

second and third predictions, we shall look at all four in order.

It is impossible to set a point at which the process of making the whole country a desolate wasteland may be said to have begun. The entire northern kingdom was carried off into exile in 723-722 B.C., making a large portion of the land of Israel desolate. In the time of Isaiah Sennacherib devastated much of the southern kingdom and there were later incursions by other Assyrian emperors from time to time. In 604 Nebuchadnezzar took some hostages, including Daniel himself, to Babylonia. In 597 he captured Jerusalem and took a king of Judah and many of the most skillful Israelites into exile. In 586 Nebuchadnezzar finished a long siege of Jerusalem and carried away most of the remaining people as captives. From that date the land could be said to have become a desolate wasteland, though a large part of the desolation began much earlier. Thus the first part of Jeremiah's statement, that the whole country would become a desolate wasteland, was not entirely fulfilled until about 18 years after the start of the predicted 70-year period.

The second and third parts of the prediction -- that the nations would continue to serve the king of Babylon 70 years, and that after the 70 years God would punish the king of Babylon and his nation -- were fulfilled when Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, king of Persia, about 66 years after Jeremiah received the message. Thus in both these predictions the 70 years is clearly a round number. The fourth prediction was that Babylon would become desolate forever. No modern visitor to the ruins of Babylon can fail to see how precisely this prediction has been fulfilled. A casual reading of Jeremiah's prophecy might lead one to think that this fulfillment was to occur at the end of the 70 years, but this is not so stated in the prediction. Actually the desolation of Babylon did not begin until more than two centuries later. After Cyrus brought the power of the Babylonian kings to an end he made Babylon one of the Persian capitals, and when the Greeks conquered the Persian empire, two centuries later, they made it one of their own capitals. The desolation of the city did not actually