JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
AND THEIR MYTHICAL 1914
Will they ever acknowledge their faulty foundation?
Max Hatton.

SOME PRELIMINARY COMMENTS:
All quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.
At the end of this study I have included a chart which I expect will be a helpful resource for the study of the chronology of the period under review.

Those who have had experience with “Jehovah’s Witnesses” will be aware that while they go from door to door challenging others to examine their beliefs, the “Witnesses” are not prepared to do this themselves. They are instructed by the Watch Tower Society not to do so. Many Christians have offered to exchange literature with them. The offer is almost always refused. Amazing isn’t it? The Witnesses challenge others to examine their beliefs but will not do so themselves. This is hypocritical in the light of the following statement from the Watchtower book *The Truth that leads to ETERNAL LIFE* (1968) page 13:

>We need to examine, not only what we personally believe, but also what is taught by any religious organization with which we may be associated. Are its teachings in full harmony with God’s Word, or are they based on the traditions of men? If we are lovers of the truth, there is nothing to fear from such an examination. It should be the sincere desire of every one of us to learn what God’s will is for us, and to do it. – John 8:32.

*Imposture shrinks from light and dreads the curious eye.
But sacred truths the test invite, they bid us search and try.*

The truth that can’t be tested can’t be trusted.

INTRODUCTION:
What we are about to review is not merely a deviation from the truth similar to a lot of other teachings of the Witnesses, far from it, 1914 is the foundation for their existence. It is crucial to the idea that God appointed the Watch Tower Society as His one and only mouthpiece on planet earth. The ordinary Jehovah’s Witness does not realise that the Watch Tower Society is an impostor. Take away 1914, the platform for their claim to authority, and the whole thing crumbles into nothingness. All of this cannot be explained in only a few minutes – read on and you will be shown beyond doubt that the 1914 of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is a myth and nothing less.

For well over a hundred years now The Watch Tower Society of Jehovah’s Witnesses has made special mention of the year 1914. Jehovah’s Witnesses are led to believe that the Society knew all about 1914 even back in the latter part of the 19th century. In their book *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* they proudly state:

*In the “Watchtower” magazine of March 1880, they said:
“*The Times of the Gentiles extend to 1914, and the heavenly kingdom will not have full sway till then.” Of all people, only the witnesses pointed to 1914 as the year for God’s kingdom to be fully set up in heaven.*
It sounds good doesn’t it? Jehovah’s Witnesses knew in advance what was going to happen in 1914. No one else knew! Jehovah’s Witnesses must have special information from God? But what do the facts show?

**HOW 1914 IS ARRIVED AT:**

The Watch Tower Society says that from the year 607 B.C., to the year 1914 A.D., there was a period of 2520 years of Gentile domination of the earth uninterrupted by God’s Kingdom. They call this period “The Times of the Gentiles.” (This is a false use of the term found at Luke 21:24). The 2520 year period is based upon a statement found in the record of a dream experienced by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It is recorded in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel. The Society claims that it’s calculations are confirmed by the fact that we see the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24 beginning and continuing since 1914. They say these prove that Jesus has been invisibly present and reigning as King since 1914. Additionally, they claim that three and a half years after October 1, 1914 (when Jesus is said to have commenced to reign) He appointed a group of the “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” who were members of the select 144,000 class, to be God’s exclusive Channel through whom alone He provides spiritual instruction. Here is a sampling of the claims they make:

_Evidences are now conclusive that Jesus Christ was enthroned in heaven in 1914 C.E., and that he accompanied Jehovah to his temple in 1918 C.E., when judgement began with the house of God. (1Peter 4:17) After cleansing those belonging to this house who were alive on earth, Jehovah poured out his spirit upon them and assigned them the responsibility of serving as his sole visible channel, through whom alone spiritual instruction was to come. Those who recognize Jehovah’s visible theocratic organization therefore, must recognize and accept this appointment of the “faithful and discreet slave” and be submissive to it._ (emphasis supplied).

I am going to scan some Watch Tower material and to make it more readable (particularly some of their letters), I will scan in black and white.

What do you think of the above found on page 15 of The WATCHTOWER, May 1, 2000? Are we expected to accept from this that the Bible and “the faithful and discreet slave” are on a par? You would certainly think so! And what about the following two statements?

_Jehovah has provided The Watchtower so that his name and purposes may be known in all the earth._ 3

_Thanks be to God that He has now provided the New World Translation with its clear and accurate Bible Text!_ 4

Many more similar statements could be provided but surely the above are sufficient to illustrate the enormous claims the Society makes for itself!

It should be quite clear however that if Jesus was not enthroned in 1914 He did not involve in any judgment of the house of God in 1918. Neither did He appoint any group to be His channel of communication then either. If 1914 is wrong the following teachings of the Watch Tower related to it are also wrong:
If 1914 is wrong - “The Times of the Gentiles” did not end then.

Christ was not enthroned as King then.

Christ has not been invisibly present since then.

“The Time of the End” did not begin then.

Satan was not cast out of heaven then.

Christ did not come to His Temple for judgment in 1918.

Deceased members of the 144,000 didn’t commence going to heaven then.

Christ did not approve any “Faithful and Discreet Slave” in 1918.

“Babylon the Great” did not fall in 1919.

The “Seven last plagues” have not been poured-out since 1919.

The “time prophecies” of Daniel and Revelation which are said to have been fulfilled in the history of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” since 1914 have been misapplied.

All of the above are important teachings of the Watch Tower Society and they all are bound up with their 1914 teaching. It stands to reason that if 1914 is wrong then all that goes with it is wrong too!

The Watch Tower teaching concerning 1914 is quite definitely wrong as I will show in the remainder of this paper. I can only do this briefly but what I present will be clear enough.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES:

This expression comes from Luke 21:24 and is not used prior thereto. What Jesus intended by the expression is nowhere explained. There is certainly no compelling reason to relate it to Daniel chapter 4. The Greek word for “times” in Luke 21:24 is not chronos which means “a space of time,” but rather kairos which means “opportunity.” Paul seems to have referred to this time of opportunity in Romans 11:25 when he says, “a dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel, until the full number of the people of the nations has come in.”6 The nation of Israel had been chosen by God for service, not for salvation as they mistakenly came to think of themselves. It was their responsibility to take God’s message of salvation to the world but they became self-centred and hugged the privileges to themselves. When the 70 weeks of probation that God extended to them in Daniel 9 expired their time of opportunity as a nation ran out. The Gospel was now to go to the nations (Gentiles) through spiritual Jews (Christians). The times of the Gentiles will run out when Jesus returns. Jerusalem will suffer at the hands of other nations until then. It has been so to this day.

DANIEL 4:

The Watch Tower Society says that the 7 times of this chapter were 2520 years long. This is calculated on the basis of the “year-day principle.” The Society is not consistent in its employment of this principle for while it uses it in connection with the prophecies of Daniel 4 and 9 it counts the 1260, 1290, 1335, and 2300 days of Daniel as literal days.

Much of the book of Daniel is apocalyptic, which is prophetic, but the first six chapters of the book are historical. Of course chapter four lies in the heart of this section. We have in this chapter a prophecy concerning a single Babylonian King - not a prophecy concerning the Gentile nations of the world. Verse 33 explicitly states that the prophecy was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. This is not to say that chapters 3 to 6 have no symbolic value, but to make of one of them a vital time prophecy concerning the Gentile nations and God’s Kingdom is to take a quite unscriptural liberty. Would it be unreasonable of us to ask the Witnesses to provide a definite prophetic value to the other events of the historic section? When and how should we expect the fulfilment of Daniel 3? Three faithful Hebrews were thrown into a fiery furnace – is that a prophecy to be specifically fulfilled? If so when and how? No doubt it prefigures the sort of thing that will happen to God’s people - for example the death decree of Revelation 13. What about Daniel in the Lion’s den? Is that to have a particular fulfilment? What about the time factor – i.e. Daniel in the den overnight?

Most Jehovah’s Witnesses today are not aware of the muddled history the early Watch Tower publications produced. They would not be aware that Pastor Russell, who began the Watch Tower teaching on the 7 times, placed his confidence in Leviticus 26:18, 24, 28. In recent years the Society has abandoned using these verses in their “seven times” teaching. This is obviously because it does not hold water. On October 9, 1910, Pastor Russell, the founder of the Watch Tower Society, addressed a Jewish Mass Meeting. His address Zionism in Prophecy was published by the Society in a book Pastor
**Russell’s Sermons.** On pages 478, 479 of this book we are informed that Russell said, *The whole period of time in which these various Gentile governments would dominate the world would last until Messiah’s promised Kingdom. And this period is symbolically stated to have been “seven times”; that is, seven years – evidently not literal years, but symbolic.* – Dan. 2:28-45; Lev. 26:18, 24, 28. It is significant that in his entire discussion Russell never even mentioned *Daniel 4.*

In later years, which could be documented, the Society dropped all references to the seven times other than that found in *Daniel 4.* Those who are aware of the history of Watch Tower interpretation find no surprise in this. The Watch Tower constantly ducks and dives from wrong interpretations and moves on with new teachings as though nothing has happened. This would not be so bad if the Society did not claim to be a channel of communication from God. If they really were fulfilling this responsibility it would indicate that God is a pretty confused Person. Of course He isn’t!

Really, what we have in *Daniel 4* is an illustration of God’s dealings with one whose main purpose in life seems to have been to exalt himself. The Bible reveals that it is God’s rule to abase the self exalter and to exalt the humble. *Daniel 4* is recorded as an example of this rule (compare verse 17). See for other examples of this rule Psalm 75:7; 113:7, 8; 1Samuel 2:6-8; Isaiah 2:11-13; Ezekiel 17:24; 21:26; Matthew 23:12; Luke 1:51-53.

**539B.C. - THE WATCH TOWER’S ABSOLUTE DATE:**
The Watch Tower Society claims that:

> For calculating Hebrew Scripture dates, the absolute date of October 5 to 6 in the year 539B.C.E. is essential....From this date all the other dates in the Hebrew Scriptures can be calculated.

To say the least, the statement by the Society is misleading. 539B.C, is not a date which stands alone but is one of a whole pattern of dates for the neo-Babylonian empire. One authority says:

> The date 539 for the fall of Babylon has been reckoned from the latest dates on the contracts of each king in this period counting from the end of Nabopolassar’s reign in 605B.C.

Nabopolassar was the father of Nebuchadnezzar who was succeeded by his son to the throne of Babylon in 605B.C. The Society has Nabopolassar’s reign concluding in 626B.C. We need to have a close look at the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

**THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE:**
There are several lines of evidence and they all contradict the faulty chronology of the Watch Tower.

1. **Cuneiform Contract Tablets:**
Archaeologists have dug up thousands of cuneiform economic texts for the period of the neo-Babylonian empire, which have been summarised by Parker and Dubberstein. By referring to the tablets dated earliest and latest of each king’s reign they have been able to provide a connected string of dates which have been summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nabopolassar</td>
<td>625-605B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>604-562B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amel-Marduk</td>
<td>561-560B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nergal-shar-usur</td>
<td>559-556B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabonidus</td>
<td>555-539B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyrus</td>
<td>538-530B.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actually, each king came to the throne during the year previous to that shown above. The year in which he came to the throne in ancient Babylon was known as his “accession year.” In the spring, at the beginning of the new year, his “regnal years” began to count.

2. **Berosus:**
Berosus was a Babylonian historian of the 3rd century B.C. He is quoted by the Jewish historian Josephus in his Against Apion 1:19. In this quotation Berosus provides information on the Babylonian Kings which corresponds with the above listing. Here is the listing Berosus provides:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Reigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nabuchodonosor</td>
<td>43 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evilmerodach</td>
<td>2 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neriglissar</td>
<td>4 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborosoarchod</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabonnedus</td>
<td>17 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his Antiquities of the Jews, Book 10, chapter 9, Josephus says that Nebuchadnezzar took the people of Judah captive and “Judea, and Jerusalem, and the temple, continued to be a desert for seventy years.”

The Society has delighted in quoting this reference to the 70 years for it sounds like Josephus is supporting their chronology. However, typically, it has failed to mention that in his Against Apion, book 1, para. 21 Josephus, while commenting on Berosus, says:

*These accounts agree with the true history in our books; for in them it is written that Nebuchadnezzar, in the eighteenth year of his reign, laid our temple desolate, and so it lay in that state of obscurity for fifty years* (emphasis supplied).

Josephus is not greatly reliable and because his statements are conflicting neither of them should be used. The Society only brings to the attention of its readers evidence that suits it. It ignores, or distorts, other evidence that contradicts it. Can we possibly accept that this is the sort of thing that Jehovah would channel through the Watch Tower publications?

3. The Adda-guppi Stele:

This monument, which was discovered at Harran in 1956, provides chronological information which also agrees with the above. The following are a few lines from the Stele as translated by C. J. Gadd in Anatolian Studies, Vol. 8, pages 35ff. The number at the commencement of each line identifies the line of the inscription.

1. *I (am) the lady Adda-guppi*, mother
2. of Nabium-nai'id, king of Babylon
29. From the 20th year of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, that I was born (in)
30. until the 42nd year of Assurbanipal, the 3rd year of Assur-etilil-ili,
31. his son, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar
32. the 2nd year of Awel-Marduk, the 4th year of Neriglissar,
33. in 95 years of the god Sin, king of the gods of heaven and earth.

The quotation just supplied is from column 1 of the inscription. The following lines are from column 2.

26. *From the time of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the 9th year*
27. of Nabu-na’id king of Babylon, the son, offspring of my womb
28. 104 years of happiness, with the reverence which Sin, king of the gods,
29. placed in me, he made me flourish, my own self.

An arithmetical summary covering the Kings mentioned is as follows:

Col. 1. lines 29-33. Adda-Guppi was born in the 20th year of Assurbanipal and lived beyond his 42nd year.

Therefore, the 20th to 42nd year of Assurbanipal = 22 years

The reign of Assur-etilil-ili = 3 "
Nabopolassar = 21 "
Nebuchadrezzar = 43 "
Evil-Merodach = 2 "
Neriglissar = 4 "

5
Line 33 says this totals 95 years.

Col. 2. line 26 takes us to the 9th year of Nabunaid. 95 + 9 = 104 and this is the total that line 28 provides. Adda-Guppi does not mention the short reign of Labashi-Marduk. The few months he reigned was of no value in counting a number of years. As we will see below Ptolemy followed the same course of omitting this king from his list.

4. The Canon of Ptolemy

Ptolemy (70-161 A.D.) was an astronomer, geographer, historian, and chronologist. His canon has been widely used for chronological purposes. It begins in 747 B.C., with the reign of Nabonassar of Babylon and continues identifying the kings of various countries down to his own day. It is more than likely that Ptolemy was not the originator of the canon and that it was in use prior to his day. He was able to utilise its details to provide dates to various astronomical phenomenon, such as eclipses, that he was interested to study.

The following is a portion of the list of the rulers of Babylon and Persia, according to Ptolemy’s Canon, provided by Edwin R. Thiele:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Years of the Nabonassar Era.</th>
<th>Years of the Christian Era.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nabopolassar</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>123-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>144-186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amel-Marduk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>187-188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nergal-shar-usur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>189-192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabonidus</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>193-209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyrus</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>210-218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambyses</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>219-226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darius 1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>227-262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xerxes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>263-283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artaxerxes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>284-324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thiele comments on the value of this work:

*The outstanding value of the canon is the large amount of astronomical material recorded in Ptolemy’s Almagest and the tying in of these phenomena with the regnal years of his list of rulers. Over eighty solar, lunar, and planetary positions with their dates have been verified by modern astronomy. The dates of the Nabonassar era are thus astronomically established and completely reliable. They may be accepted with full confidence in their amazing accuracy.*

The Watch Tower Society has consistently tried to discredit this document but has not been successful. A few years ago it provided quotations from R. R. Newton of the Johns Hopkins University, which queried some aspects of Ptolemy’s work. However, Newton says nothing detrimental to the chronology from Nebuchadnezzar onward. In fact he says:

*The dates of Nebuchadnezzar are well established by astronomical observations that were made during his reign and that were dated by using his regnal years.*

I took the trouble to write to Newton on September 5, 1979. In his reply to me dated September 17, 1979, he stated:

*In my opinion it is firmly established that –603 was Nebuchadnezzar’s first regnal year, and I so stated in The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy (p. 375).*

Historians don’t utilise a zero year in their system as they move from A.D., to B.C. Astronomers do have a zero year so their B.C. dates are one year less than the historians. –603 of the Astronomer is the same as 604 B.C., of the Historian.

There is no doubt that the Watch Tower Society has misused Newton. We need to pause to note that beside Ptolemy, we have other lines of evidence providing us the names of the kings of Babylon and
their length of reign. Please also note that chronological details available from the cuneiform texts, Berosus, Adda-guppi, and Ptolemy, are all in agreement. Ptolemy also places the Babylonian kings in the correct time slot in history. However, it should be noted that the chronology for the period can be clearly establish without reference to Ptolemy. I have left to last my comments on the Babylonian Astronomical tablets. Information on these tablets clearly identify the time period for the Babylonian kings as a group and for some individually. While these texts are independent of Ptolemy, they nevertheless agree with him.

5. Babylonian Astronomical Tablets:
A Babylonian observation tablet VAT4956 is contained in the Berlin Museum. The tablet is dated to the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar and modern Astronomers checking the information found on this tablet find that it corresponds exactly with the year 568/567B.C.9 This fixes the year when Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne as 605B.C. The tablet contains observational data detailing the positions of various planets throughout the year including a lunar eclipse. Reputable chronologists and Astronomers confirm that this tablet fixes the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar as 568/567B.C. The tablet was published and discussed in detail in an article by Paul V. Neugebauer and Ernst F. Weidner, “Ein Astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnezars 11. (-567/66)” in the book, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Konigl. Sachsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 67 (1915), part 2 pp. 29-89.

In addition to providing details of planetary positions the Babylonian astronomer noted on the abovementioned tablet that the predicted eclipse of the moon for Sivan 15 “was skipped.” Concerning this the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1961) Vol. 7, page 914 states:

In a Babylonian observation tablet of 568 B.C., mention is made of failure to observe a predicted eclipse of the moon. The eclipse is found by computation to have been real but invisible at Babylon. It was doubtless predicted by cycle.

Apparently, the eclipse occurred on the predicted date but because it was in the afternoon it was not observable at Babylon.

A precise statement on the value of the tablet for chronological purposes is found on page 152 of Vol. 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary:

Two astronomical texts are of outstanding importance to chronology, for they fix the B. C. dating of the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar 11 and Cambyses, respectively. The one most valuable for the later period of the Hebrew kings is concerned with the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. It contains a series of observational data on the positions of various heavenly bodies throughout a complete year, running from Nisan 1, year 37, to Nisan 1, year 38 of the reign. Modern astronomers who have checked this information by astronomical computation say that the combination of data for the sun, moon, and planets, which all move in differing cycles, cannot be duplicated in any other year. Thus Nebuchadnezzar’s 37th regnal year is fixed beyond any doubt as beginning on April 22/23 (sunset to sunset), 568B.C., and as ending on April 11/12, 567 B.C. Consequently all the other years in that reign are established also.

The noted astronomer Otto Neugebauer states with reference to this tablet:

A text which contains many positions of sun, moon and stars is within many thousands of years uniquely fixed.10

Dr. Edwin R. Thiele, who is very well known for his studies on the chronology of the Hebrew Kings, was able to state unequivocally:

No date in ancient history is more firmly established than is 605 for the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.11

Thiele could make this statement, not only because of the positiveness the astronomical tablet gives to the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, but also because there are numerous other items of evidence that leave us in no doubt also.
It is very interesting to note how ready the Watch Tower Society is to accept a similar tablet related to the 7th year of Cambyses when it rejects the tablet related to the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. The following are its comments from *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 page 453 (1988):

A Babylonian clay tablet is helpful for connecting Babylonian chronology with Biblical chronology. This tablet contains the following astronomical information for the seventh year of Cambyses 11, son of Cyrus 11: “Year 7, Tammuz, night of the 14th. 1 2/3 double hours [three hours and twenty minutes] after night came, a lunar eclipse: visible in its full course; it reached over the northern half disc [of the moon]. Tebet, night of the 14th, two and a half double hours [five hours] at night, the disc of the moon was eclipsed; the whole course visible; over the southern and northern part the eclipse reached” (Inscriptions von Cambyses, König von Babylon, by J. N. Strassmaier, Leipzig, 1890, No. 400, lines 45-48; Sternkunde und Sterndienst in Babel, by F. X. Kugler, Munster, 1907, Vol. 1, pp. 70, 71) These two lunar eclipses can be identified with the lunar eclipses that were visible at Babylon on July 16, 523 B.C.E., and on January 10, 522 B.C.E. (Oppolzer’s Canon of Eclipses, translated by O. Gingerich, 1962, p. 335) Thus, this tablet establishes the seventh year of Cambyses 11 as beginning in the spring of 523 B.C.E. This is an astronomically confirmed date.

The Society appreciates this tablet because it fixes the reign of Cambyses who was the son of Cyrus. Working back from 523 B.C., which was the 7th of Cambyses it is obvious that his accession year was 530 B.C., which was the last year of the reign of Cyrus. Cyrus, according to the Cuneiform Contract Tablets, reigned for 9 years taking us back to 539 B.C., as his accession year – the year Babylon was conquered. This allows the Society to reject Ptolemy’s Canon and also the Astronomical Tablet related to the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. This is how selective the Society is in accepting evidence. It only accepts what suits its own defective chronology. Some astronomical information and some cuneiform texts are accepted and not others. The determining factor seems to be their own chronology. If it fits accept it, if it doesn’t reject it. According to all the experts in the field, both of the above Astronomical Tablets are acceptable and both give valuable support for the chronology of the period.

Interestingly, Robert Newton accepts both tablets but favours much more the tablet related to Nebuchadnezzar. I quote from his book *The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy*, page 375:

there is a Babylonian record of a lunar eclipse in the 7th year of Kambyses, which is the same year that Ptolemy states. The document was published by Kugler [1907, pp. 70-71] and the astronomical observations in it are analysed in APO, chapters IV, X, and XIV. The document gives the times and magnitudes of two lunar eclipses, a conjunction of Mercury with the moon, 5 statements of the dates when Venus had its first or last visibility after or before passing the sun, and 4 such statements for Mars. If we assume that the 7th year of Kambyses began in the spring of -522, the times and magnitudes of the lunar eclipses agree fairly well with the stated values, 3 statements about Venus are accurate while 2 are impossible, and 3 statements about Mars are accurate while 1 is impossible. The most likely situation is that the year is –522/-521 and that there are some scribal errors in the record. Nonetheless, the confirmation of the year is not as strong as we would like.

However, there is another document from the 37th year of Nebuchadrezzar [Neugebauer and Weidner, 1915]. According to Ptolemy’s list, this year began in the spring of –567. The document records 9 measurements of the times of moonrise or moonset, 5 times of conjunctions of the moon with specified stars, plus 1 conjunction of Mercury, 2 of Venus, and 3 of Mars, all with specified stars. When I analyze these on the assumption that the year is –567/-566, I find that the times of moonrise or moonset agree with calculated values within about 10 minutes. The longitudes of the moon and planets inferred from the conjunctions agree with calculated values with 1 degree or less for most observations, although there is a discrepancy of about 3 degrees for one lunar conjunction.

Thus we have quite strong confirmation that Ptolemy’s list is correct for Nebuchadrezzar, and reasonable confirmation for Kambyses. Since the beginning of Nebuchadrezzar’s reign takes us back to –603 if –567 is correct for his 37th year, it seems likely that any error in Ptolemy’s list is no more than a few years for dates after –603.
Eclipses and other astronomical information are very valuable in supplying or confirming dates for ancient chronology. For the Neo-Babylonian period there is an abundance of information. The following is from F. Richard Stephenson, a leading authority in his field, who is from the University of Durham:

BM 38462 (=LBAT 1420) reports lunar eclipses for almost every year from the beginning of the reign of Nebuchadrezzar I (604/3 BC) to his 29th year (576/5 BC). The damaged (but still recognisable) name of Nebuchadrezzar is given on the first line of the tablet.

**Summary of the Secular Evidence:**
Archaeology, Astronomy, and secular History combine to provide us with a chronology for the neo-Babylonian period which is so inextricably bound together that it must be accepted as correct. It is well worth noting that while there are thousands of dated tablets for the period under review, they provide no support whatever for the Society’s endeavour to extend it by about twenty years. It moves the beginning of Nebuchadrezzar’s reign back from 605B.C., to 626B.C. How incredibly strange that the Babylonian clay tablets are abundant for the period that is established by every line of evidence, but there are none for the extra 20 years claimed by the Society! Strange? Not really! It would be strange if there were tablets for a 20 year period longer than all the other evidence indicates. The really strange thing is that the Watch Tower Society ignores the evidence and carries on merrily with its fabricated system leading to 1914. The Society is without any support whatever for accepting 539B.C., as the date for the fall of Babylon, while ignoring all the other established dates for the period. This point cannot be stressed too strongly. It insists that the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, in which Jerusalem fell, was 607B.C. However, it can easily be calculated from the above irrefutable dates that it was the year 587/586B.C.

Many have brought to the attention of the Society that it is quite out of order to accept 539B.C., and ignore all of the other equally well established dates for the Babylonian empire. Significantly, in their commentary on the book of Daniel, Pay Attention to DANIEL’S PROPHECY published in 1999, they set out all of their false dates while making no endeavour to defend them. Unsuspecting readers would have no idea that what they are reading, related to many dates, is denied by every authority upon planet earth. Rather than try and defend 539B.C., as the absolute date for the period, while ignoring the other equally well established dates (some much more positively established), the Society has chosen this time to seek refuge in silence.

**JEREMIAH’S SEVENTY YEARS:**
The Watch Tower Society says that Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539B.C., and that two years later, in 537B.C., the Jews, who had been in captivity in Babylon for seventy years, were back in their homeland. Therefore, seeing that the captivity was of seventy years duration, the land of Judah must have been emptied of it’s people in 607B.C. We have already seen that the years for the reign of Nebuchadnezzar are quite positively fixed. It is therefore an illegitimate process to select 539B.C., as one date for the period and ignore the rest. It would be more reasonable to date the seventy years from 586B.C., extending them down to 516B.C. But, of course, such a decision would also be out of order.

Many Bible Scholars have counted the years from 605B.C., terminating them in 536B.C. This is made possible by use of “inclusive reckoning” which was a common method of reckoning utilised by the Hebrews. They counted the first and last numbers of a series as whole numbers even if they were incomplete. My study has inclined me to believe that it is better to regard the seventy years as a “round number.” The period began in 605B.C., and concluded with the fall of Babylon in 539B.C. I will now provide the evidence, that has led me to strongly favour this conclusion:

The Bible texts which mention the seventy years are Jeremiah 25:11, 12; 29:10; 2Chronicles 36:21 and Daniel 9:2. There are many Bible Scholars who contend that the seventy years is a round number. Representative sample statements are:

The duration of exile seventy years...is a round number. 18

Widely different opinions are held as to the meaning of this prophecy. The most probable view is that “seventy” is an indefinite or round number (as in Isa. xxiii. 17), equivalent to “a very long time.” 19
This seems to be here no more than a round number (i.e., a normal life-span).  

Seventy years is a round figure for the length of one man’s life or one generation.  

Jeremiah only intended a long period without any specification of time. The hypothesis has an extrabiblical confirmation, for an Assyrian text uses the same number to indicate simply an indefinite period.  

Writing in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, R. Borger refers to some remarks made by Professor D. D. Luckenbill:  

Luckenbill deals with some inscriptions of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, in which it is stated that the desolation of Babylon after its destruction by Sennacherib should originally have lasted seventy years according to a decision of the god Marduk...“which would seem to indicate that seventy years was a perfectly proper period for an ancient oriental city to lie desolate...”  

When we say “seventy” of course we mean “seventy.” However, we must realise that Eastern people of 2,500 years ago did not think just like we do. Bernard Ramm provides some information which should increase our understanding:  

The mathematics and measuring systems of the Bible are those of that prescientific era and not modern scientific methods of counting and measuring. Numbers were frequently used in the same way we use the words many, some, or few. Three stood for few; seven, ten and one hundred stood for completeness; ten in other connexions meant several; forty meant many; seven and seventy meant large but uncertain numbers.  

There can not be the slightest doubt that the number 70 is a round number, about the length of a man’s life, in *Psalm 90:10* and *Isaiah 23:15-18*. It is more than likely so in other places such as *Genesis 46:27; 50:3; Numbers 11:16; Judges 1:7; 9:2; 2Kings 10:1*.  

It would be interesting to hear some proof from the Watch Tower Society showing why we should not take the number 70 as a round number in the texts we are concerned with. Of course they can provide none. I am not just relying on the fact that the seventy years of Jeremiah may be a round number. My contention is that a study of the five texts which mention the 70 years of Jeremiah requires us to accept that it is a round number. I will now review these texts.  

**Jeremiah 25:11:**  
*This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*  

“Jehovah’s Witnesses” are usually confused over the word desolate here. It is a translation of the Hebrew word *chorbah* which does not necessarily mean empty of inhabitants. *The Interpreters Bible* comments on the word *chorbah* at *Daniel 9:2* and says it is “a word often employed to describe the state of a devastated land after the armies of an enemy have passed.”  

It is true that there are some verses which say the land would become desolate without man and beast. There are only two things I need to say about these:  

1. None of them say this would be the condition of the land for 70 years.  
2. If the word *desolate* inherently meant empty without man and beast it would be superfluous to say without man and beast after using the word *desolate.*  

We should be quite clear that all *Jeremiah 25:11* says about the 70 years is “these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” The plain facts are that the nations (see verse 9 i.e., all the nations of the area) did not serve Babylon for 70 years exactly. Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539B.C. Even on the Watch Tower reckoning it is not 70 years from 607B.C., to 539B.C. The nations did serve from 605B.C., to 539B.C., a period of **about seventy years**.  

**Jeremiah 25:12:**
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.

Babylon’s punishment began in 539 B.C., and therefore before the expiration of a complete 70 year period. There can be no doubt that Babylon’s 70 years expired when the Medes and Persians took over in 539 B.C. Jeremiah 27:7 leaves no doubt about this:

All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him.

Jeremiah 29:10:
This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.”

This verse can read at Babylon or for Babylon. In addition to the above, the Revised Standard Version; the New American Standard Bible, (and others) the rendering should be for Babylon. A study of the Bible passages that relate to this period reveals that the 70 year period of Babylonian domination began in 605 B.C., 19 years before Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. It will be obvious that 70 years for Babylon fits neatly with the advice that Babylon would dominate the area for 70 years as per 25:11, 12.

The Society places itself on the horns of a dilemma when it insists, on the basis of this verse, that the people of Judah had to be in Babylon for exactly 70 years because it also insists that the land of Judah had to be empty of man or beast for exactly 70 years. Ezra tells us that he took 4 months to make the trip from Jerusalem to Babylon (Ezra 7:8, 9). It is a matter of simple arithmetic to calculate that the total time for the journeys to and from Babylon would have been about 8 months. If the people were at Babylon for 70 years exactly, then the land of Judah must have been empty for at least 70 years and 8 months. If, on the other hand, the land was completely empty for 70 years exactly, then the people could not have been at Babylon for more than 69 years and 4 months.

It is obvious that the 70 years is a round number and that there is no text in the book of Jeremiah that demands a full 70 years. Quite to the contrary, the only three verses in Jeremiah which mention the period demand that it be taken as a round number.

It must be noted that the two remaining texts requiring our attention both refer to the 70 years of Jeremiah. We must not miss this point for as the 70 years of Jeremiah are clearly not an exact 70 years the writers who refer to them must not be used to say that they are.

2Chronicles 36:20, 2:
He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to 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 fulfilment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

This text merely says that when the land reached a certain condition it kept sabbath rest to complete the seventy years. For example An American Translation renders the passage this way:

All the days of the desolation it kept sabbath, to complete the seventy years.

Other translations such as that of Isaac Leeser, The Douay Version, The New English Bible, The Bible in Living English (this is a translation by Steven T. Byington but published by the Watch Tower Society), all convey a similar concept.

Let us think of a man in a car race who travels from point A to point B to point C to point D on bitumen. The section of the race from point D to point E is over rough dirt road. The total length of the race was 1,000Km. The man can quite correctly say that when he reached point D he travelled over rough road to complete the 1,000Km. He would not mean that the road was rough for the entire journey. Neither does the Chronicler mean the land of Judah kept Sabbath throughout the complete 70 years. He is saying that when the land reached a desolate (shamen) condition, it filled out the
remaining portion of the 70 years in Sabbath resting. This is completely in harmony with the book of
Jeremiah and nothing is said in 2Chronicles 36:21 to suggest that the 70 years cannot be a round
number.

The land of Judah did not become completely empty at the time of the destruction mentioned in
Jeremiah 52:30 asserts that further Jews were taken captive in the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar - this
would be, according to the Watch Tower reckoning, 603 B.C. According to accurate chronology it
would have been 582 B.C. It is no good claiming that these captives were taken from lands other than
Judah for the context does not allow for this. The whole section has to do with the taking of captives
from the land of Judah. One day, in desperation, the Society may again make a shift in its chronology
and admit that evidence is now available which fix Nebuchadnezzars reign beginning in 605 B.C. It
could then count their 2520 years from his 23rd year which is 582 B.C., taking them down to 1939 A.D.,
the year in which the greatest war ever experienced by mankind began. It could then point out that there
has been no peace on earth ever since. Does this sound crazy? It would cause an upheaval but the
Society is no stranger to such a situation.

Daniel 9:2:
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.

Please remember that whatever we say about this verse, and the one discussed last, we must not make
them say the 70 years is a longer period than Jeremiah makes it. These texts are really only of
secondary importance. Actually, Daniel speaks of “desolations” in the plural in this verse. The New
World Translation published by the Watch Tower Society has “devastations” rather than
“desolation.” Judah suffered at least three devastations at the hands of the Babylonians. Daniel would,
of course, have had in mind the first of them when he said Jerusalem would suffer the effects of them
for 70 years. Daniel gained this information from the writings of Jeremiah and therefore he would have
understood that the 70 years was the period during which Babylon would dominate the surrounding
nations. As Babylon had now fallen to the Medes and Persians he would recognise that the period had
expired (539B.C.). He says nothing to suggest that we must take the period to be an exact 70 years.

Many Bible students have wondered why the last verse of Daniel chapter 1 reports:

And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

I believe it is to show that Daniel saw the beginning and the end of the period of servitude. Verse 1
marks the beginning of it and verse 20 the end. Daniel was an old man by then but it spanned
approximately the length of his life. Of course he continued on past 539B.C., when Babylon was
conquered by Cyrus the Persian.

The Watch Tower system of counting from 539B.C., to 537B.C., and then back exactly 70 years to
607B.C., is unscriptural, and therefore unwarranted, and unacceptable. It is not possible to ascertain
with certainty the year when the land of Judah was re-occupied by the returning exiles. Some say it was
in 537 B.C., others say 536 B.C. Personally, I favour 536 B.C. However, for our purposes, it doesn’t
really matter for the 70 years for Babylon expired in 539 B.C. The secular chronology for the period is
in no way in conflict with the Bible. The Watch Tower Society, on the other hand, is in conflict with
both the Bible and secular history.

SCRIPTURE PROVIDES TWO CHECKS THAT CONFIRM THE TRUE CHRONOLOGY:
The checks the Bible provides throw the Watch Tower case right out of Court. There are two texts in
the book of Zechariah that require two more periods of 70 years to be arched back into the past. If we
accept the Watch Tower scheme we find that they have no possible beginning point for they would both
be markers in the land when the Watch Tower claims it was devoid of man and beast. We need to
examine these two texts.

Zechariah 1:12.
First we need to notice when the scenes in which verse 12 is couched took place. Verse 7 reveals that it was on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat in the second year of Darius.

This Darius was not Darius the Mede but Darius 1of Persia who reigned 521–486B.C., his second year was 519B.C. Now we need to examine Zechariah 1:12:

> Then the angel of the LORD said, “LORD Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?”

Here we have another period referred to as being 70 years in length. Arching back 70 years from 519B.C. takes us to 589/588B.C. The final siege of Jerusalem began at this time in the 9th year of the reign of Zedekiah (2Kings 25:1). This is according to the real biblical chronology for the period. When we compare the Watch Tower chronology we find that the land was without man or beast from 607B.C. It just doesn’t fit. The period of God’s anger, according to them, would have to have been 90 years long.

**Zechariah 7:5:**

This verse provides a double check for us. Verse 1 dates the statement found in verse 5:

> In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev. This 4th year would be 517B.C.

> Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me: “Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?’” Verses 4 and 5.

Arching back 70 years again takes us this time to 587/586B.C. This was the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar, the year in which Jerusalem was destroyed. Reference to the fasts of the 5th and 7th months in Zechariah 7:5 would be because of the events in the 5th and 7th months of Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year described in 2Kings 25:8, and 25. They were the destruction of Jerusalem and the assassination of the Governor, Gedaliah, final events in the sad history of Jerusalem.

Again, when we examine the chronology of the Watch Tower we find the 70 years here arching back into nothing for the Society has Jerusalem and the land of Judah without man and beast from 20 years earlier. The Watch Tower scheme is exposed by this test of Scripture as being entirely wrong. Those who have been followers of the Watch Tower Society, but who are determined to be true followers of the Lord, have no alternative but to abandon the Watch Tower scheme.

**ASTONISHINGLY, THE WATCH TOWER SOCIETY KNOWS!**

I know that it knows of the problems associated with its chronology for I sought their help on these matters from as far back as 1962. In a letter addressed to their Brooklyn headquarters in USA dated June 10, 1962 I sought help on many questions including:

> Why 539 B.C. is an absolute date and 587 B.C. (or 586 B.C.) is not. Also, why not date the desolation from 587 B.C. to 517 B.C. (or 586-516 B.C.) in lieu of 607 B.C.-537 B.C.?
The very disappointing reply only endeavoured to confirm the 539 B.C., date and sought to confirm the Watch Tower chronology by the signs which are said to exist from 1914 A.D. On April 12, 1963 I wrote a rather detailed letter drawing attention to, among other things, the Astronomical tablet dated to the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar and to the fact that there is no evidence from the Babylonian cuneiform tablets to support the extra 20 years the Society injects into Babylonian history.

Mr. Max Hatton
2 Wasnock Street
Broadmeadows
Victoria, Australia

Dear Brother Hatton:

Your letter of April 12 pertaining to Biblical chronology has our attention, and we are pleased to acknowledge receipt of it at this time.

As you can undoubtedly appreciate, what you have outlined would require considerable research. At the present time a great deal of work is being done here in preparation for the "Everlasting Good News" assembly. Since the Society's headquarters staff is being used for the preparation of the assembly, undoubtedly you can appreciate the fact that it is not possible for us to undertake the extensive research that would be required to answer your letter at the present time. We are sure you understand that it is more important to continue in our work in preparation for the assembly than to stop for such a research project as this one. Yet we can appreciate the fact that you are interested in these matters, and no doubt the Society will have more to say on matters of chronology in future publications. At that time you will be able to benefit from the published material along with all other fellow servants of Jehovah and readers of the Society's literature.

We wish to give you the assurance of our Christian love.

With you, keeping our friendship with God,

The above is the reply I received in a letter from them dated May 15, 1963. I am sure that my extreme disappointment will be appreciated. They had completely put me off and indicated that I should not write further and should wait until further information appears in their future publications.

Up until that time I had complete confidence in the Watch Tower Society but now I started to have serious doubts. To say that I was astonished is an extreme understatement really, I had thought that the Society was God’s Channel of truth and that it had all the answers. Now I had to admit that it didn’t. Anyway, I decided to write again and wrote a much more detailed letter dated July 31, 1964. This time I referred to the chronology found in the writing of Berosus, the Canon of Ptolemy, the Stele of Adda-guppi, all of which are in absolute agreement. Attention was again drawn to the Babylonian Astronomical tablet VAT4956. I then asked a series of questions with supporting comments. A couple of the questions were:

Why is the date for the fall of Babylon accepted as an absolute date and Nisan 1st 604 B.C.E, as
the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar 11 first regnal year, rejected, when the location of this latter date apparently is more firmly fixed?

If the Nabonidus Chronicle makes the 539 B.C. date absolute, why doesn’t the other Babylonian Chronicle [published by D. J. Wiseman, being the chronicle of the early years of Nebuchadnezzar] make the 597 B.C. date absolute? On what grounds can we accept one of these and not the other?

The reply I received dated August 12, 1964, offered little else than a strong rebuke to me. I will but quote a few of the lines:

From your letter of the 31st of July on the subject of chronology, ...we note that you have worked yourself up into a state of uncertainty and you have weakened your confidence in the Society.

They went on to tell me of all the work they had done on the subject and how the signs following 1914 confirm their conclusions and then they returned to their rebuke:

These are the main considerations and there is no reason to quibble about them and to feel obliged personally to do a lot of private digging around into secular chronologies and giving them the place of first importance, thereby upsetting oneself mentally and spiritually, giving more credence to worldly, secular authorities and reducing one’s confidence in the conscientious, carefully handled research done by dedicated brothers who are trying to please the Most High God, the inspirer of the Holy Bible and who are trying to get ahead with His work before the end of this system of things comes upon the nations and the mandatory work of preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations ends.

So the condition in which your letter indicates you to be just moves us in a brotherly way to counsel you to give less attention to this matter of chronology, although it has its proper place in God’s Word, and concern yourself more with the facts of the day which are in fulfilment and in corroboration of Bible prophecy and with renewed confidence join in carrying forward Jehovah’s prescribed work with his visible organization to the glorious end.

At this point in time I was absolutely sure that the Society was wrong in its interpretation of the chronology for the neo-Babylonian period of history and as a consequence it was wrong about 1914 and all that goes with it. Not only was it greatly in error but it was now clear to me that it was willingly so. It would hold on to 1914 because without it there was no platform for its claim to be God’s Channel of truth. On August 16, 1964 I submitted my resignation to the local unit of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Glenroy, Melbourne. I could not continue as a Jehovah’s Witness.

However, I decided to query the Society further so on September 8, 1964 I wrote again to the Society’s Brooklyn New York office posing several questions largely related to the Hebrew words CHORBAH and SHAMEM. A correct understanding of these two words is essential if the desolation of Judah is to be properly understood. As a result of my study of the Bible I stated to them:

Although the Bible speaks of Judah lying desolate, without an inhabitant, I found that it nowhere speaks of it being without man and beast for 70 years. Jeremiah 29:10 seems to indicate that the 70 years had commenced at least at the time of the Exile of Jehoiachin and others. Jeremiah 25:11 seems to indicate the dominance of Babylon over the Nations. I cannot understand how this verse can be construed to teach the desolation of Judah without man or beast for 70 years.

Their reply dated October 23, 1964 made it very obvious to me that I would never get anywhere with the head office in Brooklyn. They clearly had no intention of accepting the very clear evidence of Scripture or of the history for the period. They wouldn’t even consider what other authorities had to say unless they could use them for their own purposes. If an authority contradicts the Society, it doesn’t answer what they say, it merely brushes them off as though unworthy of attention. Here is the Watch Tower letter to me:
On November 8, 1964 I wrote to the Australian Branch Headquarters asking them for help with my questions. Their tame advice was that they were going to leave it with the Brooklyn office to relate to me on the matters raised. When I spoke to my associates in the local Congregation, they admitted that they could not answer my questions but stated that I should leave the matter for now as in His due time Jehovah would clarify the situation through the Watch Tower publications. This attitude is fostered by the Society. I couldn’t accept this suggested solution for it means that the Watch Tower Society can never be wrong. If there are problems they will be sorted out at Jehovah’s pleasure. My questions have not been satisfactorily answered to this day!

In addition to my own correspondence with the Society, I have copies of letters written by Geoff Rogerson, a very good Bible student of Denmark, Western Australia, who wrote to the Society on these matters. His letters were also written in the early 1960’s and they too probe the Watch Tower chronology. Again the response was entirely unsatisfactory. Geoff and I corresponded on this subject and he was a great help to me.

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Carl Olaf Jonsson, in his book *THE GENTILE TIMES RECONSIDERED* published in 1983, states on page 3 that he began to study the Watch Tower chronology in 1968. He was at the time a full-time Pioneer for the Witnesses. He sent a treatise on the subject to the Brooklyn office in 1977. He was excommunicated in July 1982. A third edition of his book was published in 1998. I highly recommend his work but I cannot accept his suggestion that the 70 years began in 609 B.C., when the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians. It sounds good – 609-539 = 70 years. However, sounding good is not the important criterion, it must be factual as well.

Raymond Franz became a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses and served in this capacity for nine years. He was later disfellowshipped. He was aware that the Watch Tower chronology could not stand up to investigation. On pages 25 and 26 of his book *CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE* he tells of his assignment to write the article on chronology in the Watch Tower book *Aid to Bible Understanding*:

> Months of research were spent on this one subject of “Chronology” and it resulted in the longest article in the Aid publication. Much of the time was spent endeavouring to find some proof, some backing in history, for the 607 B.C.E. date so crucial to our calculations for 1914. Charles Ploeger, a member of the headquarters staff, was at that time serving as Secretary for me and he searched through the libraries of the New York city area for anything that might substantiate that date historically.

> We found absolutely nothing in support of 607 B.C.E. All historians pointed to a date twenty years later...in preparing the material for the Aid book, much of the time and space was spent in trying to weaken the credibility of the archeological and historical evidence that would make erroneous our 607 B.C.E. date and give a different starting point for our calculations and therefore an ending date different from 1914. Charles Ploeger and I made a trip to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, to interview Professor Abraham Sachs, a specialist in ancient cuneiform texts. We wanted to see if we could obtain any information that would indicate any flaw or weakness whatsoever in the astronomical data presented in many of the texts, data that indicated our 607 B.C.E. date was incorrect. In the end, it became evident that it would have taken a virtual conspiracy on the part of the ancient scribes – with no conceivable motive for doing so – to misrepresent the facts if, indeed, our figure was to be the right one.

He admits that his intent was to uphold a date for which, there was no historical support. In the year that the Aid book was released Franz was invited to become a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

There can be no doubt that the Society leadership knows it is wrong but has chosen to retain the crucial 1914 date so that they may maintain their claim to authority. They are like the man who said, “My mind’s made up, don’t confuse me with the facts.” They cannot successfully defend their position so they try to bring any of their followers, who query their chronology, into line by claiming authority.

**THE SIGNS OF CHRIST’S COMING:**

The Watch Tower Society claims that events which have taken place in the World since 1914 are the fulfilment of the predictions of Jesus given by Him at Matthew 24. It then claims that since these events have taken place since 1914 they confirm the accuracy of its chronology and prove that Jesus has been invisibly present since 1914. Again there is no substance in the Watch Tower claim.

In Matthew 24 Jesus gave signs of His second coming in response to the disciples request found in verse 3. In verses 32, 33 He said:

> Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things (the signs He gave being fulfilled), you know that it (“he” footnote) is near, right at the door.

The parallel passage in Luke 21 says:

> when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near. (Verse 31).
Quite obviously, the signs occur **BEFORE** the second coming, **BEFORE** the setting up of the Kingdom of Glory. What Jesus gave were signs of His **coming** not **presence**. Jesus presented the signs as occurring **before** the event - the Society has them **following** the event. Choose you this day whom you will follow - Jesus or the Watch Tower Society?

**“Parousia”:**
The word **coming** used by the disciples at **Matthew 24:3** is from the Greek word **Parousia**. Greek Lexicons and other scholarly works reveal that this word may be translated as either **presence** or **coming**. The following is an example:

In Hellenistic literature the term was frequently used in connection with the official visit of a ruler or the epiphany of a deity....From this custom a quasi-technical usage of the term arose which is reflected in the majority (eighteen) of the NT passages....these passages refer to the coming of Christ at the end of history. The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (1962) article “Parousia.”

At **Matthew 24:3**, Parousia must be translated in harmony with the thinking of the Apostles who used it. They expected Jesus to set-up His Kingdom at His first Advent (**Luke 19:11, 12; Acts 1:6**). They expected a visible and personal reign and they associated the **Parousia** with the destruction of Jerusalem (**Matthew 24:1, 2**) and the end of the world (more correctly “Age” in **verse 3**). They wanted signs to indicate to them when these things were about to take place. They were not asking for signs which would occur **after** these three things had taken place so that they could know that Christ had returned, was visibly reigning as King, Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the World (Age) had come to an end. The Watchtower dated September 15, 1964, page 576, says of the disciples:

> they had no idea that He would rule as a glorious spirit from the heavens and therefore did not know that His second presence would be invisible.

The word **parousia** must not be construed to mean anything else in **Matthew 24:3** other than that it is the **Coming** of Christ which will take place **after** the signs have occurred. However, the **New World Translation**, renders parousia here as **presence**. Once again they expose their lack of Bible knowledge and understanding.

**JESUS PRESENT WHERE?**

These not fully informed of Watch Tower teaching on this matter will be surprised to learn that when all is said and done JW’s do not believe that Jesus came back to planet earth in 1914 at all. In fact the Watch Tower teaches that Jesus merely directed His attention to the earth. Unbelievable? Here is a rather lengthy statement clarifying their position:

> Then should you think of Jesus as invisibly present in the earth’s atmosphere? When the Bible speaks of Jesus’ return, it does not at all follow that for him to be present he has to leave his abode in the heavens.

As a mighty spirit person, ‘the exact representation of God’s very being,’ all that would be necessary is for Christ to direct his attention to the earth. (Heb. 1:3) For example, the Scriptures frequently speak of God’s coming down to earth to make inspection, as at the building of the tower of Babel and to take note of what the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were doing. Also we read of his ‘visiting’ his people Israel and noting their plight while they were in bondage in Egypt. – Gen. 11:5-7; 18:21; Ex. 2:25; 3:8, 16; 4:31.

But do you think it was necessary for Jehovah God actually to leave his heavenly throne to make inspection or take action? Hardly! Rather, he took note, he turned his attention to the things of earth. So when we read that “God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name,” (AS) it simply means that he turned his attention to the Gentiles...So in this sense it can be said that Christ’s second advent or presence has taken place even though he actually resides in heaven. He has returned in that he has turned his attention to the affairs of the earth at God’s due time, even as Jehovah indicated to him in the prophecy that says: “Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.” – Ps. 110:1. The Watchtower, August 15, 1969, page 485.

Here we have a further example of the fanciful interpretation the Watch Tower is capable of. It makes assumptions about the visits of God to planet earth in Old Testament times and then tries to draw a parallel with the second coming of Jesus. The Watch Tower clearly does not accept that Jesus is God so
what sort of presumption is it resorting to in claiming that Jesus (a mere creature in their eyes) can do the same things that God does? Jesus has been invisibly present with us throughout the Christian era. He promised He would be at Matthew 28:20:

surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

The Watch Tower manipulation of Scripture is transparently clear. Jesus promised to return to planet earth to rescue His people and to take them to heaven – John 14:1-3. As Acts 1:11 promises:

This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

Jesus went away personally, visibly, and in the clouds. Revelation 1:7 supports the fact that Jesus will return personally, visibly, and in the clouds:

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.

The claim of the Watch Tower that this is they eye of understanding is clearly nonsense. Jesus made the same claim at Matthew 24:30:

All the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 assures us that “the Lord himself will come down from heaven...”

Jesus’ attention has always been on the affairs of the earth. In His due time He will return to our planet to save His people and to destroy the wicked.

**WHAT THE WATCH TOWER SOCIETY REALLY SAID PRIOR TO 1914:**

The following are just a sampling of pre-1914 statements that could be supplied from Watch Tower literature:

In this chapter we present the Bible evidence proving that the full end of the times of the Gentiles i.e. the full end of their lease of dominion will be reached in A.D.1914; and that that date will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men. 25

The forty years of the Gospel age harvest will end October 1914, and that likewise the overthrow of “Christendom”, so-called, must be expected to immediately follow. 26

The “Gentile Times” prove that the present governments must all be overturned about the close of A.D.1914.26

In the preceding chapter we presented evidence showing that the “Times of the Gentiles”, or their lease of domination, will run fully out with the year A.D.1914, and that at that time they will all be overturned and Christ’s Kingdom fully established.28

The Watchtower magazine of 1907 page 295 summed up the Society’s attitude to its prophetic expectations by asking:

But let us suppose a case far from our expectations: suppose that A.D.1915 should pass with the world’s affairs all serene and with evidence that the “very elect” had not all been “changed” and without the restoration of natural Israel to favour under the New Covenant (Rom. 11:12, 15.) What then? Would not that prove our chronology wrong? Yes, surely!29

Of course 1915 did pass without any of the events the Society anticipated taking place. Did not this prove their Chronology wrong? “Yes, surely!”

Let us be fair and acknowledge that when World War 1 commenced in 1914 it was reasonable for the followers of the Society to understand this to be the great trouble they were expecting. However, it became obvious in a very short while that what the Society was claiming only appeared to have
credibility because it coincided with the 1st World War. This was merely a coincidence. In a little while it became clear that what they were expecting and what had happened were quite clearly different. The story which unfolds is quite amazing.

As time went by the Watch Tower leaders should have been able to see their error. The evidence is that after a while they attached other dates to their chronological framework but nothing worked out as they thought it would, so they threw everything out except 1914 and they have clung to that ever since. As we have pointed out earlier in this paper, if they acknowledge that 1914 is wrong, they at the same time, remove their claim to be a special channel from God - they remove all support for their claim to authority.

The Society used to insist that Christ began His second invisible presence in 1874. In the year 1929, 15 years after the Society now says the signs which identify 1914 as the year when Christ’s second presence began, the Society said:

**The Scriptural proof is that the second presence of the Lord Jesus Christ began in 1874 A.D.**

Apparently, the signs which they now claim identify 1914 as the year of Christ’s second presence were not apparent to the Watch Tower leaders back in 1929. It is quite incredible to find that a little later the Society began saying that the generation (based upon *Matthew 24:34*), which was able to identify the signs of Jesus’ presence in 1914, would not pass away until all the signs were fulfilled. They claimed that the people of that generation would have had to be old enough in 1914 to be able to discern the signs. However, in 1929, 15 years later, the Society leadership were not able to discern them. See below for further on “this generation.”

**The Watchtower** magazine in its May 1 and 15 editions in the year 1922 mentioned many dates that were part of the scheme the Society had by that time erected. They were, 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918 and 1925 (they built a house “Beth-Sharim” for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who were expected to be resurrected in 1925). Eventually, it became so obvious that the whole scheme was erroneous that all of these dates were discarded, with the exception of 1914. This is surprising when we consider the statement found in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1924, page 211:

**The year 1925 is a date definitely and clearly marked in the scriptures even more clearly than 1914.**

What they claimed for 1914 failed and what they claimed for 1925 failed. Why then throw only one of the dates out? The unfortunate answer is that they **cannot let 1914 go or they will have no excuse for their existence.** The second presence of Christ was moved forward from 1874 to 1914 and the Society built a new frame-work around that date.

**1975 A.D.:**

The last excursion of the Society into date setting was its nominating of A.D.1975 as the year when Armageddon would occur.

The Society has always stirred its followers along by claiming that the generation which saw the beginning of the signs in 1914 would not pass away before the end came. Now the “Witnesses” were being prodded into action because the end would come in just a few short years - in 1975. That year came and went many years ago. Much to the consternation of many sincere “Jehovah’s Witnesses” nothing that was predicted happened once again. The let-down experienced by the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” caused many to leave the organization. The Society then began to deny that it actually said that 1975 would bring about the end. It claimed that it only pointed to that possibility. A reading of their literature and personal experience with many of the “Witnesses” of that period denies the Society’s claims. A partial acceptance of responsibility is found in the Society’s *1980 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, pages 30, 31:

**The brothers also appreciated the candor of this, same talk, which acknowledged the Society’s responsibility for some of the disappointment a number felt regarding 1975.**

**“THIS GENERATION”:**
As mentioned above, the Society for many years claimed that the generation which saw the commencement of the signs in 1914 would not pass away before the end came. Claims of this sort are sprinkled throughout their literature until 1995. A representative statement follows from their book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* (1968) page 95:

> there are people still living who were alive in 1914 and saw what was happening then and who were old enough that they still remember those events. This generation is getting up in years now. A great number of them have already passed away in death. Yet Jesus pointedly said: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” Some of them will still be alive to see the end of this wicked system. This means that only a short time is left before the end comes! (Psalm 90:10...) So now is the time to take urgent action if you do not want to be swept away with this wicked system.

How amazing is it that a group claiming to be speaking on behalf of God can make claims, such as the above, and then later deny the truthfulness of what they have claimed!

For many years the Watch Tower’s magazine *Awake* carried inside it’s front cover a statement advising “Why Awake is Published.” Part of the statement reads:

> this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.

Since the November 8, 1995 edition we now read:

> this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

The November 1 *Watchtower* of 1995, page 17, advises:

> Rather than provide a rule for measuring time, the term “generation” as used by Jesus refers principally to contemporary people of a certain historical period, with their identifying characteristics.

For many years I, and many others, have been aware that the Society has a foundation which is without factual support. It has built its house upon the sand of falsehood and deception. It keeps having to shift ground in order to try and maintain its position on 1914. We are now about a century beyond the beginning of the generation which was able to discern the events of 1914 and following. The Society could not continue to maintain its teaching. Either they would have to admit, at last, that they have been wrong about 1914 (this would spell the end for the Society) or, they would have to do away with the “this generation” teaching. We should have known! The Society chose to maintain its 1914 platform. Instead of being honest about its 1914 teaching the Society, without too much fuss, dropped the “this generation” teaching. Probably, most “Jehovah’s Witnesses” would not be awake to its reasons for doing so.

**CONCLUSION:**

**THE ABOVE INVESTIGATION HAS SHOWN THAT THE 1914 OF THE WATCH TOWER SOCIETY IS BUT A MYTH! A MYTH WHICH THE SOCIETY MAINTAINS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE ITS EXISTENCE. IT IS A DREADFUL PITY THAT MILLIONS OF SINCERE “JEOVAH’S WITNESSES” ARE THROWING AWAY THEIR LIVES ON A FALSE CAUSE - A CAUSE WHICH, INSTEAD OF GLORIFYING GOD, DISHONOURS HIM AND DENIES HIS TRUTH.** It has to be said with the greatest concern and respect that these people are not truly Jehovah’s Witnesses, they are in fact only Watch Tower Society Witnesses.

On page 1, in the subheading, the question is asked “Will they ever acknowledge their faulty foundation?” It seems unlikely that they ever will. On the other hand, another question comes prominently to mind, “How long can they continue with the myth?” It seems that we will just have to be patient and wait and see. In the meantime we remain very curious, very indignant with the Watch Tower Society because it misleads its followers, and very sympathetic with the ordinary Jehovah’s Witness who is being misled.
The Bible poses a challenging question for “Jehovah’s Witnesses”:

*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Psalm 11:3.*

*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain – Psalm 127:1*

AN APPEAL TO “JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES” - PLEASE DISCONTINUE FOLLOWING A GROUP OF MEN WHO ARE MISLEADING YOU - PLEASE STUDY THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH (JOHN 16:13) - THE WATCH TOWER SOCIETY WILL CERTAINLY NEVER DO THAT FOR YOU.

REFERENCES:


5. See for example *Your Will Be Done On Earth,* 1958, page 371.


   In 1978, Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW., made available a translation of the study of this text by Paul F. Neugebauer and Ernst F. Weidner, from German into English.


15. Thiele, page 82.


   The 1970 Revised Edition says, “this is a round figure approximately correct.”


   26. Ibid. page 245.
   27. Ibid. page 242.


29. This article was reprinted in *The Watchtower*, 15th December, 1913, pages 374, 375.

   *The Harp of God*, 1921, page 244.
   *Creation*, 1927, page 325.
