

Chronology plus Prophecy.

WITHIN THE COMPASS OF CHRONOLOGY there is a number of details which, though intimate to the subject, are surrounded with their own details, and those, to some degree, reflect into the main subject. The final era, the *ONE SEVEN*, of Daniel 9, is such a matter: in fact, the whole period of the seventy sevens may be said to have merged prophecy into chronology, at least in respect of its conclusion. This brings a unique feature into chronology, one which has not hitherto been in it, for chronology is to be consummated by prophecy. It is quite a major matter as to how to treat all the points of this coalescing of the two, and at the same time keep within the intention to follow wholly the statements and information which the Scriptures actually give.

It seems necessary to establish a real or correct relation of days and months to the year. Days, of course, are easily related to the week, though, to be sure, Hebrew does not actually have our English word "week", but the seventh day, the sabbath, served most effectually. The year, regarded as a unit, speaks of appointments such as "stated times" or "seasons". Yet days and months, though within the compass of the year, look rather at the happenings which make up the history of the year.

The Scriptures do not enter into the details by which the modern outlook views the year, such as the periods:

- The orbital (perihelion to perihelion)
- The sidereal (star to star)
- The solar (equinox to equinox)

These are the astronomer's way of stating the length of the year. The necessity to consider such matters may, of course, be argued, and the decision may be to favour the *solar* aspect, and yet, at the same time, it must be granted that the sidereal is basic to calculation: the solar has its own peculiarity which gives the precession of the equinoxes. The attempt to fix any of these upon the chronology of Scripture produces further problems to addle the brain to no profitable result in respect of God's revelation.

The luminaries were to be for the atmosphere of the heavens. As to light, they separate between day and night. They also came to be for signs, appointments, days and years. As an illustration, we see the seven festivals, introduced by the hand of Moses, distributed in the months of the year (see Leviticus 23), but the Scriptures do not give an actual calendar, though features in them seem agreeable to need a calendar. It would, however, require to be one which was a fully repeating cycle, able to give the festivals which are fixed by lunar details.

The question is suitably and properly to connect lunar details to the period of the year, and the latter is a measurement due to some aspect around the sun. But our present calendar does not solve or eliminate problems. We need the exact period, and this adds an extra day beyond fifty-two weeks. This again is insufficient, for we need the further day for leap years (so-called).

Such items become very evident when we note that the Jewish year requires identical years rather than the events moving forward by one day each year. The problem is how to achieve this, for the year is geared to a Passover Festival which was closely related to the Vernal Equinox. Yet the lunar year of thirty day months does not give coincidence with the sun. Because of this, the standard lunar year is an impossible thing as a direct result. Coincidence between sun and moon occurs but once in nineteen years (the metonic cycle). This is nineteen vernal equinoxes or 235 lunations. How can we have the cycle of a fixed calendar to satisfy both relations? And at the same time give an identical day for identical events?

The Mosaic principle seems rather to be that of direct observation, for astronomical calculations were eshewed in order to keep well away from astrology. Notably the state of the crops had also to be taken into account, alongside the appearance of the moon. The Heave Offering, the firstfruit of the harvest, thus becomes as important matter around the Passover. In fact, this offering was an anticipation of Christ as the Firstfruit in resurrection. For the first, seasonal matters, referring rather to the year, enter the case. Yet the Hebrew had but two seasons, winter and summer, or cold and warmth (see Gen. 8:22).

Writers have made various explanations in regard to the calendar adjustments necessary to keep the month and the year in step. The chief feature put forward is that of intercalary days, introduced in various ways. To a calendar consisting of 29 and 30 days, alternately through the year, one suggests to insert three intercalary months during eight years, and to repeat so as to complete the metonic cycle of 19 years. Yet another regards a cycle of thirty-nine years, in which to every third year is added the intercalary month of 33 or 34 days as necessary. Claims are made for this latter that it gives a perfect calendar, but full evidence that it was really used seems lacking, that is, as an actuality in the Scriptures. There is, however, much correspondence with the requirements of the periods which enter into the year and its chronology. But that is not entirely sufficient for it to be accepted as the fact of the calendar of the Scriptures.

The present Jewish calendar is not to be regarded as a criterion. Jewish traditions on this matter are insufficient, for it seems certain that the intercalary feature was not taken as a definite feature in their calendar until during the fourth century, when the Jews hellenized their calendar.

We may be sure that a calendar corresponding to the requirements of the Scriptures would not have months of irregular lengths of our Gregorian calendar. There must be a more uniform length to suit the outlook of the Scriptures. This outlook will regard the year as a unit in which to locate appointments such as "stated times" or "seasons". Though this unit of a year will be the full length of a period of time, which, from observations, may be *measured* by the sun, yet its details will be *computed* by months and days (see Leviticus 23). The days and months rather look at the happenings, whereas the years take the complete view which covers every appointment.

Thus we may remark that, for the Scriptures, *time* is *measured* by the year of the sun, that is, it is a repetition, which is the significance of the Hebrew *shne*. But time is *computed* by days and months of the moon, yet these days are pinned down, by observation, at least of the moon, to the year of the sun, and this latter is the continuing measurement of our chronology. We will not extend this kind of consideration further, but we hope we may have stated sufficient to illustrate the problems of this kind which can be made to enter our subject.

During Judah's deportation, prophecy came to state time periods as being related to the course which its details would follow, and these are given in years. They are a *measure* of the *extent* which the prophecy is to cover. Amidst the long period, we may have days and months which compute a shorter era. This method appears to be in order to avoid the indecision which could be possible were the period expressed in the unit of a year.

The seventy sevens of years arose out of Daniel's prayer concerning the seventy years of deportation. It is to be noted that the period of seventy sevens of years is, in the main, related to "the times of the Gentiles or nations". For sixty-nine of these sevens, the Jew was back in the land, yet under the dominance of the nations. This is not a feature which was not in being in the days prior to the deportation, and it remains so right on to the return of the Lord.

We resume concerning the period of the seventy sevens of years. It is divided into three sections: *seven* sevens, *sixty-two* sevens, and *one* seven. The conclusion of the sixty-two brought Messiah's birth and then His cutting-off, yet with no adjudication for Him. Now the complementing *ONE* seven does not follow His cutting-off, but leaps forward over the centuries to view the beginning of the day of the Lord given in the Unveiling. This *one* seven is the section in which details of the prophecy come to be given amidst the use of days and months to express the time of certain elements which are to be occurring *to conclude* the whole of the large prescribed period of sevens of years. Alongside this rigid preciseness, there seems to be the element which eschews definiteness. This possibility is in the use of the word "*season*", for the manner of use would at first seem to cover the year rather than only a season of it. However, the statement by season must necessarily find itself decided by the months and the days which are given. These cases call for special attention.

In these thoughts we are dealing with the concluding seven of Daniel's seventy sevens. Distinct attention is required, for we must keep within our intention to give the fullest regard to statements in the Scriptures. Daniel's final seven is *especially related to the Unveiling*, being covered by the first nineteen chapters of that book. In this book, this seven years of Daniel's prophecy is given what amounts to an exclusive position. And this it is, in a very real sense, for the "times of the Gentiles" are in the throes of being concluded, and man's day

is turned to the Lord's Day. Elsewhere we have been told that the days have been discounted (Matt. 24:22 and Mark 13:20), so that it cannot be an indefinite period. The related element of time is considered in an exclusive sense, one which is agreeable to the isolation of the one seven from the others.

Time seems to be regarded as standardised and *located to Jerusalem*. This seems particularly obvious in the final half, the middle of the seven. This concluding period is referred to a year of 360 days. It is a special era, one which is given its own details: thus we have :

42 months (treading of holy city) Unv. 11: 2
42 months (authority of wild beast) Unv. 13: 5
1260 days (two witnesses prophesy) Unv. 11: 3
1260 days (woman nourished in wilderness) Unv. 12: 6
Season, seasons and half (Woman nourished) Unv. 12:14
Note Daniel 7:25 and 12:7.
Also 1290 days Daniel 12:11
1335 days Daniel 12:11
2300 days (Dedication of the Temple) Daniel 8:14
(Contrast: three and a half years - Luke 4:25 - James 5:17)

Does it not become very obvious that these time statements have reference to the special era in which the eon is concluded? Though they are given in different units, yet each one expresses the same time value as the other. The terms are understandable by any nation. Any uncertainty is absent and they are referable to a uniform datum, the half of the period of the last seven, during which a covenant is made with many of Israel. With uncertainty removed, who needs to be deceived? The forty- two months confirms the twelve hundred sixty days, and so there is certainty in the numbers, for they are mutual to each, though the units differ. There is not the need to transpose the years of this final seven, for this is already done, making them most distinct from the years of the prior sixty-nine sevens. Those years went forward by the regular routine, either as to the customs of Israel or those of the nations.

These time values of the final seven are framed by God, so that forty-two months: twelve hundred and sixty days: season, seasons and half: twelve hundred and ninety days: thirteen hundred and thirty-five days: two thousand three hundred days: all go forward from one point, the middle of the heptad.

May grace be ours to believe what is written.

E. H. Clayton

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