

ISRAEL: God's Timepiece

Matthew 24:32

Revelation 11:2 says, *"The Gentiles will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months."* This statement necessitates discussion of three issues: 1) *the Times (or fullness) of the Gentiles*, 2) *the Servitude of the Nation/Babylonian Captivity*, and 3) *The Desolations of Jerusalem*. These events are interrelated and a basic understanding of each will demonstrate to the student of scripture the unfailing precision and integrity of Bible prophecy.

The Times of the Gentiles

Jesus Himself explained the meaning of this term on Olivet. Luke 21:24 reads, *"...Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* In simple terms, the *Times of the Gentiles* refer to a time in which Jerusalem and/or Israel is under foreign (non-Jewish) control. In Revelation 11:2 we learn clearly when this period of time will expire - at the end of the 7-year Tribulation. The forty-two months mentioned in verse 2 refers to the **last half** of the Tribulation (see Daniel 9:27 for further clarification). Until such time that Jerusalem will never again *"be trampled underfoot,"* the times of the Gentiles will continue. It is apparent then that this period did not end on December 9, 1917 when British General Edmund Allenby of the Allied Expeditionary Force took control of Jerusalem from the Turks. Neither did the *Times of the Gentiles* end on May 14, 1948 when the state of Israel was reborn. And it likewise did not end on June 7, 1967, when control of Jerusalem came into

the hands of the Israeli government. All of these events **precede** the Tribulation Week and, therefore, cannot mark the end of the *Times of the Gentiles*. Additional evidence that the *Times of the Gentiles* is still in effect is found in Romans 11:26, which states that, upon completion of this time period, "*all Israel shall be saved*." Is all Israel saved today? Certainly not. We are, therefore, still in the *Times of the Gentiles*.

The *Times of the Gentiles* means that Israel is oppressed by other nations; specifically that the Jews (for one reason or another) are not living in and/or maintaining complete control over the land of Israel, as partitioned to them by God. Finis J. Dake, noted Bible scholar and author of the Dake Reference Bible, writes:

By the term "the Times of the Gentiles" we mean the administration of the Gentiles, as the rod of chastening upon Israel to further God's purpose concerning them. It will end at the return of the Messiah in glory when He will deliver Israel from the Gentiles and exalt them as the head of all nations in the Millennium and forever (Romans 11:25, Revelation 19:11-20:10). Because Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles during the last 42 months of this age, it is certain that "the Times of the Gentiles" will continue until then.

The vast majority of Bible scholars, including Grant Jeffrey, Hal Lindsey and Clarence Larkin, give 606 B.C. as the starting point of the *Times of the Gentiles*.

This is when Israel was conquered and Jerusalem attacked by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Daniel 1:1). From that time until today, Israel in part or in whole has been under the control of the Gentiles (non-Jews). Today, ownership of old Jerusalem is disputed on the international level, while the Palestinian Authority claim it as their own. It is apparent then, that we are still living in the *Times of the Gentiles* and will continue to do so until the end of the coming Tribulation Week.

Servitude of the Nation

The term *Servitude of the Nation* refers to Israel and is a component of the *Times of the Gentiles*. It also began in 606 B.C. and appears to have **two** past fulfillments. Jeremiah the prophet prophesied in 609 B.C. that Israel would be taken captive by the King of Babylon and made to serve him for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11). According to sound historical data, the fulfillment of that prophecy began in 606 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Palestine and made his first siege upon Jerusalem. According to Thomas Nelson's footnote in the New King James Bible, that captivity or "servitude" ended on schedule - precisely seventy years later. This was the first and immediate fulfillment concerning Israel's seventy years of servitude. However, there appears to also be a second and more far-reaching fulfillment of the same prophecy.

In Ezekiel 4:4-6, we have additional prophecy concerning judgments upon Israel (and Judah). God told Ezekiel, who prophesied from 593 to 571 B.C., that He intended to judge Israel for a period of 430 years (390 for Israel and 40 for Judah). According to Leviticus 25:18, the children of Israel would be judged seven-fold if they repeatedly disobeyed God. Their failure to keep the sabbaths

of the land (2 Chronicles 36:21) and other acts of disobedience against God's statutes, imposed this seven-fold judgment. When applied to the 360 years of remaining judgment (430 minus the 70 years in Babylon), we find that Israel's total period of judgment is 2,520 years (360×7). This would commence at the end of the Babylonian captivity.

To find out in what year this servitude of 2,520 years would end, we must convert Bible years to solar (calendar) years. Revelation 11:3 makes it clear that a biblical year consists of 360 days. Multiplying this by the total number of years ($2,520 \times 360$), we get 907,200 days. We can now convert to "solar" years by dividing the number of days in a calendar year (365.25) into the total number of days (907,200). That gives us 2,483.8 solar (calendar) years. Hal Lindsey reports in *The Rise of Babylon and the Persian Gulf Crisis* that the Babylonian captivity ended in the summer of 537 B.C., 70 **solar** years after it started. Counting 2,483.8 years from that time (only one year between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1), we, incredibly, arrive at May 14, 1948 - the very day that Israel ended her servitude by becoming a nation again!

Desolations of Jerusalem

If the above were not enough to convince us that prophecy is real and that God keeps His Word, we also have the prophecy concerning the *Desolations of Jerusalem*, which Daniel recorded in 539 B.C., "*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*" (Daniel 9:2). Whereas the 70 years of "servitude" was upon Israel **as a nation**, the 70 years concerning the "*completion of the desolations of Jerusalem*"

pertains specifically to **the city of Jerusalem**. These two periods of 70 years are separate and distinct from one another.

Although Israel was annexed by Babylon in 606 B.C., **Jerusalem** was not conquered until 19 years later (Jeremiah 52:12-14), when on 17 TAMMUZ, the walls of the city were breached by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian guard. Twenty-one days later, on 9 AV, the Babylonian army ascended Mt. Moriah and burned the Temple to the ground. According to the Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 693, this occurred in August, 587 B.C. Daniel 9:2 foretold that the "*desolations of Jerusalem*" would end after seventy years. Using solar years of 365.25 days and adjusting for leap years, those seventy years concluded on August 16, 518 B.C. (thanks to mathematicians/engineers Chuck Missler and Dan Brauer who independently verified the accuracy of this date). According to the Eerdmans Bible Dictionary, p. 571, Zerubbabel and a few faithful Jews had returned to Jerusalem and completed restoration on the Temple by 516 B.C. (Ezra 3:1-4:6), indicating that, indeed, the "*desolations of Jerusalem*" did end on schedule and the seventy years concerning the "*completion of the desolations of Jerusalem*" were fulfilled in history, exactly as pre-recorded in Scripture.

A most amazing discovery comes to light when we again apply the seven-fold judgment of Leviticus 26 to the 360-year time frame discussed previously. Converting to the calendar year time of 2,483.8 years, and counting forward from August 16, 518 B.C. (one year for 1 B.C. to A.D. 1), we arrive at June 7, 1967! This, of course, was Israel's "six day war" in which they **recaptured old Jerusalem**. Is this not a fitting "completion" to the "*desolations of Jerusalem*"? I think so.

It is apparent that these two sets of seventy are distinct from one another because of the 19-year time variance given in 2 Kings 25:8. Also, the "*desolations of Jerusalem*" came as a result of Israel's resistance to the years of "servitude." Three times, Jerusalem was attacked because of Israel's refusal to submit to God's judgment upon them. Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument used to chastise His people (Jeremiah 27:6-8). Because of their efforts to resist the King of Babylon (in spite of Jeremiah's ongoing warnings to the contrary), King Jehoiakim was killed, his son, Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon and the next king, Zedekiah, had his sons slaughtered before him and his eyes put out (2 Kings 24:1-25:7). None of this was necessary and would not have happened if Israel would have believed the prophecy and submitted to God's program. As a result, God's warning of seven-fold judgment came upon them and what could have ended in 70 years, instead was extended to 2,520 years!

The foregoing testifies to the trustworthiness of God's Word and the consistent precision in which His prophecies are fulfilled. Let us therefore learn these lessons from history and, for the days ahead, know that "*We **also** have the prophetic word which is **more sure**, to which **we do well to heed** as a light that shines in a dark place...*" (2 Peter 1:19).

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