

## THE “SEVEN TIMES” OF DANIEL 4

**I**N THE PREVIOUS chapter it was shown that the prophecy of the seventy years may be given an application that is in full agreement with a dating of the desolation of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. Would this mean, then, that a period of 2,520 years of Gentile times started in 587 B.C.E. and ended—not in 1914—but in 1934 C.E.? Or could it be that the 2,520-year calculation is not founded on a sound biblical basis after all? If not, what meaning should be attached to the outbreak of war in 1914—a year that had been pointed forward to decades in advance?

These are the questions discussed in this chapter. We will first take a look at the attempts made to end the Gentile times in 1934.

### A. THE 1934 PROPHECY

Ending the times of the Gentiles in 1934 would not be a new idea. As far back as 1886 the British expositor Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness pointed to 1934 in his book *Light for the Last Days*.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Guinness made use of three different calendars in his calculations and thus succeeded in giving the Gentile times three time periods of different lengths: 2,520, 2,484, and 2,445 years respectively. In addition, he also used several starting-points, the first in 747 and the last in 587 B.C.E.<sup>2</sup> This provided a series of terminal dates, extending from 1774 C.E. to 1934 C.E., all of which were regarded as important dates in God’s prophetic timetable.

With the 1934 date, however, the Gentile times would definitely end, reckoned according to Dr. Guinness’ longest scale and from his last starting-point. The four most important dates in his scheme were 1915, 1917, 1923 and 1934.

1 H. Grattan Guinness, *Light for the Last Days* (London, 1886).

2 The others were 741, 738, 727, 713, 676, 650-647, and 598.

Dr. Guinness had predicted that the year 1917 would be perhaps the most important year in the termination of the trampling of Jerusalem. When the British general Edmund Allenby on December 9 that year captured Jerusalem and freed Palestine from the Turkish domination, this was seen by many as a confirmation of his chronology. Quite a number of people interested in the prophecies began to look forward to 1934 with great expectations.<sup>3</sup> Among these were also some of the followers of Pastor Charles Taze Russell.

### ***A-1: Pastor Russell's chronology emended***

At the climax of the organizational crisis in the Watch Tower Society following the death of Russell in 1916, many Bible students left the parent movement and formed the *Associated Bible Students*, in 1918 chartered as *The Pastoral Bible Institute*.<sup>4</sup>

In the same year Paul S. L. Johnson broke away from this group and formed *The Laymen's Home Missionary Movement*, today one of the strongest groups to grow out of the Bible Student movement aside from the parent organization.

Early in the 1920s the Pastoral Bible Institute *changed* Russell's application of the Gentile times, which caused an interesting debate between that movement, the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, and the Watch Tower Society.

An article entitled "Watchman, What of the Night?" published in the Pastoral Bible Institute's periodical *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*, April 15, 1921, marked a significant break with Pastor Russell's chronological system. Mainly responsible for this re-evaluation was R. E. Streeter, one of the five editors of the *Herald*. His views, accepted by the other editors, reflected a growing concern on the part of many Bible Students (as evidenced from letters received from nearly every part of the earth) who had experienced deep perplexity "as to the seeming failure of much that was hoped for and expected would be realized by the Lord's people by this time."<sup>5</sup> Some of the questions which had arisen were:

- 3 Most of these expositors seemed to be unaware of the fact that Guinness himself back in 1909, in his book *On the Rock*, had revised his chronology and "had calculated that the end would occur in 1945 instead of 1934."—Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now!* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), pp. 90-91.
- 4 The Pastoral Bible Institute (P.B.I.) was headed by former board members of the Watch Tower Society who were illegally dismissed by J. F. Rutherford in 1917 together with other prominent members.
- 5 *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*, April 15, 1921, p. 115.

Why has not the Church realized her final deliverance and reward by this time? . . . Why is not the time of trouble over with by now — why has not the old order of things passed away, and why has not the Kingdom been established in power before this? Is it not possible that there may be an error in the chronology?<sup>6</sup>

Calling attention to the fact that Pastor Russell's predictions for 1914 had not been fulfilled, it was concluded that there was evidently an error in the former reckoning. This error was explained to be found in the calculation of the times of the Gentiles:

Careful investigation has resulted in our locating the point of difficulty or discrepancy in what we have considered our great chain of chronology. It is found to be in connection with the commencement of the 'Times of the Gentiles'.<sup>7</sup>

First, it was argued, the seventy years, formerly referred to as a period of desolation, more properly should be called "the seventy years of servitude." (Jeremiah 25:11) Then, referring to Daniel 2:1, 37-38, it was pointed out that Nebuchadnezzar was the "head of gold" already in his second regnal year, and actually dominated the other nations including Judah, beginning from his very first year, according to Daniel 1:1. Consequently, the era of seventy years commenced eighteen to nineteen years *before* the destruction of Jerusalem. This destruction, therefore, had to be moved forward about nineteen years, from 606 to 587 B.C.E.

But the 606 B.C.E. date could still be retained as a starting-point for the times of the Gentiles, as it was held that the *lease of power* to the Gentiles started with Nebuchadnezzar's rise to world dominion. Thus 1914 marked the end of *the lease of power*, but not necessarily the full end of *the exercise of power*, nor the complete fall of the Gentile governments, even as the kingdom of Judah did not fall and was not overthrown in the final and absolute sense until Zedekiah, a vassal king under Nebuchadnezzar, was taken captive nineteen years after the period of servitude began. The *Herald* editors concluded:

Accordingly it was 587 B.C. when Zedekiah was taken captive, and not 606 B.C., and hence while the 2520 years' lease of Gentile power starting in Nebuchadnezzar's first year, 606 B.C., would run out in 1914; yet the full end of the Gentile Times and the complete fall

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 116.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

of Gentile governments is not indicated as taking place till nineteen years later, or in about 1934.<sup>8</sup>

So what could be expected to take place in 1934? *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom* indicated:

The reasonable deduction is that the great changes and events which we have heretofore expected to take place in 1914 would, in view of the foregoing, be logically expected to be in evidence somewhere around 1934.<sup>9</sup>

Other articles followed in the issues of May 15 and June 1 of the *Herald*, giving additional evidence for the necessity of these changes and answering questions from the readers. The changes evoked much interest among the Bible Students:

Many have freely written us that they have heartily accepted the conclusions reached. . . .

It has been of special interest to us to receive advice from brethren in several different quarters telling of how for some months or years before receiving our recent treatment of the subject, they had been led to make an exhaustive examination of the chronology and had arrived at exactly the same conclusions as those presented in the *HERALD* with regard to the 19 years difference in the starting of the Gentile Times, and found that all the evidences showed that Nebuchadnezzar's universal kingdom began in his first year instead of his nineteenth.<sup>10</sup>

### ***A-2: The Bible Student controversy on the Gentile times chronology***

However, most Bible Student groups rejected the conclusions of the Pastoral Bible Institute. The first counterattack came from P. S. L. Johnson, the founder of the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement and editor of its periodical *The Present Truth*.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*, June 1, 1921, p. 163. Interestingly, the November 1, 1921 issue of the *Herald* published an article prepared by another Bible Student in 1915, in which he presented evidence and conclusions practically identical to those of R. E. Streeter, although he dated the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 instead of 587 B.C.E. The 588 date was adopted by P.B.I. in subsequent issues of the *Herald*. As this man had no connection with P.B.I., he preferred to be anonymous, signing the article with the initials J.A.D. *The Beraean Bible Institute*, a Bible Student group with headquarters in Melbourne, Australia, also accepted the conclusions of the P.B.I. editors, as seen from their *People's Paper* of July 1 and September 1, 1921, pp. 52, 68.



Periodicals published by the three principal Bible Student groups involved in the controversy in the early 1920's about the application of the Gentile times.

In the issue of June 1, 1921, he published a critical article entitled "Watchman, What of the Night? — Examined" (pages 87-93), in which he defended Pastor Russell's understanding of Daniel 1:1 and 2:1 and the seventy years of desolation, also adding some arguments of his own. This was followed by other articles in the issues of July 1 and September 1.<sup>11</sup>

In 1922, the Watch Tower Society, too, plunged into the debate. Evidently the chronological changes in the *Herald* rapidly came to the knowledge of many Bible Students from different quarters, and seem to have caused no little agitation among the readers of *The Watch Tower* magazine, too. This was openly admitted in the first article on the subject, "The Gentile Times," published in the May 1, 1922, issue of *The Watch Tower*:

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, and some have turned into positive opposition to that which has been written. This has resulted in some of the Lord's dear sheep becoming disturbed in mind and causing them to inquire, Why does not THE WATCH TOWER say something?<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, beginning with this article, the Watch Tower Society started a series in defense of Pastor Russell's chronology. The second article, entitled "Chronology," published in *The Watch Tower* of May 15, 1922, opened with a reaffirmation of belief in Russell's dates, and added the date 1925:

We have no doubt whatever in regard to the chronology relating to the dates of 1874, 1914, 1918, and 1925. Some claim to have found new light in connection with the period of "seventy years of desolation" and Israel's captivity in Babylon, and are zealously seeking to make others believe that Brother Russell was in error.

11 "Ancient Israel's Jubilee Year' Examined" in the July 1, 1921 issue of *The Present Truth*, pp. 100-104, and "Further P.B.I. Chronology Examined" in the September 1 issue, pp. 134-136.

12 *The Watch Tower*, May 1, 1922, pp. 131-132. Other articles published during 1922 were "Chronology" (May 15, pp. 147-150), "Seventy Years' Desolation (Part I)" (June 1, pp. 163-168), "Seventy Years' Desolation (Part II)" (June 15, pp. 183-187), "The Strong Cable of Chronology" (July 15, pp. 217-219), "Interesting Letters: Mistakes of Ptolemy, the Pagan Historian" (August 15, pp. 253-254; this was written by Morton Edgar), and "Divinely-given Chronological Parallelisms (Part I)" (November 15, pp. 355-360).

The arguments put forth in this and subsequent articles were much the same as those earlier published by Paul S. L. Johnson. Johnson, who involuntarily had to side with the Watch Tower Society in this “battle,” supported *The Watch Tower* with a series of new articles in the *Present Truth*, running parallel with the articles in *The Watch Tower*.<sup>13</sup>

These responses were not long left unanswered. The *Herald* of June 15, 1922, contained the article “The Validity of Our Chronological Deductions,” which was a refutation of the arguments put forth in support of Pastor Russell’s interpretation of Daniel 1:1 and 2:1. In the July 1 issue, a second article “Another Chronological Testimony” considered the evidence from Zechariah 7:5, and the July 15 issue contained a third on the desolation period, again signed by J.A.D. (See note 10.)

Gradually the debate subsided. The Pastoral Bible Institute editors summarized their arguments and published them in a special double number of the *Herald*, August 1-15, 1925, and, again, in the May 15, 1926 issue. Then they waited to see what the 1934 date would bring.

As 1934 approached the Institute’s editors assumed a very cautious attitude:

If the nineteen years was intended to indicate the exact length of time of the running out of the Gentile Times from 1915 onward, then that would carry us to approximately 1933-1934; but we do not *know* that this was so intended, nor do we have positive evidence as to the exact length of the closing out of the Gentile Times beyond 1915.<sup>14</sup>

This cautiousness proved to be wise, and when the 1934 date had passed, they could assert:

Brethren who have perused carefully the pages of this journal, are well aware that much cautiousness and conservatism have been urged upon all in the direction of setting dates and fixing the time for various occurrences and events; and this continues to be the editorial policy of the ‘Herald’.<sup>15</sup>

As to the question of why 1934 did not see the passing away of the

13 *The Present Truth*, June 1, 1922: “Some Recent P.B.I. Teachings Examined” (pp. 84-87); July 1: “Some Recent P.B.I. Teachings Examined” (pp. 102-108); August 1: “Further P.B.I. Chronology Examined” (pp. 117-122); November 1: “Some Mistakes in Ptolemy’s Canon” (pp. 166-168).

14 *The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*, May 1, 1930, p. 137.

15 *The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*, May, 1935, p. 68.

Gentile nations, it was explained that 1934 should be looked upon as an *approximate* date, and that “we believe the progress of events and all the facts as we see them unfolding before us in this day of the Lord, lead us to look for the running out of the present order more by degrees or stages rather than that of the sudden crash and passing away of everything at one point of time, as the Apostle Paul suggests—‘As travail upon a woman’.”<sup>16</sup> The worsening situation in the world leading to The Second World War seemed to give support to this way of looking at the matter.<sup>17</sup>

The years 1914 and 1934 have come and gone, and the Gentile nations still rule the earth. In fact, the number of independent nations has *tripled* since 1914, from 66 in that year to about 200 at present. Thus, instead of *ending* in 1914, the times for the majority of nations on earth today have *begun* after that year!

Some proper questions to ask now surely are: Is the 2,520-year period really a well-founded biblical calculation? Was Jesus’ mention of the “Gentile times” at Luke 21:24 a reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” of madness? And should these “seven times” be converted into 2,520 years?

### **B. ARE THE GENTILE TIMES “SEVEN TIMES” OF 2,520 YEARS?**

When Jesus, at Luke 21:24, referred to the “times of the Gentiles,” or, according to the *New World Translation*, “the appointed times of the nations,” did he then have in mind the “seven times” of madness that fell upon the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in fulfillment of his dream about the chopped-down tree, as recorded in the book of Daniel, chapter four? And were these “seven times” of madness meant to have a greater fulfillment beyond that upon Nebuchadnezzar, representing a period of 2,520 years of Gentile dominion?

In spite of the many arguments put forth in support of these conjectures, positive proof is missing, and some serious objections may be raised against them. A critical examination of the Watch Tower Society’s chief arguments, as presented in its Bible dictionary *Insight on the Scriptures*, will make this clear.<sup>18</sup>

16 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

17 The year 1934 was still held to be an important date, occupying “a prominent place in chronological prophecy.” In support of this conclusion, the P.B.I. editors referred to a statement by Edwin C. Hill, a press reporter of international reputation, to the effect that “the year 1934 had been a most remarkable one. There had been many important occurrences and developments, he said, affecting the destinies of all the nations of the earth and marking the year as *one of the most significant of history*.”—*The Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*, May, 1935, pp. 71-72. (Emphasis added)

18 See the article “Appointed times of the nations,” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (Brooklyn, New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988), pp. 132-135.

***B-1: The supposed connection between Luke 21:24 and Daniel 4***

It is true that in his last great prophecy (Matthew 24-25; Luke 21, and Mark 13), Jesus “at least twice” referred to the book of Daniel.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, when mentioning the “disgusting thing that causes desolation” (*NW*) he directly states that this was “spoken of through Daniel the prophet.” (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27; 11:31, and 12:11) And when speaking of the “great tribulation [Greek *thlipsis*] such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now” (Matthew 24:21, *NW*), he clearly quotes from Daniel 12:1: “And there will certainly occur a time of distress [the early Greek translations—the *Septuagint* version and Theodotion’s version—use the word *thlipsis*, in the same way as in Matthew 24:21] such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation until that time.” (*NW*)

However, *no such clear reference to chapter four of Daniel may be found at Luke 21:24*. The word “times” (Greek *kairoí*, the plural form of *kairós*) in this text is no clear reference to the “seven times” of Daniel 4 as the Watch Tower Society maintains.<sup>20</sup>

This common word occurs many times in both its singular and plural forms in the Greek Scriptures, and about 300 times in the Greek *Septuagint* translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. In Daniel 4 and Luke 21 the word “times” is explicitly applied to two quite different periods—the “seven times” to the period of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness, and the “times of the Gentiles” to the period of the trampling down of Jerusalem—and the two periods may be equalized only by giving them a greater application beyond that given in the texts themselves. Therefore, the supposed connection between the “times of the Gentiles” at Luke 21:24 and the “seven times” at Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, and 32 appears to be no more than a conjecture.

***B-2: The greater application of the “seven times”***

Several arguments are proposed by the Watch Tower Society to support the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” of madness prefigured the period of Gentile dominion up to the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom, viz., a) the *prominent element of time* in the book of Daniel; b) the *time* at which the vision of the chopped-down tree was given; c) the *person* to whom it was given, and d) the *theme* of

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

the vision. Let us have a closer look at these arguments.

**a) *The element of time in the book of Daniel***

To prove that the "seven times" of Daniel 4 are related to the "times of the Gentiles," the Watch Tower Society argues that "an examination of the entire book of Daniel reveals that the element of time is everywhere prominent in the visions and prophecies it presents," and that "the book repeatedly points toward the conclusion that forms the theme of its prophecies: the establishment of a universal and eternal Kingdom of God exercised through the rulership of the 'son of man'."<sup>21</sup>

Although this is true of *some* of the visions in the book of Daniel, it is not true of all of them. And as far as can be seen, no other vision or prophecy therein has more than *one* fulfillment.<sup>22</sup> There is nothing to indicate, either in the book of Daniel or elsewhere in the Bible, that Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the chopped-down tree in Daniel 4 has more than one fulfillment. Daniel clearly says that the prophecy was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: "All this befell Nebuchadnezzar the king" (Daniel 4:28, NW). And further, in verse 33: "At that moment the word itself was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar." (NW) Dr. Edward J. Young comments:

lit., *was ended*, i.e., it came to an end in that it was completed or fulfilled *with respect to Neb.*<sup>23</sup>

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

22 When Jesus, in his prophecy on the desolation of Jerusalem, twice referred to the prophecies of Daniel (Matthew 24:15, 21), he did not give these prophecies a second and "greater" fulfillment. His first reference was to the "disgusting thing that is causing desolation," a phrase found in Daniel 9:27; 11:31, and 12:11. The original text is that of Daniel 9:27, which contextually (verse 26) seems to point forward to the crisis culminating with the desolation of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The same holds true of his reference to the "great tribulation" of Daniel 12:1. Jesus applied, not *reapplied*, both of these prophecies to the tribulation on the Jewish nation in 67-70 C.E.

Phrases and expressions used by earlier prophets are often also used, or alluded to, by later prophets, not because they gave a second and greater application to an earlier, fulfilled prophecy, but because they readily reused the "prophetic language" of earlier prophets, using similar phrases, expressions, ideas, symbols, metaphors, etc. in their prophecies of events to come. Thus, for example, it has often been pointed out that the apostle Paul, in his description of the coming "man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5), borrows some of the expressions used by Daniel in his prophecies about the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. Daniel 8:10-11; 11:36-37).

23 Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1949), p. 110.

Actually, most of the chapters in the book of Daniel do *not* contain material that could be said to point forward toward “the establishment of a universal eternal kingdom of God through the rulership of the ‘son of man’”: *chapter 1* deals with Daniel and his companions at the court of Babylon; *chapter 3* tells the story about the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace; *chapter 5* deals with Belshazzar’s feast, which ended with the fall of Babylon; *chapter 6* tells the story of Daniel in the den of lions, and *chapter 8* contains the vision of the ram and the he-goat, which culminates with the end of the tyrannical rule of Antiochus IV, in the second century before Christ’s coming.<sup>24</sup>

And although the prophecy of the “seventy weeks” in *chapter 9* points forward to the coming of Messiah, it does not say anything about the establishment of his kingdom. Not even the lengthy prophecy in the final chapters, *Daniel 10-12*, which end with the “great tribulation” and the resurrection of “many of those asleep in the ground” (Daniel 12:1-3), explicitly connects this with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

The fact is that the only *clear* and *direct* references to the establishment of the kingdom of God are found in chapters 2 and 7 (Daniel 2:44-45 and 7:13-14, 18, 22, 27).<sup>25</sup>

Thus any precedent which would call upon us to give a greater application to Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” of madness simply does not exist.

### ***b) The time of the vision***

If, as claimed, the *time* at which this vision was given should indicate a greater fulfillment, pointing to a 2,520-year break in the royal dynasty of David, it should have been given close to, or preferably

24 This is how the vision is understood by most commentators. The statements at Daniel 8:17 and 19 that “the vision pertains to the time of the end” should not automatically be understood as a reference to a final, eschatological “End of Time.” In the Old Testament words and phrases such as “the day of the Lord,” the “end” (Hebrew *qetz*) and the “time of the end” (compare Amos 5:18-20, Ezekiel 7:1-6; 21:25, 29; Daniel 11:13, 27, 35, 40) “do not refer to an End of Time but rather to a divinely appointed crisis, a turning point in history, i.e., a point within historical time and not a post- or supra-historical date.” (Shemaryahu Talmon, *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible*, Jerusalem-Leiden: The Magnes Press, 1993, p. 171) The attempt of Antiochus IV to destroy the Jewish religion, as predicted in Daniel 8:9-14, 23-26, was certainly such a “crisis” and has often been described as a “turning point in history.” See, for example, the comments by Al Walters in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 55:4, 1993, pp. 688-89.

25 Compare the careful study of this question by Dr. Reinhard Gregor Kratz, “*Reich Gottes und Gesetz im Danielbuch und im werdenden Judentum*,” in A. S. van der Woude (ed.), *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1993), pp. 433-479. (See especially pp. 441-442, and 448.)

in the same year as the dethronement of Zedekiah. Often, when the *time* a prophecy is given is important and has a connection with its fulfillment, the prophecy is dated. This is, for example, the case of the prophecy of the seventy years. (Jeremiah 25:1)<sup>26</sup> The visions and prophecies in the book of Daniel are usually dated: the dream of the image in the *second year* of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1), the vision of the four beasts in the *first year* of Belshazzar (Daniel 7:1), the vision of the ram and the he-goat in the *third year* of Belshazzar (Daniel 8:1), the prophecy of the seventy weeks in the *first year* of Darius the Mede (Daniel 9:1), and the last prophecy in the *third year* of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1).<sup>27</sup>

*But no such date is given for the vision of the chopped-down tree in Daniel 4*, which should logically have been done if this was important. The only information concerning time is given in verse 29, where the fulfillment of the dream is stated to have occurred twelve months later. Although no regnal year is given, it seems probable that Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” of madness took place somewhere near the close of his long reign. The reason for this conclusion is the boastful statement that triggered off the fulfillment of his dream:

Is not this Babylon the Great, that I myself have built for the royal house with the strength of my might and for the dignity of my majesty?—Daniel 4:30, *NW*.

When could Nebuchadnezzar possibly have uttered these words? Throughout most of his long reign he engaged in numerous building projects at Babylon and many other cities in Babylonia. The cuneiform inscriptions demonstrate that Nebuchadnezzar was primarily a

26 See chapter 5 above, section A-3.

27 That at least some dates given for the visions of Daniel are closely related to their contents may be seen from chapters 7 and 8, dated to the 1st and 3rd years of Belshazzar, respectively. According to the “Verse Account of Nabonidus” (B.M. 38299), Nabonidus “entrusted the kingship” to his son Belshazzar “when the third year was about to begin.” (J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 312-13) As the 1st year of Nabonidus was 555/54 BCE, his 3rd year—and thus the 1st year of Belshazzar—was 553/52 BCE. Now, according to the *Sippar Cylinder*, it was in this very year, the 3rd year of Nabonidus, that the god Marduk “aroused” Cyrus in a rebellion against his Median overlord, king Astyages. As stated in the *Nabonidus Chronicle*, Astyages was finally defeated three years later, in the 6th year of Nabonidus, that is, in 550/49 BCE. It can hardly be a coincidence that Daniel shortly before this, in Belshazzar’s 3rd year (Daniel 8:1), that is, in 551/50 BCE, was transferred in a vision to Susa, the future administrative capital of Persia, to be shown the emergence of the Medo-Persian empire in the form of a two-horned ram “making thrusts to the west and to the north and to the south.” (Daniel 8:1-4, 20) His vision, then, began to be fulfilled probably just a few months after it was given!



**Nebuchadnezzar's madness**

as depicted in the book *"The Truth Shall Make You Free"*, (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1943), page 237.

builder, not a warrior. He renovated and restored sixteen temples in Babylon including the two temples of Marduk, completed the two great walls of the city, built a network of canals across the city, embellished the streets of Babylon, rebuilt the palace of Nabopolassar, his father, and constructed another palace for his own use that was finished about 570 B.C.E., in addition to many other architectural achievements.<sup>28</sup>

It was evidently at the close of this building activity that the vision of the chopped-down tree was given, as is indicated by Nebuchadnezzar’s proud words in Daniel 4:30. This points towards the close of his forty-three-year-long reign, and consequently many years *after* the destruction of Jerusalem in his eighteenth regnal year.

A prophecy is, by definition, *forward* looking. How then could the *time* at which the vision was given indicate anything about a greater fulfillment, one beginning with the dethronement of Zedekiah many years *earlier*? Should not the *fulfillment* of a prophecy start, not before, but *subsequent to* the time at which the prophecy is given? The *time* of this particular dream, therefore, does not only seem to be unimportant, as the prophecy is not dated, but can actually be used as an argument *against* an application to a period starting with the destruction of Jerusalem, as the dream evidently was given many years *after* that event.

### ***c) The person to whom the vision was given***

Does the *person* to whom this vision was given, that is Nebuchadnezzar, indicate it has to be applied to a supposed 2,520-year break in the royal dynasty of David?

It is true that Nebuchadnezzar was instrumental in causing the break in this dynasty. But is it not improbable that Nebuchadnezzar’s oppressive exercise of sovereignty would be a symbol of Jehovah’s sovereignty expressed through the Davidic dynasty, while contemporaneously during the “seven times” of madness his total powerlessness was a symbol of world dominion exercised by Gentile nations? Or did he play *two* roles during his “seven times” of madness—(1) his *powerlessness*, representing the break in the dynasty of David during the 2,520-year period; and (2) his *beastlike state*, picturing the Gentile rule of the earth?

28 D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 42-80.

As may be seen, the parallels between the literal fulfillment and the claimed greater application are strained, and the greater application, therefore, becomes quite complicated and confusing. Would not this application have been far more probable if the vision had been given to one of the last kings of *Judah* instead of to Nebuchadnezzar? Would not a king of the royal dynasty of David be a more *natural* figure of that dynasty, and the “seven times” of loss of power experienced by such a king a more natural figure of the loss of sovereignty in the Davidic line?

Evidently, then, the *person* to whom the vision was given is no clear indication of another application beyond that one given directly through Daniel the prophet.

#### *d) The theme of the vision*

The *theme* of the vision of the chopped-down tree is expressed in Daniel 4:17, namely, “*that people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind.*”

Does this stated intent of the vision indicate it pointed forward to the time for the establishment of God’s kingdom by his Christ?<sup>29</sup>

To draw such a conclusion would be to read more into this statement than it actually says. Jehovah has always been the supreme ruler in the kingdom of mankind, although his supremacy has not always been recognized by everyone. But David did realize this, saying:

Jehovah himself has firmly established his throne in the very heavens; and *over everything* his own kingship has held dominion.—Psalms 103:19, *NW*.

Your kingship is a kingship *for all times indefinite*, And your dominion is throughout all successive generations.—Psalms 145:13, *NW*.

Thus Jehovah has always exercised control over the history of mankind and maneuvered the events according to his own will:

And he is changing times and seasons, removing kings and setting up kings, giving wisdom to the wise ones and knowledge to those knowing discernment.—Daniel 2:21, *NW*.

This was a lesson that Nebuchadnezzar—as well as kings before and after him—had to learn. The period that followed upon Nebuchadnezzar’s desolation of Judah and Jerusalem represented no ex-

29 *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (1988), p. 134.

ception or interruption to Jehovah’s supreme rule, in spite of the break in the royal dynasty of David. The Gentile nations during this period did not rule supremely. Jehovah took action against the Babylonian empire by raising up Cyrus to capture Babylon in 539 B.C.E. (Isaiah 45:1), and later Alexander the Great destroyed the Persian empire.

Further, the expression “lowliest one of mankind” at Daniel 4:17 is no clear indication that Jesus Christ is intended, as Jehovah in his dealings with mankind many times has overthrown mighty and haughty kings and exalted lowly ones.<sup>30</sup> This was stressed centuries later by Mary, the mother of Jesus:

He [God] has performed mightily with his arm, he has scattered abroad those who are haughty in the intention of their hearts. He has brought down men of power from thrones and *exalted lowly ones*.  
—Luke 1:51-52, NW.

Therefore, when the holy watcher in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream announced that “the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it the lowliest one of mankind,” he simply seems to be stating a *universal principle* in Jehovah’s dealing with mankind. There is no indication that he is giving a *prophecy* concerning the establishment of the Messianic kingdom with Jesus Christ on the throne. The *theme* of this vision—that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of mankind—is demonstrated by Jehovah’s dealing with the haughty Nebuchadnezzar who through his experience came to realize this universal principle. (Daniel 4:3, 34-37) By reading about Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliating experience, people living in every generation may come to realize this same truth.

### ***B-3: The collapsed foundation of the 2,520-year calculation***

As was shown in Chapter 1, the calculation that the “seven times” represented a period of 2,520 years is founded upon the so-called “year-day concept.”

This concept is no longer accepted as a *general principle* by the Watch Tower Society. It was taken over by Pastor Russell from the Second Adventists, but was abandoned by the Society’s second presi-

30 Commenting on the statement at Daniel 4:17 that God gives the kingdom “to the one whom he wants to,” the Watch Tower Society states: “We know that this ‘one’ to whom the Most High chooses to give the ‘kingdom’ is Christ Jesus.”—*True Peace and Security—From What Source?* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society,

dent, J. F. Rutherford, in the 1920's and early 1930's.<sup>31</sup> The 2,300 evenings and mornings (Dan. 8:14), and the 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 days (Daniel 12:7, 11, 12; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14), earlier held to be as many *years*, have since then been interpreted to mean *days* only.

The two texts in the Bible which earlier were quoted in proof of the year-day principle (Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6) are no longer understood as stating a *universal principle of interpretation*, although they are still cited in support of this particular 2,520-year calculation. As was shown in Chapter 1, note 2, it is not even likely that the year-day rule should be applied to the “seventy weeks” of Daniel 9:24-27. That prophecy does not speak of days, but “weeks” or, literally, “sevens.” So, rather than calling for a conversion of the “weeks” into days and then applying a “year-day principle,” the contextual connection with the “seventy years” at verse 2 strongly supports the prevalent conclusion that the angel was simply multiplying those seventy years by seven: “Seven times [or: sevenfold] seventy [years] are decreed.”

Even the adherents of the year-day theory themselves find it impossible to be consistent in their application of the supposed “principle” that in biblical time-related prophecies *days* always mean *years*. For example, when God told Noah that “after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:4, *NASB*), they do not interpret this to mean that “after seven more *years*, I will send rain on the earth forty *years*.” Or when Jonah told the inhabitants of Nineveh that “yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4), they do not understand this to mean that Nineveh should be overthrown after forty *years*. Many other examples could be given.<sup>32</sup>

To apply the year-day principle to the “seven times” of Daniel 4, then, is evidently quite arbitrary, and this is especially true if those doing the applying no longer apply that principle to other prophetic time periods.

Like other adherents of the 2,520-year calculation, the Watch Tower Society argues that the “seven times” (the period of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness) are 2,520 days, because at Revelation 12:6, 14 “a time and times and half a time” (3 1/2 times) are equated with 1,260

31 For a thorough refutation of the year-day concept, see pp. 111-126 of Samuel P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, originally published in 1852. Reference here is to the seventh edition (London: The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, 1965).

32 For additional examples, see Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1974; reprint of the 1883 edition), pp. 386-90.

days. (The validity of this reasoning will be discussed in the section below.) But while the 2,520 days are interpreted to mean a period of 2,520 *years*, the 1,260 days are understood to mean just 1,260 literal *days*. As the interpretation of the “seven times” is derived from the three-and-a-half times (1,260 days), why is not a consistent interpretation given to both periods? How do we know that the supposed 2,520 days mean *years*, but that this is not the case with the 1,260 days?<sup>33</sup>

Obviously there is no real basis for the conclusion that “seven times” mean 2,520 *years*.

#### ***B-4: Were the “seven times” really seven years?***

Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” of madness are often understood as a period of seven *years*. However, anyone acquainted with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar knows there are great problems with this understanding. It is difficult to find a period of seven years within his reign of 43 years when he was absent from his throne or inactive as ruler.

Where, then, during Nebuchadnezzar’s 43 years of rule, can we find a period of seven years when he was absent from the throne and not involved in royal activities of any kind? The accompanying table on the following page lists the years when the Biblical and extra-Biblical sources show Nebuchadnezzar still actively ruling on his throne.

As can be seen, the documented activities of Nebuchadnezzar appear to exclude an absence from the throne for any period of seven years. The longest period for which we have no evidence of his activity is from his thirty-seventh to his forty-third and last year, a period of about six years. This period ended with his death. It should be remembered, however, that Nebuchadnezzar, after his “seven times” of madness, was re-established on his throne and evidently ruled for some time afterward.—Daniel 4:26, 36.

So what about the “seven times”? Do they necessarily refer to *years*, as is often held?

Actually, the word for “times” in the original Aramaic text of Daniel (sing. *‘iddan*) commonly means “time, period, season” and may refer to any fixed and definite period of time.<sup>34</sup> Admittedly, the view

33 C. T. Russell was at least consistent in claiming that both periods were *years*, “for if three and a half times are 1260 days (years), seven times will be a period just twice as long, 2520 years.”—*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. II (originally published in 1889), p. 91.

34 Compare the use of the same word in Daniel 2:8 (“*time* is what you men are trying to gain”), 2:9 (“until the *time* itself is changed”), 2:21 (“he is changing *times* and seasons”), 3:5, 15 (“at the *time* that you hear the sound”), 7:12 (“there was a lengthening in life given to them for a time and a *season*”), and 7:25 (“they will be given into his hands

**Documented activity of Nebuchadnezzar's rule**

<b>Events</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>N, on the throne</b>	
Battle at Carchemish. Invasion of Judah and first deportation	Jer. 46:2; Jer. 25:1; Dan. 1:1f., BM 21946	accession-year	605
Campaign to Hattu	BM 21946	accession-year	605/604
N's dream of the image	Dan. 2:1f.	1st year	604/603
Campaigns to Hattu	BM 21946	2nd year	603/602
Building activity of N.	Royal inscription (Berger, AOAT 4:1, p. 108)*	2nd-6th years	603-599/98
Second deportation. Jehoiachin brought to Babylon	2 Ki. 24:11-12; 2 Chron. 36:10; Jer. 52:28; BM 21946	7th year	598/97
Campaigns to Hattu and Tigris	BM 21946	8th-9th years	597-596/95
Rebellion in N's army. Revolt plans among exiles spread to Judah. Jeremiah's letters to exiles. N. marches to Hattu	BM 21946; Jer. 28:1f.; Jer. 29:1-3, 4-30	10th year	595/04
Campaign to Hattu	BM 21946	11th year	594/03
Building activity of N.	Royal inscription (Berger, AOAT 4:1, p. 108)*	12th year	593/92
Jerusalem besieged for 2.5 years, desolated. Third deportation	2 Ki. 25:1f., Jer. 32:1-2; 52:4-16	15th-18th years	589/587
Ezekiel predicts siege of Tyre	Ez. 26:1, 7	18th year	587
N. besieges Tyre for 13 years	Josephus' Ant. X:xi,1; Ap. 1:21	19th-32nd years	586-573/72
Ezekiel confirms siege ended	Ez. 29:17-18	33rd year	572/71
N. attacks Egypt as predicted	BM 33041 (Jer. 43:10f.; Ez. 29:1-16, 19-20)	37th year	568/67
N. dies. Evil-merodach's accession-year	Jer. 52:31-34; 2 Ki. 25:27-30	43rd year	562/61

\* AOAT 4:1 = *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Vol. 4:1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973)

that at Daniel chapter four, verses 16, 23, 25, 32 it refers to years is not restricted to the Watch Tower Society. This understanding can be found in ancient sources.

Thus, the *Septuagint* (LXX) version of Daniel translated the word as "years," and so does Josephus in *Antiquities* X:x,6. But the LXX text of Daniel was rejected by early Christians in preference of the Greek version of Theodotion (usually dated to about 180 C.E.) which says "times" (Greek *kairoi*), not "years" in Daniel chapter four.<sup>35</sup>

That some Jews at an early stage interpreted the "times" of Daniel chapter four as "years" can also be seen in the so-called "Prayer of Nabonidus," a fragmentary Aramaic document found among the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran, Cave 4, and dating from ca. 75-50 B.C.E. This document says that Nabonidus was stricken with a "pernicious inflammation . . . for seven years" in the Teman oasis.<sup>36</sup>

What are the other alternatives? Realizing that the literal meaning of the Aramaic word 'iddan is not "year" but "period" or "season," Hippolytus of the third century says that some viewed a "time" as one of the four seasons of the year. Hence "seven seasons" would be less than two years. Bishop Theodoret of the fifth century, however, noted that people of ancient times, such as the Babylonians and Persians, spoke of only *two* seasons a year, summer and winter, the rainless and the rainy seasons.<sup>37</sup> This was also the custom among the Hebrews. In the Bible there are no references to spring and autumn, only to the summer and winter seasons. According to this line of reasoning, the "seven seasons" of Nebuchadnezzar's madness meant three and one-half years.

35 As a number of citations from Daniel in the New Testament agree with Theodotion's Greek text of Daniel against LXX, Theodotion's translation is thought to have been based on an earlier, pre-Christian textual tradition, which may have been either independent of or a revision of LXX.—John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 2-11. See also Peter W. Coxon, "Another look at Nebuchadnezzar's madness," in A. S. van der Woude, *op. cit.* (see note 25 above), pp. 213-14.

36 For a recent reconstruction and translation of the text, see Baruch A. Levine and Anne Robertson in William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, Vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 285-86. Most scholars suppose that the story about the "seven times" of madness originally dealt with Nabonidus and that the "Prayer of Nabonidus" reflects an earlier state of the tradition. The book of Daniel, it is held, attributes the experience to Nebuchadnezzar because he was better known to the Jews. However, there is no evidence in support of this theory, and it is quite as likely that the "Prayer of Nabonidus" is a late, distorted version of Daniel's narrative.—Compare the comments by D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.* (see note 28 above), pp. 103-105.

37 E. J. Young, *op. cit.* (see note 23 above), p. 105. Dr. H. Neumann confirms that in Mesopotamia there are only two seasons: "a cloudless and dry summer from May to October, and a cloudy and rainy winter from November to April."—Heinz Neumann in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Vol. 85 (Wien 1995), p. 242.

Some of the most highly regarded conservative Bible scholars of recent times, such as Carl F. Keil and Edward J. Young, either reject or feel strong doubts about the theory that the “seven times” of Daniel chapter four refer to seven *years*. The Assyriologist Donald J. Wiseman even suggests that the “seven times” should be understood as “seven months.”<sup>38</sup> Any of these last-mentioned viewpoints would be in acceptable agreement with the information we have on the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

Some, of course, will point to Revelation chapter twelve, arguing that since the 3 1/2 “times” in verse 14 correspond to the 1260 days (= 3 1/2 years) of verse 6, seven times must mean 2520 days, or seven years.

There is, however, no reason to conclude that the way “times” is used in Revelation chapter twelve must automatically apply also in other contexts. The fact remains that, since the Aramaic word *'iddan* simply means “time, period, season,” it could refer to periods of different lengths. It does not refer to the same, fixed period everywhere it is used. The context must always decide its meaning. And even if it could be shown that the “time, and times and half a time” at Daniel chapter seven, verse 25, mean three and a half years, this still would not prove that the “seven times” or “periods” (*New American Standard Bible*), or “seasons” (*Rotherham, Tanakh*), at Daniel chapter four, verses 16, 23, 25 and 32, mean “seven years.” The two chapters deal with two very different events and periods and therefore should not be confused.

In the discussion above it has been shown that the Gentile times of Luke 21:24 cannot be proved to be an allusion to the “seven times” of Daniel 4. Nor is there any evidence to show that Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” of madness prefigured another period, amounting to 2,520 years of Gentile dominion. Finally, it was demonstrated that the “seven times” cannot even be proved to mean seven *years*. These identifications are obviously no more than a guesswork without solid foundation in the Bible itself.

38 Donald J. Wiseman in J. D. Douglas (ed.), *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edition (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1982), p. 821. Dr. Wiseman explains that this understanding of *'iddan* at Daniel 4 “arose from my view that a ‘month’ might be an appropriate ‘period’ since the nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s illness . . . is unlikely to have been a recurrent one.”—Letter Wiseman-Jonsson, dated May 28, 1987. Compare Wiseman’s discussion of Nebuchadnezzar’s illness in B. Palmer (ed.), *Medicine and the Bible* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1986), pp. 26-27.

## C. THE SETTING UP OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM

As was pointed out in Chapter 1 of this work, Pastor Russell’s predictions for 1914 were not fulfilled. When the First World War ended, the Gentile nations still ruled the earth instead of Christ’s Kingdom, and Jerusalem in Palestine was still occupied by a Gentile nation. Evidently, the *time* for the events expected could not be right. But to draw this simple conclusion was not an easy thing. Additionally, *something* had happened: the World War. So it was felt that the time was right after all. Russell’s followers, therefore, concluded that they had been expecting the “wrong thing at the right time.”<sup>39</sup>

### *C-1: Failed expectations—wrong things at the right time?*

Gradually a new apocalyptic pattern emerged. The World War with the many crises following it came to be regarded merely as a *beginning* of the overthrow of the Gentile nations. In 1922 J. F. Rutherford, the new president of the Society, explained:

God granted to the Gentiles a lease of dominion for a term of 2520 years, which term or lease ended about August, 1914. Then came forward the Landlord, the rightful Ruler (Ezekiel 21:27), and began ouster proceedings. *It is not to be expected that he would suddenly wipe everything out of existence*, for that is not the way the Lord does things; but that he would overrule the contending elements, causing these to destroy the present order; and that while this is going on he would have his faithful followers give a tremendous witness in the world.<sup>40</sup>

This reminds us of later explanations of the 1934 failure by the Pastoral Bible Institute editors discussed above. The setting up of Christ’s kingdom had earlier been seen as a process which began in 1878 and which would culminate in 1914 with the destruction of the Gentile nations.<sup>41</sup> But in 1922 the starting-point of this process was moved forward to 1914 and the overthrow of the Gentile nations was expected to take place in the near future. This new view was presented by J. F. Rutherford at the Cedar Point Convention of September 5-13, 1922 in his address, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.”

39 A. H. Macmillan, *Faith on the March* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), pp. 48-49.

40 *The Watch Tower*, May 1, 1922, p. 139; also published in the booklet *The Bible on Our Lord’s Return* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: International Bible Students Association, 1922), pp. 93-94. Emphasis added.

41 See the article “The Setting Up of Christ’s Kingdom” in *The Watch Tower* of June 1, 1922, which still has the 1878 date.

Three years later, in the article “Birth of the Nation” in *The Watch Tower*, March 1, 1925, a new interpretation of Revelation 12:1-6 was presented in accordance with the new understanding of the setting up of Christ’s kingdom, to the effect that the kingdom had been “born” in heaven in 1914. That year Jesus Christ “took unto himself his great power and began his reign: the nations were angry, and the day of God’s wrath began.—Ezekiel 21:27; Revelation 11:17, 18.”<sup>42</sup>

### ***C-2: The “downtrodden” city of Jerusalem relocated***

But what about the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles? At the end of 1914 the city of Jerusalem was still occupied by a Gentile nation, the Turkish Empire. In an attempt to “explain” this embarrassing fact, Pastor Russell argued that the persecution of the Jews at that time seemed to have practically stopped all around the world, and he saw in this a confirmation of his belief that the Gentile times had expired.<sup>43</sup>

However, in December, 1917, more than one year after Russell’s death, an interesting thing happened. On December 9, 1917, the British under General Allenby in alliance with the Arabs captured Jerusalem and thus made an end of the nearly seven-centuries-long Turkish occupation. This event was looked upon by many Christians as a very important sign of the times.<sup>44</sup>

The deliverance of Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917, together with the so-called Balfour declaration of November 2, 1917 which proclaimed that the British Government supported the establishment

42 *The Bible on Our Lord’s Return* (1922), p. 93.

43 *The Watch Tower*, November 1, 1914, pp. 329-30; *Reprints*, p. 5568.

44 Christian commentators of several different denominations regarded this event as a sign of the times. It will be remembered that as early as 1823, John A. Brown, in his *The Even-Tide*, ended the “seven times” in 1917. In his opinion 1917 would see “the full glory of the kingdom of Israel . . . perfected.” (Vol. 1, pp. xliii f.) Later in the same century the British expositor Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness, too, pointed forward to 1917 as a very important date: “There can be no question that those who live to see this year 1917 will have reached one of the most important, perhaps the most momentous, of these terminal years of crisis.”—*Light for the Last Days*, London, 1886, pp. 342-46. Aware of these predictions, eight well-known English clergymen, among whom were Dr. G. Campbell Morgan and Dr. G. B. Meyer, issued a manifesto which among other things declared: “FIRST. That the present crisis points towards the close of the times of the Gentiles. . . . FIFTH. That all human schemes of reconstruction must be subsidiary to the second coming of our Lord, because all nations will be subject to his rule.” The manifesto was published in the London magazine *Current Opinion* of February 1918 and subsequently republished by other papers throughout the world. Although this manifesto has been cited several times in Watchtower publications in support of the 1914 date, it was actually issued in support of the 1917 date and resulted from Allenby’s “liberation” of Jerusalem in the latter year.

of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, drastically accelerated Jewish immigration to Palestine. Thus, from October, 1922, to the spring of 1929 the Jewish population of Palestine doubled from 83,794 to about 165,000.

At that time Palestine was still administered by a non-Jewish or Gentile nation (England) and the Jews still constituted only a minority (about twenty percent) of the population in Palestine. To all appearances, Palestine and the city of Jerusalem were still controlled by the Gentiles. Yet the Watch Tower Society’s president, J. F. Rutherford, in his book *Life*, published in 1929, insisted that the Gentile times spoken of by Jesus at Luke 21:24 had expired in 1914, arguing that the accelerating Jewish immigration to Palestine was the tangible proof of the conclusion that this prophecy had been fulfilled.

But shortly after the publication of *Life*, this whole idea was abandoned; the return of the Jews to the Promised Land was no longer seen as a fulfillment of Bible prophecies. Since 1931 such prophecies have been applied to *spiritual* Israel.<sup>45</sup> The logical consequence of this change could only be that the end of the treading down of Jerusalem was no longer applicable to the *literal* city of Jerusalem:

The present-day city of Jerusalem over in Palestine is not the city of the Great King Jehovah God, even though Christendom calls certain places over there “holy”. That city is doomed to destruction at the end of this world. But the true Jerusalem will live forever as the capital of Jehovah’s universal organization. We mean the New Jerusalem, of which Jesus Christ gave a symbolic vision to the apostle John on the isle of Patmos. . . .

Jesus Christ is the “King of kings and Lord of lords” over that true Jerusalem. At the close of the Gentile times in 1914 he was enthroned as acting Ruler in the “city of the great King”, Jehovah. Thus, after an interruption of 2,520 years by Gentile powers, Theocratic Government over earth rose again to power in the New Jerusalem, never to be trodden down by the Gentiles.<sup>46</sup>

What, exactly, was this “New Jerusalem”? The Watchtower book *Your Will Be Done On Earth* (1958) explains on page 94:

Back in 607 B.C. the Jerusalem that was overthrown stood for the kingdom of God because it had the typical throne of Jehovah on which the anointed one of Jehovah sat as his king. Likewise, the

45 *The Watch Tower*, 1931, pp. 253-54; J. F. Rutherford, *Vindication*, Vol. II (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1932), pp. 258, 267-69.

46 *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1949, pp. 330-31.

Jerusalem that is trampled upon by worldly nations stands for the kingdom of God. . . . So the end of the trampling down of Jerusalem at the complete fulfillment of the “appointed times of the nations” would mean the rising again of the symbolic Jerusalem, namely, *the kingdom of God*.

Thus the end of the trampling down of Jerusalem was interpreted to mean the installation of Jesus Christ on Jehovah’s throne in the *heavenly Jerusalem* in 1914.<sup>47</sup> But this relocation of the “downtrodden Jerusalem” from earth to heaven created other questions, discussed below, which never have been satisfactorily answered.

### ***C-3: Have two “kingdoms of Christ” been set up?***

In the publications of the Watch Tower Society it is constantly stressed that Jesus Christ was “enthroned” and his kingdom “set up” or “established” in heaven at the end of the Gentile times in 1914. At that time, it is held, he began to rule “in the midst of his enemies” in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1-2. Thereafter, as an initial action against these enemies, Jesus Christ is thought to have thrown Satan and his demon angels out of heaven and down to the earthly realm, in fulfillment of Revelation 12:1-10.<sup>48</sup>

One problem with this scenario is that a number of texts in the Bible clearly show that Jesus Christ was enthroned in heaven already at the time of his resurrection and exaltation. For example, in his revelation to the apostle John, Jesus said:

To the one that conquers I will grant to sit down with me on my throne, *even as I conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne*.—Revelation 3:21, *NW*.

That the kingdom of Christ existed already back in the first century is also confirmed by the apostle Paul, who in his letter to the Christians in Colossae stated:

He [the Father] delivered us from the authority of the darkness and *transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love*, by means of whom we have our release by ransom, the forgiveness of our sins. —Colossians 1:13-14, *NW*.

47 See “*Babylon the Great Has Fallen!*” *God’s Kingdom Rules!* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1963), pp. 452-53; “*The Nations Shall Know that I Am Jehovah*” — *How?* (1971), pp. 232-35; *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (1988), pp. 132-33.

48 Recent presentations of these views may be found, for example, in the books *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (1982), pp. 134-41, and *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* (1995), pp. 90-97. Both books are published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

If Jesus Christ was enthroned at his resurrection and exaltation and has been reigning in his heavenly kingdom since then, how can it be claimed that he was enthroned and his kingdom set up *in 1914*?

In order to resolve this problem the Watch Tower Society has been forced to conclude that *two* kingdoms of Christ have been set up: 1) the "Kingdom of the Son of His Love" (Colossians 1:13), which was set up at Christ's resurrection and exaltation, and 2) the "Kingdom of Our Lord and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15), which is held to have been set up in 1914.

Note how the Watch Tower Society, in its Bible dictionary *Insight on the Scriptures*, attempts to tell the difference between these two "kingdoms of Christ." Commenting on Paul's statement at Colossians 1:13-14 quoted above, this dictionary states:

Christ's kingdom from Pentecost of 33 C.E. onward has been a spiritual one ruling over spiritual Israel, Christians who have been begotten by God's spirit to become the spiritual children of God. (Joh 3:3, 5, 6)<sup>49</sup>

This *first* kingdom of Christ, then, is explained to have been a *limited* kingdom, with Jesus Christ ruling only over his congregation of followers from Pentecost onward.

The *second* kingdom of Christ, on the other hand, is *much greater in scope* and was not set up until 1914. In support of this view the above-cited dictionary refers to Revelation 11:15, where the apostle John heard loud voices in heaven proclaiming that, "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever." (NW) In explanation of this vision, the Society's dictionary states:

This Kingdom is of greater proportions and bigger dimensions than "the kingdom of the Son of his love," spoken of at Colossians 1:13. "The kingdom of the Son of his love" began at Pentecost 33 C.E. and has been over Christ's anointed disciples; "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" is brought forth at the end of "the appointed times of the nations" and is over all mankind on earth.<sup>50</sup>

But even on the supposition that Christ's rule from Pentecost onward was limited to his rule over his anointed disciples ("spiritual

49 *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2 (1988), p. 169.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 169. Similarly, on page 136 of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (1982), the Watch Tower Society refers to "the kingdom of the Son of [God's] love" mentioned at Colossians 1:13 and states: "But this rule, or 'kingdom,' over Christians with the hope of heavenly life is *not the Kingdom government for which Jesus taught his followers to pray.*" (Emphasis added.)

Israel”), as the Watch Tower Society holds, the consequence of this view is that Christ, as the legal heir to the throne of David, since Pentecost onward has been sitting on the throne of Jehovah (Revelation 3:21) in *heavenly* Jerusalem and ruling over *spiritual* Israel, just as David and his son Solomon were said to be sitting upon the “throne of Jehovah” in *earthly* Jerusalem, reigning over *fleshly* Israel.<sup>51</sup>

In view of this first-century restoration of the “kingdom of David,” *how can it be held that “Jerusalem”, understood as being the Kingdom of God, went on to be trodden down by the Gentile nations on earth during the whole subsequent period, from Pentecost onward right up to 1914?*

The Gentile nations, of course, could not “ascend into heaven” (John 3:13) in order to interfere with Christ’s rule during this period. Nor can the treading down of “Jerusalem” refer to the persecution of “spiritual Israel” (Christ’s followers), as such persecution did not stop in 1914. So what did the treading down of “Jerusalem” really mean, and how did it stop in 1914? In spite of the theory of the two kingdoms of Christ, this question still calls for an answer.

#### ***C-4: The universal power of the resurrected Christ***

Does the Bible really support the view that there are *two* kingdoms of Christ entrusted him at two different occasions? Was Christ’s “first” kingdom limited to a rule over his anointed disciples from Pentecost onward?

This idea seems clearly to be contradicted by a number of Bible passages which emphasize the *universal* scope of the authority given to Jesus Christ at his resurrection and exaltation. Even some time before his ascension Jesus stated to his disciples:

All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth.  
—Matthew 28:18, *NW*.

The past tense, “has been given,” shows that Jesus Christ *already at that time was in possession of all authority or power in heaven*

51 The angel Gabriel told Mary that the son she was to bear “will be called the Son of the Most High; and *the Lord will give him the throne of His father David.*” (Luke 1:32, *NASB*) That Christ was given “the throne of his father David” at his resurrection and exaltation was later confirmed by James, the half brother of Jesus, when he at Acts 15:13-18 explained to his fellow believers that “the tabernacle of David which has fallen” had been erected again, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos 9:11f. As pointed out by Dr. F. F. Bruce, “James’ application of the prophecy finds the fulfillment of its first part (the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David) in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the Son of David, and the reconstitution of His disciples as the new Israel, and the fulfillment of its second part in the presence of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the Church.”—F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980 reprint), p. 310.

and on the earth. What additional power, then, could possibly have remained to be given him in 1914?

Jesus' position of power after his resurrection was also accentuated by the apostle Paul at Ephesians 1:20-23:

He [God] raised him up from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, *far above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name named, not only in this system of things, but also in that to come. He also subjected all things under his feet, and made him head over all things to the congregation, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills up all things in all.* (NW)

Notice that Paul in this passage declares that Christ's dominion at that time was not limited to a rule over his congregation only, but embraced "all things," "every government and authority and lordship and every name named." Similarly, at Colossians 2:10 Paul states that Christ "is the head of all government and authority" (NW). And at Revelation 1:5 the apostle John sent greetings to "the seven congregations that are in the [district of] Asia" from Jesus Christ, "*The Ruler of the kings of the earth*" (NW).

Strangely enough, the Watch Tower Society, in the article on "Jesus Christ" in its Bible dictionary *Insight on the Scriptures*, seems to *contradict* its idea of a limited kingdom of Christ from Pentecost onward by stating that he since his resurrection "*heads a government of universal domain.*" Notice the following remarkable statements on page 61 of Volume 2:

Following his resurrection, Jesus informed his disciples, "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth," thereby showing that he *heads a government of universal domain.* (Mt 28:18) The apostle Paul made clear that Jesus' Father has "left nothing that is not subject to him [Jesus]," with the evident exception of "the one who subjected all things to him," that is, Jehovah, the Sovereign God. (1Co 15:27; Heb 1:1-14; 2:8) Jesus Christ's "name," therefore, is more excellent than that of God's angels, in that his name embraces or stands for *the vast executive authority that Jehovah has placed in him.* (Heb 1:3, 4) [Emphasis added.]

If Jesus Christ already at his resurrection and exaltation was given "all authority . . . in heaven and on the earth," and if he since then has been "the head of all government and authority" and "the Ruler of the kings of the earth" and therefore, from then on, "heads a government of universal domain" as even the Watch Tower Society admits, how, then, can it be claimed that Christ's kingdom from Pentecost onward

was limited to a rule over his congregation of followers, and that the “kingdom of the world” did not become “the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” until the year 1914?

***C-5: Waiting “at the right hand of God”—for what?***

On the last day of his earthly life Jesus explained to the members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, that his kingdom rule was now due to begin, stating that, “*from now on the Son of man will be sitting at the powerful right hand of God.*”—Luke 22:69, NW.<sup>52</sup>

That Christ after his resurrection was elevated to “the right hand of God” is repeatedly emphasized by the New Testament writers. The phrase “sitting at the powerful right hand of God” is a reference to Psalm 110:1, a text quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more often than any other passage of the Old Testament.<sup>53</sup> This psalm is consistently interpreted by the New Testament writers as depicting Christ’s exaltation to the throne of God after his resurrection.<sup>54</sup> The first two verses say:

The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is: “Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.” The rod of your strength Jehovah will send out from Zion, [saying:] “Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.”—Psalm 110:1-2, NW.

- 52 The parallel passage at Matthew 26:64 adds another feature to Jesus’ statement: “From henceforth you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and *coming on the clouds of heaven.*” (Compare Mark 14:62) The last part of the statement is an allusion to Daniel 7:13-14, where Daniel in his vision saw “with the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom”. It should be noticed that in this vision the “son of man” did not come from heaven to earth. Rather, his “coming” is in the opposite direction, to the “Ancient of Days” on the heavenly throne, to be given rulership, dignity, and kingdom. This passage, therefore, does not seem to be dealing with Christ’s second coming, but rather with his enthronement at his resurrection and exaltation.
- 53 Professor Martin Hengel finds that Psalm 110:1 is used in twenty-one passages in the New Testament, seven of which are direct quotations. The passages are: Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42f.; 22:69; Acts 2:33; 2:34f.; 5:31; 7:55f.; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12f.; 12:2; and 1 Pet. 3:22. —M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1995), p. 133.
- 54 To sit “at the right hand of God” obviously means to sit with God *on his throne*, in view of Jesus’ statement at Rev. 3:21. This enthronement of Christ is not nullified by the fact that the letter to the Hebrews twice presents him as being seated “at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 8:1; 12:2) The language here, of course, is figurative. God is not sitting on a literal throne. At Matthew 5:34 Jesus says that “*heaven . . . is God’s throne.*” A “throne” is a symbol of *rulership*. Whether Christ is pictured as being seated on God’s throne or on a separate throne to the right of it, the meaning is the same, viz., that he is *ruling*. Besides, as Professor Hengel argues, the sense of the text at Heb. 8:1 and 12:2 is “at the right hand of God *on his throne*,” rather than “at the right hand of the throne of God.”—M. Hengel, *op. cit.*, pp. 142, 148-49. Compare also Revelation 22:1, 3, which speaks of “the throne of God and of the Lamb” as one common throne only.



Thutmosis III (c. 1490-1436 BCE) at the right hand of his god Amon.



Pharaoh Horemheb (c. 1332-1305 BCE) at the right hand of his god Horus.



Amenophis II (c. 1427-01 BCE) and Amenophis III (1391-53 BCE) pictured on Egyptian paintings as infants on their nurses' laps, with Egypt's enemies placed as a footstool beneath the feet of the future kings.



The image of the king as sitting on the throne of his god was also used in the Biblical world outside the Bible, as was also the image of subjugated enemies being placed as a footstool under his feet. – R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (Berlin 1849-58), Vol. 5, Bl. 62 and 69a; L. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten* (Berlin, 1925), Bl. 93:554; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), pp. 255,263.

To overcome the problem created by the Scriptural evidence for Christ's universal rule "in the midst of his enemies" to have begun at the time of his resurrection and exaltation, the Watch Tower Society explains that Christ's sitting "at the right hand of God" means, not that he has been *ruling* from then on, but rather that he has been sitting there *waiting for his rulership to begin*. Support for this view is found in the way Psalm 110:1-2 is referred to at Hebrews 10:12-13:

When Christ returned to heaven after his resurrection, he did not start ruling then as King of God's government. Rather, there was to be a time of waiting, as the apostle Paul explains: "This man [Jesus Christ] offered one sacrifice for sins perpetually and sat down at the right hand of God, *from then on awaiting* until his enemies should be placed as a stool for his feet." (Hebrews 10:12, 13) When the time came for Christ to begin to rule, Jehovah told him: "Go subduing [or, conquering] in the midst of your enemies."<sup>55</sup>

This explanation of the word "awaiting" at Hebrews 10:12-13, however, creates other problems. In his outline of the reign of Christ at 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, the apostle Paul concludes by stating that "when all things will have been subjected to him [Christ], then the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone." This statement gives rise to the following question:

**1.** If Christ would have to wait until God had put all enemies under his feet *before his rulership could begin*, and if he then, "when all things will have been subjected to him," would hand over the kingdom to God, *what becomes of his reign?* When the time has come for him to start ruling, it is time for him to hand over the kingdom to God!

Another question occasioned by the Watch Tower Society's explanation is this:

**2.** If Christ could not *start ruling* until God had placed all his enemies as a stool for his feet, and if Christ's rule began in 1914, how can it be held that all enemies—including "the last enemy, death" (1 Corinthians 15:25)—had been put under his feet at that time?

55 *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (1982), pp. 136-37. The more recent book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1995), similarly explains that Christ's sitting at the right hand of God "indicates that *Jesus' rulership would not begin immediately after his ascension to heaven*. Rather, he would wait" for this rulership to begin, that is, until 1914. (Pages 96-97. Emphasis added.)

Strangely, the Watch Tower Society admits that these enemies *were still active* at the time of Christ's enthronement in 1914, so that his rule began "in the midst of his enemies." In fact, his very first action as king is stated to have been an attack on his chief enemies, Satan and his angels, whom he is supposed to have thrown out of heaven in 1914!<sup>56</sup>

A third question to ask, therefore, is:

**3.** If Christ could not *start ruling* until God had put all his enemies *under his feet*, how can his rule have begun "in the midst of his enemies," and why did he have to start his reign with a war against them?

Obviously, an interpretation that is so patently inconsistent cannot be correct. Christ's "awaiting" at the right hand of God cannot have been a waiting for his rulership *to begin*. Instead, as shown by other parallel passages, it has been a waiting for his rule "in the midst of his enemies" *to end*, to reach its conclusive stage.

Christ's sitting at the right hand of God cannot have been a period of passively waiting for God to put his enemies under his feet. To be sure, God is repeatedly pictured as the one who puts the enemies under the feet of Christ. But as shown already at Psalm 110:1-2, it is Christ himself who takes action against these enemies, though in the power given him by God. Jehovah's inviting him to sit down at his right hand is followed by the words:

The rod of your strength Jehovah will send out from Zion, [saying:] '*Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.*'

The text clearly indicates that this active ruling in the midst of the enemies would begin as soon as Christ had sat down at the right hand of God, not after a waiting period of some 1900 years. Christ's "waiting," therefore, is best explained as *his looking forward with expectation to the end result of his own active exercise of rule*, the final and complete victory over his enemies.<sup>57</sup>

This is evidently also how the apostle Paul understood Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, namely, as a period of active reigning on his part until he has put all enemies under his feet. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains:

Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, *after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and*

56 *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (1982), pp. 136-38, 141.

57 The Greek word for "awaiting" at Hebrews 10:13, *ekdechomai*, means to "await, wait for, expect."—Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2 (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1976), pp. 244-245.

*power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*—1 Corinthians 15:24-25, NRSV.

Notice that Paul is saying that Christ must reign *until*—not *from the time when*—the enemies have been put under his feet. According to Paul, Christ has been ruling as king ever since his resurrection and exaltation. Christ’s enemies, of course, existed also at that time. His reign from that time onward, therefore, of necessity has been a ruling “in the midst of his enemies.”

Paul’s statement indicates that the very purpose of Christ’s reign is to conquer and subjugate these enemies. When this purpose has been accomplished, he is to hand over the kingdom to God. As Bible commentator T. C. Edwards aptly remarks in his comment on this passage:

This verse means that Christ reigns until He has put, after long protracted warfare, all enemies under His feet. The reign of Christ, therefore, is not a millennium of peace, but a perpetual conflict ending in a final triumph.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, invested with “all authority in heaven and on the earth,” Christ has been *ruling*, even “*subduing* in the midst of his enemies,” ever since his resurrection and exaltation to the throne of God. Who are these “enemies” and in what way has Christ been “subduing” them since then?

### ***C-6: Ruling “in the midst of his enemies”***

At Psalm 110:5-6 the enemies to be subjugated are portrayed as earthly kings and nations:

Jehovah himself at your right hand will certainly break kings to pieces on the day of his anger. He will execute judgement among the nations; he will cause a fullness of dead bodies. He will certainly break to pieces the head one over a populous land.<sup>59</sup>

58 T. C. Edwards, *Commentary on the First Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1979; reprint of the 1885 edition), p. 417.

59 Daniel, too, in explaining Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image, pictures the enemies of God’s kingdom as earthly kingdoms. The four metals of the image are explained to mean four successive kingdoms or empires, starting with Nebuchadnezzar’s own kingdom. (Dan. 2:36-43) Then in verse 44 Daniel states that God’s kingdom would be set up “in the days of *those* kings.” Contextually, “those kings” can only be a reference to the kings existing at the time of the *fourth* kingdom described in the preceding verses (40-43). This supports the identification of the fourth kingdom with *Rome*, which held power at the time of the setting up of Christ’s kingdom. As Daniel further explains, God’s kingdom would then “crush and put an end to all these kingdoms.” As this evidently is a parallel to Christ’s “subduing in amidst his enemies” following his enthronement at the right hand of God, as described in Psalm 110 and the New Testament, the “crushing” of the kingdoms should be understood as a *protracted* warfare.

In the New Testament, however, the attention is turned from the visible enemies to the hostile powers of the spiritual world. Undoubtedly, the reason for this is that destruction of earthly kings and nations hostile to Christ’s kingdom will not free the universe from the real enemies—the spiritual powers, who by means of sin and its consequence, death, keep men in slavery. As Paul explains, our wrestling is “not against blood and flesh, but against *the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.*” —Ephesians 6:12, *NW*.

It is these spiritual powers that the New Testament writers, at 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 and elsewhere, identify as Christ’s primary enemies, which he has been combatting and finally will bring “to nothing.”<sup>60</sup>

Empowered with “all authority in heaven and on earth” it would, of course, have been an easy matter for Christ to instantly bring to nothing all these hostile powers. Some Bible passages actually present the warfare as already won at Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, and the powers as already conquered and subjected. (Colossians 2:15; 1 Peter 3:22) Such language, however, is evidently used to describe Christ’s all-embracing power and elevated position since his resurrection, “far above every government and authority and power.” (Ephesians 1:21-22) As the author of the letter to the Hebrews clarifies, there is more involved, as “we do not yet see all things in subjection to him.” —Hebrews 2:8, *NW*.

If Christ’s principal enemies are the hostile spiritual powers, his “subduing” in amidst them can hardly mean that he is subjugating them in a protracted *physical* or *literal* warfare. As explained by the apostle Paul, Satan, “the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience,” is able to hold men in slavery only because of their trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1-2, *NW*) Through Christ’s death, however, God provided a “release by ransom, the forgiveness of our sins,” by which it was made possible for man to be “delivered . . . from the authority of the darkness and transferred . . . into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” —Colossians 1:13-14, *NW*.

Throughout the centuries, millions upon millions of people, by their faith in Christ have been delivered from the “authority of dark-

60 According to Colossians 1:15-16, the spiritual powers were originally created by means of Christ. Later a number of them, headed by Satan, “the ruler of the authority of the air,” “did not keep their original position” but became enemies of God. (Jude, verse 6)—Compare Dr. G. Dellinger’s discussion of these powers in G. Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co.,

ness.” By such conquests “in amidst his enemies” Christ’s kingdom has been increasing and truly been proved to be victorious.

The Bible, therefore, presents Christ’s death for our sins as a turning-point for mankind and as a decisive victory over Satan, the head of the hostile powers in the spiritual world. (Hebrews 2:14-15) Though still active, their power and influence since then are restricted and curbed. They have not been able to prevent the good news about Jesus Christ to reach growing numbers of people around the world, making it possible for them to be delivered from the “authority of darkness” and brought under the authority of Christ.

### *C-7: The “casting out” of Satan*

In the metaphorical language of the Bible, someone’s elevation to a high position may be spoken of as his being “exalted to heaven” or “to the skies,” where he may be likened to a shining star.<sup>61</sup> Correspondingly, someone’s humiliation, defeat or fall from a high position may be likened to a throwing down or falling “from heaven.”<sup>62</sup> In his prediction of the fall of the proud and arrogant king of Babylon, Isaiah the prophet used this imagery:

O how you have fallen from heaven, you shining one, son of the dawn! . . . As for you, you have said in your heart, “To the heavens I shall go up. Above the stars of God I shall lift up my throne, and I shall sit down upon the mountain of meeting, in the remotest parts of the north. I shall go up above the high places of the clouds; I shall make myself resemble the Most High.” However, down to Sheol you will be brought, to the remotest parts of the pit.—Isaiah 14:12-15, *NW*.<sup>63</sup>

Jesus, too, used similar language in speaking of the town of Capernaum, which he had chosen as his dwelling-place and where he had performed many of his miracles. (Matthew 4:13-16) This, however, would not become a reason for the town to boast:

And you, Capernaum, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven?  
Down to Hades you will come!—Luke 10:15, *NW*.

61 Similarly, in the English language we may speak of someone being “praised to the skies.”

62 The same metaphors are also found in extra-Biblical sources from ancient times. For example, Cicero and Horace (1st century B.C.E.) both likened a fall from a great political height to a “fall from heaven.”—See Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2nd ed. 1972), p. 440, note 77.

63 Compare Daniel 8:9-12, which uses the same figurative language in describing the presumptuous actions of the “little horn,” usually understood as referring to the attempt of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.) to root out the worship of Jehovah at the temple of the Jews.

Another example of this manner of speech is found in the subsequent verses, which tell of the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus, who now returned with joy, saying: “Lord, even the demons are made subject to us by the use of your name.” Their joyful report was evidently owing to their success in expelling demons, thanks to the power bestowed upon them by Jesus at his sending them out. (Luke 10:1, 19) In answer, Jesus said: “I began to behold Satan already fallen like a lightning from heaven.”—Luke 10:17-18, *NW*.

It does not seem likely that Jesus meant he saw Satan literally falling from heaven. Rather, his statement vividly expressed the excitement he felt at the disciples’ report, as he knew that their successful ministry (as well as his own) portended the imminent fall of Satan from his position of power.

That the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ would mean a decisive defeat for Satan is also indicated by what he said to the Jews at his arrival in Jerusalem a few days before his death:

Now there is a judging of this world; *now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*—John 12:31, *NW*.

It is evidently this victory over Satan and his angels that is depicted in symbolic scenes at Revelation 12:1-12. In a vision the apostle John



The woman arrayed with the sun, the seven-headed dragon, and the child caught away to the throne of God as pictured in *The Watchtower* magazine of May 1, 1981, page 20. According to the present Watch Tower teaching, this prophetic scene was fulfilled in 1914, when Christ’s kingdom (the child) is said to have been established (born) in heaven by “God’s heavenly organization” (the woman), despite the effort of Satan (the dragon) to prevent Christ’s enthronement.

saw “in heaven” a pregnant woman, “arrayed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and on her head was a crown of twelve stars.” A great seven-headed dragon, later identified as “the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan,” was seen standing before the woman ready to devour her child. The woman “gave birth to a son, a male, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. And her child *was caught away to God and to his throne.*”—Revelation 12:1-5, *NW*.

This cannot possibly picture the setting up of Christ’s kingdom in heaven *in 1914*, as the Watch Tower Society holds. How could Christ’s kingdom have been so weak in 1914 that it ran the risk of being devoured by Satan and therefore had to be “caught away” from his gaping jaws to God’s throne? Such a view is in the most pointed contrast to the New Testament teaching that Christ ever since his resurrection is in possession of “all authority in heaven and on earth” and is exalted “far above every government and authority and power and lordship.”—Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:21, *NW*.

There was only one time when Jesus Christ apparently was in such a vulnerable situation that Satan felt he could “devour” him, and that was during his earthly life. It was during this period that Satan attempted to thwart the “birth” of Christ as the ruler of the world. From the child-murders in Bethlehem to Jesus’ final execution under Pontius Pilate, Jesus was his chief target. Satan did not succeed, however, as Christ was resurrected and “caught away to God and to his throne.”

As has often been noticed, the presentation of Christ’s enthronement as a “birth” at Revelation 12:5 is an allusion to Psalm 2:6-9:

“I, even I, have installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain.”

Let me refer to the decree of Jehovah; He has said to me: “You are my son; I, today, I have become your father. Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance and the end of the earth as your own possession. You will break them with an iron scepter, as though a potter’s vessel you will dash them to pieces.” (*NW*)

The New Testament writers repeatedly apply this psalm to Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God. (Acts 13:32-33; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5)<sup>64</sup> This Messianic psalm also, like Revelation 12:5, speaks of Christ as been given the power to crush the nations “with

64 Notice also how the “wrath” of “the kings of the earth” against “Jehovah and against his anointed one” at Psalm 2:1-3 is directly applied by the apostle Peter at Acts 4:25-28 to the actions taken against Jesus by the Jewish and Roman authorities. The same passage is also alluded to at Revelation 11:15-18, which first refers to the beginning of Christ’s universal reign in the midst of his wrathful enemies and then about God’s “wrath” upon these enemies.

an iron scepter."<sup>65</sup>

At Revelation 12:7-12 another scene "in heaven" is presented to John, a war scene: "Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled" with them. The battle ended in a complete defeat for Satan and his angels:

So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down, who accuses them day and night before our God."—Revelation 12:9-10, *NW*.

The exclamation following the "casting out" of Satan and his angels, that "now has come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ," clearly points to the time of the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ, who at that time was given all authority in heaven and on earth.

That the "war in heaven" hardly is meant to be taken as a *literal* war is indicated by the subsequent verses. When Satan had been hurled down to the earth, he persecuted the heavenly "woman" and then "went off to *wage war* with the remaining ones of her seed" who "have the work of bearing witness to Jesus" (Revelation 12:13-17). Verse 11 states that followers of Christ who became martyrs in this war "conquered him [Satan] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witnessing".

This explains the nature of the "war": Through his death as a sacrificial lamb, Christ conquered Satan and brought about his "fall from heaven". Christian martyrs are shown to be partakers in this victory, being enabled to conquer Satan "because of the blood of the Lamb." Satan, the "accuser," is no longer able to accuse them "day and night before our God" because, through the death of Christ, their sins are forgiven. To all appearances, then, the "war in heaven" is a figurative presentation of Christ's victory over Satan through his sacrificial death as a Lamb. Obviously, this "war" has nothing to do with the year 1914.

65 As Christ explained to the congregation in Thyatira, he was already at that time in possession of this "iron rod" and could, therefore, promise to share his "authority over the nations" with the one "that conquers and observes my deeds down to the end."—Revelation 2:26-27, *NW*.

As was shown above, the failed prediction that the trampling down of Jerusalem would end in 1914 necessitated a reinterpretation of this idea. When the year 1914 had passed and the city of Jerusalem continued to be controlled by Gentile nations, the Watch Tower Society finally changed the location to *heavenly* Jerusalem, arguing that the trampling down ended by the the setting up of Christ's kingdom *in heaven* in 1914.

This idea, however, was shown to be contradicted by several texts in the Bible, which unequivocally establish that Christ's universal kingdom was set up at his resurrection and exaltation, when he also began to rule "in the midst of his enemies."

Finally, the claim that Satan was hurled down from heaven in 1914 was examined and found to be biblically untenable. The Bible brings it out clearly that the "fall of Satan" was occasioned by Christ's death and resurrection.

Thus, a number of events that the Watch Tower Society claims to have taken place in 1914 are actually shown by the Bible to have occurred at Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation.

What, then, about 1914? Does this year have any prophetic meaning at all?

#### **D. 1914 IN PERSPECTIVE**

As discussed in Chapter 1, the upheavals in Europe and other parts of the world brought about by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars impelled many to believe that the "time of the end" had begun in 1798 or thereabouts, and that Christ would return before the end of that generation. Numerous schedules for the end-time events were worked out, which later on either had to be abandoned or revised.

When, finally, the nineteenth century was gone and the chaotic events that inaugurated that century became increasingly remote, the prophetic significance attached to the period faded away and was soon forgotten by most people.

The chaotic events of 1914-18, too, now belong to the early part of a past century. Is it possible that the interpretations attached to the 1914 date will also fade away and finally be abandoned and forgotten? There are reasons to believe that this date will not so easily be done away with.

It is not just a question of an erroneous chronology that has to be corrected. The unique claims of the Watch Tower movement are closely connected with the year 1914.

If the leaders of the Watch Tower organization would admit that Christ’s kingdom *was not* set up in 1914 and that Christ *did not* come invisibly that year, they would also have to admit that Christ *did not* make any specific inspection of the Christian denominations at that time and *did not* appoint the members of the Russellite movement “over his domestics” in 1919. Then they would have to admit that their claim of being God’s sole “channel” and “mouthpiece” on earth *is false*, and that they for almost a whole century have appeared on the world scene *in a false role with a false message*.

So much of the movement’s identity is “invested” in the 1914 date that it would be a tremendous step to admit that the sophisticated system of prophetic explanations infused into that date is nothing but a figment of the imagination. To openly confess this would require a great measure of courage and humility. It does not seem likely that the present leaders of the organization are prepared to defuse the prophetically loaded date in this way.

Besides, the Watch Tower Society insists that not only its *chronology*, but also the *events* since 1914 prove that this date marked the beginning of the “time of the end.”<sup>66</sup> Referring to Jesus’ prophecy at Matthew 24, it is held that wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, lawlessness, and other calamities since 1914 constitute the “sign” of Christ’s “invisible presence” since that year. Although it is admitted that earlier generations, too, have had their share of such calamities, the Watch Tower Society claims that they have been increasing *on an unprecedented scale* since 1914. Is this true?

To be able to check if this claim is correct, it is necessary to examine the extent of these calamities in earlier centuries, something that so far has never been done in the Watchtower publications. As most people to a great extent are strangers to the past, they are usually easy to convince that the period since 1914 has been more disastrous than earlier periods. Most people may find it difficult to believe that this conclusion *is disproved by a careful examination of the extent of the calamities in the past*.

An examination of history shows that most of the calamities mentioned by Jesus at Matthew 24 *have not* increased since 1914, and that some of them, such as famines and pestilences, even have *decreased markedly* since that year! The historical evidence of this is discussed

66 On p. 95 of the book *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1985) the Watch Tower Society summarizes these “two lines of evidence” as follows: “Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses say that God’s Kingdom was established in 1914? *Two lines of evidence point to that year*: (1) Bible chronology and (2) the events since 1914 in fulfillment of prophecy.”

in the work *The Sign of the Last Days—When?*<sup>67</sup>

If 1914 did not mark the end of the Gentile times, nor the beginning of Christ's invisible presence, why did the First World War break out at a date predicted thirty-nine years in advance? This may seem very remarkable. But it must first be remembered that none of the things predicted to occur on that date actually happened. Secondly, an endless number of dates have been set for the second coming of Christ, and also for the end of the Gentile times. A predicted date sometimes *accidentally* happens to coincide with some important historical event, although the event itself was not predicted. Such a coincidence may be almost unavoidable if *nearly every year* during a certain period have been pointed to in advance by various expositors!

Of the many dates fixed for the expiration of the Gentile times, some were put very near to the 1914 date: 1915 (Guinness, 1886), 1917 (J. A. Brown, 1823), 1918 (Bickersteth, 1850), 1919 (Habershon, 1844), 1922 (*The Prophetic Times*, December 1870), and 1923 (Guinness, 1886).<sup>68</sup>

The Watch Tower Society made many predictions regarding 1914, but the outbreak of a major war in Europe was not one of them. It did not lead to the “universal anarchy” that *had* been predicted. That a major event happened to take place in that year is not remarkable. Somewhat more remarkable is when a predicted date produces an event that *does* have some apparent relation to the events foretold for the date in question. This, too, has happened. For example, 1917 would, according to John Aquila Brown in 1823, see “the full glory of the kingdom of Israel . . . perfected.”<sup>69</sup> Although this did not happen in 1917, an important step was taken that year toward the establishment of the state of Israel.<sup>70</sup>

67 C. O. Jonsson & W. Herbst, *The Sign of the Last Days—When?* (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1987). xv+271 pages. Available from Commentary Press, P.O. Box 43532, Atlanta, Georgia 30336, USA.

68 See Table 2 of Chapter 1.

69 See Chapter 1, note 24.

70 See note 44 above. Another example is the predictions that pointed forward to 1941 as the culmination of the “time of trouble.” A number of expositors of the prophecies, including John Bacon (in 1799), George Stanley Faber (in 1811), Edward D. Griffin (in 1813), Joseph Emerson (in 1818), George Duffield (in 1842), and E. B. Elliott (in 1862), ended the 1260 year-days in 1866 and the 1335 year-days in 1941, arguing that the “time of the end” was a period of 75 years (the difference between 1335 and 1260). This “time of trouble” would culminate in 1941 and be followed by the millennium. 1941 was certainly a “time of trouble” as it was in this year that the United States joined the war that had started in 1939 and it was turned into a world war. The millennium, however, did not follow. —See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. III (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), pp. 721-22; Vol. IV (1954), pp. 73, 105-06, 174, 262, 337.

More remarkable still was Robert Fleming’s prediction that the French monarchy would fall towards the end of the eighteenth century, a prediction made *nearly a hundred years prior to that event!*

Fleming’s book *The Rise and Fall of Papacy* was first published in 1701. Commenting upon the fourth vial at Revelation 16:8-9, he identifies the “sun” as the Papacy, and France as instrumental in pouring out the fourth vial. After that, France itself will be humbled:

We may justly suppose that *the French monarchy*, after it has scorched others, will itself consume by doing so—its fire, and that which is the fuel that maintains it, wasting insensibly, till it be exhausted at last towards the end of this century.<sup>71</sup>

I cannot but hope that some new mortification of the chief supporters of Antichrist will then happen; and perhaps the French monarchy may begin to be considerably humbled about that time; that whereas the present French king takes the sun for his emblem, and this for his motto, “Nec pluribus impar,” he may at length, or rather his successors, and the *monarchy itself (at least before the year 1794)* be forced to acknowledge that, in respect to neighbouring potentates, he is even “Singulis impar.” But as to the expiration of this vial, I do fear it will not be until the year 1794.<sup>72</sup>

Shortly after the Republic had been proclaimed in 1792, when the horrors of the French Revolution were at their most extreme and Louis XVI was about to die on the scaffold, Fleming’s remarkable “predictions” were recalled to memory. Thus his book began to be reprinted both in England and America. The sensation his predictions produced was great and caused much excitement; and their (partial) fulfillment was a strong incentive to increased study of biblical prophecies after the French Revolution.

Fleming’s calculation of the 1,260 year-days (552-1794) was taken over by many others, although the termination date for them was soon changed by many from 1794 to 1798, the year when the Pope was deposed as ruler of the Papal States and banished by French troops.

Thus the 1798 date came to be regarded as marking the beginning of the “time of the end” by Adventist groups. The calculation was later adopted also by C. T. Russell and his followers but changed slightly (in the 1880’s) to the following year, 1799. The Seventh-Day Adventists still believe that the “time of the end” began in 1798.

71 Robert Fleming, Jr., *The Rise and Fall of Papacy* (London, 1849; reprint of the 1701 edition), p. 68. Emphasis added.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 64. Emphasis added.

Should not “fulfilled” predictions of this kind help us to take a more sober view of the 1914 date?

In Chapters 3 and 4 of this work much strong evidence was presented against the 607 B.C.E. date as the year of the destruction of Jerusalem and the starting-point of the 2,520 year Gentile times calculation.

In Chapter 5 it was demonstrated that the seventy-year prophecy is in good agreement with the 587 B.C.E. date for the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. Thus, the 2,520 years *could not have ended in 1914*.

Then, in this chapter, it has been shown that a change of the expiration date of those times from 1914 to 1934 resulted in just another failed prophecy. Next, the question was raised, “Is the 2,520-year calculation really founded on a sound biblical basis?” The examination that followed demonstrated it is not. Finally, the re-evaluation of the meaning of the 1914 date in the Watch Tower publications since 1922 was examined and found to be deficient.

For all these reasons, should not the 1914 date be wholly and entirely discarded as the pivotal point in the application of Bible prophecies to our time? The answer should be evident.

### **E. SOME NOTES ON THE “GENTILE TIMES” OF LUKE 21:24**

What, then, about the period called “times of the Gentiles”? If it does not refer to a period of 2,520 years, to what period may this expression refer?

The phrase “times of the Gentiles” (“appointed times of the nations,” *NW*) occurs in the lengthy prophecy of Jesus known as the *Olivet discourse*. This discourse is recorded by all the three Synoptics (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). Only Luke, however, uses the expression “times of Gentiles” (*kairoí ethnôn*). The phrase is used in connection with Jesus’ prediction of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. Stating that there would be “great distress in the land and wrath against this people,” Jesus went on to explain how this “wrath” would be vented on the people:

They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until *the times of the Gentiles* (*kairoí ethnôn*) are fulfilled. — Luke 21:24, *NIV*.

Following normal English usage, translators have usually employed the definite article when rendering the words *kairoí ethnôn* as, “the times of the Gentiles.” In Greek, the use of the definite article would point to a definite and well-known period. Since, however, the definite article is not found in the Greek text, the phrase “times of Gentiles” can refer to an imprecise period rather than one specific period already known to the readers (or listeners).

The words *kairoí ethnôn* have been variously interpreted throughout the centuries. Bible commentator Dr. Alfred Plummer observed:

The “seasons of the Gentiles” or “opportunities of the Gentiles” cannot be interpreted with certainty. Either (1) *Seasons* for executing the Divine judgements; or (2) for lording it over Israel; or (3) for existing as Gentiles; or (4) for themselves becoming subject to Divine judgements; or (5) *Opportunities* of turning to God; or (6) of possessing the privileges which the Jews had forfeited. The first and last are best, and they are not mutually exclusive.<sup>73</sup>

A few comments may be necessary to clarify what may be implied in each of these alternatives:

### ***(1) Seasons for executing the divine judgments***

A number of expositors understand the “times of Gentiles” as the period allotted to the Gentile armies of Rome for executing the divine judgment upon the Jewish nation and its capital. As the period required for crushing the Jewish rebellion and recapturing Jerusalem lasted for about three and a half years — from the arrival of Vespasian’s armies in Galilee in the spring of 67 until the desolation of Jerusalem by Titus’ armies in the autumn of 70 C.E. — these expositors usually also equate the “times of Gentiles” with the “42 months” of Revelation 11:2, during which period the Gentiles would “trample on the holy city.”<sup>74</sup>

### ***(2) Seasons for lording it over Israel***

In this view the “times of Gentiles” are understood as referring to the period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem, dating either from 70 C.E. or from an earlier point of time.

73 Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*. International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), p. 483.

74 Dr. Milton S. Terry, for example, who adopted this view, states: “These ‘times of the Gentiles’ are obviously the period allotted to the Gentiles to tread down Jerusalem, and those times are fulfilled as soon as the nations shall have accomplished their work of treading down the holy city.” — M. S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988. Reprint of the 1898 edition), p. 367.

It is certainly true that Jerusalem, after the destruction of the city in the year 70 C.E., was controlled by a successive number of non-Jewish nations: Rome (up to 614 C.E.), Persia (up to 628 C.E.), the Byzantine Empire (up to 638 C.E.), the Saracen Empire (up to 1073 C.E.), the Seljuks (up to 1099), the Christian Crusader Kingdom (up to 1291 C.E., interrupted by brief periods of Egyptian control), Egypt (up to 1517 C.E.), Turkey (up to 1917 C.E.), Great Britain (up to 1948 C.E.), and Jordan (up to 1967, when Israel gained control of the old walled city of Jerusalem).<sup>75</sup>

Many expositors regard this long period of Gentile domination as the “times of Gentiles,” or at least as a part of this period, arguing that the restoration of the state of Israel marks the end of the “times of Gentiles.” For this reason, many of these expositors believe that the “times of Gentiles” ended either in 1948 or in 1967.<sup>76</sup>

### ***(3) Seasons for existing as Gentiles***

According to this view, Jesus was saying that Jerusalem would be trampled upon by Gentile nations as long as there are any Gentile nations on earth. The “times of Gentiles” are simply regarded as referring to the whole period of human history during which there have been and will be nations on earth.

If the Jews can be said to have resumed full control of Jerusalem in 1967, it has to be concluded that the Gentile nations have continued to exist on earth after the end of the “Gentile times.” This, of course, would invalidate the view under discussion.

However, it may also be argued that, although the Jews have been in control of Jerusalem since 1967, the most central part of the city, the old temple site, is still in the hands of the Arabs, and this site is still occupied by the Muslim “Dome of the Rock” edifice. For this reason it may be held that Jerusalem is still being “trampled on” or desecrated by “Gentiles.”

75 A detailed history of the long period of foreign control of Jerusalem is included in Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem. One City, Three Faiths* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1996).

76 An excellent overview of the applications of Luke 21:24 and other Biblical prophecies given by various expositors to Israel’s conquest of Jerusalem in 1967 and the subsequent events is found in Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now!* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991; reprint of the 1977 edition), pp. 188-214. An update since 1977 is included in the Foreword on pp. xxv-xlii. A very thorough discussion of the various aspects of the significance of Jerusalem in Jesus’ prophecy can be found in the book *Jesus and the Holy City*, by P. W. L. Walker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann’s, 1996).

#### ***(4) Seasons for the Gentiles becoming subject to divine judgments***

Advocates of this view argue that the “times of Gentiles” refer to the period for a judgment of the Gentile nations. This period, therefore, is still future. As the Roman war against the Jews in the period 67-70 C.E. was a time for the judgment of the Jewish nation, so there will also be a time for the judgment of the Gentile nations. Until these “times of Gentiles” arrive, the Gentiles will continue to trample on Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup>

#### ***(5) Opportunities of turning to God***

Those holding this view connect the “times of Gentiles” with Paul’s statement at Romans 11:25 that “a partial hardening has happened to Israel until *the fullness of Gentiles* has come in” (*NASB*). It is argued that the “times of Gentiles” are related to this “fullness of Gentiles” and refer to the times of Gentile mission. This understanding evidently implies that the “times of Gentiles” began with the conversion of Cornelius. (Acts 10:1-48) These times of Gentile mission, as well as the times of trampling on Jerusalem by Gentile nations, will continue “until the fullness of Gentiles has come in.”<sup>78</sup>

#### ***(6) Opportunities of possessing the privileges which the Jews had forfeited***

This view is related to the previous one. Due to unfaithfulness the Jewish nation was judged and the privileges were taken away from the Jews and offered to the Gentiles. (Matthew 21:43) The period during which these privileges are made available to the Gentiles is regarded as the “times of Gentiles.”

As may be seen, there are various possible interpretations of the phrase “times of Gentiles,” even without the application of the “year-day principle” to the period. It must be recognized that the phrase itself is stated in Scripture without any specific accompanying qualification. To determine which view or views give greater evidence of validity would require a detailed and extensive discussion

77 For a recent exposition of this view, see Dr. John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*. Word Biblical Commentary 35c (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), pp. 1002-1003.

78 The note to Luke 21:24 in *The NIV Study Bible* reflects this view: “The Gentiles would have both spiritual opportunities (Mk 13:10; cf. Lk 20:16; Ro 11:25) and domination of Jerusalem, but these times will end when God’s purpose for the Gentiles has been fulfilled.” Compare also Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), pp. 1680-1681.

of each of the various alternatives. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this work, the main purpose of which has been to examine the Watch Tower Society's interpretation of the "times of Gentiles" and to demonstrate why that interpretation is both historically and Biblically untenable. Any further discussion of the factors involved in the meaning of the phrase "times of Gentiles," therefore, will have to be reserved for another occasion.