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THE 70 YEAR PROPHECIES OF THE BIBLE

There are seven different passages in the prophecies of the Bible that refer to a period of 70 years. What do these prophecies mean? The seven passages are found in: Isaiah 23:15-17; Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel 9:2; 2.Chronicles 36:21; Zechariah 1:12; and Zechariah 7:5.

Let's take a closer look at all of these passages.

ISAIAH CHAPTER 23

This prophecy is introduced as follows:

> THE BURDEN OF TYRE. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of CHITTIM it is revealed to them. (Isaiah 23:1 AV)

This is a burden, or penalty, that is pronounced against the ancient commercial capital of the Middle East, Tyre. Its power and wealth depended primarily on sea trade. It is the destruction of this economic powerhouse of the ancient world that is the subject of this chapter. In that sense it seems to be a very close parallel to Revelation chapter 18, which speaks about the yet future destruction of Babylon, also a powerful commercial centre for the whole world.

Verse 3 identifies this city to be a powerful "market" ...

> And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and SHE IS A MART OF NATIONS. (Isaiah 23:3 AV)

"The market of nations" in our end-time situation must surely in some way refer to the "Common Market" formed by the nations in Europe, a process that was started with the Treaty of Rome on March 25, 1957, and which has now introduced a common currency for all member nations, the euro.

Verse 8 tends to identify Tyre even more so with Rome. Notice ...

> Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, THE CROWNING CITY, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? (Isaiah 23:8 AV)

The word "crowning" is a verb in Hebrew, and it means "the CROWN-GIVING city", and that is a role that Rome fulfilled for many centuries, with many emperors and kings being crowned in Rome by the Catholic popes. The popes claimed the right to appoint kings and emperors.

Isaiah 23:9-11 show that GOD has "purposed" a penalty upon Tyre. It would be destroyed. But even as the original Tyre on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean would be destroyed, so THE SYSTEM of Tyre would relocate to a new place. As verse 12 tells us ...

> And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: ARISE, PASS OVER TO CHITTIM; THERE ALSO SHALT THOU HAVE NO REST. (Isaiah 23:12 AV)

This verse reveals Tyre's new location to us. Notice what God tells us here.

1) "ARISE" means that Tyre would relocate! It would move to a new location and assume a new identity.

2) "PASS OVER TO CHITTIM" identifies that new location for us. "Chittim" refers to Italy. And Rome is the chief city there. So here God shows us that the economic system, of which Tyre had anciently been the hub, would after Tyre's destruction move to Rome. So where Rome is religiously identified with Babylon, Rome is commercially identified with Tyre.

3) The expression "THERE ALSO YOU SHALL HAVE NO REST" shows that Rome is NOT the final destination for the commercial system that Tyre represented. Here God simply tells us that at some future time the system would be removed away from the area of Rome as well.

The sequel to this statement is found in the Book of Zechariah, in the Minor Prophets. In the section of Zechariah 1:8 - 6:8 the prophet records 8 distinct visions which he had in the course of one specific night ... on the 24th day of the 11th month of the 2nd year of king Darius. Those 8 visions refer to specific things that are destined to take place in the time leading up to Christ's second coming.

Vision #6 is recorded in Zechariah 5:1-4 and is about "the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole earth" (verse 3), probably a reference to the pouring out of the seven last plagues. It is the next vision, vision #7, that continues the story from Isaiah 23:12. Vision #7 is recorded in Zechariah 5:5-11.

In this vision #7 Zechariah saw a great bath ("an ephah") in which sits a woman (verse 7). The prophet sees a huge weight of lead, a base metal, which is used to represent wickedness (verse 8), and this is thrown into the bath and it shuts the woman's mouth (verse 8), i.e. it stops the woman ever influencing anyone again.

THE NEXT 3 VERSES SHOW WHY TYRE HAS NO PERMANENT REST IN ROME!

Verse 9 shows two winged spirit beings coming and picking up this bath with the woman (false church system and false economic system) in it and with the talent of lead on her mouth. They lift the whole system up into the air. So in the next verse the prophet asks the angel: where are they taking this bath with that woman in it? Verse 11 gives us the revealing answer, tying DIRECTLY back to Isaiah 23:12.

> And he said unto me, TO BUILD IT AN HOUSE IN THE LAND OF SHINAR: AND IT SHALL BE ESTABLISHED, AND SET THERE UPON HER OWN BASE. (Zechariah 5:11 AV)

"The land of Shinar" refers to the area where the city of Babylon had been. So we see in vision #7 of the Book of Zechariah A SYSTEM, that is represented by an evil, wicked woman, BEING MOVED AWAY TO A NEW LOCATION! It is moved to the area of ancient Babylon. But notice one other point: that system is there set ON ITS OWN BASE!

In other words, the Babylonian system will go through three "overturns": first it was overturned from Babylon to Tyre; the second overturn was from Tyre to Rome; the third and final overturn of that whole anti-God system will be from Rome back to its own original base in Babylon. This final overturn will happen after the seven last plagues of Revelation 16 have been poured out.

So now back to Isaiah 23.

Isaiah 23:12 shows Tyre passing over to Rome (Chittim), and Zechariah 5:11 shows Rome being removed to Babylon, its original own base. This tells us that the system of Tyre had originally come from Babylon ... and after Zechariah 5:11 has been fulfilled, the whole circle will have been completed.

Isaiah 23:13-14 tells us that God caused Tyre to be brought to ruin. With that background we come to the "70-year prophecy" in this context.

> And it shall come to pass in that day, that TYRE SHALL BE FORGOTTEN SEVENTY YEARS, according to the days of one king: AFTER THE END OF SEVENTY YEARS SHALL TYRE SING AS AN HARLOT. Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. And it shall come to pass AFTER THE END OF SEVENTY YEARS, THAT THE LORD WILL VISIT TYRE, AND SHE SHALL TURN TO HER HIRE, AND SHALL COMMIT FORNICATION WITH ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD upon the face of the earth. (Isaiah 23:15-17 AV)

THE KEY to understanding the 70 years in this context is that "TYRE SHALL BE FORGOTTEN 70 YEARS"! Isaiah was speaking this prophecy somewhere around 750 B.C., and God was predicting the destruction of this ancient commercial centre. Tyre was indeed destroyed.

Now notice something.

Whereas Tyre before its destruction had been a powerful COMMERCIAL centre, after that 70 year period it would have gone through a metamorphosis ... it would from then on focus on being "A HARLOT"! In other words, it would focus on being A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM!

That is the transition from primarily a commercial focus to a religious focus. That is the transition from "Tyre" to "Babylon the Great" of Revelation 17.

SUMMARY OF THIS 70-year PROPHECY OF ISAIAH 23:

There is nothing in this particular prophecy that in any way refers to the Church of God. This prophecy is about a penalty of 70 years on a secular commercial centre, which after the 70 years would change its focus to "harlotry", to promoting false religions. While the general points in this description very likely have some parallels in the end-time, I am not aware of any potential application in our age of THIS particular "70-year period" spoken about in Isaiah 23. There is no indication that Tyre, or its end-time equivalent, would have to go through another "70-year period" before something else would happen to it. And this prophecy has nothing to do with the Church of God.

Let's now look at the other references to a 70-year prophecy. As we'll see, they all refer to the same event. Let's start by looking at the timing for these different statements.

<u>ESTABLISHING SOME BASIC GENERAL DATES</u>

In Jeremiah 25:1 we read ...

> The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in THE FOURTH YEAR of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was THE FIRST YEAR of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; (Jeremiah 25:1 AV)

Here we see the following:

1) Nebuchadnezzar's FIRST YEAR = Jehoiakim's FOURTH YEAR.

2) Jehoiakim reigned 11 years in total (2.Kings 23:36).

3) He was followed as king by Jehoiachin for 3 months (2.Kings 24:8).

4) That was the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (2.Kings 24:12)

5) Then Zedekiah (also called Mattaniah) reigned 11 years (2.Kings 24:18).

6) Then Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians.

So getting things into context as seen from Nebuchadnezzar's reign:

1) Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year = end of Jehoiakim's reign, start of Jehoiachin's reign;

2) Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year = destruction of Jerusalem.

Now let's notice the start of the Book of Daniel.

> In THE THIRD YEAR of the reign of JEHOIAKIM king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. (Daniel 1:1 AV)

Daniel 1:1 is in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, and Jeremiah 25:1 is in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, which happened to also be the 1st year for Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon. This probably means that Nebuchadnezzar went up to Jerusalem the year before he officially took over as king, while he was still commander-in-chief of the army and crown-prince and perhaps even co-regent with his father?

The young Jewish princes who were taken back to Babylon (including Daniel and his friends) were put through a 3-year training and grooming program (Daniel 1:5), at the end of which Nebuchadnezzar had been sole king of Babylon for two years.

Historical records that have been preserved in Babylon show that Nebuchadnezzar reigned a total of 43 years, followed by (Babylonian names) "Amel-Marduk" for 2 years and "Nergal-Shar-Usur" for 4 years and "Nabunaid" for 17 years, before the Medo-Persian rulers took over the kingdom of Babylon. That is a total of 66 years from the start of Nebuchadnezzar's reign until the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon. These Babylonian historical records appear to be reasonably accurate, all being linked into the recorded new moons at Babylon, which are recorded without interruption until 75 A.D..

I show this to make clear that there cannot be a full 70-year period between the destruction of Jerusalem (and of the Temple) in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year as king, and the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persians. That period was in fact only 66 - (18 or 19) = 48 or 47 years long (making allowance for Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year to be either included or excluded in the intervening period).

In the year AFTER Babylon had fallen to the Medo-Persians (i.e. in the second year of Darius) a number of Jews returned from Babylon to the area of Jerusalem, under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel. The books of Haggai and Zechariah tie into this period of having returned from Babylon.

Now Daniel 1:1 makes quite clear that SOME Jews (Daniel, ,etc.) were already taken to Babylon about 20 years before Jewish kings stopped reigning in Jerusalem and before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians. Specifically, Daniel himself would have been at Babylon for a period of 67-68 years before

Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persians.

So IF we are going to find a period of 70 years that CONCLUDES with Babylon falling to the Medo-Persians under Cyrus and Darius, THEN it will clearly have to start 2-3 years before Daniel was taken to Babylon in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim. In other words:

> THERE IS A CLEAR 70-YEAR PERIOD FROM THE DEATH OF THE PREVIOUS KING (i.e. JOSIAH) AND FROM THE START OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM UP TO THE FALL OF BABYLON AND THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM BY SOME JEWS!

Without being too concerned about perhaps being out by one year on either side, a reasonable chronological record seems to be as follows:

- 608 B.C. = Josiah dies and Jehoahaz reigns for 3 months; then Jehoiakim becomes king;

- 605 B.C. = Nebuchadnezzar comes to Jerusalem; Daniel taken to Babylon;

- 604 B.C. = Nebuchadnezzar starts his 43-year reign as king;

- 586 B.C. = Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year; the Temple & Jerusalem are destroyed;

- 562 B.C. = Nebuchadnezzar's last year as king;

- 539 B.C. = 23 years for 3 other kings (561 B.C. - 539 B.C. inclusive); Medo-Persians start;

- 538 B.C. = 1st year (or 2nd year??) for Darius.

[COMMENT: Because our Roman years run from January to December, whereas Babylonian years ran from spring to spring (i.e. March/April to the next March/April), there is always the potential for a discrepancy by one year in some places, depending on how the years were counted.]

[COMMENT: I realize that some people have put forward dates that differ by about 20 years with these dates I have given here. The motivation seems to be to somehow fit 70 years into the Jews BEING IN BABYLON. I don't believe such dates stack up with the historical evidence that is available.]

I am not presenting the above outline as "the final word" on this dating matter. The dates are somewhat general. Perhaps there is a flaw of a year or so somewhere in the above outline? Without being absolutely tied to this outline, the point is this:

> 1) There is NO WAY of placing 70 years between the destruction of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year and the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persians (or the return from Babylon the following year).
>
> 2) There actually IS a period of 70 years that starts with Josiah's death, shortly before Daniel was taken to Babylon, and which concludes with the fall of Babylon and the return of some Jews to Jerusalem.

I have mentioned these dates only because there are people who think that Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians 70 years after the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem, or 70 years after "the Jews had gone into captivity". But that is simply not supported by the facts. A very, very few Jews (Daniel and a

few of the princely teenagers) had been taken to Babylon about 67-68 years before Babylon itself fell. But the actual Babylonian captivity of the Jews did not start till about 20 years later ... and it lasted for less than 50 years. The Babylonian historical records make it absolutely clear, beyond any doubts whatsoever, that it is impossible to have 70 years between Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year and the end of Nabunaid's 17-year reign.

With this background we can now look at the other passages that mention "70 years".

JEREMIAH 25:11-12

We already saw that Jeremiah 25:1 was one year later than Daniel 1:1. So Nebuchadnezzar has started his 1st year as king of Babylon.

So during the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign God proceeds to explain through the prophet Jeremiah that Judah had NOT responded to all the warnings God had sent them through His servants. Therefore God was now going to punish them ... and God was going to USE Nebuchadnezzar to inflict this punishment.

Verse 9 states ...

> Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them AGAINST THIS LAND, and against the inhabitants thereof, AND AGAINST ALL THESE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT, AND WILL UTTERLY DESTROY THEM, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. (Jeremiah 25:9 AV)

This is a penalty from God that is directed NOT ONLY against Judah, but also against "all these nations round about". It is a penalty from God on MANY nations, one of which is Judah. This is important to take note of. Now let's see the "70 years".

> And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and THESE NATIONS SHALL SERVE THE KING OF BABYLON SEVENTY YEARS. And it shall come to pass, WHEN SEVENTY YEARS ARE ACCOMPLISHED, THAT I WILL PUNISH THE KING OF BABYLON, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. (Jeremiah 25:11-12 AV)

So what do the "70 years" refer to ... to Judah being IN Babylon for 70 years ... or to the land of Judah being destroyed for 70 years?

NO!

The "70-year period" in this prophecy refers to A NUMBER OF NATIONS BEING IN SERVITUDE TO BABYLON! Can you see that?

We have already seen that "Judah's servitude" to Nebuchadnezzar started as early as the 3rd year of King Jehoiakim, or about 20 years before the Babylonians finally destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. When Nebuchadnezzar simply took royal Jewish teenagers captive to Babylon (see again Daniel 1:1-3), it means that Judah had become a subjugated nation. In 2.Kings 24:1 we see that Jehoiakim submitted to Nebuchadnezzar for 3 years, before rebelling.

The point is this: Some of the OTHER NATIONS, which God clearly had in mind in Jeremiah 25:11, could easily have become subject to the Babylonian rule two or three years before this subjugation reached Judah. So where Daniel was taken to Babylon 67-68 years before Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians, some of the other nations in that area, who might have been conquered two or three years earlier, would have been subjugated exactly 70 years before Babylon itself fell to an enemy.

Next, the expression "... when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon" makes clear that this 70-year period FINISHES with the fall of Babylon. So this prophecy VERY CLEARLY IDENTIFIES WHEN IT CONCLUDES!

It must conclude with the fall of Babylon! THEREFORE it also must start 70 years before the fall of Babylon. And that just happens to be when the reign of Josiah, the last of the "good kings", came to an end, and when Jehoiakim started his reign (with 3 months in between those two reigns for another king, Jehoiachin).

The concluding date here makes absolutely clear, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the 70-year period simply CANNOT start with the fall of Jerusalem! The king of Babylon was "punished" when Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians, and that was no more than 48 years after Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

To make this very plain and clear:

At the very time when God gave this 70-year prophecy to Jeremiah, this 70-year period was in fact ALREADY INTO ITS FOURTH YEAR! God did not give this prophecy to Jeremiah before the 70 years started, but only after almost four years of that period had already elapsed.

SUMMARY OF THIS 70-YEAR PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH 25:

There is nothing in this focus on "the nations around Judah that God would punish" that would make me think there must be another latter-day "70-year period" for the Church to go through. In this passage the 70 years don't even focus on Judah specifically ... Judah is just ONE of the many nations on whom God was pronouncing this period as a penalty. The focus is that Babylon would be in control for a period of 70 years. This prophecy has had a clear historical fulfillment, which ended when Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians.

Let's now look at the next 70-year period.

<u>JEREMIAH 29:10</u>

In this chapter Jeremiah sent a letter to the captives in Babylon after king Jehoiachin had gone into captivity. So this was written in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar or a little later. It was written several years BEFORE Jerusalem was destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year (see Jer. 29:1).

Verse 4 shows that this is a message TO THOSE WHO WERE ALREADY IN BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY.

> Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, UNTO ALL THAT ARE CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVES, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; (Jeremiah 29:4 AV)

For THESE people, about 10 years after Daniel had been taken to Babylon and about 10 years before

the destruction of Jerusalem, it would be more like 58 years before Babylon would be conquered by the Medo-Persian armies. At that point in time Daniel already held a high position in Nebuchadnezzar's government, as did also his three friends.

So God here has a very clear message for these people. The message was: SETTLE DOWN, because you are going to be here FOR A LONG TIME!

Verse 5 tells them to build houses and to plant gardens and orchards. Verse 6 tells them to continue forming new families and to have children to preserve the nation. In the next verse God even instructed them to pray for peace on Babylon, so that they in turn could also enjoy peace.

In verses 8-9 God WARNS those already in Babylonian captivity not to listen to any false prophets who would try to persuade them that their problems would "SOON" be over, because it was still going to be a long time!

And that introduces the statement about "70 years".

> For thus saith the LORD, That AFTER SEVENTY YEARS BE ACCOMPLISHED AT BABYLON I WILL VISIT YOU, and perform my good word toward you, IN CAUSING YOU TO RETURN TO THIS PLACE. (Jeremiah 29:10 AV)

This translation, by saying "AFTER 70 years ... AT Babylon", implies that the Jews would be AT BABYLON for 70 years. But that is contrary to what actually happened ... they were in Babylon for LESS than 70 years. The KJV doesn't really convey the meaning of the Hebrew text very accurately.

There are two points we should note from the Hebrew text of this verse.

1) The English words "that after" are a translation of the Hebrew noun "peh" which means "MOUTH". And so Green's Literal Translation renders this part of the verse as: "... when ACCORDING TO MY MOUTH ...".

2) The English words "AT Babylon" are a translation of the preposition "le" attached to the noun "babel"; i.e. "le'babel". Now this preposition "le" denotes primarily "to" or "for", rather than "at". Thus Green's Literal Translation renders this whole section as:"... when according to My mouth seventy years have been fulfilled FOR Babylon ...".

Here are a number of different translations which recognize that the Hebrew text is not speaking about 70 years AT Babylon:

> For so says Jehovah, WHEN ACCORDING TO MY MOUTH seventy years have been fulfilled FOR BABYLON, I will visit you and confirm My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 LIT)
>
> This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed FOR BABYLON, I will come to you and fulfil my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 NIV)
>
> For thus saith the LORD: After seventy years are accomplished FOR BABYLON, I will remember you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 JPS)

> "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed FOR BABYLON, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 RSV)
>
> For thus says the LORD: Only WHEN BABYLON'S SEVENTY YEARS ARE COMPLETED will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 NRSV)
>
> `For thus said Jehovah, Surely AT THE FULNESS OF BABYLON--seventy years--I inspect you, and have established towards you My good word, to bring you back unto this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 YLT)
>
> For thus saith Jehovah: When seventy years shall be accomplished FOR BABYLON I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in bringing you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 DBY)
>
> For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished FOR BABYLON, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10 ASV)

The above eight different translations of this verse should suffice to illustrate that God was not speaking about 70 years being fulfilled AT Babylon, but rather that 70 years would be completed FOR Babylon. This is in fact a reference back to Jeremiah's earlier statement in Jeremiah 25:12 ... that is what the introductory Hebrew statement "when according to my mouth" (Green's Literal Translation again) tells us. It was "God's mouth" that had spoken Jeremiah 25:11-12. It is a reference to Babylon ruling over certain nations FOR 70 years. It is not speaking about any group of people being "AT Babylon for 70 years". The KJV for this verse is simply a misleading translation.

SUMMARY OF THIS 70-YEAR PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH 29:

As with Jeremiah 25, the focus here is also on Babylon being in control for a period of 70 years. The focus is NOT on how long a specific group of Jews would be living in Babylon. As it is, after the fall of Babylon many Jews VOLUNTARILY STAYED PERMANENTLY IN BABYLON! Many voluntarily chose never to return to Palestine. I see no focus on the Church at all in this repeat statement of the prophecy of Jeremiah 25.

Let's look at the next 70-year period.

DANIEL 9:2

Daniel 9:1 tells us that this was in the 1st year of Darius.

> IN THE FIRST YEAR OF DARIUS the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; (Daniel 9:1 AV)

So this was in the year before SOME Jews returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel. It was in the year before Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 1:1. At that point in time (1st year of Darius) the return to Jerusalem was very imminent, with no biblical reason to indicate against a return to Jerusalem.

Now the statement about 70 years.

> In the first year of his reign I Daniel UNDERSTOOD BY BOOKS the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that HE WOULD ACCOMPLISH SEVENTY YEARS IN THE DESOLATIONS OF JERUSALEM. (Daniel 9:2 AV)

First of all Daniel tells us that this understanding was not revealed to him in a dream or a vision or in some other special way. It is understanding he came to simply by reading the Book of Jeremiah! In other words, Daniel had looked at the exact same passages we have just examined ... Jeremiah 25:11-12 and Jeremiah 29:10.

So Daniel presents what he himself concluded from those two passages.

The Hebrew verb translated here as "he would accomplish" is "male" and it is used with the Hebrew "piel" stem, which conveys intensive and intentional action. With this stem this verb means "HE WOULD COMPLETE 70 years ...".

Here is how this verse is rendered in the Jewish Publication Society Translation:

> in the first year of his reign I Daniel meditated in the books, over the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish FOR the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years. (Daniel 9:2 JPS)

The focus of Daniel's statement is that from the two passages in the Book of Jeremiah Daniel understood the number of years THAT HAD TO PASS BEFORE anyone could return to Jerusalem. The point is not that Jerusalem had to be desolate for 70 years, as much as that, irrespective of when Jerusalem was made desolate, A FIXED PERIOD OF 70 YEARS had to pass before Jerusalem's desolation could be reversed ... and Daniel, who by that time had himself been in a RULING POSITION in Babylon for over 60 years, understood from Jeremiah 25:11-12 that the 70 years referred to the period of Babylon's rulership, which had just come to an end (1st year of Darius)! Daniel himself was also fully aware of the fact that Jerusalem had only been destroyed less than 50 years earlier.

So does this reference to 70 years in any way refer to the Church?

NO!

The period of 70 years still refers to Babylon, exactly as in the passages in Jeremiah. But when that period of Babylonian rule came to an end, then it opened the way for people to return to Jerusalem.

It is interesting that at the end-time there is a period that is one-twentieth of 70 years (i.e. a period of three-and-one-half years) that has to be concluded before Jesus Christ starts to rule as King of kings.

Now let's look at the next reference to 70 years.

ZECHARIAH 7:5

Zechariah 7:1 tells us the timing for this statement.

> And it came to pass IN THE FOURTH YEAR OF KING DARIUS, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; (Zechariah 7:1 AV)

So this is about 3 years after Daniel chapter 9. By then some Jews had returned to Jerusalem under the

leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel. By then the captivity was past tense ... Babylon had been defeated by the Medo-Persians. Now the people who had come to Jerusalem could look back on their forced stay in Babylon.

After the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, the Jewish community in Babylon had enacted a number of days of mourning and fasting to lament what had happened to them. Those days of mourning and fasting focussed on specific events such as the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, the murder of Gedaliah, who had been appointed as governor by the king of Babylon (see Jeremiah 40:5; 41:1-2), etc..

Now in Zechariah 7 God asks the people who had returned to Jerusalem about those days on which they had mourned and fasted.

> Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, EVEN THOSE SEVENTY YEARS, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? (Zechariah 7:5 AV)

God's point here is this: the fasting days they had instituted while they were in Babylon had not really been focussed on God. God had clearly told them to settle down in Babylon. They should have mourned for their collective sins that had CAUSED God to bring this penalty upon them, instead of mourning about what had happened to them. Their mourning was: "Woe is us because now we are suffering". Their mourning should have been: "Woe is us because we have sinned against God and we have not kept the covenant we made with God". Their concern had not been for God but for themselves.

The words "even those 70 years" can be variously rendered as "for these 70 years", "during those 70 years", etc.. The point is that this is a reference to a specific period the people there were very familiar with, the period of time that Jeremiah had prophesied would come to pass.

Note that this reference here in Zechariah 7:5 is NOT a prophecy; it is merely a reference to a period of time THAT HAD ALREADY PASSED! This is written from the perspective that "those 70 years" were already history to the people Zechariah was speaking to!

Let's now look at the next reference to 70 years.

2.CHRONICLES 36:21

The books of Chronicles were written by Ezra to fill in certain details not recorded in the parallel accounts, the books of 1. and 2.Kings. The last verse of this book makes reference to "Cyrus king of Persia", showing that this book was only written after Babylon had been conquered by the Medo-Persians.

In 2.Chronicles 36:19 the destruction of the Temple and the breaking down of the wall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians are recorded. The next verse shows that the remaining Jews were then carried off to captivity in Babylon, where they were servants until Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians. This statement about being servants "UNTIL" the Medo-Persians took over introduces the statement about the 70 years.

> To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, TO FULFIL THREESCORE AND TEN YEARS. (2 Chronicles 36:21 AV)

The Hebrew text here translated as "to fulfil" is identical to what we saw in Daniel 9:2 ... the Hebrew verb "male" is used with the Hebrew "piel" stem, which conveys intensive and intentional action. Where in Daniel 9:2 it is translated as "he would accomplish", here it is simply rendered as "TO FULFIL". It obviously means the same thing in both places.

Note that here also the reference is to Jeremiah's prophecy, meaning that the author (i.e. Ezra) had arrived at this understanding in the same way that Daniel had arrived at this understanding in Daniel 9:2 ... by reading Jeremiah's prophecy.

Once again the point of this statement in 2.Chronicles, written as history and not as prophecy, is that a period of 70 years had to be fulfilled for Babylon, during which time the land of Judah lay desolate and had a rest. The focus is not that the land of Judah had to necessarily rest for 70 years, but simply that it would rest DURING that period which had been appointed for Babylon.

I do not see any application to the end-time for this 70-year period that is here referenced in a historical context. The next two verses, 2.Chronicles 36:22-23, the last two verses of this particular book of the Bible, show that this 70-year period had come to an end when Cyrus started to rule over what had been the Babylonian Empire.

Let's now look at the last passage that mentions 70 years.

ZECHARIAH 1:12

Now where Zechariah 7:5 took place in the FOURTH year of king Darius, Zechariah 1:12 took place almost two years earlier, towards the end of Darius' SECOND year (see Zech 1:7). At that point the Jews had just barely returned to Jerusalem ... nothing had yet been rebuilt.

This verse is included within the context of vision #1 (Zech 1:8-17). After those who, in this vision, had checked out the whole earth and had found it to be "still and at rest" (verse 11), the angel asks a question in the next verse:

> Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, AGAINST WHICH THOU HAST HAD INDIGNATION THESE THREESCORE AND TEN YEARS? (Zechariah 1:12 AV)

While the captivity had officially come to an end at this point in time, nothing in Jerusalem or in Judah had yet been rebuilt. It was all still desolate.

Notice that the angel is clearly referring to PAST TENSE, by saying: "... against which You HAVE HAD indignation these 70 years"! So once again this is only a reference to a period of time that had come to an end ... obviously the same period that Jeremiah had prophesied in Jeremiah 25:11. It is not a prophetic statement, but a statement of history.

And that concludes all the statements about 70 years.

IN SUMMARY

Here is what we have:

1) In Isaiah 23:15-17 there is a 70-year prophecy about Tyre, one of the commercial capitals of the ancient world. This was fulfilled in history, and the system of Tyre was relocated. There are no

references to Israel or to the Church in this particular prophecy. And while some of the specific things that are discussed in that context may have an end-time application, it is hard to see any specific application here for another 70-year period at the end-time.

2) In Jeremiah 25:11-12 there is a prophecy about Babylon ruling over a number of nations, including Judah, for a period of 70 years. The focus is the length of time that Babylon would rule, not how long various ones of those nations would be in captivity in Babylon. Judah was subjugated by Babylon many years before the Babylonians actually destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and put down ALL opposition from the Jews, and carried off the majority of the Jews to Babylon. The greatest number of the Jews who were taken to Babylon were only taken there about 48 years before Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians.

3) Jeremiah 29:10 and Daniel 9:2 and Zechariah 1:12 and Zechariah 7:5 and 2.Chronicles 36:21 all refer back to Jeremiah 25:11-12. None of these five Scriptures introduce any new "PROPHETIC ASPECTS" for the prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11-12. They introduce nothing new and they have nothing to add to the prophecy.

4) So one prophecy refers to Tyre and the other refers to Babylon. While Judah was obviously affected by this second prophecy (the one applying to Babylon), it should be noted very clearly that THE EXACT TIME PERIOD OF 70 YEARS DID NOT APPLY TO JUDAH! That period applied specifically to Babylon.

In other words, the 70-year prophecy about Babylonian rule is totally unaffected by whether Judah spent 30 years or 48 years or 58 years or 68 years or even 70 years in captivity in Babylon. HOW LONG the Jews spent in Babylon is not the determining factor for the 70-year period. The very CLEAR statements in Jeremiah 25:11-12 should help us to deal with the less accurate translations of other passages.

5) Now while the Bible does not really hint at any kind of "70-year period" in the events leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ, that does not mean that some people will not FIND such "70-year periods" ... people have done that for centuries. It is easy to find events and dates that TO US may seem significant enough to qualify as "starting points" for whatever period of time we may wish to apply in our desire to predict when God is going to intervene in world affairs and usher in certain events that have been foretold by the prophets. But thus far things have never yet worked out according to any of these human predictions.

I believe we need to be very cautious in designating any specific event as "the starting point" for a prophetic time period, unless GOD has very clearly designated that event to be used thus. That is, for example, the case with the "70-weeks prophecy" of Daniel 9:24-27, where God has very clearly pinpointed a starting event ("from the going forth of the commandment", verse 25) and also a concluding event ("unto the Messiah the Prince"). But God has not done anything of the kind regarding the 70-year prophecies we find in the Bible. And neither has God hinted anywhere that these 70-year prophecies (one or both of them) are to have a second fulfillment in the time leading up to Christ's second coming, any more than there has to be ANOTHER "70 weeks period" that has to be fulfilled before the second coming.

[I don't suppose anyone would buy the idea of a 70-year period for "Tyre" starting with the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and thus concluding in 2027 ... ??? That's supposed to be a joke, and I certainly don't believe it is remotely correct. I just present this to show how easy it is to find "significant events" that we can use.]

Thus I myself do not see anything in the Bible that makes me think we might be in the middle of, or even towards the close of, a God-determined period of 70 years, at the conclusion of which period certain events leading up to Christ's second coming will take place.