

One God Many Faces



By Craig Paardekooper © 2003

INTRODUCTION

There are many religions in the world today. And these religions are not identical; each one differs in some important aspect from the others. Now, if these religions were all inspired by God, then the connection is not immediately obvious. For a start, some people argue that these religions contradict each other on important points of doctrine.

With the coming of the reformation in the 16th century, people in the west became more aware of the cultures of other peoples, and the question of why God allowed so many different religions to flourish became an issue.

Today we live in a truly multi-cultural society, and the question of the authenticity of other religions is more important than ever.

Of course, if there is a God of justice and love, who is father of us all, then surely he would have cared enough for people in distant lands to reveal to them a true religion. It would seem a bit odd if God had completely neglected all humanity except Israel.

In this book I look at what the Bible says about the religions of the world, and we will explore one of the most amazing phenomenon ever recorded.

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

We begin our story in 626 B.C.

Israel had existed as an independent nation since the time of King David (c. 1000 B.C.) However, 400 years had past since David's reign, and Israel had fallen further and further away from God. So God had in mind to punish the nation by making Israel subservient to the Gentile powers. . In 626 B.C. the prophet **Jeremiah** began his ministry. For 40 years he preached a message of coming judgment – urging the people to repent.

However, after the death of King Josiah (in 607 B.C.), the last righteous king, the Jewish people had almost completely abandoned God and His commandments – and Jeremiah made this prophecy - he prophesied that the Jews would be taken captive by the Babylonians and put under their power for 70 years.

"Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: 'Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

*But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,' declares the LORD, 'and will make it desolate forever. I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that is written in this book and prophesied by **Jeremiah** against all the nations. They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings. I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands."*

JEREMIAH 25 v 7-14

"When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place."

JEREMIAH 29 v 10

It is a remarkable fact of history that **Jeremiah's** prophecy was fulfilled exactly.

*"He (Nebuchadnezzar) carried into exile to Babylon the remnant (of the Jews) who escaped the sword, and they became servants of him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by **Jeremiah**."*

2 CHRONICLES 36 v 22

FULFILLMENT OF THE SEVENTY YEARS

Let us take a closer look at this prophecy.. The prophecy of the seventy years of captivity was fulfilled in 4 different ways.

1) The Period of Babylonian Power

This is the period during which the Jews and western Asiatic peoples in general came under the sway of the Babylonian power. This period began with the defeat of the Assyrians and Egyptians at the siege of Harran. The New Babylonian Chronicle describes this event as occurring in the 17th year of Nabopolassar, ie 607 B.C. With the defeat of the Egyptians and Assyrians in 607 B.C., the domination of the peoples of Syria and Palestine passed from Egypt to Babylon. Jehoiakim (the king of the Jews) was reduced to a vassal king.

This assumption of Babylonian authority over all western Asia is confirmed by **Jeremiah** as dating from the accession year of Jehoiakim - 607 B.C. Jehoiakim served the Babylonian king for three years and then rebelled against him; consequently Nebuchadnezzar sent an army against Jerusalem. The date of this attack is the 3rd year of Jehoiakim.

So, the fall of Babylon and the tragic crash of the Babylonian Empire occurred in 537 B.C. - exactly 70 years after Babylon assumed power over Palestine.

2) The Desolation of the Temple

The Temple was burnt to the ground in 585 B.C. The Book of Ezra 6 v 15 informs us that the rebuilding of the Temple, after the Jews had returned from the Babylonian exile, was completed in the end (12th month) of the 6th year of Darius king of Persia. The reign of Darius, as given in Ptolemy's Canon is completely confirmed by the contract tablet datings and is also astronomically fixed by two independent eclipse records relative to two separate lunar eclipses, hence indisputable. The first year of Darius began in Spring 521 B.C. and finished in Spring 520 B.C., hence the 6th year ended in Spring 515 B.C. and no authority disputes this date. Now, from the cessation of Divine Services and the destruction of the Temple in 585 B.C. to the time the Temple was rebuilt and Divine Services recommenced in 515 B.C. was an interval of precisely 70 years - and the 70 year desolation was therefore fulfilled to the letter.

3) The Captivity of the Jews

The first batch of Jews to be removed from the Land of Judah to Babylon were those taken in the 3rd year of the reign of Jehoiakim - 604 B.C.

Now, the first batch of Jews to come back from Babylon returned in the first year of Cyrus, as recorded in the first two chapters of Ezra. The first year of Cyrus as direct king of Babylon was his 3rd year as emperor - commencing March 534 B.C. and ending March 533 B.C. It was during this very year that the first return of Jewish captives from

Babylon took place. This was precisely 70 years after the first batch of Jews were taken to Babylon in 604-603 B.C.

4) Divine Indignation

During this period God expressly declares His righteous indignation against the Jews. Both the beginning and end of this chronological band are clearly defined in the Scriptures.

The 8th chapter of Ezekiel informs us that in the 6th year of Jehoiachin's captivity the wickedness of the House of Judah had reached such a pitch that it provoked God's righteous indignation and He declared

"Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eyes shall not spare, neither will I have pity" and He withdrew His Shekinah Glory from the Most Holy in the Temple" (ie He withdrew His protecting "presence" from their midst.)

The 6th year of Jehoiachin's exile began March 590 B.C. The period of Divine Indignation on the Jews began in the 6th month (Elul) of the 6th year, that is in autumn 590 B.C.

Zechariah chapter 1 reveals the termination of that period of Divine Indignation. In verses 2 and 3, God declares

"The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say unto them, Thus sayeth the LORD of Hosts."

Verse 1 states that this was uttered in the eighth month (Bul) of the 2nd year of Darius, ie in autumn 520 B.C., exactly 70 years after the provocation of Divine Indignation in autumn 590 B.C. And verse 12 definitely draws attention to the fact that the indignation had lasted 70 years.

"Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, 'O LORD of Hosts, how long will thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these three score and ten years?'"

To which the Divine reply came,

"Therefore, thus sayeth the LORD: 'I am returning to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it,' sayeth the LORD of Hosts, 'and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem."

"'For I,' saith the LORD, 'will be unto her a wall of fire round about and will be the glory in the midst of her.'"

WHY DID GOD MAKE THE CAPTIVITY LAST 70 YEARS LONG

In the time of Moses, one thousand years before the Jewish Captivity, God gave the following laws to the Jews. Moses wrote these laws down

"At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the LORD's time for cancelling debts has been proclaimed. If a fellow Hebrew, a man or woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free."

DEUTERONOMY 15 v 1-12

"If you buy a Hebrew servant he is to serve you for 6 years but in the seventh year he shall go free, without paying anything."

EXODUS 21 v 2

As if the Sabbath Year law wasn't clear enough, God also instituted a Year of Jubilee. Every seven sabbaths of years - or seven times seven years, a special year of ATONEMENT was to be proclaimed throughout the Land. It was a special year of LIBERTY when each person was to return home to his family and property.

"Count off seven Sabbaths of years - seven times seven years - so that the seven Sabbaths of years amount to a period of 49 years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the 50th year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all it's inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan."

LEVITICUS 25 v 8

God's laws indicate that after a period of "seven", debts are to be forgiven and slaves are to be freed and allowed to return home. How appropriate, therefore, that after 70 years of captivity and enslavement to the Babylonians, the Jews were set free and allowed to return to their homeland.

God deliberately set the duration of the captivity as 70 years because such a period was in accordance with the Sabbath Year Law - a law that the Jews had repeatedly broken.

The Jews were also meant to allow the land itself to rest every seventh year. This ,too, the Jews had disobeyed.

One thousand years earlier, in the time of Moses, God had told the Jews what would happen to them if they continued to disobey Him.

"I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. I will lay waste your land, so

that your enemies who live there will be appalled. I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the Sabbaths you lived in it."
LEVITICUS 26 v 31-35

Here, God makes it very clear that the duration of the future Captivity (scattered among the nations) is to be related to the Sabbath Year Law - and the length of the period of Captivity is to equate to a great Sabbath for the land.

2 Chronicles confirms this.

"The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah."
2 CHRONICLES 36 v 21

TWO MEN BEFORE THEIR TIME

Only twice in the whole Bible does God predict the proper name of a person before they are born. In both cases God also predicts the specific events surrounding these two people, and the specific things they will do. The first name is JOSIAH. The second name is that of CYRUS. Both have an interesting connection to the events of the Captivity.

JOSIAH

During the reigns of king Saul, king David and king Solomon, Israel was a united kingdom. However, after the reign of king Solomon ended (in 977 B.C.) Israel became divided into 2 separate kingdoms - the Northern Kingdom with its capital at Samaria, and the Kingdom of Judah with its capital at Jerusalem. There was a king of the Northern Kingdom - named Jeroboam, and a king of the Kingdom of Judah - named Rehoboam.

Division of the Kingdom After Solomon		
The Northern Kingdom	King is Jeroboam	Capital at Samaria
The Kingdom of Judah	King is Rehoboam	Capital at Jerusalem

There was still only one religion, the worship of YHWH, and the centre of this religion was at the Temple of Jerusalem. However, Jeroboam was worried because he believed that if his people continued to worship at Jerusalem they would return to serving Rehoboam. So to avoid this Jeroboam set about creating a new religion with a new centre of worship - so his people would no longer have to go to Jerusalem.

So Jeroboam made 2 gold calves, and set one up at Bethel and the other up at Dan. He established a new religion with new idols, new shrines, new priests, new festivals. Then a prophet from Judah came to the shrine at Bethel while king Jeroboam was worshipping there.

By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel as Jeroboam was standing at the altar to make an offering. The man of God cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD:

"O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: "A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burnt on you."

That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: the altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."

When king Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!". But the hand he stretched out towards the man shrivelled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD.

Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before.

1 KINGS 13 v 1-6

This prophecy achieved a remarkable fulfillment 350 years later when for the first time a king named JOSIAH became king of Judah. When Josiah was 8 years old he became king, and he reigned at Jerusalem for 31 years. In the 18th year of Josiah's reign (622 B.C.) Josiah's officials discovered the Book of the Law - and Josiah read it and realized how much Israel had disobeyed God's laws. He humbled himself before the LORD, and became determined to purge Israel of its idolatry.

Josiah sent his officials to the prophetess Huldah in Jerusalem to enquire of her what the discovery of the Book of the Law meant. She gave them this prophecy -

"This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the Book the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched."

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you declares the LORD. Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place."

2 KINGS Chapter 22

King Josiah carried out a complete purge of idolatry both in the Kingdom of Judah and in the Northern Kingdom. It was the greatest purge that Israel had ever seen and would ever see. He removed all the idols from the Temple of Jerusalem and burned them outside Jerusalem. He also destroyed all the "high places" or altars throughout all of Israel where worship of the idols took place and slaughtered all the idolatrous priests. At Bethel people had been buried near to the altars (buried on holy ground they believed). Josiah dug up these bodies and burned them on the altars, thus fulfilling the prophecies made 350 years earlier. 2 Kings chapter 23 describes the purge of Josiah.

CYRUS

God not only prophesied the exact duration of the captivity, He also prophesied the name of the man who would bring the captivity to an end - **CYRUS**. More amazing still, the name of **CYRUS** was prophesied more than 100 years before **CYRUS** was even born.

God prophesied that **Cyrus** would allow the Jews to return to their homeland and would issue a decree authorizing the rebuilding of their Temple at Jerusalem.

*"This is what the LORD says - your Redeemer, who formed you out of the womb:....who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be inhabited," of the towns of Judah, "They shall be built", and of their ruins, "I will restore them", who says to the watery deep, "Be dry and I will dry up your streams", who says of **Cyrus**, "He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say to Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt", and of the Temple, "Let it's foundations be laid."*

ISAIAH 44 v 24-28

*"This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to **Cyrus**, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I call you by name and bestow on you a title of honour, though you do not acknowledge me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the Sun to the place of it's setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things..."*

ISAIAH 45 v 1-7

*"This is what the LORD says - the Holy One of Israel, and it's maker: Concerning things to come,.....I will raise up **Cyrus** in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty."*

ISAIAH 45 v 11-13

The ministry of the prophet Isaiah lasted until about 690 B.C. so these prophecies were all made before that date. **Cyrus** was born 607 B.C. at the earliest - almost 100 years after the prophecies were written.

TESTIMONY OF CYRUS HIMSELF TO ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

We find recorded in the history of Josephus that Cyrus wrote throughout all his dominions that -

"God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth," and that "He indeed foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem which is in the country of Judea."

Josephus goes on to say that, when Cyrus had read the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"He called for the most eminent Jews in Babylon and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their country and to rebuild their city Jerusalem and the Temple of God."

Josephus also gives a copy of the letter written by Cyrus to the governors that were in Syria, which letter begins as follows:

"King Cyrus to Sisinnes and Sathrabuzzanes, sendeth greetings. I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to do so to return to their own country, and to rebuild the city, and to rebuild the Temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before."

JOSEPHUS - ANTIQUITIES Bk XI, Chapter 1 see 1 & 3

But what has all this to do with the Captivity - precisely this - in the whole Bible only two people are prophesied by name before their birth - JOSIAH and CYRUS. Josiah ruled up until the very year that the captivity began. He died in 607 B.C. Cyrus's reign began in 537 B.C., the very year the Captivity ended.

So God not only predicted the length of the Captivity, but also the names of the rulers at it's beginning and end – rulers that God claims to have put in place. It is a huge coincidence that the only 2 names prophesied should "frame" the captivity in this way. These 2 names surely emphasize the fact that it is God who started the Captivity and it is God who ended it.

The seventy years of captivity represents a great turning point in Jewish history, for it is the very time that God turned from the Jewish people to the Gentiles.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

“Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:23-24).

The Scriptures tell us that the "times of the Gentiles" began when national Israel, because of her relentless idolatry and disobedience, was sent into exile, by God, to Babylon, causing Israel to no longer be the "head" but the "tail," as Moses worded it in Deu. 28:1,10,13-15 (cf. vss. 43-44).

Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth (Deu. 28:1).

So all the people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord and they shall be afraid of you (Deu. 28:10)

And the Lord shall make you the head and not the tail, and you only shall be above, and you shall not be underneath, if you will listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them (Deu. 28:13-14).

But God also warned Israel that if she failed to obey the Lord and go after other gods:

The alien who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you shall go down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; HE SHALL BE THE HEAD, AND YOU SHALL BE THE TAIL (Deu. 28:43-44).

Starting with Israel's exile into Babylon Gentile political dominion was divinely ordained. These dominions were revealed and described to the prophet Daniel as a statue of various metals in chapter two and the four beasts in chapter seven of his prophetic Book.

Scofield defines the time limits of the times of the Gentiles:

The Times of the Gentiles is that long period beginning with the Babylonian captivity of Judah, under Nebuchadnezzar, and to be brought to an end by the destruction of Gentile worldpower by the "stone cut out without hands" (Dan 2:34, 35, 44), i.e. the coming of the Lord in glory (Rev 19:11, 21), until which time Jerusalem is politically subject to Gentile rule (Luke 21:24) (C. I. Scofield, Reference Bible, p. 1345).

When Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the "times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," He did not at all mean until the Jews would again take control of the ancient city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount from Gentile hands. But instead He was specifically referring to those successive Gentile, political powers revealed by the prophet Daniel, which would have dominion over national Israel starting with Babylon and ending with the Roman Empire.

These successive Gentile powers are historically seen to be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

So the term “times of the Gentiles” refers specifically to Gentile dominion over Israel beginning with the captivity in Babylon. During this time God gave primacy to the gentile nations over Israel - first to Nebuchadnessar - giving him dominion and sending him visions of the future (see Daniel, Jeremiah), and then with Cyrus, whom God appointed as conqueror of the Babylonians and liberator of the Jews (see Isaiah).

So according to the Bible, God turned from Israel. Israel was no longer the Head, but the tail, and the Gentile nations were made the head instead – this began in 600 B.C. and was to continue for over 500 years.

EZEKIEL AND THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

According to the book of Exodus, the Egyptian captivity lasted 430 years. The Jews experienced a SECOND captivity beginning in 597 B.C. According to the prophet Ezekiel, this too would last 430 years, until the time of the Maccabees in 167 B.C. One mirrors the other... deliberately.

The Gentile Captivity mirrored the Egyptian captivity. History repeated itself partly for our benefit, so that we might know that God is active in shaping the course of world events.

The Siege of Jerusalem Symbolized

1"And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem. 2And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. 3And you, take an iron griddle, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.

The siege is the sign of the beginning of the punishment

4"Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment^[a] of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. 5For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. 6And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year. 7And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city. 8And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.

From the time of the siege there will be 430 years of punishment.

9"And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer,^[b] and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. 10And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels^[c] a day; from day to day^[d] you shall eat it. 11And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin,^[e] from day to day you shall drink. 12And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung." 13And the LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them." 14Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never defiled myself.^[f] From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth." 15Then he said to me, "See, I assign to you cow's dung

instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread." 16 Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, behold, I will break the supply^{of} of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. 17 I will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment.

The punishment would take the form being driven out among the other nations where the Jews would eat unclean food and go hungry.

Ezekiel was instructed to lie on his side for 430 days, and bear the sins of the Jews, one day for each year. To bear the sins means to bear the punishment for the sins. (See Isaiah 53) .So Ezekiel was punished for 430 days, each day representing one year. So for 430 years the Jews would be punished. God explains that they would be punished by being driven among the gentile nations where they would eat defiled food, be hungry and their freedom would be restricted.

When did this punishment begin? Ezekiel tells us that it began with a sign. The sign was the siege of Jerusalem. And by definition, a punishment of exile begins with the first exile. History informs us that the first siege and exile of the Jews occurred in 597 B.C. This was the very siege that Ezekiel had just suffered. So 597 B.C. was when the punishment of the Jews began. Ezekiel simply tells us that it would last 430 years.

History records that the Jews were under the control of Gentile powers until 167 B.C. In 167 B.C. the Jews revolted against Gentile oppression and established themselves as an independent power under the leadership of the Maccabees – this was 430 years after the Babylonian siege of 597 B.C.

Ezekiel's prophecy divides the 430 years into 2 distinct periods -

1. A period of 390 years in which the people of Israel eat unclean food
2. A final period of 40 years in which Jerusalem is under attack, and the people practice purity and only eat clean food.

In 198 B.C. Judea came under the rule of the Seleucids, who took over from the Ptolemys. It was the Ptolemys who had translated the Septuagint, and so they were quite sympathetic to the Jewish religion. The Seleucids, on the other hand, were bent on Hellenising the Jews. So during the last 40 years of the 430 year period, there was great pressure put on the Jews to give up their religion and dietary laws. But the Jews held out. Perhaps this is why Ezekiel does not eat defiled food for the last 40 days. These 40 years were a time of testing for the Jews - the Seleucids tried many ways of separating the Jews from their religion. Antiochus Epiphanes, who ruled over Israel during the final decade of this 40 years, was instrumental in attempting to eradicate Jewish culture completely, but this only served to purify the motives of the Jews who held out. The persecution he inflicted was severe.

DANIEL'S PROPHECY OF THE SUCCESSION OF GENTILE POWERS

Daniel was a prophet of the Jews who had been taken captive and led off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 604 B.C. . Daniel was aware of Jeremiah's prophecy that the dominion of the Babylonians would only last 70 years. So in the 67th year of Daniel's time in Babylon (537 B.C.) he prayed to God for mercy so that the Jewish people would be allowed to return home.

"In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom - in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the LORD God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O LORD, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love Him and obey His commands, we have sinned and done wrong....For your sake, O LORD, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary..

While Daniel was speaking and praying, an angel of the LORD appeared. He said

"Daniel, I have come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray ,an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens', and sixty-two 'sevens'. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After sixty-two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven', but in the middle of that 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the Temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

DANIEL Chapter 9

THE DECREE TO REBUILD JERUSALEM

We find recorded in the history of Josephus that **Cyrus** wrote throughout all his dominions that -

"God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth," and that "He indeed foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem which is in the country of Judea."

Josephus goes on to say that, when **Cyrus** had read the words of the prophet Isaiah, "He called for the most eminent Jews in Babylon and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their country and to rebuild their city Jerusalem and the Temple of God."

Josephus also gives a copy of the letter written by **Cyrus** to the governors that were in Syria, which letter begins as follows:

*"King **Cyrus** to Sisinnes and Sathrabuzzanes, sendeth greetings. I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to do so to return to their own country, and to rebuild the city, and to rebuild the Temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before."*

JOSEPHUS - ANTIQUITIES Bk XI, Chapter 1 see 1 & 3

So we see that from the issuing of the decree to rebuild the Temple (issued by Cyrus in 537 B.C.) there will be a period of 70 x 7 years until the dominion of the gentile empires is brought to an end and the kingdom of God is established.

There has been some controversy as to the date when the decree to rebuild the Temple was issued. History records that a decree was issued by Cyrus in 537 B.C but another decree was also issued by Artaxerxes in about 100 years later. So which decree are we to count the seventy "sevens" from ?

The Book of Daniel proceeds to answer this question very clearly in chapter 11. Here Daniel goes into meticulous detail relating the sequence of future events. These events span a period of time from 537 B.C. till 54 B.C., a period of precisely 483 years or 69 "sevens". What are the chances of Daniel relating events covering a period of precisely 69 "sevens" of years in chapter 11 immediately after describing a period of 69 "sevens" in chapter 9, unless Daniel MEANT for them to be the same. So we can say that the decree was issued in 537 B.C. with some certainty.

TABLE OF FULFILMENTS OF THE PROPHECY

Daniel Chapter 11 describes the precise events that will take place during a period of 69 x 7 years. Daniel gives a very detailed description of these events. The table below lists each prophecy next to it's precise historical fulfilment. It should be stressed that there are exactly 69 x 7 years from the issuing of the decree to rebuild the Temple (537 B.C.) until the last event described - that of the death of Crassus in 54 B.C. The precision demonstrated by these prophecies is truly amazing and requires an explanation.

	Prophecy	Historical Fulfillment	Date of Fulfillment
PERSIANS	"And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia; and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them; and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece."	The fourth king of Persia was Xerxes. He had proverbial riches. And it was Xerxes who launched an immense invasion of Greece	483-480 B.C.
ALEXANDER	"Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not by his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these."	Alexander the Great was the first and mightiest of the kings of the Greek Empire. After his death, his kingdom was split between his four generals - none of whom were his posterity.	332 B.C.
TIME OF THE PTOLEMIES	"Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and his dominion shall be a great dominion."	The southern part of the Greek Empire was based in Egypt. It was from the Egyptian part of the Greek Empire that the Seleucids emerged.	301 B.C.
TIME OF THE PTOLEMIES	"After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make peace; but she shall not retain the	Ptolemy Philadelphus was king of the southern part of the empire (Egypt). He gave his daughter Berenice to the king of the northern part of the empire (Syria) in order to	284 B.C.

	strength of her arm, and he and his offspring shall not endure; but she shall be given up, and her attendants, her child, and he who got possession of her."	make peace. The northern king was named Antiochus Theos. Antiochus divorced his first wife and married Berenice and gave her a child. However, the first wife got revenge by having Berenice and Antiochus killed together with their child.	
TIME OF THE PTOLEMIES	"In those times a branch from her roots shall arise in his place; he shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail."	Berenice's brother - Ptolemy Euergetes - organises an army to attack the northern kingdom. He wants revenge for Berenice's death. He defeats the northern kingdom.	264 B.C.
TIME OF THE PTOLEMIES	"He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their molten images and with their precious vessels of silver and gold; and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return into his own land."	Ptolemy Euergetes takes all the valuables of the northern kingdom back to Egypt. He brings so many valuables back to Egypt that the Egyptians name him "Euergetes" meaning "benefactor".	
TIME OF ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT	His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress.	The sons of the northern king - Antiochus the Great and Seleucus Callinicus warred attacked the southern Kingdom for the first time. They warred against Ptolemy Philopater - Euergetes's son	219 B.C.
TIME OF ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT	Then the king of the south, moved with anger, shall come out and fight with the king of the north; and he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. And when the multitude is taken his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail."	The South fights back and wins the war. Ptolemy Philopater defeats the northern kingdom at Raphia, near Gaza.	217 B.C.
TIME OF	For the king of the north	The Northern kingdom	198 B.C.

<p>ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT</p>	<p>shall again raise a multitude, greater than the former; and after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies. In those times many shall rise against the king of the south; and the men of violence among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision; but they shall fail. Then the king of the north shall come and throw up seige works, and take a well fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his picked troops, for there shall be no strength to stand. But he who comes against him shall do according to his will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land, and all of it shall be in his power</p>	<p>attacked the southern kingdom again, but this time the northern kingdom won. Antiochus the Great became master of Palestine. He defeated Ptolemy Epiphanes, the son of Ptolemy Philopater, at Panion. He was helped by Philip of Macedon, rebels in Egypt, and by Jews who helped beseige the Egyptian garrison in Jerusalem. The Jews had hoped that helping the northern kingdom would gain Palestine it's independence - they were disappointed. Palestine was now under the sway of the Seleucids - it had hitherto belonged to the Ptolemies.</p>	
<p>TIME OF ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT</p>	<p>He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom; but it shall not stand or be to his advantage.</p>	<p>Antiochus the Great gave his daughter Cleopatra to the king of the southern kingdom. Antiochus's plan was to use his daughter to sabotage the southern kingdom. However, his daughter sided with the king of the south and would not carry out her father's evil plots. So his plan failed.</p>	
<p>TIME OF ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT</p>	<p>Afterwards he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many of them; but a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed he shall turn his insolence back upon him. Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall and not be</p>	<p>Antiochus the Great set about conquering the Aegean Islands bordering Italy. He was defeated by the Romans - who then imposed a tribute upon him. He returned to his own land in order to find money to pay the tribute. He attempted to plunder the Temple of Jupiter at Elymais, but was killed by</p>	<p>189 B.C.</p>

	found.	the infuriated inhabitants.	
TIME OF SELEUCUS PHILOPATER	Then shall arise in his place one whoshall send an exactor of tribute through the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle.	Seleucus Philopater, son of Antiochus the Great, set about gathering the tribute to pay to Rome. He exrracted much money from his subjects, and also sent his minister - Heliodorus - to plunder the Temple in Jerusalem. After a relatively short reign of 12 years he was poisoned by Heliodorus, who hoped to gain the crown thereby.	189-177 B.C.
TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES	In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom the royal majesty has not been given; he shall come in without warning and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries. Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, and the prince of the covenant also. And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully; and he shall become strong with a small people.	Antiochus Epiphanes, the younger son of Seleucus Philopater, over threw Heliodorus and assumed the throne. He was not the rightful heir - the title belonged to his older brother - Demetrius - who was hostage in Rome.. Antiochus also murdered his younger brother (the prince of the covenant) who also posed a challenge to the throne.	177 B.C.
TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES	Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province; and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds but only for a time.	Antiochus's method of ruling was to enrich himself with loot, then bestow lavish gifts upon his followers.	
TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES	And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great army; but he shall not stand, for plots have been	Antiochus Epiphanes attacked the kingdom of the south. However, he had plotted with the leaders of the army of the south. So by treachery he defeated the south, even though the army of the south was much bigger	

	<p>devised against him. Even those who eat his rich food shall be his undoing; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. And as for the two kings, their minds shall be bent on mischief ; they shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail; for the end is yet to be at the time appointed.</p>	<p>than his army. He did not kill the king of the south, Ptolemy Philometer , but made him king at Memphis - (they ate together at the same table.) pretending he wanted to help him against Ptolemy Physcon, whom the Egyptians had made king.</p>	
<p>TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES</p>	<p>And he shall return to his land with great substance, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will, and return to his own land.</p>	<p>Antiochus returned from Egypt in 169 B.C. with much loot. In his absence it had been rumoured that he had died in the fighting. So Jason, a former highpriest, had stormed Jerusalem and ousted Menelaus, the highpriest installed by Antiochus. On his return, therefore, Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, slaughtered many of it's inhabitants, plundered and desecrated the temple and reinstated Menelaus as highpriest.</p>	<p>169 B.C.</p>
<p>TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES</p>	<p>At the appointed time he shall return and come into the south; but it shall not be this time as it was before. For ships of Kittim will come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and give heed to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the Temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.</p>	<p>Antiochus decides to attack Egypt again. But Ptolemy had suspected his designs and had called on the help of Greek mercenaries and on the help of the Romans. The Romans met Antiochus at Alexandria in Egypt and ordered him to keep out of Egypt. Antiochus was forced to submit and he withdrew north seething with anger and humiliation.. He gave vent to his wrath by turning on the Jews. He sent an army which fell upon Jerusalem, slaughtering many, taking others as slaves and looting and partially destroying the city. In 167 B.C. orders were</p>	<p>167 B.C.</p>

		<p>given that the temple ritual must be suspended, that the sacred scriptures must be destroyed, that the sabbath and other festival days be no longer observed, that the strict food laws be abolished and that the right of circumcision be discontinued.. The culminating attack on Jewish worship came in December, when an altar and probably also an image ('the abomination that makes desolate') were erected in the temple court and dedicated to the worship of OLYmpian Zeus.. Similar altars were set up throughout Judea and the Jews were ordered to sacrifice at them. Disobedience was rewarded with severe penalties. Jews who forsook Judaism and embraced the Greek culture were favoured and honoured.</p>	
<p>THE TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES</p>	<p>He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant; but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. And those among the people who are wise shall make many understand, though they shall fall by the sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days. When they fall, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery; and some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the appointed time.</p>	<p>Antiochus rewarded those who violated the covenant, and punished those who held to it.</p>	

<p>THE TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES</p>	<p>And the king shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the indignation is accomplished; for what is determined shall be done. He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honour the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his fathers did not know he shall honour with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts."</p>	<p>Antiochus called himself "Theos Epiphanes" meaning "God Manifest".- regarding himself as the incarnate manifestation of Olympian Zeus.whom he set up as the greatest of the gods.</p> <p>Antiochus did not honour Apollo, the traditional protector of the Seleucid dynasty, but instead he raised up Olympian Zeus as the chief god of his kingdom - and he himself claimed to be Zeus.</p>	
<p>THE TIME OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES</p>	<p>He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god; those who acknowledge him he shall magnify with honour. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.</p>		
<p>TIME OF POMPEY</p>	<p>At the time of the end a king of the south shall attack him; but a king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.</p>	<p>Having been ordered out of Egypt, Syria was attacked and finally annexed by Rome in 65 B.C.</p>	<p>65 B.C.</p>
<p>TIME OF POMPEY</p>	<p>He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.</p>	<p>Jerusalem was taken by Pompey in 63 B.C. Pompey started a campaign against the Nabateans in 63 B.C. The Nabateans were a powerful Arab tribe which had occupied the old kingdoms of Edom to the south, Moab to</p>	<p>63 B.C.</p>

		the south-east and Ammon to the north-east of the Dead Sea. However POMpey did not complete this campaign. He postponed it in order that he might settle the quarrels of rival Jewish leaders. Thus the Nabateans retained their independence, and EDOM, Moab and most of Ammon remained outside the Roman empire (a small section of Ammon lay within the Roman territories of Peraea and Decapolis.)	
TIME OF POMPEY	He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train.		
TIME OF POMPEY	But tidings from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go forth with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious mountain; yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.	In 54 B.C. Crassus undertook a campaign against the Parthians; (Crassus, Pompey and Julius Caesar were the members of the First Triumvirate); but before the campaign he took over the province of Syria and pillaged it very thoroughly, also plundering the treasures of the temple in Jerusalem. He pitched his tents between the Mediterranean and Mount Zion. His campaign, however, was unsuccessful. He was killed by the Parthians.	54 B.C.
	The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.	The people of the ruler after Crassus were the people of the Roman Empire. So Daniel is saying that the Romans will destroy the city and the Temple. It was just	

		after Crassus that the Romans installed their own rulers in Palestine - the Herodians.	
	The end will come like a flood: war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven, but in the middle of that seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on him	The final "seven" years is described, during which the Romans destroyed the nation of the Jews. This war lasted seven years from 66 A.D. till 73 A.D., and it was in the middle of this period (70A.D.) that the Temple was destroyed, putting a permanent end to sacrifice and offering.	66-73 A.D
TIME OF JESUS	But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.	Every Christian fled Jerusalem before the destruction in 70 A.D. and took refuge in Pella, east of the Jordan.	70 A.D

The sixty nine weeks end with the statement that

"The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed."

"The people of the ruler who will come" means the people of the Roman Empire. It was just after Crassus that Rome installed it's own ruler as king in Palestine - Herod.

So Daniel foretold the entire sequence of historical events that were to unfold over a period of 490 years. The detail and precision of these prophecies is quite remarkable, as the table above demonstrates. This shows, above all, that God was in control, and that God had ordained the rising and falling of the Gentile powers.

The final "seven" describes the seven year war during which the Romans destroyed the Jews. This war lasted from 66 A.D. till 73 A.D. Half way through this period the Temple was destroyed (70 A.D.) putting a permanent end to sacrifice and offering.

Before the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. all of the Christians, having observed the warnings of Jesus, had fled Jerusalem and took refuge in the city of Pella east of the Jordan. So they were delivered from the tribulation that was to come. Daniel chapter 12, that at the **time** of the **end** there will be a resurrection of the dead (30A.D.), a gathering up of the elect (66 A.D. onwards when Christians were gathered out of Jerusalem) and the power of the Holy people will be finally broken (70 A.D.)

SUMMARY SO FAR

In summary, Ezekiel had prophesied that the Times of the Gentiles would last 430 years, from the beginning of the Captivity in 597 B.C., when Nebuchadnessar laid siege to Jerusalem, till 167 B.C., when the Jews gained their freedom from the persecutions by Antiochus Epiphanes.

The prophet Daniel, who was a contemporary of Ezekiel, gave detailed prophecies of the events that would shape the history of these gentile nations. These prophecies begin with Nebuchadnessar, and cover events until the destruction of the Jews in 70 A.D., BUT THE MAIN FOCUS of Daniel's prophecies is on events up until Antiochus Epiphanes - in 167 B.C. So Daniel, also, is concerned with the period of 430 years until 167 B.C. Daniel's prophecies show that during this time God was guiding the rise and fall of Gentile nations; He was working through the Gentiles.

- Ezekiel set boundaries on the Times of the Gentiles - from 597 B.C. till 167 B.C., a period of 430 years
- Daniel's prophecies, FOCUS ON EVENTS DURING THIS 430 YEAR PERIOD, and demonstrate that God was working through the Gentiles at this time, causing the rise and fall of their nations. (See Daniel)
- Jeremiah and Isaiah demonstrated that God was the author of the demise of the Temple and Priestly system in Israel, marking the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles (See Jeremiah, Isaiah)

So it is perhaps an illusion to believe that in the Old Testament times God only dealt with the Jews, His Chosen People. Both the Bible, and world events, indicate that He also dealt with the gentile nations, both politically and religiously, for a precisely defined length of time.

In fact, the Times of the Gentiles lasted 430 years and endured as long as the Kingdom of Israel had lasted - (approximately 430 years from the first king of Israel until the last). This has a ring of fairness about it because why would an all loving God only choose one nation and utterly neglect all the others - wouldn't He rather give equal time to both Jew and Gentile.

A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

We have seen that 600 B.C. marked the beginning of the “Times of the Gentiles” – the Gentiles became the head, and the Jews became the tail.

It is a curious fact that at this very time, there sprang into existence **all of the world religions** –

Country	Religious Movement	Date
GREECE	The Seven Sages/ The Philosophers	<u>600 B.C.</u>
PERSIA	Zoroastrianism	<u>598 B.C.</u>
INDIA	Jainism	<u>Mahavira born 599 B.C.</u>
INDIA	Buddhism	<u>Buddha born 563 B.C.</u>
CHINA	Taoism	<u>Lao Tze born 604 B.C.</u>
CHINA	Confucianism	<u>Confucius born 551 B.C.</u>
INDIA	Hinduism replaces old Vedic religion	6 th Century B.C.

Notice that all these religious movements sprang up within a few years of each other. The time interval during which they appeared was very short and the beginning of this phenomena coincided almost exactly with the beginning of the times of the Gentiles - 600 B.C.

So the numerous different religions in the world today - Greek Philosophy, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, all began in the 6th century BC.

THE OPINION OF SCHOLARS

The first philosopher of history to mention the phenomenon would appear to be the little Lasaulx (1856), who observes,

It cannot possibly be an accident that, six hundred years before Christ, Zarathustra in Persia, Gautama Buddha in India, Confucius in China, the prophets in Israel, King Numa in Rome and the first philosophers—Ionians, Dorians, Eleatics—in Hellas, all made their appearance pretty well simultaneously as reformers of the national religion.^[vii]

The odds are overwhelmingly against chance. Victor Von Strauss (1870) notes,

During the centuries when Lao-tse and Confucius were living in China, a strange movement of the spirit passed through all civilized peoples. In Israel Jeremiaiah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel were prophesying and in a renewed generation (521-516) the second temple was erected in Jerusalem. Among the Greeks Thales was still living, Anaximander, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Xenophanes appeared and Parmenides was born. In Persia an important reformation of Zarathustra's ancient teaching seems to have been carried through, and India produced Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism.^[viii]

Swiss historian Karl Jaspers authored *The Origin and Goal of History*, first published in German in 1949. He wrote -

"In this age were born the fundamental categories within which we still think today, and the beginnings of the world religion, by which human beings still live, were created. The step into universality (one-worldism, Catholicism) was taken in every sense" (p. 2).

"The most extraordinary events are concentrated in this period. Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ti, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced the Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to skepticism, to materialism, sophism and nihilism; in Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the prophets made their appearance, from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the Philosophers—Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato—of the tragedians, Thucydides and Archimedes. Everything implied by these names developed during these few centuries almost simultaneously in China, India, and the West, without any one of these regions knowing of the others.^[ix]

Jasper refers to this time as “an age of revelation”. This is also the era of the birth of democracy, science, and the proto-secularism of the modern period.

Within his opening paragraphs, he writes:

It would seem that the axis of history is to be found in the period around 500 BC, in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 BC. It is there (about 500 BC) that we meet with the most deep-cut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today (mankind and his present civilizations) came into being. For short, we may style this the Axial Period." [p.1, emphasis mine throughout]

He advances on page 18,

"It might seem as though I were out to prove the events of the Axial Period as a direct intervention on the part of the Deity, without openly saying so."

This remark is especially interesting because Jaspers is agnostic. The fact is, however, there *was* intervention. The historical evidence, when combined with belief in the Bible, is so overwhelming that even the agnostic Jaspers has to mention the obvious appearance of supernatural involvement. Or, as he states it,

"The Axial Period is in the nature of a miracle, in so far as no really adequate [human] explanation of it is possible within the limits of our present knowledge" (p. 18).

Herbert Muller in his book "Freedom in the Ancient World" says -

"All the great achievements of the early civilizations came in the early centuries of their history, long before the end of the third millennium BC [Emphasis the author's] ...Finally, however, there did occur among some newer peoples in the first millennium BC the revolutionary change that Karl Jaspers has called the "Axial period". The change was marked immediately by the appearance of great names—no longer the names of kings and conquerors, and of their gods, but of great individuals of a very different kind: Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, and Lao-Tse; Amos Jeremiah, and Isaiah; Homer, Thales, Solon, Aeschylus, Socrates, and a hundred other Greeks. Together they represent the most extraordinary creative era since the rise of civilization, distinguished in particular by the emergence of the higher religions and of philosophy and science....It seems more extraordinary because of the mysterious coincidence that the most influential of these pioneers all appeared in or about the sixth century B.C., independently, in widely separated lands, without any apparent influence on one another...I assume that we do not know [the causation], that we can point to some relevant conditions but cannot wholly explain it, and that a student of freedom should not be distressed thereby, since we could explain it only if history were completely governed by determinate laws[??!] ...I would suggest that it was perhaps the plainest demonstration of the power of genius, the difference that great men make in history."¹¹¹

The spontaneous metaphor of a symphony with a conductor has occurred to a number of people. Thus Koestler, referring to our Axial period, notes

The sixth century scene evokes the image of an orchestra expectantly tuning up, each player absorbed in his own instrument only, deaf to the caterwaulings of

the others. Then there is a dramatic silence, the conductor enters the stage, raps three times with his baton, and harmony emerges from chaos.”

Prior to 600 B.C. religion had been polytheistic, and ritualistic and was administered and controlled by a powerful aristocracy of priests. The 6th century B.C. witnessed a world-wide religious reform with repercussions still felt today over nearly the entire globe.

- **Bertrand Russell** refers to the sweeping religious revival in Hellas.
- **John Hick** labels this century the “axial period in which the seminal moments of religious experience occurred in each of the four principle centres of civilization – Greece, the Near East, India and China – out of which the higher religions have come.”
- **Brow** says that the 6th century shattered the power of the old religions.
- **Thomas Berry** notes that *“in India this was the period of the Upanishads, the period of Mahavira and of Buddha and the classical formulations of the Eurasian world were being established.”* In Judaism, the 6th century marks the destruction of the Temple, and the demise of the Priesthood. At this time the people turned back from polytheism to Monotheism, from Priests to Rabbis, and from sacrifice to teachings. Zoroaster was a Unitarian reformer, who opposed the ancient Persian priesthood and the sacrificial worship they conducted.
- **Arthur J. Deikman, M.D.**, in “A Functional Approach to Mysticism” notes *“The compelling consensus of mystics is that the perception of oneself as an object---fundamentally isolated within our own consciousness---is an illusion, a misconception that is the source of human destructiveness and suffering. It might be argued that this consensus is due to social contagion, ideas spreading through direct contact from: one mystic to another, across cultural and geographic boundaries. Against such a proposition is the fact that Buddhism, Taoism, the Upanishads and the `wisdom' books of the Old Testament all arose in different cultures at about the same time, around 500BC. Something seemed to be happening during that time that resulted in a direct experience of a reality not easily comprehended and hard to imitate. Conceptual transmission by itself could not do this, especially as the mystical experience is ineffable. Techniques such as meditation could be passed along via trade routes but there must be a common reality that is thereby revealed. Something had to be there to be discovered.”* The common mystical experience that arose at this time testifies to a direct contact with the essence of the spiritual across many different cultures.
- John Landon in “World History And The Eonic Effect” writes –
“ca. –600, in the extraordinary synchronous emergence of the classical traditions. Suddenly, in China , India , the Middle East and Greece, the forms of culture undergo a cultural acceleration in a synchronous parallelism that is quite mysterious. Everything seems done in a flash. The world of Classical Greece flowers, and, like an apparition, the moment is gone. Israel sees its age of the

Prophet s, the Exile, and the emergence of a new religious matrix. In India and China, we find the same, in a period that produces the seminal foundations for a whole era. For centuries to come men look back at this era. The monuments of the earlier age of Egypt and Mesopotamia fall into oblivion and disappear in sand.”

“The real issue is why the period roughly centered on -600 shows such a massive interruption of new developments, religious, philosophical, cultural, artistic, political, scientific. There is no avoiding this data, but the current world of scholarship has simply played ostrich with it.”

“This extraordinary synchronism was for millennia an unobserved fact of world history and only began to be noticed in the nineteenth century. It should be noted that this phenomenon makes Darwinists so nervous there is a regime of complete silence on its very existence. It is remarkable that this data began to crystallize at about the time Darwin produced his theory, but the pattern was not yet clear.”

“Jaspers’ central insight: the synchronicity of the multiple parallel advances in China, India, Greece/Rome, and the Middle East (Israel). This stupendous pattern of data shows us a system operating on a global basis with a kind of Gaian effect beyond space and time”

A LIGHT TO THE PERSIANS

Zoroaster was the founder of Zoroastrianism, the religion of Persia. According to Zoroastrian tradition, Zoroaster flourished "258 years before Alexander." Alexander the Great conquered Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenids (a dynasty that ruled Persia from 559 to 330 BC) in 330 BC. Following this dating, Zoroaster converted Vishtaspa, most likely a king of Chorasmia (an area south of the Aral Sea in Central Asia), in 588 BC. According to tradition, he was 40 years old when this event occurred, thus indicating that his birthdate was 628 BC. According to the traditions, Zoroaster had his revelation when he was 30 years old. This means that he had the revelation in 598 B.C. This is a very interesting date, because it coincides almost exactly with the beginning of the Captivity of the Jews....

In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnessar took a few captives back to Babylon, amongst whom was the prophet Daniel. Two years later, in 603 B.C., the second year of Nebuchadnessar's reign over Jerusalem, Nebuchadnessar had his dream of the golden statue. **He saw a statue with a head of gold, a chest of silver, legs of bronze and feet of iron mixed with clay. Each of the metals represented a succeeding period of history – each period being more decadent than the last. Then Nebuchadnessar had a second dream of a Tree.**

Now let us look at Zoroaster's visions. At age 30, in about 598 B.C. Zoroaster's visions began; these visions lasted for 10 years, until 588 B.C., just before the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnessar. The Zand-I Vohuman Yasht records the following vision in which an angel brought Zoroaster before the Creator deity Ahura Mazda, who instructed him to found a new religion to supersede the cruder beliefs of the Indo-Iranians.

“ 0. May the gratification of the creator Ohrmazd, the beneficent, the developer, the splendid, and glorious, and the benediction of the archangels, which constitute the pure, good religion of the Mazdayasnians, be vigor of body, long life, and prosperous wealth for him whose writing I am.¹

1. As² it is declared by the Sudgar Nask³ that Zartosht asked for immortality from Ohrmazd, then Ohrmazd displayed the omniscient wisdom to Zartosht, and through it he beheld the root of a tree, on which were four branches, one golden, one of silver, one of steel, and one was mixed up with iron. 2. Thereupon he reflected in this way, that this was seen in a dream, and when he arose from sleep Zartosht spoke thus: 'Lord of the spirits and earthly existences! it appears that I saw the root of a tree, on which were four branches.'

And I saw a tree on which were seven branches, one golden, one of silver, one brazen, one of copper, [one of tin], one of steel, and one was mixed up with iron.'

15. Ohrmazd spoke thus: 'O Zartosht the Spitaman! this is what I say beforehand, the one tree which thou sawest is the world which I, Ohrmazd, created; and those seven branches thou sawest are the seven periods which will come.

So Zoroaster had a vision of a tree with four branches – one of gold, one of silver, one of steel and one of iron mixed with something. Each branch represented a succeeding period of history – each period being more decadent than the previous one. Compare this to the revelation Nebuchadnessar had of the statue, and the tree. The parallel is striking. Also consider that the vision of Zoroaster, and the dream of Nebuchadnessar occurred at about the same time.

It would seem that Nebuchadnessar had a dream that was shared by Zoroaster hundreds of miles away, and these revelations occurred at the very time that the "times of the gentiles" began.

What are we to make of this? Zoroaster had a series of visions that bear a close resemblance to the visions described in the Book of Daniel as coming from God. These visions led Zoroaster to found a religion, at the very time (almost to the year) that God turned from the Jews to the Gentiles!!

A LIGHT TO THE GREEKS

In Greece, we find that just after 600 B.C. there began an intense ‘outflowing’ of achievement and creative insight. If we start with the Dark Age, then the Archaic, then the Classical period, we see that the seminal period is from about -900 to about -600, and then the ‘outflowing’ period begins. Look at the generation just after -600. It is almost like clockwork, and the density of achievement for the next two centuries is stupendous. But if you look closely you can see that the foundations, almost inchoate, were laid in the period before.

The Seven Sages of Greece: (Wise Men of Greece)

Thales : 585 B.C.

Solon 594 B.C.

Pittacus : 600 B.C.

Mtson : 600 B.C.

Cleobulus : 600 B.C.

Chilon : 560 B.C.

Bias : 570 B.C.

The Greek Philosophers:

Thales : 624-546 B.C.

Anaximander : 611-547 B.C.

Anaximenes : 585-525 B.C.

Heraclitus : 535-475 B.C.

Pythagoras : 582-504 B.C “The wisest thing of all is number” (ARITHMOS = 430)

Zenophanes : 570-470 B.C.

Parmenides : 510 B.C.

Zeno : 488 B.C.

Empedocles : 492-432 B.C.

Anaxagoras : 499-428 B.C.

Leucippus : 500 B.C.

Democritus : 460 B.C.

Protagoras : 490-420 B.C.

Gorgias : 483-378 B.C.

Hippias : 5th Century B.C.

Prodicus : 5th Century B.C.

Socrates : 469-399 B.C.

Xenophon : 444-357 B.C.

Euclides : 430-360 B.C.

Stilpo : 380-330 B.C.

Antisthenes : 445-366 B.C.

Plato : 428-348 B.C.

Speusippus : 348-339 B.C.

Xenocrates : 339-314 B.C.

Aristotle : 384-322 BCE

Greek Philosophy began at the precise time that God ordained the Times of the Gentiles 600 B.C.

Was this 'outpouring' a revelation from God. If the Holy Spirit is like the soil that allows all good things to germinate and spring up, could this 'outflowing' of creative thought be inspired by God?? Perhaps the Wisdom that Daniel found, and the Good Thought that Zoroaster experienced, also inspired the Greeks.

Just as God revealed WISDOM to Daniel, it seems that the Greeks found wisdom at the same time. Pythagoras argued that "the wisest thing of all is number (ARITHMOS)" and it so happens that the word ARITHMOS has a numerical value of 430 - the duration of the times of the Gentiles.

A LIGHT TO THE INDIANS

Hinduism

“The roots of Hinduism can be traced to around 1500 BC, but it was very different to the Hinduism of today. It was polytheistic and ritualistic and originally the rituals were generally performed at home. They gradually became more complex and a priestly class was created and trained in order to carry out the rituals. The priests thus became the means of access to the gods.

In 600 BC the people revolted against the priests, who had become controlling. A new form of Hinduism gradually developed, with more of an emphasis on personal meditation.”

http://www.omf.org/omf/uk/about_asia/religions/hinduism

*“After many years of total dependence upon the priests for all religious activity, the people of the early Hindu religion revolted **around 600 B.C.** They focused their religion on internal meditation and **wrote the Upanishads, their version of the New Testament.** They believed that behind many gods stood one ultimate reality, which is called Brahman. Gradually, their perception of Brahman began to be that of a personal God called Ishvara. Ishvara manifested as a trinity - Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer*

www.cccstudents.org/pdf/Hinduism.pdf

“The sixth century B.C. saw a revolt against the power of the priests. It was not only in India. A tidal wave seems to have swept across the ancient world, from Zoroaster in Persia, to Buddha and Mahavir in India, to Confucius and Lao-tze in China. They all represent a move away from dead ritual to something more inward – ethical behaviour, or withdrawal from desire, or conformity to the Way. One group in India, the Charvakas, were atheists. They denied the existence of any gods and said that happiness was the highest goal.

Buddha and Mahavir became the founders of new religions, Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism spread rapidly among those who were frustrated with the priestly religion. Jainism emphasized right conduct, especially Ahimsa or non-violence. It was through Jainism that vegetarianism spread throughout India.”

Hinduism was completely transformed in 600 B.C.. There was a movement away from polytheism, ritual and animal sacrifice, towards an inward religion of compassion, devotion, and ego-transcendence. The new Scriptures of Hinduism were called the Upanishads.

*The Upanishads (basic scriptures of Hinduism proper) are the records of the teachings and discussions of forest hermits, holy men who accomplished the task of transforming Vedism into Hinduism **during and after the 6th century B.C.E.** The earliest Upanishads date from 900 to 600 B.C.E., and represent the first development of philosophical reflections in Sanskrit literature. According to a widespread tradition the oldest Upanishads are the Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna,*

*Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brhadaranyaka, Svetasvatara, Kaushitaki, and Maitri Upanishads. The fundamental concern of the Upanishads is the nature of reality. The basic theme of the Upanishads is the unity of the individual soul (Atman) with the impersonal, absolute world soul (Brahman) as expressed in the famous formula **tat tvam asi** ("that art thou"), the realization that the self within and the ineffable holy power sustaining and pervading the universes are essentially one. The Vedic gods are reinterpreted as manifestations symbolizing a single divine reality, multiple reflections of one single truth. Because they are the final portions of the Vedas, the Upanishads are also known as Vedanta, "the end of the Vedas."*

Quoted from <http://www.usao.edu/~usao-ids3313/ids/html/hinduism.html>

We see from these quotes that Vedism was transformed into Hinduism **“during and after the 6th century B.C.”**

Just as the Greeks found philosophy at this time, so in the Upanishads we find **“the first development of philosophical reflections in Sanskrit literature.”**

Monotheism

Here we find a movement towards worshipping a single divine reality - in Hinduism “the Vedic gods are reinterpreted as manifestations symbolizing a single divine reality, multiple reflections of one single truth.” This coincides with the decline of idolatry and the establishment of monotheism in Israel.

“The Upanishads were the foundation of Hindu thought and philosophy and introduced some of its most distinctive beliefs. They provided a way of thinking about God and reality called Monism. They offered a way to the knowledge of God without ritual, a deeper meaning behind the sacrifices. They said that the inner Self was as much a reflection of absolute reality as the absolute Brahman. The goal in life was union with the One.”

Unity

In the Penguin Classics Series “The Upanishads” the author says that

“The spirit of the Upanishads can be compared with that of the New Testament summed up in the words – ‘I and my father are one’ and ‘the Kingdom of God is within you’”.

*“The basic theme of the Upanishads is the unity of the individual soul (Atman) with the absolute world soul (Brahman) as expressed in the famous formula **tat tvam asi** ("that art thou"), the realization that the self within and the ineffable holy power sustaining and pervading the universes are essentially one”*
The Upanishads – Penguin Classics

Paul Deussen provides an overview of the *Upanishads*. In his discussion of their history and significance, Deussen makes analogies to Christianity, stating that the *Upanishads*

“are for the Veda what the New Testament is for the Bible.”

Philosophy of the Upanishads

He shows that in the old Vedic religion moral behaviour was based on fear and retribution or reward – and appealed to people’s self-interest to elicit obedience. Whereas the *Upanishads* say that true good lies in going beyond self-interest. True love and compassion are inward, and go beyond the ego. Herein we encounter the truly divine.

So we can see how the central themes of the *Upanishads* mirror the themes in the New Testament. But it wasn’t just the central themes that we find mirrored. Scholars (eg, George Wolfe – “Parallel Teachings in Hinduism and Christianity”) have noted that many passages of text in the *Upanishads* seem to reflect, word-for-word, similar passages in the New Testament – as if they both came from the same mouth – or rather as if both were inspired by the same Mind.

A similar thing can be said for the texts of Buddhism and Jainism, whose founders were born in 563 B.C. and 599 B.C. respectively. When we examine the Buddhist Scriptures, we find that many of the passages seem to reflect similar passages in the New Testament. Rudolf Seydel, Professor in the University of Leipzig (Germany), wrote *The Gospel of Jesus in relation to the Buddha Legend*, published in 1882, and *The Buddha Legend and the Life of Jesus*, published in 1897. In his books, **he noted at least 50 analogous parallels between the Buddhist and Christian stories.**

In 600 B.C., when God turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, what happened? Was the essential heart of the Christian message, the spirit of the New Testament, made known to the different nations of the world? It certainly seems the case that the religious movements of 600 B.C. “prepared the way” for Christianity. When God turned to the Gentiles, He gave them light.

“Thus philosophy, a thing of the highest utility, flourished in antiquity among the barbarians, shedding its light over the nations. And afterwards it came to Greece. First in its ranks were the prophets of the Egyptians; and the Chaldeans among the Assyrians; and the Druids among the Gauls; and the Sramanas among the Bactrians (“Σαρμαναίοι Βάκτρων”); and the philosophers of the Celts; and the Magi of the Persians, who foretold the Saviour’s birth, and came into the land of Judaea guided by a star. The Indian gymnosophists are also in the number, and the other barbarian philosophers. And of these there are two classes, some of them called Sramanas (“Σαρμάνου”), and others Brahmins (Βραφμαναί).”

—Clement of Alexandria *“The Stromata, or Miscellanies”* Book I, Chapter XV[21](2nd Century A.D).

HOW ARE WE TO EXPLAIN THIS ?

In his book *The Gentiles in Prophecy Spent Glory or Future Empire?* **Dr. David R. Reagan** says -

The Bible message is that God chose the Jewish people to serve as witnesses of his glory (Isaiah 41:10-12). God also chose them to serve as a channel of his blessings to the world (Genesis 12:1-3). Through the Jews, God revealed himself and his Law. The Scriptures focus upon God's dealings with his chosen people, the Jews. However, non-Jews (known in the Bible as the gentiles), are not ignored. God did not start using the Gentiles as a vehicle for his purposes in history until his chosen people turned their backs on him and gave themselves to idols. At that point in time, God began to work through the gentiles to carry out his plan of redemption. This point was reached about 600 B.C., when God gave dominion to the Babylonians. In 600 B.C. God announced through the prophet Jeremiah, that He would no longer hear the prayers of the Jews. Then in 595 B.C. God revealed His plan for the Gentile nations to the prophet Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles.

It is interesting that at this very point in time, when the Bible says that God began to work with the Gentiles, **all 7 of the gentile world religions appear simultaneously**. Throughout all the main centers of Gentile civilization – China, India, Greece and Persia, there was an outpouring of religious fervor and philosophic inspiration.

During the "times of the Gentiles" God turned away from the Jews and turned to the Gentiles both politically and spiritually.

The Gentiles became the Head, and lead the way in the development of philosophy, ethics and religion. As we will see, they made the transition away from the priestly system of animal sacrifice in 600 B.C. The Jews would follow suite in the time of Christ, but it would take the utter destruction of their nation to bring this about.

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

So, what is curious about the world religions is that they all appeared within a very short interval of one another, the beginning of which coincided with the turning of God from Israel to the Gentiles. Their appearance was synchronized, so much so that this event is referred to by scholars as the Axial event - the greatest turning point in the religious development of the world.

Furthermore, common themes pervaded the religious movements that sprang up, namely

- the end of the system of priests and temple sacrifice,
- the end of religion based on fear and retribution
- the end of tribal, ethnic religion
- new religion of personal communion with God
- new religion based on compassion
- universal ethic
- overcoming the ego - the way of the cross

1. The Demise of the Priesthood and Temple Sacrifice

It is curious that the central theme should be the ending of the priestly and temple systems, because these were the very things that God had brought to an end for the Jews. Through the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, God announced his dissatisfaction with the immorality and superficial ritual of the priestly and Temple systems, and soon afterwards he brought these systems to an abrupt end. He caused the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.

In the same way, there was a simultaneous world-wide turning away from the priestly and sacrificial systems witnessed by the simultaneous emergence of gentile religions that abhorred these practices.

“The sixth century B.C. saw a revolt against the power of the priests. It was not only in India. A tidal wave seems to have swept across the ancient world, from Zoroaster in Persia, to Buddha and Mahavir in India, to Confucius and Lao-tze in China. They all represent a move away from dead ritual to something more inward – ethical behaviour, or withdrawal from desire, or conformity to the Way”

A WAY OF LIFE” by Ram Gidoomal and Robin Thomson

Perhaps God was the author of change for both the Jews and the Gentiles. It is almost as if whatever the Israelites bound on earth would be bound in heaven i.e. become established universally.

However, the priestly and sacrificial systems in Israel lingered on. Seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple (586 B.C.), the temple was rebuilt (referred to as the Second Temple) in 515 B.C. and the practice of animal sacrifice continued throughout the

Times of the Gentiles, until it was finally brought to an end on the 10th of Av 70 A.D., when the Second Temple was utterly destroyed.

For all the other world religions, the priestly and sacrificial systems were brought to an end at the time of the destruction of the First Temple, which by coincidence fell on the same day - the 10th Av - 586 B.C

2. The Way of Compassion

Before the Axial Age, ritual and animal sacrifice had been the main sources of religious meaning: "The axial sages changed this: they still valued ritual, but gave it a new ethical significance and put morality at the heart of the ethical life. The only way you could encounter 'God', 'Nirvana' 'Brahman' or 'The Way', was to live a compassionate life. Indeed, religion was compassion"

"The Axial Age was a time when religion and philosophy evolved from the mere worship of something out of fear it could hurt you to a true ethical, compassionate belief". John D. Cofield

In their different locations, they all came up with the same approach to eradicate vanity, resentment, aggression, and the desire to dominate others. It was the empathic spirituality of the Golden Rule.

"Love your neighbor as yourself"

To become a fully developed human being, according to nearly all the Axial sages, you have to abandon greed and unkindness and practice love. But not just love for those closest to you but love to strangers and the entire world.

A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated. Jainism. Suttrakritanga 1.11.33

Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence. Confucianism. Mencius VII.A.4

Tsekung asked, "Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?" Confucius replied, "It is the word shu--reciprocity: Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you." Confucianism. Analects 15.23

Comparing oneself to others in such terms as "Just as I am so are they, just as they are so am I," he should neither kill nor cause others to kill. Buddhism. Sutta Nipata 705

One who you think should be hit is none else but you. One who you think should be governed is none else but you. One who you think should be tortured is none else but you. One who you think should be enslaved is none else but you. One who you think should be killed is none else but you. A sage is ingenuous and leads his life after comprehending the parity of the killed and the killer. Therefore, neither does he cause violence to others nor does he make others do so.
Jainism. Acarangasutra 5.101-2

The Ariyan disciple thus reflects, Here am I, fond of my life, not wanting to die, fond of pleasure and averse from pain. Suppose someone should rob me of my life... it would not be a thing pleasing and delightful to me. If I, in my turn, should rob of his life one fond of his life, not wanting to die, one fond of pleasure and averse from pain, it would not be a thing pleasing or delightful to him. For a state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must also be to him also; and a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?

As a result of such reflection he himself abstains from taking the life of creatures and he encourages others so to abstain, and speaks in praise of so abstaining.
Buddhism. Samyutta Nikaya v.353

Jainism and Buddhism taught the principle of Ahimsa - doing no harm. Zoroaster taught peace and justice rather than the violence and revenge of the previous Aryan warrior culture. Socrates argued that retaliation was always unjust, and that the key to enlightenment and social virtue was acting with forbearance towards everyone, friend and enemy.

*ahimsa [Sanskrit, =noninjury], ethical principle of noninjury to both men and animals, common to Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. Ahimsa became influential in India **after 600 BC**, contributing to the spread of vegetarianism. In modern times, the implications of ahimsa were developed in the nonviolence movement of Mohandas Gandhi*
The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition Date: 2008

The way of compassion included caring for all sentient beings, which meant being a vegetarian.

"The eating of meat extinguishes the seed of great compassion."
The BUDDHA (circa 563-483 B.C.)

"Do not to your neighbor what you would take ill from him."
PITTACUS (640-568 B.C.)

Pittacus was one of the Seven Sages of Greece

"Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing."
THALES (624-546 B.C.)

Thales was one of the Seven Sages of Greece. Many, most notably Aristotle, regard him as the first philosopher in the Greek tradition. According to Bertrand Russell, "Western philosophy begins with Thales."

"The animals share with us the privilege of having a soul."
PYTHAGORAS (circa 582-507 B.C.) "Father of Vegetarianism"

"The highest realms of thought are impossible to reach without first attaining an understanding of compassion."
SOCRATES (469-399 B.C.)

"The gods created certain kinds of beings to replenish our bodies...they are the trees and the plants and the seeds."
PLATO (circa 428-347 B.C.)

Throughout the world, a universal ethic replaced tribal and ethnic morality; tribal law was transformed into global law that included all human beings and sentient creatures under its umbrella of concern. Basically, religion went universal.

Karen Armstrong writes

"Without any collusion, they all came up with a remarkably similar solution to the spiritual ills of humanity.

First of all, they all insisted that you must give up and abandon your ego. The sages said the root cause of suffering lay in our desperate concern with self, which often needs to destroy others in order to preserve itself. And so they insisted that if we stepped outside the ego, then we would encounter what we call Brahman or God, nirvana or the Tao.

The safest way to get rid of egotism was by means of compassion. The first person to promulgate the Golden Rule, which was the bedrock of this empathic spirituality, was Confucius 500 years before Christ. His disciples asked him, "What is the single thread that runs through all your teaching and pulls it all together?" And Confucius said, "Look into your own heart. Discover what it is that gives you pain. And then refuse to inflict that pain on anybody else." His disciples also asked, "Master, which one of your teachings can we put into practice every day?" And Confucius said, "Do not do to others as you would not have them do to you." The Buddha had his version of the Golden Rule"

When God turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, was God preparing the world for a new

Way of living? Why do the Gentile religions, which sprang up at this time, keep on echoing messages found at the heart of Christianity? We can discern a common voice, moving the hearts and souls of the nations.

.....All the nations are God's children and always have been.

VEGETARIANISM

Israel:

In 604 B.C. many Jews were taken captive by the Babylonians and carried off back to the city of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, had in mind to re-educate these Jews with Babylonian sciences, culture and diet. However –

“Daniel refused the wealthy King Nebuchadnezzar’s feast of rich foods, meat and wine, asking for only vegetables and water for 10 days. At the end of that period, Daniel asked that his health and that of his companions be compared to those who indulged in the fare of the king’s table, and Daniel’s group was deemed “better in appearance and fatter in flesh” than those who ate the king’s diet.”

In the entire Old Testament, the only person who is described as adhering to a vegetarian diet is the prophet Daniel. It is curious that Daniel happens to be the very prophet to whom God was to reveal the successive gentile empires that were to define the Times of the Gentiles.

Greece:

Pythagoras:

The Pythagoreans were vegetarian. Everything we know about the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (ca. 580 B.C.- ca. 490 B.C.) comes from those who lived many years after him, and fortunately, his philosophy of vegetarianism is beautifully memorialized in Ovid's great epic poem, The Metamorphoses. Early vegetarians were called "Pythagoreans," and Pythagoras is regarded by many as the founder of vegetarianism.

Orpheus:

Orpheus was born in the Rhodope Mountains of Thrace (now partly in Bulgaria), king of the Thracian tribe of Cicones. His name does not occur in Homer or Hesiod, but he was known by the time of Ibycus (c.530 BC). Orpheus was called by Pindar "the father of songs".

The legend of Orpheus gave birth, in the **6th century B. C.**, to mystery cults supposed to transmit the revelations that Orpheus himself was supposed to have brought back from his descent into Hades. Orphism later became mingled with the Eleusinian Mysteries. Vegetarianism was a central element of Orphicism - "**For Orpheus taught us rites and to refrain from killing**".

China:

Taoism

"The Scripture of Forty-nine Chapters" :

Chapter 2: Keep the precept of being vegetarian

The Heavenly Lord said:

The precept of being vegetarian is the fundamental of Tao, and is a bridge of truth, which across the ocean of births and death, between the ferry and the other shore of liberation.

If you wish to learn Tao, you should be a vegetarian and keep the precepts, and your every single thought should be righteous and Real, then the evils and delusions will vanish of themselves.

Most living beings had abandoned the pure realm and are indulging in meat-eating, this defiles both their bodies and minds. They are like the hungry ghosts who eat dead bodies but cannot extinguish the fire that are burning their hungry intestines so that they can never eat their fill; they are also like the flies and worms who scramble for putrid and stinky things and stay still on them as if those are sandalwood.

In a meat eater's body, the three palaces are turbid, and the six viscera are defiled, the dark souls (PUG) of the dead bodies (that he ate) are exciting and thriving, and are always willing to guide him to the place of death.

Therefore, you should cut off the root of desires, enter into the pure and tranquil state, do not put any living being into suffering, do not commit anything evil, do not produce any delusions, and do not arouse any evil from your heart. You should regard the precepts as the laws of the world, when you want to violate any of them, you should be aware of the punishment with fear. You should uphold the teachings of precepts sincerely and respectfully, keep the precepts solemnly as if they are in front of you, and as if you are facing something that you fear. You should keep your heart righteous and solemn, eliminate all thoughts, and listen attentively to the non-dual, then you will be able to experience the Correct Truth, and become my disciple.

India:

Buddhism:

"The eating of meat extinguishes the seed of great compassion." **The BUDDHA (circa 563-483 B.C.)**

Lankavatara Sutra - Chapter 16: Do not eat meat (Not eating meat is very important for Bodhisattva practice)

At that time, Arya(sage) Mahamati(Great Wisdom) Bodhisattva-Mahasattva said to the Buddha:

"Bhagavan(World Honored One), I see that in all worlds, the wandering in births and deaths, the enlaced animosities, and the falling into evil paths, are all caused by meat eating and cyclical killing. Those behaviors increase greed and anger, and make living beings unable to escape from suffering. That is truly very painful."

"Bhagavan, people who eat meat are destroying the great merciful seed of their own, thus the people who practice the holy Way should not eat meat. "

"Bhagavan, the Exterior-paths practitioners preach the incorrect theories which may fall into the mundane views, nihilism, eternalism, existentialism, or non-existence-ism, however, all of their theories forbid meat eating, they do not eat meat and do not allow others to eat meat. So would it be possible that, for the cultivators who practice Brahma-behavior(Brahmacarya) according to the pure Dharma of Tathagata(Thus Come One), there is no rule to forbid meat eating? The Tathagata, the Bhagavan equally gives his mercy and compassion to all living beings, how could he allow meat eating? Virtuous Bhagavan, please tell us the offences of meat eating, and the meritorious virtues of not eating meat. Once we have heard it, all the Bodhisattvas and I will faithfully practice it, widely preach and spread it abroad, to make all living beings of the past, the present, and the future be aware of it."

From the above quotes, we can see that the vegetarian movement was born in 600 B.C. At this very moment in history vegetarian movements appeared around the world - Pythagoras and the Orphics in Greece, Buddha and Mahivira in India, Lao Tze in China.

As if by some mighty coincidence we find the only vegetarian in the whole Bible – the prophet Daniel – living in 600 B.C. – the very pinnacle of the Axial Age.

So vegetarianism sprang up simultaneously in several centres of civilization. The vegetarian ethic was just one manifestation of the general ethic of compassion that arose at this time. It was also an expression of the overcoming of ego.. We sense the same movement of spirit in the demise of the practice of animal sacrifice.

Could this mean that vegetarianism is in fact ordained by God – just as compassion is? On consideration, caring for animals is a very natural extension of compassion. Animals are sentient – so they should never be treated merely as objects or products that lack sentience. They can experience pleasure and pain.

Should it surprise us that God cares for the welfare of animals, and would encourage their better treatment.

CONCLUSION

We have looked at the writings of the prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and we have seen much evidence that in 600 B.C. God turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, inaugurating the Times of the Gentiles – and ordaining the rising and falling of their empires.

As if in synchrony, all the Gentile religions and philosophies appeared at this time. This was their age of revelation. And we have seen that these movements embodied high ideals and wisdom that we still cherish today.

Was God the author of these movements? Was this ‘outpouring’ a revelation from God? If the Holy Spirit is like the soil that allows all good things to germinate and spring up, could this explosion of creative thought have been inspired by God??

It is more than possible.

EPILOG

The Menorah

Just before the fall of the First Temple, in 590 B.C. Ezekiel records that Gods Spirit departed from the Temple in Jerusalem - only to return 70 years later in 520 B.C.

The presence of God in the Temple had always manifested in the Light of the Menorah - the 7 flames of the candle stick - the light of revelation.

One flame was eternal - and the other flames were lit from it each day.

When the Spirit departed in 590 B.C., it seems as if it was poured out upon the world. During the seventy years of God's departure SEVEN religious movements sprang up - a flame went to every nation –

1. Zoroaster
2. Hinduism
3. Jainism
4. Buddhism
5. Confucianism
6. Taoism
7. Greek Philosophy

All were lit from the eternal flame – that never goes out.



APPENDIX 1

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (1) [Contents](#)

The Book of Daniel regarded as Canonical by the Maccabees

The existence of the Book of Daniel at the very beginning of the Maccabean Period is confirmed by the First Book of Maccabees. In the First Book of Maccabees, Mattathias, father of the Maccabean brothers, encourages his sons in the revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes by recalling to them the deeds of their fathers. In I Maccabees² he is quoted as saying -

"Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, by believing, were saved out of the flame. Daniel for his innocency was saved from the mouth of lions."

Mattathias died in 166 B.C. so Daniel must date from before the time of the Maccabees.

Furthermore, the context seems to indicate that Mattathias was referring to an event far in the past. Also, the context of the reference seems to indicate that the author considered Daniel canonical.

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (2) [Contents](#)

The Book of Daniel Found in the Qumran Community

The Qumran community was known as the Essenes. They comprised Jews who had withdrawn into the desert during the Greek occupation of Judah. The date of the founding of the Qumran community is given in one of their most central texts - referred to by scholars as *the Zadokite Fragments or the Damascus Document*.

The text begins by declaring that in ancient times, Israel went astray. As a result, God "hid His face" and allowed the destruction of the First Temple (586 B.C.) Yet a remnant of the defeated people remained, and it was they who ultimately formed the sect. There then follows -

"And in the period of wrath, three hundred and ninety years after He had handed it (the Temple) over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylonia, He remembered them (Israel) and caused to grow from Israel and Aaron the root of a plant (ie the sect) (Zadokite Fragments 1 v 5-7)

If we calculate from the **dating** for the destruction of the First Temple, we arrive at 196 B.C. for the founding of the sect. The text of the Zadokite Fragments then tells about a period of confusion followed by the rise of the sect's leader, the Teacher of Righteousness:

"Then they understood their transgression and knew that they were guilty. They were like blind men groping on the road for twenty years. Then God paid attention to their deeds

for they sought Him whole-heartedly, and He set up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to direct them in the way of His heart"

It appears that during the initial period of 20 years the sect was leaderless and even formless until the Teacher of Righteousness established his leadership over it (176 B.C.). Only with the teacher's emergence and his assumption of control did sectarian teachings and a distinctive way of life take shape. The Teacher of Righteousness assumed leadership of the sect and introduced his teachings; at that time or shortly thereafter the sect moved to its site in the wilderness at Qumran.

Much of their scrolls contain portions of the Old Testament. ***The Qumran community held Daniel's work in such high regard as to refer to him as "Daniel the prophet", a title bestowed on him in a florilegium found in 4Q.*** Given the date when the Essene community began, it is reasonable to say that what they had is a fair representation of the canon passed down by the previous century. (300-200 B.C.) .This practically takes their canon back to the time of the prophets. With the exception of Esther, they had all the books we have in our Hebrew canon today.

The Qumran community itself was in existence from 196 B.C.. Hence Daniel would be regarded as canonical from this earlier time atleast. To be accepted as canonical, Daniel must have predated 196 B.C. by atleast a century. In short - "The discovery of manuscripts of Daniel at Qumran **dating** from the Maccabean period renders it highly improbable that the book was composed during the time of the Maccabees." Daniel must be much older.

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (3) Contents

Alexander's Expedition into Palestine

In his "Antiquities of the Jews", Josephus relates a story which, if accurate, proves the Book of Daniel existed during the time of Alexander the Great (c 330 B.C.)

Alexander, angry with the Jews who refused to give him their allegiance, was going to Jerusalem to punish them and make them an example. When he arrived, however, a procession of priests, which he had foreseen in a dream, met him. In this dream, God had promised him victory, and for this reason he spared the Jews. Josephus adds that the priests showed Alexander the prophecies in Daniel concerning a Greek conquering the Persian Empire. This pleased Alexander, and he treated the Jews with kindness.

What we know of Alexander is very compatible with this account -

Alexander marched through that area on his way to Egypt - capturing every city as he went

Alexander treated the Jews kindly

Alexander was a romantic and much given to oracles, omens and the like

During his seige of Gaza, Alexander would have had to secure the submission of Jerusalem which occupied a threatening position in regard to his communications.

The account of Alexander visiting Jerusalem makes psychological Sense

1. Alexander DID visit Jerusalem in 333 A.D.
2. Alexander came to punish the Jews
3. Alexander mysteriously changed to treating the Jews with kindness

The Jews were terrified of Alexander, and they naturally wanted to avert punishment. At the same time the Jews would be very aware that Alexander had fulfilled the prophecy of the Greeks defeating the Persians. Under these circumstances it is VERY likely that the Jews would have shown these prophecies to Alexander because this would flatter Alexander and also show Alexander that the Jews were God's chosen.

High-Profile Nature of these Events

Alexander's arrival at Jerusalem would have been a very high profile event for the Jews - and certainly would have been recorded in the history in some detail. Similarly, the showing of Daniel's prophecies to Alexander would have changed the policy of Alexander towards the Jews - and so this too would be a central event in the political life of the nation.

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (4) [Contents](#)

Frequency of foreign words

Era	Language	Number of words found in Daniel
Canaanite	Aramaic	Very similar to Ezra and 5th Century Elephantine Papyri
Assyrian- Babylonian 742-537 B.C.	Assyrian/Babylonian	7+ : all proper names are in AssyroBabylonian
Persian Empire 537- 333 B.C.	Old Persian	21 : all 21 words are Old Persian (pre Greek conquest)
Greek Empire 333-67 B.C.	Greek	3
Nabatean Kingdom 50 B.C.	Arabic, Latin, Egyptian	0

The frequency of foreign words definitely indicates that Daniel was written during the Old Persian Period; ie prior to 333 B.C.

The Persian words in Daniel are specifically Old Persian words. Daniels words are very similar to Old Persian, but not to later forms.

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (5) [Contents](#)

Mention of the prophet Daniel in the Book of Ezekiel

14:12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 14:13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 14 v 12

Ezekiel finished writing his book in about 520 B.C. since the last event he describes in the Book of Ezekiel is the return of the Holy Spirit on that date. However, the book tells us that God spoke these words to Ezekiel between 590B.C. when the Spirit departed, and 586 B.C. when Jerusalem fell. The quote is interesting. The Book of Ezekiel is drawing our attention to three men renowned for their righteousness all of whom are found in our Scriptures. It is certain that these three persons were either Israelites or Patriarchs, since it would not make sense for God to draw attention to the righteousness of other nations who followed other gods and other commandments, especially given the circumstances (being captive amongst foreigners). Daniel is placed on a level with the greatest of the Patriarchs Noah and Job. Very great righteousness is ascribed to him, as we find in the Book of Daniel, where Daniel is said to be highly esteemed by God, devoutly prayerful, and mindful of the laws of idolatry and purity. The deliverance of three men through their righteousness is a clear allusion to the story of the three friends of Daniel in the fiery furnace.

28:1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 28:2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: 28:3 Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 28:4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 28:5 By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 28:6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; 28:7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.

EZEKIEL 28 v 1

Here the WISDOM of Daniel is referred to, as well as Daniel's ability to understand secrets (ie interpret riddles and dreams). These are the very qualities portrayed of Daniel

in the Book of Daniel. This is done in the very context of the Prince of Tyre setting himself up as an idol - exactly what Nebuchadnezzar did.

It is therefore certain that during the earliest days of the Persian Empire, Daniel was already regarded as a prophet. It is also certain that as early as 590 B.C. God spoke to Ezekiel about the righteousness and wisdom of Daniel, and He spoke in such a way as to expect Ezekiel to understand the reference to Daniel.

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (6) [Contents](#)

Median Records of the Prophecies of Daniel

If Daniel lived from the time of the conquest by Babylon until the conquest by Persia, **then we would expect** references to Daniel and his prophecies by the Medians who were contemporary with Daniel

The Medians had a legend of the Oracle of Hystaspes. Hystaspes was an ancient Median King who lived contemporary with Zoroaster, that is, Hystaspes was born about 620 B.C. He was the father of Darius the Great. Hystaspes handed down to posterity a wonderful dream upon the interpretation of a boy who uttered divinations, announcing long before the founding of the Trojan nation, that the Roman empire and name would be taken away from the world. Hystaspes converted to Zoroastrianism in 588 B.C.

DATING OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (7) [Contents](#)

Persian Records of the Prophecies of Daniel

If the prophecies of Daniel had been written during the Babylonian and early Persian period, then we would expect some record of these prophecies dating from that time.

Zoroaster was the founder of Zoroastrianism, the religion of Persia. According to Zoroastrian tradition, Zoroaster flourished "258 years before Alexander." Alexander the Great conquered Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenids (a dynasty that ruled Persia from 559 to 330 BC) in 330 BC. Following this dating, Zoroaster converted Vishtaspa, most likely a king of Chorasmia (an area south of the Aral Sea in Central Asia), in 588 BC. According to tradition, he was 40 years old when this event occurred, thus indicating that his birthdate was 628 BC. According to the traditions, Zoroaster had his revelation when he was 30 years old. This means that he had the revelation in 598 B.C. This is a very interesting date, because it coincides almost exactly with the beginning of the Captivity of the Jews....

In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar took a few captives back to Babylon, amongst whom was the prophet Daniel. Two years later, in 603 B.C., the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's

reign over Jerusalem, Nebuchadnessar had his dream of the golden statue. He saw a statue with a head of gold, a chest of silver, legs of bronze and feet of iron mixed with clay. Each of the metals represented a succeeding period of history – each period being more decadent than the last. Then Nebuchadnessar had a second dream of a Tree.

Now let us look at Zoroaster's visions. At age 30, in about 598 B.C. Zoroaster's visions began; these visions lasted for 10 years, until 588 B.C., just before the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnessar. The Zand-I Vohuman Yasht records the following vision in which an angel brought Zoroaster before the Creator deity Ahura Mazda, who instructed him to found a new religion to supersede the cruder beliefs of the Indo-Iranians.

“ 0. May the gratification of the creator Ohrmazd, the beneficent, the developer, the splendid, and glorious, and the benediction of the archangels, which constitute the pure, good religion of the Mazdayasnians, be vigor of body, long life, and prosperous wealth for him whose writing I am.¹

1. As² it is declared by the Sudgar Nask³ that Zartosht asked for immortality from Ohrmazd, then Ohrmazd displayed the omniscient wisdom to Zartosht, and through it he beheld the root of a tree, on which were four branches, one golden, one of silver, one of steel, and one was mixed up with iron. 2. Thereupon he reflected in this way, that this was seen in a dream, and when he arose from sleep Zartosht spoke thus: 'Lord of the spirits and earthly existences! it appears that I saw the root of a tree, on which were four branches.'

And I saw a tree on which were seven branches, one golden, one of silver, one brazen, one of copper, [one of tin], one of steel, and one was mixed up with iron.'

15. Ohrmazd spoke thus: 'O Zartosht the Spitaman! this is what I say beforehand, the one tree which thou sawest is the world which I, Ohrmazd, created; and those seven branches thou sawest are the seven periods which will come.'

So Zoroaster had a vision of a tree with four branches – one of gold, one of silver, one of steel and one of iron mixed with something. Each branch represented a succeeding period of history – each period being more decadent than the previous one. Compare this to the revelation Nebuchadnessar had of the statue, and the tree. The parallel is striking. Also consider that the vision of Zoroaster, and the dream of Nebuchadnessar occurred at about the same time.

It would seem that Nebuchadnessar had a dream that was shared by Zoroaster hundreds of miles away, and these revelations occurred at the very time that the "times of the gentiles" began.

SUMMARY Contents

1. The fact that the book of Daniel was regarded as a prophetic book in the time of the Maccabees and Qumran (167 B.C.) confirms that it must have predated this time by at least 100 years for it to have become accepted and widely regarded as prophetic. So Daniel predates the time of the Seleucids.
 2. In 250 B.C., the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek by the Ptolomies. This Greek translation was called the Septuagint. The inclusion of the Book of Daniel in the Septuagint, shows that it must have predated the time of the Ptolomies.
 3. The further evidence that the book was shown to Alexander the Great indicates that it pre-dated 333 B.C. It must therefore have been accepted as prophetic sometime before the Greek period.
 4. The predominance of Persian words in Daniel indicates that the book was written during the Persian period between 537 and 333 B.C.
 5. The predominance of Assyrian/Babylonian proper names indicates that the Book was written about events that happened earlier during the Babylonian period 607 - 537 B.C..
 6. The Use of the Babylonian dating system, indicates that the Book was written about events that took place during the Babylonian period 607 - 537 B.C..
 7. If Daniel lived from the time of the conquest by Babylon until the conquest by Persia, **then we would expect** references to Daniel and his prophecies by the Hebrews who were living at the same time
- Ezekiel refers to Daniel and his wisdom and ability to decipher secrets and mentions him as a prophet on a par with Noah and Job. Ezekiel's book was written after 520 B.C. at the very beginning of the Persian period. So acceptance of Daniel as a prophet must pre-date the Persian period
8. If Daniel lived from the time of the conquest by Babylon until the conquest by Persia, **then we would expect** references to Daniel and his prophecies by the Medians who were contemporary with Daniel

The Medians recalled the Oracle of Hystaspes. Hystaspes was an ancient Median King who lived contemporary with Zoroaster, that is, Hystaspes was born about 620 B.C. He was the father of Darius the Great. Hystaspes handed down to posterity a wonderful dream upon the interpretation of a boy who uttered divinations, announcing long before the founding of the Trojan nation, that the Roman empire and name would be taken away from the world. Hystaspes converted to Zoroastrianism in 588 B.C.

9. If Daniel lived from the time of the conquest by Babylon until the conquest by Persia, **then we would expect** references to Daniel and his prophecies by the Persians who were contemporary with Daniel

In 598 B.C. the Persians record that Zoroaster received his revelations. These bear a striking resemblance to the dreams that Nebuchadnezzar received, and that Daniel interpreted. It would make sense that God would have sent a similar dream to the Persians and Medians. The date of these revelations coincides to within a few years with the date when Nebuchadnezzar received his dreams.

All these indicators show that Daniel was truly prophetic - that the detailed prophecies of events outlined in chapter 11 were, indeed, written BEFORE those events transpired.

APPENDIX 2 – Symmetrical Pattern in Jewish History

Here I wish to outline a rather odd pattern that has emerged, or rather has become apparent. All dates are based on the Ussher chronology.

Captivity in Egypt	Judges	United Kingdom			Divided Kingdom	Times of Gentiles
430 yrs	395 yrs	40 yrs	40 yrs	40 yrs	390 yrs	430 yrs

The whole pattern centers on two numbers $40 + 390$

- The Bible tells us that the Egyptian Captivity lasted 430 years.
- Ezekiel foretold that the Times of the Gentiles would be a time of captivity that would also last 430 years. He divided this period into two parts, $390 + 40$ years.
- It therefore comes as quite a surprise to discover that the period of Israelite Monarchy prior to the Gentile Captivity divides naturally into $40 + 40 + 40 + 390$ years. During the reigns of Saul (40 yrs), David (40 yrs) and Solomon (40 yrs) the Kingdom of Israel was united. However, after Solomon the Kingdom of Israel became divided into a Northern Kingdom (consisting of 10 tribes), and a Southern Kingdom (consisting of 2 tribes – Benjamin and Judah). The divided kingdom lasted 390 years – from it's beginning down to it's last monarch.
- To complete this pattern, we find that the period of the Judges (including the wandering in the Wilderness) comes to 395 years – an approximation to 390.

Numerical Observations

- The pattern is symmetrical
- The pattern is built around 430. And 43 is the main factor in Elohim (2×43)
- The period of united Kingdom = $430 - 310$. And 31 is the main factor in God (31)
- The twelve tribes were united for 120 years. And 12 relates to the twelve tribes.
- The centre of the pattern is the reign of King David.