

begin until the Hellenistic period had lasted half a century. Then many of its inhabitants were removed to the new city of Seleucia, quite a distance to the north, and Babylon began gradually to sink into its present condition. If a student were not familiar with the fact that divine prophecy often contains unmentioned intervals he might think that Jeremiah had predicted that the desolation of Babylon would begin immediately after the end of the 70 year period.

Jeremiah's other reference to a period of 70 years is in a letter that he sent from Jerusalem to the exiles who had been carried off to Babylon in 597 B.C. Jeremiah 29:10 reads:

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place."

The previous mention of a 70-year period referred to the end of the Babylonian power over the nations. This one refers specifically to the Jewish captives, promising them that after the 70 year period they would be permitted to return to Jerusalem. Within a year or two after Daniel uttered his prayer this prediction was fulfilled -- about 60 years after this second prediction was given. Again we see 70 years used as a round number.