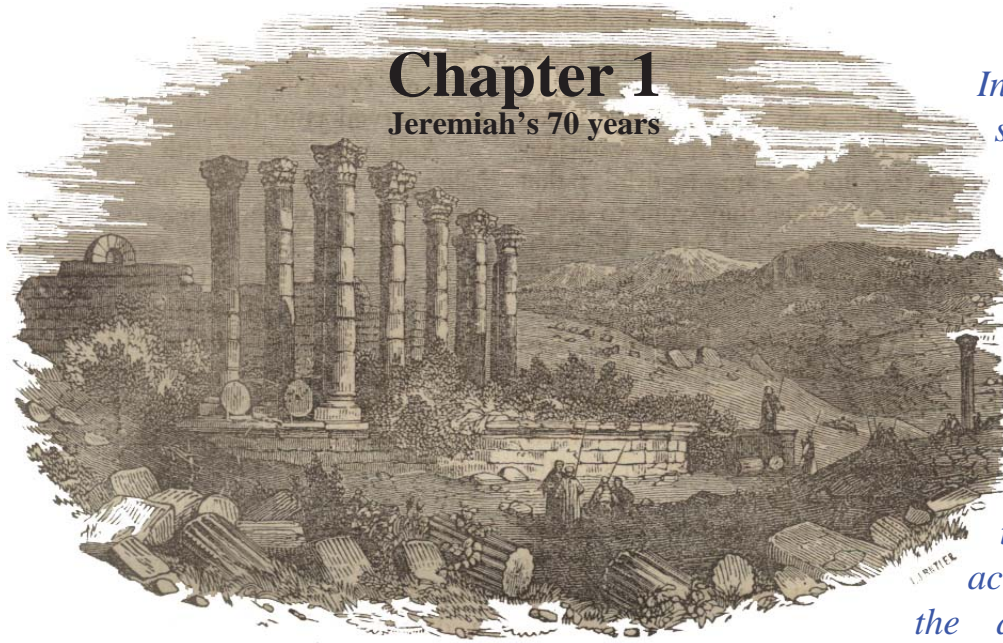


Chapter 1

Jeremiah's 70 years



Daniel 9:1-2

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; ² In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of YHWH came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

In 604 BC a young man's life would change forever. At the time he or those around him didn't know it but his life and experiences would have profound effect on the course of human history for more than 2600 years. This young man was a Hebrew of the "children of Judah". On that fateful day in 604 BC Nebuchadnezzar "king of Babylon" came up and laid siege of Jerusalem. He took captive some of the wisest and smartest young people in the land of Judah. Among these young people was Daniel and his three companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel and his companions were placed under the watchful care of Melzar, by Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs. Daniel grew in favor as the years passed. In time he became one of the wisest and most influential men in Babylon. Because of his faith and wisdom during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar he became second unto the king in the land of the Chaldeans and one of the most powerful men of his age. What is even more amazing and compelling about Daniel is the influence his words have had over the last 2600 years.

Not only did Daniel find favor in the eyes of Melzar, Ashpenaz and Nebuchadnezzar but more importantly he found favor in the sight of YHWH our Creator. In Ezekiel 14, Daniel is named with Noah and Job as one of three faithful and "righteous" men. Daniel was used by YHWH to influence the course of history. Through a series of visions YHWH gave Daniel the ability to interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. Because Daniel was the only "wise man" of Babylon able to interpret these dreams Daniel became second unto the king. During Daniel's life he was given additional visions by YHWH concerning the future of the children of Israel and the end of this age. By far the most influential vision Daniel was given was the vision concerning the coming of the promised Messiah. This vision is found today in the Bible in the book of Daniel chapter 9.

Daniel chapter 9 is arguably the most important Messianic prophecy in the Scripture. Its importance is found in the fact that it connects the coming of the Messiah with specific historical events. This unique feature provides the ability for us to prove or disprove the validity of the Messiah. For those who preceded the Messiah in centuries past, this prophecy gave hope that the Messiah would come in their generation. For those who have followed the Messiah this prophecy provides proof of the Messiah and confirmation of the Scriptural record. For many centuries the predominately accepted interpretation among biblical scholars has retained wide acceptance. This interpretation in general is based on the following beliefs:

1. The commandment to "restore and build" was given by Artaxerxes (Longimanus) circa 464-424 BC
2. The 70 "weeks" of years are based on a modern Biblical year.
3. The 69th & 70th "week" are separated by almost 2000 years.
4. The "Covenant" is one made and confirmed by man.

While on the surface this commonly accept interpretation seems to satisfy the requirements of Daniel 9 there remain unanswered conflicts between this interpretation and the Scriptural record. Specifically, this interpretation does not harmonize with the chronology of the Scripture. If we are going to claim that Yashua (Jesus) fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel 9 it is incumbent upon us to ensure that our interpretation does not contradict the Scripture. There will always be those who question the validity of Yashua’s life and testimony. We should be extremely careful that the impetus for that questioning does not come from those of us who are students and believers of the Scripture.

It is my hope to take a fresh look at Daniel chapter 9 and the 70 “weeks” vision. Since this vision in Daniel 9 links Scriptural and historical events it is imperative that we build our interpretation upon the most accurate chronological foundation possible. Without the right context you cannot possibly have the correct interpretation. While the 70 “Weeks” vision is in the strictest sense, limited to the few verses towards the end of chapter 9. It is my belief that all of Daniel chapter 9 is important to understanding the vision of 70 “Weeks” and developing an accurate Scriptural context. In fact, I believe the rest of Daniel 9 provides several important “keys” which provide a much deeper understanding of this vision. So with that in mind let’s start at the very beginning. Let’s take a fresh look at Daniel’s introduction to this vision and begin the process of laying a firm foundation upon which to base our understanding.

Daniel introduces the vision of 70 “Weeks” in verses 1 & 2 with a reference to the seventy years captivity spoken of by Jeremiah. Why are these 70 years mentioned as an introduction to this Messianic prophecy? What is so important about this period of 70 years desolation prophesied by Jeremiah that Daniel thought necessary to mention it.

Notice Daniel says he “understood” the “number of years” spoken about by Jeremiah. Daniel likely understood that his captivity under Nebuchadnezzar started the 70 years spoken of by Jeremiah. Now Daniel as an old man in the 1st year of “Darius the son of Ahasurus” by faith believed that those 70 years



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were at or drawing to a close. Let’s take a closer look at the 70 years captivity and its chronological context. If these 70 years were relevant enough for Daniel to include as an introduction to the 70 “Weeks” vision it surely is worthy of some further examination by us. We may in fact find that this

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Jeremiah 25:9-13

⁹ Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith YHWH, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an 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 candle. ¹¹ And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith YHWH, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. ¹³ And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

Jeremiah 29:10-24

¹⁰ For thus saith YHWH, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith YHWH, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. ¹² Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. ¹³ And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. ¹⁴ And I will be found of you, saith YHWH: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith YHWH; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

and Judah. There was to be a period of 70 years when the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem would be captives in Babylon. Second this period of 70 years would end with the punishment of the king of Babylon and his land. 2 Chronicles 36:19-23 adds even more details. It states that Judah and Jerusalem were taken captive by Babylon for 70 years and they were held captive until the reign of the kingdom of Persia. Further we see that this 70 year captivity was punishment in part because Judah had not been keeping the land Sabbath rests. They had not been letting the land rest every 7th year. Finally in order to fulfill the 70 year prophecy of Jeremiah, YHWH “stirred up” Cyrus the king of Persia so the captives would be allowed to return to the land of Israel and build “an house in Jerusalem”. It should not be overlooked that Cyrus states clearly that this “stirring” by YHWH was in his view to “build Him (YHWH) a house in Jerusalem”. This building a “house in Jerusalem” is the event that marks the end of the 70 years captivity of Judah. Both Ezra 1 and 2 Chronicles 36:19-23 state that Cyrus was stirred up by YHWH to build the Temple in order that the words of Jeremiah might be fulfilled. The start of the 2nd Temple construction then marks the end of the 70 years spoken of by Jeremiah.

70 year captivity has a far deeper chronological significance than may have been first supposed.

First let’s look at the prophecies as given by Jeremiah. This will give us a starting point. There are two places in Jeremiah which mention the 70 years. Let’s start by looking at Jeremiah 25:9-13 then Jeremiah 29:10-24.

A few things are apparent from these two passages. First, YHWH was going to bring Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem

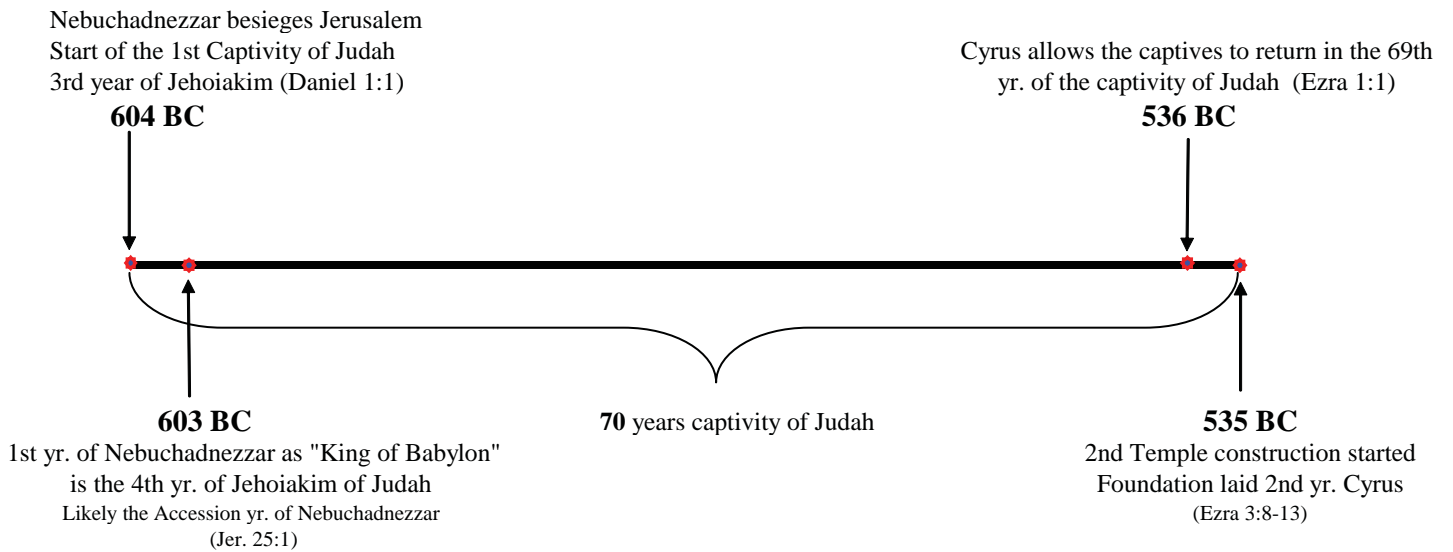
2 Chronicles 36:19-23

¹⁹ And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. ²⁰ And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: ²¹ To fulfil the word of YHWH by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: or as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. ²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of YHWH spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, YHWH stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, ²³ Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath YHWH God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there



This chapter has introduced us to Daniel and the 70 year captivity of Judah. In each subsequent chapter we will fill in additional chronological detail and context. Chapter 1 is only meant to lay a simple foundation. Lets continue then by further exploring the historical context of the Babylonians, the Medes, and the Persians as they relate to Daniel, the captivity of Judah and the Countdown to the Messiah.

Plate 1 - Jeremiah's 70 years



Jeremiah among the ruins of Jerusalem - Bendemann