

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.**
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)*

#03-09126

Jacob's Distress: 21 & 210-Year Cycles

May 28, 2009

(20) Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. (21) It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. (22) It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him." (Daniel 2:20-22 NASB)

It seems rather strange to me to hear preachers proclaim with much bravado that God is not in control of the affairs of men on earth. I don't think Daniel and all the prophets would agree with such preaching. According to Daniel, God changes the times and the epochs by removing and establishing kings, as well as by giving wisdom and knowledge to men so that change will come about through them. We need to be reminded that Jesus told his questioning disciples: **"It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority"** (Acts 1:7 NASB). In God's wisdom, He will reveal profound, even hidden, things to whomever He pleases. For example, to Jeremiah, the young prophet, the Lord said: **"See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant"** (Jeremiah 1:10 NASB).

God is the Sovereign of His creation and, as such, He sets the times and the epochs. However, it is more than merely setting a date, for God seems to work in time cycles or what could be called prophetic time-cycles that often repeat themselves and overlap.

One such cycle is discovered in what Jeremiah called **Jacob's distress** or **trouble**.

'Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress [trouble, adversity], but he will be saved from it.' (Jeremiah 30:7 NASB [ASV, KJV, YLT])

Many Christians have been trained to think of Jacob's distress as a future event at the end of the age that involves the state of Israel and is called the great tribulation. I once held this view but no longer do. In order to understand Jacob's distress or affliction, we need to understand the history of Jacob (individually) as well as the history of his sons and descendants (nationally), and when we do, we discover that there are two time cycles based on the number 21. The number **21** signifies **the sinfulness of sin**.

Simply, on an individual level, Jacob had two periods of distress, both of which lasted 21 years, and on a national level, Jacob's descendants (as a nation) had two periods of national distress, both of which lasted 210 years or 10 times 21.

(41) "These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. (42) If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night." (Genesis 31:41-42 NASB)

Jacob's first time of distress was the period he spent working for Laban; the first 14 years were for Laban's two daughters, and the next 6 years were for his flock. We arrive at 21 years by accounting for

his travel time that could amount to another year. By his own admission, Jacob called this a time of affliction and toiling of his hands. Jacob was known as a schemer or supplanter or, we could say, a sinner, and the Lord dealt with him on this basis for those years, finally releasing him from bondage after 21 years (signifying the sinfulness of sin) or in the 22nd year. By the way, the number **22** refers to **light**. Truly, the light dawned on Jacob as he wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night until he came to see that **God rules**, which is the meaning of the name **Israel**, given to him at Penuel (Genesis 32:24-31).

Jacob's second 21-year period of distress commenced when his son, Joseph, was sold into Egyptian slavery by his brothers. However, this turned into a blessing from the Lord when Joseph was appointed the ruler of Egypt (Genesis 41). But for Jacob, it was 21 years of a deeper affliction as he mourned the loss of his son, weeping for him and refusing to be comforted: **"Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son"** (Genesis 37:35 NASB).

His mourning was turned into joy when, due to a great famine, Jacob was reunited with Joseph, and the sons of Israel moved to Egypt, which began a new period on a national level that lasted for the next 210 years or 10 times 21. The number **10** refers to **the completion of divine order or a whole cycle is completed**. Issue #03-09125, May 27, 2009, *Starting Point for 400 and 430 Years*, explains that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt under bondage for 210 years and not 430 years. In other words, the Israelites completed a cycle of distress just like their father had completed. Indeed, after Joseph's death (Exodus 1), Jacob's descendants entered into a period of distress or hard labor and affliction similar to Jacob's time under Laban. This was the first of two 210-year cycles.

The second cycle began in 931 BC after the death of Solomon that also resulted in Joseph being separated from his brothers, only this time it was on a national level. By the end of his reign, Solomon had placed a heavy tax load on the citizens of the kingdom (sound familiar?). Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king, at which time, the assembly of Israel approached Rehoboam requesting him to lighten their load, that is, reduce their taxes (1 Kings 12:4). Unfortunately, Rehoboam listened to his young friends, and instead of lowering taxes, increased them, which in turn led to a revolt by the house of Israel and the dividing of the kingdom into the house of Judah (two tribes of Judah, Benjamin plus Levi) in the south (Jerusalem) and the house of Israel (10 tribes) in the north (Samaria). The name **Israel** was given to Joseph's two sons (Genesis 48:15-16) and is representative of the **birthright and sonship** (Genesis 49:22; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2), which speaks of the kingdom of God and the right to rule in it as a son. When the tribes divided, the name Israel remained with the tribes of Joseph's sons, for only they have the right to bear the name. By contrast, the name Judah followed the house of David the king because the scepter was given to **Judah** by his father (Genesis 49:10), which represents **kingship**. Jesus had to come from the line of Judah in order to qualify as King.

The fact of the matter is that Rehoboam was a Judahite and his actions led to the separation of the two houses, just as Judah suggested selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver (Genesis 37:26-28), which led to Joseph being separated from his brothers for 21 years. Consequently, the two houses were separated from each other for the next 210 years until Israel was lost among the nations. A 24-year siege by the Assyrians began in 745 BC that ended in 721 BC when Israel's capital in Samaria was finally captured after a 3-year siege. At this point, it could be said that the house of Israel became the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for they lost their national identity as they were dispersed among the nations; a dispersion that ultimately led them to Europe, the British Isles, North America (Canada and the United States), Australia, and South Africa; a dispersion and loss of national identity that has remained to our present day. Contrary to common thinking, the modern-day state of Israel is not the lost house of Israel. Rather, it is a supplanter that has taken the name Israel. **The true Israel of God** believes in Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah, the Christ or Anointed One.

Thus, we can see that there were two cycles of 21 years and two cycles of 210 years, all of which could be called Jacob's distress, trouble, or affliction. If you are interested in seeing how these cycles, perhaps, have been played out in our modern era, then please see issue #03-09115, April 15, 2009, *Tax Day Tea Party #2*.