

## 228 The “seven times” of Daniel 4

The various “signs of the times” in this current age suggest that we may well now be within what are termed in the Bible “the last days”. While we know that there is some debate within Christian circles as to the detailed nature and timings of the various foretold events, (such as the “rapture”, the tribulation and the millennial kingdom, as discussed last week), the central truths are clear – Christ is in control, and at the Father’s chosen time, Christ will return in glory to seal His victory over all opposition (eg., Matthew 24.29-44). No wonder the Holy Spirit tells us through Paul – “Wherefore, comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4.18 and 5.11).

Within the mix of global events these days sits the Jewish state of Israel, re-born in May 1948 after a period of nearly 1900 years, during which time the Jews, like the Messiah they had rejected, had had “nowhere to lay their head” (Luke 9.58). Yet this return was repeatedly promised in Scripture, and this return has now happened. Time after time Israel’s Arab neighbours have sought to crush this Jewish nation (notably in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973), but Israel survives, a small democracy within what is now the turmoil of the Middle East.

In Daniel Chapter 4 we read of the vivid dream of King Nebuchadnezzar: a tree grew high and strong (vv 10-12); but it was to be hewn down, leaving only its stump (vv 13-15); “his heart” was to be changed from that of a man to a beast (v 16); and “seven times” were to pass over him. All very strange! - and not surprisingly neither Nebuchadnezzar nor his team of astrologers and soothsayers had a clue as to what this was about (vv 4-7). It was given to Daniel, by the living God who had sent the dream in the first place, to give the interpretation (vv 19-27). Nothing happened for twelve months (v 29), and then it did, just as the Lord God had foretold in that dream: for seven years, (the seven “times”), Nebuchadnezzar was “driven from men”, until finally his “understanding returned to him and he blessed the most High ....” (vv 30-37).

In 1882 Dr Grattan Guinness, a renowned astronomer and Bible scholar of his day, published a book setting forth the results of some of his biblical studies. He knew that the “seven times” of Daniel Chapter 4 stood not only for 7 literal 360-day Babylonian years, (thus applying directly to Nebuchadnezzar in the short term), but might also apply to a timespan of a 7 x 360 Babylonian years, giving a total of 2520 years in all. He wondered therefore if this prophetic passage is also a “type”, in this case dealing with a period of Gentile domination over the Jews - a domination which developed in distinct steps from 607 BC (with Nebuchadnezzar’s first subjugation of Judah) through to its full establishment in 588 BC.

Grattan Guinness did some sums. From each, already-known, date in Judah’s progressive downfall under Babylon, he measured forward a precise 2520-year timespan to discover the corresponding “end-date” from each of those various

start-dates. From his results, he wrote – in 1882 remember - advising Christians to expect some divine activity regarding the Jews, their restoration to the land, and the coming of the Kingdom of God, in the following years: 1914; 1917; 1923; 1933.

“Well? – so tell us what happened!!” This is what happened: 1914 - the outbreak of the Great War which ended the Ottoman Empire’s dominance over Palestine; 1917 – the Balfour Declaration by the British Government in support of a Jewish homeland; 1923 – the British, still recognised then as a Christian nation, took on the Palestine Mandate on behalf of the League of Nations; and 1933 – Hitler came to power. 15 years on from 1933, after the horrors of the holocaust, Israel came into being once again.

Clearly such extraordinary fulfilments of the predictions made by Dr Guinness cannot be dismissed as a fluke. Do they not show beyond all argument that God’s Word is God’s Word; that God is in complete control of time and events, indeed “declaring the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46.8-10); and that the Jews’ return to their land must be highly significant as far as God is concerned?

This year, 2017 AD, is 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, 70 years since the re-birth of Israel, and 50 years since the Jewish conquest of the Temple Mount. We shall soon see whether or not these anniversaries are also significant, but either way we do well to keep steadily on with Psalm 122.6-9!

**© 2017 Faithful Sheep Ministries - [www.fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org)**