

## 54. The 70-Year Bible Prophecies

- There are seven, 70-year passages in the Bible that reveal very important details about the end times. In these passages, the phrase "seventy years" is used eight times (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Daniel 9:2; Isaiah 23:15-17) and "these seventy years" twice (Zechariah 1:12, 7:5). Three different 70-year periods are described in these verses, yet they are all related. The first 70-year period is described in Jeremiah 25 and 29, 2 Chronicles 36 and Daniel 9. These prophecies will be fulfilled in two phases. The first phase has already been fulfilled, and the second phase will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation. The second 70-year period, described in Zechariah 7:5, represents 70 years of fasting to commemorate the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C. The third 70-year period, described in Zechariah 1:12 and Isaiah 23:15-17, probably began with the rebirth of Israel, 14 May 1948 (Yom Ha'atzmaut, 5 Iyar 5708 in the Jewish calendar) and ends during the year following Israel's seventieth Independence Day, 19 April 2018 (4 Iyar 5778).

- "This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (25:11). "Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation," declares the LORD, "for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation" (Jeremiah 25:12).

- "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place'" (Jeremiah 29:10).

- "He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years" (2 Chronicles 36:20-21; ESV Bible).

- "In the first year of his reign, 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).

- The four Bible passages above describe the two-phase, 70-year prophecies (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Daniel 9:2). They all begin with Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and find their complete fulfillment when Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation. There are some slight differences in the duration of each phase, which will be discussed below.

- In 605 B.C., Jeremiah spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and warned them to turn from their evil ways, but the people did not listen (Jeremiah 25:1-10). Jeremiah prophesied that the whole land would be a desolation and a horror, and that the Jewish people and the surrounding nations would serve the king of Babylon 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11). Jeremiah also prophesied that the king of Babylon would be punished when 70 years were completed (Jeremiah 25:12). In the same year as Jeremiah's prophecy, the 70-year period of judgment began with Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem (approximately September, 605 B.C.). At this time Daniel and his companions were taken to Babylon as captives. Some of the vessels from the house of God (temple) were also taken to Babylon and placed in a Babylonian temple (Daniel 1:1-6). The rule of Babylon ended suddenly in 539 B.C. (October) when the Persians captured the city of Babylon and King Belshazzar (Babylon's last king) was killed (Daniel 5:28-31). From Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem (605 B.C.) to Belshazzar's death (539 B.C.) is a period of approximately 66 years. This falls four years short of fulfilling the 70-year prophecies. Since God's Word never fails, we must conclude that these prophecies will be fulfilled in two phases. In a similar fashion, the Daniel 9, 70-weeks prophecies will be fulfilled in three phases, with the third phase representing the seven-year Great Tribulation. The first phase

of Jeremiah 25 applies to ancient Babylon and the second phase applies to end-time Babylon the Great and her king, the beast (antichrist; Daniel 11:36). The duration of phase two is about four years, the amount of time that the nations will serve the antichrist during the last portion of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 13:5-8, 17:12-13). These two time periods add up to 70 years and therefore will fulfill the prophecies of Jeremiah 25:11-12. At the second coming of Christ, the nations will have served the king of Babylon 70 years and the king and his empire will be judged by God (Revelation 16:19, 19:19-21). This means that the antichrist (beast) must become the king and supreme ruler of Babylon the Great approximately three years after the beginning of the Great Tribulation. This makes sense because Babylon the Great begins as a global empire ruled by 10 kings and the antichrist is not one of the original 10 (Daniel 7). These kings will fall one by one as the antichrist rises to power. Until the antichrist becomes the supreme ruler, Babylon the Great will not be considered an instrument of judgment against the Jews and will not be counted toward the 70-year judgment period. For more information about Babylon the Great, refer to section 44.

- Jeremiah 29:10 will also be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ. Following the abomination of desolation, at the midpoint of the Great Tribulation, Israeli Jews will be killed, driven from the land and led captive into all nations (Luke 21:24). When 70 years have been completed for Babylon, the Lord will visit His people, fulfill His good word to them and bring them back to Jerusalem, fulfilling the Jeremiah 29:10 prophecy.

- The 70-year prophecies of 2 Chronicles and Daniel emphasize the desolation of the land and Jerusalem. The significance of the 70-year period is revealed in 2 Chronicles 36:20-21. This was the number of years that the people had failed to observe God's law of a "sabbath rest" for the land. God told the sons of Israel that every seventh year, the land was to have a sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:1-5); "but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard" (Leviticus 25:4). They would have to trust the Lord to provide for their needs for that year. If the people would fail to follow this command, God would remove them from the land to enforce this "sabbath rest" (Leviticus 26:33-35). For hundreds of years the nation disobeyed God by ignoring this command which resulted in a 70-year judgment that would allow the land to enjoy its "sabbath rest". This judgment was also a result of the unfaithfulness of the people as they followed all the abominations of the nations and defiled the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:14). Indeed all Israel had transgressed God's law and turned aside, not obeying His voice and rebelled and sinned against Him (Daniel 9:9, 11). These prophecies will also be fulfilled in two phases, although the duration of each phase will be slightly different than Jeremiah's prophecies.

- Phase one began with the removal of the "sons of Israel" from the land (605 B.C.) and would end with the return of the Jewish people to the land more than 66 years later (538 B.C.). Notice that phase one does not end with the conquest of Babylon by the Persians in 539 B.C. (October), as it did for Jeremiah's 70-year prophecies. The emphasis of 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 is the sabbath rest of the land as it remained desolate. Therefore, phase one did not end until the Jewish people returned to Jerusalem several months after the fall of Babylon. Shortly after the Persians conquered Babylon, Cyrus king of Persia sent out a proclamation "in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah", allowing the Jews to return to their land (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). Almost 50,000 Jews made the long journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, arriving in 538 B.C. Although the Bible does not give the exact date of their arrival, we can conclude that phase one was approximately 66 and a half years long, to add to the three and a half years of phase two, totaling 70 years. Ezra describes how the "sons of Israel" were in the cities and then gathered in Jerusalem on the seventh month (September-October, 538 B.C.) to build the altar, to offer burnt offerings and to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Ezra 3:1-6).

- Just as phase one began with the desecration of the temple and the captivity of the Jewish people, so will phase two. At the midpoint of the Great Tribulation, the antichrist will desecrate the temple and declare war on the Jewish people. Those who are in Judea and Jerusalem must flee to the mountains. Many Jews "will fall

by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24; Revelation 11:2). Some Jews will escape and God will miraculously provide a safe haven for them during the second half of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24; Revelation 12:6, 14). During these three and a half prophetic years, the Gentiles (Babylon the Great; refer to Revelation 17, 18) will control the land of Israel and the land will once again have a sabbath rest for exactly 1,260 days (Revelation 12:6). This 70-year prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns and brings His people back to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:10).

- The 70-year prophecy of Daniel 9:2 is similar to 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 in that their two phases are identical. Daniel's prophecy reveals that "the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem" would be 70 years. Notice that "desolations" is plural, indicating several desolations are meant. Just as with the other 70-year prophecies, phase one began with Babylon's first invasion (605 B.C.) and the desolation of Jerusalem and the land. Phase one ended with the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. Phase two will occur during the second half of the Tribulation, ending with the second coming of Christ.

- "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?'" (Zechariah 7:5).

- The second 70-year period is found in Zechariah 7:5. It represents 70 years of fasting to commemorate the destruction of the first temple. Zechariah gave four messages in chapters 7 and 8, and Zechariah 7:5 is part of the first message. According to Zechariah 7:1, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah "in the fourth year of King Darius... on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev". This was in 518 B.C., 68 years after the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (Jeremiah 52:12-13; 2 Kings 25:8-10). So "these seventy years" is spoken prophetically since 70 years of fasting and mourning would not end for another two years, when the new temple would be completed "on the third day of the month Adar", which is the twelfth month (515 B.C.; Ezra 6:15; Esther 3:7). Even though two more fasts were to be observed during the next two years, the message is given in the past tense; "you fasted and mourned". The seventieth fifth month fast was the last one observed because the second temple was completed seven months later. This same phrase, "these seventy years", appears in Zechariah 1:12 and is also spoken prophetically. These are the only two occurrences of the phrase "these seventy years" in the Bible.

- Since the temple was being rebuilt and was nearing completion, the people wondered if it was still necessary to observe the fast of the fifth month. The first message to the people (Zechariah 7:4-7) was a rebuke for observing self-imposed fasts that were not commanded by God and were observed with the wrong motivation. They were fasting and feasting for themselves, not for the Lord. The fourth message indirectly answers their question. In the millennial kingdom, the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah (Zechariah 8:19).

- There are several unusual things about Zechariah 7 and 8 that should be noted. First, why are two chapters of Zechariah, including four messages from the Lord dedicated to answering what seems to be a relatively unimportant question about a man-made fast? Second, why is a prophecy that was fulfilled in 515 B.C. included in a book that mainly focuses on future events and the end times? Third, since the temple was nearing completion, why would the people of Bethel be so concerned about a one-day fast that would only be observed two more times? Fourth, why are "these seventy years" mentioned when it has only been 68 years? It is spoken in the past tense as if the 70 years have already been completed. Based on the unusual nature of this prophecy, one must conclude that there is more to this passage than meets the eye. One's attention is drawn to "seventy years" (Zechariah 7:5), a time period that also appears in Zechariah 1:12 and that is often associated with end-time events. The many similarities between the Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5 prophecies will be discussed below.

- "Then the angel of the LORD said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?" (Zechariah 1:12)

- The third 70-year period is described in Zechariah 1:12 and Isaiah 23:15-17. This period probably began with the rebirth of Israel, 14 May 1948 (Yom Ha'atzmaut, 5 Iyar 5708 in the Jewish calendar) and ends during the year following Israel's seventieth Independence Day, 19 April 2018 (4 Iyar 5778). Zechariah describes eight prophetic visions he saw in a single night in the first six chapters of his book. Zechariah's "these seventy years" prophecy is part of the first vision (Zechariah 1:7-17). The vision begins with a patrol of the earth. After the patrol, the angel of the Lord receives the report that "all the earth is peaceful and quiet" (Zechariah 1:11). Based on the end-time events at the end of this vision and in Zechariah's other seven visions, it is likely that the patrol occurs just prior to the rapture. Since the rapture will come unexpectedly (except for alert believers), like a thief in the night, it makes sense that the earth would be peaceful and quiet prior to this event (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). When the angel receives the report, he is clearly concerned for the people of Jerusalem and Judah. Even though "all the earth is peaceful and quiet" the Jewish people are apparently experiencing anti-Semitism and are being threatened by their enemies. Why the Lord has been without compassion (mercy) and indignant (angry) for 70 years is not stated. Perhaps it is because the Jewish people have rebelled against God and have not believed in the Messiah as their Lord and Savior (Isaiah 64:5; Hebrews 3:17-19). This 70-year period is not the same period that is mentioned in Jeremiah, Daniel or 2 Chronicles; prophecies that will be fulfilled in two phases. Zechariah 1:12 does not mention Babylon or the prophecies of Jeremiah, as these other passages do. Also, the first phase of these prophecies was fulfilled approximately 20 years before the eight prophetic vision came to Zechariah from the Lord (519 B.C., Zechariah 1:7). In addition, a two-phase fulfillment does not match the details of this vision.

- So when does the 70-year period start? Many of the end-time prophecies that mention a period of time have a clearly defined starting and ending point and are associated with the Great Tribulation. This is true for Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) and the 70-year prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel and 2 Chronicles. Since the time period of Zechariah 1:12 probably includes the time just prior to the rapture, it would be logical to conclude that the 70 years begins with the rebirth of Israel, 14 May 1948 (5 Iyar 5708). Israel's rebirth in Scripture is often associated with the nation's spiritual awakening and revival (Ezekiel 11:14-21, 36:22-38, 37:1-28, 39:25-29), with the judgment of nations (Joel 3:1-3; Ezekiel 28:25-26), with great tribulation (Jeremiah 30:1-11) and with the coming of Messiah (Zechariah 12, 14).

- There are many similarities between the Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5 prophecies. First, these are the only two verses in the Bible that use the phrase "these seventy years". Second, the four messages of Zechariah 7-8 follow directly after the eight visions of Zechariah 1-6. Third, exact dates were given for both prophecies (Zechariah 1:7, 7:1) showing that they were spoken only one year and 10 months apart. The dates also reveal that both prophecies were spoken 20 years or more after the fall of Babylon and therefore are not describing the two-phase prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel or 2 Chronicles. Fourth, both 70-year periods are followed by the completion of the temple in Jerusalem (second temple, Ezra 6:15; Tribulation temple, Zechariah 1:16). Fifth, the verses that follow Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5 describe the millennial kingdom and how the Lord is exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion and how He will return to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom and will dwell with His people (Zechariah 1:14-17, 2:10-12, 8:2-3).

- The unusual nature of Zechariah 7 and 8, combined with the many similarities of Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5, suggest that the Zechariah 7:5 prophecy could be used to help interpret the Zechariah 1:12 prophecy. This implies that the 70-year period of Zechariah 1:12 would also begin with a significant event, such as the rebirth of Israel (14 May 1948; 5 Iyar 5708). This also suggests that shortly after the seventieth Israeli Independence Day (19 April 2018; 4 Iyar 5778), God's period of "no compassion" will end. "Therefore thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem'" (Zechariah 1:16). The whole world will witness

God's compassion for Jerusalem when the Tribulation temple is built, which will apparently be completed 220 days after the start of the Great Tribulation (refer to Daniel 8 commentary). God's compassion will also be displayed during the Ezekiel 38 battle, when God will judge the many nations that attack Israel. This battle probably occurs shortly after the rapture and just before the Tribulation.

- "Now in that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:" (Isaiah 23:15) "Take your harp, walk about the city, O forgotten harlot; pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs, that you may be remembered" (23:16). "It will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot's wages and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth" (23:17). "Her gain and her harlot's wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD" (Isaiah 23:18).

- The 70-year period of Isaiah 23:15-18 is likely the same one as Zechariah 1:12. It probably began with the rebirth of Israel, 14 May 1948 (5 Iyar 5708) and ends sometime during the year following Israel's seventieth Independence Day, 19 April 2018 (4 Iyar 5778). The first part of chapter 23 (Isaiah 23:1-14) is a prophecy describing the fall of Tyre, one of the most famous cities of the ancient world. Tyre is located on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, just north of Israel. Over the years, Tyre has been destroyed and rebuilt several times. Alexander the Great destroyed the mainland city and the island fortress in 332 B.C.

- The last part of chapter 23 (Isaiah 23:15-18) begins with the phrase "in that day". This phrase is not used in the first part of chapter 23, however it is used seven times in what is commonly called "Isaiah's apocalypse" (Isaiah, chapters 24-27), which follows. Isaiah's apocalypse describes the terrible judgments of the Great Tribulation, the deliverance of God's people and the blessings of the millennial kingdom. Perhaps Isaiah's apocalypse really begins with Isaiah 23:15. The fact that 70 years is mentioned three times in this passage (Isaiah 23: 15, 17) is another indication that it probably has a connection to the end times and the Great Tribulation. There are several other reasons to conclude this. First, Tyre is mentioned in over 50 Bible verses, yet Tyre is only described as a harlot in Isaiah 23:15-18. She "will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth" (23:17). This description is very similar to that of end-time Babylon the Great, where "all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her" (Revelation 18:3; see also 17:2, 18:9, 19:2). The end-time global kingdom and false religion is described as "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Revelation 17:5). Just as the city of Tyre was once one of the great cities of the world, the great city of Babylon the Great will reign over the kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth will become rich by the wealth of her sensuality (Revelation 17:18, 18:3). Second, the harlot's gain will not be stored up, but will be set apart to the Lord and be given to those "who dwell in the presence of the LORD" (Isaiah 23:18). Since believers will not dwell in the presence of the Lord until the millennial kingdom, we can conclude that the events of Isaiah 23:15-18 occur just prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ, including the 70-year period. Third, the 70-year prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel and 2 Chronicles begin and end with a historic event. There is no obvious 70-year period in Tyre's history that matches the details of Isaiah 23:15-18.

- There is another important Bible passage that describes the judgment of Tyre and the fall of the leader of Tyre; Ezekiel 26-28. In the middle passage of chapter 28 (28:11-19), Satan is apparently being described, not the actual king of Tyre, for he "had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty", was "in Eden, the garden of God", was created and was "the anointed cherub who covers", was "on the holy mountain of God" and was blameless in his ways (Ezekiel 28:11-15). After this, unrighteousness was found in him, he was "filled with violence" and sinned, he was cast as "profane from the mountain of God", he was filled with pride, he was cast to the ground and God has turned him to "ashes on the earth" and he will "cease to be forever" (Ezekiel 28:15-19). Since the king of Tyre is apparently Satan in this passage, then the end-time king

of Tyre probably represents the antichrist (beast) and Satan, who act as one for the last portion of the Great Tribulation. This also means that end-time Tyre actually represents Babylon the Great.

- Since we have concluded that the last four verses of Isaiah 23 probably describe the end-time global empire known as Babylon the Great, we can now look further into the interpretation of this passage. Verse 15 says that "Tyre will be forgotten for 70 years". As with the other 70-year prophecies, we can assume that a historic event will begin the 70-year period. It would be logical to conclude that this event was the rebirth of Israel (1948), as explained for Zechariah 1:12 above. The rebirth of Israel is necessary for the fulfillment of many end-time prophecies. Based on Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5, we concluded that the 70-year period will probably end sometime during the year following Israel's seventieth anniversary of its rebirth. Why has Tyre, which represents Babylon the Great, been forgotten for 70 years (Isaiah 23:15)? We have to remember when the first phase of Jeremiah's prophecies ended (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21). The Jewish people and the surrounding nations were supposed to serve the king of Babylon 70 years, but after approximately 66 years, Babylon was defeated by the Persians (539 B.C.). In order to fulfill the prophecy, a second phase of judgment is necessary. When Israel was reborn in 1948, the second phase of the judgment that awaits the nation was forgotten, along with Babylon. Then, after 70 years, Babylon will be reborn as Babylon the Great, a global empire, ruled by 10 kings and comprised of 10 kingdoms.

- Shortly after Babylon the Great is established, the Lord will "visit" her (Isaiah 23:17). This is probably a reference to the Ezekiel 38 battle (Ezekiel 38:8), where God will judge the nations that attack Israel, perhaps a reference to the three end-time horns (kingdoms) of Daniel 7:8 that are pulled out by the roots. While Israel is being attacked, the other kingdoms of Babylon the Great will not come to her aid. After the Lord's visit, Babylon the Great "will go back to her harlot's wages and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth" (Isaiah 23:17). This shows the wickedness of end-time Tyre; even after a visit from the Lord, she goes right back to her evil ways. Since the period of "harlot's wages" occurs during the Great Tribulation, this implies that the Tribulation will follow soon after the Lord's visit with Tyre. It is very unusual that "Her gain and her harlot's wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD" (Isaiah 23:18). Tyre's gain perhaps represent the "wealth of all the surrounding nations" (Zechariah 14:14) that will be gathered at the end of the Great Tribulation. The harlot's "gain" will be used by "those who dwell in the presence of the LORD". This is probably describing believers who will enter the millennial kingdom.

- Now that we have looked at all the 70-year passages, let's summarize what we know. First, the two-phase prophecies of Jeremiah reveal that the antichrist will become the king and supreme ruler of Babylon the Great approximately three years after the Great Tribulation begins and the Jewish people and the surrounding nations will serve the antichrist for the remaining four years until he is judged at the second coming of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns, He will lead His people back to Jerusalem and set up His millennial kingdom. Second, the two-phase prophecies of Daniel and 2 Chronicles indicate that the Jewish people will be removed from the land for the second half of the Tribulation period to fulfill the 70-year sabbath rest judgment and for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem. Third, Zechariah's and Isaiah's 70-year prophecies indicate that shortly after Israel's seventieth Independence Day, 19 April 2018 (4 Iyar 5778), seven major events will occur; the Zechariah 1 patrol of the earth (not observable on earth), the rapture, the formation of Babylon the Great, the Ezekiel 38 battle, the Israel-antichrist peace treaty, the start of the Great Tribulation and the construction of the Tribulation temple. Jesus Christ will return exactly seven prophetic years (2,520 days) after the start of the Great Tribulation. Since only God knows the day of the rapture (Matthew 24:36), believers should continue to be alert and ready. The 70-year prophecies offer great hope for God's people, because in the end, Jesus Christ will return to judge the king of Babylon the Great and his empire, to rescue His people and to rule His earthly kingdom.