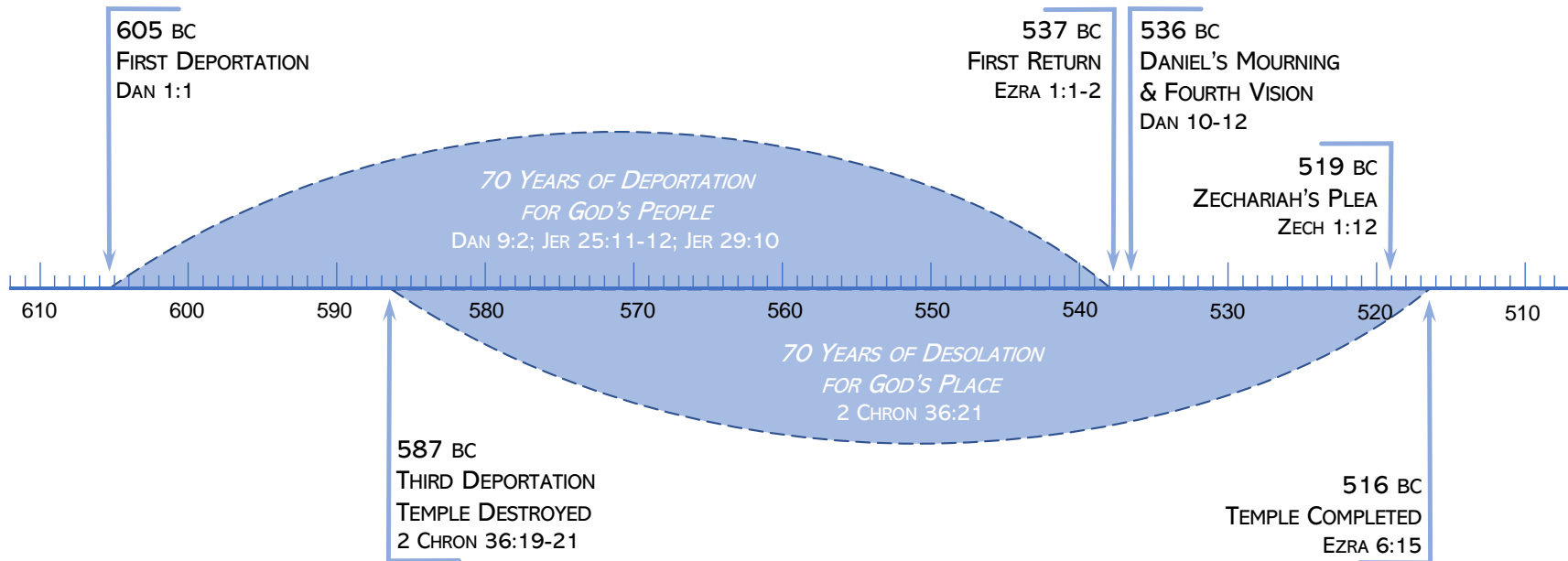


DANIEL'S PERIOD OF MOURNING

DANIEL 10:2-3

"IN THOSE DAYS I, DANIEL, HAD BEEN IN MOURNING FOR THREE WHOLE WEEKS . . ."



What prompted Daniel's three weeks of mourning?

Dan 9 records Daniel's prayer following his reading of the 70 years prophecy in Jeremiah. This occurred in "the first year of Darius," which was likely in 538 BC. Sometime that same year Cyrus decreed that peoples could return (Cyrus cylinder), including the Jews (Ezra 1:1-4). If inclusive reckoning is used for the period 605 BC to 537 BC (double-counting the transition years between Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin and Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, the period is 70 years).

For the desolation of the temple, however, the 70 year period did not begin until it was destroyed in 587 BC. 2 Chron 36:21 seems to state that the desolation of Jerusalem, and perhaps the temple specifically, would last 70 years.

This seems to be supported by the plea of Zechariah, who refers to "these seventy years" of indignation (Zech 1:12). This took place in the 11th month of the 2nd year of Darius the Great, i.e. 519 BC, nearly 20 years after Daniel's prayer (Zech 1:7; cf. Dan 9:1-2). God's response is that "I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; my house will be built in it" (Zech 1:16). And, in fact, the temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius, about 516 BC (Ezra 6:15).

It may have been this disconnect, the lapse in time between the return of the people and the reconstruction of the temple, that concerned Daniel. The period between the first return and the completion of the temple was a time of difficulty and stress for the Jews. This was also true of the following years (the city itself was not rebuilt for another 60 years).