

PREFACE

The Bible's chronology as with all else in Scripture is given and preserved by the Holy Spirit. Chronology gives the Bible its form, its structure, its actuality. The Bible can be tested in all points, and so in the subject before us it can be tested as regards *time*. Our study here presents the view that the Bible (the King James Version translated from the Masoretic and Received Texts) gives a complete, unbroken chronology of the years from the creation of Adam to the Death of Christ on the Cross. There are no gaps. The Bible and the Bible alone gives the complete chronology of the years from the First Adam to the Last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45). The Bible is not dependent in any way upon secular chronology to "fill in" any supposed gaps.

The above may be taken for granted among Bible believers, but the actual case is in fact substantially different. The standard Bible chronology followed for many generations presupposes a gap in the Biblical Record of about 90 years and seeks to fill that gap by resorting to secular history. This supposed gap lies at the beginning of the famous *Seventy Weeks of Daniel*. By following the "conventional wisdom" of standard chronology this great portion in the Book of Daniel is dislodged from its place as the primary cornerstone of history, chronology and prophecy.

Another chronological problem of an entirely different nature, and indeed one that has been called the Bible's *Crux Chronologorum* is also dealt with in this book. The period concerned is that from the Exodus to the building of the Temple and involves some 130 years.

I would like to express special thanks to Clive Spencer-Bentley, whose studies in chronology provided part of the incentive to undertake this project, and who also typed the initial manuscript. Inestimable help was received through access to the British Museum and British Library here in London. The book was written over a seven-year period from 1993-1999, and amidst a busy schedule of tract evangelism, pastoring and missionary work in London.

The Authorized Version is the basis of this chronological study and is followed and upheld at every point.

In these days when it is common to chip away at the Bible, and no less at its chronological framework, it is the author's desire that *Bible Chronology: The Two Great Divides* will provide help in the *Defense of the Unbroken Biblical Chronology from Adam to Christ*.

J. A. Moorman London, England 2010

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“And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.”

(I Kings 6:1)

SAMPLE

INTRODUCTION

Back in 1995/96 Jerusalem celebrated the 3000th anniversary of its founding by King David, and it did so on the basis of Edwin Thiele's chronology which has been in popular use since the 1950s. But the date 1005 BC for that event is in contrast to the traditional Ussher date of about 1048 BC, when David captured Jerusalem and two or three years later when he brought the ark into the city. Which is right? Further, orthodox rabbis say that the anniversary was being observed *136 years too early* (*London Times*, 9 March 1995). When we go to the Bible itself (the Authorized Version), does it confirm that David established Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 1048, 1005, 869, or another date?

Before *other factors* are considered it is likely that Ussher's date would be the correct one. Thiele to a certain extent manipulates the Scripture chronology. And, for some truly astounding reasons the orthodox Jewish date is *miles off*.

The purpose for writing this book is to demonstrate the extent to which the *other factors* mentioned above affect the dating of events in Scripture. There are several places of marginal disagreement, but two areas are so fundamental in nature that they are here presented as The Two Great Divides. And before accepting a chronologist's Old Testament dates it is important to enquire as to how he approached these *Two Divides*.

The second of these *Divides* affects the timing of Jerusalem's 3000th anniversary (and a lot more!). It concerns the question of *how long* the Kingdom of Persia lasted, and *when* Daniel's Seventy Week prophecy actually commenced. If the traditional dates are accepted - that Babylon fell to Persia in 539 BC, that Daniel was given the Seventy Week prophecy in 538 BC, that Cyrus allowed the Jews to return in 536 BC, that Ezra returned to Jerusalem in 458 BC, and that Nehemiah returned in 445 BC at which time the Seventy Weeks begin - then a number of questions need to be answered.

- How old is Ezra as a co-reformer with Nehemiah in 445 if his father Seraiah was slain by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC?
- How old are sixteen to twenty leaders who returned with Zerubbabel in 536 BC if they also lived to seal the covenant with Nehemiah in 445 BC?
- Why was Nehemiah so distressed to hear about the destruction of Jerusalem's walls and gates if it happened 141 years before (586-445 BC)?

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY: THE TWO GREAT DIVIDES

- Why do 483 years (69 weeks) from 445 BC extend well beyond 33 AD? Is Sir Robert Anderson's solution valid? Are there *Biblical* reasons for *not* dating the Seventy Weeks from Cyrus' decree?
- And, the question with the most tragic answer of all - Why do the Jewish people say the current year (2010) is 5771? And why does their traditional chronology, the Sedar Olam, reckon only 53 years from Cyrus to Alexander?

The other *Divide* we are examining occurs before Jerusalem's capture by David. It concerns the length of time from the Exodus to the building of Solomon's Temple. According to I Kings 6:1 it is 480 years. But if the time periods are added up in Exodus to I Kings, and also in Acts 13:18-21, they are shown to be over 600 years. This has been called the *Crux Chronologorum*. But as we will show, this seeming contradiction opens up some wonderful truths about the Lord's forgiveness that could not otherwise be known.

Apart from marginal disagreements (except in the case of Thiele) as to how long the divided monarchy lasted, there is little in the other periods of Old Testament chronology that is not straightforward for the Bible believer. The *Two Divides*, however, are different, and cannot be approached without a good deal of prayerful and diligent study.

We begin by showing how seven generally conservative¹ and representative chronologists approach the TWO GREAT DIVIDES.

CHAPTER ONE

SEVEN CHRONOLOGIES COMPARED

The chronologies we are about to look at show an unbroken linkage from Adam to the end of the seventy-year captivity. Such a linkage is perfectly evident in God's Word. But the question arises as to whether there is a clearly defined Biblical link after the captivities. If the Seventy Weeks of Daniel do not directly connect with the captivities and span the period down to the time of Christ, then there is in fact no Biblical link to rely upon and extra-Biblical sources must be used. Most today believe that this latter is the case, and though Daniel received the Seventy Week prophecy in 538 BC, it did not commence for another 93 years until 445 BC when Nehemiah in Artaxerxes' 20th year was given permission to build the walls of Jerusalem.

The fact that most accept that such a gap exists is not really due to a search of Scriptures which may be relative to this question, but rather, *and this is crucial*, to the calculations and influence of a famous 2nd century AD astronomer, astrologer and geographer. Before we look at our seven chronologers, we must first introduce

PTOLEMY AND THE CANON

Based on historical sources and astronomical calculations made at Alexandria, Egypt, from 127 to 151 AD, Claudius Ptolemaeus composed a list of rulers (Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Grecian, Roman and others) for some nine centuries down to his day. The list gives the number of years a king reigned, and some of the kings are linked to lunar eclipse data which Ptolemy gleaned from historical records. Apart from this there is no explanatory detail in the list. The Canon begins with the first year of the Babylonian King Nabonassar, and all other reigns are dated from his first year. According to Ptolemy's figures, Anno Nabonassar 1 would equal 747 BC. There are other secular records and inscriptions that give chronological details for parts of this period, but Ptolemy's Canon is the only extra-Biblical authority that claims to bridge the *entire* span from 747 BC to the Christian era.

In a number of instances the Canon appears to conflict with Scripture. The notable example: if 536 BC is the date for Zerubbabel's return and 445 BC for Nehemiah's return (both based on Ptolemy's data), how is it possible that sixteen and more priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:1-9) could also sign the covenant with Nehemiah after the wall building (Neh. 10:1-10), 91 years later?

In the crucial Persian period, Ptolemy lists ten kings from Cyrus to the last Persian king before Alexander the Great, whereas their epic poet Firdusi (931-1020 AD) in his versification of Persian history names six monarchs, as does also Josephus (37-103 AD). The *Sedar Olam* (2nd century AD), the standard Jewish chronology, gives only three kings and has the Persian Empire lasting but 53 years. Certainly greater attention needs to be given to the wording in Dan. 10:19-11:4, which seems clearly to point to a shorter time frame than that given by Ptolemy.

Regarding Ptolemy's eclipse data it should be pointed out that in each year there are at least two solar eclipses, and as many as three lunar eclipses, with the total sometimes as many as seven. Therefore it is not unusual to have eclipses occurring during or near a number of important events each year. If there were only several eclipses each century this would be a valuable pointer for dating events in the ancient world. But as there are several each year, it is about as tenuous as attempting to date events in "ancient Florida" by the occurrence of hurricanes! Further, do we know that the observations were accurate and accurately preserved, and does it clearly indicate the location of the observation, and whether the eclipse was solar, lunar, total, partial or annular? Apart from three eclipses said to occur in 381 and 380 BC,² there are no further eclipses mentioned from the 31st year of Darius Hystaspes (the Persian king who allowed the Jews to resume building the Temple) down to Alexander the Great - the period of time most in dispute!

Despite these and other objections, Ptolemy's Canon has been universally accepted and few Bible chronologists are prepared to suggest any major departure. They merely *slide* the long span from Adam to the captivities into alignment with the Canon's dating of the Persian Kingdom. Thus the Canon rather than the Seventy Weeks has become the primary basestone for the Inter-Testamental Period.

With these factors in mind, and realizing that Bible Chronology is a subject of ongoing study with perhaps some aspects not to be understood before the Lord returns, it will help us put things into perspective by comparing seven important and representative works.

First among the mighty, and the standard against which all others are measured, we mention briefly the work of –