

HOW LONG WAS THE DESOLATION OF ISRAEL?

TWO CONTRASTING VIEWS

How long was the Land of Israel Desolate under the Babylonian conquest of Judah?

There are two main views considered by Bible Students on the length of the period of the desolation of the land of Israel during the Babylonian captivity.

- 1) VIEW IN VOLUME 2: 70 years of complete desolation of the land – 606/7 BC – 536/7 BC.
- 2) VIEW MORE COMPATIBLE WITH SECULAR HISTORIANS: 51 years captivity/desolation - 587 BC - 537 BC. 70 year period in which Judah and the nations surrounding it serve the king of Babylon. This throws 2nd Volume chronology off by about 19 years.

WHY DOES IT MATTER WHICH VIEW IS CORRECT?

Cyrus' first year (of administration over the Jews – Ezra 1:1) was 536 BC which ended 70 years of desolation of the land. Therefore, the desolation of the land began in 607 (606.25) BC. That would have been when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and removed the remaining Jewish inhabitants from the land.

Volume 2 chronology is based on 70 full years of desolation, on which basis we arrive at 606/7 BC as the start of the Times of the Gentiles prophecy ($7 \times 360 = 2520$, when added to 606/7 BC brings you to 1914 AD). If the 70 years desolation is really only 51 years of desolation, this throws off the times of the Gentiles prophecy by 19 years.

Agreeing with secular chronology, some still begin the prophecy in 606/7 BC, but with a different event, which would be the first captivity of Judah by Babylon about 19 years earlier at the time of King Jehoiachin. With this adjustment, you still have 70 years, but only 51 of which were complete Land Desolation. Our objection is that we believe that the evidence shows that the Bible does not allow for any less than 70 complete years of land desolation.

SUMMARY OF WHAT THIS PAPER ATTEMPTS TO PROVE

We propose that the 70 years of Jeremiah are referring to 70 years of complete desolation of the land of Israel based on the following three lines of scriptural evidence that explain Jeremiah's 70 years:

- 1) 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 explains that Jeremiah is describing 70 years of desolation in which the land rests.
- 2) Daniel 9:1-2 explains that Jeremiah is describing the desolation and ruin of Jerusalem.
- 3) Leviticus 26:33-36 - Daniel 9:13 describes what Moses wrote in Leviticus about this punishment on Israel, showing that the land would be desolate, would rest and would enjoy her Sabbaths. 2 Chron 36:21 explains that this desolation to keep the Leviticus sabbaths would last 70 years.

Next, we will refute arguments against the a complete 70 years of desolation of the land. Then we will explain how Jeremiah 25 is describing the desolation of the land of Israel during a 70 year period during which various nations would serve Babylon.

Some have argued that vine dresses were left in to tend the land of Israel and therefore it would be literally impossible for there to be 70 full years of desolation. We will show how thoses vine dresses quickly left Judah and that there were none left to tend to the land and prevent this complete desolation of the land from occuring for a full 70 years.

Because of the detail that follows, it would be easy to get lost if you don't keep the above summary in mind. So we recommend that as you read through the details that follow, that you you refer back to this summary. As a matter of fact, to avoid confusion, we recommend that you read this short summary section one more time.

We will now begin by examing the three lines of scriptural evidence that show that Jeremiah is describing 70 years of desolation of the land of Israel.

1) 2 CHRONICLES 36:19-21 EXPLAINS THAT JEREMIAH IS DESCRIBING 70 YEARS OF DESOLATION DURING WHICH THE LAND RESTS

The most common line of evidence to supplort 70 complete years of desolation of the land per the Volume 2 chronology is found in the following passage:

2 Chronicles 36:19-21 (Isaac Leeser) "*And they [the Babylonians] burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and all her palaces they burnt with fire, and all her costly vessels they gave up to destruction. And those that had escaped from the sword did he carry into exile to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to the government: To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the LAND had satisfied its sabbaths; all the days of its desolation it [the land] rested, till seventy years were COMPLETED.*"

INTERPRETATION: The land lay desolate for 70 year as per 2nd Volume chronology. Next, we would like to consider two arguments that have been proposed to refute the Volume 2 view of 70 complete years of desolation of the land.

2) DANIEL 9:1-2 EXPLAINS THAT JEREMIAH IS DESCRIBING THE DESOLATION AND RUIN OF JERUSALEM

Daniel 9:1-2 (NASV): "In the first year of Darius... I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years."

As taught in the 2nd Volume of Studies in the Scriptures, "The Time is at Hand," here the NUMBER OF YEARS for the COMPLETION of the DESOLATIONS is 70 years, not 51 years, as is taught by the "New Chronology."

Let's notice two other more clear translations...

"the number of years... to fulfill the desolations of Jerusalem, 70 years." - Rotherham.

"the number of years... that he would let pass full seventy years over the ruins of Jerusalem." - Isaac Leeser.

We find it difficult to read this passage any other way than that the period of desolation would last a full 70 years.

Lesser uses the word ruins, instead of desolations. Actually, both words are accurate.

Desolations: Strong's 2723, New Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies. "to be dry; to be laid waist, desert... laid waist, destroyed, a laying waist, a laying waist, a desolation, a place laid waist, ruins."

When was Jerusalem in ruins, laid waste and made desolate? It was NOT in the 4th year of Jehoiachin when he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem as is taught by the "New Chronology". Jerusalem was not destroyed, and the kingdom was left in place, albeit as a vassal state to Babylon. It was 19 years later when Zedekiah was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. In Zedekiah's 11th year Jerusalem was destroyed, laid waste and made desolate, not 19 years earlier.

It's important to note that 2 Chron. 36:21 speaks of 70 years of desolation of the land, not of 70 years of captivity. Hence, this period of Desolation began in Zedekiah's 11th year, when the nation was destroyed, laid waste and remaining (most of) the people taken captive.

3) LEVITICUS 26:33-36 SHOWS THAT THE LAND WOULD BE DESOLATE AND REST FOR 70 YEARS (COMPARE DANIEL 9:13 & 2 CHRONICLES 36:21)

Daniel 9:1-2 (Isaac Leeser): "In the first year of Darius... I Daniel searched in the BOOKS for understanding concerning the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would let pass full seventy years over the ruins of Jerusalem." (NASV) "for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years."

What BOOKS were Daniel talking about?

Daniel was referring to Jer. 25:11; 29:10 and 2 Chron. 36:21, which all relate to Jeremiah describing the 70 years of complete desolation of the land. So Daniel is describing desolation of the land of Jerusalem, not serving Babylon for 70 years.

But there's another book which relates to the same 70 years Jeremiah spoke of...

Daniel 9:13 (Isaac Leeser): "As it is WRITTEN [in one of the "BOOKS"] in the law of Moses; all this evil came over us: yet offered we not any entreaty before the Lord our God, to return from our iniquities, and to become intelligent in thy truth."

Where did Moses write about "all this evil" that came over them? Daniel must have been referring to Leviticus 26 since there is no other passage in the books of Moses that apply. Clearly again, it relates to the desolation of the land. Nothing is mentioned about nations serving Babylon.

Leviticus 26:33-36 (Isaac Leeser): *And you will I scatter among the nations, and I will draw out after you the sword; and your land shall be a desolate wild, and your cities shall be a waste. Then shall the LAND satisfy its sabbaths, all the days of its desolation, when ye are in the land of your enemies: then shall the LAND rest, and satisfy its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation shall it rest, the time which it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. And regarding THOSE THAT ARE LEFT OF YOU, I will send a faintness into their hearts IN THE LANDS OF THEIR ENEMIES"*

Main points:

*Those left (who survive) will be in enemies land. No Israelite left in land.

*Land will rest during this period of desolation and ruin long enough to satisfy its sabbaths. How long would the land have to rest to satisfy its Sabbaths?

2 Chronicles 36:19-21: *"and they [the Babylonians] burned the house of God, and threw down the wall of Jerusalem, and all the palaces thereof burned they with fire, and all the precious vessels thereof he [Nebuchadnezzar] destroyed; and he exiled the remnant left from the sword into Babylon, where they became his and his sons as servants, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of God by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off her sabbaths, all the days of her lying desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil seventy years.*

Conclusion: We conclude then that the 70 years of Jeremiah are referring to 70 years of complete desolation of the land of Israel based on three lines of of scriptural evidence that explain Jeremiah's 70 years. Do you agree? Can you find any fault with this evidence?

REFUTING ARGUMENTS AGAINST 70 FULL YEARS OF LAND DESOLATION

ARGUMENT #1 - Jeremiah 29:10 is not a full 70 years

Some have argued that when Jeremiah 29:10 says, "seventy years COMPLETED for Babylon" and 2 Chron 36:21 says, "*till seventy years were COMPLETED*," that this does not mean that the Desolation was 70 years. They argue that the Desolation does not begin until 19 years into the 70 year period and continues till the 70 years are completed. This means the land rested only 51 years (not a full 70) during the Babylonian captivity.

OUR RESPONSE:

The word "complete" (Jeremiah 29:10; 2 Chron 36:21) in the Hebrew has the thought of "to fill" or "fully count". It does not include the thought of finishing of a count from somewhere in the middle (starting from 19th of 70 years).

Complete: Strong's 4390. New Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies, "*to fill; to be full; to give in full tale; i.e. to make up in full number*"

(Note: Webster's "tale: A reckoning by numbers; a count; enumeration." In our case, a full counting of numbers of years)

As indicated by the definition of the Hebrew, we do not start in the 19th year of a partially filled 70 year period. We start counting the 70 years desolation at the beginning of the 70 year period. The common use of this Hebrew word in scripture supports the 2nd Volume view.

Let us consider examples of how this same word (Strongs 4390) is used in scripture: All have idea of something starting out empty (not partially empty) and being completely filled.

Joshua 9:13 (NASV): "*And these wineskins which we **filled** were new, and behold they are torn..*"

The wineskins here started out empty, then were completely filled. They weren't partly filled then topped off.

1 Kings 18:35 (NASV): "*And the water flowed around the alter, and he also **filled** the trench with water.*"

Here Elijah filled an empty trench with water. The trench was not already partially filled with water.

Jer. 41:9 (NASV): "*Now as for the cistern... Ishmael the son of Nethania **filled** it with the slain.*"

Before Ishmael started filling the cistern with the slain, it was completely empty

Lev 25:29-30 (NKJV) "*29 'If a man sells a house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year he may redeem it. 30 'But if it is not redeemed within the space of a **full year**, then the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to him who bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee.*"

A man is allowed a full year, starting on day 1 of the day he sold his house, to redeem it.
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Lev 12:1-6 (NJKV): " 1 "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. 3 'And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4 'She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are **fulfilled**. 5 'But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days. 6 'When the days of her purification are **fulfilled**, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

Clearly the days of purification to be fulfilled are a full 30 or 60 days. There are no shortcuts here for a part of a 30 or 60 day period.

Summary: As used in the Bible, this word “completed,” (Strong’s 4390) in 2 Chronicles 36:21, has the thought of taking something empty and filling it. We are NOT talking about taking a glass half full and topping it off with water. We are NOT talking about beginning the Desolation 19 years into a 70 year period. This means starting out with an empty glass or beginning the 70 years desolation in year one. The ONLY way our conclusion could be wrong is if the word “complete” in Jeremiah 29:10 has a completely different meaning than all the other scriptural examples cited.

Conclusion: II Chronicles 36:21 has the thought of the land being desolate until the 70 years are filled or fully counted, starting from year one and going all the way to the end (the 70th year).

ARGUMENT #2 – Jeremiah 29:10 is 70 years of Nations Serving Babylon

Jeremiah 29:10 (NASV): *"For thus says the LORD, 'when 70 years have been completed **FOR** Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.'"*

If 70 years is FOR BABYLON, not IN or AT BABYLON, this scripture would allow for only 51 years actually ruled by Babylon for the seventy years, nineteen of which were in Judah.

OUR RESPONSE:

Some who understand Hebrew better than the author of this paper have explained that the word “For” is from the Hebrew el, or l- and explained as follows:

el, or l-, means "towards," "into," or by extension "for;" direction or motion is implied. In other words, for Babylon,' or 'to the benefit or detriment of Babylon?

We do not understand why so many translations indicate "IN" or "AT" Babylon if "FOR" is clearly the meaning. Here are translations using "IN" or "AT" -- Webster, NLT, NKJV, Lamsa, JB2000, Douay, Calvin Bible, Bible and AVRLE.

However, since more translations support the “FOR Babylon,” we will go with that understanding. So then, what is this 70 years FOR Babylon?

Jeremiah 29:10 is sufficiently vague that the answer is not clear without looking to other scriptures for clarification. We are inclined to think that these 70 years were “FOR Babylon” in the sense that during the 70 years of Israel’s Land Desolation, the benefit to Babylon was that many nations were subject to and served Babylon during this period of Israel’s punishment. This harmonizes with the three lines of scriptural evidence already considered for 70 complete years of Land Desolation

Let’s proceed to Jeremiah 25:12 since it is the only proposed concrete evidence that the main focus of the 70 years applies to this period of other nations serving Babylon.

ARGUMENT #3 – Jeremiah 25:11 says that nations serve Babylon for 70 years

A careful reading of Jeremiah 25:1-8 shows the God is specifically addressing Judah. As a matter of fact, verse 1 clearly states, “The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah...” (NASV)

Verse 9 mentions Babylon as the instrument for punishing Judah saying that God “...will bring them [Babylon] against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around...” (NASV)

It is important to note here that the mention of Babylon coming against other nations is incidental. As verse one shows, this prophecy is addressed to Judah. With that context in mind, we can understand verse 11.

Jeremiah 25:11 (NASV) “And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

The main point here is the punishment of Judah, that the whole land “shall be a desolation and astonishment.” Incidentally, during this 70 year period of Judah’s Land Desolation, “these nations shall serve the king of Babylon.”

If we we are wrong and if the main point here is that the nations serve Babylon for 70 years, then we must conclude that based on the three lines of scriptural evidence already presented, that Daniel and the writer of 2 Chronicles both misunderstood what Jeremiah was talking about. That could only be possible if 1) the Bible is not inspired or 2) if one the original manuscripts supporting these verses are corrupt.

Finally, if Jeremiah 25:11 is speaking about exactly 70 years of other nations serving Babylon we have a big problem in that the nations were conquered and made to serve Babylon over a period of years, hence selecting a start and end date becomes very subjective.

As we stated previously, some go with secular chronology and begin the 70 years of nations serving Babylon in about 606/607 BC with the conquering of Jerusalem at the time of King Jehoiachin. However the problem with this is that King Jehoiachin’s father, named King Jehoiakim had been a vassal to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon three years, then rebelled. For five years, Nebuchadnezzar prompted the surround nations to attack Judah before he besieged Jerusalem and took the new King Jehoiachin captive with ten thousands more leaving only the poor in the land.

The Pulpit Commentary discussing 2 Kings 24:1-6 says, “Jehoiakim meditated revolt from the moment of his submission; and within three years threw off the mask, and rebelled openly. Five years of struggle followed. Prompted by Nebuchadnezzar, “the nations set upon him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him,” {#Eze 19:8; comp. #2Ki 24:2} ravaged his territory far and wide, “destroyed” multitudes of the people, and, at last, “took the king in their snare,” {#Eze 19:8} and “brought him to the King of Babylon.” {#Eze 19:9} Nebuchadnezzar punished him with death, cast out his body unburied, and took as hostages to Babylon three thousand more of the upper classes of the citizens (Josephus, ‘Ant. Jud.’, 10:6. §3)”

Barnes Notes on 2 Kings 24:5 “Comparing #Jer 22:19 36:6,30; and #Eze 19:8,9, it would seem that Nebuchadnezzar must in the fifth or sixth year after Jehoiakim’s revolt have determined to go in person to Riblah, to direct operations, first against Tyre and then against Jerusalem.”

Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 9, ¶ 7 “...on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Celesyria; and when he had possessed himself of it, he made war against the Ammonites and Moabites; and when he had brought all these nations under subjection, he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned (16) and set up another; and he took those Jews that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon.”

So when does this 70 years of nations serving Babylon begin? Should we start it eight years before the first captivity when King Jehoiachin was overthrown? By secular reckoning, that brings us to about 614/615 BC (606/607 BC plus eight years). The New Chronology suggests 610 BC, however that puts us during the period of Jehoiakim’s five year rebellion. Can we honestly begin the 70 years of nations serving Babylon before Judah is serving Babylon and after they had previously been a vassal to Babylon. To complicate matters further, the quote from Josephus above shows that five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, that Babylon brought Egypt, Ammon and Moab into subjection. So now does that mean that we begin 70 years of nations serving Babylon five years after the destruction of Judah? We can only make sense of all this by simply understanding that Judah and all these surrounding nations were serving the King of Babylon during Judah’s 70 year period of Land Desolation, even if all of them were not in subjection for that full period, since after all, they are incidental to the 70 years of the land desolation of Israel.

DURING THE DESOLATION WAS ANYONE LEFT IN THE LAND AT ALL?

2 Kings 25:8-9 (NKJV): “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.”

2 Kings 25:11,12,22,25,26 (NKJV): “Then the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile. But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen... Now as for the people who were left in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, he appointed Gedaliah... over them... But it came about... that Ishmael... came with ten men and struck Gedaliah down so that he died along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. Then **ALL THE PEOPLE**, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.” (Note: See same in Jer 52:12-13 & 16)

CONCLUSION: In Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year, he burned Jerusalem, but left some of the poorest Jews to work the land. However, they ALL soon fled to Egypt. This means that not even one Jew was remaining in Israel. Do you think the Bible is exaggerating in using the word ALL?

Jeremiah 41:1-3, 16-18 (NKJV) “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... 16 Then Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, took from Mizpah all the rest of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah after he had murdered Gedaliah the son of Ahikam—the mighty men of war and the women and the children and the eunuchs, whom he had brought back from Gibeon. 17 And they departed and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is near Bethlehem, as they went on their way to Egypt, 18 because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had murdered Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor in the land.”

CONCLUSION: This context coincides with 2 Kings 25:25, Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year, at which time Gedaliah, his appointed governor, was murdered by Ishmael. Johanan recovered the Jews from Ishmael and began to lead the Jews toward Egypt for fear of the Chaldeans. Nothing is said of any Jews remaining behind in Israel.

Jeremiah 43:5-7 (NKJV) “5 But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to dwell in the land of Judah, from all nations where they had been driven— 6 men, women, children, the king’s daughters, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. 7 So they went to the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD...”

CONCLUSION: ALL the remnant of Judah – EVERY PERSON – went to Egypt. Not one Jew was left behind in Judah to work the land, even if that was the original intent. Hence the Land can be said to be desolate for the full 70 years.

Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 9, ¶ 6 “...both the people and Johanan disobeyed the counsel of God, which he gave them by the prophet [Jeremiah], and removed into Egypt...” This took place after the destruction of Jerusalem and overthrow of King Zedekiah.

CONFLICTING PASSAGE?

To refute the conclusion that no Jews were remaining in the land of Israel, the following verse is frequently quoted:

Jeremiah 52:29-30 (NKJV) “29 in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty–two persons; 30 in the twenty–third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty–five persons...”

Here it is interesting to read the account of Josephus.

Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 9, ¶ 7 “And when they [Jews] were there [in Egypt], God signified to the prophet [Jeremiah] that the king of Babylon was about making an expedition against the Egyptians, and commanded him to foretell to the people that Egypt should be taken, and the king of Babylon should slay some of them and, should take others captive, and bring them to Babylon; which things came to pass accordingly; for on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he... fell upon Egypt... and he took those Jews that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon.”

There can be no doubt from the account of Josephus that these remaining Jews were taken from Egypt, not Judah.

We know from the other passages already cited, that no Jews were remaining in Israel. So how then were 745 Jews carried away in Nebuchadnezzar’s 23rd year, four years after the burning of Jerusalem? The answer is that these are the Jews who had fled to Egypt, as we have already seen. Further details are provided in the next passage.

Jeremiah 42:15-18 (NKJV) “15 “Then hear now the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah! Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, 16 ‘then it shall be *that* the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there *in* Egypt; and there you shall die. 17 ‘So shall it be with all the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to dwell there. They shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. And none of them shall remain or escape from the disaster that I will bring upon them.’ 18 “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘As My anger and My fury have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will My fury be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. And you shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more.”

If you look up all these scriptures, it becomes clear that ALL THE PEOPLE left Israel. If in spite of the words of scripture, one wants to argue that there must have been some ongoing presence of Jews in Israel, then let’s follow that logic to it’s ultimate conclusion, that there was never a day when there wasn’t at least one Jew in Israel to tend the land during the 70 years Desolation. Taking that approach, you would have to conclude that there never was a period of Desolation, even for 51 years.

JOSEPHUS VIEW OF WHEN THE 70 YEARS DESOLATION BEGAN

Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book 20, Sections 224 - 251 (about the high priests) “[231] After those thirteen high priests, eighteen took the high priesthood at Jerusalem, one in succession to another, from the days of king Solomon, until Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made an expedition against that city, and burnt the temple, and removed our nation into Babylon, and then took Josadek, the high priest, captive; [232] G the times of these high priests were four hundred and sixty-six years, six months, and ten days, while the Jews were still under the regal government. [233] But after the term of seventy years’ captivity under the Babylonians, Cyrus, king of Persia, sent the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, and gave them leave to rebuild their temple; [234] G at which time Jesus, the son of Josadek, took the high priesthood over the captives when they were returned home.”

CONCLUSION: Josephus starts the 70 years desolation with the destruction of the Jewish temple. This would be in King Zedekiah of Judah's 11th year.

Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 7, ¶ 3: "...Zedekiah... revolted to the Egyptians, in hopes, by their assistance, of overcoming the Babylonians. When the king of Babylon knew this, he made war against him: he laid his country waste, and took his fortified towns, and came to the city Jerusalem itself to besiege it.... Jeremiah... prophesied... that the king of Babylon... would destroy the people by famine, and carry away those that remained into captivity, and would take away what they had as spoils, and would carry off those riches that were in the temple; nay, that, besides this, he would burn it, and utterly overthrow the city, and that they should serve him and his posterity seventy years; that then the Persians and the Medes should put an end to their servitude, and overthrow the Babylonians; "and that we shall be dismissed, and return to this land, and rebuild the temple, and restore Jerusalem."

CONCLUSION: Josephus begins the 70 years at the destruction of Jerusalem and ends the 70 years with the overthrow of Babylon by Persia and the Medes.

Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 9, ¶ 7 "...the king of Babylon, who brought out the two tribes, (17) placed no other nation in their country, by which means all Judea and Jerusalem, and the temple, continued to be a desert for seventy years..."

CONCLUSION: The context here is after the destruction of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's 11th year. Notice the expression "continued to be a desert for seventy years." Josephus here connects the 70 years to Judea being "a desert," this harmonizing with the concept of Land Desolation.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

"The Gentile Times Reconsidered" by Carl Olof Johnson is based on his research from "The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings" by Edwin R. Thiele and the Parker and Dubberstein chronology which is the standard view of secular authorities. However, if we trust the standard view of secular authorities, then should we not accept the theory of evolution? Is the secular chronology reliable? Interestingly, in recent years, denominational Christian with no vested interest in the JW or Russell chronology are increasing debating and questioning the accuracy of these conclusions: Here are examples where Thiele's work is questioned:

http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/2_09/

<http://ldolphin.org/barrychron.html>

Some Bible Students are taking notice of the works of Rolf J. Furuli.

<http://www.gramma.dk/produkter/persian-chronology-and-the-length-of-the-babylonian-exile-of-the-jews/>

Some Bible Students have ordered his impressive two volume set (over 1,000 pages) on "Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian Chronology Compared with the Chronology of the Bible" in which he refutes in several ways the popular Parker and Dubberstein chronology.

Although some like me find the accuracy and confirmation of time prophecy faith strengthening, it should not be an area of judging and dividing brothers and sisters in Christ.

A new movie on dating the Exodus (and that it actually happen), six independent arch. proofs along with an excellent demonstration on why the Egyptologist get it wrong. All we have to do is make the 1 Kings 6:1 adjustment of 100 years and Volume 2 chronology is within a decade of the Exodus date. www.PatternsOfEvidence.com

FINAL CONCLUSION

Chronology is the foundation upon which time prophecy is built. We know that it is said of Christ "Whom the heavens must receive until the time of restitution of all things" Acts 3:20. The 7th Thousand Year Day marks the time of Christ's return and restitution. Sevens are used throughout the Bible. 7 x 7 Sabbath days brings you to Pentecost. 7 x 7 Sabbath years brings you the Jubilee year. And 50 x 50 Jubilee years brings you to the Grand Antitypical Jubilee in 1874, or to the Grand 7th Thousand Year Sabbath/Jubilee. The Jubilees of Lev 25 were a time to set slaves free and to return lost land to former owners. Antitypically, since our Lord's Return in 1874, we see the cry for liberty, freedom and human rights around the world as never before. Land has been returned to the former colonies of European empires; and these former colonies have become independent countries. These are the small beginning stages of restitution, leading toward a much grander and complete fulfillment, once the Mediator is complete and ready act. The reliable chronology provided by the Lord to the 7th Messenger (Luke 12:37,42) has stood the test of time and we can firmly trust that the Lord has provided "meat in due season" that is accurate and true. Like Abraham, we must be patient, trusting in God's plan, not our own solutions.

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January 1, 2017