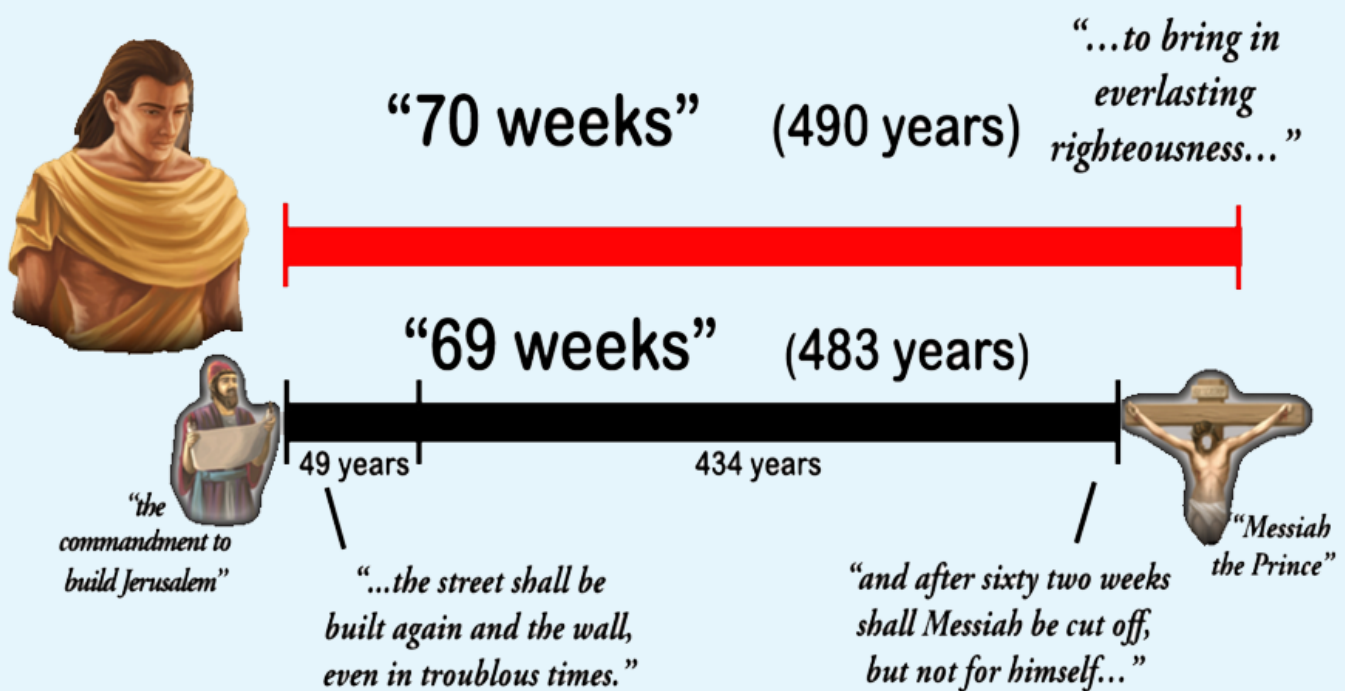


# DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS PROPHECY



**Roger Waite**

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# DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS PROPHECY

One of the most mysterious prophecies in the Bible is Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27. There are many different interpretations of this prophecy. The prophecy, we are told, starts with a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Various different beginning points have been suggested as a result of four different decrees that were made about the Temple and Jerusalem from Cyrus to Artaxerxes.

Within the prophecy mention is also made of different periods within the 70 weeks - 7 weeks, 62 weeks and a final week where at the midpoint "the sacrifice and the offering...cease". Some see the 70 weeks as one complete continuous block. Others see one or more breaks in time between the various blocks that form the 70 weeks and, as a result, we have different end points for these various views as well.

The Hebrew word translated as weeks in this prophecy is "shebua" which literally means "sevens". It can refer to a week of seven days or it can refer to a heptad of seven years. Most views either say it should be translated as a heptad or, if they accept the standard translation of week, invoke the day for a year prophecy principle (Ezekiel 4:6). In either case, the vast majority of views (though not all) believe the 70 "shebua" in this prophecy gives us a grand total of 490 years (70 heptads).

## Overview of the Different Views

The traditionally held view in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and in the United Church of God (UCG) keeps the first "69 weeks" and the first half of the final "week" together as a continuous unit starting from the 457 BC decree in Artaxerxes I's 7<sup>th</sup> year.

The "69 weeks" ends at the beginning of Christ's ministry and then the 3 ½ years of Christ's ministry up to his death is the first half of the "70th week". While little publicised in the church, the second half of the final week is placed after the second coming of Jesus Christ.

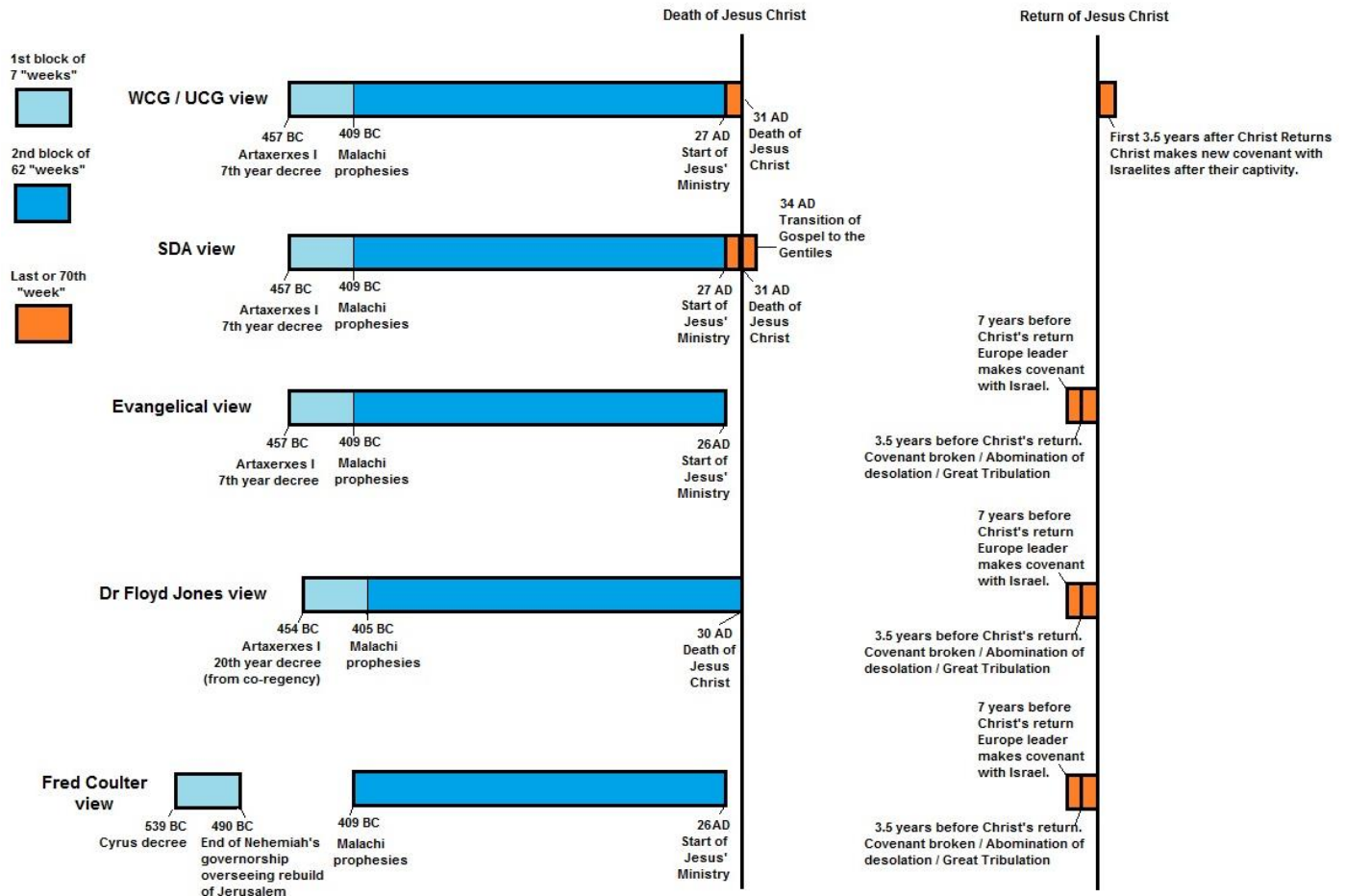
The view of the Jehovah Witnesses and the Seventh-Day Adventists is much the same as the WCG with the exception of not splitting the final week. They believe that the final week covers the time from the beginning of Christ's ministry to the end of the first 3 ½ years of the church. From the beginning of the church up to Stephen's stoning and subsequent scattering of the church was the second half of the final week. The end of the 70th week is seen as the transition between the gospel going to just the Jews to being preached to the Gentiles.

The main Protestant / Evangelical point of view keeps the first "69 weeks" together as a continuous unit. Some views have it starting it with the same decree in 457 BC believed to be the starting point by the Worldwide Church of God and ending at the start of Christ's ministry. Others have it starting from the decree of Artaxerxes I's 20th year and ending at Christ's crucifixion.

Most evangelicals interpret the "he" of Daniel 9:27 who "confirms a covenant for a week" to be the Beast of end time prophecy, rather than the Messiah as believed by the Worldwide Church of God. This view has the final "week" being the last 7 years proceeding the return of Jesus Christ. They believe the Beast power will form a covenant with Israel allowing them to start the Temple sacrifices and then break that agreement 3½ years before Christ's coming and with the abomination of desolation trigger the Great Tribulation.

A view put forth by Fred Coulter of the Christian Biblical Church of God breaks up the "7 weeks" and "62 weeks" into separate blocks. He starts the "7 weeks" with the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC ending in 490 BC and the second block of "62 weeks" starting around the time of Malachi through to the start of Christ's ministry. He takes the same position as the evangelicals on the final week being the last 7 years leading up to the return of Jesus Christ.

## DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE 70 WEEK'S PROPHECY OF DANIEL 9



## Elements and Purpose of the Prophecy

There is much confusion over this prophecy. In this article I plan to look at the different points of views comparing and contrasting them to see which point/s of view are most likely to be correct.

Let's now look at this mysterious prophecy and note its purpose and the key elements within it:

**Seventy weeks** [literally "sevens"] are decreed **upon your people and upon your holy city to finish the transgression and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.**

Know therefore and understand that **from the going forth of the commandment TO RESTORE AND TO BUILD JERUSALEM, to Messiah the Prince, shall be 7 weeks, and 62 weeks.** It shall be built again with streets and the wall, even in troublous times.

**And after 62 weeks Messiah shall be cut off**, but not for Himself. And the people of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. But his end shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

**And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.** And in the **midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease**, and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate even until the consummation. **And the fully determined end which is decreed shall be poured out upon the desolator.**

The purpose of the prophecy is that these 70 “sevens” are decreed upon Israel and Jerusalem:

- To finish the transgression and make an end to sin
- To make reconciliation for iniquity
- To bring in everlasting righteousness
- To seal up the vision and prophecy
- To anoint the Most Holy

This is the purpose of the prophecy – to reveal the fate of Israel and Jerusalem and their eventual reconciliation with God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Some key elements that are noted in the prophecy are the following:

- The starting point is a command to restore and build Jerusalem. Note that it is Jerusalem and NOT the Temple specified in the starting decree. It speaks of the streets and the wall being built in troublesome times.
- There are two blocks of 7 “sevens” and 62 “sevens” to Messiah the Prince. There is nothing definite that indicates whether these two blocks are continuous or separated.
- It states that after 62 “sevens” Messiah shall be cut off for others. This indicates that the block of 7 “sevens” occurs before the block of 62 “sevens”.
- During the 70th “seven” (the last “seven”) a covenant is made by “he”. The identity of the person noted as “he” is not crystal clear. The Messiah is spoken of at the beginning of the previous verse and then the prince of the people who destroys Jerusalem is spoken of in the latter part of the previous verse.
- In the midst of that last “seven” this “he” shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease.
- It then goes straight on to speak of abomination and desolation, presumably upon Jerusalem. The abomination of desolation appears to form part of the prophecy.

### **Which Decree is the Starting Point?**

In relation to Jerusalem and the Temple there are four decrees recorded in the post-Exile period noted in the Bible. These decrees are as following:

- 1) Cyrus' decree in his 1st year (**Ezra 1:1-6**) to rebuild the Temple dated to **539 BC**.
- 2) Darius decree in his 2nd year to complete the Temple (**Ezra 6:1-12**) dated to **520 BC** which saw its completion a few years later in **516 BC**.
- 3) The decree commonly identified with Artaxerxes I in his 7th year to beautify the Temple (**Ezra 7:7-28**) in **457 BC**. This is the one that the Worldwide Church of God believed was the starting point.
- 4) The decree commonly identified with Artaxerxes I in his 20th year to Nehemiah to rebuild the city and its walls (**Nehemiah 2:1-17**). This is usually dated to **445 BC**. Floyd Jones in his book “The Chronology of the Old Testament” dates this **454 BC** if you count the 20th year from the time that Artaxerxes I became co-regent with Xerxes.

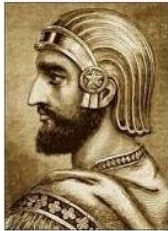
## EARLY PERSIAN KINGS AND THEIR DECREES

### BABYLONIAN EMPIRE



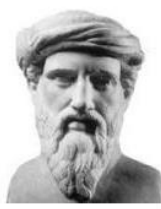
609-539 BC

### Cyrus the Great 539-529 BC



Cyrus' decree in his 1st year (Ezra 1:1-6) to rebuild the Temple dated to 539 BC.

### Cambyses 529-522 BC



### Darius I 522-486 BC



Darius decree in his 2nd year to complete the Temple (Ezra 6:1-12) dated to 520 BC which saw its completion a few years later in 516 BC.

### Xerxes 486-465 BC



The decree commonly identified with Artaxerxes I in his 7th year to beautify the Temple (Ezra 7:7-28) usually dated to 457 BC.

### Artaxerxes I 465-424 BC



The decree commonly identified with Artaxerxes I in his 20th year to Nehemiah to rebuild the city and its walls (Nehemiah 2:1-17).

This is usually dated to 445 BC. Dr Floyd Jones dates this 454 BC if you count the 20th year from the time that Artaxerxes I became co-regent with Darius I.

Dr Floyd Jones in his book "The Chronology of the Old Testament" writes the following regarding these decrees:

**As may be seen and verified, the first three have only to do with the temple proper; nothing was said concerning the rebuilding of the city, the street in the plaza area and its walls... Thus the conditions of Daniel 9:25 were not met in any of the first three decrees...**

Anstey and others have strongly advocated the decree of Cyrus on the grounds that other scripture in Isaiah demands it was under this Persian monarch that the city would be rebuilt (p.206).

Dr Floyd Jones says that only the last decree (Artaxerxes 20th year decree) fits the condition of building the city of Jerusalem that is a requirement to be the decree. The last decree certainly fits the requirement of rebuilding the city. Can we rule out all the other three or not?

### The 1st decree – The decree of Cyrus the Great.

**Ezra 1:1-6** only speaks of the rebuilding of the Temple. Let's look at the prophecy in Isaiah alluded to in Dr Jones' quote above. In **Isaiah 44:28** we read:

Who says of **Cyrus**, He is My shepherd, and shall do all My pleasure; even saying to **Jerusalem, You shall be built**; and to the temple, Your foundation shall be laid.

God's word clearly says here that Cyrus would command that Jerusalem would be built. This would meet the requirement of the starting decree that it involve the rebuilding of Jerusalem and not just the Temple.

## The 2nd decree - The decree of Darius.

After work on the Temple was thwarted by the enemies of the Jews, Darius I issued a decree in **520 BC** which allowed the Jews to complete the Temple 4 years later in **516 BC**. As correctly noted by Dr Floyd Jones there is nothing in the decree found in Ezra 6:1-12 that has anything to do with rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. It only concerns the Temple and can be ruled out.

## The 3rd decree – The decree of Artaxerxes that was given in his 7th year.

The Worldwide (and United) Church of God have started the 70 weeks prophecy from the decree commonly believed to be in Artaxerxes I's 7th year usually dated to **457 BC**.

If we go 483 years (69 prophetic weeks) forward from this date it brings us to **26 AD** when Christ turned 30 and started His ministry. From a timing point of view this, too many, seems the obvious choice. But is it?

Dr Floyd Jones says that this decree must be ruled out because it only had to do with beautifying the Temple and had nothing to do with rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. The prophecy says that it is from the decree to “restore and build Jerusalem”.

If the prophecy meant to restore and build the Temple of Jerusalem this decree still wouldn't fit either because it was given after the Temple was completed in **516 BC**.

Below is the passage that describes this decree where the reader can decide if there is anything that has anything to do with rebuilding Jerusalem:

Ezr 7:8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king.

Ezr 7:9 For on the **first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon**, and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God on him.

Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach statutes and judgments in Israel.

Ezr 7:11 And this is the copy of the letter which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the scribe, a scribe of the words of the commandments of Jehovah, and of His statutes to Israel.

Ezr 7:12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven, perfect peace, and now:

Ezr 7:13 From me was made a decree that everyone of the people of Israel, and their priests and Levites in my kingdom, who desire of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with you;

Ezr 7:14 since you have been sent by the king, and by his seven counselors to ask about Judah and Jerusalem, according to the Law of your God in your hand;

Ezr 7:15 and to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose house is in Jerusalem,

Ezr 7:16 and all the silver and gold which you can find in all the province of Babylon, with the free will offering of the people and of the priests, **offering willingly for the house of their God in Jerusalem.**

Ezr 7:17 Before all of this, you shall diligently buy with this money, bulls, rams, lambs, with their food offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.

Ezr 7:18 And whatever shall seem good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do that after the will of your God.

Ezr 7:19 Also the vessels which are given you for the service of the house of your God, deliver them before the God of Jerusalem.

Ezr 7:20 And whatever more shall be needful for the house of God, which you shall have need to give, give it out of the king's treasure house.

Ezr 7:21 And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers who are Beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven, shall ask of you, it shall be done exactly,

Ezr 7:22 to a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths of oil, and salt without saying.



Ezr 7:23 **Whatever is commanded by the God of Heaven, let it be carefully done for the house of the God of Heaven, for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?**

Ezr 7:24 Also, we notify you, that in regard to any of the priests and the Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple slaves, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, taxes, or custom on them.

Ezr 7:25 And now, Ezra, after the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, set officers and judges who may judge all the people who are Beyond the River, all who know the Laws of your God; and teach them who do not know.

Ezr 7:26 And whoever will not do the Law of your God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily on him, whether it is to death, or to exile, or to confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.

Ezr 7:27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put this in the king's heart, to **beautify the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.**

As the reader should be able to see, this decree **ONLY** has to do with beautifying the Temple which had been already built BEFORE this decree.

Another point against this decree is that the timing may not be as ideal as many think. Evidence will be shown later for a co-regency between Xerxes and Artaxerxes indicating the dates of any decrees assigned to Artaxerxes I should be reckoned from the start of his co-regency. This would mean the 7th year decree if the Artaxerxes mentioned in Nehemiah was Artaxerxes I would have been given in **467 BC** and the 20th year decree in **454 BC**.

One further point that the reader should keep in mind is the time of year that this decree was given. Ezra 7:9 says that the decree was given at the beginning of the 1st month. If we assume that this is the correct decree then the event at the end of the 69th “week” when the Messiah would come along one would think would probably be around the same time of year – the 1st month.

Those who support the 7th year decree of Artaxerxes say that the 69 “weeks” goes from 457 BC and ends with the year that Christ began His ministry. Christ’s ministry did not begin in the 1st month. It began around the 7th month and ended with his crucifixion in the 1st month some 3 ½ years later. If a half year is important in the reckoning of the last “week” of the prophecy then one would think a half year is important in the counting of the 69 “weeks”.

Like the decree of Artaxerxes 7th year we will see later that his 20th year decree was also given in the 1st month. Dr Floyd Jones, using this decree, has the event at the end of the 69 “weeks” Christ’s entry into Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion which also fell in the 1st month.

**Having looked at these decrees carefully I am compelled to rule out not just the decree of Darius I to complete the Temple but also the decree that the Worldwide (and United) Church of God has chosen as the starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy.**

### **The Two Decrees that Relate to the Building of Jerusalem**

Of the four candidates for being the starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy only two of them fit the criteria:

- Cyrus’ decree in his 1st year (**Ezra 1:1-6**) to rebuild the Temple (and Jerusalem according to Isaiah’s prophecy) dated to **539 BC**.
- Artaxerxes’ decree in his 20th year to Nehemiah to rebuild the city and its walls (**Nehemiah 2:1-17**). This is usually dated to **445 BC** but Dr Floyd Jones dates this **454 BC** if you count the 20th year from the time that Artaxerxes I became co-regent with Darius I.

So which one is it?

If we use Cyrus' decree it is obvious we would have to split the 7 "sevens" from the 62 "sevens" and that there would be a gap between the two blocks.

All three major views on how the 70th week is to be interpreted are possible using Cyrus' decree as the starting point.

Later we will look at Dr Floyd Jones' evidence that Cyrus did verbally consent to the building of Jerusalem but only put into writing the rebuild of the Temple.

If we use Dr Floyd Jones' date of **454 BC** for Artaxerxes I's 20th year decree then the 7 "sevens" and 62 "sevens" would form a continuous 483 year block and end in the year **30 AD**, the date that Dr Floyd Jones gives for the crucifixion of Christ.

A major consequence of choosing this decree is that no part of the 70th "week" would fall within Christ's lifetime. The "70th week" would start in the time after Christ's death. Using this decree would rule out the WCG/UCG and SDA view for how the 70th "week" should be interpreted.

The only major view of the 70th "week" that would fit with this decree is the Evangelical point of view that says that the 70th "week" is the last 7 years leading up to Christ's return.

### **In What Year Was Christ Crucified?**

Dr Floyd Jones' end date for the first 69 weeks (**30 AD**) raises another question that has been hotly disputed. In what year was Jesus Christ crucified?

Most mainstream churches defend either **30 AD** or **33 AD**. The Worldwide (and United) Church of God has said that Christ was crucified in **31 AD** (and therefore born in **4 BC**). Which is the correct date?

**The WCG/UCG view that Christ died in the year 31 AD is built upon two points:**

- 1) The belief that Passover (Nisan 14) fell on a Wednesday in 31 AD and on a Friday in both 30 AD and 33 AD.**

For Christ to be in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights as demanded by Scripture He must have died shortly before sunset on a Wednesday and rose just before sunset near the end of the weekly sabbath. The sabbath after the day of the crucifixion was a high sabbath (First Day of Unleavened Bread). It was one of the annual sabbaths, NOT the weekly sabbath.

Was the Passover of 30 AD on a Friday as claimed or on a Wednesday? I did a lot of searching on Google to determine which was true and came up with some interesting results. Almost every day of the week came up in the results. The majority of results (including the US Naval Observatory) did support a Friday date in 30 AD but coming in a close second was a Wednesday date for 30 AD for the Passover. It is clear that retrocalculating the day of the week is not the exact science that some claim that it is.

Carl Franklin in his very detailed paper "The Calendar of Christ and the Apostles" goes into much detail on the evidence that Dr Herman Hoeh of the Worldwide Church of God used to arrive at the 31 AD date (covered mostly in chapters 5 and 13). He misinterpreted certain source information that Carl Franklin goes back into and examines carefully regarding the pattern of leap years in the 19 year time cycle when retrocalculating the dates for Passover in the years 30 and 31 AD.

By using the wrong pattern (leap years in years 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16 and 18 of the 19-year cycle) instead of the pattern that Carl Franklin shows was in use at the time of Christ (leap years in years

3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 of the 19-year cycle) different days of the week are arrived at for Passover in 30 and 31 AD. The internet address for those who wish to download the paper to examine this further is [http://www.cbcg.org/franklin/cal\\_of\\_christ\\_part1\\_revised.pdf](http://www.cbcg.org/franklin/cal_of_christ_part1_revised.pdf).

Carl Franklin also notes:

These errors were compounded by the fact that many in the early days of the church simply believed that the Passover of the crucifixion of Jesus occurred in the year of 31 AD. Why? Because there was a strong belief that an event that occurred in 1931—the beginning of the Radio Church of God, occurred 100 19-year time cycles (1900 years) after the supposed beginning of the New Testament church in 31 AD.

This attempt to have the Passover of the crucifixion occur in 31 AD was probably born out of good intentions. Nevertheless, a 31 AD crucifixion also stemmed from the work of scholars who had not thoroughly researched the subject. We need not assign some great fault for this conclusion as it was likely based on good motives (The Calendar of Christ and the Apostles, p.124-125).

**2) John 2:20 speaks of the Temple being built (Herod's major expansion) 46 years earlier than Christ's first Passover in His ministry and Josephus says this was in the year that we date to 19 BC. Adding 46 years (remembering there was no zero year) would bring us to Passover 28 AD. Adding 3 years to this brings us to 31 AD for Christ's crucifixion date.**

In A.T. Robertson's special notes at the back of his Harmony of the Gospels where Robertson discusses this particular point he notes that when you use Josephus' other writings to correct himself, it gives a date of either 20 or 19 BC for the start of the Temple expansion. Wikipedia says around 19 BC rather than a definitive 19 BC.

Even if 19 BC was correct, there is also the possibility of the Temple starting in January or February 19 BC and so someone counting from then to the first Passover of Christ's ministry would count 46 years to 27 AD since the new year began just before Passover. This would give a 30 AD crucifixion (33 AD appears to be ruled out as an option by this).

**There are three other key pieces of evidence that also need to be considered in determining the dates for the birth and death of Jesus.**

**1) The death of Herod occurred around Passover in 4 BC.**

Most scholars who put forth a year and general time of year for the death of Herod based on Roman and Jewish records conclude that Herod died shortly before Passover in 4 BC. The Bible plainly tells us he was still alive when Jesus was born. If this is correct then Jesus could not have been born 6 months in late 4 BC after Herod died. This would mean the latest date for Christ's birth was 5 BC and therefore Christ's crucifixion would have to have been in 30 AD (remembering that 1 BC is followed by 1 AD and there is no zero year).

**2) Another key piece of evidence is the typology that kicks in if Christ was crucified in 30 AD. The year 30 AD is exactly 40 years before the Temple was destroyed. The seige of Jerusalem itself began on Passover in 70 AD.**

The number of 40 we all know is the number of trial and testing and it would make perfect sense if God gave the Jews 40 years to turn back to Him after their involvement in the death of Christ. Josephus writes:

And indeed, why do I relate these particular calamities? – while Manneus, the son of Lazarus, came running to Titus at this very time and told him that there had been carried out

through the gate, which was entrusted to his care, no fewer than a 115 880 dead bodies, in the interval between the **14th day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan] when the Romans pitched their camp by the city** and the 1st day of the month Panemus [Tamuz]. (War of the Jews Volume V, Chapter 13, 7)

Josephus confirms that the siege of Jerusalem began on Nisan 14 in **70 AD** on the very same day of the year that Christ was crucified. This would be exactly 40 years to the day when Jesus was crucified if it was in the year **30 AD**.

### **3) Temple miracles that occurred for 40 years before the destruction of the Temple.**

We do have some other historical evidence that supports this likelihood that God gave the Jews 40 years of testing following the death of Christ. Jewish records record four miraculous events that started 40 years before the Temple was destroyed and continued every year until Jerusalem fell. It would be unusual if these started a year before Christ was crucified and it would make more sense if they began starting with the year of Christ's death.

The Jerusalem Talmud has to say on this matter [The following translation is that of Jacob Neusner from his book The Yerushalmi, pages 156,157.1]:

#### **Forty years before the destruction of the Temple [starting in A.D.30]**

- **The western light went out,**
- **The crimson thread remained crimson, and**
- **The lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand.**
- **They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open [These huge gates took 20 men to open and close].**

Said Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to the Temple, 'O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said 'Open your doors, O Lebanon [a symbol for the Temple at Jerusalem which was made from Lebanese timbers], that the fire may devour Your cedars' (Zechariah 11:1) (Sotah 6:3).

I personally find that typology of there possibly being 40 years between Christ's death and the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem is extremely compelling evidence supporting a 30 AD crucifixion date, particularly given that the siege of Jerusalem began on the very same day of the year as Christ's crucifixion.

### **Is the 20th Year Decree of Artaxerxes the Correct Decree?**

So let's now take a look at the merits of each of our two remaining decrees in contention as the starting point for Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy and I would first like to look at the merits of the latter decree first.

Below is a summary of the points supporting the decree being that of Artaxerxes I's 20th year:

- 1) The prophecy of Isaiah stated that Cyrus would command that Jerusalem be rebuilt as confirmed by Josephus however internal biblical evidence appears to confirm that only the Temple rebuild was put in writing. This, according to Dr Floyd Jones, would leave us with Artaxerxes I's 20th year decree as the correct starting point.
- 2) In his book "The Chronology of the Old Testament" Dr Floyd Jones provides some solid evidence supporting a co-regency for Artaxerxes I while his father Xerxes was still alive. As a result, the 20th year of Artaxerxes I should be taken from his co-regency which would mean the decree was given in 454 BC.

- 3) The decree was given in the first month of Nisan. Go forward 483 years (factoring in no zero year) brings us to Nisan in 30 AD, the year of Christ's crucifixion. The coming of the Messiah in that month is likely a reference to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem shortly before his crucifixion on Nisan 14.

### Did Cyrus Give an Official Decree to Rebuild Jerusalem?

In defending Artaxerxes I's 20th year decree as the correct starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy Dr Floyd Jones examines the Cyrus decree in detail and contends that it cannot be the correct decree because there was no official decree in writing for the city to be built, only the Temple.

I'd like to now quote at length from his book "The Chronology of the Old Testament" covering his evidence in support of the first of the three points in support of his view noted above:

Cyrus was the monarch whose armies overthrew the Babylonian empire on the night the mysterious "handwriting on the wall" appeared during Belshazzar's great feast (Dan. 5). Concerning Cyrus, Isaiah 44:24, 28 and 45:1-4 adds:

"Thus saith the LORD..of CYRUS, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus with the LORD to...Cyrus... I, the LORD, which call thee *by thy name*, am the God of Israel ... I have even called thee *by thy name*: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."

Called by name nearly 125 years prior to his birth Cyrus was thence commissioned by God to allow the captives to return and rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

"That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid... I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts (Isaiah 44:28; 45:13)..."

Cyrus came to be sole ruler in the kingdom. But for a worldly-minded king - a battle hardened warrior - to suddenly release thousands of his slaves "not for price nor reward" seemed unthinkable. Slaves meant wealth, fame, and prestige to any king. When Cyrus proclaimed that these slaves could return to their land, he had it put *in writing*.

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put* it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah (note: this was in the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28).

"Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:1-3; also see 2 Chron. 36:22, 23).

It is very likely that Cyrus had been shown the Isaiah prophecies. If so, he must have been amazed when he saw that which had been written of him so many years beforehand. Such would have provoked him to reflect and come to realize that the God of Israel must be the true God. Regardless, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to decree that the people of this God should be allowed to return to rebuild their temple.

The 70 "weeks," however, were to begin with "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" - that is - the city along with its walls as Daniel foretold:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city. . . Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and **to build**

**Jerusalem** unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, **even in troublous times**. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself (Dan. 9:24-26, author's emphasis).

The decree granting these privileges was issued when letters were given to Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes Longimanus (Neh. 2:1-9)... The proclamation of Cyrus had only to do with the rebuilding of the "house of God" (Ezra 1, 5, and 6), whereas the 70 weeks were to begin with the commandment to build the city as well as its walls.

Consequently, it is a mistake to reckon these 70-year weeks from the time Cyrus gave permission for the people to return and to build the temple as they were to begin with permission to restore and build the city itself.

**The portion of the decree of Cyrus that is recorded in the first chapter of Ezra mentions only the rebuilding of the temple and does not specifically mention the rebuilding of the city (houses, streets, wall, etc.).**

The temple, which was eventually decorated with gold and silver as well as rare vessels, would be under the protection of the Empire itself prior to the rebuilding of the city walls.

**The decree in Nehemiah in which the commandment was given to rebuild the city was issued about 82 years after the decree of Cyrus (536 - 454 = 82).**

**The Jews returned from Babylon and rebuilt the temple, but because the Persians feared a revolt (Ezra 4:12-16) it was not until 82 years later that the decree was given for the city and its walls to be built! During the interim, the people lived among the ruins in the few restored homes as Nehemiah 1:3 and 2:3 depict.**

Still, according to Bible prophecy, Cyrus was to be the one that would speak the word which would cause the *city* of Jerusalem to be built, as well as the temple.

"He (Cyrus) is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (Isa. 44:28)."

"I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts (Isa. 45:13)".

As a result of Cyrus'...decree, Darius I Hystaspis (Darius of Marathon) allowed the work to restart in 520 BC after the Persian monarch [Cambyses] who had reigned in the period between Cyrus and Darius Hystaspis had caused the cessation of the reconstruction (Ezra 4; cp. chs. 5 and 6).

Again, the actual commandment to build the city did not go forth until 82 years after the return from Babylon in the days of Nehemiah. This was 76 years after the 530 BC passing of Cyrus.

This forces us to address the question - was the prophecy of Isaiah wrong or was Anstey et al. right all along? Should we measure the 483 years of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy from the ... decree of Cyrus after all?

Where does the truth lie for here we have Scripture saying that it would be Cyrus who would speak the command to restore and build Jerusalem: "even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built."

How can this be if the rebuilding of the city is said to actually have been carried out by Nehemiah acting under the authority of the decree given by Artaxerxes Longimanus in the 20th year of his reign (454 BC)?

Moreover, according to Josephus, Cyrus wrote:

"God almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth ... indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in the country of Judea" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, op. cit., XI, 1).

After Cyrus had supposedly read the remarkable prophecy in Isaiah, Josephus added:

"He called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to **rebuild their city Jerusalem**, and the temple of God" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, op. cit., XI, 2).

A letter written by Cyrus to the governors in Syria is reported to have read:

"King Cyrus to Sisinnus and Sathrabuzanes, sendeth greeting. I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to return to their own country, and to **rebuild their city**, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, op. cit., XI, 3).

**Thus, Josephus declares that Cyrus was instrumental in building not just the temple, but the CITY as well. This, along with the Isaiah passages already presented, represents the strongest, most convincing evidence in favor of the Cyrus Decree.**

Admittedly, it seems substantial. Can it be answered or has our former decision in favor of the Artaxerxes Decree been incorrect, and how does one begin?

As biblicists, we simply begin in faith. Knowing that all the relevant scriptures are true, there must be a way to reconstruct the history while honoring each passage. If the secular data, such as Josephus, can be made to accord, it is taken as accurate and utilized. If not, it is viewed as incorrect and ignored. Armed with this frame of reference and world view, we proceed.

**First, the Book of Nehemiah unmistakably says that the wall and city were in ruins (Neh. 1:3; 2:3; 7:4). Hence, although permission was given by Cyrus, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its wall was not written into his formal decree. This is why the people had not nearly completed the task...**

EZRA CHAPTER FOUR: tells of a letter in which their adversaries wrote: "...the Jews... are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad CITY, and have set up the WALLS thereof, and joined the foundations" (vv. 11-16).

The mention of the walls in verse 12 had to do with the walls of the temple, not the *city* (context, cp. vs. 24 whereas vv. 13 and 16 are the city wall). Moreover, vv. 13 and 16 show by the qualifying word "if" that the walls and city were not complete at that time. As the decree issued by Cyrus had not included the restoration of these, this unauthorized attempt on the part of the people was that which their enemies used against them. The attempt caused the work to halt.

**It cannot be overemphasized that the complaint lodged against the Jews said nothing about the temple (see vv. 12-13). This is because their enemies knew that its construction had been approved by Cyrus' decree.**

**Obviously they also knew that the rebuilding of the city and its walls were not part of that edict; hence, they knew their complaint to the king would stand a good chance to bring about the results which they desired.**

Indeed, as Cyrus was often away on military campaigns, even during his reign temple construction was thwarted (4:4-5) for direct appeal to him was not possible.

The enemies letter accomplished its purpose. Fearing a rebellion and the loss of tribute, the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:6-24 sent back a commandment that the building of "this city" should cease (vs. 21).

With this, discouragement and unbelief set in for we now read: "then ceased the work of the house of God ... unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia" (vs. 24).

By beginning construction on the city and its walls, the Jews went beyond that which was granted by Cyrus' official decree and this action brought about the problem...

EZRA CHAPTER SIX: When their right to rebuild was contested (Ezra 5:6-17), King Darius ordered a search of the "house of rolls {scrolls}" in the city of Babylon. Cyrus' edict was found 300 miles away at Achmetha (Ecbatana), his Median capital. Thus we see the providential hand of God at work in His leading Cyrus to have put the edict in writing!

**As we read the Decree of Cyrus recorded in this chapter (vv. 3-5) and the following confirming decree of Darius Hystaspis (vv. 6-12), it is most significant to observe that there is not found a single word concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem or its walls! Over and over, it is the building of the "house of God" and that alone that is before us (e.g., vv. 3, 5, 7, 8, 12). This substantiates our conclusion on chapter 5 that the walls referred to in verses 3, 8, and 9 were those of the temple and not those of the city.**

**Thus, it must be seen that although Cyrus may have given permission for the rebuilding of Jerusalem possibly in private to some of the Jewish leadership ... as some surmise from Isa. 44:28 and 45:13, at no place in Scripture is it recorded that he so did in his official written decree.**

**In point of fact, citations from this decree are given three times and no mention whatsoever is made in any of them concerning the building of the city or its walls.' Thus, his pleasure regarding the Holy City was, at best then, verbal only. It was not placed in writing.**

On the basis of Cyrus' former writ, Darius issued a decree in which he confirmed the words of his illustrious predecessor.

And the elders of the Jews builded ... and this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius (Ezra 6:14-15).

The temple was completed on the 3rd of Adar, the last month of the sixth year of the reign of Darius (14 February **516 BC**). ... The temple was then dedicated *before* the Passover which was held on the 14th day of the following month (Nisan, 6:16-22 and thus still in **516 BC**)...

**The building of the wall "in troublous times" was unmistakably fulfilled under the hand of Nehemiah (Neh. 2:17-6:15).**

These cited verses carefully record in great detail the struggle involved throughout this entire undertaking.

Thus according to Isaiah's prophecy, Cyrus was to be the one that would speak the word which would cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt - both the city and temple. However, the scriptural history we have given reveals that the returning captives under Zerubbabel built only the temple and merely homes enough to meet their immediate needs.

Yet even though they did not fully restore the city, that which they did must be seen as sufficient to fulfill Isaiah as he made no mention of the walls. Moreover, it was on the basis of Cyrus' decree that the later decrees were mandated; thus, it may rightly be held that Cyrus built "my city" and said to Jerusalem "Thou shalt be built."

Now let us notice the order of events:

1. The temple was completed in the **sixth year of Darius (Ezra 6).**
2. It was after this in the **seventh year of Artaxerxes** - that Ezra came to Jerusalem to beautify the house of God.
3. Still later in **"the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (Neh. 2:1)** - Nehemiah came to Jerusalem. He found only the temple to have been rebuilt (Neh. 2:8, "the house"), and the commandment to rebuild the city given to *Nehemiah* by Artaxerxes was then put into effect (Neh. 2:5, 8, 13, and 17)...

CONCLUSION: Isaiah 44:24-28 is a protracted sentence consisting of a series of participial clauses that recite mighty acts of God from creation down to Cyrus. Verse 26 clearly states



that God himself will rebuild Jerusalem. Thus, the subject of "even saying to Jerusalem" in verse 28, which many attribute to Cyrus, may well refer instead to God.'

The LXX and the Latin Vulgate both read this as meaning God, not Cyrus. Further, Cyrus did not directly build the city and its walls - Nehemiah did. If one still insists it is Cyrus who said to rebuild Jerusalem, we reply that it is not so stated in his decree as recorded at Ezra 6:3-5. Accordingly, Isa. 45:13 refers to Messiah far better than to Cyrus. All this casts serious doubt and greatly diminishes the case for these verses favoring Cyrus' decree over that of Artaxerxes.

Indeed, it must be seen that however long it may have taken the people to rebuild the city, this has *nothing* to do with the beginning of the 70 weeks prophecy. This prophecy was *not* to begin with the *completion* of the city but from the going *forth* of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem along with its wall!

Nehemiah's work was primarily with the wall and rebuilding the *city*. The entire work of repairing the walls (in spite of threats, hardships, and summer's heat) was completed in 52 days (Neh. 6:15)! The temple, the streets nearby, the homes of the indwelling remnant, etc., had already been built years before.

Once again, we see that the 70 weeks are to be counted from the 20th year of Artaxerxes when Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to repair the walls and the restore the city! The 69 "weeks" (69 sevens) or 483 years from this point do measure unto the "cutting off" of Messiah. The original...*decree* of Cyrus simply does not fit the context nor extend to the days of Christ (p. 300-308).

### **Is There Evidence for a Co-regency between Xerxes and Artaxerxes I?**

Having defended why the Artaxerxes I 20th year decree should be favoured over the Cyrus decree there is next the matter of the timing of that decree in Artaxerxes I's 20th year.

Ptolemy's Canon, from which we get our accepted dates for the reigns of the Persian kings, has Artaxerxes I's reign beginning in 465 BC which would place his 20th year in 445 BC. Go forward 69 "sevens" (483 years) and you come to a date of 39 AD, some 9 years after the death of Christ.

Now there have been challenges to the dates of Ptolemy for which I have devoted Appendix 1 (Can We Rely on the Dates that come from Ptolemy's Canon?) to answering. My conclusion in that appendix is that we can rely on those dates and this is also Dr Floyd Jones' conclusion as well.

The earlier fixed date of 454 BC for Artaxerxes I's 20th year that Dr Floyd Jones contends is the correct date for the decree (which ends the 483 year count in 30 AD) is derived by showing evidence for a co-regency between Xerxes and Artaxerxes I and that 20th year should be counted from his co-regency.

An eclipse at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC is used to obtain the date for the flight of Themistocles from Greece to Persia after being accused of treason. This is dated between **473 and 470 BC** with Ussher and Dr Floyd Jones favouring 473 BC.

Ptolemy's canon states that Artaxerxes I came to the throne in **465 BC** yet Thucydides, a contemporary of Artaxerxes writes:

"He [Themistocles] then travelled inland with one of the Persians living on the coast and sent a letter to **Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, who had recently come to the throne.**"

Below I quote the evidence that Dr Floyd Jones solution to the problem which he uses to support a co-regency for Artaxerxes I:

**It must not be overlooked that with regard to the varying ancient testimonies of the flight of Themistocles to Artaxerxes Longimanus rather than Xerxes,** the resolution unquestionably favors the authority of Thucydides and Charon of Lampsacus. Unlike all other voices, they were writing as contemporaries to the facts.

The "prince" of Greek historians, Thucydides was contemporary with Artaxerxes I Longimanus and was born around the time of Themistocles' flight. Moreover, he relates that the reason for his digressing to give a brief summary of the events between the Persian and Peloponnesian war was that all his predecessors had omitted this period in their works except Hellanicus who had only treated it "briefly, and with inaccuracy as regards his chronology"...

As to Xerxes' dates, Sir Isaac Newton continued (*Chron. Amended*, p. 353-354) saying that his expedition against the Greeks took place at the time of the 75th Olympic Games (480 BC), adding the critical comment that all chronologers agreed on that date. Diodorus Siculus (c. 80-20 BC), writing nearly a century before Ptolemy, gives these same facts with regard to Xerxes and is undoubtedly Newton's primary source for that information.

Newton added that the Battle of Salamis was fought in the autumn and that an eclipse took place a short time later on October 2nd. Herodotus mentions this same solar eclipse and Ussher, citing him, also dates the famous naval conflict at Salamis as 480 BC. The point is that having mentioned the October 2nd eclipse, Newton uses it to set the first year of Xerxes' reign as 485 BC (Anne Nabonassar 263) adding that he reigned "almost twenty one years by the consent of all writers."

The importance of this or any support certifying Ptolemy can hardly be over stressed. This is all the more true since Robert Newton has recently shown the extreme limitations of Ptolemy's king list. Robert Newton convincingly illustrated that any modern historian or chronologist using Ptolemy's lunar eclipse records, even if many or all of the aspects of these eclipses were fabricated as Newton charged, would seem to verify his king list. Moreover, he showed quite remarkably that any king list, regardless of its accuracy, would seem to be eclipse validated such that, taken alone, Ptolemy's king list is of little value.

However, Robert Newton goes on to show that the latter part of his king list has independent verification such that there is strong confirmation for its correctness for Nebuchadnezzar and reasonable affirmation for Cambyses. From this, Newton concluded that any error in Ptolemy's list could be no more than a few years for dates after -603 JP (604 BC Gregorian), but as there was no astronomical confirmation available for earlier dates, errors before that year could be of any size.

Yet from the foregoing testimony by Ussher, Diodorus Siculus, Herodotus, and Sir Isaac Newton, it cannot be fairly said that Ptolemy is not on firm ground at this place in the Canon. The length of Artaxerxes Longimanus' reign and the date of Alexander the Great are also settled within very narrow bounds by ample ancient voices, all of which confirm Ptolemy. What then is to be done with the impasse between Ussher and his sources (Thucydides, Charon of Lampsacus, etc.) and Ptolemy? Amid so much conflicting evidence and doubt, can the truth be found?...

The solution proposed by this author is that, as many writers have heretofore stated, following Xerxes' humiliations at the hands of the Greeks in battles such as Thermopylae, Salamis, etc., his spirit was crushed resulting in the giving of himself over to a life of indolent ease, drink, and the sensual enjoyment of the harem.

**Further, that after some time of this debauched living, his desire and/or abilities to govern were diminished or impaired to the extent that he placed Artaxerxes Longimanus on the throne as his pro-regent some years before his death in his 21st year of rule, leaving the affairs of state in his son's hands.**

**Thus when Themistocles' flight ended, he arrived with Artaxerxes I Longimanus' having just come to the throne as Thucydides and Charon of Lampsacus reported.**

**Most scholars have assumed from their histories that with Artaxerxes in power, his father was dead. Yet in point of fact, at no place in his narrative does Thucydides make mention of Xerxes' actually being dead at this time!**

This allows the possibility that Ephorus, Dinon, Clitarchus, Heracleides, Diodorus Siculus and others were also correct in part in maintaining that Xerxes was alive at the time the fleeing Athenian arrived at the Persian court and was the monarch with whom the interview was conducted rather than Artaxerxes. Xerxes was alive, but it was Artaxerxes with whom Themistocles spoke.

This solution differs from Ussher, Vitringa, Kruger, and Hengstenberg who interpreted Thucydides, etc. as meaning that Themistocles arrived at the onset of the *sole* reign of Artaxerxes I; hence they rejected Ptolemy's giving 21 years for Xerxes' kingship, ceding only some 11 or 12 years to him. The above resolution completely maintains the integrity of the Canon.

Although, as previously stated, there is some discrepancy as to the exact date for this event [the flight of Themistocles] with Diodorus Siculus setting the year as 471, Cicero placing it as 472, and Eusebius along with Ussher opting for 473 BC, it seems certain to this author that it should be placed somewhere between 473-470. Nor should it be thought that he is alone in this determination among today's scholars.

As recently as AD 1990, Dr. Edwin M. Yamauchi, internationally noted professor of history at Miami University of Ohio, has decided in favor of Thucydides and that it was Artaxerxes I Longimanus before whom Themistocles appeared, giving 471/470 BC as the date for the ostracism of Themistocles...

Thus if, for example, we take 473 BC as the year in which Xerxes installed Artaxerxes I Longimanus beside him on the throne the Jews would quite naturally begin to reference the dates associated with him from that year as that would have been the point from which they began to have dealings with him as their sovereign.

**Numbering from that date would place his 20th year over the Jews as 454 BC (or AM 3550 inclusive, exactly as Ussher) and the 483 years of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy brings us to AD 30 for its fulfillment (454 BC + AD 30 = 484 less 1 for going from BC to AD = 483). (p. 228, 236)**

An elegant solution indeed to this apparent contradiction of evidence. It should also be noted that the date of the flight is not completely fixed varying probably between 473 and 470 BC. Adding 483 to the latest date takes us a little after the lifetime of Christ.

That said, combined with his evidence in support of using Artaxerxes 20th year decree over Cyrus' decree he has made an excellent case for using that decree.

### **The Time of Year for the Start and End of the 69 "Weeks"**

The last point in support of Artaxerxes' 20th year decree is the time of year it was given. The decree was given in the first month of Nisan.

Let's read what Nehemiah 2:1-8 says about when Nehemiah was commissioned to rebuild Jerusalem:

And it happened **in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king**, wine *was* before him. And I took up the wine and gave *it* to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence before. And the king said to me, Why *is* your face sad, since you *are* not sick? This *is* nothing but sorrow of heart. Then I was very much afraid.

And *I* said to the king, Let the king live forever. Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire?

And the king said to me, For what do you ask? So I prayed to the God of Heaven, and I said to the king, If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I pray that you would send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, so that I may build it.

And the king said to me (the queen also sitting by him), For how long shall your journey be? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time...And the king granted me what I asked, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

Both the 20th year decree above and more commonly accepted 7th year decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:9) were given in **the first month of Nisan**.

It would seem logical then that the event at the end of the 69th "week" when the Messiah would come along would probably be around the same time of year – the 1st month.

Those who support the 7th decree of Artaxerxes say that the 69 "weeks" goes from 457 BC and ends with the year that Christ began His ministry.

Christ's ministry did not begin in the 1st month. It began around the 7th month and ended with his crucifixion in the 1st month some 3 ½ years later.

Dr Floyd Jones, using the 20th year decree of Artaxerxes I which was given in the 1st month, has the event at the end of the 69 "weeks" Christ's entry into Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion which also fell in the 1st month.

**Dr Floyd Jones appears to have a match not only with the number of years (483 between 454 BC and 30 AD) but he has also been able to match it up with the same time of year (Nisan, the first month), unlike the supporters of Artaxerxes I's 7th year decree which ends half a year from its starting point.**

The combination of those three major points that he has given evidence is very strong in favour of using that decree as the starting point.

After going through all this evidence I initially was convinced to support this decree over the others as the starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy with its follow-on effect in ruling out the ministry of Christ as being part of that final 70th "week".

It seems a water tight case at this point in time but is it really? Is there any possibility that the case for Cyrus' decree could better what we have looked at so far in support of the 20th year decree of Artaxerxes I?

### **The Case for Using Cyrus' Decree as the Starting Point**

Let's now take a look at the counterarguments in support of Cyrus' decree. Before we look into these points in greater detail here is a summary of the points in support of using Cyrus' decree as the starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy:

- 1) The name Artaxerxes used in Ezra and Nehemiah is the Greek equivalent of Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. This is a title rather than a proper name and means "mighty king". It could be used for any Persian king in the same way that Pharaoh can be used for any Egyptian king.
- 2) Dr Floyd Jones in his book "The Chronology of the Old Testament" makes a great case for Darius I being the Ahasereus who married Esther. He uses two details relating to the number of provinces in the empire and another detail relating to some islands showing this can only apply to Darius I, not Xerxes who most scholars believe was Esther's husband.

- 3) While Dr Jones supports Artaxerxes I as the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah, his evidence for Darius being the Ahasereus who married Esther can be used to support the possibility of Darius I also being the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah since the titles Artaxerxes and Ahasereus are one and the same. While not using Dr Jones evidence from Esther, Fred Coulter in his book "The Appointed Times of the Messiah" believes Darius I is the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah. This new identification makes the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Darius I) decree fall in the year 502 BC since Darius became king in 522 BC.
- 4) If we identify Darius I as the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7 and use Darius I's 7th year as the date for the 7th year of Artaxerxes decree which involved the supply of gold and silver and other treasures to decorate the Temple we come up with a date of 515 BC. This new date is almost immediately after the Temple was completed in 6th year of Darius (Ezra 6). Logically decorating the Temple would happen right after the Temple is built, NOT 60 years after with the conventional identification of Artaxerxes as Artaxerxes I.
- 5) By identifying Artaxerxes in Ezra/Nehemiah as Artaxerxes I scholars have added an artificial gap of 60 years into this book/s. Ezra 6 has the Temple being completed in Darius I's 6th year and right after in Ezra 7 the decree to decorate the Temple happens the year after in his 7th year.
- 6) By identifying Artaxerxes in Ezra/Nehemiah as Darius I we nicely resolve the chronological problem in Nehemiah where Nehemiah and many of the same priests are there at the time of Cyrus and also at the time the wall is completed supposedly 90 years later. Dr Floyd Jones says that some chapters are inset chapters that are flashbacks to the time of Cyrus and that Ezra and Nehemiah lived very long lives. However, this would make Nehemiah a very old man when he was Artaxerxes I's cupbearer. Identifying Artaxerxes in Ezra/Nehemiah as Darius I is a much more comfortable fit.
- 7) Identifying Esther's husband as Darius I and not Xerxes means that she became queen (in Ahasereus' 3rd year) the year after Darius I (in his 2nd year) allowed the Temple to be rebuilt that was completed 4 years later. The unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians worked in favour of the Jews as Darius could not rescind the Temple rebuild decree once given. Thwarted by that, the Jews' enemies then tried to use the unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians against the Jews. Since they couldn't stop the Temple they went all out to destroy the people.
- 8) Daniel 9 says that there is a combination 69 "sevens" between the command to restore Jerusalem and the coming of Messiah. This combination is formed of two blocks of 7 "sevens" and 62 "sevens". There must be some purpose to these two groupings of 49 years (7 "sevens") and 434 years (62 "sevens") which has never been explained by those who support the traditional WCG/UCG viewpoint.
- 9) By using Darius I as the Artaxerxes in Ezra/Nehemiah we find that Nehemiah and company complete the job of restoring Jerusalem and Nehemiah finishes his governorship in 490 BC - exactly 49 years after Cyrus' decree. This physical restoration of Jerusalem completes the 7 "sevens" of the prophecy.
- 10) Fred Coulter has a break between the two blocks of 7 and 62 "sevens" and the second block of 62 "sevens" (spiritual judgment) starting with Malachi's proclamation of the coming Messiah shortly before 400 BC. There is no definitive date for the book of Malachi. Fred Coulter favours 409 BC with the 62 "sevens" ending in 26 AD with the start of the ministry of Christ.

### **Outline of the 70 Weeks Prophecy According to Fred Coulter Using Cyrus' Decree**

One question that has never been answered by the WCG or UCG in relation to Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy is why the mention of the two blocks of 7 "sevens" and 62 "sevens".

Fred Coulter, who supports the Cyrus decree as the starting decree, has this to say in his book “The Appointed Times of Jesus the Messiah”:

As verse 24 states, the 490 years are “decreed” in order for specific events to take place in the city of Jerusalem in preparation for the coming of the Messiah...

The scriptural accounts show that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem to succeed Zerubbabel as governor of Judea. Nehemiah’s governorship actually ran from 502 BC to 490 BC. As the end of Nehemiah’s governorship approached, the Temple was in service and the city was protected by a secure wall, but the restoration of Jerusalem was not yet complete. The houses that were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and his army had not been rebuilt. Nehemiah chapter seven describes the condition of Jerusalem. “And the city was large and great, but the people in it were few, and the houses not built” (verse 4).

When those who were selected to dwell in Jerusalem had built their houses, the restoration of the city was complete. This event was the final act in the fulfillment of Cyrus’ proclamation as prophesied by Isaiah. “[I am the LORD] Who makes the word of His servant sure, and makes good the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, ‘She shall have people;’... Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and shall do all My pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built;’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’ ” (Isa. 44:26, 28).

When Nehemiah returned to the king of Persia at the end of his governorship in 490 BC, the first division of the 70-week prophecy was complete. The fulfillment of the “seven weeks” (seven *heptads*, which equates to 7 x 7 years, or 49 years) had begun in 539 BC with Cyrus’ decree and had ended in 490 BC when Nehemiah’s governorship ended—exactly 49 years.

#### **The Fulfillment of the 49 Years — 539 BC - 490 BC**

PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS II TO REBUILD JERUSALEM 539  
COMPLETION OF TEMPLE 515  
NEHEMIAH APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF JUDEA 502  
WORK ON THE WALL BEGINS 502  
WALL COMPLETED 492  
JERUSALEM REPOPULATED, HOUSES REBUILT 491  
NEHEMIAH LEAVES JERUSALEM 490

With the fulfillment of the “seven weeks,” the *physical* stage was set for the appearing of the Messiah. But problems of corruption and complacency soon developed in the priesthood. In fact, twelve years *after* the completion of the first division of the prophecy—in 478 BC—Ezra made a final journey to Jerusalem to deal primarily with such problems.

The second part of the prophecy—the 62 weeks or 434 years—was to begin the countdown to the appearing of the Messiah. As we will see, this key time period would begin in the fall of 409 BC and end in the fall of 26 AD with the beginning of Jesus Christ’s ministry.

Meanwhile, God sent the final Old Testament prophet, Malachi, to deal with problems in the priesthood and deliver prophecies concerning the Messiah. Moreover, the tiny nation of Judah would undergo tremendous cultural and religious changes in the interim period known as the time “between the Testaments”—from the close of the age of the prophets (with Malachi being the last) to the work of John the Baptist, as the messenger who would herald the coming of the Messiah as foretold of by Malachi (Mal. 3:1).

#### **The Book of Malachi and John the Baptist**

God’s warnings to His people—and especially the priests who had violated His laws—are recorded in the book of Malachi, which pronounced a curse upon those who failed to take heed and repent of their evil ways (Mal. 1:6-8; 2:1-3).

**Although the book of Malachi is dated to the 400s BC, there is no historical record of the specific year that it was written.**

**In fact, there is sound scriptural basis for concluding that the book of Malachi was written in 409 BC...[as this date] marked the beginning of the 62 weeks division (434 years) — the second part of the 70-week prophecy.**

Since the book of Malachi contains a prophecy of the ministry of John the Baptist, which took place at the end of the 434 years (26 AD), it is fitting that God would inspire it to be written at the beginning of the 434 years, in 409 BC. The title of the book itself points to the work of John the Baptist as the one who would herald the promised Messiah. The name Malachi means “My messenger.” The book begins with a call to repentance and ends with the prophecy of the messenger who would come in the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of the people back to their God. The Messiah Himself declared that this prophecy was fulfilled by John the Baptist (Matt. 17:12-13).

There is additional support in Scripture for dating the prophecy of Malachi to the beginning of the 62 weeks. Malachi’s prophecy was, in effect, a decree from God: “Behold, I will send My messenger...” (Mal. 3:1). As this decree was fulfilled at the end of the 62 weeks, a parallel is established with the fulfillment of the first segment of the 70 weeks (the seven weeks or 49 years), which began with a decree and ended with the fulfillment of that decree. This parallelism is illustrated below.

**First segment: The 7 weeks began with the decree of Cyrus and ended with the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, which completed the fulfillment of the decree.**

**Second segment: The 62 weeks began with the decree of God in the book of Malachi—“Behold, I will send My messenger”—and ended with its fulfillment through the ministry of John the Baptist and the appearance of the Messiah.**

The book of Malachi reveals that the time span between the end of the seven weeks in 490 BC and the beginning of the 62 weeks in 409 BC was a period of increasing corruption within the priesthood after it was restored by Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra’s visit to Jerusalem in 478 BC had helped to reinforce and complete the reforms that Nehemiah had begun, but the repentance of the people at that time did not end the pattern of disobedience that had stained the history of the house of Israel and the house of Judah since their Exodus from Egypt.

Malachi’s message is directed to a priesthood that had lost its reverence for God and defiled His altar by sacrificing diseased and defective animals (Mal. 1:6-8, 12-14). This is the decadent condition that moved God to issue His warnings in the book of Malachi at the beginning of the 62 weeks.

The failure of the priests and the people to heed these warnings and repent led God to forsake His Temple in Jerusalem and allow the city to be overrun by foreign armies several times during the 62 weeks, or 434 years, which extended from 409 BC to 26 AD.

Indeed, the first division of 49 years was a period of restoration after 70 years of desolation; but the second division of 434 years was a period of judgment marked by invasion and foreign domination after the people and the priests fell back into sin (pages 18-22).

Fred Coulter has the date for when Nehemiah left for Jerusalem to oversee the rebuilding of the city as **502 BC**.

Nehemiah 2:1-8 plainly says Nehemiah was commissioned to rebuild Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes.

If Artaxerxes I is the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah mentioned here then Fred Coulter’s dates are much too early. Artaxerxes I reigned from **465-424 BC**. Dr Floyd Jones has him beginning his co-regency in **474 BC** and has his 20th year starting from his co-regency as **454 BC**.

ONLY way that Nehemiah could have begun the restoration of Jerusalem in 502 BC is if Fred Coulter can provide support that Artaxerxes mentioned in Nehemiah 2 is **NOT** Artaxerxes I but an earlier Persian king.

## Was the Artaxerxes in Nehemiah an Earlier Persian King than Artaxerxes I?

The name Artaxerxes used in Ezra and Nehemiah is the Greek equivalent of Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. This is a title rather than a proper name and means "mighty king" - "Ahasuerus" means "the mighty" (Aha) and "king" (Suerus). It could be used for any Persian king in the same way that Pharaoh can be used for any Egyptian king.

Dr Floyd Jones in his book "The Chronology of the Old Testament" makes a great case for Darius I being the Ahasereus who married Esther. As Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes are both titles meaning "mighty king" then if Darius I can be proven to be the Ahasuerus of Esther then another king other than Artaxerxes I could be the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah. I quote below Dr Floyd Jones' evidence for Darius I, instead of Xerxes I (as commonly believed), being the husband of Esther:

The Persian monarch portrayed in the Book of Esther under the title "Ahasuerus" has caused much debate over the centuries as to his identification. The Book of Esther begins with a great feast "in the 3rd year of the reign of Ahasuerus" (Esther 1:3). Although at one time or another nearly every monarch from Cyaxares (624-586 BC) to Artaxerxes III Ochus (358-338 BC) has been declared as the Medo-Persian ruler in question, it is conceded today almost beyond question in nearly all theological circles that the man is Xerxes I of Thermopylae (486-465 BC).

This identification was initially offered by Scaliger, the first modern chronologer. The proofs offered are: (1) a supposed congruity of the character of Ahasuerus with that of Xerxes as portrayed by Herodotus and other classic writers and (2) a philological conjecture.

These will be examined in that which follows, comparing secular data with Scripture. The secular will not be taken as judge but merely as a witness. Where the secular fits - if it does - it will be incorporated, but the framework will be based upon the Scriptures which, in context, are the only and final authority on the matter, not the reverse.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that although the duration of the Persian empire is probably accurately established, it is not based upon eye witness accounts. Secondly, the exact listing of kings and the lengths of their reigns are not verifiable with absolute certainty and thirdly, the same Persian monarch may have possessed two or more different titles or "throne" names.

Profane literature will now speak and testify as to the identity of this Ahasuerus. It shall be shown that this material declares him to be Darius Hystaspis (of Marathon, the Great or Darius I), and not Xerxes, as is commonly believed. Darius I, a kinsman of Cyrus II (The Great, the Cyrus of Scripture), recorded: "Eight of my family have been kings before me. I am the ninth. In two branches have we been kings"...

As Cambyses had no son, Darius, his 28-year-old commander and distant relative, moved to claim the kingship. This seizure was greatly facilitated by the fact that Darius was related to Cyrus. He took charge of the whole army and marched toward Babylon. Upon nearing the seditious city, six young Persians from noble families having learned of his arrival met Darius and pledged their support, forming a seven family pact...

These six Persian families, linked to each other by intermarriages, became established as counselors to the king with special privileges. They even bore the right to rule their estates as semi-independent princes for the duration of the Persian empire.

**Firstly, Esther 1:14 refers to "The seven princes of Persia and Media." [NOTE: These appear to be seven family pact noted above including Darius].**

As the Book of Esther mentions Persia *before* Media (1:3,18,19), this Ahasuerus *cannot precede* Cyrus' first year as sole king over the expanded empire (536 BC) for during Darius the Mede's short reign' (539-537 BC) the Medes were named *before* the Persians (Dan. 6). During Cyrus' "first year," the Persians gained political ascendancy over the Median constituency and were thereafter consistently mentioned *ahead of* the Medes.



**Secondly, King Darius the Mede had set 120 princes over the kingdom (Dan. 6:1). At the time of Esther, King Ahasuerus' Medo-Persian Empire, extending from India to Ethiopia, had increased into 127 provinces or "satrapies" (Esther 1:1). These satrapies constitute a major key as to the correct identity of Esther's "Ahasuerus."**

**Although today's standard chronologies would have Esther the wife of Xerxes (485-464 BC), by the *beginning* of his reign the Persian empire had begun to *lose* satrapies. Therefore, the name "Ahasuerus" must refer to a monarch *after* Darius the Mede, but *before* the reign of Xerxes (refer to the following diagram).**

Conventional chronological schemes have completely ignored this problem choosing instead to give preference to and place reliance upon a tenuous etymological identification, the merit of which will be presently examined. Furthermore, Esther 1:1 declares: "This is (that) Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia over 127 provinces."

During the fifth year of his reign, all Egypt had submitted to Cambyses (525 BC) and he also subdued the Ethiopians, at least in part.' Having already inherited Cambyses' conquests in Egypt and Ethiopia, Darius I Hystaspis invaded and conquered India (506 BC). Therefore, the Ahasuerus of Esther cannot be a Persian *before* Darius Hystaspis (Darius of Marathon) because it was not until Darius that the Empire extended from "India unto Ethiopia."

These hard facts are decisive, yet there is more:

**"And King Ahasuerus laid a *tribute* upon the land and upon the Isles of the Sea (Esther 10:1)."**

**During 496 BC, the fleet of Darius conquered Samos, Chios, Lesbos and the rest of the islands of the Aegean Sea. Herodotus says that Egypt, India, the Island of Cyprus and the Islands of the Erythraean Sea paid tribute to this Darius Hystaspis...**

When compared to the previously cited Esther 10:1 passage, this secular data testifies and declares that Ahasuerus is Darius Hystaspis. Moreover, upon being chosen as his royal residence, Susa (or Shushan) was embellished and extended by Darius Hystaspis (521 BC). There he built his palace and kept all his treasures within.' These data militate against Cambyses, or anyone before him, as being the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther for the palace therein was at Shushan (Esther 1:2).

This excluding determination is especially legitimate when coupled with Esther 1:14 concerning the "seven princes of Persia." It was Darius I who established the Persian tradition of having a council of seven wise and powerful men at court to serve and assist the king. This custom was a continuation of the policy resulting from the Persian noblemen's aiding Darius in procuring the throne from the Magians. Obviously then, no monarch prior to Darius Hystaspis could be the "Ahasuerus" in question.

**Moreover, Thucydides...tells us that Darius Hystaspis used his Phoenician fleet to subdue all the islands in the Aegean Sea, and Diodorus Siculus relates that they were all lost again by his son Xerxes immediately after his 479 BC defeat to the Greeks - *before* the 12th year of his reign.' Yet it was *after* the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Ahasuerus of Esther that he imposed a tribute upon the Isles (Esther 3:7,12,13; 9:1,21; 10:1) or at least during the very last days of that 12th year.**

**Further, as Ussher pointed out, the terms of the 387 BC "Peace of Antalcidas" recorded by Xenophon shows that, except for Clazomene and Cyprus, Xerxes' successors held none of these islands.'**

All of this external secular data tells us that the Ahasuerus of Esther is *not* Xerxes, and it harmonizes with the internal evidence contained in Scripture. Cyrus and Cambyses never imposed tribute, although they did receive presents. Polyaeus writes that Darius was the first of the Persians to impose a tribute on the people. This act led Herodotus to pen that the Persians called Cyrus a father, Cambyses a master, but Darius a huckster, "for Darius looked to make a gain in everything."

This description of Darius is consistent with Haman's behavior in the account. Being aware of this aspect of his king's character and in order to secure approval to massacre all the

Jews within the empire, Haman offered to pay the monarch 10,000 talents of silver to offset the expenses that would be incurred in his proposed plan (Esther 3:9). Esther also seems aware of this trait as she mentions in her petition that the king would lose revenue if the proposed exterminations were carried out (Esther 7:4).

Although the Old Testament Apocrypha is not the inspired Word of God, hence is neither authoritative nor trustworthy, it does reveal how the writers of that time interpreted the story of Ezra.

**The first Book of Esdras (c. 140 BC) recites verbatim Esther 1:1-3, the only change being that of replacing the name "Ahasuerus" with "Darius" (I Esdras 3:1-2). This Darius is later firmly identified as Darius Hystaspis by relating that it was in the sixth year of this king's reign that the temple was completed (I Esdras 6:5, cp. Ezra 6:15).**

In the Apocrypha account of "The Rest of Esther" as well as in the LXX, Ahasuerus is everywhere called "Artaxerxes"; however these are not necessarily attempts to identify him as the Persian king of Ezra chapter 7 and/or the Book of Nehemiah. Though there have been able, conservative Christian chronologers who have made this connection, two things must be remembered.

**First, "Artaxerxes" may here only be intended as an appellation meaning "king" (as "pharaoh" or "caesar").**

Secondly, none of these books is inspired. They do not contain God breathed words, thus they are not authoritative and are only useful as incidental witnesses. Nevertheless, Sir Isaac Newton took the Book of Esdras to be the "best interpreter of the Book of Ezra" and thus, although he never refers to the Book of Esther anywhere in his discussion of the Persians, his chronology accepted Esdras to be correct in identifying the Ahasuerus of Esther as Darius Hystaspis. Ussher and Bishop Lloyd made the same identification.

The last and most pertinent data necessary in correctly identifying Ahasuerus is the direct internal evidence within the biblical story itself concerning the age of Mordecai. The erroneous identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes, compounded by other poor judgments, has caused most modern scholars to reject that Mordecai was taken away from Jerusalem with Jeconiah in "the captivity" of 597 BC despite the clear declaration of Esther 2:5-6 which so proclaims.

This biblical assertion is rejected because, having already erroneously presumed that Ahasuerus is Xerxes, the acceptance of the verse as it stands would force Mordecai to be at least 113 years old (597 - 484 BC [the 3rd year of Xerxes; Esther 1:1-3]) at the beginning of the story (if he were a new born when carried away). Moreover, Mordecai would have been a minimum of 125 at the close of the book when he became "prime minister" in the king's 12th year (Esther 10:3, cp. 3:7).

Though this would be possible, it is somewhat unlikely as only one man's age has been reported in Scripture as being that great since the days of "the judges" (over 700 years!). Besides, as Esther is Mordecai's first cousin (Esther 2:7), she would tend to be too old to fit the context of the story.

The solution to the dilemma, accepted by nearly all, has been to impose an unnatural rendering of the Esther 2:5-6 passage compelling the verse to read as though it were Kish, Mordecai's grandfather, who was carried away in 597 BC with Jeconiah rather than Mordecai himself.

Notwithstanding, this interpretation is neither true nor an accurate rendering of the Hebrew construction which affirms that it was Mordecai who was carried away with Jeconiah. Only by a tortured, forced grammatical construction could this sentence ever be applied to his greatgrandfather Kish.

The entire matter is resolved by simply letting the Bible speak for itself. This excessive age problem is simply due to a failure to accept the obvious which is that the Ahasuerus of Esther is actually this Darius Hystaspis and not Xerxes. When this is seen, the age of Mordecai will be significantly reduced to a more reasonable and believable value (as will

Ezra's and Nehemiah's, see footnote 1, page 204). Moreover, it is the persistent insistence by most modern scholars that "Ahasuerus" is Xerxes that has caused the problem.

With the Ahasuerus of Esther as Darius I Hystaspis (of Marathon, the Great), his third year would fall in 519 BC. Thus, Mordecai could have been as young as 78 in the first chapter of Esther and 10 years older (88) rather than 125 years old when promoted to prime minister during the 12th year (509 BC) of that Persian monarch (597 BC - 519 = 78 years; Esther 1:3, cp. 2:5-7, 3:7, hence 12 - 3 = 10 years inclusive).

Indeed, the Mordecai of Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:7 should, in all likelihood, be identified as the Mordecai of the Book of Esther such that we have only one Mordecai, not two as is being taught today. This is much more in line with other Bible ages for this period and unifies the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther into one continuous story with only one principal person named Mordecai (and as we shall soon see, probably only one Nehemiah and one Ezra, not two).

The sum of all the foregoing particulars is conclusive evidence offered both for the proper identification of the Ahasuerus of Esther as Darius Hystaspis and against his being Xerxes I or any Persian ruler after Xerxes I. Evidence has also been presented as to why Ahasuerus cannot be an occupant of the throne preceding Darius I Hystaspis of Marathon (p.199-204).

All those points above combined make a far more compelling case for Darius I and Xerxes being the husband of Esther.

Given the equivalence of Artaxerxes with Ahasuerus I find the following rather odd:

Fred Coulter, who favours Darius I as the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah, favours Cambyses I, the father of Cyrus the Great as the husband of Esther.

Dr Floyd Jones, who favours who favours Darius I as the husband of Esther, favours Artaxerxes I as the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah.

Like Dr Floyd Jones, Fred Coulter also interprets Esther 2:5-6 to mean that Mordecai, not his great grandfather, was taken away captive in the captivity of Jeconiah, however he adds one more detail to make his case that Esther was married to Cyrus the Great's father, Cambyses I.

Dr Floyd Jones in equating Ahasuerus with Darius I has Mordecai 78 years old when Esther is made queen. Esther was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle – his cousin. As Esther was still a virgin there would have been 60 years in age difference which appears way too much yet Dr Floyd Jones' has what I believe is a water tight case for Darius I and not some earlier king being Esther's husband.

Fred Coulter's argument for a king before Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon (even arguing for Esther being Cyrus the Great's mother) is ludicrous in light of the number of provinces in the empire at the time of Esther (127 – Esther 1:1). This would have been impossible at the time of the Babylonian empire and certainly the Persians and Medes did not rule from Ethiopia to India as stated. So then how do we reconcile the age difference between Esther and Mordecai? Let's take a closer look at Esther 2:5-6:

In Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew whose name *was* **Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite who had been carried away from Jerusalem** with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away.

Except for genealogical listings, when a individual's lineage is listed in the Bible it is almost always limited to just recording the father or mother. It is highly unusual that not just the father but both his grandfather and well as his great grandfather are noted. The passage easily allows both

possibilities of Mordecai or Kish being the one who went into captivity but the fact that not just one but three generations of fathers are noted lends itself very heavily towards Mordecai's great grandfather Kish and not Mordecai being the one who went into captivity at the time of Jeconiah.

**Identifying Esther's husband as Darius I and not Xerxes means that she became queen the year after Darius I (in his 2nd year) allowed the Temple to be rebuilt that was completed 4 years later. Darius I was the king who commissioned the famous Behistun rock inscription, a trilingual inscription that was the Persian equivalent to the Rosetta Stone.**

**The unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians worked in favour of the Jews as Darius could not rescind the Temple rebuild decree once given. Thwarted by that, the Jews' enemies then tried to use the unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians against the Jews. Since they couldn't stop the Temple they went all out to destroy the people.**

While Dr Jones supports Artaxerxes I as the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah, his evidence for Darius being the Ahasereus who married Esther can be used to support the possibility of Darius I also being the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah since the titles Artaxerxes and Ahasereus are one and the same.

While not using Dr Jones evidence from Esther, Fred Coulter in his book "The Appointed Times of the Messiah" believes Darius I is the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah. This new identification makes the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Darius I) decree fall in the year 502 BC since Darius became king in 522 BC.

**If we go back to calculate the date for the 7th year of Artaxerxes decree which involved the supply of gold and silver and other treasures to decorate the Temple identifying this Artaxerxes as Darius I we have a date of 515 BC – the year after the Temple was completed in 6th year of Darius (Ezra 6). Logically decorating the Temple would happen right after the Temple is built, NOT 60 years after with the conventional identification of Artaxerxes as Artaxerxes I.**

As an aside, we are told that the amount of gold given was 100 talents (Ezra 8:26). A talent is 30 kg (65 pounds) so that means there was **3 tonnes of gold!!!** At today's gold price this is equivalent to an incredible **\$270 million!** The prophets spoke of the second Temple being a shadow of the glory of Solomon's Temple. Indeed, it was in comparison because it had 3000 talents (1 Chr. 29:4) which is equivalent to **90 tonnes of gold** valued at over **\$8 billion at today's gold price.**

### **Solving the Chronological Puzzle of Ezra and Nehemiah**

The large span of time for the books of Ezra and Nehemiah present the chronologist a major dilemma. Only a correct interpretation of which king is the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah will properly be able to resolve it. Dr Floyd Jones outlines the nature of the problem in the quote below:

Nevertheless, a persisting problem remains. The unresolved matter is a serious one which places all previous solutions squarely on the horns of a dilemma.

It has long been recognized that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah exhibit a built-in yet distasteful quandary. The Book of Ezra begins in the 16th year of Cyrus, about 536 BC (Ezra 1:1), and the Book of Nehemiah ends around the 32nd year of a Persian king designated as "Artaxerxes" (Neh. 2:1; 13:6). As nearly all scholars identify this monarch as being Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Book of Nehemiah is seen to close near 434 BC (his 32nd year).

**Thereby these two books apparently span nearly 102 years (536 - 434 = 102). Within them, the names "Ezra" (Neh. 12:1, cp. Ezra 1:1-2:2) and "Nehemiah" (Ezra 2:2) are found throughout beginning from the first year of Cyrus, at which time the men**

**bearing these names are listed among the leaders returning from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel, unto the end (or very nearly so, Neh. 12:36, etc.).**

The "unpleasantness" produced by this is that although the context of the narrative seems to depict them as being the same two men, their ages become uncomfortably large. Being portrayed as leaders demands a minimal age of 30 in the first year of Cyrus, and when the 102 year span is added to this, Nehemiah would have been at least 132 and Ezra, who is last mentioned in the 20th year of "Artaxerxes" (c. 445?), a minimal of 121 years ( $536 - 445 = 91 + 30$ ) by the story's end.

This is a problem for most as biblical life spans between these dates had shortened, coming in line with those of today (Ps. 90:10). The fact that the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally only one volume makes this all the more troublesome...

The predicament arises from a comparison of the lists of priests and Levites returning with Zerubbabel in the first year of Cyrus as sole rex of Persia and Babylonia (536 BC, Neh. 12:1-9) with the list of priests who sealed a covenant with Nehemiah (Neh. 10:1-10). The consensus of nearly all scholarship is that this latter event of sealing the covenant took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes (445 BC).

**The correlation reveals that at least 16 and possibly as many as 20 of those who returned [in Cyrus' 1<sup>st</sup> year] with Zerubbabel in leadership positions (hence 30 and older) were still alive in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes, if indeed most scholars are correct in assigning the Nehemiah covenant to that date.**

**If this "Artaxerxes" were Longimanus, as is currently taught (and indeed is), then this generation of leaders would still have been alive 91 years ( $536 - 445 = 91$ ) after they returned to Jerusalem (p.240-241).**

Dr Floyd Jones then goes into a discussion of Sir Isaac Newton's solution to this chronological dilemma before making some refinements to it.

Sir Isaac Newton's solution is to have several inset chapters in Nehemiah where he is effectively jumping back in time from when they are building the wall and city back to the time of Cyrus the Great from Nehemiah 7:6 through to Nehemiah 12:26 before returning to the time of the rebuilding of the wall and city for the remaining chapter and a half of the book.

While Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book, Dr Floyd Jones notes that the narrative by Ezra focuses on events connected to the Temple while narrative by Nehemiah focuses on events connected to the wall and city of Jerusalem.

Newton's solution closed the 91 year chronological gap between Nehemiah 10 and Nehemiah 12 which lists a very similar group of priests and Levites. That said, he still has left Nehemiah living a very great age. In Nehemiah 10:1 (according to Newton a flashback to the time of Cyrus the Great) we read of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah being amongst them. In Nehemiah 1:1 Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah leads off with the story of being cupbearer to Artaxerxes in his 20<sup>th</sup> year.

Dr Floyd Jones reduces this span of time by 9 years with his placement of Artaxerxes I's 20<sup>th</sup> year being from his co-regency rather than his sole reign. He also notes that Josephus stated that Ezra "died an old man" (Antiquities of the Jews, XI, 5, 5) and says Nehemiah died at a "great age" (Antiquities of the Jews, XI, 5, 8).

Accepting Newton's inset chapters solution and adding his co-regency solution for Artaxerxes I reduces the gap between the beginning and end of events involving Nehemiah to 82 years. While this is within the realm of possibility, it is still a big chronological span.

Dr Floyd Jones gives no definitive evidence for why the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah cannot be an earlier Persian king.

Let's notice the flow of kings that are named in the Book of Ezra:

- Cyrus the Great gives the decree to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1)
- A king referred to as both Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes is petitioned by the Jews' enemies to have the work in Jerusalem stopped (Ezra 4:6-7). The petition is successful and the work is stopped until the 2nd year of Darius. Only one Persian king is noted by Ptolemy as reigning between Cyrus the Great and Darius I and that is Cambyses. This is the king accepted as the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6 and also the same as Artaxerxes in the next verse (The NKJV of the Bible erroneously adds in the word also after Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7 but this is neither there in the KJV or original language Ezra was written in). **So here, we have another king commonly accepted as Artaxerxes who was not Artaxerxes I.**
- Darius I gives the decree to rebuild the Temple in Ezra 6 which sees the Temple completed 4 years later. The Temple is completed in the 6th year of Darius.
- In the 7th year of another Artaxerxes than the one in Ezra 4, he gives the Jews gold and silver to decorate the Temple in Ezra 7, the next chapter after the Temple is complete.

**Are we really expected to believe that this SECOND king addressed by the title Artaxerxes in the same book MUST be Artaxerxes I and that this decoration happened 60 years after the Temple was completed?**

The points that I have favouring Nehemiah's Artaxerxes as Darius I instead of Artaxerxes I are as follows:

- 1) If Nehemiah's Artaxerxes was Artaxerxes I he would have been born no later than 566 BC making him **around 80 years old at the youngest at the time that he was Artaxerxes I's cup bearer**. This seems highly unlikely.
- 2) By identifying Nehemiah's Artaxerxes as Darius I it makes the 20th year of Artaxerxes' decree fall in the year 502 BC since Darius became king in 522 BC. If we go back to calculate the date for the 7th year of Artaxerxes decree (Ezra 7) which involved the supply of gold and silver and other treasures to decorate the Temple and identify this Artaxerxes as Darius I we have a date of 515 BC - almost immediately after the Temple was completed in 6th year of Darius (Ezra 6).

**Logically, decorating the Temple would happen right after the Temple is built, NOT 60 years after with the conventional identification of Artaxerxes as Artaxerxes I.**

- 3) If we identify Darius as Nehemiah's Artaxerxes then the completion of the wall and the city and the governorship of Nehemiah (32nd year of Artaxerxes – Nehemiah 5:14) ends in 490 BC, EXACTLY 49 years after the decree of Cyrus which is a perfect match for the first block of 7 "sevens" in Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy.

Based on this identification of Nehemiah's Artaxerxes being Darius I, a more correct solution for the chronological structure of Ezra and Nehemiah and Esther is as follows:

- The Book of Ezra starts with the story of the Temple from Cyrus the Great's decree (**539 BC – Ezra 1**) then the opposition that stopped it for several years in Cambyses' reign (**529-522 BC - Ezra 4**) to the restart in Darius I's 2nd year (**520 BC - Ezra 5**) and completion in Darius' 6th year (**516 BC - Ezra 6**).

- Slotted in between the restart and completion of the Temple is the story of Esther in Darius' 3rd year (**519 BC**) where the Jews' enemies tried to destroy the Jews since they couldn't stop the Temple from being built.
- Following the completion of the Temple in Darius' 6th year (**516 BC - Ezra 6**) the Temple is decorated in Darius' 7th year (**515 BC - Ezra 7**) with gifts of gold and silver. Darius I, at this time has as his wife Esther, who is a Jew. Ezra names the people who came back from Babylon with the king's gold and silver for the Temple in Ezra 8. [At the end of chapter 8 there is a chronological break before the final chapters (Ezra 9 & 10) which occur in the year that the Temple wall is dedicated (492 BC)].
- Nehemiah hears of the state of the city and petitions Darius I in his 20th year (**502 BC - Nehemiah 2**) to rebuild the city and the wall.
- After 10 years the wall is completed in the 6th month (**492 BC - Nehemiah 6**).
- In the same year (**492 BC**) the people gather for the reading of the Law of Moses by Ezra (Nehemiah 8:1-5, 13:1) that was done every 7 years at the Feast of Tabernacles. Just after the Feast on the 24th day of the 7th month (Nehemiah 9:1, Ezra 10:2) the people confess their sins of intermarrying pagan wives and enter into a covenant putting the pagan wives away (Ezra 10:3-5, Nehemiah 9:38-10:1-30).
- The wall is then dedicated (**492 BC - Nehemiah 12**).
- The separations occur (Ezra 10:7-44, Nehemiah 13:1-3), Nehemiah deals with the issue of sabbath-breaking (Nehemiah 13) before he completes his time as governor overseeing the completion of city and the wall (**490 BC - Nehemiah 5:14**)

#### FLOW OF EVENTS IN EZRA, NEHEMIAH AND ESTHER

DATE	EZRA	ESTHER	NEHEMIAH	EVENT
539 BC	Ezra 1-3			Cyrus the Great's decree to rebuild the Temple and journey back to begin this work.
c. 525 BC	Ezra 4			Opposition from enemies that stopped work for several years in Cambyses' reign (529-522 BC)
520 BC	Ezra 5			Darius I's 2nd year to recommence work on the Temple
519 BC		Book of Esther		In Darius' 3rd year the Jews' enemies try to destroy the Jews. Esther becomes Darius' wife and helps prevent genocide.
516 BC	Ezra 6			Completion of Temple in Darius' 6th year
515 BC	Ezra 7-8			In Darius' 7th year the Temple is decorated with gifts of gold and silver given by Darius I, who married Esther.
502 BC			Nehemiah 1-2	Nehemiah hears of the state of the city and petitions Darius I in his 20th year to rebuild the city and the wall.
c. 500-495 BC			Nehemiah 3-5	The wall is built under continual opposition from the enemies of the Jews.
492 BC			Nehemiah 6-7	After 10 years the wall is completed in the 6th month of the year.
492 BC	Ezra 9-10		Nehemiah 8-11	Ezra reads the Law of Moses. The people confess to intermarrying pagan wives and make covenant to put them away.
492 BC			Nehemiah 12	The wall is then dedicated.
492-490 BC			Nehemiah 13	Nehemiah deals with sabbath-breaking and completes his 12 year governorship in Darius' 32nd year.

## Summary of the Best Fitting Decree

Dr Floyd Jones' in defending a 454 BC (Artaxerxes I's 20th year) date for the start of the 70 weeks prophecy focused significantly on that decree being the only one in writing that concerned rebuilding the city and the wall.

While his claim that the Cyrus decree regarding the city, at least to the Jews, was not put into writing (only the Temple), we have Isaiah's prophecy Cyrus would issue such a decree and we have Josephus' confirmation that he gave such permission orally, at the very least, to the Jews and that this is also confirmed in another letter to another dignitary.

To be a contender the wording doesn't require the city decree to have been put into writing as even an oral decree would suffice.

Dr Floyd Jones does successfully, in my opinion, prove that there was a co-regency for Artaxerxes I and that his 20th year could well be 454 BC, exactly 483 years (69 "sevens") before Christ's crucifixion in 30 AD and that the time of year for the decree and Christ's entry into Jerusalem just before his crucifixion are both in the same month.

That timing is the strongest support for Dr Floyd Jones' position, however, I believe we have more than sufficient evidence to prove that the Artaxerxes in Nehemiah was NOT Artaxerxes I but was Darius I and hence the decree that Dr Floyd Jones uses should be dated to Darius I's 20th year in 502 BC.

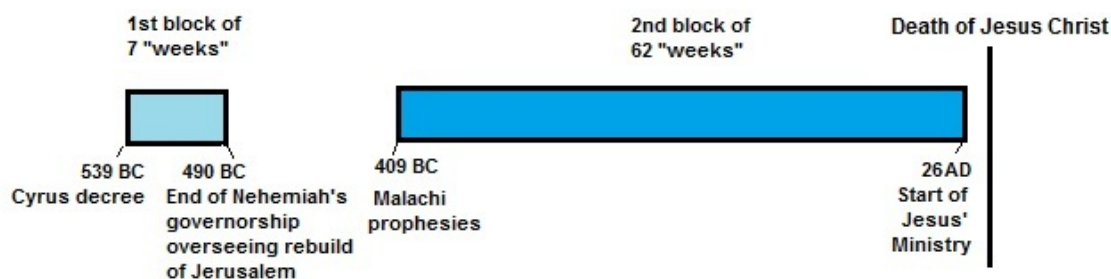
If we go forward 49 years (7 "sevens") from 502 BC we come to 451 BC for which there is no significant Jerusalem related event. Going forward 483 years brings us to 19 BC, many years before the birth of Christ and so it must be ruled out as the correct decree.

This leaves us solely with the Cyrus decree as a possible starting decree (unlike the Artaxerxes' 20th year decree we do not know the time of year for the Cyrus decree). Fred Coulter summarises the two blocks of 7 and 62 "sevens" leading up to the coming of the Messiah:

**First segment: [PHYSICAL RESTORATION]** The 7 weeks began with the decree of Cyrus [539 BC] and ended with the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, which completed the fulfillment of the decree [Nehemiah's 12 year governorship finished in 490 BC].

**Second segment: [SPIRITUAL JUDGMENT]** The 62 weeks began with the decree of God in the book of Malachi [c. 409 BC] —"Behold, I will send My messenger" —and ended with its fulfillment through the ministry of John the Baptist and the appearance of the Messiah [26 AD].

## HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT OF THE FIRST 69 "WEEKS" OF DANIEL'S 70 WEEK PROPHECY





## How Should We Interpret the Last or 70th “Week”?

Now that we have determined how to interpret the first 69 weeks of the prophecy how do we interpret the 70th or last “week” in the prophecy? Has it already been fulfilled or is it a prophecy still to happen. Let’s read again what Daniel writes about this final 70th week in the prophecy:

And after threescore and two weeks shall **Messiah** be cut off, but not for himself: **and the people of the prince** that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

**And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week:** and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (**Daniel 9:26-27**).

The first point to notice in the first half of verse 26 is that the Messiah is cut off after the block of 62 weeks. **We should notice this cutting off of the Messiah is after the 62 weeks, not 62 ½ weeks.**

In the second half of verse 26 it talks about the people who “shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary”.

**This can only refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD, NOT to the time of the end-time “abomination of desolation” spoken of Daniel 12:11 as Jerusalem and the Temple would not be completely destroyed by the end-time Beast power.**

Daniel 11:45 says “And he [The end-time Beast leader] shall plant his palace tents between the seas in the glorious holy mountain [Jerusalem]”.

Zechariah 14:2 says he will take the city captive with half of the people exiled and the other half remaining in the city.

In the first half of verse 27 a covenant is made with many for one “week” (7 years) and in the midst of that week the sacrifice and grain offering shall cease.

**The “he” who confirms the covenant with many for one week is not clearly specified here. There are two possibilities:**

- 1. It is referring to Christ or**
- 2. It is referring to “the people of the prince” who are responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem – the Romans.**

The second half of verse 27 also has a degree of ambiguity making the identification of what destruction it is referring to a little unclear.

Here are a selection of translations of verse 27 to illustrate the point:

King James Bible:

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

New International Version:

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

English Standard Version:

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

New Living Translation:

The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.

The Keter Crown Bible (based on the Aleppo [Crown] Codex):

He will forge a strong pact with the great powers for one week of years, but for half of that period he will abolish sacrifice and meal-offering, and the mute abominations will be upon soaring heights, until extermination will pour down upon the mute abomination as decreed.

The King James version says "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

By translating "al" as "for the" it gives the impression that the desolation to befall Jerusalem is because of the abominations of the Jewish people rather than an abomination set up by the desolator. The Hebrew word "al" (Strong's 5921) means "upon, above, over" so this is a false impression.

Below is are the original Hebrew words and their closest English equivalents:

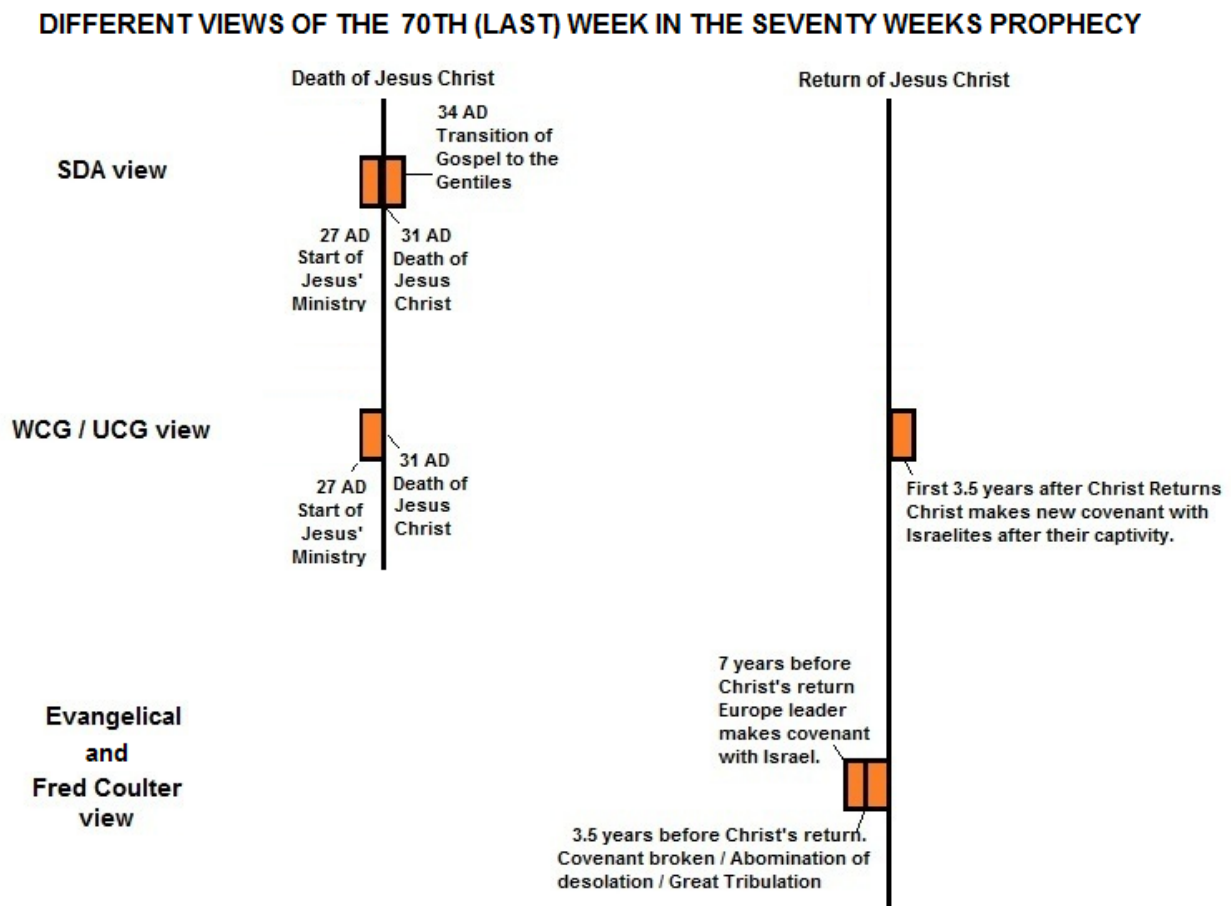
5921	wə·'al	and on
3671	kə·naḇ	the wing
8251	šiq·qū·šîm	abominations
8074	mə·šō·mêm,	desolate
5704	wə·'aḏ-	until
3617	kā·lāh	A complete
2782	wə·ne·ḥē·rā·šāh,	is decreed
5413	tit·taḵ	is poured
5921	'al-	and
8074	šō·mêm.	desolate

Looking at the above words there is nothing dogmatic in there where we can say it is either the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Romans or the end-time destruction and abomination of desolation caused by the Beast power.

While we can't be dogmatic, there is one clue that strongly leans towards the latter - the end-time destruction and abomination of desolation caused by the Beast power.

Notice the two words together translated "abominations" and "desolate". These are the very same two Hebrew words used in Daniel 12:11 for the end-time abomination of desolation. The use of "abomination of desolation" is a technical term for the desecration of the Temple.

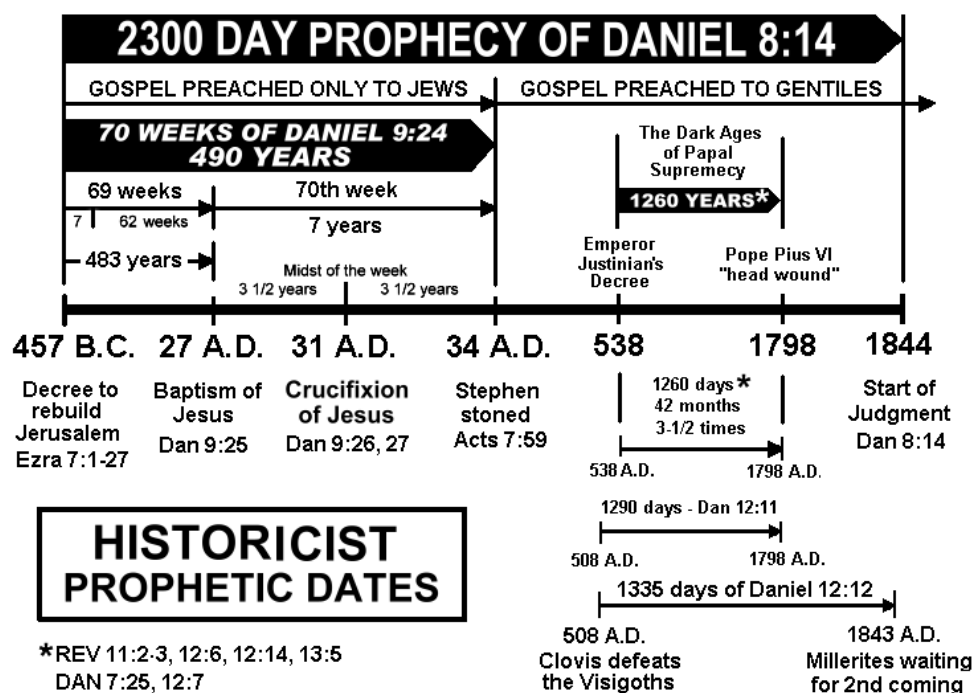
Below is a chart showing the three dominant views of how this last week is interpreted that differ based on whether the "he" in verse 27 is interpreted as the Messiah or the prince of the Romans.



### Seventh-Day Adventist View of the 70th "Week"

The first interpretation of the final week is that espoused by the Seventh-Day Adventists who see the final week as having already been fulfilled. They say the first half was the ministry of Christ and the second half came straight after during the first 3 ½ years of the church up to the stoning of Stephen after which came the transition of the gospel from just the Jews to going out to the Gentiles.

## DANIEL'S LONGEST MOST AMAZING PROPHECY



They interpret the "he" who confirms the covenant as Jesus Christ. This explanation of their viewpoint is provided on one SDA website (<http://biblelight.net/dan927.htm>):

Some would claim that the "he" could not refer to Jesus since his ministry on earth was only 3 ½ years in length. They try to apply this to the antichrist (the prince who shall come in verse 26) and a 7 year peace treaty (covenant) with the Jews. Note the following:

(NIV) **Mat 26:28** This is my blood of the **covenant**, which is poured out **for many** for the forgiveness of sins.

(KJV) **Mark 10:45** For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and **to give his life a ransom for many**.

(NIV) **Mark 14:24** "This is my blood of the **covenant**, which is poured out **for many**," he said to them.

(KJV) **Rom 15:8** Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to **confirm the promises** made unto the fathers:

During this 70th week, the Gospel was preached only to the Jews to confirm the 70 week prophecy (**Matt 10:5, 6 and Acts 11:19**).

The event that ends the 70 weeks is the stoning of Stephen as found in **Acts 7:59**. At that point (**Acts 22:20-21**) the Gospel was no longer preached exclusively to the Jews. (See also **Acts 10:45, 11:18, 13:46, 14:27, 15:9, 18:6**). The Jews are no longer the exclusively chosen people of God (**Gal 3:28**). See also the parable of **Mark 12:1** and **Luke 20:9**.

The original husbandmen (the Jews) of the vineyard are rejected, and replaced, never to tend the vineyard again. This does not mean they have been rejected as individuals. They can still be saved by faith in Jesus like anyone else.

Promises made to the Jewish nation have been rejected by the Jews due to their unbelief, so the fulfillment of those promises will be made to those of faith, regardless of national origin (**Gal 3:29**).

So the final week of the 70 week period left to the Jews continues unbroken from the baptism of Jesus in 27 A.D. thru to 34 A.D., to confirm and fulfill (seal up) the prophecy of Daniel.

"and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease,"

In the middle of the week [on a Wednesday], in 31 A.D., Jesus is crucified, bringing an end to the meaning of the temple sacrifices, which were a type (shadow) of his sacrifice at the cross.

This is confirmed by the tearing of the veil in the Temple at the instant of his death, exposing the most holy place (**Mat 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45**). The fact that Temple ceremonies continued until 70 A.D. is irrelevant. There was no longer any meaning in what they were doing."

There are certainly some strengths in the view that Christ's ministry fulfilled the first half of the last week.

The expression "and in the **midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" does fit what historically happened when Jesus Christ after a 3 ½ year ministry (half a "seven") was crucified on Passover 30 AD which fell on a Wednesday (rising 3 days and 3 nights later at the end of the weekly sabbath).

He also brought an end to the need for animal sacrifices in the Temple when He became the ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross.

The second half of the week as interpreted by the SDA's is less secure.

With the no-hiatus view of Christ confirming the covenant Christ in the 3 ½ years after His death He does it "impersonally" through the Holy Spirit and the apostles, not personally.

There are no chronological markers to determine what year many of the events early in the book of Acts took place.

Whether the stoning of Stephen is the crossover event between the gospel going from just the Jews to also the Gentiles is debatable. The author above uses Acts 22:20-21 to support this idea where Paul says he was at Stephen's stoning and then says a voice told him to go to the Gentiles, however, in the book of Acts the events of Stephen's stoning in Acts 7 are separated from Paul's conversion in Acts 9 with the events of an early persecution and Philip going to Samaria and then baptising the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8.

The Ethiopian eunuch's baptism is the first record of a Gentile being baptised, even before Cornelius' baptism in Acts 10. It's certainly possible that his or Cornelius' baptism occurred 3 ½ years after Christ's crucifixion, though we have no way of proving it from the Bible.

As an aside, some of the dates on the above SDA chart are also rather questionable. We have already shown the date of 457 BC is invalid as the starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy and that the two decrees relating to Jerusalem being built occurred in 539 BC and 502 BC.

Daniel 8:14 speaks of there being 2300 evenings and mornings before the sanctuary (of the Temple) would be reconsecrated after being desolate for 2300 evening and mornings (i.e. 1150 days). The end point is the cleansing of the Temple so saying that there would be 2300 years between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and Temple (years when the Temple was functioning and not desolate) and the year 1844 (the year of the so-called disappointment when many SDA's expected Christ to return) is a misapplication of this passage as there was no reconsecration of the Temple in that year.

The point that seems to lean most against the SDA view in my mind is that the period of the 70 weeks does not include the end-time "abomination of desolation" which appears strongly implied in the last verse.

Destruction and desolation is mentioned on either side of the expression "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week". The destruction immediately before the expression refers to destruction by the Romans under Titus in 70 AD as it mentions that they shall "destroy the city", something that doesn't happen in the end-time.

Straight after the expression we read of abomination and desolation. As we saw earlier there is a high likelihood that the desolation in the second half of Daniel 9 is the end-time "abomination of desolation".

Both of these destructions are tied to the prophecy. Rejecting the Messiah and His Way led to the judgment of the 70 AD destruction but there is no way to tie in the end time "abomination of desolation" if we wrap up the last week with the stoning of Stephen.

One of the purposes of the 70 weeks prophecy is to bring in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24). This can only be done **AFTER** Christ's second coming so this appears to rule out the SDA view we looked at before of the last half of verse 27 being already fulfilled in the time of the apostles.

### **WCG/UCG View of the 70th "Week"**

The traditionally held view in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) when Herbert Armstrong was alive and today in the United Church of God (UCG) is the first half of the "70th week" is the 3 ½ years of Christ's ministry up to his death, as per the SDA view.

Unlike the SDA view which sees no break in time between the first half and second half of the final week, the WCG/UCG view sees the second half of the final week as prophetic and that there is a 2000 year hiatus due to Christ not returning to complete this second half of the week for all that time.

While little publicised in the church, the second half of the final week is placed after the second coming of Jesus Christ when Jesus Christ makes the new covenant with the whole House of Israel after the two Houses of Israel and Judah are re-united.

As mentioned above, there are definite strengths to the view that Christ's ministry fulfilled the first half of the last week.

The expression "and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" does fit what historically happened when Jesus Christ after a 3 ½ year ministry (half a "seven") was crucified on Passover 30 AD which fell on in the "midst of the week" on a Wednesday (rising 3 days and 3 nights later at the end of the weekly sabbath).

He also brought an end to the need for animal sacrifices in the Temple when He became the ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross.

What are the merits of the interpretation of the second half of the week being after the return of Jesus Christ?

After Jesus Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth the survivors of the tribes of Israel will be restored by God after their humbling during the Great Tribulation and they truly will fulfill their destiny as a model nation to the rest of the world. First of all, God promises a major regathering of both Israel and Judah back to the land of Palestine.

After the verses describing the millennial scene of the lamb and the lion dwelling together in peace and the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth as the waters fill the sea (so not a reference to the Jews coming back to Palestine in the last 50 years) it then goes straight on to say in **Isaiah 11:11-12**:

It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left...He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The Israelites in Moses' day did not go straight into the Promised Land. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. In **Ezekiel 20** we find that before entering Palestine God will first bring Israel into the wilderness and prepare them for entry into the Holy Land. God also says that He will purge out the rebels from Israel. Just as there was the rebellion of Korah during the first exodus there will be rebels this time around who God will purge from Israel. Ezekiel writes:

'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'Surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.

And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,' says the Lord GOD. 'I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I *am* the LORD (**Ezekiel 20:32-38**).

At Mt Sinai God proposed the old covenant to ancient Israel. When God brings modern Israel into the wilderness for a time before they move into the Holy Land He will propose to them the new covenant which they will agree to. This time around Israel God will give them the Holy Spirit and they will have the heart to be able to live God's way and keep the terms of the new covenant which will be a great joy to God after the unfaithfulness of ancient Israel. This we read of **Jeremiah 31:31-33** (which is also quoted in **Hebrews 8:8-12**):

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor and none his brother saying, 'Know the Lord' for all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.

This preparation in the wilderness when Christ personally proposes the new covenant may last 3 ½ years if this is the second half of the final week of the 70 weeks prophecy.

Christ preached about the new covenant (Matthew 26:28) during His ministry and was cut off in the middle of the week when He was crucified, so for Him to PERSONALLY complete the confirming of the covenant for a week it seems quite possible that this may occur at the beginning of the millennium with the whole House of Israel.

With the SDA no-hiatus view of Christ confirming the covenant Christ does it "impersonally" through the Holy Spirit and the apostles. The WCG/UCG hiatus view of Christ confirming the covenant has the advantage of Christ doing it personally.

William H. Shea (The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy) notes that verses 25-27 forms a chiasm and that this chiasm appears to support the view that the "he" in verse 27 is better interpreted as being the Messiah rather than a leader of an end-time European superpower:

**A.** Daniel 9:25a (ASV)

**Jerusalem Construction:**

Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem

**B.** Daniel 9:25b

**Anointed one:**

unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks:

**C.** Daniel 9:25c

**Jerusalem Construction:**

it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times.

**D.** Daniel 9:26a

**Anointed one:**

And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing:

**C'.** Daniel 9:26b

**Jerusalem Destroyed:**

and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined.

**B'.** Daniel 9:27a

**Anointed one:**

And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease;

**A'.** Daniel 9:27b

**Jerusalem Destroyed:**

and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.

There are certainly some positives with this point of view. What are the weaknesses?

Firstly, the time duration of this proposal of the new covenant and preparation is not specifically confirmed anywhere else. It may or may not last 3 ½ years.

Secondly, there is no way to tie in the end-time "abomination of desolation" noted earlier that appears to be a part of the 70 weeks prophecy if we have the second half of the final week beginning with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The next weakness is that both prior to and after the pronoun "he" in verse 27 the subject is not the Messiah but "the people of the prince who shall come [and] shall destroy the city".

The last weakness is that it says "after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off". The traditional Church of God point of view has the death of the Messiah an additional half a "week" after the "62 weeks" i.e. half way into the final "week".



## Fred Coulter and Evangelical View of the 70th "Week"

According to Hal Lindsay, author of the popular evangelical book "The Late Great Planet Earth", the coming United Europe and Israel will make a covenant which Europe will later break 3 ½ years later when Europe triggers off the Great Tribulation to last 3 ½ years when it will be responsible for the abomination of desolation.

Jesus Christ predicted an event which would trigger a time of unparalleled catastrophe for the Jewish nation shortly before His second coming. This "abomination of desolation" or desecration of the inner sanctum of the Temple would occur at the midway point of God's last seven years of dealing with the Jewish people before setting up the long-awaited Kingdom of God (**Daniel 9:27**).

Daniel's prediction also indicates that a prince would rise up from among the people who destroyed the second Temple (who were the Romans in A.D. 70) and that he "would make a firm covenant" with the Jewish people. This treaty would guarantee the religious freedom to reinstitute the old "sacrifices and oblations" of the Law of Moses. This "prince" must be from a revived form of the ancient Roman Empire...

According to the Bible, the Middle East crisis will continue to escalate until it threatens the peace of the whole world. The focus of all nations will be upon this unsolvable and complex problem which keeps bringing the world to the precipice of a thermonuclear holocaust. This is apparently the first major problem that the incredible Roman leader will solve after taking over the ten-nation confederacy of European nations.

Some 2500 years ago the prophet Daniel said that a prince would come to power from the people who would destroy the city of Jerusalem and the second Temple (**Daniel 9:27**). The Romans under Titus did the destroying, so the coming prince would have to be someone out of the Roman culture.

This Roman prince, as we described in "The Future Fuehrer," will come to power just before the return of Christ. He will make "a strong covenant" with the Israelis, guaranteeing their safety and protection. The word translated "strong covenant" has the idea of a treaty or mutual protection pact. The Israelis will then be permitted to reinstitute the sacrifice and offering aspect of the law of Moses.

This demands that the Temple be rebuilt, because according to the law of Moses, sacrifices can be offered only in the Temple at Jerusalem. Apparently all this will be done under the protection of the Antichrist of Rome. (P.S. The Arabs are not going to like this idea of rebuilding the Temple one bit.)

According to Daniel's prophetic chronology, the minute the Israeli leader and the Roman leader sign this pact, God starts His great timepiece which has seven allotted years left on it. This event marks the beginning of the period of Biblical history previously noted as the Tribulation.

Isaiah prophetically expressed warning to the Jews concerning this covenant when he declared: "Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement; when the overwhelming scourge passes through it will not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter'; Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through you will be beaten down by it" (**Isaiah 28:15, 18**).

It is through an ingenuous settlement of the Middle East problem that the Antichrist will make good his promise to bring peace to a world terrified of war. After this he will rapidly bring all nations under his control. The world will experience great hope and put its full trust in the genius of Rome. He will begin to bring in fantastic plans of economic prosperity, even to the underdeveloped countries. War will seem to be a curious game that men used to play. The world will be universally acclaiming the Dictator (p.56, 151-152).

If it is the leader of the Romans who is the “he” who confirms the covenant for a week with the Romans then we should look at when this covenant for a prophetic week (7 years) is made.

Josephus tells us that the first Jewish-Roman war began in 66 AD, possibly 3 ½ years before Jerusalem’s eventual destruction. The Romans surrounded Jerusalem with armies and then briefly pulled back before starting up their siege again at Passover in 70 AD. The destruction of the Temple occurred in 70 AD.

The use of abomination and desolation we have seen is a technical term for the desecration of the Temple. There was a historical fulfillment of this when Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the Holy of holies with a swine. There is no such inner Temple desecration recorded in 70 AD, neither was there a covenant made 7 years before with the Jews that was then broken.

Jesus spoke of another prophetic fulfillment of this spoken of by Daniel (Matthew 24:15, Daniel 12:11). Daniel’s “abomination of desolation” in Daniel 12:11 comes at the time of the end when the Great Tribulation begins (Daniel 12:1 compare with Matthew 24:21-22).

If the “he” who confirms the covenant is also the prince of the Romans then it is likely this refers to the end time prince of the Romans (Europeans).

Hal Lindsay did quote another passage to support his view which I was unfamiliar with in relation to this topic and that was in Isaiah 28:

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves...

And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it (**Isaiah 28:15, 18**).

The overflowing scourge sounds very much like armies invading and conquering Israel. God will allow Israel to be conquered and their covenant to protect themselves will be in vain. When is this prophecy meant for? The Good News Bible Reading Program has these comments:

In Isaiah’s day, perhaps this applied to the nation’s agreement with Egypt or Babylon to defend against Assyria. Yet, because some of this passage apparently refers to the end time as we’ve seen [such as **verse 22** speaking of destruction to the whole earth], the covenant with death may as well.

In that context, it could refer to an Israeli pact or treaty with Europe that may initially preserve the Jewish state—an agreement such as that made with Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. (see **Daniel 11:23**)....None of these agreements has preserved the people of the Holy Land—and neither would any made in the end time.

It is quite possible that there is an end-time covenant between the Jews and the end-time Romans (United Europe). Now there will be a restart of the Temple sacrifices in the end time that will be stopped which we read of in Daniel 12:11 where we read:

And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

The 1290 days (which is around 3 ½ years) is likely to be a reference to the time between that event and the return of Jesus Christ. The Great Tribulation does last 3 ½ years. Based on that passage quoted above in Isaiah 28 there may well be a covenant between Israel and the European Union that allows for the resumption of the Temple sacrifices that will be double-crossed by the Europeans when the abomination of desolation occurs.

The view that the last 7 years leading into Christ's second coming is the last "week" of the 70 weeks prophecy does have the advantage of including the end-time abomination within it which appears to be a component of the prophecy when we carefully examined verse 27 of the prophecy. The disadvantage of the prophecy is that it doesn't include the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

While the WCG/UCG view with the Messiah being the one who makes the covenant doesn't cover the Roman destruction in 70 AD, it was the rejection of the Messiah and His Way that was the reason for that destruction exactly 40 years to the day! In that way that destruction is connected to the prophecy if the "he" who makes the covenant is the Messiah.

One key point in support of the end-time European leader being the "he" who makes the covenant is that both prior to and after the pronoun "he" the subject is "the people of the prince who shall come [and] shall destroy the city".

While the evidence of a chiasm supports the belief that the "he" who makes the covenant is the Messiah the chronological flow of the verses supports the belief that the "he" who makes the covenant is the end-time leader of the Beast power. We have the following chronological flow if we say that the "he" who makes the covenant is the end-time leader of the Beast power:

- First we have the Messiah being cut off in 30 AD (Daniel 9:26 first half)
- The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD (Daniel 9:26 second half)
- The end-time leader of the Beast power makes a covenant with Israel 7 years before Christ's return (Daniel 9:27 first half)
- The abomination of desolation takes place 3 ½ years from Christ's return which shall last until Christ's return when he shall destroy the desolator (Daniel 9:27 second half)

After Christ's return He will make the new covenant with Israel and restore Jerusalem. This last step is not covered if we say the "he" who makes the covenant is the end-time leader of the Beast power.

It is if we say the "he" who makes the covenant is the Messiah. Remember one of the purposes of the prophecy is to bring in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24). This can only be done AFTER Christ's second coming.

### **What is the Correct Interpretation for the Last or 70th "Week"?**

So now that we have explored the strengths and weaknesses of the different interpretations of the 70th and last "week" of the 70 "weeks" what is the correct interpretation?

The only one that we can clearly rule out is the SDA view (at least the second half of it). One of the purposes of the 70 weeks prophecy is to bring in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24). This can only be done **AFTER** Christ's second coming so this appears to rule out the SDA view we looked at before of the last half of verse 27 being already fulfilled in the time of the apostles.

The correct interpretation for the last and final week hinges on one thing – who is the "he" who confirms a covenant for a week. Is it the Messiah or is it the end-time leader of the Beast power?

We have seen the different strengths and weaknesses of the two positions. Neither position has a water tight case for being the one and only correct interpretation. Each position seems to have a missing element to close the case in its favour.

One thing that I hope that the careful reader has seen as we have gone through them is that the weaknesses of each point of view are complemented by the strengths of the other point of view. Let's assume that the second half of verse 27 is highly likely to be the abomination of desolation:

- If the covenant maker is the Messiah, rejection of Him and His way accounts for the inclusion of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD in verse 26 **BUT** it does not account for the inclusion of the end-time "abomination of desolation".
- If the covenant maker is the end-time Beast leader it accounts for the inclusion of the end-time "abomination of desolation" **BUT** it does not account for the inclusion of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- The chaismic evidence supports the Messiah as the covenant maker but the chronological flow supports end-time Beast leader as the covenant maker.

What I going to propose as the answer to our dilemma is that we do not have to choose one view over the other. I propose that the ambiguity in who the "he" is who makes the covenant is actually quite **deliberate** and that **BOTH views are correct – that the final week is a dual prophecy!**

Each point of view is missing something that the other point of view supplies and the two points of view tell of two parallel stories relating to the Messiah's work of atonement, punishment and then redemption for Jerusalem and Israel.

The two parallel lines of the story for the final week could be blended and summed up in this way with the 5 purposes of the prophecy added in:

- **[MESSIAH – first half of the week]** Christ is baptised by John [TO ANOINT THE MOST HOLY], proposes the new covenant to Israel during His 3 ½ year ministry which is accepted by the few. He is crucified paying the penalty of sin for Israel and mankind [TO MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR INIQUITY]. He is rejected by Israel which leads to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.
- **[PRINCE OF THE ROMANS - first half of the week]** European leader proposes a covenant to Israel 7 years prior to Christ's coming which the Israelites accept for protection instead of relying on the true Messiah.
- **[PRINCE OF THE ROMANS - second half of the week]** European leader double-crosses Israel causing the "abomination of desolation" desecrating the Temple 3 ½ years before Christ's return and taking Israel into captivity [TO FINISH THE TRANSGRESSION AND MAKE AN END TO SIN].
- **[MESSIAH – second half of the week]** Jesus Christ returns and destroys the desolator – the Beast power (Daniel 11:45), releases Israel from captivity who finally recognise the true Messiah who proposes the new covenant to them [TO BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS] that leads to the restoration of Jerusalem, the millennial Temple and the House of Israel [TO SEAL UP THE VISION AND PROPHECY].

Notice how this forms a chiasm of its own! The last step brings in everlasting righteousness which happens in the consummation – the end of the age – when Jesus Christ returns and restores Jerusalem, the Temple and the nation of Israel!

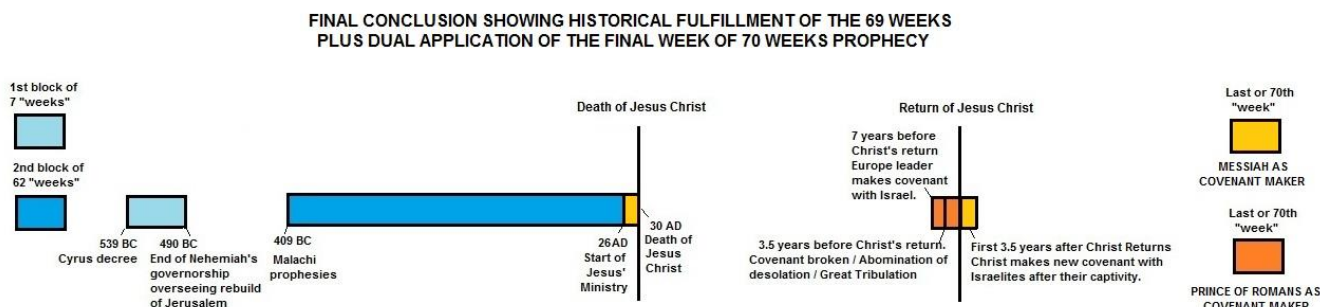
Now I am not dogmatic about this interpretation of the last week. Some may criticise it seeing it effectively as two weeks and not one week. It is possible that either of the other two positions on their own (accepting Christ as the covenant maker or accepting the Roman leader as the covenant maker) could be the correct interpretation.

As I have meticulously analysed both of those points of view they are very much line ball as to which is the stronger position of the two. There is too much abiguity to dogmatically say one position is right over the other.

That said, there does appear to be a missing element in both of them and hence my unconventional solution to the dilemma of recognising the last week as dual.

We are on much safer ground in declaring the correct historical interpretation of the first 69 weeks. When it comes down to the final week, that is mostly or wholly prophetic, we will need to wait and see what comes to pass at the time and probably only in hindsight or when Christ returns will we know for sure the correct interpretation of the final week of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy.

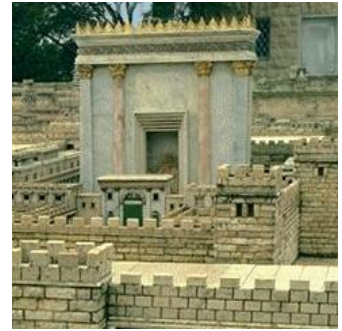
Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy is a most amazing prophecy that tells of the rise and fall and rise again of the Holy City of Jerusalem and God's chosen people Israel!



## Appendix 1 – The Abomination of Desolation

In **Matthew 24** Jesus Christ gave a long prophecy detailing events that would occur leading up to His return. In this chapter he spoke of something called the abomination of desolation. He said:

“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’...”



“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (**Matthew 24:1-3, 15-22**).

The prophecies that He spoke were dual and answered two different questions that the disciples had asked Him. The first question was “When will these things be?”, referring to the destruction of the temple where one stone would not be left on top of one another. This occurred in **70 AD** when the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple that was standing in Jesus’ day. The second question was “What *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” The disciples expected the Kingdom of God would come in their lifetime.

Jesus spoke of “the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place”. We read of this in **Daniel 11:31**: “And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation.”

According to the UCG booklet “**Is the Bible True?**”:

“This refers to the momentous events of **Dec. 16, 168 B.C.**, when a crazed [Antiochus Epiphanes – Greek ruler of Syria] entered Jerusalem and killed 80 000 men, women and children (2 Maccabees 5:11-14). He then desecrated the temple by offering a sacrifice [swine or pig flesh] to a pagan god, Jupiter Olympus. This outrage was a forerunner of a comparable event that Jesus Christ said would occur in the last days (**Matthew 24:15**)”.

Josephus wrote the following in Antiquities of the Jews (Book 12, Chapter 5, Verse 4):

“And when the king had **built an idol altar upon God’s altar**, he slew swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own God.”

1 Maccabees 1:54 called the idol of Zeus “**a desolating sacrilege on the altar.**”

**Daniel 11:31** says that:

- 1] The sanctuary is defiled
- 2] The daily sacrifice taken away and
- 3] Placed there is the abomination of desolation.

In the days of Antiochus Epiphanes after the Temple was defiled and the daily sacrifices were taken away it was an idol of Zeus that was placed or set up there. The idol that was set up is what is referred to as the abomination NOT the forces or army that caused destruction to the Temple and Jerusalem. Josephus tells us the following:

"He [Antiochus] also spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for **3 years and 6 months**" (Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 1, Verse 1).

This 3 years and 6 months equates to about 1270 days and is the time that the daily sacrifices were stopped for. This period differs from the 1290 days noted in **Daniel 12:11** in relation to the stopping of sacrifices and the setting up of the abomination of desolation.

Another "abomination of desolation" appears to have occurred in **70 AD** when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple that stood in Jesus' day.

In Wars of the Jews (Book 6, Chapter 6, Verse 1) Josephus records: "And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, **brought their ensigns to the temple and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them**".

We will shortly look closely at Daniel's prophecies relating to the abomination of desolation. They appear to indicate that there will be another end-time fulfillment as well.

That said, Jesus does appear to be specifically referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in **70 AD** when He speaks of the abomination of desolation. Jesus says in **Matthew 24:15-18**: "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand). **Then** let those in Judea flee into the mountains. Let him on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; nor let him in the field turn back to take his clothes."

By the use of the word **then** Jesus connects the abomination He is specifically referring to with the flight of people in Judea. In the parallel account in Luke speaking of the same events where He tells people to flee we read: "And when you see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that **its destruction** has come. And let those in Judea flee to the mountains. And those in its midst, let them go out. And those in the open spaces, let them not go into her."

**Jesus is not referring to an end-time abomination of desolation here as He speaks of Jerusalem's destruction. In the Great Tribulation Jerusalem would be taken captive NOT destroyed (Revelation 11:2).**

What evidence do we have for an end-time fulfillment of the prophecies relating to the abomination of desolation?

The first place that the abomination of desolation is mentioned is in **Daniel 8**.

"And as I was watching, behold, a he-goat came from the west, over the face of the all earth, and did not touch the ground. And the he goat had an outstanding horn between his eyes...Then the he-goat became very great. And when he was strong, the great horn was broken. And in its place came up four outstanding ones towards the four winds of the heavens.

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which became very great, toward the south and toward the east and toward the bountiful land. And it became great, even to the host of heaven. And it made fall some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.

"Yes, he magnified himself, even to the ruler of the host, **and the daily sacrifice was taken away by him, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down**. And an army was given to him against

the daily sacrifice because of transgression, and it cast the truth to the ground. And it worked and succeeded.

“Then I heard a certain holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that one who spoke, Until when shall the vision last, concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression that astounds, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled? And he said to me, For 2 300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed...

“The he goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. And as for that being broken, and four stood up in its place; four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in its power.

“And in **the latter time of their kingdom**, when the transgressors have come to the full, a king, fierce of face, and skilled at intrigues, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power. And he shall destroy marvelously, and shall prosper and work, and destroy the mighty and the holy people. And also through his understanding, he shall cause deceit to succeed in his hand.

“And he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many. **He also shall stand up against the Prince of princes. But he shall be broken without a hand” (Daniel 8:5, 8-14, 22-25).**

The he goat is the king of Greece and the great horn is its first king, Alexander the Great. After his premature death the kingdom was split between his 4 generals.

A little horn then follows and it is he that causes the daily sacrifice to be taken away and place of the sanctuary to be cast down. The latter time of their kingdom appears to indicate late in the Greek empire that controlled the land of Israel right up until the time of Antiochus Epiphanes who stopped the daily sacrifices and set up an idol of Zeus in the Temple in **168 BC**. The Maccabees then drove out the Greeks 3 ½ years later and cleansed the Temple, an event celebrated as Hannukah by the Jews today.

It seems a simple matter to interpret this prophecy of the daily sacrifice as just referring to the abomination of desolation in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.

That said, there is a very strong indication that the prophecy is dual because of what it says in **Daniel 8:25 – “He also shall stand up against the Prince of princes. But he shall be broken without a hand.”**

2 Maccabees 9:5-7 says the following about the death Antiochus Epiphanes: **“But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him an incurable and unseen blow.** As soon as he ceased speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels for which there was no relief and with sharp internal tortures - and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions. Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to hasten the journey. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body.”

The manner in which Antiochus Epiphanes died matches the prophecy of **Daniel 8:25** of being broken without a hand from anyone else. The part where it says he also shall stand up against the Princes of princes could possibly be metaphorical of his defiance against God and His people or it could be literal.

If this is referring to a literal stand against the Prince of Princes (Jesus Christ) then it can only be an end-time event when Jesus Christ will return to this earth. It doesn't appear to refer to the events of **70 AD** when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem as General Titus later went on to become emperor.



**Daniel 8:13-14** says: "Until when shall the vision last, concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression that astounds, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled? And he said to me, For 2 300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

That number of 2300 evenings and mornings is usually believed to be a reference to the evening and morning sacrifices of which there were 2 each day. This would be 1150 days, as opposed to 2300 days if so. What is this period referring to which differs from other periods of 1290 and 1335 days also mentioned later in the book of Daniel?

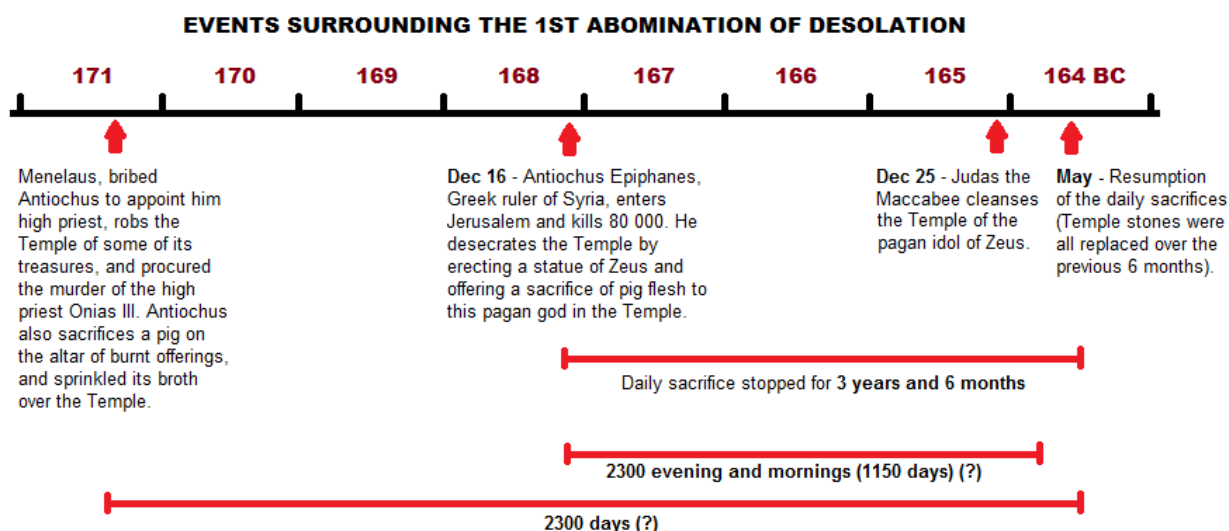
The Expositor's Bible makes these comments on the events that appear to have fulfilled the prophecy of the 2300 evenings and mornings:

"Turning now to the dates, we know that Judas the Maccabee cleansed (1 Mac 4:41-56, 2 Mac 10:1-5) ('justified' or 'vindicated', **Dan 8:14**) the Temple on Kislev 25 (**December 25th, B.C. 165**). If we reckon back 2 300 full days from this date, it brings us to **B.C. 171**, in which Menelaus, who bribed Antiochus to appoint him high priest, robbed the Temple of some of its treasures, and procured the murder of the high priest Onias III.

**"In this year [171 BC] Antiochus sacrificed a great sow on the altar of burnt offerings, and sprinkled its broth over the sacred building. These crimes provoked the revolt of the Jews in which they killed Lysimachus, governor of Syria, and brought on themselves a heavy retribution.**

"If we reckon back 2300 half-days, 1150 whole days, we must go back 3 years and 70 days, but we cannot tell what exact event the writer had in mind as the starting-point of his calculations. The actual time which elapsed from the final defilement of the Temple by Apollonius, the general of Antiochus, in **B.C. 168**, till its re-purification was roughly 3 years. Perhaps, however - for all is uncertain - the writer reckoned from the earliest steps taken, or contemplated, by Antiochus for the suppression of Judaism.

"The purification of the Temple did not end the time of persecution, which was to continue, first, for 140 days longer, and then 45 days more (**Dan 12:11-12**). It is clear from this that the writer reckoned the beginning and the end of troubles from different epochs which we have no longer sufficient data to discover."



The Expositor's commentary hints that the 1290 days of Daniel 12:11 **may** have been fulfilled at the time of the first abomination of desolation, however, we simply do not have the data to prove it! This opens the door for this prophecy to be fulfilled in the end time.

Going back to the 2300 evening and mornings, was this just fulfilled anciently or is there evidence for the prophecy being dual with an end time fulfillment? We saw before how Antiochus Epiphanes'

death fulfilled the prophecy of being broken without a human hand. The part about standing up against the Prince of Princes could be either metaphorical or it could be literal. If literal then that means there will be an end time fulfillment.

There is something more definitive in this chapter pointing to an end time fulfillment. In **Daniel 8:17** we read: "So he came near beside my place. And when he came, I was afraid and fell on my face. But he said to me, Understand, O son of man, for the vision is for **the time of the end.**"

The term "time of the end" is almost universally applied to the time before the second coming of Jesus Christ to bring the Kingdom of God to this earth.

**Daniel 8:13-14** says: "Until when shall the vision last, concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression that astounds, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled? And he said to me, For 2 300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

He asks when the vision was to come to an end regarding "the daily sacrifice [being] taken away by him", "the transgression that astounds" (most likely the setting up of an idol in the Temple) and "the sanctuary and the host [being] trampled" before being told the answer of 2300 evening and mornings.

This could refer to 2300 literal days or it could refer to 2300 evening and morning sacrifices (1150 days). The Hebrew leans a little more to the latter.

What is the starting point for this? Is it the end time stopping of the sacrifices and abomination of desolation (possibly 1290 days out from the return of Christ – **Daniel 12:11**) or perhaps even when the sacrifices restart before being later stopped. **The wording simply isn't clear enough to tell.**

If the former then perhaps the two witnesses or the Jews themselves cleanse the sanctuary 140 days before the return of Christ while the beast power is tied up fighting the hordes from the north and the east (**Daniel 11:44**).

We've already looked at **Daniel 11:31** which is placed in the series of prophecies in that chapter at the place in time we would expect to find Antiochus Epiphanes. Only later in **Daniel 11:40** does it then jump to the time of the end.

In the following chapter we again read about the abomination of desolation. Let's look at the full context:

"And at that time Michael shall stand up, the great ruler who stands for the sons of your people. **And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation; until that time.** And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt..."

"And one said to the man clothed in linen on the waters of the river: **Until when shall be the end of these wonders?** And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was on the waters of the river, when he held up his right and his left hand to Heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it shall be for **a time, times, and a half. And when they have made an end of scattering the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.**

"And I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, O my lord, what shall be the end of these things? And He said, Go, Daniel! For the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried. But the wicked shall do wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

**"And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1290 days.**

**“Blessed is he who waits and comes to the 1335 days.** But you go on to the end, for you shall rest and stand in your lot at the end of the days (**Daniel 12:1-2, 6-13**)."

There is mention in **Daniel 12:11** here of 1290 days that would follow the stopping of the daily sacrifice and the abomination of desolation. Is this the primary fulfillment of this verse or is there an end time fulfillment as well?

In **Daniel 12:1** there is a clear reference to the Great Tribulation where it speaks of a time of trouble such as there ever was a nation. **Matthew 24:21** says: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." **Jeremiah 30:7** similarly says: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

The "time, times and half a time" in **Daniel 12:7** is usually interpreted as 3 ½ years (1 year – time, 2 years – times, ½ year – half a time). This period is "when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, [and] **all these things shall be finished.**" The prophecies of the previous chapter won't be finished until the return of Christ. This appears to be a better fit than the scattering of the holy people by the Romans started around **70 AD** but not completed until the final Jewish revolt around **135 AD**.

This "**time, times and half a time**" is usually equated with the **42 months** that Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles in the Great Tribulation and the **1260 days** in which the two witnesses will prophesy – "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under **42 months**. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy **1260 days**, clothed in sackcloth."

If we multiply 42 by 30 we come up with 1260 days. Many Bible students believe that a year of 360 days with 12 months of 30 days each is the year that is being used in some prophecies like this one as opposed to the current Hebrew calendar which has alternating months of 29 and 30 days. This may or may not be true. There is simply not enough data to confirm or reject this hypothesis.

As confirmed in many ancient sources from around the ancient world, prior to around the time of Hezekiah there was a shorter year of 360 days with 12 months of exactly 30 days each. Noah used 30 day months at the time of the Flood rather than alternating months of 29 and 30 days as the Hebrew calendar does today (compare **Genesis 7:11** with **Genesis 8:3-4**). The calendar change occurred before Daniel's time so it is a little unusual why 360 day years would be used for the prophecies in the Book of Revelation.

In addition to the **1260 days** when the two witnesses will prophesy in the Great Tribulation (noted in **Revelation 12:3**), **Daniel 12** notes two other periods – **1290 days (Daniel 12:11)** and **1335 days (Daniel 12:12)**.

In **Daniel 12:11** it says "And from the time that **the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up**, there shall be **1290 days**."

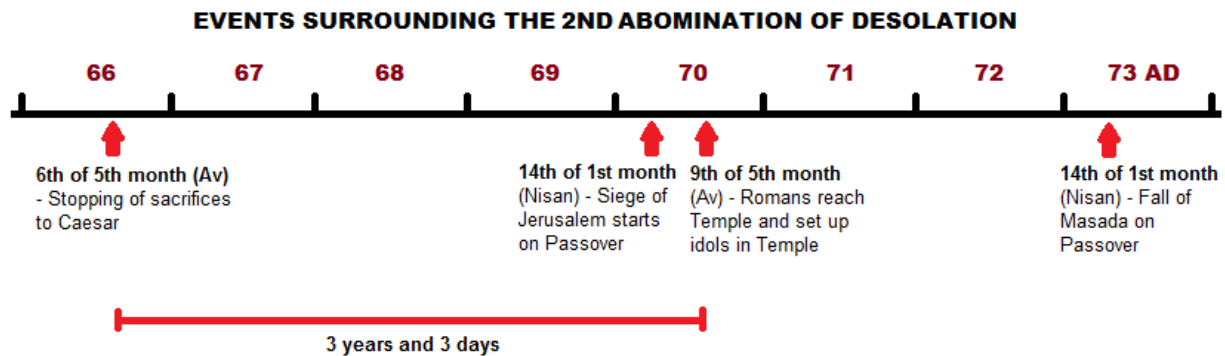
In the time of Antiochus Epiphanes Josephus tells us "He [Antiochus] also spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for **3 years and 6 months**" (Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 1, Verse 1).

**This 3 years and 6 months** equates to about **1270 days** and is the time that the daily sacrifices were stopped for. Using 2 leap months rather than 1 leap month would make this period 1300 days. Either way this period differs from the **1290 days** noted in **Daniel 12:11**.

How does this fit with the second "abomination of desolation" that Jesus referred to in 70 AD? Notice the following dates derived from Josephus' account in Wars of the Jews:

66 AD - 6th of 5th month (Av)  
 70 AD - 14th of 1st month (Nisan)  
 70 AD - 9th of 5th month (Av)  
 73 AD - 14th of 1st month (Nisan)

Stopping of sacrifices to Caesar  
 Siege of Jerusalem starts on Passover  
 Romans reach Temple and set up idols in Temple  
 Fall of Masada on Passover



One author claims (<http://revelationrevolution.org/daniel-chapter-12-a-preterist-commentary/>) that from the stopping of the sacrifices to Caesar in 66 AD to the setting up of idols in the eastern wing of the Temple that the Romans made sacrifices to was 1290 days. He also claims that from that the abomination of desolation in the Temple when the Romans made sacrifices to the day after Masada fell (he gives the year as 74 AD instead of 73 AD) was 1335 days.

Even if his year for the fall of Masada is correct, when I have cross-checked those periods I get a different numbers of days than 1290 days from Av 6, 66 AD to Av 9, 70 AD and 1335 days from Av 9, 70 AD to Nisan 15, 73 or 74 AD no matter what combination of leap months I use.

**As best as I can tell, there is NO MATCH for the 1290 and 1335 days for the Jewish revolt when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.**

**Now if 1290 days does not appear to fit both the 1st and 2nd abominations of desolation in 168 BC and 70 AD then it appears, by a process of elimination, to refer to a future end time abomination of desolation when sacrifices will be stopped and an idol of some description is set up in a Jewish temple.**

Raymond McNair makes these comments on the end-time abomination of desolation:

"It appears, then, that some form of Temple worship will first be reinstituted by the Jews. Otherwise, how could the sacrifices be 'cut off'? However, whether there will be an actual temple—or just a sacrificial altar as in the days of Ezra—is not certain. Yet a strong argument can be made for the former since the Apostle Paul says that the final 'man of sin'—the false religious leader...who will be in partnership with the Beast dictator—will enthrone himself 'as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God' (**2 Thessalonians 2:4**)

"It should be noted that quite a number of Jews are right now engaged in reproducing implements of Levitical worship and drawing up plans for a new house of worship on the Temple Mount. If they do actually build a temple or altar in the years to come, this would certainly fan the flames of Arab hatred toward Israel" (The Coming War for the City of Peace, World Ahead, Sept-Oct. 1997, p.20).

There are two references (**Daniel 8:17 & Daniel 8:25**) that appear to support an end time abomination of desolation in **Daniel 8**. The 1290 days of **Daniel 12:11** may have been fulfilled anciently with the first abomination of desolation and, only by a process of elimination do we see evidence for **Daniel 12:11** having a future fulfilment.

We know from **2 Thessalonians 2:4** that there will be an end time Temple as the false prophet goes into the Temple and claims to sit as God in the Temple. That there will be an end time

Temple gives strong support for the reinstitution of sacrifices in that Temple and the stopping of those and a future abomination of desolation in that Temple.

**Revelation 11:2-3** tells us the beast power controls Jerusalem for 42 months and the two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days. Additionally, the church is also protected for 1260 days (**Revelation 12:6**). This period is the same as the “time, times and half a time” mentioned a few verses later in **Revelation 12:14**. This same phrase, “time, times and half a time”, we saw was used in **Daniel 12:7** for the time of the “scattering the power of the holy people”, which will start with the Jews (Israel today) and then the other nations descended from Israel.

**The end of the 42 months that Jerusalem is trodden on by the Gentiles appears to be the return of Jesus Christ. That period of 42 months the beast power controls Jerusalem and the 1260 days that the church is protected for appears to be the total length of the Great Tribulation.**

This 42 months is assumed to be 1260 days (3 years and 6 months) using a prophetic year of 360 days. It is around 9 days shorter than 3 years and 6 months using today's Hebrew calendar. The length of 1260 days using today's calendar is closer to 42 months than 41 months so 42 months may just be a rounded up figure equal to 1260 days.

Depending on whether you use the prophetic year or not, the period of 1290 days from the stopping of sacrifices and setting up of the abomination of desolation to some unspecified event is either 30 or 40 days longer than the 42 months.

**Like the 1260 days (42 months), the unspecified event is assumed to end with the return of Jesus Christ. It is very unlikely that the 1290 days would start at the same time as the 1260 days and finish 30 days after the return of Christ so the assumption that they both end at the return of Christ is quite logical and sound.**

If the abomination of desolation occurs 1290 days before Jesus Christ returns and then a month later (1260 days before Christ's return) Europe invades the Middle East it leads to a very interesting problem. How is it that the beast power will set up some kind of abominable thing in Jerusalem a full month before they actually come in and conquer Jerusalem?

Now if the false prophet does enter the Temple of God and this happens in conjunction with the abomination of desolation how might he do so a month before the armies of Europe conquer Jerusalem and for what purpose? Under what pretext might he do such a thing? We are told that he has miraculous power to do just about anything he wants to (**Revelation 13:13-14**).

The leader of the United Europe will tap into the influence that the false prophet will have if he has miracle working powers and work with the Vatican and the church and the European state will be closely working together like in centuries past. Those kind of miracles by the false prophet will undoubtedly shake the Europeans out of their spiritual complacency and a religious revival will sweep through Europe.

I have a theory that could kill two birds with one stone. It could explain why the false prophet comes to the Temple of God the Jews have built and what might arouse the anger of the Arabs against the Europeans. Here is my theory, an educated guess that I hasten to add is just speculation.

What if the false prophet was to use his miracle-working powers and seize it as a golden opportunity to show the ascendancy of Christianity (Catholicism) over the Jewish religion? What if he were to come down to Jerusalem and use his powers to take over the Temple of God? It would be an incredible public relations victory for the Catholic Church if he were to take over the Temple. It would “prove” that Christianity supercedes the Jewish religion and that the church are the true inheritors of the things of God, including possibly the Ark of the Covenant (if found), since the Jews killed and rejected Christ. Why stop the sacrifices? Well, Christ died once and for all and therefore animal sacrifices are no longer necessary.

A takeover by the false prophet of the Temple in Jerusalem would be seen by many Arabs as merely the first step towards a full takeover of Jerusalem by Europe and another crusade.

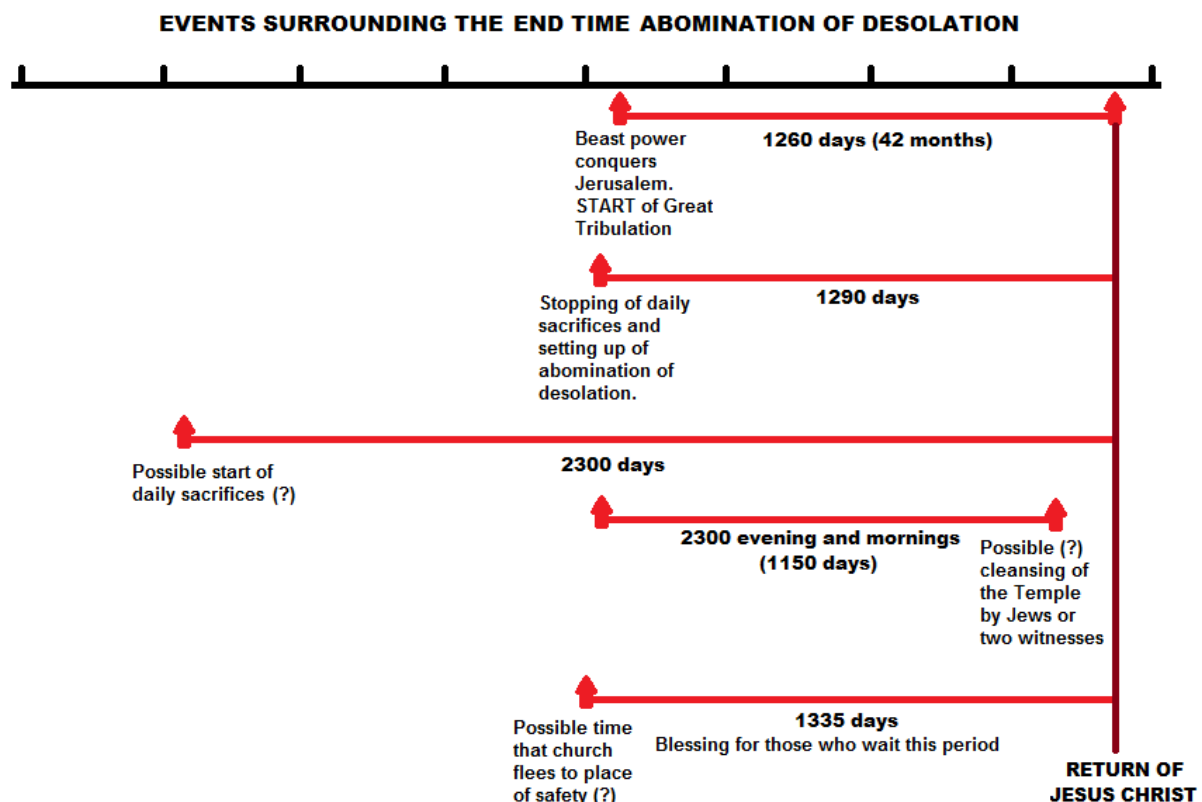
What if the false prophet to all the world watching on TV were to say the following after this hypothetical takeover of the Temple – “It’s now time for Christianity to assert itself as the world’s dominant religion and be the instrument to bring God’s kingdom and peace to the world”?

Would that not be like a red flag to a bull for the Arabs who would see it as a declaration of holy war? Another crusade like the ones of the Middle Ages? It would also help put the European people into a frame of mind to accept the coming conquests as being the will of God. The miracles of this future false prophet will be seen the world over on TV and the Arabs will see that miraculous power as a great threat.

So what will the abomination of desolation look like? Jesus described the abomination of desolation to occur in 70 AD as “standing in the holy place” (**Matthew 24:15**). The future abomination is described as being “set up” in **Daniel 12:11**.

The false prophet will exalt himself in the Temple as it says in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**. Could his act on sitting in the holy place, possibly even in the Holy of holies in “the place of God”, be the abomination? Perhaps, though that doesn’t seem to fit the description of being “set up”? What might he set up in the Temple to desecrate it? I think the most likely scenario is that this coming false prophet might place a throne for himself in the Holy of Holies, making Himself as God within it symbolically and behind it a large standing crucifix with the false image of Jesus.

There is one more number of days spoken of in **Daniel 12:12** where we read: “Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the **1335 days**.” So what event might occur 1335 days before Jesus Christ returns, assuming that is the end point for it? No further information is given. The church has traditionally believed that this is possibly the time when God’s people will be told to go to the place of safety and have 75 days to get there before Europe invades the Middle East and the Great Tribulation begins.





## Appendix 2 – The True Location of the Temple of God

The prophecy in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4** indicates that there will be a future Temple in Jerusalem before the return of Jesus Christ which today's Jews are keen to build. There is seemingly one major obstacle in the way to this happening and that is the common belief that the Muslim Dome of the Rock was constructed over the site where the Temples of God stood that both Solomon and later the second Temple was built after the Jews returned from Babylon.

Those Temples are generally assumed to have stood where the Muslim Dome of the Rock now stands but let's notice a couple of Jesus' prophecies about what was going to happen to the Temple and Jerusalem:

In **Matthew 24:1-2** we read: "Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down'".

In **Luke 19:41-44** Jesus said: "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"

Both Jerusalem and the Temple would be left without one stone upon another because they didn't recognise Jesus who came to them was the true Messiah. An eyewitness of the destruction of Jerusalem was Eleazar, the Jewish commander at Masada. In **AD 73**, three years after the war was finished in Jerusalem, he stated:

"Where is this city that was believed to have God himself inhabiting therein? It is now demolished to the very foundations, and hath nothing left **BUT THAT MONUMENT OF IT PRESERVED, I MEAN THE CAMP OF THOSE [ROMANS] THAT DESTROYED IT, WHICH STILL DWELLS UPON ITS RUINS...**I cannot but wish that we had all died before we had seen that holy city demolished by the hands of our enemies, or **THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR HOLY TEMPLE DUG UP**, after so profane a manner" (Wars of the Jews, Book 7, Chapter 8, Verse 7).



Above is the view of Jerusalem today from the Mount of Olives which is east of Jerusalem. Look at that massive stone platform that the Dome of the Rock sits on today. Those lower stones are universally agreed to have been built by Herod the Great. If that is so, then there is a major contradiction between the accepted belief that this was where the Temple stood with Jesus' prophecies and the eyewitness statement by the general at Masada.

If those stones were indeed built by Herod and if the general at Masada's statement is correct that the Temple was dug up to its very foundations then that stone platform must have been the Roman fort called Fort Antonia. Notice how Josephus described the Roman fort Antonia:

"Now as to the tower of Antonia, it was situated [its entrance was] at the corner of two cloisters [colonnades] of the court of the Temple; of that on the west, and that on the north. It was erected upon a rock of fifty cubits in height, and was on a great precipice. It was the work of King Herod, wherein he demonstrated his natural magnanimity. In the first place, the rock itself was covered over with smooth pieces of stone, from its foundation... The inward parts had the largeness and form of a palace, it being parted into all kinds of rooms and other conveniences, such as courts, and places for bathing, and broad spaces for camps [military training areas]; insomuch that, by having all conveniences that cities wanted, **IT MIGHT SEEM TO BE COMPOSED OF SEVERAL CITIES.**



A Roman legion was formed of 5000 soldiers and there was at least one full legion based in Jerusalem and so the fort was a lot bigger than it is usually depicted as. A typical Roman camp was around 400 x 500 metres, close to the size of this stone platform on which the Dome of the Rock now sits. So, if that stone platform was Fort Antonia where was the Temple? Josephus stated that the Fort was to the north of the Temple so Josephus places the Temple south of the Roman fort. The Roman historian Tacitus gives us another major clue.

"The Temple resembled a fortress and had its own walls, which were more laboriously constructed than the others. Even the colonnades with which it was surrounded formed an admirable outer defense. **IT CONTAINED AN INEXHAUSTIBLE SPRING**" (Tacitus, History, 5, 11-12).

There was a spring that lay underneath the Temple complex. There are two reasons why it was located near a spring 1) Living waters symbolically flow from the throne of God and 2) Water in abundance was needed for the sacrifices.

The Gihon spring is the only spring in Jerusalem and is around 250 metres (700 feet) south of where southern wall of the stone platform where the Dome of the Rock is today. To the right is a photo taken before much of the excavations that took place from the 1960's on that shows why the City of David was a great defensible location with steep sides on either side and its own water source.

THE CITY OF DAVID AND THE GIHON SPRING

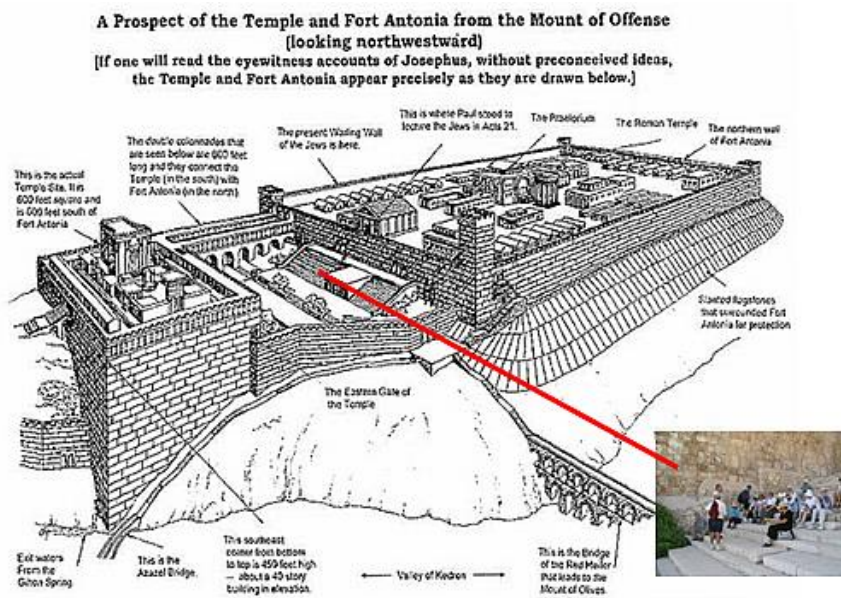
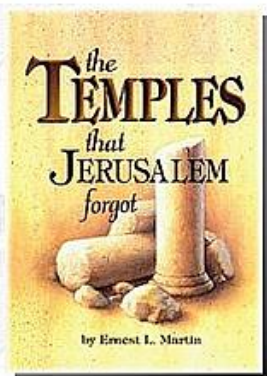


The Gihon Spring was where the tabernacle resided before the Temple was built in Solomon's day (**1 Kings 1:38-39**). In describing the Temple during the time of Jesus day Josephus wrote:

"This hill [Temple platform] was walled all round, and in compass 4 stades [a stade was 600 feet], each angle [of the square] containing in length a stade [600 feet on each side] [Antiquities of the Jews, Book 15, Chapter 11, Verse 3]...The colonnades were 30 cubits broad [45 feet], and the complete circuit of them, embracing [the colonnades to and from] the Tower of Antonia, measured 6 stades" [Wars of the Jews, Book 5, Chapter 5, Verse 2]



Based on the research I have presented here on the Temple from Ernest Martin's book "The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot" here is an artist's illustration of what the Temple really looked like in relation to the true size of Fort Antonia where the Dome of the Rock is today. Each side of the Temple was a little under 200 metres long or about the length of two football fields. Notice the stairs up to Fort Antonia on its southern side. That was most likely the site where the crowds gathered when Pilate offered to release either Jesus or Barabbas.



Jerome in the late fourth century said the following about the destruction of the Temple:

Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste': and the Temple which earned reverence throughout the world has become the refuse dump of the new city whose founder [Hadrian] called it Aelia [that is, Hadrian called his new city Aelia Capitolina] (Quoted by Moshe Gil, A History of Palestine 634-1099, p.67 – Temples p.175).

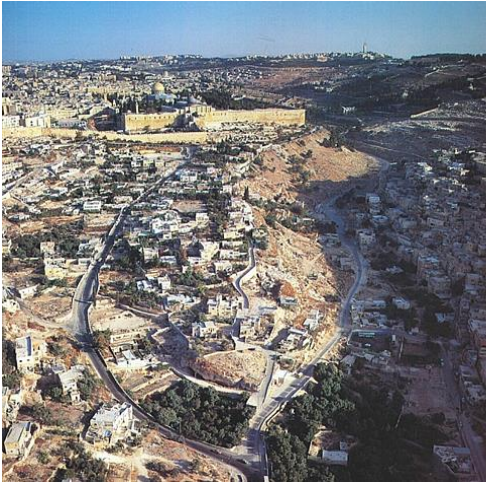
Jerome said the Temple area was turned into dump. Of the Temple site Eusebius about the same time as Jerome wrote that the Temple:

"...is a Roman farm like the rest of the country. Yea, with my own eyes i have seen the bulls plowing there, and the sacred site sown with seed."

This is a fulfillment of **Micah 3:12** which says: "Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field. Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest."

So what is on this site today? After my first visit to Jerusalem in 1999 the Jews had taken over quite a bit of the northern part of the spur that was the original City of David and developed an archaeological park that is a huge tourist attraction.

Its key attraction is Hezekiah's tunnel that goes from the Gihon spring to the southern end of the spur where the Pool of Siloam is. Arab houses are further south where the Temple site was but the Jews are quite eager to buy them out. The left photo is looking up the hill from the south. The two photos I took on the top and bottom right (about 2/3rds up the hill from the south) are approximately where the Temple stood.



Now if the Temple was further south as this research indicates and if the Jews accepted this research then there is no need to move or blow up the Dome of the Rock if the Jews wanted to rebuild the Temple. It's just a matter of acquiring the private properties owned by Arab citizens who currently live on that site.

### Appendix 3 – Can We Rely on the Dates that come from Ptolemy's Canon?

Our chronological dates for the kings of the Persian empire are almost entirely dependent on the dates provided to us by the Canon of Ptolemy who lived a century after Christ. The Bible does not supply us with detailed chronological information in the post-exile period and so for most people studying Bible chronology most look to secular sources to fill in that chronological data.

By relying on secular sources to establish fixed dates for Old Testament events we need to recognise that, not being God-inspired scriptures, they are open to being in error so, in order to establish the date of the decree from which the 70 weeks prophecy is to begin we must confirm if the Canon of Ptolemy can be relied up for our dates. Wikipedia gives us the following general information about the Canon of Ptolemy:

The Canon of Kings was a dated list of kings used by ancient astronomers as a convenient means to date astronomical phenomena, such as eclipses. The Canon was preserved by the astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, and is thus known sometimes as Ptolemy's Canon. It is one of the most important bases for our knowledge of ancient chronology.

The Canon derives originally from Babylonian sources. Thus, it lists Kings of Babylon from 747 BC until the conquest of Babylon by the Persians in 539 BC, and then Persian kings from 538 to 332 BC. At this point, the Canon was continued by Greek astronomers in Alexandria, and lists the Macedonian kings from 331 to 305 BC, the Ptolemies from 304 BC to 30 BC, and the Roman Emperors from 29 BC to 160 AD...

The Canon is generally considered by historians to be accurate. The dates have been confirmed to be essentially accurate whenever they are checked against independent sources (Article - Canon of Kings).

One author who has compiled evidence to challenge the accepted dates of Ptolemy is Ernest Martin. I quote first of all from his article entitled "Chronology: The Key to Prophetic Understanding - Part 2 (<http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p900902.htm>):

The most important year in the whole Bible to establish a proper world chronology for all past time (from Adam to the present) is the year in which Jerusalem and Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. This is the only key date that gives a "link-year" from biblical chronology to a precise Gentile time reckoning.

The Bible tells us that this crucial "link-year" is the 11th year of Zedekiah (the last Davidic king of Jerusalem) which dovetails with the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25:2,8; Jeremiah 52:5,12).

What makes this year crucial (and vitally important for chronological purposes) is the fact that from this year onward the Bible gives only prophetic time indications until the advent of the Messiah (that is, the Seventy Years and Seventy Weeks prophecies of Daniel Nine). All other dates in the Bible (from this time forward) are the years of Gentile rulers -- and this practice continues into the New Testament with the mention of the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1).

It is because of this feature that some chronologists insist on going to "Babylon" and Gentile chronology from Nebuchadnezzar [year] 19 onward. But this is wrong! What the Gentiles need to do is to go to the Bible for the correct date of Zedekiah [year] 11 (which equals Nebuchadnezzar [year] 19).

**It is the Bible that has the proper date (and the Bible has a perfect chronology of 4000 years from the first Adam to the spiritual Adam -- Christ Jesus).**

**It is NOT the Babylonian chronological scheme sanctioned by Ptolemy that should determine (wrongly) when Zedekiah [year] 11 occurred in world history and thereby adjusting all biblical dates to accord with the Gentile scheme. This is where the modern error begins.**

Now Ptolemy in his astronomical canon placed Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year in what we call 585 B.C. (while most modern scholars have adjusted Ptolemy slightly and consider the year to be 586, 587 or some even 588 B.C.).

But is Ptolemy and the "Babylonian chronology" correct at this time in history? There are many reasons to show that the Gentile scheme is wrong, and this was acknowledged by several historians of the past who relied principally on the Bible.

Josephus (first century A.D.), a historian of the first rank, a priest who had access to and referred to the archives in the temple in Jerusalem as well as all the records in the imperial library at Rome including Babylonian, Egyptian, Jewish, Greek and Persian histories, stated quite confidently that **Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in what we call 639 B.C. In another place, when he acceded to the Babylonian chronology of Berosus, he said it was 619 B.C.**

Ctesias (fourth century B.C.), whom we referred to before (even though he did not follow the Bible), showed Jerusalem's destruction was probably 850 B.C. since he placed the fall of Nineveh in 877 B.C., and he said Nineveh fell 27 years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Demetrius (last of third century B.C.) was a Jewish historian from Alexandria. He worked out a chronology that was supposed to be with great precision and he stated there were 338 years and 3 months from the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to King Ptolemy of Egypt (that is, in 222 B.C). **Thus, according to his chronology, Jerusalem fell in 560 B.C.** See Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 1,21,141 for this scheme.

Tertullian (third century A.D.) had an odd way of recording years of the past, but his fall of Jerusalem came to 507 B.C. See Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol.3, pp. 158, 159,168.

Africanus (third century A.D.), the first Christian chronologer, stated that Jerusalem fell in 629 B.C. (Archer, Jerome's Commentary on Daniel, p.96).

Hippolytus (third century A.D.), one of the most educated men in Italy, stated that Jerusalem fell in 664 B.C. (Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 147).

Jerome (fifth century A.D.), editor of the chronologies of Africanus and Eusebius, said Jerusalem fell in the year 591 B.C. See Finegan, p.185. All these dates are inconsistent!

What we find is the fact that the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian worlds was not clearly understood by historians (and even astronomers) within a few decades of some major historical events within the periods.

Indeed, we have Plutarch telling us just prior to the time that Ptolemy devised his astronomical canon of kings that thousands of chronologists (using historical and astronomical data) were working to correct the errors that people knew to be resident in that crucial time in history.

And even today, we find many of the early Gentile historical records not agreeing with known astronomical indications. Our modern dates for the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods are not as infallible as some people may think.

Of course, new discoveries which would give us more astronomical information concerning the times of the various Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian kings would be most welcome, but of the texts that we already have available, there is no real consensus that all the astronomical and chronological problems have been perfectly worked out.

It is essential for us today that we re-examine what the biblical writers have told us about the proper chronology from the first Adam to the last Adam (Jesus Christ).



In my Part One of this research paper I have shown the remarkable circumstance that exactly (to the very day) a 4000 year period has elapsed between the two "Adams." When one looks at the evidence carefully, it may well be that it is the biblical revelation that has the "key" to solve the real chronological problems of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. I believe this to be the fact.

Below is the chart from Part 1 of the chronology article that I have quoted above by Ernest Martin (<http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p900901.htm>):

From Adam's year "one" to the 99th year of Abraham	2107 years.
From Abraham's year 99 to the first year of the Exodus	430 years
From the year of the Exodus to year 4 of Solomon's reign	480 years
Add the remainder of Solomon's 40 years' reign	36 years.
Summation of the years for the 19 kings of Judah and their reigns from Jerusalem	<b>393 years</b>
Then add a "one" year period for harvest after the temple's destruction	1 year
Then add the prophetic period which comprised the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews when the Land of Judah observed its Sabbatical years of rest	70 years
Finally, add the 69 Weeks of Sabbatical Periods that reach to a Messiah (which should properly begin with the year called Cyrus "one")	483 years
Total number of completed years from Adam to the Messiah of Daniel	<b>precisely 4000 years</b>

With this chronology of Ernest Martin's he has 483 years between Cyrus' decree (usually dated to 539 BC) and the birth of Christ (5 BC) giving a date of 488 BC for Cyrus' decree, a difference of 51 years.

He has the 70 years of the captivity prophecy starting from the fall of Jerusalem instead of the earlier captivity (23 years earlier) of Jehoiachin (The 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy is conventionally dated from 609-539 BC).

If it could be proven that there were exactly 4000 years between Adam and Jesus Christ this might constitute some solid evidence in favour of using a "purely" biblical chronology unreliant upon secular dates.

There are two mistakes in the above chart. The first is that the 430 years from Abraham to the Exodus is from when Abraham was 75 years old and came out of Ur of the Chaldees (assuming Josephus' statement below is correct), not from the later promise given to him at age 99. See the chart below for the details confirming this:

## HOW LONG WAS ISRAEL'S PERIOD OF SLAVERY?

Exodus 12:40-41:

"Now the **sojourning** of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was **430 years**. And it came to pass at the end of the **430 years**, even the **selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."

Galatians 3:16-17:

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made...And this I say, that the law which was **430 years** later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before God in Christ".

Josephus:

"They left Egypt in the month Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; **430 years** after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but **215 years** only after Jacob removed into Egypt."

**130** – Jacob when he moved to Egypt

**60** - Isaac when Jacob born

**25** - Time between Abraham moving to Canaan and Isaac being born (100 – 75)

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**215 years**

Joseph was **39 years** old when Jacob moved and Joseph lived another **71 years** after to **110**.

Therefore max time of slavery was **144 years** but more likely to have been not much more than **100 years** long.

The second mistake in Martin's chronology chart is the length of time between the split of Israel into two kingdoms and the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. Ernest Martin explains his reasoning for using 393 years for this period this way:

There were 19 kings who followed Solomon. Simply add up the years of reign of those 19 Judaic kings (in the Book of Kings and in the Book of Chronicles -- both books give the identical number of years), and one is shown a total of 393 years.

There is another way to demonstrate that 393 years is absolutely accurate for this period of time. The prophet Ezekiel gave a prophecy that the House of Israel (the northern ten tribes) had been in an iniquitous relationship with God for 390 years (Ezekiel 4:1-8). Ezekiel put him at the end of the 390 years at the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's year 19 which happened to be the last year of King Zedekiah's reign.

But why 390 years and not 393 years (which is the exact period of time after the death of Solomon)? This is simple to explain. We are told in II Chronicles 11:17 that for three years the northern Israelites after the death of Solomon continued to walk in the righteous ways of God. But after three years, Jeroboam set up the calf worship in Bethel and Dan (I Kings 12:26-33).

This is the precise time that Ezekiel's prophecy of the 390 days (which answered to "years") began to be counted. Thus we see that the prophet Ezekiel clearly confirms the 393 years' period for the 19 Judaic (Davidic) kings to have ruled in Jerusalem.

It is true that a simple counting up of the reigns of the kings of Judah after Solomon equals 393 years but this does not factor in any co-regencies which could be included in these figures. Consider the following data to illustrate the point:

**2Ki 14:23** In the **15th year of Amaziah**... king of Judah, **Jeroboam** ... king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, *and reigned* **41 years**.

**2Ki 14:17** And **Amaziah**... king of Judah lived after the death of **Jehoash**...king of Israel **15 years**.

Amaziah lives 15 years after Jeroboam's father died and Jeroboam became king. So this would mean that Amaziah's son Azariah (Uzziah) starts his reign in Jeroboam's 15<sup>th</sup> year but what do we read next?

**2Ki 15:1-2** In the **27th year of Jeroboam** king of Israel began **Azariah (Uzziah)** ...king of Judah to reign...and he reigned **52 years** in Jerusalem.

Hang on, how can Azariah (Uzziah) start his reign in Jeroboam's 27<sup>th</sup> year when we just calculated above it should be in Jeroboam's 15<sup>th</sup> year?

We have only one of two choices:

- 1) The 27<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam starts from when he became co-regent ruling alongside his father.
- 2) There was a period of 12 years when a king didn't sit on the throne of Judah.

If we accept option 2 then there is more than 393 years between the split into the two kingdoms and the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians so it must be option 1 according to Ernest Martin. Continuing on:

**2Ki 14:23** In the 15th year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, *and reigned* 41 years.

So we have Azariah (Uzziah) starting his reign in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam from his co-regency. We are then told above that Jeroboam reigned 41 years. If this is taken from his co-regency then his successor should take over in **Azariah (Uzziah)'s 14<sup>th</sup> year** (41-27). So what are we then told?

**2Ki 15:8** In the **38th year of Azariah [Uzziah] king of Judah** did **Zachariah the son of Jeroboam** reign over Israel in Samaria 6 months.

Now we have a difference of 24 years. If his successor takes over in Azariah [Uzziah]'s 38<sup>th</sup> year we again have two choices:

- 1) The 38<sup>th</sup> year of Azariah (Uzziah), king of Judah, is taken from his co-regency. This is anathema to those who says that there was 393 years between the split into the two kingdoms and the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.
- 2) There was an interregnum of 24 years when there was no king sitting on the throne of Israel.

This latter option appears to be ruled out by this verse:

**2Ki 14:29** And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, *even* with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned **in his stead**.

This verse strongly implies that Zachariah succeeded Jeroboam straightaway **NOT 24 years after Jeroboam dies** or 12 years later if somehow we can work something out so that the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam when Azariah (Uzziah) became king was from Jeroboam's sole reign, not co-regency.

Given the succession of 3 rulers within 2 years that occurred in Israel after Zechariah ascended the throne of Israel such a space of 24 (or 12) years in Israel without a king is completely illogical given the number of power hungry contenders there would have been trying to seize the throne.

The 390 year prophecy in Ezekiel 4 about the House of Israel's sin "constrained" Ussher and others in an unnecessary way to set a date for the split of the kingdom of Israel 44 years earlier than the more commonly accepted dates of Edwin Thiele. They took it as a marker that from the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC) back to when Jeroboam set up idols and changed the feasts should be 390 years.

This is an incorrect application of that prophecy. The prophecy concerns the House of Israel which had gone into captivity 120 years before Ezekiel gave the prophecy. Also, the fall of Jerusalem, if we were to take it as the end point, was not for several years after Ezekiel gave the prophecy. Ezekiel's prophecy is given below:

**Eze 4:4** Also lie on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; *according* to the number of days that you shall lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity.

**Eze 4:5** For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days. So you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

**Eze 4:6** And when you have fulfilled them, lie again on your right side, and you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days; a day for a year; a day for a year, I have set for you.

There is nothing explicit stating that the 390 days began with the split of Israel and the sins of Jeroboam. Ezekiel gave this prophecy in 593 BC, well over a century after Samaria fell and Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria.

If we go ahead 390 years from the date of the prophecy we come to 203 BC. This is the time when the Parthian Empire comes on the scene and gains independence from the Greek Seleucids. As well documented in Stephen Collins' book "Parthia" the ruling class and much of its people were descendants of the Israelites relocated to the area of Parthia by the Assyrians.

This prophecy, in itself, going forward from the time of Ezekiel gives support for the general period of time allocated by Ptolemy for the Babylonian and Persian empires.

Simple addition of 483 years and the 70 years of captivity plus the biblical dates from Adam to the fall of Jerusalem when we use the correct figures gives us a number somewhat different from the magical 4000 years calculated by Ernest Martin.

We've gotten a little off topic here in examining the claims of Martin's "purely biblical chronology" without reliance on secular dates but I believe we have shown enough above to show that we need to find outside, independently corroborated secular dates to help us obtain the necessary fixed dates for the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian and Persian kings.

Now a little more from Ernest Martin relating specifically to Ptolemy's Canon before we look at the counterarguments:

Why is so much authority given to this second century A.D. document preserved by an Egyptian astrologer attached to the Chaldean priesthood? It is because of those *seven eclipses* of the moon! And those eclipses, at first glance, do seem to be a formidable adversary to any other chronological scheme put forward, even though it may come directly from the Bible. The reason? Astronomy never lies!



True enough, astronomy is a sure guide if used properly. But look at Ptolemy. He used only seven lunar eclipses. Why only seven? Ptolemy should have used many more. The fact is, lunar eclipses occur quite frequently. There were literally hundreds that occurred in the period Ptolemy covered, but he was only able to involve seven?

Look, out of that 400 year period (the time of the Babylonian and Persian Empires) there were over 600 lunar eclipses visible to the earth. It is true that not all of these could be observed from the region of Babylon (the only area Ptolemy is concerned with). Yet, it was possible for the Babylonians to witness and to record over 300 of them. But of all these 300 eclipses, Ptolemy was able to muster only seven.

This lapse is odd, indeed. In fact, lunar eclipses occur in cycles. If a lunar eclipse is seen at any time, in 54 years and one month, that same type of eclipse will occur again in virtually the same part of the sky and with the same amount of the shadow of the earth on the moon. Any encyclopedia will inform a person that in any ten year period there are on the average 15 lunar eclipses observable from earth. That is a lot of eclipses. (Ptolemy only deals with lunar eclipses because the Chaldeans at this early period were unable to predict or to work with the more complicated solar eclipses.)

Astronomers (other than historians) have long complained that Ptolemy gave us only a pittance of eclipses when hundreds occurred. They are very disappointed in him. In fact, in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society, March, 1968, Professor Heather speaking about the eclipses of ancient times:

"There is no mention of important eclipses which one would have expected to be recorded such as that of 462 B.C. and there are those which are recorded that have no counterpart theoretically" p.549

**In fact, there are all types of eclipses that occurred right in Babylon that Ptolemy and others should have recorded—very prominent ones—that are passed over as though they never occurred, and there are many, many more eclipses mentioned by the classical writers which don't fit in with Ptolemy's eclipse chronology at all! What is interesting is the fact that Ptolemy only selected seven eclipses when over 300 were available.**

And now, thanks to the modern astronomical research by Dr. Robert R. Newton, he has proved dogmatically that every one of Ptolemy's eclipses was manufactured by Ptolemy himself. Indeed, Ptolemy found eclipses to fit his astrological scheme of chronology. See Dr. Newton's book "*The Origin of Ptolemy's Astronomical Tables*," The Center for Archaeoastronomy, at the University of Maryland, published by John Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory.

Now for the counterarguments regarding the trustworthiness of the Canon of Ptolemy. For the balance of this appendix I would like to quote at length from a lengthy blog by Alan Feuerbacher called "Discussion Of Historical Evidence" (<http://corior.blogspot.com/2006/02/part-2-discussion-of-historical.html>). In this blog he provides significant independent confirmation from multiple sources of Ptolemy's fixed dates for the Babylonian kings.

This independent astronomical data helps lock in fixed dates for the Babylonian data of Ptolemy and subsequently the Persian data as well for which we have significantly less data for apart from Ptolemy. Feuerbacher has the following to say about Ptolemy's canon:

Claudius Ptolemy (70-161 A.D.) was a scholar, astronomer, geographer, historian and chronologist who lived in Egypt during the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. In about 142 A.D. he wrote *The Almagest*, to which he added his famous *canon*, a list of kings and their lengths of reign beginning with the reign of Nabonassar in Babylon, 747 B.C., through the Babylonian, Persian, Greek (Ptolemaic) and Roman rulers to his contemporary, Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161).

Where did Ptolemy get his king list? The *Aid* book, under the subject "Chronology," says that "Ptolemy is thought to have used the writings of Berossus (p. 331), but it gives no evidence in support of this claim, which has been dropped from the equivalent discussion in *Insight on the Scriptures*. The claim is not very likely, because scholars have concluded that Ptolemy's canon represents a Babylonian tradition about the first millennium B.C. that is *independent of Berossus* as can be seen from the order and forms of the names of the kings. Professor Friedrich Schmidtke explains:

"With respect to the dependence of the sources, the Canon of Ptolemy has certainly to a great extent taken its stuff from the Babylonian Chronicle. This is clear from the characteristic *abasileuta ete* [years of interregnum] 688-681, which is also found in the Chronicle (IV,23), while the King List A at this place introduces Sennacherib instead, as well as for the two *abasileuta ete* 704-703. The Canon of Ptolemy like the Chronicle reproduces here the Babylonian tradition, which did not recognize Sennacherib as the legitimate king, as he had sacked and destroyed Babylon."

**There is also some evidence that Ptolemy used Babylonian king lists. Thus he had access to Babylonian chronicles and king lists, probably through intermediary sources, but *evidently independent of Berossus*. This is a very important conclusion, as Ptolemy's figures for the Neo-Babylonian kings are in agreement with Berossus's figures.**

Thus we have two independent witnesses to the length of the Neo-Babylonian era according to the chronicles, and even if these chronicles are only partly preserved on cuneiform tablets, their figures for the lengths of reign of the Neo-Babylonian kings have been correctly transmitted to us via Berossus and Ptolemy.

The reigns of the Neo-Babylonian kings, according to Berossus and Ptolemy, are as follows, not counting accession years:

	YEARS OF REIGN ACCORDING TO:		
	BEROSSUS	PTOLEMY	B.C. DATES
Nabopolassar	21 years	21 years	625 - 605
Nebuchadnezzar	43 years	43 years	604 - 562
Evil-merodach	2 years	2 years	561 - 560
Neriglissar	4 years	4 years	559 - 556
Labashi-Marduk	9 months	--	556
Nabonidus	17 years	17 years	555 - 539

Ptolemy omits Labashi-Marduk, as he always reckons *whole* years only. Labashi-Marduk's reign of only a few months (probably 2 or 3) was included in Neriglissar's last year (which was also the accession year of Nabonidus). Ptolemy, therefore could leave him out of the king list.

If these lists by two of the oldest and most reliable historians are correct, the first year of Nebuchadnezzar would be 604/3 B.C. and his 18th year, when he destroyed Jerusalem, would be 587/6 B.C. But even if Berossus and Ptolemy both give a true representation of the length of reigns given in the original Neo-Babylonian chronicles, how do historians know that the chronological information originally contained in these chronicles is reliable?

One reason Ptolemy's canon has their confidence is that in his *Almagest* he records a large number of ancient astronomical observations from the periods covered by the canon. As these observations were dated to different kings mentioned in the king list, Ptolemy could attach the list to a series of astronomically fixed dates, thus turning it into a kind of "absolute chronology" for the periods it covered...

Here is what Berossus said about Nebuchadnezzar's taking of Jewish captives in his accession year:

"Nabopolassaros, his father, heard that the satrap who had been posted to Egypt, Coele Syria, and Phoenicia, had become a rebel. No longer himself equal to the task, he entrusted a portion of his army to his son Nabouchodonosoros, who was still in the prime of life, and sent him against the rebel. Nabouchodonosoros drew up his force in battle order and engaged the rebel. He defeated him and subjected the country to the rule of the Babylonians

again. At this very time Nabopolassar, his father, fell ill and died in the city of the Babylonians after having been king for twenty-one years.

"Nabouchodonosor learned of his father's death shortly thereafter. After he arranged affairs in Egypt and the remaining territory, he ordered some of his friends to *bring the Jewish, Phoenician, Syrian, and Egyptian prisoners* together with the bulk of the army and the rest of the booty to Babylonia. He himself set out with a few companions and reached Babylon by crossing the desert."

**Thus Berossus gives support to Daniel's statement in Dan. 1:1 that Jewish captives were brought to Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year.**

This confirmation of Dan. 1:1 is important because Berossus derived his information from the Babylonian chronicles, or sources close to those documents, originally written during the Neo-Babylonian era itself...

Here is what Thiele actually said concerning this [Ptolemy's canon]:

"What makes the canon of such great importance to modern historians is the large amount of astronomical material recorded by Ptolemy in his *Almagest*, making possible checks as to its accuracy at almost every step from beginning to end. Over eighty solar, lunar, and planetary positions, with their dates, are recorded in the *Almagest* which have been verified by modern astronomers. The details concerning eclipses are given with such minuteness as to leave no question concerning the exact identification of the particular phenomenon referred to, and making possible the most positive verification." [*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 46].

**As professor of ancient history Otto Neugebauer has pointed out, the king list was compiled from Babylonian sources by Alexandrian astronomers long before Ptolemy, to be used in their astronomical calculations.**

**Ptolemy was simply one in a long line of keepers of astronomical records, and he used the previously compiled king list in conjunction with his astronomical calculations. Attempts to prove that his astronomical data are erroneous, therefore, have no bearing on the king list, since it existed long before Ptolemy.**

It is an accident of history that the king list was preserved, but since it was preserved in Ptolemy's own writings, it came to bear his name. Many other king lists, none as complete as Ptolemy's, have been found from more ancient times which bear this out.

Royal inscriptions of various kinds -- building inscriptions, annals, etc. -- have been found in Assyria and Babylonia in great numbers. We will consider three original documents from the reign of Nabonidus.

**1. Nabon. No. 18 is a cylinder inscription from an unnamed year of Nabonidus.** Fulfilling the desire of Sin, the moon god, Nabonidus dedicated a daughter of his to this god as priestess at the Sin temple of Ur. An eclipse of the moon, dated in the text to Elul 13 and observed in the morning watch, led to this dedication. When, during Nabonidus's reign, did such an eclipse take place?

In 1949 scholar Hildegard Lewy examined the eclipse and concluded that it referred to the eclipse of September 26, 554 B.C (Julian calendar). If Nabonidus ruled for seventeen years and his first year was 555/4 B.C., as is shown by Berossus and Ptolemy, the eclipse and the dedication of Nabonidus's daughter took place in his *second* regnal year (554/3 B.C.), according to Lewy's calculation.

A remarkable confirmation of this dating was brought to light twenty years later, when another scholar, W. G. Lambert, published his translation of four fragments of an inscription from Nabonidus's reign. The inscription established that the dedication of Nabonidus's daughter took place shortly before his third year, and obviously in his second, precisely as Lewy had concluded.

The lunar eclipse of Elul 13, then, definitely fixed the second year of Nabonidus to 554/3 B.C. and his first year to 555/4, thus giving a very strong confirmation of Berossus' and Ptolemy's figures for Nabonidus's reign.

**2. Nabon. No. 8, or the Hillah stele**, was discovered in the neighborhood of Hillah, southeast of the ruins of Babylon, at the end of the 19th century. A transcription of the text was first published in 1896 and a second in 1912. The information given in this stele helps to establish the length of the *whole* Neo-Babylonian era from Nabopolassar to the reign of Nabonidus. This inscription, too, contains a record of astronomical observations which enables us to fix the reign of Nabonidus.

The stele tells of occurrences in Nabonidus' accession year and his first full year, and contains a description of a configuration of planets and stars observed by Nabonidus in an unnamed evening during this period.

It is stated that Venus, Saturn, and Jupiter were visible after dusk while Mars and Mercury were absent. Certain bright stars were also mentioned. If, as has been established, Nabonidus ascended the throne in 556 B.C. and his first full year was 555/4 B.C. (Nisan-Nisan), we should find this configuration of stars and planets during that period.

**The above mentioned Hildegard Lewy calculated the date for this configuration and concluded:**

**"The only time within the given interval when this constellation occurred was the period of 3 days comprised between Simanu 2 and Simanu 6 of Nabu-na'id's first full year (May 31 to June 4, 555 B.C.), during which period, in fact, also the fixed stars enumerated by the king were visible in the evening sky."**

**So again, we find Nabonidus's reign astronomically fixed and his seventeen years of rule confirmed.**

In several of his royal inscriptions (Stelenfrgm. III,1 and XI, Nabon. H1,B and Zyl. III,2) Nabonidus says that in a dream in his accession year he was commanded by the gods Marduk and Sin to rebuild the temple e.hul.hul in Harran. In connection with this the text under discussion (Nabon. No. 8) provides a very interesting piece of information:

"As to the temple e.hul.hul in Harran which was in ruins for 54 years -- through a devastation by the Manda-hordes the(se) sanctuaries were laid waste -- the time (predestined) by the gods, the moment for the appeasement (to wit) 54 years, had come near, when Sin should have returned to his place."

The date when the temple e.hul.hul in Harran was ruined by the "Manda-hordes" is known to us from two different reliable sources: The Babylonian chronicle BM 21901 and the Harran inscription Nabon. H1,B (this is described below).

The chronicle states that in the 16th year of Nabopolassar, in the month of Marcheswan, "the Umman-manda (the Medes), [who] had come [to help] the king of Akkad, put their armies together and marched to Harran.... The king of Akkad reached Harran and [...] he captured the city. He carried off the vast booty of the city and the temple."

The Nabonidus stele H1,B gives the same information: "Whereas in the 16th year of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, Sin, king of the gods, with his city and his temple was angry and went up to heaven -- the city and the people that (were) in it went to ruin."

**Thus Nabonidus reckons the 54 years to be from the 16th year of Nabopolassar to the beginning of his own reign when the gods commanded him to rebuild the ruined temple. This is in excellent agreement with the figures for the Neo-Babylonian reigns given by Berossus and Ptolemy. As Nabopolassar reigned for 21 years, 5 years remained from his 16th year to the end of his reign.**

**After that Nebuchadnezzar ruled for 43, Evil-Merodach for 2, and Neriglissar for 4 years before Nabonidus came to power (Labashi-Marduk's few months may be neglected). Adding up these regnal years (5+43+2+4) we get 54 years -- exactly as Nabonidus states on his stele.**

If, as has already been established, Nabonidus's first year was 555/4 B.C., Nabopolassar's sixteenth year must have been 610/609, his first year 625/4 and his 21st year 605/4 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar's first year, then, was 604/3, and his 18th, when he destroyed Jerusalem, was 587/6 B.C. These dates agree completely with the dates arrived at from Ptolemy's king list and Berossus's figures.

Consequently, this stele alone establishes the length of the whole Neo-Babylonian era. It fixes the reign of Nabonidus astronomically, and it gives the total length of the reigns of all the Neo-Babylonian kings prior to Nabonidus. The strength of this evidence from the Neo-Babylonian era itself can hardly be overestimated.

**3. Nabon. H1,B, or the Adda-Guppi stele**, after the name of queen to which it was dedicated, was discovered in 1956. It is virtually complete and includes a biographical sketch of Nabonidus's mother Adda-Guppi. It recorded the number of years in the reigns of two Assyrian kings, Ashurbanipal and Ashur-etillu-ili, as well as those of the Neo-Babylonian kings Nabopolassar through Neriglissar. The record ends in the 9th year of Nabonidus's reign. Note these excerpts:

"From the 20th year of Assurbanipal, King of Assyria, that I was born (in) until the 42nd year of Assurbanipal, the 3rd year of Assur-etillu-ili, his son, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar, the 2nd year of Awel-Marduk, the 4th year of Neriglissar, in 95 years of the god Sin, king of the gods of heaven and earth...."

Further on in the text a complete summary of her life is given:

"From the time of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the 9th year of Nabu-na'id king of Babylon, the son, offspring of my womb, 104 years of happiness, with the reverence which Sin, king of the gods, placed in me, he made me flourish, my own self...."

**So the reign of every Neo-Babylonian king, except Labashi-Marduk, who ruled only three months, down into the reign of Nabonidus, during which the queen died, is given in this stele, and the figures exactly match Ptolemy's canon and all the other sources of evidence.**

Interestingly, the queen actually lived only about 101 or 102 years, because the scribe who recorded this stele apparently did not realize there was an overlap of two years between the last Assyrian king, Assur-etillu-ilani, and the first Neo-Babylonian king, Nabopolassar. The scribe simply summed up the years given for the kings and missed the overlap.

**So the stele assigned lengths of reign for the following Neo-Babylonian kings: 21 for Nabopolassar, 43 for Nebuchadnezzar, 2 for Awel-Marduk and 4 for Neriglissar. These correspond exactly to every piece of evidence we have discussed...**

Thousands of such dated cuneiform texts have been unearthed from the Neo-Babylonian period. During the 1920s alone, more than five hundred tablets dated in the reign of Nabonidus were published, according to the work *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, by Raymond P. Dougherty, 1929.

**Thus there exist many such dated tablets from every year during the whole Neo-Babylonian era. Because of this abundance of dated texts modern scholars are able to determine not only the length of the reign of each king, but also the time of the year when each change of reign occurred, sometimes almost to the day. This has been demonstrated by R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein in their work *Babylonian Chronology: 626 B.C. -- A.D. 75*, 1956...**

Another interesting business document mentions both the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession year of his son, Evil-merodach. A slave girl was placed at the disposal of one Nabu-ahhe-iddina "in the month of Ajaru, forty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon." Some months later, "in the month of Kislimu, accession year of (Amel)-Marduk," full payment was given for the girl. This text, then, fixes the length of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and shows that he was succeeded by Evil-merodach.

Nebuchadnezzar's length of reign and his succession by Evil-merodach are confirmed by the Bible. In 2 Kings 24:8, 12, 15 the 1st year of Jehoiachin is said to be the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon.

**2 Kings 25:27 says that in Jehoiachin's 37th year he was let "out of the house of detention" by the king of Babylon, Evil-merodach. Jer. 52:31 equates the 37th year of Jehoiachin's exile with the accession year of Evil-Merodach. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar could have reigned for at most 44 years, and, counting from his accession year this means his 43rd year was his last. This is a remarkable example of how well the Bible and secular history agree on Neo-Babylonian chronology...**

Astronomical observations are fundamental to establishing an absolute chronology of ancient time periods. Certain documents called "astronomical diaries" are used to establish Neo-Babylonian chronology. For purposes of this discussion, the "astronomical diaries" are a group of documents recording astronomical observations by astronomers at Babylon, and have been so termed by an authority on astronomical diaries, Professor Abraham J. Sachs.

**A "diary" usually covers the six or seven months of the first or second half of a particular Babylonian year and gives the position of the moon at its first and last visibility on a specific day, along with the positions of the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.**

**It should be noted that the Babylonian priests kept these records mainly for astrological purposes, since much of their religion was based on astrology. They kept precise records of the heavens in order to practice astrology.**

The diaries often add much additional information, such as meteorological events, earthquakes, market prices, etc. More than 1,200 fragments of astronomical diaries of various sizes have been discovered, but because of their fragmentary condition only about a third of the number are datable. Most of these texts had already been discovered in the 1870s and 1880s. Almost all are kept in the British Museum. This is where designations like "BM 32312" come from.

**Most cover the period from about 385 to 60 B.C. and contain astronomical observations from about 180 of these 325 years, thus firmly establishing the chronology of this period. Half a dozen of the diaries are dated in the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries B.C.**

#### **VAT 4956**

The most important text for our discussion is designated VAT 4956, which is kept in the "Vorderasiatischen Abteilung" in the Berlin Museum. This diary is dated from Nisan 1 of Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year to Nisan 1 of his 38th regnal year, recording observations of the moon and the planets from his entire 37th year. A translation and careful examination of the text was published by P. V. Neugebauer and E. F. Weidner in 1915.

Among the many observations recorded on VAT 4956, there are about thirty which are so exactly described that modern astronomers can easily fix the exact dates when they were made. By doing so they have been able to show that all these observations (of the moon and the five planets) must have been made during the year 568/7 B.C. Remember in the following discussion that astronomical calculations include a zero year between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D., so that this date would be written as -567/6.

The diary itself clearly states that the observations were made during Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year, opening with the words: "37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. On Nisan 1 the moon became visible behind the Hyades; visibility lasted for 64m...." It ends with Nisan 1 of the "38th year of Nebuchadnezzar," according to Neugebauer and Weidner.

If Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year was 568/7 B.C., then his first year must have been 604/3 B.C, and his eighteenth, during which he destroyed Jerusalem, 587/6 B.C. This is the same date indicated by Berossus, Ptolemy, royal inscriptions and the business documents.

Could all these observations also have been made twenty years earlier, in the year 588/7 B.C., which according to the chronology presented in the *Aid* and *Insight* books corresponds

to Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year? The March 15, 1969 *Watchtower*, page 186; *Aid*, page 331; and *Insight*, pages 455-6, say: "Modern chronologers point out that such a combination of astronomical positions would not be duplicated again in thousands of years." Let's consider one example.

**According to this diary, on Nisan 1 and Airu 1 of Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year, the planet Saturn could be observed "opposite the Southern Fish [south of the constellation Aquarius] of the Zodiac."**

**Since Saturn revolves around the sun every 29.5 years, it moves through the whole Zodiac in 29.5 years. This means that it can be observed opposite each of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac for about 2.5 years on average. It means also that it could be observed in opposition to the Southern Fish 29.5 years prior to 568/7 B.C., or in 597/6, but certainly not 20 years earlier, in 588/7.**

**Add to this the different periods of revolution of the other four planets mentioned in the text, along with the positions given for the moon, and it is easily understood why such a *combination* of observations could not be made again in thousands of years.**

**The observations recorded in VAT 4956 must have been made in 568/7 B.C. because they fit no other situation which occurred thousands of years before or after. Thus VAT 4956 gives very strong support to the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian era as established by historians through all the other means we are discussing.**

The astronomical evidence is so strong that the [Watchtower] Society has to grasp at straws to discredit it.

First, *Insight*, Vol. 1, page 456, says:

"The observations made in Babylon may have contained errors. The Babylonian astronomers showed greatest concern for celestial events or phenomena occurring close to the horizon, at the rising or setting of the moon or of the sun. However, the horizon as viewed from Babylon is frequently obscured by sandstorms."

Then Professor O. Neugebauer is quoted as saying that Ptolemy complained about "the lack of reliable planetary observations [from ancient Babylon]."

Although the description of the weather conditions at Babylon is undoubtedly correct, this does not mean that unreliable planetary observations were commonly made. The horizon as viewed from Babylon was not obscured by sandstorms every day, and some planetary events could be observed many days in succession, such as the position of Saturn which, according to VAT 4956 could be observed "opposite the Southern Fish of the Zodiac."

As pointed out above, Saturn can be observed opposite each of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac for about 2.5 years on the average. Saturn's positions in the vicinity of the Southern Fish, then, could have been observed for several months in succession, which would have made it impossible for Babylonian astronomers to make any mistake as to where this planet was observed during the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, *in spite of frequent sandstorms*.

Further, Babylonian astronomers made regular and systematic observations of the moon and planets, following their movements through the Zodiac day by day. By the Neo-Babylonian period they had devised computational methods for *predicting* certain celestial events; some "observations" recorded in the diaries are actually not observations, but celestial events calculated in advance. These calculations are usually found to be correct when checked by modern astronomers.

For example, VAT 4956 records an eclipse of the moon which occurred on the 15th day of the month Sivan. Astronomers had calculated this eclipse with the help of the known 18-year eclipse period and therefore it is designated in the text as *atalu Sin* which means "calculated lunar eclipse." Then were probably added the words (the text is somewhat damaged): *sa etelik (LU)*, "which did not take place," i.e., it was invisible in Babylon. This has been confirmed by modern computations. The eclipse took place on July 4, 568 B.C (Julian calendar), but as it began in the afternoon it was not visible at Babylon.

This including of "observations" that were really calculations, and noting them as such, and especially indicating when the predicted event did not occur, argues strongly against a modification by scribes several hundred years later in order to fit some sort of altered version of history. If the purpose of the scribe was to alter a historical account, and if the events were not observed, logically he would have left them out. A pure copyist, on the other hand, would simply copy everything, errors and all. This would include translating them to other languages or updating them to current usage as the original language changed through the centuries.

That the observations recorded in VAT 4956 are substantially correct may be seen also from the fact that all of them (except one or two containing scribal errors) fit the same year. This would not have been the case if the observations were erroneous. Furthermore, Professor Neugebauer, who is quoted in *Insight*, does not himself seem to distrust the information given in the diaries, even though a reader of *Insight* could get that impression from the quotation of him.

Second, *Insight* says:

"The fact is that the great majority of the astronomical diaries found were written, not in the time of the Neo-Babylonian or Persian empires, but in the Seleucid period (312-65 B.C.E.), although they contain data relating to those earlier periods. Historians assume that they are copies of earlier documents."

But historians do far more than just "assume" they are copies of earlier documents. The earliest dated diaries frequently reflect the struggle of the copyists to understand the ancient documents they were copying, some of which were broken or otherwise damaged. Often the documents used an archaic terminology which the copyists tried to modernize. This is clearly true of VAT 4956, too. Twice in the text the copyist added the comment "broken off, erased," indicating he was unable to decipher a word in the text he was copying. Also, the text reflects his attempt to change the archaic terminology. But did he change the content of the text, too? On this Neugebauer and Weidner conclude: "As far as the contents are concerned the copy is of course a faithful reproduction of the original."

**Suppose some of the material in the thirty complete observations recorded in VAT 4956 had been distorted by later copyists. How great is the possibility that *all* these "distorted" observations would fit into one and the same year, that is, Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year? Remember that this year is corroborated by the royal inscriptions, the business documents, the chronicles, Berossus, and Ptolemy.**

Accidental errors of this kind do not cooperate to such a great extent. So there is no reason to doubt that the original observations have been correctly preserved in our copy. Vaguely saying "errors may have occurred," without presenting specific supporting evidence, is mere special pleading...

### ***Shamashshumukin's Reign***

There exists relatively new material establishing firmly that Nabopolassar's 1st year was 625/4 B.C. This material matches up the reigns of Babylonian kings from before the Neo-Babylonian era with the first king of that era, Nabopolassar. Note that astronomical dates from B.C. are given as negative numbers, and that a zero year is put between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D., so that 652 B.C. is written -651.

In an article published in 1974, the aforementioned Professor Abraham J. Sachs, considered to be the foremost authority on the astronomical diaries, gives a brief presentation of them. Mentioning that the oldest datable diary contains observations from the year 652 B.C., he explains how he was able to fix its date:

"I found the astronomical contents to be just barely adequate to make this date virtually certain. It was a great relief when *I was able to confirm the date by matching up a historical remark in the diary with the corresponding statement for -651 in a well-dated historical chronicle.*"

In a letter, Professor Sachs was asked the following questions:



"What information in the diary makes the date -651 virtually certain? What kind of historical remark in the diary corresponds with what statement in which well-dated chronicle?"

In his answer Professor Sachs included information about the diary in question, BM 32312, and added information which fully answered the questions. The astronomical contents of the diary clearly establish the year as 652/1 B.C. when the observations were made. Sachs wrote:

**"The preserved astronomical events (Mercury's last visibility in the east behind Pisces, Saturn's last visibility behind Pisces, both around the 14th of month I; Mars' stationary point in Scorpio on the 17th of month I; Mercury's first visibility in Pisces on the 6th of month XII) *uniquely determine the date.*"**

Interestingly, it cannot be claimed that later copyists inserted the name and regnal dates of the king mentioned, because *they are broken away*. Yet these data may be supplied because of a historical remark in the diary. For month 12, day 27, the diary states that the king of Babylon was involved in a battle at a place called Hirit. Fortunately, this battle is also mentioned in a well-known Babylonian chronicle.

The chronicle is the so-called "Akitu Chronicle," BM 86379, which covers a part of Shamashshumukin's reign, especially his last five years (the 16th to 20th). Shamashshumukin was the 2nd to last king in Babylon before the Neo-Babylonian kings began to rule. The battle at Hirit is dated in his sixteenth year as follows:

**"The sixteenth year of Shamash-shuma-ukin ... On the twenty-seventh day of Adar [the 27th day of the 12th month!] the armies of Assyria and Akkad did battle in Hirit. The army of Akkad retreated from the battlefield and a major defeat was inflicted upon them."**

Incidentally, this chronicle shows that the Babylonian priests who recorded the information did not shrink from reporting major defeats in battle, in contrast with the Assyrians.

The astronomical events described in the diary fix the battle at Hirit on Adar 27 to 651 B.C., about the middle of March. The "Akitu Chronicle" shows that the battle at this place on this day (Adar 27) was fought in the 16th year of Shamashshumukin.

Thus Shamashshumukin's 16th year was 652/1 B.C. His entire reign of 20 years, then, may be dated to 667 - 648 B.C. This is how historians had dated Shamashshumukin's reign for a long time (see *Insight*, Vol. 1, p. 453), and that is why Professor Sachs concluded his letter by saying:

**I should perhaps add that the absolute chronology of the regnal years of Shamash-shuma-ukin was never in doubt, and that it is *only confirmed again* by the astronomical diary.**

Shamashshumukin's reign has been known, for example, through Ptolemy's canon which gives him 20 years and his successor Kandalanu 22 years. Thereafter Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, succeeded to the throne. These figures agree completely with ancient cuneiform sources.

Business documents, as well as the "Akitu Chronicle" and the "Uruk King list," all show that Shamashshumukin ruled for 20 years, and that from the first year of Kandalanu to the first year of Nabopolassar was a period of 22 years.

The diary BM 32312, then, again corroborates the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian era:

BABYLONIAN KINGS	LENGTH OF REIGN	B.C. DATES
Shamashshumukin	20 years	667 - 648
Kandalanu	22 years	647 - 626
Nabopolassar	21 years	625 - 605
Nebuchadnezzar	43 years	604 - 562

Evil-merodach	2 years	561 - 560
Neriglissar	4 years	559 - 556
Labashi-Marduk	3 months	556
Nabonidus	17 years	555 - 539

The diary confirms Ptolemy's king list, as well as much other data. A change of Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year from 587 to 607 B.C. would also change Shamashshumukin's 16th year from 652 to 672 B.C. But the diary BM 32312 makes such a change impossible. And, as already pointed out, no one can claim that later copyists inserted "the 16th year of Shamashshumukin" in this diary, because the text is damaged at this point and that datum is broken away.

**The unique historical information in the text, repeated in the "Akitu Chronicle," fixes the diary to Shamashshumukin's 16th year. This diary, therefore, may be regarded as an independent witness, which upholds the authenticity of the dates given in VAT 4956 and other diaries...**

### Lunar Eclipses

The astronomical evidence we have considered so far is fully supported by other astronomical observations, which are covered below. One such is a lunar eclipse in 621 B.C., said by Ptolemy's canon to have been in Nabopolassar's 5th year.

Nabopolassar reigned 21 years, which makes 605 B.C. the year of his death and of Nebuchadnezzar's accession. It also makes 625/4 B.C. the 1st year of Nabopolassar, consistent with what was derived above in connection with Shamashshumukin.

If Nebuchadnezzar's accession year was 605/4, then his 1st year was 604/3 and his 37th year was 568/7 B.C., which is what has been independently established by VAT 4956 and other sources. So we have *three* independently established and astronomically confirmed sets of data that prove Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year was 587/6 B.C. Therefore that was the year of Jerusalem's destruction.

One of the most important types of astronomical observations concerns the *regular pattern* of lunar eclipses that was discovered by Babylonian astronomers. These observations were recorded in the lunar eclipse records known as the *saros* texts. They are among the strongest of evidences against the Society's chronology. They contain reports of observations of consecutive lunar eclipses arranged in 18-year groups. It was known in late Babylonian times that the pattern of observable lunar phenomena is repeated at intervals of approximately 18 years and 11 days.

This cycle later became known as the *saros* period. Some of the *saros* texts record lunar eclipses from as early as the 8th century B.C., while others are from the 7th, 6th, 5th and 4th centuries B.C. Fourteen texts of this type were briefly described by Dr. Abraham Sachs in his catalog of *Late Babylonian Astronomical and Related Texts*, LBART, Providence, Rhode Island, 1955, pp. xxxi-xxxii. Over 400 years, from Nabonassar's first regnal year (747 B.C.) to the 4th century B.C., are covered by such eclipse dates, giving numerous *absolute dates* for this period. Again, these often very detailed descriptions of lunar eclipses offer a perfectly satisfactory substitute for the eclipses described by Ptolemy in his *Almagest*. By themselves, they contain enough information to establish the absolute chronology of this period.

For the 8th century B.C., the *saros* texts record detailed descriptions of lunar eclipses from six different years (748/7, 747/6, 731/0, 713/2, 703/2, and 702/1 B.C.). For the 7th century, the texts contain descriptions of lunar eclipses, most of them detailed, from about 25 different years, and the number from the 6th century is about 15-20.

The texts recording lunar eclipses from the Neo-Babylonian era are LBART 1418, 1419, 1420 and 1421 in Sachs's catalog. Of these, the last three contain detailed descriptions of lunar eclipses. The observations are dated, with the names of the kings and the specific regnal years given, and provide the following absolute dates:

KING	YEAR	B.C. DATE
Nabopolassar	15th	611/0
	17th	609/8
Nebuchadnezzar	1 <sup>st</sup>	604/3
	12th	593/2
	13th	592/1
	14th	591/0
	15th	590/89
	30th	575/4
	31st	574/3
	32nd	573/2
	41st	564/3
	42nd	563/2
Nabonidus	1st	555/4

LBART 1419 spans the whole period from the 17th year of Nabopolassar (609/8 B.C.) to the 18th year of Artaxerxes (447/6 B.C.). This text contains detailed reports of consecutive lunar eclipses at the 18-year intervals, without interruptions, from the beginning to the end of this period. These observations are dated with the regnal years and the names of the kings. This tablet alone provides a completely reliable network of absolute dates for this period, settles the total length of the Neo-Babylonian era, and establishes the absolute chronology of the period. The following absolute dates at 18-year intervals are given in this text:

KING	YEAR	B.C. DATE
Nabopolassar	17th	609/8
Nebuchadnezzar	14th	591/0
Nebuchadnezzar	32nd	573/2
Nabonidus	1st	555/4
Cyrus	2nd	537/6
Darius	3rd	519/8
Darius	21st	501/0
Xerxes	3rd	483/2
Xerxes	21st	465/4
Artaxerxes	18th	447/6

These observations refer to lunar eclipses, the same type of observations as the ones recorded by Ptolemy in his *Almagest*. When we compare the handful of observations described by Ptolemy from these three centuries, with the great number of observations found on the cuneiform tablets from the same period, such as the diaries and the *saros* texts, it is obvious that the absolute chronology of this period is firmly established even without the help of the observations of Ptolemy.

The *saros* texts provide at least four independent lines of evidence for the length of the Neo-Babylonian period. All four of them give absolute dates from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and confirm that his 18th year, when Jerusalem was destroyed, was 587/6, not 607 B.C.

**It should now be evident why any claim that individual lunar eclipses could be confused with earlier ones is simply wrong, at least where the eclipse has enough supporting evidence to fit it in the *saros* cycles. Because the 18-year cycles are not exactly 18 years, but 18 years and 11 days, the eclipses are not repeated on the same day in the calendar. The pattern gradually moves forward at each 18-year interval, and cannot even be approximately repeated for about 600 years. Therefore it is impossible to confuse an earlier eclipse with a later one.**

So there is a *continuous* list of kings, tied to astronomical observations, that synchronizes perfectly with the dates given by all the methods mentioned above.

Feuerbacher's abundant evidence of multiple astronomically-corroborated and independent data that supports Ptolemy plus the evidence of the 390 year prophecy from Ezekiel to the time of Parthia, in my mind, allows us to confidently accept the dates handed down from Ptolemy.

## Appendix 4 – What is the Jewish Interpretation of the 70 Weeks Prophecy?

What is the Jewish interpretation of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy given that they do not recognise Jesus Christ as the legitimate Messiah?

There isn't complete consensus on this in the Jewish community just as is the case in the Christian community. The authoritative Jewish Encyclopedia gives the following as its interpretation of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy:

The well-known passage ix. 23-27 also points to the same period. The first and imperative rule in interpreting it is to begin the period of the seventy times seven units (A. V. "seventy weeks") with the first period of seven (ix. 25), and to let the second period, the "sixty-two times seven units," follow this; for if this second period (the sixty-two weeks) be reckoned as beginning again from the very beginning, the third period, the "one week," must be carried back in the same way. The context demands, furthermore, that the origin of the prediction concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem be sought in Jer. xxv. 11-13 and the parallel passage, ib. xxix. 10. The "anointed," the "prince," mentioned after the first seven times seven units, must be Cyrus, who is called the anointed of the Lord in Isa. xlv. 1 also.

He concluded the first seven weeks of years by issuing the decree of liberation, and the time that elapsed between the Chaldean destruction of Jerusalem (586) and the year 538 was just about forty-nine years. The duration of the sixty-two times seven units (434 years) does not correspond with the time 538-171 (367 years); but the chronological knowledge of that age was not very exact.

The Seder 'Olam Zuṭa (ed. Meyer, p. 104) computed the Persian rule to have lasted fifty-two years. This is all the more evident as the last period of seven units must include the seven years 171-165 (see "Rev. Et. Juives," xix. 202 et seq.). This week of years began with the murder of an anointed one (compare Lev. iv. 3 et seq. on the anointing of the priest)—namely, the legitimate high priest Onias III.—and it was in the second half of this week of years that the Temple of the Lord was desecrated by an abomination—the silver altar erected by Antiochus Epiphanes in place of the Lord's altar for burnt offering (see I Macc. i. 54).

This reasoning above is quite bizarre. They use the commonly accepted date of 586 BC, rather than the Jewish date of around 430 BCE for the destruction of Jerusalem, and say between that and the accepted date for Cyrus' decree was close to 49 years, matching the first block of 7 "weeks".

Next they try to fit the 62 "weeks" into the period between Cyrus' decree and the 3 ½ years before the abomination of desolation and say that it doesn't make a good fit and is 67 years too short. Rather than look for a way to lengthen it the extra 67 years they then say that the Persian kingdom only lasted 52 years, shortening it by 150 years. Then they say that the final week just HAS to be from 171-165 and the time of the abomination of desolation recognising the abomination of desolation is spoken of in Daniel 9:27. This interpretation then makes the High Priest at the time, Onias III, who was murdered during the time of the 168 BC abomination of desolation, the Messiah spoken of in the prophecy.

It is understandable for them to try and make the original abomination of desolation the final week in the prophecy but the maths and reasoning before it is all wrong. Even the starting point, which we are told is the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, is taken instead from the time of the fall of Jerusalem under the Babylonians.

As mentioned above, this is not the only view in the Jewish community.

The Seder Olam was compiled by Rabbi Yose ben Halafta in the second century AD and is the basis for the Jewish chronology. The year 2000 will be, according to the Jewish chronology, the year 5760 since the creation of mankind, around 200 years short of the Bible's chronology.

The Jewish chronology misses 60 years from misunderstanding how old Terah was when he begat Abraham. The Jewish chronology reckons Terah as being 70 years old when Abraham was born. Genesis 11:26 tells us that "Terah lived 70 years and begot Abraham, Nahor and Haran." This gives the impression that Terah was 70 years old when he begat Abraham though we are plainly told that Abraham was 75 years old when Terah died at 205 (Genesis 11:32, Acts 7:4). It obviously had to be one of the brothers of Abraham who born when Terah was 70 years old.

The remaining difference of around 140 years comes from shortening the Kingdom of Persia from over 200 years to a little over 50 years. The kings after Darius I are completely left out. Darius I is incorrectly noted as the king Darius who Alexander the Great defeated. The kings of the "decadent phase" of the Persian empire - Artaxerxes II, III and IV are all left out as well as Darius III. In addition, the existing kings' reign lengths are compressed.

The years attributed to the Persian kings by the Jewish chronology are as follows:

Darius the Mede - 1 year  
Cyrus - 3 years  
Artaxerxes (Cambyses) - ½ year  
Ahasuerus (Xerxes) – 14 years  
Darius the Persian – 35 years

According to orthodox Persian chronology Artaxerxes I reigned 40 years and then Darius II reigned 18 years.

Artaxerxes I is left out in the Jewish chronology and half his reign is added to Darius the Persian's reign. The two decrees in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> years of Artaxerxes reign involving beautifying the Temple and rebuilding the city and wall given to Nehemiah are correctly (as we have seen in the main article on the 70 weeks prophecy) ascribed to Darius the Persian (Darius I) in the Jewish chronology.

Can this removal of the latter Persian kings be justified? Some christian scholars have also advocated the removal these latter Persian kings in order to make the decree of Cyrus the Great rather than one of the two in Artaxerxes I's reign be the starting point of the 70 weeks prophecy that is interpreted to say that there is 483 years between the decree and coming of the Messiah.

The last Persian king mentioned in the Bible is thought to be Darius II and the King of the North v King of the South prophecy jumps from Xerxes to Alexander the Great so can this removal of the latter Persian kings be justified historically?

In his article "Bible Chronology and Prophecy" William Dankenbring writes:

To support a 456 B.C. date for Cyrus, some 80-year gap theorists claim that the reigns of Darius II (19 years) and Artaxerxes II (46 years) and Artaxerxes III (21 years) should be cut out of the historical record as "FABRICATIONS." This would account for 86 years. But there is a slight problem with this suggestion. Archaeology disproves this idea, because the ROYAL TOMBS of these kings which supposedly "never existed" HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED!

"...in 1931 the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago began excavation of Persepolis ... Cut into the hill behind the platform on which Persepolis was built are **the TOMBS OF ARTAXERXES II, ARTAXERXES III AND DARIUS III**. At NaqshiRustam, only three miles from Persepolis, the end of a steep, narrow ridge of rock comes to an abrupt end in the plain. **High up in the face of the cliff are the rock cut tombs of Darius I, Xerxes I,**

**Artaxerxes I and DARIUS II** (Collier's Encyclopedia, vol.15, p.567-568, article 'Persian Architecture: Achaemenid Period 553-330 B.C.').

Further archaeological evidence proves these kings existed. The remains of a palace of Artaxerxes III have been discovered at Persepolis. An inscription of Artaxerxes III himself on the walls of that palace reads:

"Says Artaxerxes the great king, king of kings, king of countries, king of this earth: I (am) the son of Artaxerxes (II) the king; Artaxerxes (was) the son of Darius (II) the king; Darius (was) the son of Artaxerxes (I) the king; Artaxerxes (was) the son of Xerxes the king; Xerxes (was) the son of Darius (I) the king; Darius was the son of Hystaspes by name. Hystaspes (was) the son of Arsames by name, the Achaemenid."

The Jewish chronology misses 60 years from misunderstanding how old Terah was when he begat Abraham and the remaining difference of around 140 years comes from unjustifiably shortening the Persian empire from over 200 years to a little over 50 years. The kings after Darius I are completely left out. In addition, the existing kings' reign lengths are compressed.

The effect of this shortened chronology according to Dr Floyd Jones in his book "The Chronology of the Old Testament" is that it conceals the fact that the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 points to Jesus Christ being the Messiah and also points the prophecy to Simon Bar Kokhba who led the second Jewish revolt in 132 AD. On this subject Dr Floyd Jones writes:

Thus the *Seder Olam* depicts the Kingdom of Persia as lasting a mere 53 years from 374 to 321 BC, rather than about 207 years (538-331 BC) Over the centuries, orthodox rabbis have differed somewhat in their listing of the Persian kings, but they generally have not departed from the 52/53-year parameter established within the *Seder Olam*.

The result of this shorting of the span of the Persian Empire is that the paramount prophecy and major foundation block of chronology - the Daniel 9:25 seventy weeks of years - has become dislodged. Furthermore, this shorting as perpetuated within the *Seder Olam* is deliberate! While not openly admitting this, present day Jewish scholars acknowledge that there is something enigmatic about the *Seder Olam's* dating. For example, after stating that the commonly received dates in the Ptolemaic chronology "can hardly be doubted," Rabbi Simon Schwab nevertheless goes on to uphold his own tradition:

**"It should have been possible that our gages - for some unknown reason - had 'covered up' a certain historic period and purposely eliminated and suppressed all records and other material pertaining thereto.**

"If so, what might have been their compelling reason for so unusual a procedure? Nothing short of a *Divine command* could have prompted ... those saintly 'men of truth' to leave out completely from our annals a period of 165 years and to correct all data and historic tables in such a fashion that the subsequent chronological gap could escape being noticed by countless generations, known to a few initiates only who were duty-bound to keep the secret to themselves" (emphasis his).

This is an astonishing proposal! Schwab, along with other Jewish commentators, further suggests that the reason God directed the sages of the 2nd century AD to become involved in falsifying the data was to confuse anyone who might try to use the prophecies of Daniel to predict the time of the Messiah's coming.

**This was supposedly done to honor Daniel 12:4: "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." He adds that the reason the sages had adopted the non-Jewish Seleucid Era calendar was part of the scheme to do just that - to close up the words and seal the book of Daniel.' Schwab also states that if the 165 years were included it would reveal, "we are much closer to the end of the 6th Millennium than we had surmised!" (Schwab mentions this date as it is when many rabbis expect Messiah to come).**

But can any sincere reader accept such a flimsy reason as justification for distorting history. It actually accuses God himself of perpetrating a dishonest deception.

**Indeed, it is manifestly apparent that the real reasons for the deliberate altering of their own national chronology in the *Seder Olam* were:**

**(1) to conceal the fact that the Daniel 9:26 prophecy clearly pointed to Jesus of Nazareth as its fulfillment and therefore the long awaited Messiah, and**

**(2) to make that 70 weeks of years prophecy point instead to Simon Bar Kokhba!**

Rabbis in the century immediately following Christ Jesus had a tremendous problem with so direct a prophecy as Daniel 9. This chapter speaks of Messiah's being cut off (slain) 69 "weeks" (i.e., 69 sevens) or 483 years after the going forth of a commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. This 538 BC prophecy (Dan. 9:1) unmistakably points to Jesus Christ and His crucifixion.

Such must either be acknowledged and His person accepted or completely erased from Jewish consciousness. The latter could be accomplished if the 69 (or 70) weeks of years could somehow be made to apply to the century after the life of Christ. Then it would be possible for the rabbis to point to *another messiah* who, as circumstances would have it, was cut off in death some 100 years after the crucifixion of our Lord.'

**The ninth day of the month Ab (c. mid-July) is a great day of sorrow to Israel. On this day in 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed Solomon's Temple. Further, the second temple was laid waste by the Romans under Titus on the same day in AD 70. And on this very day in AD 135, at the conclusion of a 3 ½ year revolt, the Romans crushed the army of the "messianic" Simon Bar Kokhba (also spelled "Cocheba").**

Bar Kokhba had been declared the long-awaited Messiah by the foremost Jewish scholar of that day, the highly venerated Rabbi Akiva (Akiba) ben Joseph. In 130 AD, Emperor Hadrian of Rome declared his intention to raise a shrine to Jupiter on the site of the temple,' and in 131 he issued a decree forbidding circumcision as well as public instruction in the Jewish Law. Having preached peace all his life, the 90-year old Akiva gave his blessing to the revolution by proclaiming that Bar Kokhba was the "star out of Jacob" and the "scepter out of Israel" (Num. 24:17).

In his 98<sup>th</sup> year Akiva was eventually imprisoned and condemned to death by the Romans." Among the many accolades heaped upon Akiva, that which elevated him as a preeminent authority, was the acknowledging of him as "the father of the Mishnah." Such prominence gave great weight to the messianic expectancy Akiva placed upon Bar Kokhba.

Akiva's students became some of the most prominent sages of the following generation. Among these was Yose (Josi) ben Halafta. Akiva's influence on Halafta is apparent from a statement made concerning his education; it was merely said that Rabbi Akiva had been his teacher. As his mentor, Akiva's regard for Bar Kokhba would have been thoroughly imbedded in Yose.

The preceding overview explains why the *Seder Olam* is held in such veneration and why the Jews still use it for their national dating. Yet the fact remains that it is a dishonest attempt to conceal the truth with regard to the Daniel 9 prophecy.

**By removing the 164 (or 165) years from the duration of the Persian Empire, Rabbi Halafta was able to make the 483-year Daniel 9 prophecy fall reasonably close to the years prior to the AD 132 revolt during which Bar Kokhba rose to prominence as Israel's military and economic leader.' Then with Akiva proclaiming, "This is the King Messiah" followed by "all the contemporary sages regarded him as the King Messiah," the Jewish populace united around this false hope.**

Dio Cassius states that the whole of Judea was in revolt. To quell the rebellion, Hadrian dispatched Julius Severus, his ablest general, from Britain. The Romans destroyed 985 towns in Palestine and slew 580,000 men. A still larger number perished through starvation, disease, and fire. All Judah was laid waste, and Bar Kokba himself fell while defending Bathar.

Even more astonishing is that “even in later generations, despite the disappointment engendered by his defeat, his image persisted as the embodiment of messianic hopes”...

Yose ben Halafta and his fellow compilers of the Seder Olam sought to terminate the 69 weeks of years as close to the AD 132 revolt as possible but there were limited as to where they could make the “cuts”. As the chronology of the Seleucid era onward was firmly fixed among the Jews years could not be pared from their history after 312 BC.

**Since the Daniel 9 prophecy dealt with a decree that was biblically and historically issued by a Persian monarch, this left only the Persian period of history for them to exploit. The Persians had been so hated by the Greeks and later by the Moslems that these two conquerors destroyed nearly all of the Persian records. This has created great difficulty in recovering their sequence of kings, the length of their reigns and thereby their chronology. Thus the Persian period was readily vulnerable to manipulation.**

This author offers the conclusions given herein as the only reasonable, logical deductions that can be drawn from the historical and biblical facts.

**As indicated earlier, many of the orthodox rabbis are looking for Messiah to come in the year AM 6000 [after man's creation]. Should they be correct in this assessment, the deduction inherent within the Seder Olam would result in a great national tragedy for Israel. Their Messiah who “came unto their own and His own received Him not” would not be coming to the earth for the first time. Rather He would be returning “as a thief in the night” about 243 years before they would be expecting Him. O Israel, repent!**