

The brethren of Joseph “hated him” (v. 4) and “hated him yet the more” (v. 8). This hatred was fuelled by envy: “his brethren envied him” (v. 11). Hatred and envy were two of the things that characterised the Cretians before they were baptized: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Tit. 3:3). The example of Joseph’s brethren provided them with a warning of the type of behaviour they were to avoid.

Given the parallels with Genesis 37, the exhortation for young men is seen in a new light when applied to Joseph: “Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Tit. 2:6-8). It is often noted that no sin is recorded of Joseph. Truly, he is presented as “a pattern of good works” of whom there is “no evil thing to say”.

The times of the Gentiles

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THE EXPRESSION “the times of the Gentiles” occurs only once in Scripture (Lk. 21:24). This is clearly an end-time prophecy indicating that Jerusalem would be ruled by non-Jewish people until some indeterminate future time when it would throw off the alien power and be restored to Jewish sovereignty. Jesus links this with a time when there would be great distress throughout the world as the prelude to his return to earth. Can we know when this will be?

In answer to the disciples’ question as to whether he would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons” (Acts 1:6,7). He was speaking to the disciples, not to us. We do know the times. We are living in them. On another occasion Jesus said no man knows the “day and hour” (Mt. 24:36). Jesus was speaking in the present tense, as he did in Acts 1.

The reference to not knowing the day or hour seems to be a figure of speech derived from the method of determining the start time for the Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), the Jewish New Year. The date for this was determined by two members of the Sanhedrin observing the appearance of the new moon and reporting its visibility to the council. The day became known as the ‘no one knows day’. Perhaps Jesus was implying that the Messiah would come on a future *Rosh Hashanah*. Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, says, “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and with the trump of God”; and in 1 Corinthians 15:52 he says, “for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised”. The Feast of Trumpets, the

beginning of the Jewish New Year, seems to be a likely candidate for the day of Christ’s return.

In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of the need to keep a watch because we do not know when a thief might come. But if the owner of the house *had* watched, the thief would have been apprehended. It was because he was not watching that he was surprised. Therefore Jesus counsels watching to avoid the consequences, as does Paul (1 Thess. 5:1,2). The thief comes unexpectedly to those in darkness, not those watching.

What are the “times” and “seasons”? They must relate to Gentile times. “The times of the Gentiles” must be a period of time with a determinate start date, for it has an end associated with the freeing of Jerusalem from Gentile rule.

The beginning of Gentile times is revealed by Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the man-image, in which he is the head of gold, and concludes with the destruction of the kingdoms of the Gentiles by the returned Jesus Christ. The duration of the times is given in Daniel 4:16 as being seven times of day/years, that is 7×360 years on the principle of one time equals one prophetic year of 360 days, each of which represents a year. This is 2,520 years. This is the duration of the times of the Gentiles.

Is there a precise date at which the times of the Gentiles commenced? The times of the Gentiles can be considered, not as one continuous period of 2,520 years, but as *blocks* of times of 2,520

Acknowledgement is made to Daniel Matson, who first alerted me to these parallels.

The years of destruction		2,520 years later	
9th Av 606 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar's first attack on Jerusalem, marking the start of Gentile times.	9th Av 1914 (1 August)	Declaration of World War 1, an unparalleled event that overthrew world order.
9th Av 587 B.C.	First temple destroyed by the Babylonians.	11 April 1933	Passover Day. Laws passed in Germany defining who was Jewish, the beginning of the persecution by the Nazis that led to the Holocaust.
The years of restoration		2,520 years later	
537 B.C.	End of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon. Exiles return to Jerusalem.	14 May 1948	Declaration of the State of Israel. Independence regained.
518 B.C.	End of seventy years of desolation. Rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.	7 June 1967	Six-Day War. Jerusalem recaptured by Israel.

years, each of which begins with a significant event in the period of the termination of the Old Testament kingdom of Israel, the exile, and the restoration, and each of which terminates in the period referred to by Jesus when he said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Mt. 24:34). They thus form parallels of fulfilment with the earlier events.

A Biblical generation can be forty, seventy or 100 years (Abraham was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac). If the maximum length of a generation is assumed then there could be some very signifi-

cant events in 2014, 100 years from the beginning of World War 1, and 2017, 100 years from when Allenby entered Jerusalem, thus freeing Palestine from alien rule and initiating events that led to the restoration of Israel.

The parallels between significant dates in the history of Israel and end-time events separated from the former by 2,520 years are shown in the table.

Jesus said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled". Will it see the coming of the Lord?