city of Carchemish by the Euphrates River to the north. *"In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him."*²³ No doubt, Josiah thought that if Carchemish fell to the Assyrians, they would march south and take Jerusalem also. So, Josiah's army tried to stop Pharaoh Necho's northward advance to assist the Assyrians. Upon seeing Josiah's interference in his northern advance, Pharaoh Necho sent messengers to Josiah warning him not to meddle. *"What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain from meddling with God, who is with me, lest He destroy you."* Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. *So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo.*²⁴ In this battle, Josiah was shot with an arrow. The armies of Judah immediately retreated back to Jerusalem where Josiah died of his wounds in Jerusalem.

Jehoahaz – captured by Pharaoh Necho (3 months)

Yet, Pharaoh Necho remembered Judah's interference. After Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, was installed as king of Judah, Pharaoh Necho returned to subjugate the kingdom of Judah. After Jehoahaz had reigned only three months, *"Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Pharaoh took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he died there."*²⁵ Thus, Josiah's mistake brought the heavy hand of the Egyptians upon Judah.

Jehoiakim – Vassal of Pharaoh Necho (8 years – years 1-8 of his 11 years)

*"So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho."*²⁶ Jehoiakim remained a vassal king of Pharaoh Necho for the first eight years of his eleven-year reign.²⁷

²² 2 Kings 22:1

²³ 2 Kings 23:29

²⁴ 2 Chron. 35:21-22

²⁵ 2 Kings 23:33-34

²⁶ 2 Kings 23:35

²⁷ 2 Kings 23:36

By this time, the Babylonians had gained many victories over the Assyrians, whose empire was collapsing. In Jehoiakim's fourth year as vassal king of Necho, prince Nebuchadnezzar was sent by his father Nabopolassar to confront Necho, the Assyrian ally. Jeremiah explained: *"Concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, which was by the River Euphrates in Carchemish, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah."*²⁸

According to Josephus, Nebuchadnezzar's victory at Carchemish allowed him to take from Pharaoh Necho all of Syria. However, Nebuchadnezzar did not take Judea at this time, which remained under the control of Pharaoh Necho.

*"Now in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, one whose name was Nebuchadnezzar took the government over the Babylonians, who at the same time went up with a great army to the city Carchemish, which was at Euphrates, upon a resolution he had taken to fight with Neco king of Egypt, under whom all Syria then was. And when Neco understood the intention of the king of Babylon, and that this expedition was made against him, he did not despise his attempt, but made haste with a great band of men to Euphrates to defend himself from Nebuchadnezzar; and when they had joined battle, he was beaten, and lost many ten thousands [of his soldiers] in the battle. So the king of Babylon passed over Euphrates, and took all Syria, as far as Pelusium, **excepting Judea.**"*²⁹

While Nebuchadnezzar was routing the Egyptian army at Carchemish, his father, Nabopolassar, died in Babylon. When Necho retreated from Syria, Nebuchadnezzar went immediately back to Babylon as a victorious warrior to assume the throne of Babylon.

Jehoiakim – Vassal of Nebuchadnezzar (3 years – years 9-11 of his 11 years)

Four years after assuming the throne, Nebuchadnezzar came up to Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's eighth year, ordering him to become his vassal instead of Pharaoh Necho's vassal, at which time Jehoiakim complied.

"But when Nebuchadnezzar had already reigned four years, which was the eighth of Jehoiakim's government over the Hebrews, the king of Babylon made an expedition with mighty forces against the Jews, and required tribute of Jehoiakim, and threatened upon

²⁸ Jer. 46:1-2

²⁹ Josephus, Antiquities, Bk. X, ch. vi

his refusal to make war against him. He was afrighted at his threatening, and bought his peace with money, and brought the tribute he was ordered to bring for three years."³⁰

The book of Kings records this as follows: *"In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon **came up**, and Jehoiakim **became** his vassal for three years."*³¹ These were the last three years of Jehoiakim's eleven-year reign.

At the end of Jehoiakim's reign, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Josephus explains: *"But on the third year, upon hearing that the king of the Babylonians made an expedition against the Egyptians, he did not pay his tribute; yet was he disappointed of his hope, for the Egyptians durst not fight at this time."*³² Nebuchadnezzar then besieged Jerusalem, taking Jehoiakim prisoner. The book of Chronicles adds: *"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon."*³³ However, before he could be transferred to Babylon, Jehoiakim died. Jeremiah prophesied that *"his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost."*³⁴ And again: *"Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: 'They shall not lament for him, Saying, "Alas, my brother!" or "Alas, my sister!" They shall not lament for him, Saying, "Alas, master!" or "Alas, his glory!" He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey, dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'*"³⁵ This indignity was done to him by Nebuchadnezzar.

Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) – Nebuchadnezzar's vassal (3 months)

After Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Jehoiakim, his eighteen-year-old³⁶ son, Jehoiachin (also called "Jeconiah"³⁷ and "Coniah"³⁸), became Nebuchadnezzar's vassal king. However, soon after departing Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar changed his mind about the new vassal king, perhaps out of concern that he might be easily swayed by advisors to revolt like his father did. So he returned to the siege of Jerusalem after only three months, at the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year.³⁹ *"And Nebuchadnezzar king*

³⁰ Josephus, Antiquities, Bk. X, ch. vi

³¹ 2 Kings 24:1-2

³² Josephus, Book X, ch. vi

³³ 2 Chron. 36:6-7

³⁴ Jer. 36:30

³⁵ Jer. 22:18-19

³⁶ 2 Kings 24:8, According to 2 Chron. 36:9, Jehoiachin was eight years old.

³⁷ 1 Chron. 3:16, Jer. 24:1, Matt. 1:11-12

³⁸ Jer. 22:24,28; Jer. 37:1

³⁹ Nebuchadnezzar bound Jehoiakim in the ninth month of Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year, and carried off 3,023 captives. This was the *first* deportation (Jer. 52:28). At that time he installed Jehoiachin as his vassal. The three months that Jehoiachin reigned were the last three months of Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year – Tevet, Shevat, Adar.

of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his [Nebuchadnezzar's] reign, took him prisoner. And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."⁴⁰ The first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the death of Jehoiakim took place in the ninth month of Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year. Three months later, at the beginning of his eighth year, Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive along with thousands more.⁴¹ Ezekiel was among these captives. He dated his prophecies by the "year of King Jehoiachin's captivity,"⁴² calling it "our captivity."⁴³ Daniel and his three friends were also among these captives.

The book of Daniel begins with the following words: "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god."⁴⁴ Chronologists seize on Daniel's statement in an attempt to begin the "seventy years" of Jerusalem's desolation prophesied by Jeremiah nineteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem. This is done because the secular chronology for the Babylonian period is nineteen years shorter than the biblical chronology. In doing so, they must invent a siege of Jerusalem and deportation of Daniel the year before Nebuchadnezzar engaged in battle with Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish, which was "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim."⁴⁵ Yet no such siege of Jerusalem is recorded in history, nor was such a siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar possible at this time. Nebuchadnezzar was engaged elsewhere. We saw earlier that when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish and took Syria from the Egyptians, he did not take Judah according to Josephus. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar returned and ended Jehoiachin's reign "at the turn of the year" (Nisan) (2 Chron. 36:10), which began "the eighth year of his reign" (2 Kings 24:12).

⁴⁰ 2 Kings 24:10-16

⁴¹ Jer. 52:28

⁴² Ezek. 1:2

⁴³ Ezek. 33:21; Ezek. 40:1

⁴⁴ Dan. 1:1-2

⁴⁵ Jer. 46:2

immediately returned to Babylon to assume the throne. It is simply impossible to reconcile a siege of Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's third year with the rest of the biblical data or secular history. The problem is a misunderstanding of Daniel.

The ancient Jewish *Seder Olam* explains that when Daniel referred to "the third year" of Jehoiakim, it was his third (last) year as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal. "So why does Scripture say in Jehoiakim's year three? It must mean the year three of his revolt."⁴⁶

That the siege mentioned by Daniel was the end of Jehoiakim's eleven-year reign (his third year as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal-king over Jerusalem) is proven by comparing what Daniel said occurred at that time with the parallel accounts in Kings and Chronicles. According to Daniel, during this siege Nebuchadnezzar looted the Temple. "... the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god."⁴⁷ This occurred when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and Jehoiakim was bound in bronze fetters.

2 Chron. 36:5-8

5 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God. 6 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. 7 **Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.**

Daniel placed the looting of the Temple in Jehoiakim's third year. 2 Kings places the looting of the Temple when Jehoiachin was taken captive just three months after Jehoiakim was killed.

2 Kings 24:10-16

10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. 12 Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner.

13 And **he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD**

⁴⁶ Seder Olam, translation and commentary by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, p. 216

⁴⁷ Dan. 1:1-2

***had said.** 14 Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 15 And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. 16 All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.*

Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, had just been installed as king only three months earlier. The armies of Nebuchadnezzar were still encamped around the city. Yet, the new king was taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar, who also looted the Temple of its valuables. Notice the clause, "as the Lord had said." This referred to Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah that the king of Babylon would loot the Temple and the king's house, as well as take nobles captive who would become eunuchs in Babylon.

Isa. 39:5-7

*5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 7 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be **eunuchs** in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"*

It is highly unlikely that there was a previous similar looting, and previous taking of captives by Nebuchadnezzar. Also, when Jeremiah was describing the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the taking of all of the remaining Temple valuables in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, he recognized only one previous looting of the Temple treasures when Jehoiachin was taken captive, along with the "nobles."

Jer. 27:19-22

*19 "For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, concerning the Sea, concerning the carts, and concerning **the remainder of the vessels that remain in this city**, 20 which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take, **when he carried away captive Jeconiah** the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and **all the nobles** of Judah and Jerusalem — 21 yes, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning **the vessels that remain** in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem: 22 'They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them,' says the LORD. 'Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.'"*

Jeremiah noted that “*the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem*” had been taken captive along with Jehoiachin. Daniel was among these “nobles” who became eunuchs in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

Dan. 1:3-5

*3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and **some of the nobles**, 4 young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. 6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 To them the chief of the **eunuchs** gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.*

It is therefore clear that Daniel and his three friends were taken at the same time as Ezekiel and the new king, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), and his mother.⁴⁸ Daniel called this “*the third year of Jehoiakim*” because it was his third year as Nebuchadnezzar’s vassal, the year of his rebellion and his death.

Some have argued that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image which Daniel interpreted was in his second year⁴⁹ after assuming the throne in Babylon. Therefore Daniel had to be in Babylon from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign in Babylon. However, Daniel dated Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom from his overthrow of Judah and taking captive king Jehoiachin. Daniel was not concerned with when a particular king began to reign in his own country, or assumed the throne upon the death of his predecessor. Rather, the reigns of foreign kings were given in relationship to their conquering Judah and gaining sovereignty over the Jews. This principle can be

⁴⁸ McFall claims that Daniel was taken captive when Jehoiakim first became Nebuchadnezzar’s vassal (counting Jehoiakim’s third year of Dan. 1:1 from Jehoiakim’s third year as Necho’s vassal). He then attempts to date the “seventy years” of Jeremiah’s prophecy from this date. However, there is no historical evidence of any siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the year he defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish on the Euphrates River. Secular history indicates that immediately after the battle, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to assume the throne vacated by his father’s death. There is no time for a siege of Jerusalem that year. Nor would a siege be necessary, since Jerusalem was at that time under the control of Pharaoh Necho, and was not self-governing. Jehoiakim and the armies of Jerusalem would not have resisted Nebuchadnezzar if such a siege took place, because Nebuchadnezzar would simply free them from their subjugation to Pharaoh Necho. They would have surrendered immediately to Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, the “siege” referred to in Daniel 1:1 was in the third year that Jehoiakim was vassal of Nebuchadnezzar.

⁴⁹ Daniel 2:1

demonstrated with the reign of Cyrus who was king of Persia long before he conquered Babylonia. Yet, Scripture dates the first year of Cyrus from when he defeated Babylon, when he became sovereign over the Jews in captivity. This was also the year of his decree ending the exile.⁵⁰ Yet this was twenty years after he assumed the throne of Persia. It is called the “*first year of Cyrus*” because it was the first year that he gained sovereignty over Judah and the exiles by defeating the Babylonians. We should not be surprised, then, that Daniel counted the “*second year of Nebuchadnezzar*” from his first siege and overthrow of Judah and taking Jehoiachin captive.

Zedekiah – Nebuchadnezzar’s vassal king (11 years)

When Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) along with Daniel, Ezekiel, and a host of other captives, he appointed Jehoiachin’s uncle (Jehoiakim’s brother) as his vassal king, changing his name to Zedekiah.⁵¹ Nebuchadnezzar forced him to swear by YHVH that he would remain subject to Babylon and not rebel as Jehoiakim had done. Yet, Zedekiah “*did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel.*”⁵²

It was not very long after becoming Nebuchadnezzar’s vassal that Zedekiah rebelled against him. Jeremiah informs us of a vision he had at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, intended to be implemented later when Zedekiah became king. In the vision God told Jeremiah to fashion “*bonds and yokes*” and put them around his neck. Then, when king Zedekiah received messengers from the surrounding nations, Jeremiah was to send the emissaries back to their kings with the “*bonds and yokes*” along with the following message:

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel — thus you shall say to your masters: ‘I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son’s son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them. And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,’ says the

⁵⁰ 2 Chron. 36:22 & Ezra 1:1

⁵¹ 2 Kings 24:17

⁵² 2 Chron. 36:12-14

LORD, 'with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, "You shall not serve the king of Babylon." For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish. But the nations that bring their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let them remain in their own land,' says the LORD, 'and they shall till it and dwell in it.'"⁵³

While it is true that Jeremiah was told to make the bonds and yokes at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, he was also told to send them to the kings of those nations by their messengers sent to King Zedekiah. Therefore, the "bonds and yokes" prophecy of Jeremiah to the surrounding nations commenced at the beginning of Zedekiah's eleven-year reign. At the same time, Jeremiah "spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live! Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD has spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?"⁵⁴

The following chapters in Jeremiah detail how that Zedekiah refused to listen to Jeremiah's command from God to submit to Nebuchadnezzar. Instead, false prophets arose who claimed that the recently taken exiles would be soon released, and that Nebuchadnezzar would not return to Jerusalem. Jeremiah responded by sending a letter to the captives in Babylon, who had been taken along with the boy-king, Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the rest. In that letter Jeremiah told them to prepare for a long exile. "After seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place."⁵⁵ It is clear from this letter that the seventy years could only be counted after the beginning of Zedekiah's reign at the earliest, not eight years earlier when Nebuchadnezzar first assumed the throne of Babylon.

We do not know exactly when Zedekiah first rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. However, it was certainly early in his eleven-year reign. In the ninth year, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem a second time. The siege lasted until the eleventh year.⁵⁶ In the fourth month (June/July on our calendar), the city wall was

⁵³ Jer. 27:4-11

⁵⁴ Jer. 27:12-13

⁵⁵ Jer. 29:10

⁵⁶ 2 Kings 25:1

breached, and Zedekiah fled. He was quickly captured, his sons killed, and his eyes put out because he did not keep his oath to Nebuchadnezzar.⁵⁷

2 Kings 25:8-13

8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. 10 And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around.

11 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest of the people who remained in the city and the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, with the rest of the multitude. 12 But the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers.

Of the few poor farmers left to farm the land by Nebuchadnezzar, Gedaliah was made vassal governor. However, after the Babylonian armies left, he was assassinated by Ishmael, a zealot, who then fled. The remaining Jews were so afraid that Nebuchadnezzar would return and kill them all that they all fled to Egypt, leaving the land of Judah completely vacant without anyone to farm. This desolate condition lasted for a full seventy years until the first year of Cyrus according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and according to the interpretations of Jeremiah's prophecy by Daniel, Ezra, and Zechariah.

Testimonies to the 70 Years of Jerusalem's Desolation

I. The Prophecies of Jeremiah

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (the same year that Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho at Carchemish), Jeremiah was given the following message from God – a final opportunity to repent before they would come under God's judgment.

Jer. 36:1-3

1 Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: 2 "Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. 3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon

⁵⁷ 2 Kings 25:4-7

them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Jeremiah dictated to Baruch his scribe, who wrote the scroll including a summary of all of God's threats against Judah throughout all of Jeremiah's years of prophesying. He then gave the scroll to Baruch, ordering him to go to the Temple and read it in the hearing of all the people gathered for the Day of Atonement.⁵⁸ God was providing Judah the opportunity to repent and be spared the prophesied judgment. *"It may be that they will present their supplication before the LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way."*⁵⁹ Baruch did so, reading the scroll *"in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house, in the hearing of all the people."*⁶⁰

Fourteen months later, a fast was proclaimed for repentance of the people.

Jer. 36:9-10

9 Now it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem. 10 Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house, in the hearing of all the people.

It is important to note that God gave all of Judah an opportunity to repent and be spared the judgment that He had planned for them. In Jehoiakim's fifth year, the people responded well and a fast was declared. It is therefore clear that God's judgment against Judah and Jerusalem had not begun by the fifth year of Jehoiakim. This fact overthrows the chronology of Ussher and others (including McFall) which place an invasion and captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in Jehoiakim's third or fourth year. There was no such invasion of Judah that year – the year of the battle of Carchemish. God was still allowing Judah a window of opportunity for repentance.

After the fast in the ninth month of Jehoiakim's fifth year, Jeremiah's scroll was read before of an assembly of nobles and princes who were still in Jerusalem (they had not already been taken captive). *"Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, that they looked in fear from one to another, and said to Baruch, 'We will surely tell the king of all these*

⁵⁸ Jeremiah commanded Baruch to read the scroll at the Temple *"on the day of fasting,"* which is Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). See Lev. 23:26-32. This was in the seventh month of Jehoiakim's fourth year.

⁵⁹ Jer. 36:7

⁶⁰ Jer. 36:10

words.”⁶¹ Jeremiah and Baruch were then hidden and the scroll was brought in and read before king Jehoiakim. *“Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with a fire burning on the hearth before him. And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe’s knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words.”*⁶² The burning of Jeremiah’s scroll sealed the doom of Jerusalem and Judah. God said: *“I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah all the doom that I have pronounced against them but they did not heed.”*⁶³ It is therefore evident that the judgments threatened upon Judah and Jerusalem could not have been carried out prior to the ninth month of Jehoiakim’s fifth year. It was three years later, in his eighth year, that Jehoiakim became vassal of Nebuchadnezzar for the last three years of his reign.⁶⁴ Yet this switch from being vassal of Pharaoh Necho to becoming vassal of Nebuchadnezzar took place without a fight, as Josephus informs us. *“But when Nebuchadnezzar had already reigned four years, which was the eighth of Jehoiakim’s government over the Hebrews, the king of Babylon made an expedition with mighty forces against the Jews, and required tribute of Jehoiakim, and threatened upon his refusal to make war against him. He was affrighted at his threatening, and bought his peace with money, and brought the tribute he was ordered to bring for three years.”*⁶⁵

At the end of his three years as Nebuchadnezzar’s vassal, Jehoiakim rebelled. Josephus explains: *“But on the third year, upon hearing that the king of the Babylonians made an expedition against the Egyptians, he did not pay his tribute; yet was he disappointed of his hope, for the Egyptians durst not fight at this time.”*⁶⁶ According to Josephus, Nebuchadnezzar then set out to settle the score because of Jehoiakim’s rebellion.

“Now, a little time afterwards, the king of Babylon made an expedition against Jehoiakim, whom he received [into the city], and this out of fear of the foregoing predictions of this prophet, as supposing he should suffer nothing that was terrible, because he neither shut the gates, nor fought against him; yet when he was come into the city, he did not observe the covenants he had made, but he slew such as were in the flower of their age, and such as were of the greatest dignity, together with their king Jehoiakim, whom he commanded to be thrown before the walls, without any burial; and made his son Jehoiachin king of the

⁶¹ Jer. 36:16

⁶² vss. 22-24

⁶³ vs.31

⁶⁴ 2 Kings 24:1

⁶⁵ Josephus, Antiquities, Book X, ch. vi. 1

⁶⁶ Josephus, Antiquities, Book X, ch. vi. 2

country, and of the city: he also took the principal persons in dignity for captives, three thousand in number, and led them away to Babylon; among which was the prophet Ezekiel, who was then but young.”⁶⁷

At this time, Jeremiah saw a vision of two baskets of figs set in front of the Temple. One basket had good figs, and the other rotten figs. This vision was shown to Jeremiah immediately *“after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.”⁶⁸* This was eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem.⁶⁹ It is important to note the date when this parable was given, because it establishes the time when God first announced the *“seventy years”* of desolation for Jerusalem. It was just after Jehoiachin was taken captive, along with Daniel and Ezekiel.

In this parable, the basket of good figs represented those whom Nebuchadnezzar had just taken captive along with Jehoiachin. The captivity of the good figs was to preserve them from the coming destruction of Jerusalem eleven years later. *“Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.”⁷⁰*

However, the rotten figs represented those who remained in Judea along with the new vassal-king, Zedekiah, whom God had appointed to the slaughter when Nebuchadnezzar would return to destroy Jerusalem. *“‘And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad’ — surely thus says the LORD — ‘so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.’”*

⁶⁷ Josephus, Antiquities, Book X, ch. v1, 3

⁶⁸ Jer. 24:1

⁶⁹ Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar at the time he took Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) captive. Zedekiah reigned 11 years before Jerusalem was destroyed, (2 Chron. 36:9-21).

⁷⁰ Jer 24:5-7

Immediately following the parable of the two baskets of figs, Jeremiah reminded the people of the **previous prophecy** in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (8 years earlier, found in Jer. 36). It is important to note that Jeremiah was reminding them of this previous prophecy immediately after explaining the two baskets of figs parable, at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign. Of the previous prophecy, Jeremiah said:

Jer. 25:1-7

1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2 which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: 3 "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. 4 And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. 5 They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. 6 Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.'"

In this former prophecy, God allowed Judah a period of time to repent before God beginning in Jehoiakim's fourth year. If they did so, He would not bring the destruction upon Jerusalem which He had prophesied through Jeremiah, but they would be permitted to remain in the land indefinitely. However, as stated earlier, the following year Jehoiakim destroyed Jeremiah's scroll, thus God concluded that there had been no repentance. Jeremiah continues: *"Yet you have not listened to Me," says the LORD, 'that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.'"*⁷¹ In other words, since God's final warning previously given through Jeremiah in Jehoiakim's fourth year until the taking of the first group of captives (the good figs) along with king Jehoiachin, those seven years⁷² had produced no repentance so that God might withdraw the judgment and spare the desolation of Jerusalem. Consequently, God decreed the seventy-year exile and desolation of Jerusalem at that time – eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jer. 25:8-11

8 "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you have not heard My words [during the previous seven years], 9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the

⁷¹ Jer. 25:7

⁷² Jehoiakim's fifth through eleventh years

north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10 Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.'"

Chronologists like Ussher and McFall (who claim that the total time Jerusalem was in ruins was only about fifty years) make the mistake of beginning the "seventy years" prophecy in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho), thus dating the "seventy years" from that time. However, they have missed three critical points:

1. The pronounced judgment of seventy years is linked by Jeremiah to the total destruction of Jerusalem. God says, "*I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations.*" This did not occur before the complete destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the evacuation of the remaining farmers to Egypt.
2. The prophecy of the "seventy years" was given *after* Judah had first been given seven full years to repent, and after God passed judgment at the end of that period.
3. Nebuchadnezzar did not invade Judah or take any captives when he defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish in Jehoiakim's fourth year (nineteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem). There is no record in the Bible or in secular history of an invasion of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar at that time.⁷³ Josephus wrote that Nebuchadnezzar did not take Judah or Jerusalem at that time.

Consequently, the "seventy years" of desolation prophesied by Jeremiah cannot be dated from Jehoiakim's fourth year, when God was first giving Judah the opportunity to repent. The sentence of "seventy years" of total destruction and desolation was passed when Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was taken captive at the end of Jehoiakim's reign and the beginning of Zedekiah's eleven-year reign. That is when God spoke through

⁷³ Jer. 46:2

Jeremiah with the parable of the two baskets of figs, followed immediately by the prophecy of the “seventy years.”

Some have argued that Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy concerns only the surrounding nations serving Nebuchadnezzar, since the text says, *“these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”* They date this from his defeat of Pharaoh Necho at the Euphrates, when Nebuchadnezzar inherited control of Syria. Yet, it is clear that while Necho was defeated and retreated back to Egypt, neither Judah nor all of the surrounding nations served Nebuchadnezzar during all of the first nineteen years of his reign prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. That Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem twice years after his defeat of Pharaoh Necho proves that Judah did not serve Nebuchadnezzar during all (or even most) of those nineteen years, otherwise those sieges would not have been necessary. Regarding the other nations, Nebuchadnezzar set out to completely subdue them *after* he destroyed Jerusalem.⁷⁴ His siege of Tyre alone lasted thirteen years. That the subduing of all the surrounding nations was to occur after the destruction of Jerusalem is made plain in the following verses. Speaking to the surrounding nations, God said: *“For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth,”* says the LORD of hosts.⁷⁵ Thus, the coming destruction of Jerusalem was to be a sign to the surrounding nations that they were next to fall to Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, they did not all serve Nebuchadnezzar from his first year when he defeated Pharaoh Necho at the Euphrates.

It should also be noted that the Septuagint differs from the Hebrew in Jeremiah 25:11. While the Masoretic Text has *“these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years,”* the Greek text has *“And all the land shall be a desolation; and they [the Jews] shall serve among the Gentiles seventy years.”* The LXX says nothing about the surrounding nations serving Nebuchadnezzar for the seventy years, but attributes the seventy years exclusively to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah being desolate. As will be demonstrated later in this paper, the LXX reading is the true reading because both Daniel and Ezra interpret the seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah as applying to the **total desolation** of Jerusalem.

That the seventy-year prophecy was only given after the death of Jehoiakim (after Jehoiachin and the “good figs” were taken captive eleven years before the destruction of

⁷⁴ Ezekiel prophesied of these nations being defeated by Nebuchadnezzar while he was besieging Jerusalem in the 9th – 11th years of Jehoiachin’s captivity, when he totally destroyed Jerusalem (Ezekiel 24 – 32). Therefore, those nations did not serve Nebuchadnezzar for the 19 years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁷⁵ Jer. 25:29

Jerusalem) is confirmed by Jeremiah's letter to the "good figs" who were captives in Babylon.

Jer. 29:1-7,10-14

1 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive — to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2 (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) 3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying, 4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters — that you may be increased there, and not diminished. ... 10 For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Notice the promise of returning back to Jerusalem, a promise first spoken concerning the "good figs" in Jeremiah 24. This letter was sent to the captives immediately after Jeremiah had prophesied the seventy years of total destruction for Jerusalem in chapter 25. The seventy years could not begin seven years before these were taken captive, as the shorter chronology requires. All seventy years must have elapsed after the beginning of the captivity, specifically after the arrival of the remaining "bad figs" in Babylon.

The only way to interpret Jeremiah's prophecy without doing violence to the text is to place all seventy years after the destruction of Jerusalem, concluding with the return from exile under Cyrus.⁷⁶

II. The Interpretation of Ezra (2 Chronicles)

No doubt the clearest proof that Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years spanned the entire time from the destruction of Jerusalem until the return from exile under Cyrus is found in the last verses of 2 Chronicles, most likely written by Ezra.

2 Chron. 36:15-21

15 "And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

17 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. 19 Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. 20 And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years."

This passage describes the rising anger of God as He sent many prophets to warn His people, yet they mocked and scoffed at His prophets until His wrath reached a point of no other remedy than to carry out all of His threats. Threatening to destroy the Temple began when God appeared to Solomon the second time after completing the Temple and his own house.

1 Kings 9:1-9

1 And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do, 2 that the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3 And the

⁷⁶ The conclusion of the seventy years is stated in Jer. 25:11 when the king of Babylon would be punished (defeated by Cyrus), and also in Jer. 29:10 when the "good figs" would return to Jerusalem.

LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. 4 Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, 5 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.' 6 But **if you or your sons** at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then **I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight.** Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8 And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' 9 Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought all this calamity on them.'"

2 Chronicles 36:19-20 graphically describes the total destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away to Babylon of the survivors. However, verse 21 says that this destruction of Jerusalem was "to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." This is proof that Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years did not concern the surrounding nations, but rather the desolation of Jerusalem (as in the LXX).

But more importantly, this statement acknowledges the fulfillment of God's threat to Israel through Moses if they failed to observe the Sabbatical years and Jubilee years specified in Leviticus 25. If they failed to obey these regulations and worshipped idols this is what God said He would do:

Lev. 26:32-35

32 **I will bring the land to desolation**, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. 33 **I will scatter you among the nations** and draw out a sword after you; **your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.** 34 **Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.** 35 As long as it lies desolate it shall rest — for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths **when you dwelt in it.**

God's initial threat concerning the Sabbatical year was to drive them all out of the land so that the land could enjoy its "Sabbaths." The "Sabbaths" for the land meant no

farming at all. It is critical to observe that the land could not enjoy its “Sabbaths” as long as the Israelites were still in the land farming it. This passage and Jeremiah 25 are the two Scriptures in view in 2 Chronicles 36:21. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and took the remaining people captive *“to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.”* Since according to Moses the land could not enjoy her Sabbaths until the people were completely driven out into their enemies’ lands and the cities lay waste, and since the land enjoyed her Sabbaths for seventy years, the only conclusion possible is that the seventy years began after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and all of the remaining Jews were evacuated from the land.⁷⁷

III. The Interpretation of Daniel

Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9 was made at the exact time that the seventy years expired. An angel was dispatched to Daniel to inform him that the decree of Cyrus ending the exile and desolation of Jerusalem had just been issued. *“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans — 2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood **by the books** the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”*⁷⁸

When Cyrus defeated Belshazzar the very night that Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall, he immediately installed Darius the Mede as the local ruler of Babylon. At that time Daniel understood *“by the books”* the meaning of Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy. Notice that “books” is plural. This means that Daniel was referring to more than just Jeremiah’s book. The second “book” was the Torah, specifically Leviticus 25-26 which states the penalty for not observing the Sabbaticals for the land to rest – being driven from the land and the cities laid waste so that the land could enjoy its Sabbaths. The third “book” no doubt contained God’s threat to Solomon that he would destroy the House he had built, and drive the people from the land of Israel if Solomon or his sons did not walk in the ways of God. Thus, Daniel arrived at exactly the same conclusion as Ezra (2 Chronicles), by comparing Jeremiah 25 to Leviticus 25-26. Notice also that according to Daniel, the seventy years were for *“the desolations of Jerusalem,”* in agreement with the Septuagint version of Jeremiah 25:11, contrary to the Masoretic Hebrew version.

⁷⁷ It is important to note that Jerusalem was destroyed in the 5th month (Av) of Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year. Two months later, in Tishri, the few remaining Jews fled to Egypt, and the whole land was empty of Jews.

⁷⁸ Dan. 9:1-2

That Daniel understood the seventy years of Jeremiah's prophecy to concern the total destruction and ruin of Jerusalem is also evident from his prayer of repentance for his own people. Just as 2 Chronicles 36 speaks of the kings of Judah scoffing at God's prophets sent to warn them, so also Daniel repents on their behalf. *"Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land."⁷⁹ ... We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets."⁸⁰*

That Daniel had been studying Leviticus 25-26 in coming to his conclusion concerning Jeremiah's prophecy is clear from what follows in his prayer. *"Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; **therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us,** because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. **As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us;** yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth."⁸¹*

That the seventy years of "desolation" concerned the destruction of Jerusalem is also evident in what follows. Daniel pleaded with God to have mercy on his city, Jerusalem. *"O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, **let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain;** because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on **Your sanctuary, which is desolate.** O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and **see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name;** for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, **for Your city** and Your people are called by Your name."⁸²*

Observe that Daniel referred to the current state of the Temple as "desolate" and to Jerusalem as "desolations." Previously Daniel said he understood from the books that God would *"accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."* It is therefore obvious that "desolations" referred to the current state of Jerusalem – ruins without inhabitant.

⁷⁹ Dan. 9:6-7

⁸⁰ Dan. 9:10

⁸¹ Dan 9:11-14

⁸² Dan. 9:16-19

Why was Daniel praying and repenting for his people in the first year of Darius, which was also the first year of Cyrus, the seventieth year since Jerusalem had become desolate? It is because he had read the letter of Jeremiah to the “good figs” (including Daniel and Ezekiel) who had been sent to Babylon eleven years before its destruction for their own protection. Here is what God had promised to them through Jeremiah.

Jer. 29:10-14

*10 For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and **cause you to return to this place.** 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 **Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.** 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and **I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.***

In the seventieth year, Daniel set his heart to do what Jeremiah has said in his letter to the captives, counting on God to keep His promise. This is why Daniel ended his prayer with the following words: “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, **listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake**, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”⁸³ Any delay beyond the end of that seventieth year would mean that God had broken his promise. This is why Gabriel was immediately dispatched to Daniel to inform him: “At the beginning of your supplications **the command went out**, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.”⁸⁴ The “command” that had just been given was the proclamation of Cyrus ending the exile. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: “All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!”’”⁸⁵

Gabriel followed this with the “seventy weeks” prophecy, which commenced with that very command of Cyrus that had just been issued. “**Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem** Until Messiah the

⁸³ Dan. 9:19

⁸⁴ Daniel 9:23

⁸⁵ 2 Chron. 36:22-23

*Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.”⁸⁶ That this command was the proclamation of Cyrus (and not Artaxerxes) is proven by Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Cyrus. “Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, **Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,”** And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”’⁸⁷ ... “I have raised him up in righteousness, And I will direct all his ways; **He shall build My city** And let My exiles go free, Not for price nor reward,” Says the LORD of hosts.”⁸⁸*

There can be no question that Daniel’s analysis of these Scriptures led him to conclude that from the destruction of Jerusalem until the return from captivity under Cyrus would be exactly seventy years. The last Jews had fled the land of Judah in the seventh month of the festival calendar (Tishri),⁸⁹ which was the first month on the agricultural Sabbatical – Jubilee calendar. Thus, the land began to enjoy her Sabbaths from the beginning of a “week” of years. She kept Sabbath for ten full “weeks” of years, completing seventy years of Sabbaths back to back with no farming of the land at all.

IV. The “Desolations” of Jerusalem According to Ezekiel

McFall and others try to date the “desolations” of Jerusalem from Jehoiakim’s fourth year (Nebuchadnezzar’s first year), taking great liberties with the term “desolation.” Daniel used this term to describe the state of Jerusalem for the entire seventy years. However, Ezekiel’s prophecies prove beyond doubt that this language applied only to Jerusalem and Judah *after* they were completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem and the Temple were not “desolate” until after the total destruction in Nebuchadnezzar’s nineteenth year.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon at the same time as Jehoiachin. His first vision was in the fifth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity, which was six years before the destruction of Jerusalem. At this time God placed the “desolation” of Jerusalem in the *future* according to Ezekiel. “So ***I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land desolate, yes, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their dwelling places. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.***”⁹⁰ Such a threat would have no meaning if Jerusalem was already considered “desolate.” The next year God showed Ezekiel why He was so angry with Jerusalem. Ezekiel was shown many pagan abominations that were being

⁸⁶ Dan. 9:25

⁸⁷ Isa. 44:28

⁸⁸ Isa. 45:13

⁸⁹ Jer. 41-43

⁹⁰ Ezek. 6:14

practiced by His own people in His Temple.⁹¹ Ezekiel was then shown the glory of the Lord leaving His Temple in anticipation of its destruction.⁹² Thus, it is evident that God's presence had remained in the Temple up to this time (five years before its total destruction), despite the abominations committed there by His people. The term "desolate" therefore cannot be applied to God's Temple while His presence remained there for the thirteen years leading up to Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God departing (from Jehoiakim's fourth year to the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity).

Again, the "desolation" of the cities of Judah were also said to be future. *"Then the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land **shall become desolate**; and you shall know that I am the LORD."*⁹³ No longer would the prophesied desolation be postponed. *"For I am the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; **it will no more be postponed**; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it," says the Lord GOD.' ... Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "**None of My words will be postponed any more**, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord GOD.'*⁹⁴ Then God declared to Ezekiel that He was going to make Jerusalem desolate (future). *"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will set My face against them. They will go out from one fire, but another fire shall devour them. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them. **Thus I will make the land desolate**, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,' says the Lord GOD."*⁹⁵

In the ninth year of Jeconiah's captivity, Ezekiel was given the vision of the cooking pot. God would not delay His unbridled fury anymore. *"In your filthiness is lewdness. Because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed, You will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, **Till I have caused My fury to rest upon you**. I, the LORD, have spoken it; It shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not hold back, Nor will I spare, Nor will I relent; According to your ways And according to your deeds They will judge you," Says the Lord GOD.'*⁹⁶ Again, in the 34th chapter God speaks of the imminent desolation of Jerusalem and Judah. *"For **I will make the land most desolate**, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel **shall be so desolate that no one will pass through**. Then they shall know that I am the LORD, **when I have made the land most desolate** because of all their abominations which they have committed."*⁹⁷

⁹¹ Ezek. 8

⁹² Ezek. 10-12

⁹³ Ezek. 12:20

⁹⁴ Ezek. 12:25,28

⁹⁵ Ezek. 15:6-8

⁹⁶ Ezek. 24:13-14

⁹⁷ Ezek. 33:28

That “desolate” refers to being without inhabitant is proven by the following passage where God spoke of the end of the exile. “Thus says the Lord GOD: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it.”⁹⁸ It is abundantly clear that “desolate” is the antithesis of being tilled and farmed. Since Ezekiel makes it abundantly clear that the “desolations” of Jerusalem were still future in the fifth and sixth years of Jehoiachin’s captivity (twelve and thirteen years after Jehoiakim’s first year), it is obvious that when Daniel wrote that he understood “*seventy years for the desolations of Jerusalem*,” this must be counted from the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the complete emptying of Jews from the land so that it could “*enjoy her Sabbaths*.”

V. The Interpretation of Zechariah

Only a few months after Cyrus’ decree, the altar had been rebuilt and *the daily sacrifices* commenced on Rosh Hashanah, the official end of the exile.⁹⁹

Ezra 3:1-6

*1 And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening burnt offerings. 4 They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day. 5 Afterwards they offered the regular burnt offering, and those for New Moons and for all the appointed feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and those of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD. 6 **From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD,** although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid.*

⁹⁸ Ezek. 36:33-36

⁹⁹ Ezra 3:1-7 (cf. Lev. 23:39-43)

Seven months later, construction began on the foundation of the Temple. The work progressed with great joy and celebration throughout the remaining eight years of Cyrus' reign¹⁰⁰ despite the interference and opposition of the surrounding peoples.

Ezra 3:8-13

8 Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the LORD. 9 Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers, Kadmiel with his sons, and the sons of Judah, arose as one to oversee those working on the house of God: the sons of Henadad with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD:

"For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel."

Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

Once Cyrus died, the opponents of the Jews attempted to derail the reconstruction by appealing to the new king, Cambyses,¹⁰¹ apparently with no response. Cambyses was more interested in expanding the Persian Empire to include all of Egypt. Thus, reconstruction slowly moved ahead through the eight-year reign of Cambyses.¹⁰²

Bardiya (alias Smerdis) usurped the throne just before Cambyses' death, and reigned for seven months until he died (reportedly assassinated by Darius). During his short reign, the opponents of the Jews wrote another letter to Smerdis¹⁰³ complaining that the

¹⁰⁰ Parker & Dubberstein, p. 29

¹⁰¹ Ezra 4:6 Cambyses is called Ahasuerus

¹⁰² Parker & Dubberstein, p. 30.

¹⁰³ Ezra 4:7-16 Smerdis is called Artaxerxes in this passage. "Artaxerxes" is not a personal name, but a title used by several Persian kings, meaning "great king." According to Anstey, "He was aided by his brother Patizithes. The two brothers were called the Magi. They occupied the throne for 7 months, after which they were slain by Darius Hystaspes. In this letter they refer to 'the Kings' Ezra 4:13, not to 'the King,' which agrees very well with the fact that the false Smerdis was really placed on the throne by his brother Patizithes, one of the chief of the Magians, whose authority was quite equal to that of Pseudo-

Jews were rebuilding both the Temple and the walls of the city of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ Because of this letter, Smerdis halted the construction. This condition remained for two years, until the second year of Darius.¹⁰⁵

However, in the second year of Darius, God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to motivate the people to resume building His house. In the sixth month, just before Rosh Hashanah, God commanded them to resume building through Haggai. *“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,’ says the LORD.”*¹⁰⁶ In response, Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the High Priest began building again without permission from the new Persian king and contrary to the explicit orders of Smerdis.¹⁰⁷ God instructed them not to be afraid because He would be with them.

During the Feast of Tabernacles in the following month, God prophesied through Haggai concerning the greater Temple that will stand in the Kingdom of Messiah, which will surpass even Solomon’s Temple in its glory.¹⁰⁸

In the eighth month of that same year, Zechariah prophesied a warning to the people, not to be like their fathers who heard the former prophets (Jeremiah & Ezekiel) and refused to obey and thus experienced God’s great wrath. *“The LORD has been very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Return to Me,” says the LORD of hosts, “and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts:” Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.”’ But they did not hear nor heed Me,” says the LORD.”*¹⁰⁹

Three months later, Zechariah saw a vision of a man among the myrtle trees. The interpretation of that vision is as follows: *“So they answered the Angel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, ‘We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.’ Then the Angel of the LORD answered and said, ‘O LORD of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah,*

Smerdis, whence the two are coupled together, and this reign or usurpation is often referred to as that of the two Magi or Magians, both being regarded as in a manner sharers of the same throne. The word ‘Kings’ occurs in the plural again in the King’s reply, ‘Cause these men to cease. Why should damage grow to the hurt of the Kings?’” (Anstey, Martin, The Romance of Bible Chronology, p. 240).

¹⁰⁴ Ezra 4:6-24

¹⁰⁵ Ezra 4:24

¹⁰⁶ Hag 1:7-9

¹⁰⁷ Hag. 1:12-15

¹⁰⁸ Hag. 2:1-9

¹⁰⁹ Zech. 1:2-4

against which You were angry [those]¹¹⁰ **seventy years?**' And the LORD answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words."¹¹¹ The critical question is this: To which 'seventy years' did the angel refer?

In order to identify the seventy years intended in this statement it is necessary to point out that it concerned the period of time of God's wrath against both Jerusalem and the surrounding towns of Judah. This was prophesied by Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Jer. 7:32-34

32 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. 33 The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away. 34 Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate.

It is also important to note the Hebrew word translated "angry" (za'am) in the clause, "with which You were **angry** those seventy years," is a very uncommon word, the strongest way to express rage in Hebrew. The word literally means "to foam at the mouth, to be enraged."¹¹² It refers to a point of wrath reached from which there is no remedy. In Scripture, concerning all of the events leading up to and during the Babylonian exile this term is only used for God's unquenchable wrath poured out in the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Lam. 2:6-8

*6 He has done violence to His tabernacle, As if it were a garden; He has destroyed His place of assembly; The LORD has caused The appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion. In His burning **indignation** He has spurned the king and the priest. 7 The Lord has spurned His altar, He has abandoned His sanctuary; He has given up the walls of her palaces Into the hand of the enemy. They have made a noise in the house of the LORD As on the day of a set feast. 8 The LORD has purposed to destroy The wall of the daughter of Zion. ...*

¹¹⁰ The NKJV has "these." However, the Hebrew word does not distinguish between a near or far referent (these or those).

¹¹¹ Zech 1:11-14

¹¹² Strongs' #2194

Ezek. 22:30-31

24 "Son of man, say to her: 'You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of **indignation**.' ... 30 So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. 31 Therefore I have poured out My **indignation** on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

That God's anger was in the past when Zechariah wrote, "Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You **were angry** [those] seventy years," is proven by the perfective conjugation ("were angry"). This form indicates a past state that did not reach to the present.

From these passages it is abundantly clear that God's unbridled wrath against Jerusalem and the cities of Judah was poured out beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem. It is also quite clear that His unbridled wrath was no longer being poured out on Jerusalem once Cyrus gave the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. If this seventy-year period extended twenty years after the decree of Cyrus, then Jerusalem would have been under God's unbridled indignation during the return from captivity with Zerubbabel and Joshua, the rebuilding of the altar and the joyous celebration during the Feast of Tabernacles, all of the daily sacrifices that commenced at that time, during the laying of the Temple foundation, and during the subsequent building throughout the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses. Such a concept is beyond absurd. The only exegetically sound interpretation of Zechariah 1:12 is that God's unbridled indignation spanned a full seventy years from the destruction of Jerusalem until the decree of Cyrus ending the exile. Trying to extend God's unbridled wrath twenty years in either direction in order to accommodate the much shorter secular timeline is impossible to harmonize with the text.

Once Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the rest of the people resumed building, word quickly spread to Israel's enemies in the surrounding areas. They sent a letter to Darius complaining that the Jews were again building the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.¹¹³ While awaiting the response of king Darius, fearing that the new king's wrath would fall upon them for defying the order of his predecessor, the Jews inquired of Zechariah what they should do. The people wanted to know whether they ought to return to "fasting and mourning" for the house of God as they had done during the exile, since no doubt Darius would send an army and demolish what they had built, and punish them for their defiance of the decrees of the Persian monarchs.

¹¹³ Ezra 5

Zech. 7:1-7 NKJV

*1 Now in the fourth year of King Darius it came to pass that the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Chislev, 2 when the people sent Sherezer, with Regem-Melech and his men, to the house of God, to pray before the LORD, 3 and to ask the priests who were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and the prophets, saying, "**Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?**"*

*4 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 5 "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: '**When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me — for Me? 6 When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? 7 Should you not have obeyed the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?'**"*

The Jews in the exile had fasted and mourned twice a year for seventy years, during the fifth month (Av) and in the seventh month (Tishri). "Fasts" in general were appointed to preserve the penitential remembrance of punishments or tragic events already endured.¹¹⁴ Fasts were memorials of severe judgments just as the Feasts commemorated victorious events, such as Passover's memorial of the exodus. In fact, the only mandatory fast day in the Law of Moses was Yom Kippur, the anniversary of Adam's exile from Eden.¹¹⁵

The seventy years of fasting in the fifth and seventh months commemorated the two tragic events that occurred in those two months during the year that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

2 Kings 25:8-12

*8 And **in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month** (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. 10 And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around.*

11 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest of the people who remained in the city and the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, with

¹¹⁴ 1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam. 1:12; Ezra 10:6; Neh. 1:4

¹¹⁵ See: Warner, *The Time of the End*, pp. 231-232.

the rest of the multitude. 12 But the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers.

Even today the Jewish people fast on *Tisha B'Av* to mourn the destruction of the second Temple and acknowledge the current desolation that began in AD 70.¹¹⁶ The fast mentioned by Zechariah in the fifth month was to mourn the destruction of the first Temple. As the passage above points out, the land of Judah was not totally abandoned in the fifth month. Nebuzaradan left some of the poor behind to farm the land for the Babylonians. He appointed Gedaliah as governor of the poor who were left behind in Judah.¹¹⁷ Yet, Gedaliah was assassinated two months later, in the seventh month, Tishri.

Jer. 41:1-3

*1 Now it came to pass **in the seventh month** that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family and of the officers of the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah. And there they ate bread together in Mizpah. 2 Then Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men who were with him, arose and struck Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3 Ishmael also struck down all the Jews who were with him, that is, with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans who were found there, the men of war.*

As soon as this was known, Johanan gathered a small band and went after Ishmael, who fled to the Ammorites and escaped.¹¹⁸ Yet, the poor people of Judah who had been left to farm the land under Gedaliah were greatly afraid that Nebuchadnezzar would return because of the assassination of the appointed governor Gedaliah and his Babylonian guards. So they immediately fled to Bethlehem on their way to Egypt.¹¹⁹ There Jeremiah prophesied to them that they should remain in Judea and serve the Babylonians, and God would be with them. But they rejected Jeremiah's words, and immediately fled to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go with them.¹²⁰ Thus, in the seventh month (only 2 months after the Temple was destroyed), the remaining Jews completely evacuated the Holy Land leaving it totally desolate and without inhabitant. From this point, the month of Tishri, the land rested and kept its Sabbaths for ten Sabbatical cycles, seventy consecutive years.

¹¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tisha_B%27Av

¹¹⁷ 2 Kings 25:22-24

¹¹⁸ Jer. 41:11-15

¹¹⁹ Jer. 41:17-18

¹²⁰ Jer. 42-44

Since God through Zechariah stated plainly that the Jews in exile had fasted and mourned *for seventy years* in the fifth and seventh months, the entire seventy years must follow the events that they were fasting and mourning about. The mourning and fasting could only occur in those months to commemorate the horrific events of that year, the destruction of the Temple, and the complete evacuation of the last remnant from the land of Judea so that the land could enjoy its Sabbaths. It was because the people refused to repent, to mourn and fast during the prophesying of Jeremiah, that God sent Nebuchadnezzar to destroy utterly Jerusalem and evacuate the remaining people.

It is also certain that once Cyrus issued his decree to end the exile, fasting and mourning ceased. How could such lamentation for Jerusalem's utter destruction continue while they were rebuilding the Temple and the city? Ezra paints a picture of continuous celebration from the year after the return under Cyrus.¹²¹

That fasting and mourning are only to be done during exile is also shown from the memorial of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). As has already been pointed out, this was the only mandatory fast day in the Law of Moses.¹²² It commemorated the exile of Adam and all of his offspring from Eden. During the final "week" of Daniel's seventy weeks, the Mosaic Covenant will be renewed¹²³ and the Temple rebuilt and the daily sacrifice reestablished¹²⁴ in order to give Israel the opportunity for national repentance and restoration according to the promise in the Law of Moses.¹²⁵ Observing the fast for Adam's expulsion on Yom Kippur will be part of the rituals observed by Israel during the seventieth week. However, Jeremiah pointed out that in the Kingdom, Yom Kippur will not be observed any more¹²⁶ even though Ezekiel makes it clear that the other Festivals of the Lord will be celebrated.¹²⁷ The reason is that the mandatory fast of Yom Kippur will be abandoned at the end of the seventieth week (when Christ returns) is because the curse will be removed.¹²⁸ The exile of Adam's descendants will end and we will have access to the Tree of Life.¹²⁹

It is therefore evident that fasting and mourning are reserved for exile, not for restoration and rebuilding. It would be contrary to common sense to suppose that the people were fasting and mourning after the daily sacrifice was being offered at the altar

¹²¹ Ezra 3:10-13

¹²² Lev. 23:27,29

¹²³ Dan. 9:27, Mal. 4:4-6

¹²⁴ Rev. 11:1-3

¹²⁵ Deut. 30

¹²⁶ Jer. 3:17

¹²⁷ Ezekiel 45:18-25

¹²⁸ Rom. 8:16-25

¹²⁹ Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 22:2,14

every day, or while observing the Feast of Tabernacles – the greatest celebratory event on God’s Calendar. It would be absurd to suppose that they fasted and mourned the destruction of the Temple in the same month they were rejoicing before the Lord waving palm branches, proclaiming His deliverance from Egypt,¹³⁰ and were rebuilding the Temple!

It is also evident from the grammar of Zech. 7 that they had mourned and fasted in the past, but had ceased doing so at some point. In contrast, verse 6 explains that their current ongoing practice was of eating and drinking (not fasting).

5 "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, **did you really fast** for Me – for Me?

6 'When you eat and when you drink, **do you not eat and drink** for yourselves?

The verb conjugations imply a sharp contrast between a previous time of fasting (perfective conjugation) in verse 5 that had been discontinued and a present practice of eating and drinking (non-perfective conjugation) in verse 6. In fact, Bruce Waltke quotes McFall to explain this difference. McFall writes:

"The verb forms have been determined by the actual situation then prevailing, for in Gen. 16.8 Hagar was resting when the angel asked her, 'Whence camest thou?' (perfective conjugation). It would have been inappropriate to have used the yqtl (non-perfective) form since that would have implied that she was going somewhere at that moment; though it is possible that Hagar could have been viewed as on a journey, and her present situation ignored.

Joseph uses the qtl (perfective) form in Gen. 42.7, "Whence came ye?', because at that precise moment it was obvious they were not on a journey, but had arrived. Notice, however, the difference in Jos. 9.8, 'Who are you? And where do you come from?' (non-perfective conjugation). It is obvious to Joshua that these men are on a journey, that is their present activity. Joshua's question is: From where did you start out on your journey? He does not know yet that he is the goal of their journey; but this comes out in the choice of verb form they use; 'From a very far country uour servants have come.' (perfective conjugation)..., implying that they had finished their journey and had reached their destination."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Lev. 23:39-43

¹³¹ Leslie McFall, quoted by Bruce Waltke, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp 504-505

It is therefore evident that the reference to fasting in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years refers to an earlier practice that had been discontinued. Yet when Zechariah prophesied they had been eating and drinking. Thus, the “seventy years” mentioned here had ended at a prior time.

Notice also that the statement about God’s being angry with Jerusalem for seventy years was made in the second year of Darius.¹³² But the prophecy in chapter 7 concerning fasting was given two years later, in the fourth year of Darius.¹³³ It is therefore evident that these two “seventy years” statements do not refer to different periods of time that each ended the year that the prophecy was given, but rather to an earlier time. Otherwise, these two seventy-year periods would have to begin and end two years apart.

There is an extremely uncomfortable problem for virtually all chronologists who wish to take the Scriptures as infallible witnesses, yet are tempted to harmonize Scripture with the secular chronology based on Ptolemy’s Canon. The books of Jeremiah, Daniel, 2 Chronicles, and Zechariah contain six statements about the “seventy years.” Harmonizing all six of these statements within the text of Scripture is a simple matter, as this paper has demonstrated. **All six “seventy years” statements refer to exactly the same period**, from the destruction of Jerusalem to the return in the first year of Cyrus. This was the time Daniel spoke of as “*seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem,*” of which 2 Chronicles says “*As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years,*” and about which Zechariah says “*on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years,*” and again, “*When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years.*” There is perfect harmony between all of these passages.

It is only when chronologists try to force the Biblical data to conform to the secular chronology based on Ptolemy’s Canon that they buckle under and yield to the secular chronology, shortening this period by about twenty years. Since the secular chronology has only 47 years between the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (when Jerusalem was destroyed¹³⁴) and the first year of Cyrus (when the exile ended¹³⁵), they extend the “seventy years” prophecy found in Jeremiah back to Nebuchadnezzar’s first year (Jehoiakim’s fourth year). But this creates havoc with the statements in 2 Chronicles and Zechariah.

¹³² Zech. 1:1

¹³³ Zech. 7:1

¹³⁴ Jer. 52:12

¹³⁵ Ezra 1:1

The following excerpt from Martin Anstey illustrates just how awkward this becomes, arguing for three different “seventy year” periods that all overlap each other for the bulk of each period, but do not coincide exactly with each other. In his book, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, Anstey claimed that the “seventy years” in Daniel 9:1 refers to the prophecy of Jeremiah, which he incorrectly dates from Jehoiakim’s fourth year, nineteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He then says, “*There is another period of seventy years, referred to in the Old Testament, quite distinct from the seventy years of the servitude, in part coinciding with it and in part going beyond it. ... This period of seventy years is referred to in Zech. 1:7-12, from which we learn that it came to a close in the 2nd year of Darius. ... Yet another period of seventy years, the seventy years of the fasts (B.C. 586-517) is referred to two years later in Zech. 7:5. ... We have therefore three periods of seventy years to help us in determining the Chronology of this period.*”¹³⁶

Such are the hoops through which chronologists are willing to jump to make Scripture conform to the secular chronology. Yet, all of Scripture presents a harmonious chorus regarding the chronology of the exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The absolute faith in the *idol* of the false chronology of secular scholarship, while at the same time trying to maintain his claimed devotion to Scripture, has forced Ussher, Anstey, Jones, McFall, et al into a predicament. Rather than choosing to take the normal sense of Scripture as objective truth, and the secular chronology as subjective and error prone, they have chosen to twist Scripture as much as necessary to force it to agree with the false dating system. But doing so completely discredits the prophets of God as well as the internal dating system that accurately predicts both the first and second coming of Messiah, Jesus Christ the King.

The Error in Ptolemy’s Canon and Parker & Dubberstein

Since God is true and every man a liar, and since it is evident that the Bible has seventy years between the destruction of Jerusalem (in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar) and the decree of Cyrus (in his first year), one question remains: How can we account for the missing years in the secular chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period? While it is impossible to prove because the Bible does not provide the following information, the most likely solution is that the reign of Evil-Marodach was twenty-three years instead of the two years attributed to him by Ptolemy and by Parker & Dubberstein. The seventy years from Nebuchadnezzar’s nineteenth year to the first year of Cyrus should most likely be broken down as follows:

¹³⁶ Martin Anstey, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, Vol. I, pp. 235-236

1. Nebuchadnezzar – 24.5 Years

Parker & Dubberstein give 43 years¹³⁷ total for the reign of Nebuchadnezzar as does Josephus.¹³⁸ Jeremiah places the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's successor – Evil-Merodach – in the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar's last year was the thirty-sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. His captivity began in Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year.¹³⁹ This also gives a total of 43 years.¹⁴⁰

Jerusalem was destroyed in the fifth month of Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year.¹⁴¹ The Babylonian year began in spring, in the month Nisan. The remaining Jews evacuated the land in the seventh month of that year, Tishri.¹⁴² This is the beginning of the Jewish agricultural year and Sabbatical cycle when the land began to keep Sabbath for seventy years. Thus the seventy-year desolation of Jerusalem began half-way through Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year (on Rosh Hashanah – Tishri 1). This leaves 24.5 remaining years for Nebuchadnezzar covering the first part of the seventy-year period of desolation.

2. Evil-Merodach – 23 Years

Parker & Dubberstein give only two years based on Ptolemy's Canon. Yet, several ancient sources give a much longer reign. Ptolemy most likely derived the figure of two years from Berossus.¹⁴³ Eusebius gives twelve years citing the history of Polyhistor.¹⁴⁴ Josephus gives eighteen years.¹⁴⁵ However, the Talmud¹⁴⁶ and Seder Olam¹⁴⁷ both give twenty-three years. This is no doubt the correct number. The Talmud explains the source of its calculations for some of the Babylonian kings, including Nebuchadnezzar's reign which is deduced from Jeremiah. Also, the reign of Belshazzar was calculated in the Talmud by trying to force the exile to fit a preconceived total length. However, the

¹³⁷ P&D p. 28

¹³⁸ Josephus, Antiquities, Book X, ch. xi

¹³⁹ 2 Kings 24:12

¹⁴⁰ Jehoiachin's first year of captivity coincided with Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year. Adding Nebuchadnezzar's previous seven years to the thirty-six remaining years of Jehoiachin's captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, gives 43 full years.

¹⁴¹ Jer. 52:12

¹⁴² Jer. 41

¹⁴³ The writings of Berossus are lost. However, some fragments are preserved in quotes by other writers. Eusebius quotes Berossus as follows: "Confirmation of this is found in the writings of Berossus, for in the third book of [his History] he writes as follows. 'Nebuchadnezzar fell ill and died after beginning the construction of the aforementioned wall. He had reigned for 43 years. His son Amel-Marduk took the kingship, but he governed in a corrupt and impious manner. He was murdered by his sister's husband, Neriglissar, after ruling for two years.'" (Eusebius, Chronicle, xiii).

¹⁴⁴ Eusebius, Chronicle, ch. ix

¹⁴⁵ Josephus, Antiquities, Bk. X, ch. xi, 2

¹⁴⁶ Talmud, Megillah, 11b

¹⁴⁷ Seder Olam, Translated by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005, p. 238

reign of Evil-Merodach was not deduced, but known from oral tradition as the Talmud states: “*The twenty-three of Evilmerodach we know from tradition.*”¹⁴⁸

That Evil-Merodach’s reign was much longer than the two years assigned to him by Ptolemy (and incorporated into Parker & Dubberstein) is evident from the following passage.¹⁴⁹

2 Kings 25:27-30.

*27 Now it came to pass **in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin** king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. 28 He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and **he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life.** 30 And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him **by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.***

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old¹⁵⁰ when he became king, and had reigned only three months¹⁵¹ when he was taken captive. In the thirty-seventh year of his captivity, he was released at age fifty-five by Evil-Merodach in his first year. He then ate at the table of king Evil-Merodach “*all the days of his life.*” That is, he ate at the table of king Evil-Merodach until he died, as Jeremiah adds, “*a portion for each day **until the day of his death, all the days of his life.***”¹⁵² Therefore, Jehoiachin died before Evil-Merodach died, otherwise he would not have been able to eat from Evil-Merodach’s table “*until the day of his death, all the days of his life.*” If Evil-Merodach reigned only two years, as claimed by Ptolemy and Parker & Dubberstein, then Jehoiachin’s release from prison, his eating at the kings’ table “*all the days of his life,*” and his death all took place in less than two years! In such a scenario, it is extremely difficult to justify the clause “*all the days of his life,*” which everywhere else in Scripture refers to a period of many years.¹⁵³ However, if Evil-Merodach reigned for twenty-three years as the Talmud and Seder Olam claim, then “*all the days of his life*” could be as long as twenty-three years, a much more reasonable interpretation.

¹⁴⁸ Talmud, Megilah, 11b

¹⁴⁹ See also: Jer. 52:33-34

¹⁵⁰ 2 Kings 24:8 However, 2 Chron. 36:9 states that he was 8 years old. If the Chronicles figure is correct, he would have been ten years younger when released by Evil-Merodach.

¹⁵¹ 2 Kings 24:8

¹⁵² Jer. 52:34

¹⁵³ cf. Deut. 17:19; Josh. 4:14; 1 Sam. 1:11; 1 Sam. 7:15; 1 Kings 4:21; 1 Kings 11:34; 1 Kings 15:5-6; Eccl. 5:18,20; Eccl. 8:15.

It should also be noted that Jeremiah only counted three major kings of Babylon – Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, and Belshazzar. “*And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve **him and his son and his son’s son**, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them.*”¹⁵⁴ The two minor kings (Nergal-Shar-User {four years} and Labashi-Marduk {nine months}) are not included. If Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Evil-Merodach reigned only two years (less than Nergal-Shar-User), it is odd that Evil-Merodach would be listed but not Nergal-Shar-User. On the other hand, if the Talmud is correct that Evil-Merodach reigned twenty-three years, then Jeremiah’s statement makes sense since all three listed kings dominated the lands mentioned by Jeremiah for significant periods of time: Nebuchadnezzar – 24.5 years, Evil-Merodach – 23 years, and Belshazzar – 17 years.

Nergal-Shar-Usur – 4 Years

Parker & Dubberstein give four years.¹⁵⁵ Josephus gives forty years.¹⁵⁶ However, Josephus’ number is most likely a scribal copy error, since it is easy for a copyist to mistake four for forty. The Bible does not recognize the very short reigns of Nergal-Shar-User and Labashi-Marduk, but only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, and Belshazzar.

Labashi-Marduk – 9 mo.

Parker & Dubberstein give 9 months¹⁵⁷ as does Josephus.¹⁵⁸

Belshazzar (Nabunaid) – 17 Years

Parker & Dubberstein give seventeen years,¹⁵⁹ as does Josephus.¹⁶⁰ However, the Talmud gives only 2 years.¹⁶¹

This gives a total of 69.5 years from the fall of Jerusalem to the first year of Cyrus, assuming that the nine-month reign of Labashi-Marduk is counted as a year (neither his predecessor nor his successor claimed the remaining three months as one year for themselves). We have therefore accounted for the entire seventy-year period that Jerusalem lay in ruins with the reigns of these Babylonian kings.

¹⁵⁴ Jer. 27:6-7

¹⁵⁵ P&D, p. 29

¹⁵⁶ Josephus, Antiquities, Bk. X, ch. xi, 2

¹⁵⁷ P&D, p. 29

¹⁵⁸ Josephus, Antiquities, Bk. X, ch. xi, 2

¹⁵⁹ P&D, p. 29

¹⁶⁰ Josephus, Antiquities, Bk. X, ch. xi, 4

¹⁶¹ Talmud, Megilah, 11b

We noted earlier that the destruction of Jerusalem took place in the fifth month of Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year, and the remaining farmers fled to Egypt in the seventh month, Tishri, when the Sabbatical cycle (agricultural year) began. In the seventieth year, Cyrus issued his decree allowing the Jews to return to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. *"And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God."*¹⁶² Thus, we have the beginning and end of the seventy-year desolation of Jerusalem in the month of Tishri, which is when the Sabbatical – agricultural years begin and end. The calculating of the exile is exactly seventy years, from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah.

Comparing the secular chronology of Ptolemy and Parker & Dubberstein with the Jewish chronology in the Talmud and Seder Olam presents an intriguing puzzle. Both the secular and the Jewish chronologies shorten the length of time Jerusalem lay desolate by about 19 years. But they do it in completely different ways. The secular chronology (Ptolemy and Parker & Dubberstein) shortens the reign of Evil-Merodach from 23 years to 2 years (19 years missing). The Jewish chronology shortens the reign of Belshazzar from 17 years to 2 years and leaves out the 4 years of Nergal-Shar-Usur, and the 9 months of Labashi-Marduk (19 years and 9 months missing). Yet, both of these link the start of the seventy years to the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, instead of the nineteenth year when he destroyed Jerusalem.¹⁶³

The chronology of this period is constructed by adding together the lengths of the reigns of the Babylonian kings. It is a strange coincidence that such vastly different numbers end up with the same total! Could it be that the aim was to bring about this desired result, shortening the desolation of Jerusalem, and that these two different sources devised different ways to arrive at the same destination? While this may sound like some bizarre conspiracy theory, we should not forget who is behind the greatest conspiracy of all time – Satan, and his attempt to deceive the whole world.

If the question of the length of Jerusalem's desolation was merely academic, such a conspiracy might easily be dismissed. However, the length of the desolation of Jerusalem is the basis for calculating Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy – with the command to rebuild. The cutting off of Messiah at the end of sixty-nine weeks

¹⁶² Ezra 3:1-2

¹⁶³ The Jews make this link explicitly in the Talmud. Parker & Dubberstein do so implicitly. Most Christian chronologists who depend on P&D make this link explicitly.

(Sabbatical cycles) is critical to identifying the Messiah. Offsetting this by nineteen years is sufficient to deny that Jesus is the Messiah of Daniel's prophecy by both secularists and Jews. The same nineteen-year error destroys the entire 120-Jubilee chronology, making it impossible to synchronize these events with the Jubilee cycle. This in turn makes it impossible to calculate the second coming of Christ in the 120th Jubilee year.

Accepting the shortened period for Jerusalem's desolation is the mistake made by Newton, Ussher, Anstey, Mauro, Anderson, Jones, McFall, et al. Trying to force the seventy years into a forty-seven year segment of secular chronology has obscured the discovery of the 120-Jubilee calendar with its amazing beauty and harmony.