

Introduction

The following article is a transcript of an article appearing in the July 1, 1923 issue of *The WATCH TOWER*, along with the following time-line chart for the years BC 650 to BC 530. It is a clear and strong support of Bible Chronology presented by C. T. Russell.

* Sharing this well researched article does not endorse numerous revisions adopted after 1916.

After Pastor Russell's death in 1916, there surfaced a number of revisions of the accepted Bible Chronology. The November 1921 issue of the PBI-*The Herald Magazine*, replaced the 606 BC date with 588 BC and proclaimed 1933 as the end of the Gentile Times. In the May 1 and 15, 1922 issues of *The Herald* there was an extensive case for revising and using a "new chronology." Many readers of *The Watch Tower* were also readers of *The Herald Magazine*.

Among those with the *Watch Tower Society* were some who defended the chronology presented in Volume 2 of *SCRIPTURE STUDIES*. The May 1, 1922 *Watch Tower* opens with an article including these excerpted comments on The Gentile Times:

"Another test is on. Who will weather the storm? ... About a year ago there began some agitation concerning chronology, the crux of the argument being that Brother Russell was wrong concerning chronology and particularly in error with reference to the gentile times. ... Agitation concerning the error in chronology has continued to increase throughout the year ... let us come to an honest examination of the facts."

That was the first of six *Watch Tower* articles supporting the chronology. The last being this one in July 1923. As a summary of the previous five, we found it to be a most clear and precise evidence for the chronology used by Bible Students today. It biblically and historically addresses many challenges that still persist to our times.

The author is not listed. Years later, even the *Watch Tower* itself moved on with revisionism. Yet in 1923 they offered a scholarly biblical defense for *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Volume 2.

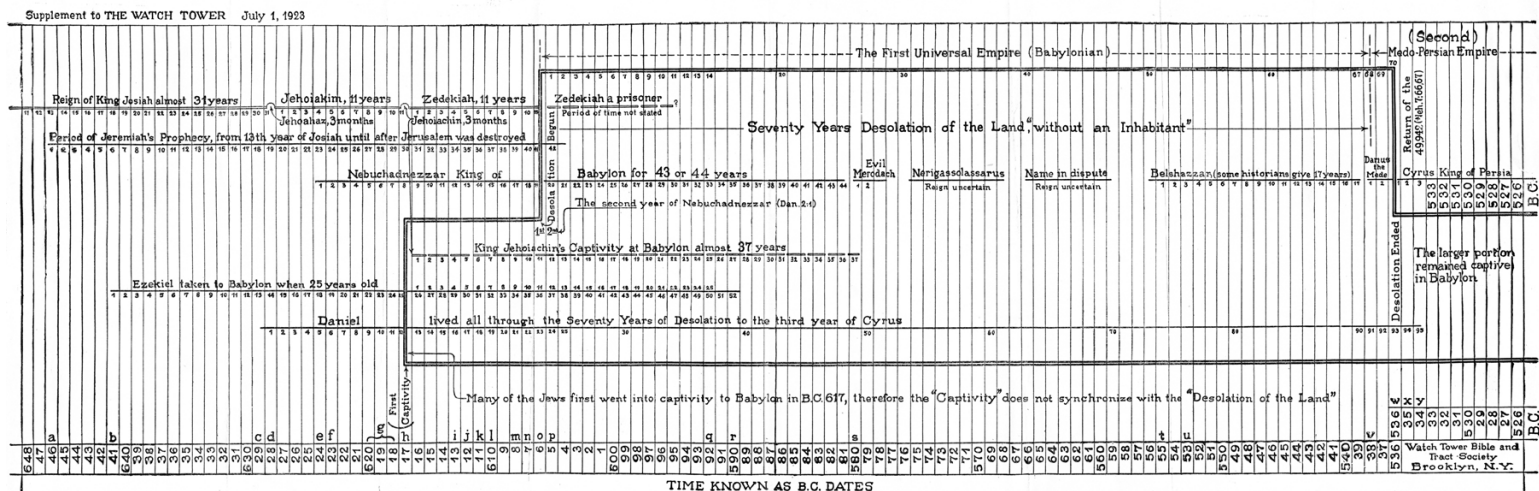
The full version chart is most useful by examining its details. Zoom or scroll horizontally to examine the years and events. There is a section with **EXPLANATION OF THE CHART**.

Then for supporting evidence for each of the lower case letters associated with various years, the reader may proceed to the section under **CITATIONS AND QUOTATIONS** and look for the same letters associated with those years.

Below is a reduced image of the chart. Open the full chart separately from:

www.biblestudentarchives.com/documents/ClearVisionChart.pdf

A CLEAR VISION OF CHRONOLOGY (from BC. 650 to BC. 530)



A CLEAR VISION OF CHRONOLOGY

IF FULL understanding of all the details of chronology had been necessary to victory in the race for the high calling, it would have been supplied all down through the Gospel age. After the apostles fell asleep chronology was little noticed until about “the time of the end.” As the time drew near for the setting up of the kingdom, God began to arouse some of his servants to the time-features of his plan, that the church might not be in darkness, as stated by the Apostle.—1 Thessalonians 5:1-8.

² We have often noticed travelers who paid little attention to their time-tables until nearing their destination; then they began to scan the schedules closely to see whether their trains were on time. Their knowledge, or lack of it, would not affect the arrival of the train, but would have considerable to do with their preparations. So with God’s consecrated people as they near their destination.

³ Aside from the Bible record the history of the human race in its infancy is very uncertain. Family history passed from father to son by word of mouth for centuries. The rising generations were more or less migratory; and, as families became more numerous and daily affairs were more pressing, it was easy to lose interest in the past and to throw about it the halo of tradition. Occasionally kings desired to have their exploits recorded that future generations might know of their greatness; thus records of the reigning families were kept, and stored in the palaces of the kings. Wars were frequent; and the victor usually cared little or nothing for the history of the vanquished, and if it were preserved, it might be altered that the importance of the victor should appear the greater. This continued more or less until about 600 to 800 years before Christ. Then secular history began to come more into vogue, but was not very popular or reliable.

⁴ The record of the Jews is a notable exception. God provided them with a complete connected history from the creation of the first man to their exodus from Egypt. This, together with their own carefully kept records to project the line of succession of their priesthood and kings, continues until their return from the Babylonian captivity, 3592 A.M. At that date secular history becomes reliable, and from then on Jewish history is disconnected. This of itself is remarkable.

⁵ The problem of the historians has been to connect properly the historical events during and prior to the Babylonian captivity. The history of the Jews runs parallel with that of the Babylonians for nearly ninety years, and they touch at many points. The Bible records of this period make frequent mention of Babylonian kings, and incidentally throw considerable light upon that nation. It is for this reason that historians generally endeavor to carry the chronological line through the Babylonian and Jewish records. One date of connection is very generally agreed upon; but, not properly reading some of the Jewish prophecies and the records of their fulfillment, by endeavoring to connect up other dates chronologers differ considerably. They generally miss the correct dates by about eighteen or nineteen years.

⁶ There need be no difficulty, however, if the Bible records are followed carefully. That all may easily see that we have been correct in the dates given in the SCRIPTURE STUDIES and THE WATCH TOWER, we herewith present an outline chart, showing the harmony of the references in the Scripture, and giving explanations of apparent difficulties. By it may be located the time when many of the prophetic visions were given, especially those in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

⁷ Those who have relied too much upon secular history have become confused, and begin to entertain doubts about the Bible record, which is the only “sure foundation” for God’s people.

⁸ Chronology itself is not a vital doctrine, necessary to salvation: but it is closely related to the doctrines, and gives great aid to a proper understanding of God's Word at this time. Let all who are interested give it a careful study.

⁹ The points of difference by historians lie chiefly between the dates of 536 B.C. and 630 B.C. The connected Bible history ends with the return of the Jews under Zerubbabel at the close of the seventy years of "desolation of the land," usually termed the seventy years of captivity. This was 3592 years from the creation of Adam, and was "the first year of Cyrus king of Persia." This "first year of Cyrus" is very generally accepted as 536 B.C.

¹⁰ All admit that if the last year of the seventy was 536 B.C. the first year must have been 606 B.C. With what event in Jewish history did the seventy years begin? It should be noted that the chronological line, as recorded in the Bible, is given by faithful, holy men, chosen by God as his special servants; and that therefore it is reliable; wicked, faithless men and heathen nations are referred to only incidentally, as they come in contact with God's people.

¹¹ That all may compare some of the "conclusions" of secular historians we quote from "McClintock & Strong's Cyclopedia" [Babylonia]: "Nebuchadnezzar pressed forward and had reached Egypt, when news of his father's death recalled him; and hastily returning to Babylon, he was fortunate enough to find himself, without any struggle, acknowledged king, B.C. 604." The list of Babylonian kings is given as follows:

Nabopolassar	625 to 604 B.C.	21 years
Nebuchadnezzar, his son	604 to 561 B.C.	43 years
Illoarudamus, his son (Evil-Merodach)	561 to 559 B.C.	2 years
Nerigassolassar	559 to 555 B.C.	4 years
Nabonadius (jointly with his son Belshazzar)	555 to 538 B.C.	17 years

¹² This reaches down to 538 B.C., when Darius and Cyrus, at the head of the Medes and Persians, took Babylon; when the second world empire arose. Two years later Cyrus became sole ruler, 536 B.C.

¹³ The above list states that Nebuchadnezzar did not become king until 604 B.C. The united testimony of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel is that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon when the seventy-year period of Jewish captivity began. This is acknowledged to be 606 B.C. To bridge this difficulty, it is "assumed" that he reigned jointly "with his father" for two years. From the statement in Jeremiah 25:1-3 that "the fourth year of Jehoiakim ... was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon." It is further "assumed" that the fourth year of Jehoiakim must therefore be the first year of the captivity, and therefore 606 B.C. That being "settled," all other dates are made to harmonize therewith. They "conclude" that Nebuchadnezzar was considered as king, though reigning with his father from 606 to 604 B.C. This shows the method of arriving at the dates given in the margin of some of the Oxford Bibles, which follow the chronology of Bishop Usher. Note marginal references opposite Jeremiah 25:1 and 11. This throws the reckoning off at least eighteen years. See marginal reference opposite 2 Chronicles 36:19. There is no need of following this further.

¹⁴ We now note the clearness of the Scriptural records. Jeremiah 25:1 reads: "The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the *first* year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon." Nothing in that verse intimates where Nebuchadnezzar was at the time Jeremiah had this word from the Lord. The Prophet simply gave the date when he received it, the twenty-third year of his prophecy (v. 3), by referring to two kings, one of Judah and one of Babylon. In verses 9 to 12 he prophesies that God WILL BRING Nebuchadnezzar against the *land*, and that the children of Israel WILL

BE TAKEN to Babylon for a period of seventy years, during which time there would be a complete desolation of the land. This was fulfilled nineteen years later, commencing in 606 B.C. The captivity recorded in 2 Kings 24:8-16 took place when Jehoiachin had begun his reign (vs. 6, 8) in 617 B.C., at which time the land was *not* made desolate (v. 14). These two events should not be confused.

¹⁵ God knew that his children today, at this testing time, when all manner of deceptions would abound to “deceive if possible the very elect,” would need a “thus saith the Lord” as a sure foundation. He therefore overruled that his servants the prophets should include in their writings all the information necessary to form a complete connected line from Adam to the time when secular history became reliable.

¹⁶ Those who follow the evidence herewith presented will see the accuracy and simplicity of the record. We give many citations, also quotations from corroborative records in harmony therewith. The latter are not necessary, for the Bible record is complete in itself; but these additional testimonies often include interesting details not found elsewhere.

¹⁷ God told Daniel that he did not purpose that “the wicked” should understand. His information was only for the “wise,” those willing to look to God. These wise ones are willing to begin at the beginning with confidence that God will supply his own with all that is needed; for the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

¹⁸ God’s servants of old wrote at different times and under greatly varying circumstances: therefore we should not expect to find all the data assembled in one place, but “here a little, there a little.” Occasionally references were made to events with which many at the time of the writing were familiar, and details were not necessary. As time passed, the details would become obscured; and only the slight references found in the records remained. Again, if God had designed that the wicked should not understand, we can see another reason for scattering the links, to be readily found when really needed.

¹⁹ No attempt is here made to enter into details of days or months of the beginning or ending of the reigns of the various kings. Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin each reigned three months, but in the Bible records these are absorbed in the reigns of predecessor or successor. This is proved by the overlapping periods mentioned in other Scripture references, as will appear later.

EXPLANATION OF THE CHART

²⁰ The spaces between the light vertical lines represent one year each. It begins with the thirteenth year of Josiah, 646 B.C., as that was the year in which Jeremiah began his work as a prophet; and Jeremiah figured prominently during much of the period under discussion. It closes with the third year of Cyrus, the date of Daniel’s last recorded vision. Bible references to dates following that year are not directly connected with preceding events, hence cannot be used. The lower line of figures represent dates known as Before Christ, usually written with B.C. and read from right to left, because reading backward from the date of Christ’s birth. The small letters above this line refer to notes which are given in this explanation. They are placed at the dates in which the events referred to in the references or quotations took place. Space is too limited to write them all down on the chart. By reference to the citations, notes and quotations it will be readily seen which dates synchronize and thus form a harmonious whole.

²¹ There is but one event connected with and located in both Jewish and secular history that can be definitely dated in each. This is the “first year of Cyrus king of Persia.” The Bible date is 3592 A.M., and the secular date is 536 B.C. This fact should not be overlooked, and was evidently arranged by Jehovah that the man of God might be fully convinced. More connections are not necessary.

²² All dates prior to 536 B.C. should be built upon the Bible record. Secular history is no standard by which to correct supposed errors in the Bible. Starting, therefore, with “the first year of Cyrus” as 536 B.C., we see the seventy years of “desolation of the land” must have begun seventy years prior, or 606 B.C. With what event in Jewish history did the land become desolate? Leviticus 26:34, 35 reads: “Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as *long as it lieth desolate*, AND *ye be in your enemies’ land* [note that the two conditions must synchronize—the inhabitants would be captives and the land desolate]; even *then* shall the *land* rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. As *long as it lieth* DESOLATE it shall rest; BECAUSE *it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.*” This was a prophecy. Jeremiah 25:11,12 reads: “And *this whole land* shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished—.” Here the length of time is given, as also in Jeremiah 29:10. 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 explains further. After describing the complete destruction of the temple, the city of Jerusalem and the captivity of all the people this record says: “To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.*” Surely this is simple enough. The land must be desolate for seventy years to keep her sabbaths; at the same time the people of Israel must be captives in an enemy’s land.

²³ Jeremiah 52:12-15 states that these conditions commenced in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, and not in his first year. 2 Kings 25:2-8 definitely connects the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar with the eleventh year of Zedekiah. The overthrow of Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, and the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, must be the event which marked the beginning of the seventy years’ desolation, or 606 B.C. From this it is easy to figure the date of any of the kings. Zedekiah had reigned eleven years. His reign must have begun eleven years prior to 606 B.C., or 617 B.C. Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years; thus his reign began 628 B.C. Josiah reigned thirty-one years, beginning 659 B.C.; and so on as far back as one cares to go. Jehoiachin was dethroned, and many of the Jews were taken captive in 617; but as long as there were people in the land and the city of Jerusalem was inhabited and the sacrifices at the temple continued, the land could not be said to be “without an inhabitant,” and keeping her sabbaths.

²⁴ There are some passages of Scripture which at casual reading seem to be out of exact harmony: but a little investigation clears the apparent discrepancy. Jeremiah 52:28,29 mentions some events as taking place in the *seventh* and *eighteenth* years of Nebuchadnezzar; whereas 2 Kings 24:12 and Jeremiah 52:12 mention the *eighth* and *nineteenth* years as the dates for the same events. Any careful reader can easily see that the last seven verses of Jeremiah must have been added by some later writer. (Note Jeremiah’s own statement in 32:1.) Ezra is usually credited with this addendum, as he is also credited with the compiling of the records of the Chronicles. Ezra was born and reared in Babylon, but did not return to Jerusalem until the seventh year of Artaxerxes, some sixty-nine years after 536 B.C. (Ezra 7:7,8) Being an educated scribe, he might easily have adopted one of the Assyrian dates. Babylon belonged to Assyria at that time. The following quotation from “The Assyrian Canon,” by George Smith, will be interesting here:

²⁵ “Among the Assyrians the regnal years of the kings were not reckoned from the day of accession, but from the Assyrian’s New Year’s day either before or after the day of accession. There does not appear to have been any fixed rule as to which New Year’s day should be chosen; but from a number of known cases, it appears to have been the general practice to count the regnal years from the New Year’s day next after the accession, and to call the period between the accession day and the first New Year’s day, ‘The beginning of the reign’; while the year from the New Year’s day was called ‘The first year’; and the following ones were numbered successively from it. Nevertheless, in the dates of several Assyrian and Babylonian sovereigns, there are cases

of the year of accession being considered as the first year, thus giving *two* reckonings for the reigns of the following monarchs: Shalmanezzer, Tiglath Pileser, Sargon, Sennacherib and *Nebuchadnezzar*.”

CITATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

a Thirteenth year of Josiah, and beginning of Jeremiah’s work as a prophet.—Jer. 1:2;
B.C. 646 25:3.

b *a.* Eighteenth year of Josiah, and the year of the great passover of Josiah.—2 Kings
B.C. 641 22:3; 2 Chronicles 34:8; 35:1-19.

b. Probable date of Ezekiel’s birth.—Ezekiel 1:1, 2.

c Estimated date of Daniel’s birth. Jerome, one of the early church writers (340-430
B.C. 629 A.D.), states that Daniel was probably about twelve years of age when taken to
 Babylon. It is evident from Daniel 1:3 that he was one of the nobility who were taken
 captive in 617 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar carried many of the princes and chief men to
 Babylon.—Jeremiah 24:1; 27:20; 29:2; 2 Kings 24:14.

d *a.* Death of King Josiah—2 Kings 23:29,30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24.

B.C. 628 *b.* Jehoahaz reigns three months.—2 Kings 23:31; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4.

c. Jehoiakim begins his eleven-year reign.—2 Kings 23:34-36; 2 Chronicles 36:5-8.

d. The date of the death of Josiah, which is the same as the first year of Jehoiakim, is an important date. It is also connected with Egyptian history, which in turn is connected with Babylonian history, which closely touches Jewish history; and incidentally it refers to a number of dates, and these latter definitely locate the beginning of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. We therefore include a number of quotations with the Scripture references.

e. Pharaoh-Necho was king of Egypt, and also of Syria, a country lying to the northeast of Palestine. (This should not be confounded with Assyria, which lay further to the east along the Euphrates river, and of which Babylon was at that time the capital.) Pharaoh decided to enlarge, his domain by overrunning parts of Assyria. He left Egypt with a large army, following the Mediterranean coast line past Palestine, en route to Carchemish, a city on the banks of the Euphrates about 600 miles from Egypt and 500 miles north from Babylon. On his way thither King Josiah attempted to hinder him at Megiddo and was killed. (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24) It appears that Pharaoh proceeded to Carchemish, stationed a strong garrison there, and returned to Egypt, without attempting to invade Assyria at that time. On his way back, about three months later (2 Kings 23:29-34; 2 Chronicles 36:1-3) he deposed Jehoahaz, whom the Jews had chosen as king in place of Josiah, and placed Jehoiakim on the throne at Jerusalem, taking Jehoahaz as prisoner to Egypt.

f. The following quotation is from “Smith’s Bible Dictionary,” under the heading of Carchemish:

g. “Carchemish is not, as has generally been supposed, the classical Circesium. It lay much higher up the Euphrates. ... It seems to have commanded the ordinary passage of the Euphrates, ... and thus in the contentions between Egypt and Assyria its possession was of primary consequence. Carchemish appears to have been taken by Pharaoh-Necho shortly after the battle of Megiddo, and retaken by Nebuchadnezzar after a battle three years later.”

h. As Josiah was slain in 628 B.C., three years later would be 625 B.C.

i. Note also the following from “Smith’s Bible Dictionary,” under the heading of Pharaoh-Necho:

j. “At the commencement of his reign he made war against the king of Assyria, and, being encountered on the way by Josiah, defeated and slew the king of Judah at Megiddo. ... Necho seems to have soon returned to Egypt; perhaps he was on his way thither when he deposed Jehoahaz. The army was probably posted at Carchemish, and was there defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in the fourth year of Necho [this is evidently intended for the fourth year of Jehoiakim], that king [Necho] not being, as it seems, then at its head. This battle led to the loss of all Asiatic dominions of Egypt.” This was in 625 B.C., or the beginning of 624.

k. Jeremiah 46:2 reads: “Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah.”

e a. Fourth year of Jehoiakim.—Jeremiah 25:1; 36:1; 45:1; 46:2.

B.C. 624 b. First year of Nebuchadnezzar.—Jeremiah 25:1.

c. Jeremiah writes his prophecy of 36:1-8.

d. Notice that Jeremiah 25:1-3 connects the *first* year of Nebuchadnezzar with the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim, and also covers the entire period from the *thirteenth* year of Josiah to this *twenty-third* year of Jeremiah’s office as prophet. This bridges over the three months’ reign of Jehoahaz and shows that it was not counted in the reckonings of years.

e. It was during this year, seven years before any captives had been taken to Babylon, that Jeremiah first states the length of time as seventy years that would come as a punishment for their evil ways. Jeremiah 25:11 reads:

f. “And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

g. This was also the date of the battle of Carchemish. Josephus makes the following statement, in “Antiquities,” Book 10, Chapter 6:

h. “In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, one whose name was Nebuchadnezzar took the government over the Babylonians; who at the same time went up with a great army to the city of Carchemish which was at the Euphrates; upon a resolution that he had taken to fight with Necho king of Egypt, under whom all Syria then was. [We recall that Necho had left a large garrison there three years previously. No doubt this was a constant irritation to Babylon.] When Necho understood the intention of the king of Babylon, that this expedition was made against him, he did not despise the attempt; but made haste with a great band of men to the Euphrates, to defend himself from Nebuchadnezzar. And when they had joined battle he was beaten, and lost many thousands of his soldiers. So the king of Babylon passed over the Euphrates, and took all Syria as far as Pelusium, *excepting Judea*.”

i. Pelusium is at the northeast corner of Egypt, and southwest of Judea. Josephus says that Nebuchadnezzar did not touch Jerusalem at this time, but passed it by. Nebuchadnezzar was not yet really “king of Babylon,” but was acting as general of his father’s army. It was at Pelusium that he heard of his father’s death. The following from “McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopaedia” is to the point:

j. “A few years later, he was placed at the head of a Babylonian army, and sent by his father, who was now old and infirm, to chastise the insolence of Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt. This prince had recently invaded Syria, defeated Josiah, king of Judah, at Megiddo, and reduced the whole tract from Egypt to Carchemish on the upper Euphrates, which in the partition of the Assyrian territories on the destruction of Nineveh had been assigned to Babylon. Necho had held possession of these countries for about three years, when Nebuchadnezzar led an army against him, defeated him at Carchemish in a great battle, recovered Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and

Palestine, took Jerusalem [Josephus says he PASSED BY JUDEA on this trip, and to that the Scriptures agree], pressed forward to Egypt, and was engaged in that country or upon its borders when intelligence arrived which recalled him hastily to Babylon. Nabopolassar, after reigning twenty-one years, had died, and the throne was vacant; or, as there is some reason to think, Nebuchadnezzar, since he appeared to be the 'king of Babylon' to the Jews, had really been associated with his father. In some alarm, however, about the succession, he hurried back to the capital, accompanied only by his light troops; and crossing the desert, probably by way of Tadmor, or Palmyra, reached Babylon before any disturbance had arisen and entered peaceably on his kingdom."

k. The above authority dates this as 604 B.C., but it is easily proved that the correct date must have been 624 B.C.

l. In the Scripture there is no mention of Nebuchadnezzar's taking Jerusalem prior to 617 B.C., when Jehoiakim surrendered the city and was himself slain and thrown over the walls. Josephus says a threat of Nebuchadnezzar so frightened Jehoiakim (in 620 B.C.) that he consented to pay tribute, and continued to do so for three years.

m. Note an interesting sidelight here. The Rechabites had been living in tents to the north of Judea. When Nebuchadnezzar followed Necho, taking over Syria and northern Palestine, the Rechabites would be in the line of march of the two armies. They became fearful and hurried to Jerusalem for safety. "But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go up to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem." (Jeremiah 35:11) Jerusalem had not then been taken by Nebuchadnezzar, as is easily seen by verse 17, which tells of a punishment yet to come.

f Date of Jeremiah's prophecy of 36:1-8, which Baruch read in the temple, and later
B.C. 623 before King Jehoiakim, who burned it.—Jeremiah 36:9-32.

g a. Jehoiakim begins to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, and continues it for three
B.C. 620 years (until 617 B.C.)—2 Kings 24:1; Daniel 1:1.

to 618 b. It is evident that Jehoiakim could not have become tributary to Nebuchadnezzar in the first year of Jehoiakim. Pharaoh-Necho still controlled Jerusalem to some extent, for he had set Jehoiakim upon his throne; and it was not until three years later that he was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. We quote again from Josephus, "Antiquities," Book 10, Chapter 6:

c. "But when Nebuchadnezzar had already reigned four years [therefore in his fifth year], which was the eighth year of Jehoiakim's government over the Hebrews [Note how this harmonizes with Jeremiah 25:1; if Jehoiakim's fourth year were Nebuchadnezzar's first year, Jehoiakim's eighth year would be Nebuchadnezzar's fifth year. See chart], the king of Babylon made an expedition with mighty forces against the Jews, and required tribute of Jehoiakim; threatening upon his refusal to make war against him. He was affrighted at this threatening, and bought his peace with money; and brought the tribute he was ordered *three years*. But on the third year [actually the eleventh year of Jehoiakim's reign], upon hearing that the king of Babylon made an expedition against the Egyptians, he did not bring his tribute; yet he was disappointed in his hope; for the Egyptians durst not fight at that time."

h a. Eleventh year of Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim refuses to continue to pay tribute to
B.C. 617 Nebuchadnezzar.—2 Kings 24:1.

b. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took it in the eighth year of his

(Nebuchadnezzar's) reign. (2 Kings 24:11,12) Carried many captives to Babylon, including all the princes.—Verse 14.

c. Death of Jehoiakim.—2 Chronicles 36:6; Jeremiah 22:18,19; 36:30.

d. Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah) appointed king by Nebuchadnezzar, three months later deposed by Nebuchadnezzar, and together with his mother, wives, and princes of the land, and much treasure and many vessels of the temple, taken to Babylon.—2 Kings 24:10-16.

e. Nebuchadnezzar appoints the uncle of Jehoiachin, Mattaniah (later known as Zedekiah), as king over Jerusalem.—2 Kings 24:17,20.

f. The captives taken to Babylon at this time included all the princes and nobles of the land, among whom were Ezekiel and probably Daniel and his three companions.—Ezekiel 1:2; Daniel 1:1-3.

g. This must have been considered an important date, as all of Ezekiel's dates are based upon it.—Ezekiel 1:2; 40:1, etc.

h. Josephus in the same chapter before quoted says:

i. "A little time afterward, the king of Babylon made an expedition against Jehoiakim; who received him into the city, and this out of fear of the foregoing predictions of Jeremiah, as supposing he should suffer nothing that was terrible; because he neither shut the gates, nor fought against him. Yet when he was come into the city, he did not observe the covenants he had made; but he slew such as were in the flower of their age, and such as were of the greatest dignity; together with their king, Jehoiakim, whom he commanded to be thrown before the walls, without any burial [Compare Jeremiah 22:18,19], and made his son Jehoiachin king of the country, and of the city; he also took the principal persons in dignity for captives, three thousand in number, and led them away to Babylon, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel, who was then but young [though in his twenty-fifth year, Ezekiel 1:1,2]. And this was the end of King Jehoiakim, when he had lived thirty-six years and reigned eleven. But he was succeeded in the kingdom by Jehoiachin. ... He reigned three months and ten days."

j. There is no Scriptural record of any prisoners or temple vessels being taken to Babylon prior to this date, 617 B.C. Daniel 1:1 (which refers to "the third year of Jehoiakim") could not refer to the third year after Jehoiakim began to reign, but rather to the third year of his vassalage, for it was then he refused to pay tribute; for Nebuchadnezzar was not king of Babylon at that time, as already shown. (See B.C. 624 l; 606 c, d, e; 605 j.)

k. Josephus adds another interesting item, "Antiquities," Book 10, Chapter 7:

l. "After the king of Babylon had given the kingdom to Jehoiachin, he repented of what he had done; fearing lest he might excite a revolt, to revenge the death of his father. [A footnote adds that Nebuchadnezzar heard that Jehoiachin had already entered into a confederacy with the king of Egypt, as his successor (Zedekiah) did, and therefore sent an army against him, in the very beginning of his reign.] He therefore sent an army, and besieged Jehoiachin in Jerusalem. Because he was of a gentle and just disposition, he did not desire to see the city endangered on his account; but took his mother, and kindred, and delivered them to the commanders sent by the king of Babylon, and accepted of their oaths, that neither should they nor the city suffer any harm. This agreement, however, was not observed for a single year; for the king of Babylon gave orders to his generals to take all that were in the city captives; both the youth and the handicraft men, and bring them bound to him; their number was 10,832; as also Jehoiachin, and his mother and friends. And when these were brought to him, he kept them in custody, and appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be king; and made him take an oath that he would certainly keep the kingdom for him, and make no innovation, nor have any league of friendship with the Egyptians [which oath Zedekiah broke and which the Prophet declared was the direct cause why God sent Nebuchadnezzar later to overthrow him.—Ezekiel 17:11-21]."

- i a. Date of the false prophecy of Hananiah and of Jeremiah's reply, as recorded in
B.C. 613 Jeremiah 28:1-17.
- b. Also the year that Jeremiah wrote a letter to those captives already in Babylon
who had been disturbed by Hananiah's false prophecy, that they should not expect to return for
fully seventy years.—Jeremiah 29:1-32.
- c. Jeremiah sent this letter by Seraiah, who doubtless accompanied Elasah and Gemariah,
special messengers of King Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the fourth year of
the reign of Zedekiah. Compare Jeremiah 29:1-3 with 51:59-63.
- d. In this letter is the second prophecy of the seventy years, and this was seven years before
the final overthrow of Jerusalem at the beginning of the seventy years of desolation in 606 B.C.
Compare Jeremiah 29:10 with 51:59.
- j a. The fifth year of the captivity of Ezekiel and Jehoiachin.—Ezekiel 1:2.
B.C. 612 b. The thirtieth year mentioned in Verse 1 doubtless refers to Ezekiel's age. This
 would make him twenty-five at the time of his captivity, and thirty at the time he saw
the vision, the age at which a priest might enter upon the priestly work. In Verse 3 he claims to be
a priest, and he could not enter the priesthood under thirty.
- k Sixth year of his captivity, date of vision recorded in Ezekiel 8.
B.C. 611
- l Seventh year of his captivity. Ezekiel received the instructions recorded in chapter
B.C. 610 20.
- m a. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon.—2 Chronicles 36:13.
B.C. 608 b. Nebuchadnezzar begins the siege of Jerusalem, about November or December.
 —2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4; Ezekiel 24:1,2.
- n a. *Tenth* year of Zedekiah, *eighteenth* year of Nebuchadnezzar.—Jeremiah 32:1,2.
B.C. 607 b. Tenth year of the captivity of Ezekiel, and date of the message from the Lord as
 recorded in Ezekiel 29.
- o a. *Eleventh* year of Zedekiah, *nineteenth* year of Nebuchadnezzar.—2 Kings 25:2,8;
B.C. 606 Jer. 52:5,12.
- b. Jerusalem taken, and destroyed: the walls broken down; all the palaces destroyed:
the temple burned—about July, after eighteen months' siege (See 608 b).—2 Kings 25:4,9,10;
2 Chronicles 36:18,19; Psalms 74:6-8; 79:1-7; Jeremiah 52:13.
- c. Beginning of the seventy years of "desolation" of the land; for the inhabitants were all
removed, with the exception of a few who fled to Egypt some months later. There was nothing
left in the land or the cities, "to fulfil the word of the Lord ... until the land had enjoyed her
sabbaths, ... to fulfil threescore and ten [seventy] years."—2 Chronicles 36:21; Leviticus
26:33-35.
- d. The remainder of the gold, and silver vessels of the temple, and the brass pillars of the
court were also taken to Babylon. Judea became a desert, without an inhabitant.—2 Chronicles
36:18; 2 Kings 25:13-17.
- e. Zedekiah's sons were slain before his eyes; and then his own eyes were put out and he was
carried to Babylon, where he died, but never saw it. Thus a double prophecy was fulfilled. See
Jeremiah 32:4,5; 34:3; Ezekiel 12:13.
- f. Gedaliah appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as governor over the few hundreds left in the land.
He was soon murdered; and the rest fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah and Baruch with them.
—Jeremiah 39:7 to 43:13.

g. The whole land of Palestine was not desolated, but that part usually known as Judea, comprising approximately that portion originally given to Judah and Benjamin. The Samaritans continued to live in their land during the entire seventy years. See later note.

h. Eleventh year of the captivity; date of Ezekiel's prophecy of chapter 31.

p a. Date of Ezekiel's prophecy as recorded in chapters 32 and 33. See 32:1; 33:21.
B.C. 605 b. Let us here consider a few scriptures which apparently contradict each other.

2 Kings 24:8 gives the age of Jehoiachin as eighteen years, and 2 Chronicles 36:9 gives it as eight. One is evidently an error by some copyist. (See note on page 53 of Volume II, SCRIPTURE STUDIES.) This is not very important and does not affect chronology in the least. There are a few others which have bothered historians, though they do not affect the chronological chain either; for the entire period is otherwise covered. But they are interesting; and as some have been inclined to stumble over them we will notice them briefly.

c. Daniel 1:1 reads: "In the *third* year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it." In the margin of many of the Oxford Bibles the date of this is given as 607 B.C., and the seventy years captivity is supposed to have begun the next year, 606 B.C. (See reference opposite Verse 2) 2 Kings 24:1 is often quoted to support this calculation.

d. A careful reading of 2 Kings 24:1-4 will show that it does not state that Nebuchadnezzar "came up" to Jerusalem. The Hebrew word here rendered "came up" is rendered seventy-eight different ways in the King James version. It is the word *alah*. The Lord used bands of the Chaldees, and of the Syrians, of the Moabites, and of the children of Ammon to harass Jehoiakim, no doubt at the command of Nebuchadnezzar; for Jehoiakim paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for relief.

e. Jeremiah 25:1 informs us that the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim was the *first* year of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 46:2 corroborates that statement. All the connecting dates between Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiakim and Zedekiah fall into line, as already shown. These all show that Nebuchadnezzar could not have taken Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim; for he did not defeat Pharaoh-Necho until the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Therefore some other explanation of the statement of Daniel 1:1 must be found. Possibly some copyist has made a mistake; and as it was not a connecting link in the chronological chain, God did not see fit to have it corrected, but left us sufficient evidence to cover the entire period without this. However, Daniel was writing from Babylon, and being high in official position, possibly even copying from the Babylonian records as to dates, might have referred to this as the third year of Jehoiakim as being under King Nebuchadnezzar, which we have found to be the case. This third year of vassalage was the eleventh year of his reign, and was the date that Daniel 1:2 was fulfilled.

f. Another text is Daniel 2:1, which reads: "And in the *second* year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar," etc., he had his wonderful dream together with some exciting experiences for the wise men of his realm, as related in the second chapter. Verse 1, if given its usual interpretation that this was actually the second year that Nebuchadnezzar had been king, will not harmonize with Daniel 1:5,18. Notice the inconsistency.

g. Suppose the first year of Nebuchadnezzar to be the year that Daniel and his companions reached Babylon, and that Nebuchadnezzar immediately gave the instructions as recorded in Daniel 1:5. If the king had his dream in his *second* year, it must have occurred while Daniel and his companions were still at school. The latter part of the chapter says that Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed with the interpretation of the dream, and the evident favor of God with Daniel, that he "fell upon his face and worshiped Daniel. ... Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the

governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.”

h. If all this occurred in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, then Daniel and his companions must still have had a year to attend school before they had their examination as told in Daniel 1:18. Does this look reasonable? Again, if Daniel were but twelve years of age when he went to Babylon, he would be but fourteen at this time. Would a king of Nebuchadnezzar’s ability place a boy of fourteen over the affairs of the province of Babylon, and make him chief of all his wise men? Would the king fall down and worship a boy of fourteen? Even if Daniel were twenty years old when he went to Babylon, as some suppose, he would be but twenty-two, altogether too young for such a position.

i. We suggest the two following solutions, either of which would not be unreasonable, and would not be out of harmony with other scriptures:

j. A critical reading of Daniel 1:1-3 does not demand the conclusion that what follows must have followed immediately. It is simply a prelude or introduction. Then follows an account of what occurred some time after they reached Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar instructed Ashpenaz to select some of the well-born children, preferably from among the king’s seed and princes, that they might be sent to school for three years. At the end of that time they were examined by the king himself, and found to be far above the average. No mention is made of any honor being bestowed upon them at that time. They drop out of sight for a while. In the meantime Nebuchadnezzar had taken and destroyed Jerusalem (606 B.C.) and brought many more captives to Babylon, and the remainder of the temple vessels. The treatment of these Hebrew captives by the heathen king of Babylon has been a subject of comment. They had many liberties, dwelt in communities by themselves, and were permitted to have laws of their own; their religious services were not interfered with particularly; and the men were often exempt from military service. Apparently there must have been some influence at court exerted on their behalf.

k. God could as easily arrange for that as he did for the children of Israel through Joseph over 1700 years before. Again he used a king by giving him a dream. The wise men of the kingdom were called upon to tell the dream and the interpretation. Because they could not, orders went forth that all the wise men should be slain. This must have caused great consternation and wide publicity; just the end desired by Jehovah. Daniel and his companions, recognized as wise men, were to be slain also (Daniel 1:20; 2:13) Because Daniel was used of God to reveal and interpret the dream, he was immediately honored by the king with high official position and would be able to exert a great influence for good on behalf of his brethren, the Hebrew captives, as would also Daniel’s three companions, who held high positions in the kingdom. Any suggestion from Daniel would therefore be given careful consideration by the king. Thus did God honor his loyal servants, and protect his covenant people; and also manifest his supervision over the affairs of the world, and cause even the heathen kings to bow to him.

l. In what year did all this take place? This date is not necessary to establish chronological connection, for that is fully covered elsewhere; but it is interesting, and should be found in harmony with other scriptures. If 606 B.C. were the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, as we have already found, 605 B.C. would be his twentieth year. The book of Daniel is written partly in Hebrew, partly in Aramaic. The Aramaic in many respects closely resembles the Arabic. In the Arabic the cypher is but a dot, like our period. Thus ten would be written with the figure for one followed by a dot, twenty by two and the dot; as for example, 1. for 10 and 2. for 20. It would be very easy for a copyist to overlook the dot, especially if his original were somewhat worn. Not noticing the dot he would write it as for two instead of twenty.

m. However, the following appeals to us as the more reasonable: We note by the chart that

the twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar synchronizes with his second year as world monarch. As long as Jehovah had a representative on a throne, in the typical kings of Israel (1 Chronicles 29:23), Nebuchadnezzar could not technically be said to be absolute monarch, as stated in Daniel 2:37,38. With the fall of Zedekiah, the last typical king, Nebuchadnezzar's rule would become absolute. The book of Daniel was doubtless written long after the occurrence of the events; and his mind would naturally associate the rule of Nebuchadnezzar with the time he became the world monarch, and the typical kingdom of God was no more. In this sense the expression, "the second year of the reign [*malekuth*, dominion, empire] of Nebuchadnezzar," would be altogether proper, and in no way contradict the record of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah. Daniel would be at least twenty-four years of age, even if taken captive at the age of twelve. This would be young enough for one to occupy so high a position of honor and trust, especially if appointed by Jehovah, although through the king. Joseph was thirty years old, and so was David, when exalted. We would not be surprised to learn later that Daniel was also thirty years of age when exalted. It would seem more in harmony with God's general method.

n. Instances in modern history are in line:

o. William I of Germany became king of Prussia, the largest state of the German empire, in January, 1861. He became the emperor of Germany in January, 1871. Thus his *first year as emperor* would be his *eleventh year as king*. The expression, "The second year of the dominion of William I," would be correct, though it would be actually his twelfth year as king. The word used by Daniel, *malekuth*, has more the meaning of empire or dominion, and is rendered "reign" 21 times, and "kingdom" 49 times; whereas the word more generally translated "reign" is *malak*, meaning "to be a king," and is used 284 times. Daniel 2:1 would be more properly rendered: "In the second year of the empire of Nebuchadnezzar." etc.

p. A similar case is that of Victoria, queen of England. She became queen in 1837, but did not become empress until the year 1877. Her first year as empress would be her forty-first as queen.

q. Already acknowledged as a wise man before Nebuchadnezzar's second campaign against Jerusalem in 606 B.C., Daniel no doubt knew not only the king, but many prominent men of the kingdom and generals of the army. He must have known of the letter Jeremiah had written in 613 B.C. to those captives who had been taken to Babylon in 617 B.C. When Nebuchadnezzar started for Jerusalem what would he more reasonable than for Daniel to tell him of Jeremiah's prophecy that he would take the city? It requires no stretch of imagination to read between the lines how, therefore, Nebuchadnezzar would be much interested in a prophet who had foretold his victory, and who was also a friend of Daniel. What more reasonable than that he should give special orders that Jeremiah be found and well treated? Zedekiah had left Jeremiah in the court of the prison, and it was there that Nebuchadnezzar's generals found him. What more reasonable ground as a basis for the solicitude of the victorious king for a poor captive, as recorded in Jeremiah 39:11-14, and the explanation of the captain in 40:2-4?

q
B.C. 592 a. Date of Ezekiel's vision of the Temple, as recorded in chapters 40 to 48.
 b. Ezekiel connects the *twenty-fifth* year of his captivity with the *fourteenth year* of the city's destruction, thus showing the synchronization of the two dates, which is in full harmony with all previous dates mentioned. This will be easily noticed by reference to the chart.—Ezek. 40:1.

r The latest date mentioned by Ezekiel. He fore-tells that Babylon shall have Egypt for wages for taking Tyre.—Ezekiel 29:17 to 30:26.
B.C. 590

s a. The thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin.—Jeremiah 52:31; 2 Kings
B.C. 580 25:27-30.

b. From the above texts it is easily inferred that this was the first year of Evil-Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, hence that Nebuchadnezzar had died that year or the year before. This would make the reign of Nebuchadnezzar about forty-four or forty-five years—625 to 580 or 581 B.C. (instead of from 606 B.C. to 563 B.C., as given by most historians).

t
B.C. 555 If Belshazzar reigned for seventeen years before the fall of Babylon in 538, this would be the first year of Belshazzar, and also the date of Daniel's vision as recorded in Daniel 7. However, this date is not material to the chronological line.

u
B.C. 553 On the above basis this would be the third year of Belshazzar, and the date of Daniel's vision as recorded in chapter 8.

v
B.C. 538 a. The last year of Belshazzar; the great feast, the handwriting on the wall, and Daniel's interpretation.—Daniel 5.

b. The fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians, under Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, and the beginning of the second universal empire.

c. It was some time during the "first year of Darius," probably 537 B.C., that Daniel had the visit of the angel, as recorded in chapter 9.

w
B.C. 536 a. First year of Cyrus, king of Persia. Apparently Darius had died, and Cyrus became sole monarch of the dual empire.

b. Close of the seventy years "desolation of the land."

c. Return of nearly 50,000 of the more zealous of the Jews to Jerusalem, with permission from Cyrus to rebuild the temple. (This should not be confounded with the permission given to Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of the city. That was given in 454 B.C., eighty-two years later.—Daniel 9:25.) The returning Jews found their land vacant, their houses unoccupied, and their cities still without inhabitant. They could move in immediately. The last of the Jews had left Judea about our July or August, 606 B.C. The returning Jews reached Judea about the fourth month, our July or August, 536 B.C. Thus the land had been desolate the full seventy years. By the seventh month they had been able to get their houses cleaned and sufficiently settled that they could assemble at the ruins of Jerusalem to hold the Day of Atonement sacrifices. Thus by October they "gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem [from the various cities where they had resettled]—to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses." See Leviticus 16:29 and Ezra 3:1-7. Jerusalem would be a heap of ruins, but it was sacred to every Jewish heart.

d. Another text has been somewhat of a puzzle to some. Jeremiah 52:30 mentions Nebuchadnezzar as taking some more Jews to Babylon in his twenty-third year. Where did he find any more Jews, if the land had been denuded in his nineteenth year? Note the following from Josephus, "Antiquities," Book 10, Chapter 9:

e. "Accordingly both the people, and Johanan, disobeyed the counsel of God, which he gave by the prophet, and removed into Egypt, and carried Jeremiah and Baruch along with them. While they were there, God signified to the prophet 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 that the king of Babylon should slay some of them and 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 year of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Coele-Syria; and when he had possessed himself of it, he made war against the Ammonites and the Moabites; and when he had brought all these nations under his subjection, he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it. And he slew the king that then reigned, and set up another; and took those Jews that were captives, and led them away to Babylon. And such was the

end of the nation of the Hebrews, it having gone twice beyond Euphrates. For the people of the ten tribes were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians, in the days of King Hoshea. After which the people of the two tribes, that remained after Jerusalem was taken, were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and Chaldea. Now as to Shalmaneser, he removed the Israelites out of their country, and placed therein the nation of the Cuthians; who had formerly belonged to the interior of Persia and Media; but were then called Samaritans, by taking the name of the country to which they were removed. But the king of Babylon, who brought out the two tribes, *placed no other nation in their country*. By which means all *Judea*, and *Jerusalem*, and *the Temple*, continued to be a desert for 70 years.”

x Rebuilding of the temple begun, though it was not completed for nearly fifteen
B.C. 535 years.—Ezra 3:8; 6:15.

y a. Third year of Cyrus.
B.C. 534 b. Date of Daniel’s last recorded vision (Daniel 10:1). He was doubtless at least
 ninety-five years of age at this time. How much longer he lived we have no present
means of knowing. Cyrus reigned for several years after, and we may feel certain that he would
see that Daniel was well cared for.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

²⁶ A little study of the chart, together with the Scripture citations and the quotations, will show how simple the whole matter is, when properly located. The date of references given in Jeremiah and Ezekiel may be quickly ascertained by looking at the chart, under the names of the various persons mentioned. Thus the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar is seen to be 617 B.C.; the fifth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity is 612 B.C. Just find the person named, the year of his reign, prophecy or captivity; and follow the vertical line down to the lower line of dates. It would also be interesting to use a Bible atlas in connection with the study, and thus locate the various places mentioned.

²⁷ We are not called upon to harmonize these with the tangled records of secular history. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—2 Timothy 3:16,17.