
CHAPTER 5

UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETIC CALENDAR

THE CHURCH AGE, AN INTERCALATION

Dispensations from the Babylonian Captivity to the Second Coming provide the framework for understanding the Bible and rightly dividing the word of Truth. During the span of this period of time for example, the Church Age is an intercalation (insertion) in the prophetic calendar. In this Church age the believer becomes the agent for God's redemptive action (as ambassadors) to the realization of the kingdom of God. Angels become only guardian-servants and learn from us, the Church (1 Pet. 1:12). Israel is also now temporarily set aside until the rapture of the Church.

Surprisingly, biblical prophecy does not make reference to this Church dispensation. It is the book of Acts and the Epistles that unveiled the mystery of the Church (Eph. 3:1-6). Hitherto no calendar was given to the Church but only her divine mission to disciple the nations in preparing herself for her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus.

ISRAEL, THE KEY TO PROPHECY [Dan. 2:31-45; 7:8-27; 8:20-21; 9:23-27]

Israel is the key to all Biblical prophecy. Certainly the rise and fall of world kingdoms as they relate the Jew are significant. Egypt and Assyria had taken their turn already. While the Babylonian rule was at centre stage, God unfolds His divine time table in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar which Daniel later interpreted. From Daniel chapter two right to the end of chapter twelve, a panorama for unearthing end-time agenda is set forth for us.

From Dan. 2:31-45 we read, "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. "The head of that statue {was made} of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. "This {was} the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king. "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, {or} the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given {them} into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. "And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. "And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. "And {as} the toes of the feet {were} partly of iron and partly of pottery, {so} some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. "And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and {that} kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy." (NAS)

It is widely accepted that God, through Abraham has, placed the Jew on a clear prophetic calendar. From the above Scriptures viewed

through historic fulfillments, we observe the specific history of the captivity of the Jewish people from the time of Daniel as interpretation goes. Hitherto, permit me to say that nothing has been revealed about the Church. It is the destiny of the nation of Israel, which is viewed through the prophetic eye in relation to kingdoms that will arise. Of course, there will be sub-kingdoms in the various geographical settings of the world, but this is the main initial key to end-time prophecy. The four (4) world kingdoms before the kingdom of the *Stone* cut without hands would be: Babylon (606 - 538 B.C.); Medo-Persia (538 -331 B.C.); Greece (331 -168 B.C.); Rome (168 B.C. - 476 A.D.) and the fragmented kingdoms and then the Stone, Christ will strike finally at the end of the Tribulation (Dan. 2:34-35; 44-45). It is seen that from 476 A.D. we can only talk of the mixed iron and clay kingdoms, a period of fragmentation and disintegration of world power.

There will be power shift in the world during these times. But the inference is that the influence of each of these four kingdoms will be felt in the rise and fall of emerging world powers, more especially, the mixed Roman influence. It is also valid to note that no one single nation will be able to dominate the world scene, but kings and nations will rise against another. In the midst of wars and distress, in the end, there will be a revived Roman Empire out of which Anti-Christ will emerge and dominate the world scene, including Israel. In his time the *Stone*, referring to Christ, will strike at him and his rule, destroy all earthly kingdoms and set up His millennial rule, which will extend into eternity.

Later, Daniel himself also sees in his visions a panorama of kingdoms to confirm the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 7:11-14, 17-22 KJV reads: *"I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" ... "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and*

possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."

Dan. 8:20-21 *"The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first"* (KJV).

Today, we look back to history to discover that Daniel's interpretations were fulfilled in the rise and fall of kingdoms as indicated below:

A CHART OF THE RISE AND FALL OF KINGDOMS IN DANIEL

Dan 2	Dan 7	Dan 8	Kingdom	Period
Dan. 2:32, 38 (gold)	Dan. 7:4 (lion)		Babylon	(606 - 538 B.C)
Dan. 2:32, 39 (silver)	Dan. 7:5, 23, 24 (bear)	Dan. 8:20 (ram)	Medo - Persia	(538 - 331 B.C)
Dan. 2:32,39 (bronze)	Dan. 7:6, 23, 24 (leopard)	Dan. 8:21 (goat)	Greece	(331 - 168 B.C)
Dan. 2:33, 40 (iron)	Dan. 7:7, 23, 24 (beast)		Rome	(168 BC - 476 A.D)
Dan. 2:34, 41 (iron & clay)			Divided kingdom	476 A.D to Unspecified time
Dan. 2:34, 41 - 44 (iron & clay)	Dan. 7:8, 24 (ten horns & ten kings)		Revived Roman Kingdom	At the close of the Church Age
	Dan. 7:8, 24 - 26 (little horn)		The Anti - Christ	Tribulation
Dan.2:34 - 35; 44 - 45 (The Stone)	Dan. 7:9, 13 - 14, 22 - 27		Christ's Earthly Rule	Millennium

70 WEEKS OF DANIEL

After these visions, Daniel prays and gets the answer to his inquiry on God's time dealings, specifically with Israel with regard to their prophetic destiny as a sovereign nation and of this we read:

"As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: 'Seventy `sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. 'Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven `sevens', and sixty-two `sevens'. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two `sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one `seven'. In the middle of the `seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (Dan. 9:23-27).

The Jewish captivity of 70 years was to start during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar; of Babylon (2Chron. 36:17-21) to allow the land to enjoy its Sabbath rests. Daniel seeks the Lord to gain understanding and to seek an end to the captivity (Jer. 25:11, 12; Dan. 9:1-3).

Years later, Daniel prays and receives the above answer to the future prophetic time line of Israel (Dan. 9:23-27). Picking on from verse 24 we read, *"Seventy `sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression"*. "Your people" and "your Holy City" refer to the Jews (Israel as a nation) and Jerusalem (as the capital, where the Temple site is) with apparently no Gentiles mentioned since Daniel's concern was the restoration of Israel. To *restore* and *rebuild* here in verse 25 refer to work on the city of Jerusalem. We would say here that 70 *sevens* or 70 *weeks* stated in the prophecy implies a period of 70 weeks of years or literally $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. This is subdivided into segments of $(7 \times 7 =) 49$ years, $(62 \times 7 =) 434$ years and $(1 \times 7 =) 7$ years. The prophecy gives the most vivid time line of activities for Israel right from the time it was given until the Millennium. In the passage there is reference to *the*

Anointed One, that is, *the Messiah*, Jesus Christ being *cut off* or crucified. There is also a reference to the ruling power "*the people of the prince*" assigned the *task of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple* in A.D. 70. The prince to come here is thus clearly identified as the Anti-Christ from the would-be revived Roman Empire who will make a covenant with the Jews in the first half of the seven years Tribulation.

Interestingly enough, there is an intercalation in time after the Anointed One is cut off. No one has any hint anywhere as to the length of this period. All that can be said is that, that period is the Church Age. For we read from the verses 26b and 27, "*The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one `seven'`".*

Suddenly the last seven years jump on us with Anti-Christ on centre stage as the last lap of desolations against Israel, which Jesus will intervene in the end. This is the more reason for very strong belief in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. No time line for the intercalated Church Age! Jesus is coming to conquer and rule; and it may be nearer than many expect. Taking the historical events, we observe that many decrees were made by kings of Mede-Persia in fulfillment of prophecy (2Chron. 36:22; Jer. 25:11, 12). The first three were to begin and complete the building of the second Temple and to restore worship, while the fourth was the rebuilding of the walls:

- i. **Decree One by King Cyrus in 538 B.C. to begin the work on the Temple.** He reigned for nine years (Ezra 1:1-4; Is. 44:21-28; 45:1-5, 12-13). The work ceased for some time after his death until later on. [The Temple had been destroyed in 586 B.C. (see Ezra 5:11-15)].
- ii. **Decree Two by King Darius in about 521 B.C. to resume and complete the work on the Temple** (Ezra 6:1-12). Darius ruled for 35 years; the decree was in the second year and completion (516 B.C.) in the sixth year of his reign (Ezra 6:13-15; Hag. 1:14, 15)
- iii. Decree Three by Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:11-16) in 457 B.C. to restore worship and law in Judah.
- iv. Decree Four by Artaxerxes I in 444 B.C. (20 years in his reign). It was at this time that Nehemiah was commissioned by the king to lead the Jews to rebuild the broken walls (Neh. 2:1-10). This is the starting point for Daniel's 70 weeks of years in Dan. 9:25a.

The Meaning of 70 Weeks of Daniel

Let us try to figure out the meaning of the 70 *weeks* or *sevens*. It is easy to notice that if *weeks* or *sevens* were literal weeks that would mean only $1\frac{1}{2}$ years (i. e. $70 \times 7 = 490$ days = $1\frac{1}{2}$ years) and in that case $\frac{1}{2}$ week in Dan. 9:27 would be three ($3\frac{1}{2}$) days which would be too short to fulfill that prophecy for Israel. However, we observe the clue of Lev. 25:8 which says: '*And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years.*' We have the indication then that the reference is to weeks of years.

Secondly, the Gregorian calendar of our time is based on solar year of 365 days as against the Jewish or Prophetic calendar on lunar year of 360 days a year. Scripture speaks for itself where 150 days is given as five months in Gen. 7:11, 24; 8:3, 4. Again, Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14 speak of time, times and a half a time; Rev. 11:3; 12:6 refer to 1260 days; with Rev. 11:2; 13:5 talking about 42 months. We deduce readily that 42 months = 1260 days = time, times, half a time = $3\frac{1}{2}$ years = $\frac{1}{2}$ week. Hence month = 30 days making a year = 360 days.

Assuming that 445 B.C. begins the first 49 years [$7 \times 7 = 49$ years cf. Dan. 9:25a], then 396 B.C. begins the next 434 years [$62 \times 7 = 434$ years cf. Dan. 9:25b], and if A.D. 30 is when Messiah is cut off, we almost arrive at 483 prophetic years [i. e. (49+434 years) = 483 years cf. Dan. 9:26]. Now if Jesus was born in about 4 B.C. and crucified in about A.D. 30, can we see any good correlations for Jesus being also the Jewish Messiah referred to? The answer will be a big yes! Mathematically, 445 B.C. to 30 A.D. will be 476 Gregorian years [i. e. $445 + 30 + 1$ (B.C. to A.D. transition)]. By calculation, we come up with $(476 \times 365.2412989) \div 360 = 482.93$ prophetic years. Hence 476 Gregorian years approximates 483 prophetic years [discounting human errors and approximations for if we take the exact dates in days instead of years were used we sure will come up exactly to the 483]. Now, for the sake of the unschooled in calculations and historical information, I want to suggest that what has been done above is only to whet the appetite of the inquiring mind. We notice that dates of such nature are approximations and from

discoveries of archeological findings. That is why some writers put the date of the decree at 444 B.C., the triumphant entry and crucifixion at 29 A.D. or 32 A.D. or even at 33 A.D. Whatever the case, we find that Daniel's prophecy holds exactness if we could figure out the exact dates of the events. The soon coming King Jesus is the Messiah who will fulfill all the prophecies of scripture, including this unique Jewish time line!

The Last Lap or Daniel's 70th Week

Well, in A.D. 70 Titus, the Roman General destroys the Temple and Jerusalem and the last dispersion of the Jews begun. The Gentiles would trample down Jerusalem as reconfirmed by Jesus in Matt. 23:37, 38 and in the Olivet discourse until the times of the Gentiles are over. Incidentally Paul uses the Church Age to mark when this will end by saying that in the last days God through His Son Jesus Christ is saving a community of believers [both Jews and Gentiles] to be His Bride.

More so, in His eternal purposes God's attention has since been on the salvation of the Gentiles; and this time is running out. We must watch out, for since 1917, and especially May 15, 1948, Israel has become a sovereign state for the Jews. Since then, the Ezekiel dry bones exodus of Jews is gradually populating the Promised Land. After the six-day war of 1967, the Jews regained many of the holy sites including part of the Temple site.

Permit me to say here that from 1995 under 'Celebrate Messiah', the Jews started celebrating the 3000 years since their model King David made Jerusalem their capital. *Celebrate Messiah* in the annals of the Jews shows what they are anticipating; Jerusalem as their capital with the Temple Mount under Jewish total control. So, with the "nation of Israel", back in the Promised Land, since the official United Nations declaration on 15 May 1948, the curtain for His return is surely drawing closer than when we first believed. Notwithstanding, God would not wish that any one speculate on dates. In all these, the predominant feature of Jewish existence in the Land shall be marked by continued atmosphere of war. *"The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations*

have been decreed." says Daniel. Other nations, notably Arab nations, have conflict of interest with Israel, which shall cause wars unto the end (Ezek. 38; 39; Zech. 12; 14). We hence know that a period of *one week*, literally seven (7) years called Daniel's 70th Week is left for future fulfillment. Again, it is enough to occupy with kingdom living and business till He comes (Luke 19:13). Our business, though, is not to pinpoint the exact time for the start of that one week of years, for Christians are advised by the Lord Himself on this.

From Acts 1:6-8 we read: *"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'"*

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

"And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (Luke 21:24).

This is a crucial statement referring to the major world kingdoms as they relate to Israel in end-time prophecy. For purposes of clarity, it here indicates the continued period when Jerusalem will be destroyed and trodden down by Gentiles (which occurred in AD 70 under the command of Titus who later became a Roman Emperor), until the Jews regain total control of the city. In the general sense, it began in 606 BC when Babylon besieged Jerusalem and will span all the 490 years marked out in Daniel 9:24-27. In that case it would include the Tribulation under Anti-Christ rule until the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords (Zech. 14:9).

THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25).

This is the period when God, in His sovereignty, opens the door for Gentiles to enjoy, New Covenant blessings in Christ Jesus. Salvation in Christ is for both Jews and Gentiles, but the mercy of God has extended a special hand of grace to Gentiles. It is commonplace for Jews to disregard the Lord Jesus. The Bible refers to it as a little blindness on their part. This period, it is believed, started with Paul's ministry from the time when he declared, "*Lo we turn to the Gentiles*" - Acts 13:46. It will close with the rapture of the Church, when the Jews will once again become the centre of action under God's redemptive divine plan (Rom. 11:20-27).