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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute
OR
Philosophical Society of Great Britain

VOL. LXX

1938



LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY
THE INSTITUTE, 1, CENTRAL BUILDINGS, WESTMINSTER, W.C.1

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*THE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERIODS IN
SCRIPTURE PROPHECY.*

By WILLIAM BELL DAWSON, M.A., D.Sc., M.Inst.C.E.

*A brief explanation of the material on this subject donated to the
Victoria Institute, comprising tabulated results and diagrams,
classified in sections and contained in a portfolio.*

IT may be allowable to give some notes to show what these prophetical diagrams indicate, and to outline the results of these investigations in Bible Prophecy, which have occupied most of my spare time during thirty years of my life from 1896 onward. For they bring out an aspect of the truth as revealed in Scripture which certainly deserves study, in showing that the communications which the Great Revealer gives to His servants the Prophets is marked by order and method.

We thus recognise that nothing in the Word of God, not even a date, is mentioned without purpose ; and the periods predicted show that there is system in the providential dealings of God. In the light of such Divine orderliness, the audacity of the Critic who denies prediction and displaces the dates given in Scripture, can only be regarded as a form of sacrilege. For many of these dates mark the time chosen of God at which to make a revelation to one of His Prophets.

One cannot carry on such prophetical investigations with preconceived ideas, or to prove some new theory. On the contrary, the only sound method is to recognise the foundations laid in the past by capable and painstaking investigators, beginning with Sir Isaac Newton ; and in the last century, such comprehensive works as those of Dr. William Hales, Rev. E. B. Elliott, Professor T. R. Birks, and the researches of Dr. H. Grattan Guinness. We may thus expect to find that there is

system in the Prophets, and method in the way that fulfilment takes place.

(1) There is a systematic "time-structure" in the books of the Prophets, which also results in correlation between them. This is the outcome of their own dating, and is independent of any system of Bible chronology. For example, Jeremiah specially emphasises the twenty-third year since the beginning of his prophesying, when he reproaches the people for not heeding his message from the Lord (Jer. xxv, 3). This same interval runs on a second time to the last date at which captives are taken to Babylon, as mentioned in the supplementary chapter to his book. This chapter is thus plainly needed to complete the structure of Jeremiah, and it also makes the above remonstrance the central point of the book. Again a third time, this interval runs on to the uplift of Jehoiachin, which is accurately dated; and indicates the first dawn of Restoration. (Jer. lii, 31.)

There are thus four prominent dates connected by equal intervals; and the one specially emphasised is found to be the year when God gives to another Prophet, Daniel, the first intimation of the Times of the Gentiles, through the Dream of the Image at the opening of his book. The next of these dates in Jeremiah is the central year in the twenty of Ezekiel's prophesying, from "the fifth" to "the twenty-fifth" year. This indicates the principle of centrality which so strongly characterises Ezekiel, and brings his careful dating into relation with the feasts of the year, from Passover to Tabernacles. Such correlations are full of significance in the development of Divine purpose, if we could enlarge upon this. (*See* the diagrams for all the notable time-relations between these three Prophets.)

(2) If we believe there is purpose throughout the Word of God, the question arises forcefully as to why it is that so many books of the Bible are grouped around the Captivity of Babylon and the Restoration following. The three notable books, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, stand at the beginning of the Captivity and continue into it; Haggai and Zechariah are related to the Restoration; and Ezra and Nehemiah continue later. It is also in these books that so much definite dating occurs.

The evident answer is that the Captivity era stands at the beginning of the long period of Seven Times, or the "Times of the Gentiles," as explained in Daniel and referred to by Christ. And the prediction of the Seventy Years of Captivity was fulfilled

in such a way as to be a type of the longer fulfilment of the Seven Times, and to afford the primary key to its understanding. It is also surely providential to find just in these times, from 721 to 491 B.C., that seven eclipses were very accurately recorded which fix the dating of the reigns of the kings at this epoch. The dates are thus specially reliable from which the age-long periods run. The references to eclipses in the centuries following are mostly so vague and unrelated to the years of reigning kings that they have little value.

We have already seen that a period mentioned in Scripture may furnish a clue which may go much farther than what is definitely stated. This answers the objection of literalists, that no deduction can be made from periods indicated, beyond what is found in the actual words of Scripture. Yet, in all great movements in history, there may be several beginning points in the rise of an empire or a system of dominance, and corresponding endings. This occurred at the beginning and end of the Captivity (as the diagrams show) and it is a marked feature in the Times of the Gentiles, which have already reached incipient endings, notably since the French Revolution. The remarkable divisibility of the number 2520 which represents the Seven Times, corresponds with their fulfilment; for the New Testament Era stands at one-fourth of the way along their course (*see* the diagram); and it is found that the last "Time" of the Seven extends from the Reformation to our own day. It is thus our part in studying these periods, to learn how prediction comes to pass; rather than to lay down rules ourselves as to how fulfilment ought to take place.

(3) The periods predicted serve also to define the power or system referred to in the prophecy. For this accords with a general principle that the domination of evil is limited (Psalm xxxvii, 10-13) which we find exemplified by predicted periods throughout the Bible. The Servitude in Egypt, the Forty Years in the Wilderness, as well as the Captivity in Babylon, were all limited in advance. How helpful also to the servants of God to know that a limit was set to the devastations of the Mohammedan power, and the persecutions of the Papal system. The significance of this came to light in the Reformation Era, and in the wars of a century and a half that followed, by which the Papacy undertook to crush the Reform movement. This great apostate system is now clearly identified by its predicted duration for "a Time, Times and a half," which form the latter half

of the Seven Times, or 1260 years. This period extends from the three initial points in its rise, to corresponding endings ; beginnings at the French Revolution. The fulfilment is so plain in history that the identification cannot be controverted ; especially as these three initial points represent the characteristics of the system as originally depicted in Daniel.

(4) In studying the features found in the original revelations made to the Prophets, and the manner of their fulfilment, we should realise that prediction in Scripture is not only a foretelling of future events, showing that all is in God's hands ; but it is given to the servants of God for their enlightenment and guidance down the centuries.

We cannot enlarge further upon many points of interest which the diagrams bring out, such as the details of the last " Time " that extends from the Reformation to the close ; and two series of Jubilee periods, in a succession of 50-year intervals, that are found to run in parallel during this Last Time. This accords with the remarkable character of the primary number 2520 as noted, and its seventh part, as well as shorter periods. It even seems possible that the Seven Vials may be depicted as a system of successive periods ; for nations are dealt with in this world, in the chastisements that fall upon them in God's providence ; as the ordinary historian may acknowledge. For God will not allow evil systems to triumph without a check, or injustice to continue for ever in His world. This the Scriptures constantly assert ; and a limit is set by the periods allotted.

It is much to be desired that this aspect of Truth could be adequately taught in all Theological Institutions and Bible Colleges ; to exalt the justice of God and to encourage confidence and endurance. For the time shall come when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ ; and " here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Montreal, Canada.

16th May, 1938.

NOTE.—For further explanations, see the following Book and Papers by W. Bell Dawson, in the Library of the Victoria Institute :—

The Time is at Hand ; book of 141 pages. Thynne & Co., London.

“The New Testament Era in the Sequence of Prophecy.”
Trans. Victoria Institute, Vol. LX, pages 77-91. 1928.

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Hebrew Christian Q'tly (in two parts) Jan. and Apr., 1934.

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and Daniel. *The Fundamentalist*, London; Aug., 1934.

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Cycles.” *Trans. Victoria Institute*, Vol. LXVII, pages 129-
149. 1935.