

When Did God's Kingdom Begin Ruling?

—PART 2

The following is a typical conversation that one of Jehovah's Witnesses might have with a neighbor. Let us imagine that a Witness named Cameron has returned to the home of a man named Jon.



NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM—A BRIEF REVIEW

Cameron: It's good to see you again, Jon. I always enjoy our weekly Bible study sessions.* How have you been?

Jon: I've been fine, thanks.

Cameron: I'm glad you're doing well. The last time I was here, we talked about why Jehovah's Witnesses say that God's Kingdom began ruling in 1914.[#] As we discussed, we find a key piece of evidence in a prophecy in chapter 4 of the Bible book of Daniel. Do you recall what is recorded there?

Jon: It was King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a big tree.

Cameron: Yes, exactly. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw an immense tree that reached clear to heaven. He heard a messenger of God command that the tree be cut down, but its stump and roots were to be left in the ground. After a period of "seven times," the tree would grow again.[^] We also discussed why the prophecy has two fulfillments. Do you remember what the initial fulfillment was?

* By means of their free Bible study program, Jehovah's Witnesses often have systematic discussions about the Bible with their neighbors.

[#] See the article "A Conversation With a Neighbor—When Did God's Kingdom Begin Ruling?—Part 1" in the October 1, 2014, issue of this magazine.

[^] See Daniel 4:23-25.

Jon: It was something that happened to Nebuchadnezzar himself, right? He lost his sanity for seven years.

Cameron: Precisely. Nebuchadnezzar temporarily lost his sanity, so his rulership was interrupted. But in the larger fulfillment of the prophecy, *God's* rulership would in a way be interrupted for a period of seven times. As we saw, the seven times began when Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. From then on, there were no more kings on earth who represented Jehovah God in ruling his people. However, at the end of the seven times, God would appoint a new Ruler over his people—someone in heaven. In other words, the end of the seven times would mark the start of the rulership of God's heavenly Kingdom. Now, we already discussed when the seven times started. So if we can determine how long they lasted, then we will know when God's Kingdom began ruling. Are you with me so far?

Jon: Yes, this review has helped me to refresh my memory.

Cameron: Great. Let's dig in, then, and consider the length of the seven times. I've just finished reading up on this subject to remind myself of the key points. I'll try to explain them as well as I can.

Jon: OK.

SEVEN TIMES END—THE LAST DAYS BEGIN

Cameron: In the prophecy's initial fulfillment involving Nebuchadnezzar, the seven times were evidently seven literal years. But in the larger fulfillment involving God's Kingdom, the seven times must be much longer than seven literal years.

Jon: Why do you say that?

Cameron: For one thing, recall that the seven times began when Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. If we start counting from that year, seven literal years would take us to the year 600 B.C.E. But nothing significant happened in that year with regard to God's rulership. Besides, as we considered before, centuries later when Jesus was here on earth, he indicated that the seven times had not yet ended.

Jon: Oh, yes. I remember that now.

Cameron: So, rather than being literal years, the seven times must involve a longer period of time.

Jon: How long?

Cameron: The Bible book of Revelation, which is closely connected with the book of Daniel, helps us to determine exactly how long the seven times are. It identifies a period of three and a half times as amounting to 1,260 days.* Thus, seven times—twice the amount of three and a half times—would equal 2,520 days. Are you still with me?

Jon: Yes, I follow you. But I don't see how this shows that God's Kingdom began ruling in 1914.

Cameron: OK, let's see if we can make the connection. Sometimes in Bible prophecy, a day symbolizes a year.[#] If we apply the rule of a day for a year, the seven times would amount to 2,520 years. Counting forward from 607 B.C.E., 2,520 years takes us to the year 1914.[△] That's how we

arrive at 1914 as the year that the seven times ended, the start of Jesus' rule as King of God's Kingdom. And significantly, since 1914, major world events have happened—events that the Bible foretold for the last days.

Jon: What sort of events?

Cameron: Consider what Jesus said, as recorded here at Matthew 24:7. Concerning the time when he would start ruling in heaven, Jesus said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." Notice that Jesus foretold food shortages and earthquakes during that time period. Our world

Concerning the time when he would start ruling in heaven, Jesus said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another"

has certainly seen a lot of that kind of trouble in the past century, hasn't it?

Jon: True.

Cameron: In this verse, Jesus also foretold warfare during his presence as King of God's Kingdom. And the Bible book of Revelation foretold not just local warfare but wars that would affect the whole earth during the time of the end.* Do you recall when the first world war broke out?

Jon: That was in 1914, the same year that you're saying Jesus began ruling! I never connected that before.

Cameron: When we put all these pieces

* See Revelation 12:6, 14; footnote.

[#] See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6.

[△] See the chart "Nebuchadnezzar's Tree Dream."

* See Revelation 6:4.

together—the prophecy about the seven times as well as other Bible prophecies concerning the time of the end—it really makes sense. Jehovah’s Witnesses are convinced that Jesus began ruling as King of God’s Kingdom in 1914 and that the last days began in that same year.*

Jon: I’m still trying to wrap my mind around all of this.

Cameron: That’s perfectly understandable. As I mentioned before, it took me a while to grasp it fully too. But at the very least, I hope our discussion has helped you to see that even though the year 1914 isn’t specifically mentioned in the Bible, Jehovah’s Witnesses *do* base their beliefs about that year on the Scriptures.

Jon: Yes, I’ve always been impressed with this about you—no matter what you say, you back it up with a scripture. It’s never just your opinion. I

* See chapter 9 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org.

guess I’m wondering, though, why this is so complicated. Why didn’t God just tell us in the Bible that 1914 would be the year that Jesus would begin ruling in heaven?

Cameron: That’s an excellent question, Jon. In fact, there are many things that are not explicitly spelled out in the Scriptures. So why did God have the Bible written in a way that would require effort for people to understand? Maybe we can talk about that on another visit.

Jon: I would like that. ■

Do you have a particular Bible subject that you have wondered about? Are you curious about any of the beliefs or religious practices of Jehovah’s Witnesses? If so, do not hesitate to ask one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He or she will be pleased to discuss such matters with you.



NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S TREE DREAM

HOW IT RELATES TO GOD'S KINGDOM

THE PROPHETIC PATTERN

An enormous tree
(Daniel 4:10, 11)



"Chop down the tree"
(Daniel 4:14)



"Let **seven times**
pass" (Daniel 4:16)



"Your kingdom
will be yours again"
(Daniel 4:26)



Rulership

Rulership interrupted

Interval

Rulership restored

INITIAL FULFILLMENT

Nebuchadnezzar,
King of Babylon



Sometime after 606 B.C.E.,
Nebuchadnezzar loses his
sanity and is unable to rule



7
literal
years

Nebuchadnezzar regains his
sanity and begins ruling again



LARGER FULFILLMENT

Israelite kings who
represent God's rulership



Jerusalem is destroyed,
interrupting that line of
Israelite kings



2,520 years

B.C.E.

606 1/4
years

C.E.

1,913 3/4
years

Jesus begins ruling in
heaven as King of God's
Kingdom



October
1914 C.E.

"Jerusalem will be
trampled on . . .
until the *appointed*
times of the nations
are fulfilled"
(Luke 21:24)