



The Reckoning of Time.

LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S HISTORY.



BY A. E. BOOTH.



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THE RECKONING OF TIME.

Lessons from Israel's History.

WE purpose to take a brief glance at the history of God's ancient people—Israel, and note the different periods of their history from the beginning to the end; namely, from Abraham's birth to that period called the Millennium. These lessons will be of great value if we take the practical lessons to ourselves, and again, as we proceed and discover their accuracy they will more and more convince us of the truth of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. A monarch, it is said, asked his chaplain once to give proof in one word of the authenticity of the Bible. The chaplain returned in three days with this answer—Israel. Theirs, truly, has been an eventful history, "written for our admonition," and their presence and place upon earth even now are an abiding proof of the truth of Holy Scripture.

We will look at that history and divide it into four cycles of time. First, from Abraham to the Exodus; second, from the Exodus to the dedica-

tion of Solomon's temple ; third, from the dedication of Solomon's temple to Daniel's prophecy ; fourth, from Daniel and the time Daniel received his prophecy to the Millennium. Each of these periods, carefully reckoned, covers about the same number of years. The first begins with Abraham ; the next, with Moses ; the third, with Solomon ; and the fourth, with Daniel the prophet. Let us carefully look at Scripture for proof, and when we gather that, we will look at the after lessons. In each period, we have said, the time is about the same, if not exactly so ; that is, when we look at the true order of reckoning time, each period will be found similar to the last one, which was revealed to Daniel—70 weeks of years, or 490 years (Dan. ix. 24-27).*

CYCLE I.

From Abraham to the Exodus. Two scriptures seem to cover this. Abraham was 75 years when he came into the land (Gen. xii. 4), and the law was 430 years after (Gal. iii. 17). This makes in all 505 years. This is the first count. This is the full time given, but we must look somewhat deeper and see what further we can learn from this period. Abraham went down to Egypt in the time of famine. This, all will admit, was a grievous failure on Abraham's part,

* These "weeks," or rather *heptads*, are manifestly the *sabbatical heptad* ; each seventh year being a "sabbath" year. See Lev. xxv. 4, 8 ; Deut. xv. 1.

and led to grievous results ; he received Hagar into his home, and in this, clearly, Abraham was in a path of unbelief. This was 10 years after he first entered Canaan, which would make him 85 years old. At the age of 85, Hagar enters (Gen. xvi. 3), and soon after Ishmael was born. What a departure for the man of faith from that highly exalted path ! But, eventually, Abraham now restored and in Canaan, God fulfils His promise in giving him Isaac (chap. xxi. 5). Abraham by this time is 100 years old. Hagar entered at 85 ; Isaac was given at 100 ; what sorrow Abraham experienced between ! Here we have 15 years of time, which, if deducted from 505, leaves just 490 years from Abraham to the Exodus. The whole period, 505 years, with Abraham's 15 years deducted, leaves our cycle 490, or 70 weeks of years. Abraham lost these 15 years as a testimony, and for reward at the judgment-seat. This way of deducting time from natural history, illustrating for us God's holiness, will get more confirmation as we proceed.

CYCLE 2.

This second period begins with the Exodus and goes to the dedication of Solomon's temple, which is about the same space of time, if not exactly. We will need here to examine the Scriptures carefully, and get all that God has said.

From 1 Kings vi. 1, we get one date. Solomon

began to build the temple 480 years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. This is one of the passages which have given material for "higher critics" to use against verbal inspiration—notably among them Bishop Colenso. Yet, for the true believer, while many parts of such a wonderful book may not be at once clear, humility would attribute the mist to our poor perception rather than cast a shadow of doubt upon the sacred Scriptures; and the very difficulties, in the end, only furnish the reverent student with more abundant truth. If the whole history is counted from Exodus, we will find 573 years in all. For this see Acts xiii. 18-22. The wilderness history was 40 years. Then He gave the Judges by the space of 450 years, till Samuel. Then the reign of King Saul, 40 years; and finally, David, 40 years, and Solomon, 3 years to the building of the temple. Thus, altogether, we get 573 years. But 1 Kings vi. 1 states clearly 480 years—a difference of 93. How can we account for the missing 93 years? The natural man sees them not, and concludes that the Bible contradicts itself. But when a search is made, and God's holiness apprehended in reckoning time, the lesson is clear, and Scripture true and perfect. We will now look at the book of Judges.

We have already seen how 15 years are deducted from Abraham's history in Genesis; now, in Judges, we are to learn lessons of a similar

character. Israel turned away from the Lord five times, which altogether is 93 years. In Judges iii. 7, 8, they were captives for their sins 8 years. In verses 12–14, captive again 18 years. In chapter iv. 1–3, captive again 20 years. In chapter vi. 1, captive for 7 years. In chapter xiii. 1, captive to the Philistines, 40 years. (This last includes the 18 years mentioned in chapter x. 7–8, embracing the whole captivity of the Philistines.) We now sum up the whole period in which they were captives on account of their failure, and get 93 years in all—the missing 93 years in 1 Kings vi. 1. Does it not manifest man's short-sightedness, as well as the educated ignorance to be found in the schools of "higher critics"? In the very places where they vainly think they can find flaws and mistakes, in these very places the true believer finds a feast—finds light and truth; the holiness, as well as the grace of God, is thus better understood.

We see, then, that as Abraham lost 15 years, Israel lost 93, which, if deducted from 573, leaves us 480 years till Solomon began to build the temple. Seven years it was in building (1 Kings vi. 38), which would make 487, and if the dedication was 3 years later, as is supposed, the period is exactly the same as the first 490 years. It was some time later than 487, as the building was completed the *eighth* month (chap. vi. 38), and the dedication was the *seventh* month (chap. viii. 2),

which could not therefore have been the same year the building was completed; hence, the dedication was at a later time. To give time for garnishing and furnishing all the vessels of service, it is very probable that the dedication was about the third year, the work of chapter vii. coming between the completion of the main body of the temple and the dedication, which took place in chapter viii. Hence, the whole period would be about 490 years, if not actually so.

CYCLE 3.

From the dedication of the temple to the close of the Babylonish captivity when Daniel received his last prophecy, we have a period of 560 years in all. (See the chronological dates at 1 Kings viii., B.C. 1005, and Nehemiah ii., B.C. 445, thus leaving exactly 560 years.) This is again the natural count; but what shall we say of the 70 years in Babylon? Shall we deduct them? Surely, if we continue the lesson of holiness; and if 70 is deducted from 560, the balance will be as before, 490 years (70 weeks). Just and true are all Jehovah's ways, and in the end *all* shall justify Him in *all* His ways.

CYCLE 4.

This cycle completes the prophetic history of that people (now but two tribes), and brings us down to the end, to the second coming of Christ,

when God shall make them a name and a praise in all the earth. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people (the Jews) and thy holy city" (Jerusalem) (Dan. ix. 24). This gives the closing cycle of their history until the Millennium. The first section, 7 weeks (49 years), with the second, 62 weeks (434 years), bring us to the time when the Messiah was "cut off"; there we stand beside the Cross, and halt. Sixty-nine weeks only have been fulfilled, one week is yet future. Where shall we place this last week, or 7 years of Daniel's prophecy? Abraham lost 15 years; Israel lost 93 in the time of the Judges, and afterwards 70 in Babylon, all on account of their sins. But where can we trace departure from God and from truth like the rejection of Christ, which is expressed in the Cross? For this they are set aside as a nation to-day, as Romans xi. clearly states. And God is now visiting another people—the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name (Acts xv. 14). Thus we get this interval of grace, coming in between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel, and for the Jew it is all deducted time, lost time, a blank. Daniel quietly passes over this interval and sees it not. This was left for another to unfold, for Paul, not Daniel (Eph. iii.). Sixty-nine weeks were completed at the Cross, and there He ceased to count time for them. They are now away from their inheritance and sanctuary, and without a king, priest, or a sacrifice (Hos.

iii. 4, 5). During this interval, all dates are suspended (Acts i. 7; Gal. iv. 9-11). Times and seasons belong to the earth and the earthly people—the Jews, and are given in Daniel in 70 weeks of time. The same is taken up again in Revelation, from chapters vi. to xix., after the Church interval which embraces only Revelation ii. and iii.—the present interval of grace.

During this dispensation, we have said, those dates do not apply. A new work of grace—a “mystery” comes in and is unfolded between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel.* While Christ has gone back to the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit is present upon the earth, and the Church, the body of Christ, is being called out and formed, and the hope of the Church is “the Morning Star”—Christ’s coming in the air (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). In this, the ministry of the apostle Paul comes to the front, unfolding, as he does in his epistles, the formation and character of the Church, as well as her hope and destiny. We find no dates here; in this time they have no place. Dates refer to Jewish people and Jewish history, and this whole period is a blank for them. The hope of the Church has been the second coming of Christ since the beginning. The apostles did not know whether this would take place in the first century or the twentieth, and none have been

* This is beautifully shown by a little chart in a pamphlet, *The Mystery—the Church of God.*

informed since. The Word was completed by the apostle Paul (Col. i. 25)—no new subject has been given since, and we look for none. How long this dispensation will continue, none here can say. How soon our Lord may return, none here know; but it is the blessed hope of the Church. At His coming in the air and the translation of the saints to heaven (as seen in Enoch, the type of our translation), this interval will close, and the last week of Daniel's prophecy will be taken up and fulfilled.

This last week covers the whole portion of Revelation chapters vi. to xix., in which dates again appear; all refer to these last 7 years of Daniel's prophecy; mainly to the last half, in which we have 1,260 days ($3\frac{1}{2}$ years), 42 months ($3\frac{1}{2}$ years), time, times, and half a time ($3\frac{1}{2}$ years). In accord to this the different themes and different lines of ministry can be readily discerned. Daniel refers to the earth and the earthly people, as also Revelation vi. to xix. Paul's ministry refers to the heavenly people and their hope and inheritance. When these distinctions are seen, the different errors taught in confounding these lines are readily discerned, and the hope of the Church will shine out clear and distinct. Lord, revive with freshness in our hearts this bright hope of the "Morning Star," as before our eyes!

At the close of this last period of Daniel's prophecy and time of trouble for Israel (Jer.

xxx. 7) and the nations also (Rev. vii.), the Lord will appear “as the Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. iv.). His feet will touch the Mount of Olives (Zech. xiv.), He will then deliver Israel, and through them blessing will flow to the now heathen world. This will be the Golden Age of prophecy—the days of heaven upon the earth; the days that God’s earthly people, Israel, have always looked forward to. (See Isa. xi., lx.; Jer. xxx.; Ezek. xxxvii.; Zech. viii., xiv.) However much that hope has been clouded in their minds through unbelief, yet all the promises will be made good to them.

But *our* hope is far different. Before them lies Daniel’s last week. But *we* look for our translation before that event. They look for Palestine as their inheritance; our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven. They are an earthly people; we, Christians, are a heavenly people. Their hope, “the Sun of Righteousness”; ours, “the Morning Star”; and the last week of Daniel is the dark interval between those two events.

Recapitulating briefly: We see that four periods complete Israel’s history.

1st. From the birth of Abraham to the Exodus, 505 years, with the 15 deducted, leaves 490, *i.e.* 70 weeks.

2nd. From the Exodus to the dedication of the temple, 583 years in all, with their 93 years in the book of Judges deducted, also leaves 490; another 70 weeks.

3rd. From the dedication to Daniel's prophecy, 560 years, with 70 years in Babylon deducted, leaves again 70 weeks.

4th. From Daniel's prophecy to the Millennial period (dropping out this whole Church dispensation—all between the 69th and 70th weeks) gives us the 490 years, another 70 weeks—4 cycles of the same duration.

This number also, 70 times 7 (490), as seen in Matthew xviii. 22, is one that is expressive of perfect grace and forbearance, which surely can be seen in Jehovah's ways with Israel in every period of their history. And we are exhorted to be imitators of Him in this grace towards each other.

How perfect are God's ways! Who can doubt His plans? When this double way of reckoning time is understood, many things become plain. The *verbal inspiration* of Scripture is confirmed, and the truth of 1 Kings vi. 1 is seen to be correct, and "higher critics" are reprov'd for their short-sightedness and unbelief.

Underlying this wonderful history we would note a spiritual lesson, and close this brief review. God's principles and His truth never change. His holiness is the same now as in the past dispensation, and we are safe in applying the history of Israel as typical of ourselves. "All these things happened unto them for types, and are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). The end of the believer's

path here will bring him one day face to face with the Judgment-seat (*Beema*) of Christ. The Lord Himself will occupy that seat (2 Cor. v. 10). Then each believer will look back and "remember all the way"—every step of the journey—"and every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 10-12). Grace and mercy will never be more manifest to each believer than there. The grace that saved, and the mercy all along the way up to the end, will be understood aright and appreciated fully; but holiness will be shown there also. The even balance of truth we will see—God is light, and God is love.

How this truth should spur our hearts and stir our consciences! What about the valuable time granted us now, to serve and glorify the peerless name of the Lord Jesus? The *hours*, the *days*, the *weeks*, the *months*, the *years*—how has our time been used and in what way?—serious and pointed questions for both reader and writer! May we lay them well to heart. At the Judgment-seat will be a careful reckoning up of time. A perfect Hand will balance all correctly, and His judgment none will for a moment dispute. He who loves His own people and values also every moment of their heart's communion and service, will reward each one according to his works. What a searching thought! Abraham, we see, lost 15 years because of his unbelief and departure from God. Israel, as a nation, lost 93 years in the

book of Judges, and at an after date 70 years in Babylon, with their harps hung upon the willows ; and what shall we say of this whole dispensation ? It has been lost to the Jew, and God has ceased to count time for them since this break in their history. For *us* the history and its lessons are given that we might not fail as they failed. The Word of God has been preserved for us. The Holy Spirit is given to each believer to teach us that Word ; and therein we get *the path* and *work* for each believer marked out. Do we search that Word earnestly ? Do we earnestly desire each day to follow where it leads ? Here, and here only, is the believer right. Here, and here alone, will time truly count. When the heart grows cold, as in the case of Ephesus (Rev. ii. 4, 5), and the feet wander from the right path, all this time will be deducted for us too. True believers possess eternal life, and can never be lost (John x. 27-29), but time they may lose, and their rewards also, at the Judgment-seat (1 Cor. iii. 9-15).

Let us, then, be admonished by Israel's history. Let us give ourselves more unreservedly to the search of God's holy Word and earnest prayer, that we may be sanctified by the truth. That, until we see Him face to face, we may follow Him our Saviour and Lord, who is worthy of our undivided hearts.

A. E. B.

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