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THE DANIEL 9:25 PROPHECY

AN EXACT TIMELINE FOR THE
ARRIVAL OF THE MESSIAH



MICHAEL FILIPEK

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CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING THE RELIABILITY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Before even beginning with the real content of this study, we first need to address the issue of *when* the Book of Daniel was actually written. Much of Daniel involves astonishingly accurate prophecies – prophecies that were so precisely fulfilled in history that it’s led unbelieving scholars to claim that Daniel must have been written after the fact. Obviously, in order to prove that the Book of Daniel is genuine prophecy, we must have evidence that Daniel was in fact written well before the fulfillments of the events it foretells.

Most of Daniel’s critics derive their skepticism of Daniel’s early date of authorship from the remarkable prophecy found in Daniel 11, which amazingly foretells the history of the intertestamental period. The intertestamental period is the historical period of about four hundred years between the Old and New Testaments (roughly four hundred BC to the first century AD). Since these critics reject the possibility that Daniel could actually be genuine prophecy, they are forced to claim that it was written much later, around the second century BC (instead of the mid-500s BC, as Daniel claims). In other words, they claim Daniel must have been written after the events it prophesies about took place, negating its claim to be truly prophetic.

For a fuller examination of why these critical scholars are incorrect

about this late dating of Daniel, consult our companion study entitled, “Establishing The Prophetic Validity Of The Book Of Daniel”. In that study, we demonstrate that the evidence shows that Daniel was in fact written when it claims to have been written – in the mid-500s BC.

Although that evidence is necessary to validate the incredible prophecy that we mentioned in Daniel 11, which concerns fulfillments in the intertestamental period, it’s not a concern for the purposes of this study. The reason is because the prophecies we will discuss in this study (found in Daniel 9) find their fulfillments hundreds of years later, during the first century AD at the time of Jesus Christ and following – specifically, between the years of 33 and 70 AD.

So, even if the critics were correct in their dating of Daniel to the second century BC, it would in no way invalidate the prophetic nature of Daniel 9, which we will be discussing in this study. In other words, we don’t need to prove Daniel was written in the 500s BC for our purposes here. We just need to show that it was written well before the time of Christ (which all scholars agree with anyway).¹

So, although no serious scholars would ever doubt that Daniel was written well prior to the first century AD, let’s just take some time to quickly detail some of the evidence that proves this – and in fact, even points to a much earlier pre-second century BC date of authorship. We will go through three main points of evidence.

The first point of evidence regarding the early date of Daniel’s authorship comes due to its inclusion in the Septuagint. The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (which included Daniel).

The Torah, (the first five books of the Old Testament), was translated first, near the middle of the third century BC, and then the rest of the Old Testament (including Daniel) was translated no later than the second century BC.²

So, we should recognize that Daniel was already included in the Septuagint translation at the time the liberal critics claim the autograph of Daniel (the original) was just being written! Since it was included in the Septuagint, we know that it was already universally venerated as scripture within the Jewish community at large at that

time. This type of veneration of Old Testament books did not happen overnight, indicating that the Book of Daniel must have been originally written quite some time earlier.

The second point of evidence is the finding of many manuscript fragments of Daniel in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947, which also date to around the second century BC. In fact, this find included fragments from all chapters in Daniel except for Chapter 12. Of particular interest to us, are five tiny fragments found in Cave 4, from none other than Daniel's prayer in Chapter 9!³

The significance of the Daniel fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls (as far as the dating of Daniel's authorship) was first made known in 1958 when Frank Cross, a professor at Harvard published *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, a complete review of the scrolls. In the second edition of his book (in 1961), Cross refers to the fragments of the Daniel scrolls as follows.

One copy of Daniel is inscribed in the script of the **late second century B.C.**⁴

So, it has long been established that fragmentary copies of Daniel found in the Dead Sea Scrolls date to the second century BC – again, very close to the same time the liberal critics date Daniel's original authorship! This simply does not make sense. In order for it to be included as sacred writing in the Septuagint, and then found copied in the Dead Sea Scrolls (both dating to around the second century BC), it would have to have been already overwhelmingly venerated by the Jewish community at large at that time. Again, this type of veneration does not happen overnight, indicating that Daniel would have to have been originally composed well prior to this period.

In 1969, based on the evidence already available at that time regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls texts of Daniel, scholar Roland K. Harrison had already concluded that the liberal second century dating of Daniel was, in his words, "absolutely precluded by the evidence from Qumran..."⁵

The third point of evidence indicating Daniel's early authorship

comes from an important historical corroboration given by the well-known Jewish/Roman historian of the ancient world, Flavius Josephus. This first century historian (in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter 8.5) records that around 332 BC, during Alexander the Great's conquest of Jerusalem, the Jewish High Priest Jaddua brought out an old scroll of Daniel, showing Alexander prophetic references to himself and his conquest of the Persian Empire found in the Book of Daniel. Josephus records the following.

And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended.⁶

It goes on to say that Alexander was so impressed by this prophecy detailing his exploits far in advance that he spared the city and allowed the Jews all they desired in keeping their traditions and laws.⁷

Obviously, this whole idea of the scroll of Daniel being showed to Alexander in the early 330s BC (which Josephus plainly records as a historical account), indicates that Daniel was completed well before the rise of the Greek Empire.

Interestingly, because the liberal scholars refuse to believe this clear historical record validating Daniel, they go as far as to deny that Alexander ever even visited Jerusalem, claiming that Josephus's account was pure fiction!

And so, these three powerful points of evidence not only show us that Daniel was written prior to the time of Christ, but they point us toward the conclusion that it was even written prior to the 2nd century dating of the critics, solidifying our confidence in the prophetic validity of Daniel.

But before we close this chapter, let's go back to the Dead Sea Scrolls evidence again to make one final point, this time concerning the **reliability of the transmission of the text** of Daniel. In other words, even if we accept that Daniel was written prior to the events it foretells, how do we know that our Daniel text that we find in our Bibles today has been transmitted reliably over time? Can we be confi-

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dent that the text has not been notably changed or altered over the centuries and millennia?

The Dead Sea Scrolls give us the answer. The Old Testaments (including Daniel) that we have in most of our English Bibles today are translated from a Hebrew/Aramaic source text called the Masoretic Text. The Masoretic Text is the official Hebrew/Aramaic text of what Christians would call the Old Testament, and it is based on the two oldest known ancient Masoretic codices – the Aleppo Codex (dated to 826 AD) and the Leningrad Codex (dated to 1008 AD). A codex is an ancient manuscript book.^{8 9}

Why does this matter for us here? It matters because due to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we are now, for the first time in history, able to compare our current Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Book of Daniel that is in our Bibles today (that comes from source texts from 826 and 1008 AD) with Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts of Daniel that are about a thousand years older.

In other words, before the Dead Sea Scrolls, our earliest Hebrew Bible was from around 1000 AD. But how could we be sure that it hadn't dramatically changed since around the time of Christ and before? Before the Dead Sea Scrolls, we couldn't be sure it hadn't changed. But because we now have them, and they date to several centuries before Christ, we can compare them with our current Bibles to see if the text has changed. Put yet another way, we can now look at over two thousand years of Hebrew text transmission and see for ourselves how much – if at all – the Old Testament has changed from 200 BC up until today.

When we do this, what do we find? Scholar Alfred Mertens tells us the following.

The Daniel fragments from Caves 1 and 6 reveal, on the whole, that **the later Masoretic text is preserved in a good, hardly changed form.** They are thus a valuable witness to the **great faithfulness with which the sacred text has been transmitted.**¹⁰

So, the Dead Sea Scrolls are textual witnesses that demonstrate

that the Masoretic Text was faithfully preserved and confirm that the Hebrew and Aramaic text of Daniel translated in our modern Bibles is reliable!

And so, we can clearly conclude on the basis of strong evidence that Daniel's prophecies were not only written well before the time of Christ, but that our current text of Daniel that we read in our Bibles today has been transmitted reliably. Both of these facts help us to confidently establish the validity of the amazing prophecy found in Daniel 9 that we will explore in this study!

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CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL 9:25

Daniel 9:25, part of the famed “seventy weeks prophecy” of Daniel, anticipates the future time that Jesus would present Himself as the Messiah to Jerusalem. This prophecy is likely the most conclusive apologetic one can point to that proves Jesus was the Messiah and that the Bible is inspired by a Being from outside our time domain. According to the Old Testament, the Messiah could only appear at a very specific time. As we will see, Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone precisely fulfilled this prophecy!

Around 605 BC, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar subjugated the kingdom of Judah, forcing them to pay tribute to Babylon. At this time, the Babylonians deported members of the Judean royal family as well as families belonging to Jerusalem’s aristocracy – including Daniel, who was probably a teenager at the time. Daniel then spent the next nearly seventy years in Babylonian captivity.

Before this Babylonian subjugation, God had issued prophecies through Jeremiah, revealing that He would use Babylon as His instrument of judgment upon the apostate kingdom of Judah, and that the length of the captivity would be seventy years (not to be confused with the seventy *week* prophecy we will soon be discussing). Daniel,

who had now spent his entire adult life as a captive in Babylon, was reading these prophecies of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:11-12) from which he understood that the seventy-year period of captivity was coming to an end. With this understanding in mind, Daniel then committed himself to fervent prayer.

He prayed specifically for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple, as they had been destroyed by the Babylonians (Daniel 9:3-19). Daniel apparently expected the immediate and complete fulfillment of Israel's restoration with the conclusion of the seventy-year captivity. However, this idea was interrupted when he was visited by the angel Gabriel, who showed him a prophetic vision of the future of the Jews and Jerusalem (this being what we call the seventy weeks prophecy), revealing that Israel's restoration would be progressive, taking place over the course of another future prophetic period also characterized by the number seventy – but this time, seventy weeks of years (or heptads) instead of just seventy years – and would only be ultimately fulfilled at the time of the end (see also Daniel 12).

The giving of this prophecy probably took place around the year 538 BC, soon after the Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC.¹ Through this prophecy, God decreed that He would complete His Messianic redemption of the Jews and Jerusalem over the course of a seventy-week period (which as we now understand, includes both advents of Christ). The last four verses of Daniel 9 record this seventy weeks prophecy.

As we already mentioned, this prophecy describes seventy “sevens” (or weeks) of years – or in other words, four hundred ninety years total that would be designated for the Jews and Jerusalem in order to complete six key objectives related to this full Messianic redemption (essentially, to wrap up this age of human history and introduce the Messianic Kingdom). We will discuss the timing in more depth as we go further. This prophecy not only gives us a countdown to the Messiah, but it also acts as the backbone or framework for the timeline of all future Bible prophecy.

To set the stage for understanding Daniel 9:25, let's first read the

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verse before it – Verse 24 – in order to understand the basics of the seventy weeks prophecy.

Seventy weeks are determined **upon thy people** [the Jews] and **upon thy holy city** [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, 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.

-Daniel 9:24

The first thing we need to understand is the term “weeks.” In our modern-day culture, we’re only familiar with the term “week” as referring to a period of seven days. However, the Jews not only had a week of days (Exodus 20:8-11), but also a week of weeks (Leviticus 23:15-16), a week of months (Exodus 12:2; Leviticus 23:24), a week of years (Leviticus Chapters 25-26; Deuteronomy 15), and then finally, the jubilee cycle, which consisted of forty-nine years (seven weeks of years) followed by a jubilee year, which was the fiftieth year – a year in which debts were cancelled (Leviticus 25).

The Hebrew word translated as “week” here in Daniel 9:24 is *shabuwa* (Strong’s #H7620), referring to a heptad, or a grouping of seven. Most of the time this word refers to a grouping of days, as in our modern understanding of a “week.” But this word can also refer to a heptad of years – or a “week of years.”^{2 3}

So, Daniel 9:24 declares that seventy “weeks” or “sevens” of years were determined upon Daniel’s people (the Jews) and the city of Jerusalem – an overall period of four hundred ninety years from beginning to end. But there are several key points we need to make note of from Daniel 9:24.

First, the focus of the passage is on the **Jews** and **Jerusalem**, not the Church nor the Gentile world (it says, “...upon **thy people** and upon **thy holy city**”). So, this prophecy is written to a very specific group. It is critical that we understand this context. There is no basis for it to be expanded to mean humanity in general, nor can it be interpreted to have anything to do with the Church.

Second, the passage lists six key objectives which will be accomplished through these seventy weeks. It is critical to recognize that all of these objectives have not yet been fully completed. The six objectives are as follows:

- to finish the transgressions
- to make an end of sins
- to make reconciliation for iniquity
- to bring in everlasting righteousness
- to seal up the vision and prophecy
- to anoint the Most Holy (or the Holy of Holies)

Since these objectives were not explicitly defined for us, it leaves the interpreter to find a plausible explanation of what they point toward. We believe it is clear that they point towards the culmination of the major Biblical themes of this age – judgment of sin, atonement, forgiveness, and spiritual restoration.

When we look at these themes while using the backdrop of Old and New Testament prophecy, it becomes clear that although some may have been fulfilled – or have begun being fulfilled – it is clear that in the ultimate sense, these events will be brought to complete fulfillment when Israel is brought to spiritual restoration and revival at the time of the Second Coming of Christ and the inauguration of the future Millennial Kingdom.

- “To finish the transgression” – This seems to refer to an ending of the rebellion and apostasy that had sent Israel into captivity.
- “To make an end of sins” – This indicates that Israel as a nation will turn from her sin and rebellion and enter into fellowship with God after the divine discipline of the extensive period of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).

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- “To make reconciliation for iniquity” – This similarly would refer to Israel’s national reconciliation to God after her extended period of rebellion. Of course, this looks back to the cross of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:9), which is the basis for this future reconciliation of Israel to her Messiah.
- “To bring in everlasting righteousness” – The phrase refers to the Millennial restoration or “age of righteousness” that will initiate following the completion of the seventieth week (see Isaiah 1:26; 11:2-5; 32:16-18; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-18).
- “To seal up vision and prophecy” – The expression “to seal up” indicates that no more is to be added and that what has been predicted will receive divine confirmation and recognition in the form of actual fulfillment. Once a letter is sealed, its contents are irreversible.
- “To anoint the Most Holy” – The conclusion of the seventy weeks will result in the dedication of the Temple’s Holy of Holies, specifically, the Millennial Temple. The Old Testament tells us all about this in detail. When the Messiah returns in glory, He will build the Millennial Temple (see Ezekiel Chapters 40-48), fill it with the divine presence (Ezekiel 43:1-7), and consecrate it for use throughout the Messianic Age (Isaiah 56:6-7; 60:7; Jeremiah 33:18; Ezekiel 43:11, 18-27; 44:11-28; 45:13-46:15; Zechariah 14:16-21).

God will accomplish these six things in anticipation of the Millennial Kingdom which directly follows the ending of the seventieth week. As we continue into the following verses of this prophecy, we will see that Daniel describes the Messiah’s mission to Israel, beginning with a countdown that led to His Triumphant Entry and soon after crucifixion as Israel’s Savior, and culminating with His reign as Israel’s

King – events that take place during Christ’s First and Second Comings.

So, the ultimate restoration of Israel is yet future. We identify the expected time of completion to be the end of the Tribulation, which is what we term the seventieth week – as Christ returns and inaugurates His Millennial Kingdom. All of these six objectives will seem to have been achieved at this time. So then, because they have not yet been fully achieved at this present time, it means that the seventy week prophecy has not yet been completed. Instead, we will find that it has been paused, which we will discuss further in a moment.

Continuing into Daniel 9:25, as this prophecy continues, we find a startling prediction given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel.

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.

-Daniel 9:25

As we pointed out earlier, we have a total of seventy weeks of years, or four hundred ninety years. However, Verse 25 focuses on the first sixty-nine weeks of years, separating them from the seventieth. It breaks them down into a first seven weeks of years followed immediately by sixty-two weeks of years (or threescore and two weeks), totaling sixty-nine. It tells us that these sixty-nine weeks of years would be a countdown that begins with a commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and culminates with the appearance of the Messiah to Israel. It’s a countdown to the arrival of the Messiah, or what Christians would call the “First Coming.”

But let’s stop for a moment to discuss the “pause” we mentioned earlier. Remember, we had observed that because the six key objectives that the seventy weeks are intended to bring about have not yet been fully achieved at this present time, it means that the seventy weeks prophecy has not yet been completed. Now that we’ve looked at Verse 25, we can see where that pause takes place. It takes place at the

conclusion of the sixty-ninth week. Let's take some time to understand how we reached that conclusion.

What is the reason that a pause and a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks is logically necessary? The answer is because Verse 25 gives us a beginning point for the seventy weeks prophecy. But it also gives us an ending point for the conclusion of the sixty-ninth week. By reading Verse 25, we see that the seventy week count-down would *begin* at the **decree to rebuild Jerusalem** ("from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem"). We then see that the sixty-ninth week would *end* with the **coming of the Messiah the Prince** ("unto the Messiah the Prince"). The word "unto" means "until" (Strong's #H5704).⁴

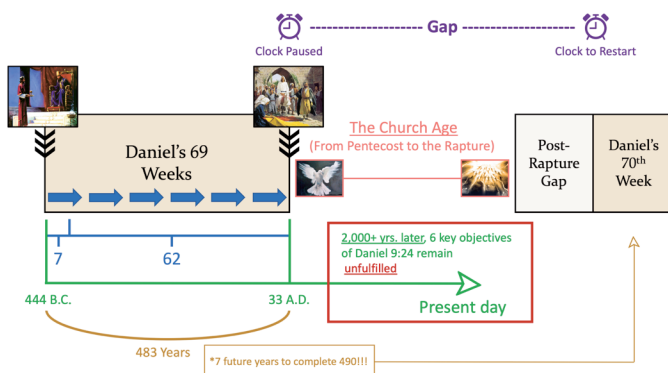
So, we are told the beginning point – the command to rebuild Jerusalem – and we are told that sixty-nine weeks would run continuously up until the coming of the Messiah the Prince. In this study, we will undertake a thorough examination of both this beginning point and this ending point in order to nail down when these events took place in history. We will find that the *beginning* point occurred during the reign of the Persian Empire, around the mid 400s BC (the year 444 to be exact). We will find that the *ending* point of the sixty-nine weeks takes place in 33 AD. The reason we're bringing this up now is because the awareness of these dates (especially the beginning point) helps us understand the necessity of seeing a pause and a gap inserted after the completion of the sixty-ninth week. The rationale for this is as follows.

Since we know that the seventy weeks began in the 400s BC (as we will prove further ahead), then the fact that the six key objectives presented in Verse 24 have not yet been fulfilled in the past two thousand-plus years logically demonstrates that the seventy-sevens (four hundred ninety year) time period cannot be contiguous (uninterrupted). In other words, if the prophecy is only said to be four hundred ninety years in length, and yet over two thousand years have passed since the point at which we know it began, then there is a time gap somewhere within these four hundred ninety years where the clock

has stopped, and there must be a future time where the clock will again be restarted.

Like we mentioned, it is clear that this time gap is situated between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, and that this time gap is known as the Church Age – the time in which we’re presently living. This is clear because, as we will show in the chapters ahead, we know when the sixty-ninth week was concluded in history – with the arrival of the Messiah in the first century AD, as foretold here in Verse 25. But following the completion of the sixty-ninth Week, we find that this prophetic program for Israel was paused as they rejected their Messiah, Christ, and God then introduced an interim program called the Church.

Daniel's 70 Weeks



And herein lies a critical understanding for properly interpreting the Bible – and especially Biblical eschatology, or the study of end-times prophecy:

Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy provides the framework for understanding the important concept of the distinction between Israel and the Church. We find from scripture that God deals with each group mutually exclusively. While we can't get off track on that topic here, we recommend that if you're interested in learning more about

it, that you consult the companion study entitled “Understanding The Distinction Between Israel And The Church”.

And so, it is clear to us that at the conclusion of the sixty-ninth Week, the prophetic weeks were paused. The final week – the seventieth week awaits a future fulfillment. In this study, we will mainly be dealing with the first sixty-nine weeks of the prophecy – the countdown to the Messiah. But let’s recognize that the future seventieth week is actually a period of time which the Bible details for us more precisely than any other period of time in history.

This final week is described in detail for us in Revelation, as well as being referred to throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is a period sometimes referred to as the Tribulation – a seven-year period of time characterized by great trouble and distress on Earth, but primarily directed at the Jews (especially the final half of it). The last half, or last three and a half years of this seven-year period is called the “Great Tribulation” by Jesus (Matthew 24:21), emphasizing how terrible of a period this will be for Israel – but will result in the salvation of a remnant. But for now, we will focus our attention on the first sixty-nine weeks, as this period of time involves the main purpose of our study – the incredible sixty-nine week countdown to the Messiah detailed for us here in Verse 25.

At the time this prophecy was given to Daniel, the city of Jerusalem was in ruins after being defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. However, according to this prophecy, it was destined to be rebuilt. Because this is such an important prophecy, and it has strictly fixed beginning and ending points, we will need to conduct a thorough investigation of both of these points in order to determine whether this prophecy was fulfilled – and if so, how accurate was it?

So, the first question we will examine is, “what is the beginning point?” The beginning point, as we’ve read, is, “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” In order to eventually determine a date for this beginning point, we must first identify this event in history. So, in the next chapter, we will examine what we know about our beginning point and see if we can develop

certainty as to how to pinpoint this event in our knowledge of ancient history.

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CHAPTER 3

THE BEGINNING POINT - “THE COMMANDMENT TO RESTORE AND TO BUILD JERUSALEM”

In our last chapter, we observed that the Daniel 9:25 prophecy identifies a clear beginning point: “the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” In order to eventually determine a dating for this beginning point, we first need to determine whether it can be positively identified with any specific historical event known to us today.

Obviously, it is vital to start with the correct event. If we get the beginning point wrong, we are doomed from the start. So, we need to consider this carefully and operate with precision. Four different historical decrees have been considered as the possible beginning point of this prophecy. We will walk through the scriptural contexts of each, in order to determine which applies to Daniel 9:25.

#1 – The Decree of Cyrus, Recorded in Ezra 1:1-4

The context of this first decree we will consider involves the Babylonian exile of the Jews who were taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar. In Jeremiah 29:10, God had promised:

After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in **causing you to return to this place** [causing the Jews to return to Jerusalem].

-Jeremiah 29:10

Ezra 1:1 then refers to this decree by Cyrus, which, just as prophesied, did allow the Jews to return from Babylonian captivity.

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...

-Ezra 1:1

This decree of Cyrus probably went forth in the year 538 BC.¹ At this time, many Jews began the return to their homeland. Two centuries earlier, God had prophetically appointed Cyrus for this task. The following two passages both prophetically refer to this.

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.

-Isaiah 44:28

We see this also in Isaiah 45:13.

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.

-Isaiah 45:13

Before reading the actual decree, as recorded in scripture, we need to make note of several points involving these two potentially confusing passages that we have just read.

Note #1

Some advocates claim that Isaiah 44:28 (the first of the two passages we just read) supports the view that Cyrus' decree included the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In order to understand why they believe this, let's re-read the passage so we have it fresh in our minds.

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.

-Isaiah 44:28

It is easy to see how a casual reader may arrive at the conclusion that this verse is saying Cyrus' decree involved the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It seems as if this verse depicts Cyrus saying that Jerusalem shall be built. But a careful examination of this verse (and this chapter as a whole) reveals several things we must make note of.

First of all, this is God speaking, not Cyrus. Secondly, this is God speaking about His future actions, and not the actions of Cyrus. This verse does not depict Cyrus saying Jerusalem will be built, and nowhere does God say that Cyrus will build it. Although this is obscured in some of our English translations (such as the *King James Version* (KJV), where it is hard to understand who is saying what), looking at Verses 24-28 of this chapter in, for example, the *English Standard Version* (ESV), makes this much clearer.

Thus says **the Lord**, your Redeemer,
who formed you from the womb:

[everything that follows is Isaiah quoting God, who at times quotes Himself, not Cyrus]

“I am the Lord, who made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who spread out the earth by myself,
who frustrates the signs of liars
and makes fools of diviners,

who turns wise men back
and makes their knowledge foolish,
who confirms the word of his servant
and fulfills the counsel of his messengers,
who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,'
and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built,
and I will raise up their ruins';
who says to the deep, 'Be dry;
I will dry up your rivers';
who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,
and he shall fulfill all my purpose';
saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,'
and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"
-Isaiah 44:24-28 (ESV)

Taking a look at this passage and noticing the quotation marks will help any reader understand that it is God who is speaking, not Cyrus – and God never says Cyrus will build Jerusalem. God simply says that it shall be built. For further clarity, let's take a look at the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (HCSB) rendering.

This is what the Lord, your Redeemer who formed you from the womb, says:

I am Yahweh, who made everything;
who stretched out the heavens by Myself;
who alone spread out the earth;
...
who says to Cyrus, "My shepherd,
he will fulfill all My pleasure"
and says to Jerusalem, "She will be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Its foundation will be laid."
-Isaiah 44:24, 28 (HCSB)

So, although there is ambiguity in some English translations, the

intended meaning of this passage should be clear. **God is declaring His actions, not the actions of Cyrus.**

Note #2

Isaiah 45:13 – the second passage we read – is probably the most confusing passage, which at first, may appear to support the idea that Cyrus’ decree might have included the rebuilding of the city. Let’s re-read this passage to have it fresh in our minds.

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.

-Isaiah 45:13

The pronoun “he” in this passage refers back to the subject of Cyrus in Verse 1 of this chapter. So, it would seem on the surface that this verse clearly would indicate that God is saying Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem. But the question must be asked, what does “rebuild the city” mean and when was the rebuilding to occur? At first, this might appear to be dancing around the issue in an attempt to avoid the obvious; but it is made very clear to us in Nehemiah 2:11-17, that the Temple would be built before the city. This passage in Nehemiah is important since it describes the city much later during the reign of Artaxerxes, who ruled quite some time after Cyrus.

In this passage, we are told that the city is still desolate and the walls were still “broken down.” The Hebrew text in Verse 13 states explicitly that the walls and gates were in utter ruin. Verse 17 is also very significant, as it states that Jerusalem was still desolate and the gates burned by fire. The Hebrew word translated “is desolate” in this passage (Strong’s #H2720), can also be translated as “to lay waste,” meaning “to lay in ruins.”²

If Cyrus’ decree included rebuilding the city and the walls, why is the city still in ruins much later during Artaxerxes reign? Clearly, we see that Cyrus never rebuilt it. It is very possible that Isaiah 45:13

simply means that during the Medo-Persian Empire – which Cyrus was the figurehead of – Jerusalem will be rebuilt. In other words, it could be a sort of synecdoche (a figure of speech in which the specific is used to refer to the general, or vice versa).³

The specific (Cyrus) is likely being used as a symbol of the general (the Medo-Persian Empire). The reasons for this could be typological, as Cyrus was in many ways a prophetic type of Christ (a type in scripture is a person or thing in the Old Testament which foreshadows an ultimate person or thing in the New Testament).

Isaiah 45:1 calls Cyrus, God’s “anointed,” clearly showing that he would be used in a typologically Messianic role. The Greek word “Christ” itself (used in the New Testament, as well as in the Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament) means “anointed” (the Greek *christos* – Strong’s #G5547). So, we know that Cyrus was a typological figure that in some ways profiled the future arrival of the true Messiah.⁴

For example, Isaiah tells us that Cyrus was the one whom God chose, whom God raised up, whom God called, whom God anointed, whom God loved, and the one who would do God’s pleasure concerning Israel. This sounds remarkably similar to the language used to describe the ultimate Messiah, Jesus Christ. Much more can be said on this, involving specific parallels between the actions of Cyrus and the actions of Christ.

This passage also could simply mean that Cyrus began the sequence of events that would ultimately lead to the rebuilding of the city. But in any case, the point here regarding these passages is simple. However we’d like to explain them, it is clear that Cyrus’ decree (which we will read shortly) did not give permission for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, nor did it result in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. As we will progress on in our investigation, it will become even clearer that this first decree by Cyrus is not in any way an option for the beginning point of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy.

So, with those two notes out of the way, let’s now continue.

The ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus records that upon

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entering the conquered city of Babylon, Cyrus was presented with a scroll of the writings of Isaiah – written around one hundred and fifty years earlier – which called Cyrus by name and prophesied of his exploits in great detail.⁵ This prophecy is found in Isaiah Chapters 44 and 45 – which include the two passages we just examined. When presented with this incredible prophecy, Cyrus was so impressed that he began to see it as a personal directive from God to rebuild the *Temple* (which is exactly what it was).

Now that we understand much of the foundational information regarding this important decree, let's now actually read it. Cyrus began his decree with these words:

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.

-Ezra 1:2

Cyrus continued:

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 1:3

This decree is also recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, **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, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and **he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem**, which is in Judah. Who is there among

you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

-2 Chronicles 36:22-23

This first decree authorized the Jews to return to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity and *rebuild the Temple*. Ezra Chapter 3 tells us that those who returned to Judea gathered in Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month, and the following spring, “in the second month,” they “set forward the **work of the house of the Lord**” (Verses 1, 4, 8).

After the foundation of the Temple had been laid, Ezra Chapter 4 tells us that, “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” “the people of the land,” being prohibited from participating in the project, “weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.” (Ezra 4:1-5).

Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So, it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

-Ezra 4:24

When, under the inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah, the work on the Temple was finally resumed, the governor of the region – with a group of other officials – came and asked the workers:

Who hath commanded you to build **this house**?

-Ezra 5:3

They replied:

In the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to **build this house of God**.

-Ezra 5:13

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So, the governor and his officials wrote a letter to King Darius I, saying:

If it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that **a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God** at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

-Ezra 5:17

It should be clear from our exploration of this story that nowhere does Cyrus issue a decree to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem itself, as the Daniel 9:25 prophecy would require. And nowhere in this story do we find any Biblical verification that the prophetically required city infrastructure (the wall, the streets – “...**the street** shall be built again, and **the wall**, even in troublous times” – Daniel 9:25b) was rebuilt. In fact, we will see later on that it certainly was not rebuilt at this time, as it still lay in ruins at that future point. Rather, this decree by Cyrus concerned only the rebuilding of the Temple of God in Jerusalem. We have seen that reflected constantly throughout the relevant passages we have examined. So, we can see that this first decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1:1-4 cannot be our starting point for the sixty-nine week “countdown to the Messiah.”

#2 – The Decree of Darius I, Recorded in Ezra 6:1-12

Because of the letter Darius received from the governor of the area west of the Euphrates (referenced above), a search was made, and Cyrus' original decree was found. Darius then issued his own decree, confirming the original decree, saying: “Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews **build this house of God** in his place.” Darius actually instructed his governor to supply the Jews with money or whatever else they needed, that “the building of this house of God ... be not hindered” (Ezra 6:7-8).

Based on Ezra 4:24, this decree was probably issued in 520 BC, the

second year of the reign of Darius. With the hindrances now removed, the Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius on the third day of the twelfth month of 515 BC (March 12th on our modern calendar) – and in the following month they kept the Passover (Ezra 6:15, 19).⁶
7

It is clear that the decree of Darius I recorded in Ezra 6:1-12 also had nothing to do with the rebuilding and restoration of the city of Jerusalem. Rather, it was simply a re-stating of the earlier decree by Cyrus to rebuild the Temple.

#3 – The Decree of Artaxerxes I (Longimanus), Recorded in Ezra 7:11-26

King Artaxerxes Longimanus, in the seventh year of his reign (457 BC), authorized Ezra the priest and scribe – and all who wished to join him – to go to Jerusalem and freely initiate Temple worship now that the Temple had been rebuilt (Ezra 7:11-26).⁸

It was Ezra's desire to instruct the Jews in the laws of God. Artaxerxes granted him large amounts of silver and gold to furnish the Temple, and gave instruction that his treasurers on that side of the river should provide whatever was needed to beautify the Lord's house. In the decree, Artaxerxes commanded Ezra to:

Set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.

And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

-Ezra 7:25, 26

We can see that this decree by Artaxerxes only gave the Jews permission to proceed with Temple worship. There is no mention of rebuilding Jerusalem. Ezra left Babylon on the first day of the first

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month of Artaxerxes's seventh year, and arrived in Jerusalem exactly four months later on the first day of the fifth month (Ezra 7:7-9). Three days later, the gifts brought from Babylon were registered in the Temple treasury, and sacrifices were offered to God (Ezra 8:32-35). Either at that time or shortly thereafter:

They delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants,
and to the governors on this side the river.

-Ezra 8:36

So, it seems clear that the evidence does not support the decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Ezra 7:11-26 as being the beginning point of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy.

#4 – The Decree of Artaxerxes 1 (Longimanus), Mentioned in Nehemiah Chapters 1 and 2

The story of Nehemiah begins in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes's reign. Nehemiah, a Jew, was the king's cupbearer. One day, some of his brethren from Judah arrived in Shushan, where the king's palace was. Nehemiah inquired of them about the condition of things in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-2). They replied by saying:

The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: **the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.**

-Nehemiah 1:3

Hearing this, Nehemiah sat down and wept. For several days, he mourned and fasted and prayed (Nehemiah 1:4). His prayer is remarkably similar to that of Daniel in Daniel 9. He prayed that somehow God would "grant him mercy in the sight of" the king (Nehemiah 1:5-11). Sometime later, Nehemiah was serving wine to the king, and Artaxerxes noticed a sad expression on Nehemiah's face. "Why is thy countenance sad?" the king asked (Nehemiah 2:1-2).

Nehemiah explained that the city of **Jerusalem was still in ruin, and the wall and the gates were still not repaired** (Nehemiah 2:3). When the king asked what he would like to do, Nehemiah answered, “If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest **send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it**” (Nehemiah 2:4-5).

Artaxerxes consented, and sent with him letters for the governors of the region, authorizing the rebuilding project of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:6-9). Verse 8 even specifically mentions the acquiring of building materials “for the wall of the city.” If you recall, the wall was one of the components specifically mentioned in the Daniel 9:25 prophecy.

So, it looks like we have a clear winner! We see that until this time, the city and walls were not yet rebuilt – hence the distress of the inhabitants who were under constant threat of attack. This is shown again in the next several verses, as upon his arrival at Jerusalem, Nehemiah viewed for himself the ruinous condition of the city’s infrastructure.

And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the **walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.**

-Nehemiah 2:13

Based on this assessment – and having the king’s consent to rebuild – Nehemiah soon after confronted the city’s elders, saying:

Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how **Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire:** come, and **let us build up the wall of Jerusalem,** that we be no more a reproach.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said,

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Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

-Nehemiah 2:17-18

So, we have all the proof we need. We see at this time that Jerusalem (the walls, gates, etc.) were still not rebuilt (meaning none of the earlier decrees could have been our starting point). And we also see clear evidence that this command by Artaxerxes did concern the actual rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.

It's actually quite simple: Nehemiah petitioned the king to allow him to return and rebuild the city – and the king issued a command authorizing it. This is the only decree or command that precisely fulfills the requirements of the Daniel 9:25 prophetic countdown. Hence, this decree by Artaxerxes is considered the starting point for the seventy-week countdown.

Furthermore, the Book of Nehemiah – as well as Ezra 4:7-23 – indicate that the restoration of the walls was done in the most distressing circumstances, as also was required by the prophecy in Daniel 9:25 – “the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in **troublous times.**” There is no record of any later commands being given by the Persian kings regarding the rebuilding of Jerusalem. So, again, it should be very clear to us which of these decrees was the one that signaled the beginning point of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy: the decree of Artaxerxes mentioned in Nehemiah Chapters 1 and 2.

Now that we have positively identified our beginning point with a specific historical event, our next task is to determine *when* in history this event took place. In other words, can we accurately assign a historical date to this event?

In our next chapter, we will find out that the answer is yes! We will demonstrate that this decree was issued in the spring, during the Hebrew month of Nisan (our March/April), of 444 BC, in Artaxerxes's twentieth year of reign (Nehemiah 2:1). Since Nehemiah 2:1 already tells us all this information except for the year, we will just need to demonstrate how we arrive at the year 444 BC.

MICHAEL FILIPEK

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CHAPTER 4

THE DATING OF THE BEGINNING POINT

Now that we have successfully identified our beginning point with a specific historical event, we now need to see if we can develop certainty as to the dating of this event. In this chapter, we will demonstrate that the decree of Artaxerxes (that we've identified as our beginning point) was issued in the spring during the Hebrew month of Nisan (equivalent to our March/April) in the year 444 BC, in the twentieth year of his reign.

As we mentioned at the close of the previous chapter, many of the clues concerning the dating of this decree are already provided to us in the Biblical record. Like we said, the Bible tells us all of this information, except of course what year this took place by our modern calendar reckoning. So, our main task here will be to explain how we arrive with certainty at the year 444 BC as being the year this decree was issued.

First, Nehemiah 1:1 states that Nehemiah heard of Jerusalem's desolate conditions in the month of Chisleu, or Kislev (our November/December) in Artaxerxes's twentieth year.

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass **in**

the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

-Nehemiah 1:1

So, Nehemiah heard about Jerusalem's desolate conditions in the month of Kislev in Artaxerxes's twentieth year. Then, later in Artaxerxes's twentieth year, in the month of Nisan (March/April), Nehemiah reports that he was granted permission to restore the city and build its walls. This decree is recorded in Nehemiah Chapter 2, which starts out by giving the date that this occurred. It says the following.

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king...

-Nehemiah 2:1a

So, these events – Nehemiah finding out about the desolate state of Jerusalem, and the decree granting him permission to restore Jerusalem – both took place during the same year – the twentieth year of Artaxerxes's reign. This understanding is significant, and provides us with a significant clue that we will use to determine this dating with precision! To have Nisan (our March/April) *later* than Kislev (our November/December) and **both be in the same year** is a significant clue.

This may seem strange to us until we recognize that the Jews had two different calendars – a religious, or Nisan-to-Nisan calendar, as well as a civil, or Tishri-to-Tishri calendar. We will find that Nehemiah was using the Tishri-to-Tishri (civil calendar) dating method.¹

In order to understand this, we need to have a general understanding of the Hebrew months in terms of their two Biblical calendars.² To review this, please refer to the chart below. The two months we are particularly concerned with at this time – Kislev and Nisan – are highlighted in red:

The Two Hebrew Calendars			
Modern Months:	Hebrew Months:	Civil Calendar: (before Exodus 12)	Religious Calendar: (after Exodus 12)
Sept./Oct.	Tishri	1 st Month	7 th Month
Oct./Nov.	Marcheshvan (Cheshvan)	2 nd Month	8 th Month
Nov./Dec.	Kislev	3 rd Month	9 th Month
Dec./Jan.	Tevet	4 th Month	10 th Month
Jan./Feb.	Shevat	5 th Month	11 th Month
Feb./Mar.	Adar (+ Adar 2 – leap years)	6 th Month	12 th Month
Mar./Apr.	Aviv (Nisan)	7 th Month	1 st Month
Apr./May	Iyar	8 th Month	2 nd Month
May/June	Sivan	9 th Month	3 rd Month
June/July	Tammuz	10 th Month	4 th Month
July/Aug.	Av	11 th Month	5 th Month
Aug./Sept.	Elul	12 th Month	6 th Month

As we can see from this chart, when using the civil calendar (as opposed to the religious calendar), the Hebrew months of Kislev (our November/December) and Nisan (our March/April) both occur in the same year. Knowing that Nehemiah was using a Tishri-Tishri civil calendar reckoning will help us accurately pinpoint the dating of the decree of Artaxerxes.

This (civil calendar) reckoning used by Nehemiah is confirmed by the Jews in Elephantine Island, who also used this method during the same time period as Nehemiah.

Elephantine Island is in the Nile near Aswan in Upper Egypt. During the fifth century BC, there was a colony of Jewish soldiers there. They were part of a military garrison protecting the southern limits of the Persian Empire. Almost a hundred Aramaic documents have been recovered from there. Outside the Bible, these provide the

earliest documentation of the political, economic, social, and religious life of a Jewish community from the southern Diaspora. Many of these are double-dated legal documents that give some insight into the calendar reckoning of the period. The papyri from Elephantine demonstrate that the post-exile Jews used a calendar similar to the method discussed above.³

So, we recognize that Nehemiah was obviously using a Tishri-to-Tishri calendar reckoning. **Next, we need to determine the date of the beginning of Artaxerxes's reign in order to figure out when his twentieth year was.**

According to a clay tablet from Babylonia which has been dated to the Hellenistic period, the murder of Artaxerxes's father Xerxes took place during the month of August of the year 465 BC. Xerxes was murdered by the captain of his guard, a man by the name of Artabanus, who had aspirations of ruling the empire. The oldest historical account of this comes from Ctesias, a Greek physician at the court of Artaxerxes II (the grandson of Artaxerxes). Ctesias lived in Persia, knew the language, and had access to the official archives and to the accounts preserved by the royal family. His account is recorded in a summary by Photius in the ninth century AD.

But Artaxerxes was not the designated heir to the throne, and did not immediately begin to rule. Instead, as we learn from this account, Xerxes' eldest son Darius was next on line to rule, but was killed by Artabanus after he had also assassinated Xerxes. The machinations and political intrigue that followed apparently did not result in a smooth transition of power to the young Artaxerxes.

Artaxerxes eventually ended up finding out the truth about Artabanus and responded by killing him and consolidating control after also dealing with a Bactrian revolt – one of the Persian provinces. And so, we have evidence from these ancient historical accounts that there was an interregnum (or a gap period) of probably several months between the death of Xerxes and when Artaxerxes was finally recognized as king.^{4 5}

Although an entire study can be done just on this subject of the dating of the beginning of Artaxerxes's reign, the totality of the

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evidence leads many historians to confidently conclude that it can be dated to sometime during late 465 BC. For the sake of this study, and to clearly visualize this on the charts that we will display shortly, we will name December as the most likely month of Artaxerxes’s accession to the throne – but any date in autumn or late 465 BC would yield the same results for our calculation purposes here. So, **December of 465 BC** is our date for the accession of Artaxerxes.

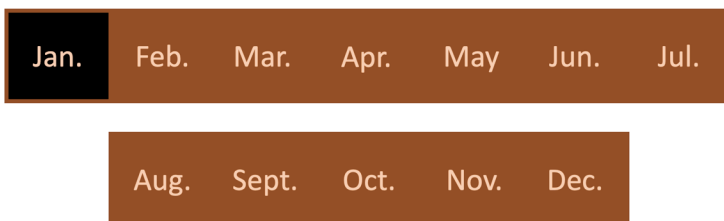
Now is where it becomes a bit complicated, as different ancient kingdoms used different ways of reckoning the beginning of a king’s reign. Let’s try to understand this before continuing on.

Ancient kingdoms generally used one of two methods to count the duration of a king’s reign: the **accession year system** or the **non-accession year system**.

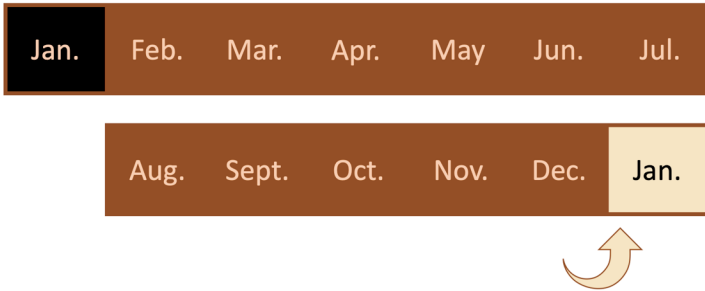
In the accession year system (also called “postdating”), the year in which a king comes to the throne was termed his accession year, and his first official year is that which begins with the New Year’s Day after his accession.

In the non-accession year system (also called “antedating”), a king’s first official year was the year in which he came to the throne, and his second official year begins with the New Year’s Day following his accession.⁶ This will probably seem confusing at first, so let’s go over a few examples (using our modern calendar of January to December):

Accession Year Dating – If a king began to reign in February of a given year, then February to December (the remainder of that year) would be considered his “accession year”...



...and the first official year of his reign would not begin until the next New Year's Day.



Non-Accession Year Dating – If a king began to reign in November of a given year, then November to December (the remainder of that year) would be considered the first official year of his reign (even though it was only two months).



His second official year would begin the next New Year's Day. And so, even though he had only been on the throne for a total of three months, he would already be considered to be in the second official year of his reign.

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So, we hope this gives you a basic understanding of the differences between these two dating methods. Although this certainly can be confusing information to grasp, it is necessary to understand in order to accurately calculate our dating of these events.

Before pausing to understand these different regnal methods, we had left off with our conclusion that according to the evidence we know of from ancient histories and writings, the Persian king Artaxerxes began to rule around December of 465 BC. Let's now continue.

In the case of the Persians, the accession-year system was used.⁷ This means that since Artaxerxes began to rule in December of 465 BC, then until the end of that year would have been considered his accession year. His first official year would not begin until the next New Year's Day. But of course, they were not using our modern calendar of January through December. As we learned earlier in this chapter, Nehemiah was using the Jewish civil calendar that began with the month of Tishri (which again, is equivalent to our September/October).

So, knowing that the accession-year system as well as the Tishri-to-Tishri civil calendar reckoning were being used, the first official year of Artaxerxes's reign on our modern calendar would be the year Tishri 464 to Tishri 463 BC. This could be charted as follows (see Jewish Tishri-Tishri year).

The Accession Of Artaxerxes

Julian (Jan. – Jan.)	465 B.C.		464 B.C.		463 B.C.	
Persian (Nisan – Nisan)	21 st Year of Xerxes		Accession Yr. Of Artaxerxes	1 st Year of Artaxerxes' Reign		2 nd Year of Artaxerxes' Reign
Jewish (Tishri – Tishri)	20 th Year of Xerxes	21 st Year Of Xerxes	Accession Year of Artaxerxes		1 st Year of Artaxerxes' Reign	
<div style="background-color: #8B4513; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Artaxerxes' Accession c. December, 465 B.C. </div>						

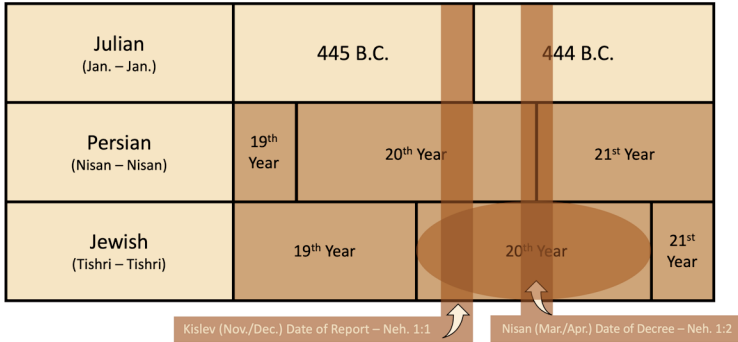
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Persian (Nisan – Nisan)	21 st Year of Xerxes		Accession Yr. Of Artaxerxes	1 st Year of Artaxerxes' Reign		2 nd Year of Artaxerxes' Reign
Jewish (Tishri – Tishri)	20 th Year of Xerxes	21 st Year Of Xerxes	Accession Year of Artaxerxes		1 st Year of Artaxerxes' Reign	
<div style="background-color: #8B4513; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Artaxerxes' Accession c. December, 465 B.C. </div>						

Next, now that we understand when Artaxerxes began to reign, we can easily figure out when his twentieth year was. Of course, we just push forward the information provided on the last chart by twenty years.

When you plug in the information given in Nehemiah’s Biblical account (“in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king”), you arrive at **Nisan of 444 BC**. This could be charted as follows.

The Decree Of Artaxerxes



The report of Jerusalem’s desolate conditions was given in Kislev, according to Nehemiah 1:1, which on our calendar is still 445 BC. Then a few months later, Nehemiah was given permission to rebuild Jerusalem during the month of Nisan, according to Nehemiah 1:2, which on our calendar is now 444 BC. So, again, we can confidently conclude that **the decree of Artaxerxes (described in Nehemiah 2:1) would have occurred in Nisan (our March/April) of 444 BC.**⁸
9

Concerning the specific day of the month of Nisan – since there is no day-of-month specified in the verse, then this decree could have taken place on any day during this Hebrew month. Some have concluded that the Hebrew practice was that if no exact day was specified, it should be understood as being the first day of the month. Although this could certainly be true, we do not find convincing enough evidence to confidently make this claim.

But since the prophecy in Daniel 9:25 was given to us in years (“weeks” of years), then we should not be concerned with trying to count it in terms of smaller units of measure, such as days, minutes, or seconds. The fulfillment cannot be more precise than the unit of measure originally given (which in this case, is years). Some interpreters have gotten sidetracked into error by trying to come up with

fulfillments more precise than the prophetic parameters the Bible issues.

We will keep it simple in this study, and only take our claims as far as the supporting evidence allows, as we believe scripture intends. Nailing this decree date down to sometime during the month of Nisan of the year 444 BC is as precise as we can be while still maintaining accuracy, and is perfectly sufficient for our purposes.

So, we can say with confidence that the decree of Artaxerxes described in Nehemiah Chapters 1 and 2, which marks the beginning point of the 69-week countdown of Daniel 9:25 took place in the month of **Nisan, (our March/April), of 444 BC** on our modern calendar.

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1. Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, new rev. ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994, pp. 52-53.
 2. Wikipedia contributors, "Hebrew Calendar," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_calendar - Retrieved 11/23/18)
 3. S.H. Horn and L.H. Wood, "The Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XIII, January, 1954, pp. 1-20.
 4. Rick Lanser, "Did Ezra Come To Jerusalem In 457 B.C.?" Sept. 10, 2019, part of "The Daniel 9:24-27 Project" article series, *Associates For Biblical Research*. (<https://biblearchaeology.org/abr-projects/the-daniel-9-24-27-project-2/4549-did-ezra-come-to-jerusalem-in-457-bc> - Retrieved 2/10/21)
 5. Julia Neuffer, "The Accession of Artaxerxes I," *Andrews University Digital Library*. (<https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/AUSS/1968-1/1968-1-05.pdf> - Retrieved 2/10/21)
 6. Thiele, pp. 43-45, 231.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 8. Parker and Dubberstein, p. 32.
 9. Herman H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons, 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1651*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973, p. 47.

CHAPTER 5

THE ENDING POINT - “THE MESSIAH THE PRINCE”

In the previous chapter, we have clearly established that the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus during the month of **Nisan, (our March/April), of 444 BC, marks the beginning point of the sixty-nine weeks of Daniel 9:25.**

Let’s review our main scriptural passage before going on to discuss the ending point of this sixty-nine-week countdown.

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** [7 + 62 = 69 weeks of years]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

-Daniel 9:25

The next question of course, is, “when was the ending point for this prophecy?” The final conclusion, or ending point is, “unto the Messiah the Prince.” “Messiah the Prince” means “The Anointed Ruler, the King,” or in Hebrew, *Meschiach Nagid* (*meschiach* – Strong’s #H4899; *nagid* – Strong’s #H5057).¹

How do we proceed from here? Well, the obvious answer is to

identify any Messianic candidates and then investigate if there is any record that they ever presented themselves as a Messianic prince. Obviously, we will begin our search with the most well-known Jewish Messianic figure in history. That of course, is Jesus Christ – and there isn't a close second.

As we begin, let's recognize that there is evidence in the name Jesus Christ itself, as being the subject of the term *Meschiach Nagid*, or "Messiah the Prince" in Daniel 9:25. The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew words "Yahweh saves." The word Christ itself comes from the Greek word *christos*, and is the word used in the Greek Septuagint for "Messiah."²

In fact, E.W. Bullinger says that its' use in Daniel 9:25 – *christos* being the Greek word used for the Hebrew word *meschiach* – is interpreted in the Jewish writings to mean the expected savior – the one anointed by God to be King and Redeemer of His people (this will be discussed and Jewish references will be given towards the end of this study).³ So, for the people of the New Testament era, the very name Jesus Christ meant that He fulfilled Daniel 9:25. Let's continue.

If we know the sixty-nine weeks of years are to end with the *Meschiach Nagid* - the "Messiah the Prince/King," and we theorize that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, then our next question must be, "when did Jesus Christ ever present Himself as the Messiah the Prince/King?" Let's determine if there was ever a time when Jesus did, and then see if the dating fits.

Often in the New Testament, we read about the enthusiasm of the crowds that followed Jesus. For example, in John 6:15, they tried to make Him a king, but He slipped away. He wouldn't let it happen. Then one day, Jesus does something strange. He not only permits it, He deliberately arranges it. Jesus tells His disciples to go to a certain place to find a donkey, and He even gives them a sort of password to use so the owner would release it. The disciples then bring the donkey to Him, and He rides it into Jerusalem to fulfill the Messianic prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9. In order to answer the question we are investigating, we need to pay close attention to the wording found in this Old Testament prophecy which Jesus was fulfilling on this day.

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, **thy King cometh unto thee**: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

-Zechariah 9:9

The following excerpt is John's account of this event.

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: **Blessed is the King of Israel** that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, **thy King cometh**, sitting on an ass's colt.

These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

-John 12:12-16

It was at this time – and only at this time – that we know Jesus (or anyone, for that matter) fulfilled the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9 (“thy King cometh unto thee”). On this day, He presented Himself as the awaited Anointed King – the Messiah - to Jerusalem. We call this the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, occurring four days before He is then killed on Passover. This is celebrated in Christianity on Palm Sunday, although this event actually seems to have occurred on a Monday (we will discuss that in a following chapter of this study). **The Triumphal Entry is the first and only occasion where Jesus ever allowed Himself to be proclaimed as a Messianic King!** In fact, Zechariah 9:9 actually requires that He did, in the phrase “**thy King cometh unto thee.**” But there's more.

We need to also become familiar with the following prophetic

verse found in the Psalms. Many of us are probably familiar with this passage, but may never have understood the specific day it speaks of.

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

-Psalm 118:24

What specific day is this prophetic passage referring to? While we can certainly rejoice for each and every day God has given to us, it is important to recognize that this verse was celebrating a very *specific* future day in history. Let's understand which day.

To do this, we will need to take a look at the accounts of the Triumphal Entry found in the gospels. In Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12, we find the records of this story of Jesus riding the donkey into Jerusalem. We see that people began throwing down their palm branches in front of Him as He rode down the path, and when they had run out of branches, they began to throw down their coats. The gospels record that they were singing a Messianic quotation from the same chapter in Psalms we just mentioned, found only two verses later – Psalm 118:26, giving us the context of what “day” Verse 24 was referring to!

Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord...

-Psalm 118:26a

The following is Matthew's recording of this event.

And **the multitudes** that went before, and that followed, **cried, saying**, Hosanna to the son of David: **Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**; Hosanna in the highest.

-Matthew 21:9

Luke's account records even more detail, and gives us an additional confirmation of this event.

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Saying, Blessed be **the King** that **cometh in the name of the Lord**:
peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

-Luke 19:38

Notice that in Luke's account, it specifically mentions "the King," recalling our earlier question of "when did Jesus allow Himself to be called the King?" So according to the gospel accounts, the disciples and the multitude lining the streets during the Triumphal Entry were singing the Psalm 118 Messianic prophecy of the Messiah King entering Jerusalem. So then by the gospels' testimonies of this event being a fulfillment of Psalm 118:26, we can then understand what "day" Psalm 118:24 spoke of – the Triumphal Entry!

It is important to recognize that the Psalm 118 passage truly was a prophetic Messianic declaration in the minds of the Jews at the time of Christ. Ancient evidence for this Jewish belief is found in, for example, the *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, a Jewish commentary possibly dating as early as the fifth or sixth century AD, but surely containing long-established traditions and beliefs passed down from far earlier.⁴ From this commentary, we recognize that traditionally, the rabbis taught that whatever the time of year the Messiah was to appear, the Jews were to greet and hail Him by taking up branches and singing Hosannas to Him as the Holy One of Israel.⁵

This practice of taking up branches to wave while singing hosannas was typically a tradition associated with the holiday of *Sukkot*, in which the Messianic arrival and Messianic Kingdom were anticipated.⁶ Thus, by them waving palm branches and singing this Messianic Psalm under the conditions in which Jesus was fulfilling Zechariah 9:9, they were convinced He was there to usher in the Messianic Kingdom. This is evidenced by the next puzzle piece we will now examine in order to soundly prove this and fully understand what was transpiring on this day.

As Gentiles, we may read about the crowd singing this quote, but yet miss the point in the Hebraic sense. But luckily, whenever we run the risk of missing the point, the Pharisees always come to our rescue. They become unhinged when they hear the people praising Jesus.

And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him,
Master, rebuke thy disciples.

-Luke 19:39

The people were simply singing a song! Why the anxiety over this? As was just mentioned, the reason for their meltdown was that the Pharisees recognized that by the crowd singing that Messianic Psalm under those circumstances, they were actually declaring Jesus to be the Messiah. The Pharisees naturally assumed that this Rabbi didn't want His disciples blaspheming by calling Him the Messiah! How wrong they were! But this confirms to us what we just stated, about this particular day being of such significance in that Jesus was presenting Himself as the *Meschiach Nagid* – the Messianic Ruler – to Israel. Notice Jesus's frank reply to the Pharisees' statement of unbelief.

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

-Luke 19:40

Why would the stones have to cry out? Because of the significance of this special event on this special day, which had been prophesied of far in advance in Zechariah and the Psalms, and had been precisely anticipated in the Daniel 9:25 countdown to the Messiah! This was that day! If the people didn't react accordingly in recognition of the King of the Universe on this special day, the creation itself immediately would, in order to fulfill this prophecy and acknowledge this Anointed King!

So, it is very clear that Jesus on this specific day, not only allowed – but actually arranged and accepted – being presented as the Messiah the King! Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118 – both being prophetic passages anticipating the Triumphal Entry were fulfilled in dramatic fashion as Jesus entered Jerusalem four days before His crucifixion. We see it fulfilled here and only here, on this specific day, during Jesus's First Coming. This was the only day Jesus ever allowed

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Himself to be hailed as King! But if that wasn't evidence enough, let's take it even a level deeper.

Many of the same people who were crying *hosanna* (meaning "save now") and singing the Messianic song from Psalm 118 on the day of Jesus's Triumphal Entry would a few days later be part of the mob crying "crucify Him!" Though they were declaring Him the Messiah here, they would be deceived by the religious leaders shortly after, and actually support the murder of the one they just called Messiah. Jesus, as He rode the donkey nearer to Jerusalem, knew this, and that is why He exclaimed the following, as Luke records in this same chapter.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
Saying, **If thou hadst known**, even thou, at least **in this thy day**,
the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from
thine eyes.

-Luke 19:41-42

Jesus wept over the city. This is the Triumphal Entry, the big day, but He wept over it. Notice in the above passage, His phrase "this thy day." What day? That day that Daniel predicted! The termination of the prophetic countdown to the Messiah! That "day" specifically mentioned in Psalm 118 ("this is the day which the Lord hath made")! He made His appointment and showed up right on time. He expected them to be ready! He expected them to understand that He was the Messiah arriving right on schedule, which Gabriel had predicted to Daniel so many years before.

Jesus essentially was saying, "you had your chance, and you blew it." He wept because they blew it, despite that He had gone to such lengths to tell them ahead of time. Because of that, He then said "the things which belong unto thy peace" are hidden from them. He announced corporate blindness upon the Jewish people specifically because they did not recognize this day! In other words, as a nation, the Jews would continue to not recognize Christ as their Messiah.

The Apostle Paul later tells us that the national blindness on Israel will last until the "fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans

11:25). So eventually, they will recognize Him and acknowledge Him (Zechariah 12:10).

In fact, they will even use the same Messianic phrase we referred to in Psalm 118 to welcome Him at His Second Coming (“blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”). In Matthew 23, before going on to discuss in detail the gruesome future seventieth week that Israel will have to endure due to their rejection of Him as their Messiah, Jesus laments the continual unbelieving nature of His people. He makes it clear that He was sent unto them, and He would have gathered and brought them into His Messianic Kingdom if they were found in faith when He came. But because they rejected Him, they would have to endure a time of national desolation until the time of the end. Jesus said they wouldn’t see Him again until they cry out to Him, finally acknowledging Him as their Messiah. And at His Second Coming, this time they will be in faith and will receive Him, and will proclaim this Messianic greeting when He comes. Let’s read this statement by Jesus found in Matthew 23:37-39.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**

-Matthew 23:37-39

We find that this will happen at the end of the future seventieth week (Zechariah 8-14; Revelation 7-19). We are told that the remnant Jews acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah and petitioning His return is actually a precondition for His Second Coming.

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

-Hosea 5:15

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Note: The Hebrew word translated “early” in that passage actually means “diligently” or “earnestly” (*shachar* – Strong’s #H7836).

So, the corporate blindness Jesus proclaimed on the Jews is temporary. But the real point here is that Jesus actually held them accountable to know the prophecy given to them!

Continuing, Jesus then states that for this reason, Jerusalem would soon be destroyed “because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.**

-Luke 19:43-44

Notice Jesus’s usage of the phrase “thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” In other words, He was telling them that He came as their Messiah, but they did not recognize the timing of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy! If they had known the prophecy, they should have been expecting Him at that very time. But they ended up crucifying their Messiah instead – just as Daniel 9 also predicted (“and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off” – Daniel 9:26). This is the verse that follows Daniel 9:25. It says that after “threescore and two weeks” – in other words, after sixty-two weeks that follow the first seven weeks, or put differently, after the entire seven plus sixty-two equals sixty-nine weeks of years – the Messiah would be cut off, or in other words, killed (*karath* – Strong’s #H3772).⁷



Because of this, Jesus foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. It took place thirty-seven years later in 70 AD, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple - fulfilling Jesus's exact words.⁸

Note: For more information on this prophetic destruction of Jerusalem, please consult our companion study, entitled “The Luke 19:43-44 Prophecy: The Destruction Of Jerusalem Foretold”.

But this is chilling to think about – Jesus actually held them accountable to know this prophecy and expect it at that very time! They should have known it, but they failed to recognize it as the fulfillment of this countdown, and the consequences were severe.

So, we have already established the beginning point of the prophetic timeline from Daniel 9:25 and we have now also established what we should expect the end point to be. In this chapter, we concluded that the ending point of the sixty-nine week countdown is the coming of the “Messiah the King,” meaning the anointed ruler – a Messianic anticipation. We then established when - according to the gospel accounts – Jesus presented Himself as that Messianic King: at – and only at – the Triumphal Entry.

Next, we need to determine the actual calendar date that the Triumphal Entry took place in order to determine whether or not this ending point we have identified actually does fit the prophetic timetable.

1. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, pp. 38, 839.

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2. Irene Belyeu, *Revelation in Context: A Literary and Historical Commentary on the Book of Revelation with Supporting Referents and Notes*, Complete Ed., Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2006, p. 18.
3. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975, p. 151.
4. Wikipedia contributors, "Pesikta de-Rav Kahana," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesikta_de-Rav_Kahana - Retrieved 7/12/18)
5. *Pesikta De-Rab Kahana*, ed. William G. Braude, trans. William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975, 27:3.
6. Sam Nadler, *Messiah in The Feasts of Israel*, rev. ed., Charlotte, NC: Word of Messiah Ministries, 2006, pp. 53-54.
7. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, pp. 231-232.
8. Wikipedia contributors, "Siege of Jerusalem (70 CE)," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_\(70_CE\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(70_CE)) - Retrieved 8/10/18)

CHAPTER 6

THE DATING OF THE ENDING POINT (PART 1) - THE DATE OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Before we begin our examination of the dating of the ending point of Daniel's sixty-nine week prophetic countdown, let's again look over Daniel 9:25.

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** [7 + 62 = 69 weeks of years]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

-Daniel 9:25

Let's now recap some of what we have concluded thus far.

First, we noted that Daniel identifies the beginning point to this countdown as "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." We have seen that Artaxerxes Longimanus issued the command to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem during the month of Nisan (our March/April), of 444 BC. That is our beginning point of the sixty-nine weeks.

Then, in the previous chapter, we concluded that the ending point

of the sixty-nine-week countdown is the coming of the “Messiah the King.” We then established when – according to the gospel accounts – Jesus presented Himself as that Messianic King: at – and only at – the Triumphal Entry. Next, we need to see if we can come up with a conclusive date for this event.

The way we will tackle the dating of the Triumphal Entry will be in two parts – first, we will determine a conclusive date for the crucifixion of Jesus, and second, we will then backtrack a few days prior to the crucifixion, to the day He rode the donkey into Jerusalem. These two tasks have been split into two chapters, as the first task of proving the date of the crucifixion is a bit extensive. It is necessary that we go into substantial depth in this chapter in order to make sure we get the correct dating for the ending point.

There are eight Biblical clues that will help us understand precisely when Jesus died (by precisely, we mean right down to the year, season, month, day, and hour). As you will notice, we are not simply extrapolating a date based upon one mention or reference. Instead, we will develop this progressively, beginning with larger date ranges, which will then telescope down to the precise day as we go through the following clues. Each progressive clue will build upon the previous clues and further solidify them. The Bible gives us many clues as anchor points to allow us to determine this date with precision and confidence.

Clue #1 – The High Priesthood of Caiaphas

The gospels indicate that Jesus was crucified at the instigation of the first century high priest named Caiaphas. The gospels declare this in Matthew 26:3-4, and John 11:49-53.

According to the ancient historian Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Caiaphas was appointed high priest of the Jews by the Roman procurator Valerius Gratus, the predecessor of Pontius Pilate,¹ and removed from that office by the procurator Vitellius, shortly after he took charge of affairs in Palestine.² Secular history dates his appointment to around 18 AD and his removal to around 36 AD.^{3 4}

So, history records that Caiaphas served as high priest from about **18 to 36 AD**, putting Jesus's death somewhere within that time frame.

Clue #2 – The Governorship of Pontius Pilate

All four gospels state that Jesus was crucified on the orders of the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:24-26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24; John 19:15-16).

Non-Biblical sources agree on this as well. For example, the Roman senator and historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus (c. 56-c. 120 AD) states that:

Christus, from whom the name [“Christian”] had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.⁵

We know from secular historical sources that Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from 26-36 AD, under the emperor Tiberius.⁶

So, we can narrow down the possible date range by a number of years, to **26 to 36 AD**.

Clue #3 – “The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius Caesar”

The Bible gives us a clue whereby we can determine a close approximation of the date of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. This clue is based on Luke's very historically specific statement in Luke 3:1-3 about the ministry of John the Baptist, which shortly preceded that of Jesus.

Now in the **fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar**, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

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Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, **the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.**

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

-Luke 3:1-3

So, Luke records that John the Baptist began his ministry during the **fifteenth year** of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. It is well agreed upon in secular historical sources that the reign of Tiberius Caesar began on the death of his predecessor, Augustus Caesar, on August 19th, of 14 AD.⁷

What is not well agreed upon is how to begin counting fifteen years from this date. Scholars are not agreed on what calendar system Luke is using to reckon this. Without making this into its own study, let's first preface by saying by far most scholars – no matter what method of reckoning they subscribe to – arrive at a date range of 28-29 AD for the “fifteenth year” of the reign of Tiberius.⁸ We will advocate that the more likely year is autumn of 29 AD. Let's briefly examine our reasoning for this.

Luke's Gospel is addressed to the “most excellent Theophilus,” who most agree is a Roman official (Luke 1:3). This greeting of “most excellent” is otherwise employed in the book of Acts (also written by Luke) as a greeting of respect to Roman officials (Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25). It would appear that Luke is intending his Gospel to be addressed to/understood by Roman readers, or at any rate, readers out in the Roman world.

It is probable then, for this and other reasons, that Luke – as a historian in the Roman empire – uses typical Roman reckoning in his dating of events. Other Roman historians of the time – such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius – generally date the first regnal year of a ruler from January 1st of the year following the date of accession (accession-year dating). We judge that Luke would do likewise.⁹

So, Luke says that John the Baptist began to preach in Tiberius's fifteenth year (Luke 3:1–3). By official Roman reckoning, Tiberius's fifteenth year (counted as Julian Calendar years according to the acces-

sion-year system) ran from January 1st, 29 AD to December 31st, 29 AD. This is the reason we advocate for 29 AD as being the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry.^{10 11}

The New Testament implies that shortly after this, Jesus was baptized by John and began His public ministry (Luke 3:21-23; Acts 10:37-38). So then, we believe Jesus began His public ministry sometime in 29 AD.

But can we be any more specific? Many scholars believe there is reason to believe this would have occurred in autumn of 29 AD. One reason for this is that religiously, preaching ministries of repentance (like John the Baptist's) are noted as generally reaching their height in late summer or early autumn in preparation for the Fall Feast Days, which heavily involved the themes of repentance and atonement.¹² So, we have reason to believe that Jesus was baptized and began His public ministry in the fall of 29 AD.

Next, we want to determine the length of Jesus's public ministry, from its beginning until His death.

John's Gospel mentions that Jesus attended at least three separate Passovers (but possibly four), which took place once a year in the spring. First, there was a Passover in Jerusalem at the start of His public ministry.

And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

-John 2:13

Second, there was a Passover in Galilee midway through His public ministry.

And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

-John 6:4

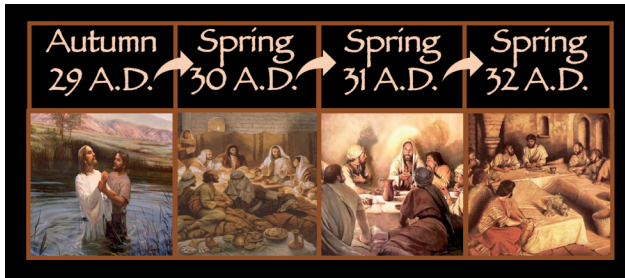
Ant third, there was a final Passover in Jerusalem at the end of His public ministry, that is, the time of His crucifixion.

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And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

-John 11:55

So, we have three definite Passovers following the beginning of Jesus's ministry in 29 AD. If we add these three to 29 AD, it would then seem to indicate that no crucifixion date prior to 32 AD could be a viable option.



Does this mean 32 AD has to be our crucifixion date of choice? We believe the answer is no, as many scholars believe there may be an additional Passover included in the Gospels that may have not been mentioned explicitly. In *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Jack Finegan outlines this possibility and points out some of the passages that may potentially indicate a fourth Passover.¹³ Andrew Steinmann points out the same in *From Abraham To Paul: A Biblical Chronology*.¹⁴

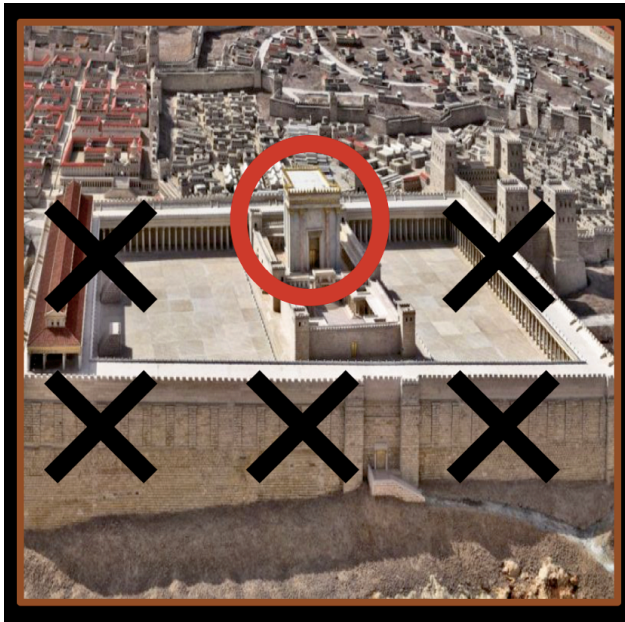
So, we can further narrow down our date range to between **32 and 36 AD**.

Before moving on to our next clue, there is another passage we need to examine, as it seems to provide us with a confirmation of our conclusion here. As we concluded, Jesus's baptism took place during Tiberius' fifteenth year, which we said was 29 AD, probably in late summer or early autumn. Confirmation for this can be found in a statement made by the Jews to Jesus during the first Passover of His ministry, mentioned in John.

Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple,
and will You raise it up in three days?”

-John 2:20

First, we need to recognize that many scholars have noted that the Greek in this statement in John 2:20 is probably best understood as saying that, “this building has stood for forty-six years” rather than “it had been under construction for forty-six years.” In addition, scholars note the specific Greek term used for “temple” in this passage as specifically focusing on the Temple building itself – and not the surrounding precincts and courtyards.^{15 16 17}



Josephus notes that Herod began to build the Temple sometime after the spring of the year that Caesar came to Syria (20 BC), that is, during the second half of 20 BC or in 19 BC.¹⁸ The Temple building proper (the Greek term used in this passage) was completed in one year and six months – in late 19 BC at the earliest, but, more likely, in mid-to-late 18 BC. Thus, the forty-sixth anniver-

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sary of the Temple's completion occurred sometime in mid-to-late 29 AD.¹⁹

If Jesus was in Jerusalem at the first Passover in His ministry, forty-six years after the completion of the Temple building proper, then the Passover would have been the one in 30 AD. Therefore, as we concluded earlier, His baptism would have occurred in 29 AD.²⁰

18 B.C.	17 B.C.	16 B.C.	15 B.C.	14 B.C.
13 B.C.	12 B.C.	11 B.C.	10 B.C.	9 B.C.
8 B.C.	7 B.C.	6 B.C.	5 B.C.	4 B.C.
3 B.C.	2 B.C.	1 B.C.	1 A.D.	2 A.D.
3 A.D.	4 A.D.	5 A.D.	6 A.D.	6 A.D.
8 A.D.	9 A.D.	10 A.D.	11 A.D.	12 A.D.
13 A.D.	14 A.D.	15 A.D.	16 A.D.	17 A.D.
18 A.D.	19 A.D.	20 A.D.	21 A.D.	22 A.D.
23 A.D.	24 A.D.	25 A.D.	26 A.D.	27 A.D.
28 A.D.	29 A.D.			

46 Years = 29 A.D.

So again, by putting together 29 AD with the three separate Passovers (at least) that took place in Christ's ministry brings us to 32 AD. as the earliest date for the crucifixion. So, our new date range is between 32 and 36 AD.

Before closing this chapter, let's make several notes.

Note #1: Because of uncertainties regarding which calendar reckoning the Jews were speaking from in their counting of the forty-six years, as well as the issue of using inclusive reckoning, we shouldn't be too dogmatic about our conclusion. Any calculation of this sort needs to allow for slight variability (give or take a year). But that being said, this exercise does help us generally verify our earlier calculation of the fifteenth year of Tiberius.

Note #2: In this Clue #3, we admit that different scholars have

different views regarding the calculations of the events we discussed (the “fifteenth year of Tiberius” and the “forty-sixth year of the Temple”). These two issues are not agreed upon and therefore, the dates anyone proposes for them should be viewed as inexact, and may vary by several years. So, for those who disagree with some of the scholarly opinions we’ve opted to side with, we encourage you to stick around until we examine some of the further clues. We are confident that regardless of what you come up with for the dating of this clue, the clues we still have yet to examine will strongly point in only one direction.

Clue #4 – Crucified on a “Preparation Day”

Since Sabbath is Saturday, and no work could be done (Exodus 16:23; 35:3), the day before (Friday) was known to the Jews as preparation day – a fact that is even recorded in *The Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus, who lived close to the time of Christ.²¹ On this day, they cooked food in advance and made other necessary preparations. All four gospels agree that Jesus was crucified on a “preparation day” (Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42), just before a Sabbath.

And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation,
that is, the day before the sabbath,

-Mark 15:42

And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

-Luke 23:54

So, it would seem clear that the gospels agree Jesus must have been crucified on a Friday, which is the preparation day for the weekly Sabbath. However, on this particular year, it seems that the preparation day actually fell on Passover, with the next day (the weekly Sabbath) also being the High Holy Day of Unleavened Bread.

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And it was the **preparation of the Passover...**

-John 19:14

In other words, it was Friday of the Passover week. In the next passage, we will see that the following day (the Sabbath) was also the Feast of Unleavened Bread that year.

The Jews therefore, because **it was the preparation**, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross **on the sabbath day**, (**for that sabbath day was an high day**,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

-John 19:31

We see in this passage the phrases “it was the preparation” and then “that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, for that sabbath day was an high day.” In other words, Jesus was crucified on a Friday (preparation day), and as we know, the next day was a Sabbath – and the Jews didn’t want dead bodies laying uncovered. But yet, this Sabbath was also a “high” Sabbath. What was a “high Sabbath?” A high Sabbath refers to one of the seven leitical feasts.²² Therefore, this passage is telling us that one of the seven Levitical feasts (in this case, Unleavened Bread) fell on a normal Saturday Sabbath. In the next clue, we will further discuss this important point in detail and use it to further telescope down our understanding.

Note: Some, while trying to defend alternative chronologies of the Passion week, argue that the label “preparation day” can be also used as a label for the 14th of Nisan – the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They do this in support of their promotion of a Wednesday or Thursday crucifixion. However, it is important to note that in the Bible, only the sixth day of the week (Friday) is defined as the preparation day for the seventh day Sabbath (Exodus 16:5), and *not* the day preceding a yearly festival Sabbath (such as Unleavened Bread). The

term always means what we call Friday, in both scriptural and non-scriptural usage. For example, as mentioned earlier, Josephus records the ancient practice of Friday (the day before the weekly Sabbath) as being the preparation day. The following is the quote from Josephus.

Caesar Augustus, high priest and tribune of the people, ordains thus: Since the nation of the Jews hath been found grateful to the Roman people, not only at this time, but in time past also, and chiefly Hyrcanus the high priest, under my father Caesar the emperor, it seemed good to me and my counselors, according to the sentence and oath of the people of Rome, that the Jews have liberty to make use of their own customs, according to the law of their forefathers, as they made use of them under Hyrcanus the high priest of the Almighty God; and that their sacred money be not touched, but be sent to Jerusalem, and that it be committed to the care of the receivers at Jerusalem; and that they be not obliged to go before any judge **on the sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it**, after the ninth hour.²³

Clearly, the context speaks of Friday, the day before the seventh day weekly Sabbath. There is no basis for the idea that “preparation day” can be any other day than the Friday before the weekly Sabbath.

So, we should clearly recognize from scripture, that the crucifixion happened on a **Friday sometime between 32 and 36 AD**.

Clue #5 – A Friday, the 14th of Nisan of the Passover Week

As we have already seen in the previous clue, the gospels agree that Jesus was crucified on a Friday during the annual spring feast of Passover (Matthew 26:2; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:1; John 18:39). Our goal in this clue is to specifically determine that this Friday during Passover was the 14th of Nisan on the Jewish calendar – the day the lambs were killed (*Erev Pesach*, or the Eve of Passover).

In the official festival calendar of Judea, as used by the priests of the Temple, Passover time was specified precisely. The slaughtering of

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the lambs for Passover occurred on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan (Exodus 12:6, 18; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16; 2 Chronicles 35:1). The Passover meal commenced at sunset that evening, that is, at the start of Nisan 15 after nightfall (Exodus 12:8; Leviticus 23:6; Numbers 28:17) Keep in mind, the Jewish day runs from sundown to sundown, rather than from midnight to midnight (as we reckon days). Consider the following charts:

Modern vs. Jewish Reckoning of a Day																								
(e.g. Fri-Sat)																								
12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Midnight to Daybreak (a.m.)				Daybreak to Noon (a.m.)				Noon to Sundown (p.m.)				Sundown to Midnight (p.m.)				...								
Friday (Modern Calendar – Midnight to Midnight)												Sat.												
Friday (Jewish Calendar – Sundown to Sundown)												Saturday...												

Passover Order of Events	
<p>Nisan 14 "Eve of Passover"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lambs killed (about 3 p.m.) Lambs prepared and roasted (about 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) 	<p>Nisan 15 "Unleavened Bread"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sundown begins the 15th (about 6-7 p.m.) Ritual Seder meal then commences
<p>↑ Sundown (about 6-7 p.m.)</p>	

With this in mind, let's look over several of the additional passages

that associate the crucifixion with the beginning of Passover and see if any might offer clues.

And it was the **preparation of the Passover**, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

-John 19:14

In this passage, it is made clear to us that Jesus was crucified on the “preparation of the Passover,” or in other words, the Friday of Passover week, which we have seen clearly in the last clue section. The next passage will give us a unique clue that will help us understand whether this Friday was the 14th or the 15th.

The Jews therefore, because it was the **preparation**, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross **on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day)** besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

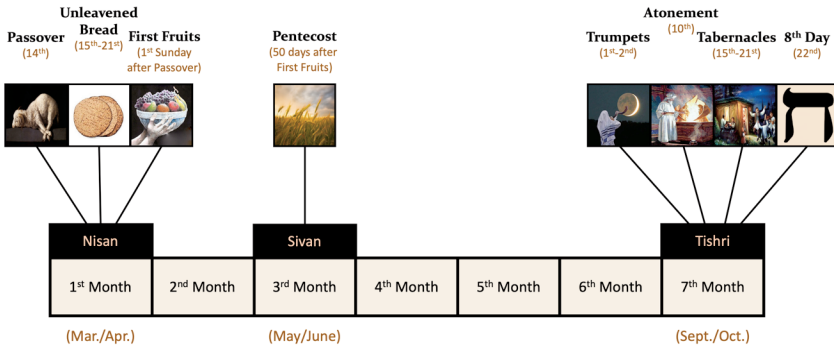
-John 19:31

In this passage, it again confirms that Jesus was crucified on a preparation (or a Friday), before a weekly Sabbath. But this key passage also gives us the significant clue that the following day – a Saturday Sabbath – was also a “high day.” What could this mean? What would make a normal Sabbath a “high day” or a “high Sabbath?” The answer is if one of the seven Levitical feast days fell on a normal seventh day Sabbath, it was referred to as a High Sabbath.²⁴

So, in this case, since we know the context of John 19:31 is the Passover season, it means that one of the three Levitical feast days of the Passover season must have coincided with this particular Sabbath following Jesus’s death.

For a review of the Levitical feast calendar, refer to the following chart:

The Hebrew Religious Calendar



The three Levitical feast days of Passover season are shown on the left – Passover (or *Erev Pesach*, the Eve of Passover), which fell on Nisan 14, Unleavened Bread, which fell on Nisan 15, and First Fruits, which fell on the first Sunday after Passover.

So then, which of these three days could John 19:31 be referring to by calling the Sabbath after Jesus’s Friday crucifixion a “high day?” Right away, we can eliminate First Fruits, since by definition, it took place on a Sunday rather than a Saturday. So then, it must have been either Passover the 14th (the day when the lambs are killed) or Unleavened Bread the 15th (the day that begins with the evening Passover Seder that initiated a week-long feast in which no leavened bread could be eaten).

Does John’s account give us any additional clues that can help us figure this out? Yes! It is found in John 18:28. In this passage, in which John records the trial of Jesus, he states that Jesus was crucified *before* the Jews ate their Passover meals.

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

-John 18:28

So, John tells us that the Jews and religious leaders in Jerusalem had not yet eaten their Passover Seder at the time of Jesus’s trial. As was illustrated in an earlier chart, the Passover Seder was eaten after nightfall as the 15th – the Feast of Unleavened Bread – begins.

So then when did Jesus’s trial take place in relation to this Seder? This passage itself (along with the storyline of all four gospels) tells us that Jesus was arrested at night and put through a number of overnight/early morning trials culminating with His appearance before Pilate early the next morning (notice the phrase “it was yet early” in this passage). It was at this time that this passage tells us the Jewish religious leaders refused to enter the Praetorium because they needed to stay ceremonially undefiled, as they were preparing to eat the Passover Seder later, after nightfall.

John’s account tells us that Jesus was crucified later that same day (John 19:14), prior to nightfall when the Jews were preparing to eat their Seder. If we know the Seder begins the 15th, then this could only mean that Jesus’s trial and crucifixion took place on the 14th – and the Jews ate their Seder after nightfall as the 14th turned into the 15th.



So, we can clearly conclude that Jesus died on Friday of Passover, the 14th of Nisan, the day the lambs are killed.

The New Testament continually returns to this theme of Jesus dying as our ultimate Passover Lamb, fulfilling the typology of the Passover. It would only make sense if He was in fact crucified on the

very day the lambs were being killed, which was the 14th of Nisan – and this is what we clearly do find.

For even **Christ our passover is sacrificed** for us:

-1 Corinthians 5:7b

So, we clearly conclude that the crucifixion happened on a **Friday, the eve of Passover – the 14th of Nisan – sometime between 32 and 36 AD.**

Clue #6 – The Jewish Lunar Calendar Reconstructed

Astronomy can be used to reconstruct the Jewish calendar in the first century AD, and hence, rule out many impossible dates, while identifying the most probable date of the Crucifixion.

So, with our conclusion thus far that Jesus's crucifixion took place on a **Friday during the first day of Passover when the lambs were killed (the 14th of Nisan, or Erev Pesach) sometime between 32 and 36 AD**, we can begin to pinpoint the year even further using modern astronomy.

The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, which, in the first century AD, was determined by observing the new lunar crescent. Each Jewish month began with the evening when the new crescent was for the first time visible, shortly after sunset. Hence the Jewish day began in the evening, and the first day of each month was the day of first visibility.²⁵

Astronomical calculations have been used to reconstruct the Jewish calendar in the first century AD. Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington computed the visibility of the lunar crescent seen from Jerusalem using the most current astronomical theory, in which we can have considerable confidence.²⁶ The dates of Nisan 14 (Passover) for the period between 30-36 AD are given in the below table. Although we have already narrowed it down to 32-36 AD, we will give data from between 30 and 36 AD. Any uncertainties are noted in the footnotes to the table. As you will see, only two years within that date

range included a Nisan 14 (Passover) that fell on a Friday (highlighted in red).

The Dates of Nisan 14 (Passover) in Jerusalem Between 30 and 36 A.D.				
Year (A.D.):	New Moon time:		Deduced date of Nisan 14 (Passover):	
30	22 March	19:55	Friday	7 April †
31	12 March	0:25	Tuesday	27 March
32	29 March	22:10	Sunday	13 April *
33	19 March	12:45	Friday	3 April
34	9 March	5:25	Wednesday	24 March
35	28 March	6:10	Tuesday	12 April
36	16 March	17:50	Saturday	31 March
<p>The time of new Moon is given as calculated apparent (sundial) time of conjunction for Jerusalem (± 5 min). The deduced date is the Julian day (from midnight to midnight), starting at 6th hour Nisan 14 and ending at 6th hour Nisan 15.</p> <p>* Nisan 14 27 A.D. and 32 A.D. could have been on the following day if the new Moon was not detected due to poor atmospheric transparency.</p> <p>† In each of these cases it is not impossible, but highly improbable, that Nisan 14 would have occurred on the preceding day.</p>				
<p>-Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, A Lunar Eclipse And The Date Of Christ's Crucifixion," in <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> 43.2, 1992, pp. 331-351, and Table 1, p. 335.</p>				

Based on the above information, we see that there are only two possibilities for the crucifixion of Jesus. During those years, Nisan 14 (Passover) fell on a Friday twice:

- April 7 of 30 AD
- April 3 of 33 AD

These dates are the only ones that are astronomically and calendrically possible for the crucifixion.^{27 28}

But as we concluded from earlier clues, we instantly must be skeptical of 30 AD, as we already determined that 32 AD is our earliest option for the crucifixion. The 30 AD date would appear to conflict with the clues regarding the “fifteenth year of Tiberius” as well as the “forty-six years the Temple had been built.” But for those who disagree with our dating of those events, and still see 30 AD as an option, we will include it for now. As we will see in the clues ahead, 30 AD will not work.

So, we conclude that April 7, 30 AD and April 3, 33 AD are the only two viable options from an astronomical perspective.

To help us choose between these two dates, there is further ample and fascinating evidence. We will present two reasons from secular history and astronomy that will help us conclusively determine which is the correct date for Christ’s crucifixion.

Clue #7 – Pilate and Sejanus

The next clue comes from a surprising source: a dark tale of intrigue, hidden violence and vicious revenge in Rome. In order to understand why this clue is relevant to us, a brief history lesson is in order.

By the time Tiberius Caesar (42 BC - 37 AD) reached his mid-sixties, he had grown weary of daily Imperial duties. He entered semi-retirement on the Island of Capri in 26 AD. There, out of the public eye, he embraced a life of unmentionable depravity and cruelty. Still, even for a degraded and absentee emperor, there were the problems of government.

As his personal conduit for management of Rome from Capri, Tiberius left a regent in the capitol named Aelius Sejanus, who had been captain of the Praetorian Guard. Sejanus had shown himself to be politically capable and apparently loyal to Tiberius, but he was a cunning and ruthless man.

During the five years that Sejanus administered the Empire, he artfully engineered the banishment, imprisonment, suicide or other elimination of many of his own opponents and Tiberius’ potential successors. As chronicled extensively by the Roman historian Tacitus,

Sejanus apparently expected that he might one day plot and murder his way to the throne.²⁹ He very nearly did.

Unfortunately for Sejanus, Tiberius had a trusted sister-in-law, Antonia. She was not a political player, which gave her opinions a certain weight. While nearly all communication from Rome filtered through Sejanus, Antonia managed to place a secret letter before Tiberius in which she described Sejanus's web of plots in convincing detail.

Tiberius responded by plotting his own surprise. He sent an emissary with a lengthy letter to be read before the Roman Senate with Sejanus present. In the turnabout ending of the letter, Tiberius unleashed a scathing denunciation of Sejanus and demanded his arrest. The shocked mastermind was dragged out and executed the same day: October 18, 31 AD.

Why does this date of October 18, 31 AD matter? It matters because Roman and Biblical histories intersect in a way that will help us eliminate one of our two potential dates for the crucifixion.

During his glory days, Sejanus first influenced and then himself made appointments of many Imperial officials, including one Pontius Pilate. Pilate was made Prefect of Judea about the time that Tiberius gave up Rome for Capri. Sejanus was a notorious anti-Semite. Philo of Alexandria notes Sejanus's "...hatred of and hostile designs against the Jewish nation.").³⁰

And just like Sejanus, Pilate followed his benefactor's anti-Jewish policies as he governed Judea. A few examples will illustrate Pilate's ill treatment of the Jews.

First, the Romans were well aware that the Jews shunned all graven images. Tacitus, though himself disdainful of Jewry, accurately comments in *The History*, Book V:

The Jews have purely mental conceptions of Deity, as one in essence. They call those profane who make representations of God in human shape out of perishable materials. They believe that Being to be supreme and eternal, neither capable of representation, nor of decay.

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They therefore do not allow any images to stand in their cities, much less in their temples.³¹

Of course, this rejection of graven images comes from the Ten Commandments, recorded in Exodus 20.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

-Exodus 20:4

Knowing this, Pilate proceeded to install images of Tiberius in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem – a massive offense. From Josephus's *The Wars of the Jews*, we read the following.

Now Pilate, who was sent as procurator into Judea by Tiberius, sent by night those images of Caesar that are called ensigns into Jerusalem. This excited a very great tumult among the Jews when it was day; for those that were near them were astonished at the sight of them, as indications that their laws were trodden under foot; for those laws do not permit any sort of image to be brought into the city. Nay, besides the indignation which the citizens had themselves at this procedure, a vast number of people came running out of the country. These came zealously to Pilate to Caesarea, and besought him to carry those ensigns out of Jerusalem, and to preserve them their ancient laws inviolable; but upon Pilate's denial of their request, they fell down prostrate upon the ground, and continued immovable in that posture for five days and as many nights.

On the next day Pilate sat upon his tribunal, in the open market-place, and called to him the multitude, as desirous to give them an answer; and then gave a signal to the soldiers, that they should all by agreement at once encompass the Jews with their weapons; so the band of soldiers stood round about the Jews in three ranks. The Jews were under the utmost consternation at that unexpected sight. Pilate also said to them that they should be cut in pieces, unless they would

admit of Caesar's images, and gave intimation to the soldiers to draw their naked swords. Hereupon the Jews, as it were at one signal, fell down in vast numbers together, and exposed their necks bare, and cried out that they were sooner ready to be slain, than that their law should be transgressed.³²

Other examples of Pilate's intentional mistreatment of the Jews have come down to us in ancient histories. Philo of Alexandria reports that Pilate also proposed to set up a colossal idol in the Holy of Holies itself, the most sacred part of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Now the thing proposed to be erected is a colossal statue ... in the inmost part of the temple, in the very holy of holies itself...³³

Josephus reports that Pilate also seized religious offerings made by worshipping Jews to pay for Roman work projects. *The Wars of the Jews*, Book II, Chapter 9.4 reports how contributions made to the Temple were seized by Pilate for use on Roman aqueducts.³⁴ The Book of Luke tells us that Pilate killed Jewish worshipers, and mingled their blood with that of their religious sacrifices – a hideous desecration.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

-Luke 13:1

And at the crucifixion, Pilate posted a notice on Christ's cross which declared Him "the King of the Jews," thereby mocking the Jewish leadership, even as he gave them their way.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was Jesus Of Nazareth The King Of The Jews.

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

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Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

-John 19:19-22

But all this raises a large question about the execution of Jesus. Pilate's pattern was to avoid doing "anything which could be acceptable to his subjects" the Jews.³⁵ So, why would he now give in to the Jewish leaders' clamor against Jesus? Why not release Jesus, if only to irritate the priests who called for His death? The Biblical record does reflect Pilate's intention to release Jesus, and that He almost did. But something had changed. Something made Pilate respond to the Jewish leaders, grudgingly, rather than treat them with his customary vicious disdain.

What changed? Consider the following historical explanation, as it will demonstrate that we can conclusively eliminate the earlier year option of April 7, 30 AD.

What changed was Sejanus! Sejanus was dead. Even worse for Pilate, after the surprise execution of Sejanus in the fall of 31 AD, Tiberius began to root out Sejanus's appointees and allies. Many were tried, tortured at length, and executed in ways designed to maximize terror. In *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, Suetonius describes the treatment of Sejanus's allies with tortures unmentionable. The following is one of the milder descriptions from section LXII.

The place of execution is still shown at Capri, where he ordered those who were condemned to die, after long and exquisite tortures, to be thrown, before his eyes, from a precipice into the sea. There a party of soldiers belonging to the fleet waited for them, and broke their bones with poles and oars, lest they should have any life left in them.³⁶

Tacitus records in *The Annals*, Book VI:

Executions were now a stimulus to [Tiberius's] fury, and he ordered the death of all who were lying in prison under accusation of

complicity with Sejanus. There lay, singly or in heaps, the unnumbered dead, of every age and sex, the illustrious with the obscure. Kinsfolk and friends were not allowed to be near them, to weep over them, or even to gaze on them too long. Spies were set round them, who noted the sorrow of each mourner and followed the rotting corpses, till they were dragged to the Tiber, where, floating or driven on the bank, no one dared to burn or to touch them. The force of terror had utterly extinguished the sense of human fellowship, and, with the growth of cruelty, pity was thrust aside.³⁷

Tiberius also issued countermands to Sejanus's orders and policies, including his anti-Semitic policies. The new official line was to "let the Jews alone." Philo records the following.

Things in Italy were thrown into a great deal of confusion when Sejanus was preparing to make his attempt against our nation; for [Tiberius] knew immediately after [Sejanus's] death that the accusations which had been brought against the Jews who were dwelling in Rome were false calumnies, inventions of Sejanus, who was desirous to destroy our nation ... And he sent commands to all the governors of provinces in every country to comfort those of our nation in their respective cities, as the punishment intended to be inflicted was not meant to be inflicted upon all, but only on the guilty; and they were but few. And he ordered them to change none of the existing customs, but to look upon them as pledges, since the men were peaceful in their dispositions and natural characters, and their laws trained them and disposed them to quiet and stability.³⁸

But this was not a casual change of direction. The new mandate arrived amidst the vigorous extermination of many officials Sejanus had put in place – officials like Pilate.

After Sejanus's death on October 18, 31 AD, Pilate lived in an explosive political context. If Jesus's "trial" happened after this date, Pilate's strange ambivalence toward Jesus and the Jewish leadership is not strange after all – at this moment of history, his prejudices could

cost him his life. Knowing this context, we can also understand why Pilate would genuinely dread the chant of those Jews who demanded Christ's execution. The Book of John, Chapter 19 records this. As we read through this excerpt, keep in mind the political climate described above and notice how it becomes obvious in the description of this event.

And from thenceforth **Pilate sought to release him** [Jesus]: but the Jews cried out, saying, **If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.**

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, **We have no king but Caesar.**

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

-John 19:12-16

From the witness of recorded history, we can now gain deeper understanding to the context of the above passages. This is a strong demonstration that the 30 AD date is no longer an option, as Sejanus's death – which is the clear factor that created this political climate – didn't take place until 31 AD. It's becoming clearer that **April 3, 33 AD** is our date.

Clue #8 – Lunar Eclipse Data

So, we have increasing confidence that Jesus was crucified on April 3, 33 AD. But the "clincher," perhaps the most powerful evidence, is astronomical – literally – and confirms our conclusion of the day and year. Let's consider Peter's argument.

We now leap beyond the crucifixion to add a last piece of evidence about the day of the cross. The Bible reports that the resurrected Messiah instructed His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they received power from the Holy Spirit. They may have been confused, wondering if Jesus was talking about something political (Acts 1). But stay they did.

They were still there for the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after the Sunday that followed Passover. Jerusalem was full of worshippers from all over the Near East. While in the Upper Room following Jesus's instructions to await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Acts records sudden startling events taking place: the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and flames of fire hovering over the heads of the believers. Just as strange, the Upper Room followers began to speak, but not in their native Aramaic or Hebrew. They spoke in languages they had not learned, though these languages were understood by countless foreign Jewish observers who were in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (Acts 2).

There was pandemonium. A boisterous crowd jostled closer. Travelers heard their own languages spoken by Galileans and were puzzled. Hecklers shouted: "They're all drunk!" The Apostle Peter jumped up amidst the confusion. He then declared his explanation of what was happening. Listen and consider as Peter argues from the words of the prophet Joel recorded around 835 BC, as recorded in Acts Chapter 2.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

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And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

And **I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs** in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and **the moon into blood**, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

-Acts 2:14-21

Then, in the very next verse, Peter delivered the knockout punch.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and **wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:**

-Acts 2:22

So, Peter quoted Joel's prophecy, which foretold the occurrence of various **wonders** and **signs**. Of special interest to us, Peter speaks of astronomical wonders associated with this time – one in particular, being the moon turning into blood (Verse 20). Peter then addressed the people gathered around, who were witnesses of the recent events of Jesus's crucifixion. In Verse 22, he asserts that Joel's prophecy had been fulfilled (at least partially) and that his listeners knew it - that they had **seen the wonders and signs themselves**.

This is essentially the same argument the Apostle Paul made in Romans 10:17-18 in regards to certain celestial phenomena that should have indicated the Messiah's arrival to the Jews. This argument would have had exactly no persuasive force unless Paul's and Peter's audiences knew that astronomical wonders had occurred. Both men assumed that everybody knew about these celestial wonders that had recently taken place. That is powerful evidence that they had actually occurred.

Of particular interest for us: Joel said there would be an astronomical wonder involving the moon turning into blood. And then Peter

essentially said, “you’ve seen it” to the Jewish audience that had been in Jerusalem for the crucifixion.

We need to point out that although it is likely that these same astronomical signs will be repeated in the end times yet future (Revelation 6:12-13; et al.), Peter’s argument provides good reason to believe that they also took place at the crucifixion. Since we know that at least one of the two mentioned astronomical wonders – the darkened sun – did occur at the crucifixion (as recorded by the gospel accounts), it is reasonable to theorize that the other astronomical wonder – the moon turning to blood – also occurred that same evening. The following passages record the darkened sun on the day of the crucifixion.

And when the sixth hour was come, **there was darkness** over the whole land until the ninth hour.

-Mark 15:33

Now from the sixth hour **there was darkness** over all the land unto the ninth hour.

-Matthew 27:45

Note: Some have theorized that the cause of this darkness could have been a dust storm, as we know that a solar eclipse is impossible at Passover time (full moon).

So, again, since the Bible explicitly records one of the wonders occurring on the day of the crucifixion, it is reasonable to expect that the other wonder – the moon turning to blood – also likely occurred on that day. This interpretation of Acts 2:20 is supported by the New Testament scholar, F.F. Bruce, who states the following in his commentary on the Acts.

Peter’s hearers may have associated the phenomena described in vv. 19f. with those which attended the preternatural darkness on Good Friday.³⁹

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We will investigate this notion and demonstrate that the phrase “the moon turned to blood” refers to a lunar eclipse, and show that this interpretation is self-consistent and enables another precise verification regarding the dating of the crucifixion.

The moon turning to blood is a graphic ancient description of a lunar eclipse. The reason an eclipsed moon appears blood-red is well known and the effect has been well documented: even though during an eclipse the moon is geometrically in the earth’s shadow, some sunlight still reaches it by the refraction of light passing through the earth’s atmosphere. The light reaching the moon is red since scattering by air molecules and very small particles along its long path through the atmosphere preferentially removes the blue end of the spectrum.⁴⁰

The phases of a lunar eclipse always include a “blood moon.”



The phrase “moon turned to blood” has been used by writers and historians to describe lunar eclipses for many centuries, and the expression dates back to at least 300 BC. Descriptions of some well-documented ancient eclipses have been compiled by F.K. Ginzel and matched with his calculated eclipse dates – showing “moon turning to blood” to be a standard ancient reference to a lunar eclipse.⁴¹ The following are three examples.

- The lunar eclipse of September 20, 331 BC occurred two days after Alexander crossed the Tigris and the moon was described by Quintus Curtius in *History of Alexander*, 4.10.2, as “suffused with the colour of blood.”⁴²
- The lunar eclipse of August 31, 304 AD, which (probably) occurred at the martyrdom of Bishop Felix, was described in *Acta Sanctorum* as “when he was about to be martyred the moon was turned to blood.”⁴³
- The lunar eclipse of March 2, 462 AD was described in the *Hydatius Lemicus Chronicon* as: “On March 2 with the crowing of cocks after the setting of the sun the full moon was turned to blood.”⁴⁴

Additionally, in the medieval European annals compiled by G.H. Pertz, there are so many lunar eclipses described by “the moon turned to blood” that the phrase appears to be used as a standard description.⁴⁵

F.R. Stephenson, an Emeritus Professor of physics at the University of Durham, whose research concentrated on historical aspects of astronomy (in particular analyzing ancient astronomical records to reconstruct the history of Earth’s rotation), is the author of the well-known work *Historical Eclipses and Earth’s Rotation*. Stephenson also considers that the prophecy of Joel clearly alludes to a lunar eclipse.⁴⁶

There is therefore strong evidence that when Peter, quoting the prophecy of Joel, refers to the moon turning to blood as one of the astronomical signs or wonders the Jews had witnessed, he was describing a lunar eclipse. Let’s continue.

With the foundation of Johannes Kepler’s equations of the Laws of Planetary Motion, we can determine exactly when historical eclipses occurred. F.R. Stephenson and L.V. Morrison used ancient Babylonian eclipse records to refine the calculations made by J. Meeus and H. Mucke’s *Canon of Lunar Eclipses* – the most comprehensive data available. Stephenson and Morrison refined the calculations made by

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Meeus and Mucke to take into account more accurately the long-term changes in the earth's rate of rotation.^{47 48 49} These calculations agree very well with records of Babylonian and Chinese eclipse observations (the probable error in an eclipse time two thousand years ago is typically five minutes).⁵⁰

All lunar eclipses (total and partial) visible from Jerusalem between 26 AD and 36 AD (when Pilate was in office) are listed in the table below, which shows that during this period, there was one - and only one - lunar eclipse at Passover time visible from Jerusalem, that being on **Friday, April 3, 33 AD** (highlighted in red) – this being the second of our final two date options for the crucifixion.⁵¹

Lunar Eclipses Visible From Jerusalem Between 26-36 A.D.

Date*:		Day†:	Magnitude‡:	Time Eclipse Started:
15 Aug.	26 A.D.	Friday	50%	23:10
31 Dec.	27 A.D.	Wednesday	70%	23:27
14 June	29 A.D.	Tuesday	Total	20:27
9 Dec.	29 A.D.	Friday	45%	20:55
25 April	31 A.D.	Wednesday	35%	21:35
19 Oct.	31 A.D.	Friday	25%	4:49
3 April (Passover)	33 A.D.	Friday	60%	Occurred at rising moon
27 Sept.	33 A.D.	Sunday	85%	4:53
11 Feb.	35 A.D.	Friday	55%	4:55
7 Aug.	35 A.D.	Sunday	60%	20:18
31 Jan.	36 A.D.	Tuesday	Total	Occurred at rising moon
26 July	36 A.D.	Thursday	Total	22:14
<p>* Julian Calendar † Julian day (from midnight to midnight as distinct from the Jewish day). ‡ Fraction of the area of the Moon covered at the midpoint of the eclipse.</p>				
<p>-Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, A Lunar Eclipse And The Date Of Christ's Crucifixion," in <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> 43.2, 1992, p. 345.</p>				

Consider the following description of this eclipse by Humphreys and Waddington.

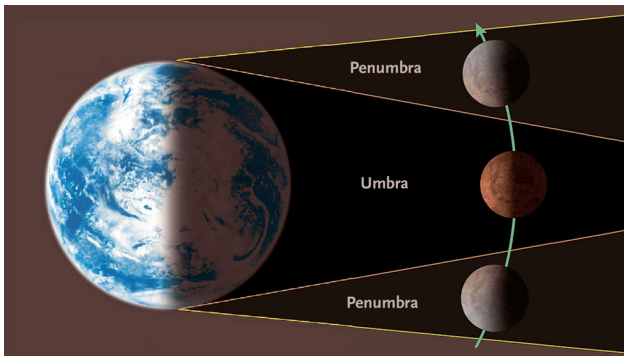
Calculations show that the eclipse on April 3, 33 A.D. was visible from Jerusalem at moonrise. (All times quoted are local Jerusalem times as measured by a sundial.) The start of the eclipse was invisible from Jerusalem, being below the horizon. The moon rose above the

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Jerusalem horizon at about 6:20 p.m. (the start of the Jewish Sabbath and also near to the start of the Passover Seder in 33 A.D.), with about 20% of its disc in the umbra of the earth's shadow and the remainder in the penumbra. The ancients, however, made no distinction between the umbral and penumbral shadows and to a casual observer, about 60 per cent of the moon's disc would have been perceived as being "in eclipse" at moonrise. The perceived eclipse ended at about 7:10 p.m. The 60 per cent "bite" out of the moon was positioned close to the top (that is, leading edge) of the moon. Thus, most of the visible area of the rising moon would initially have been seen as fully eclipsed.⁵²

Umbra – the fully shaded inner region of a shadow cast by an opaque object, especially the area on the earth or moon experiencing the total phase of an eclipse.⁵³

Penumbra – The shadow cast by the earth or moon over an area experiencing a partial eclipse.⁵⁴



As far as the coloration for the eclipse of April 3rd, 33 AD, consider the following quote from Humphreys and Waddington.

The moon was just above the horizon and was seen against a relatively bright sky background (the sun having just set). The most probable colour of the rising moon would be red in the umbral shadow and yellow-orange elsewhere. At moonrise the initially small yellow-orange

region would indicate that the moon had risen, but with most of its visible area “turned to blood.” ... The majority of lunar eclipses pass unnoticed, occurring when people are sleep or indoors. This eclipse, however, would probably have been seen by most of the population of Israel, since the Jews on Passover Day would be looking for both sunset and moonrise in order to commence their Passover meal. Instead of seeing the expected full Paschal moon rising, they would have initially seen a moon with a red “bite” removed. The effect would be dramatic. The moon would appear to grow to full in the next hour. **The crowd on the day of Pentecost would undoubtedly understand Peter’s words about the moon turning to blood as referring to this eclipse that they had seen.**⁵⁵

But there is more that the Jewish onlookers on April 3, 33 AD could not see. With software that incorporates Kepler’s equations, we can create a computer model of the universe. In just minutes, we can produce thousands of sky maps, which were a great labor before computers. We can animate the universe in real time at any speed we choose, make months pass in moments, or wind back the clock. We can view the sky precisely as it moved over Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Why does this matter?

Because Kepler’s equations indicate that on this day in 33 AD, the moon rose already in eclipse, already bloody, fulfilling Joel’s vision. Necessarily, this means that the eclipse commenced before moonrise, as was also mentioned in the former quote by Humphreys and Waddington (“The start of the eclipse was invisible from Jerusalem, being below the horizon...”⁵⁶). With software, we can look below the horizon – to see what the onlookers could not see – and see Earth’s shadow begin the eclipse. Researcher Rick Larson, the creator of the documentary *The Star of Bethlehem* observed that when we do, we find that at 3:00 PM, as Jesus was breathing His last breath on the cross, the moon was turning to blood.⁵⁷

The interpretation of Peter’s words in terms of a lunar eclipse is therefore not only astronomically and calendrically possible, but definite. The idea that this could happen by coincidence is not reasonable.

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This event was predicted hundreds of years earlier through the prophecy of Joel – and now, thousands of years later, with the science of astronomy, we can verify that it indeed took place – even down to the precise year, day, hour, and minute. **This confirmation allows us with great certainty to specify Friday, April 3, 33 AD, as being the date of the crucifixion.**

Now that we have established the date of the crucifixion with incredible certainty, in our next chapter, we can continue to pinpoint the date of our expected ending point of the sixty-nine week countdown.

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CHAPTER 7

THE DATING OF THE ENDING POINT (PART 2) - THE DATE OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Before beginning Part 2 of our examination of the ending point of our prophetic countdown, let's first recap some of what we have established. We will begin with a review of our main scriptural passage.

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** [7 + 62 = 69 weeks of years]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

-Daniel 9:25

We can see that “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” is our starting point for the sixty-nine-week countdown. Previously, we noted that Artaxerxes Longimanus issued the command to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem during the month of Nisan, in the year 444 BC. So, we understand that Nisan, (or our March/April), of 444 BC is the starting point for this prophetic countdown.

We can also see that this countdown would continue until the

presentation of “the Messiah the Prince,” meaning the anointed ruler – a Messianic anticipation. We theorize that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Prince that anticipated. So then based on that, we then established when, according to the gospel accounts, Jesus presented Himself as that Messianic King: at, and only at, the Triumphal Entry. And in doing so, He fulfilled numerous Old Testament prophecies from Zechariah and the Psalms.

But now, we need to verify that our choice of Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem at the Triumphal Entry is in fact the correct event that fits this sixty-nine-week countdown. To do this, we first need to determine the actual calendar date that the Triumphal Entry took place. Once we do that, we will then be able to calculate whether or not this ending point we have identified actually does fit the prophetic timetable.

By taking into account the eight clues we have examined in Part 1, we have comfortably arrived at a conclusion of April 3, 33 AD for the date of Christ’s crucifixion. We now will need to backtrack several days to see if we can discern the date the Triumphal Entry occurred, as we have proposed that event as our ending point for Daniel’s sixty-nine-week prophecy. Let’s begin.

From the record of the Passion Week of Christ given in the gospels, we can discern exactly which day the Triumphal Entry occurred. John’s gospel is of particular help to us concerning this task, as he provides us with what is clearly the most solid anchoring point. John 12:1 identifies the day *before* Jesus rode into Jerusalem as “six days before the Passover.”

Then Jesus **six days before the passover** came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

-John 12:1

John continues on to recollect the story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus and wiping them with her hair, which Jesus declared to be an anointing performed in preparation for His soon-coming burial

(Verses 2-11). John then, in the next verse, tells us that the Triumphal Entry took place “**on the next day.**”

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

-John 12:12-15

So then if John recorded that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover, and on the next day the Triumphal Entry took place, then it is clear that **the Triumphal Entry took place five days before the Passover.**

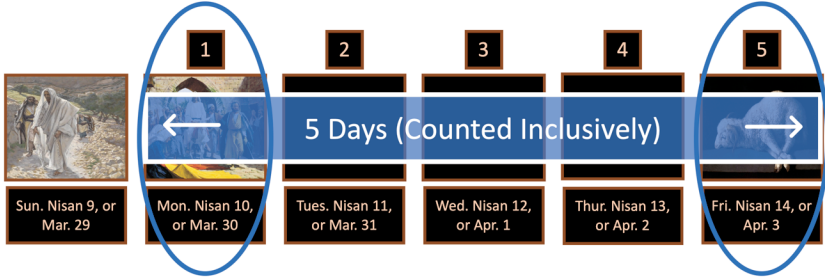
But in order for us to reckon this time with precision, we need to take into account a significant difference in the way the ancients reckoned time in comparison to the way we reckon time today. In the ancient world, when one counted a sequence, one counted the day that started the sequence as “number one,” even if it was not a full day. This method of time reckoning is referred to as inclusive reckoning. The Jews (and many others) of that time, reckoned any part of a day as a whole day.¹

For instance, the Bible tells us that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. However, by analyzing the relevant passages, we should recognize that these three days – Friday, Saturday, and Sunday – were clearly not three full twenty-four-hour days. He was only dead for part of Friday and part of Sunday – yet, scripture clearly and repeatedly calls it three days. We need to recognize that this is the way the ancients reckoned time.

Earlier, we conclusively proved that the date of the crucifixion was Friday, Nisan 14, or April 3, 33 AD. Therefore, counting inclusively as

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the ancients did, five days before Friday, Nisan 14 would be Monday, Nisan 10, 33 AD.



But then what does that date translate to on our modern calendar? Obviously, we are just subtracting five inclusively from April 3rd. Consider the following image from *TimeAndDate.com*.²

Calendar for March 33 (Israel)

March						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Adar 10	Adar 11	Adar 12	Adar 13	Adar 14	Adar 15	Adar 16
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Adar 17	Adar 18	Adar 19	Adar 20	Adar 21	Adar 22	Adar 23
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Adar 24	Adar 25	Adar 26	Adar 27	Adar 28	Adar 29	Nisan 1
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Nisan 2	Nisan 3	Nisan 4	Nisan 5	Nisan 6	Nisan 7	Nisan 8
29	30	31				
Nisan 9	Nisan 10	Nisan 11				

Phases of the Moon: 8:00

Image courtesy of timeanddate.com. Used with permission. (Red circle added by this author).

So, we can demonstrate from scripture that the Triumphant Entry took place on Monday, Nisan 10, 33 AD. This date on our modern calendars would be **March 30, 33 AD** – our proposed ending point for the sixty-nine-week countdown.

But before moving on, we should take note of one astonishing detail regarding Jesus's precise fulfillment of this day – Nisan 10. Did anything significant take place on Nisan 10 with regards to the celebration of the Passover festival? Yes!

The 10th of Nisan, known to the Jews as the “lamb selection day,” was the day the spotless male Passover lambs were chosen for the Passover sacrifice and brought into the city.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, **In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb**, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

-Exodus 12:3-6

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the typology of this day that He instituted over a thousand years earlier – and He did it on the exact day. Let's briefly understand some points regarding this fulfillment.

The lambs, chosen for sacrifice by each family on the 10th of Nisan, were brought into the city on that same day. They would be visible for five days (four days as we count) before the Passover Feast in order for everyone to observe and inspect the selected lamb's perfection.

In like manner, Jesus, the perfect Passover Lamb of God, entered into the city on that day – Nisan 10 – and for the next five days (four as we count), He was inspected and proclaimed to be spotless and blameless by no less than the following witnesses:

- Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:4)

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- Herod (Luke 23:14-15)
- Pilate (Luke 23:14)
- Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19)
- the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55-59)
- the thief on the cross (Luke 23:41)

So, we find that the Triumphal Entry took place exactly on the day intended. The Old Testament prophets clearly foretold this event with astonishing detail in no less than the following three passages (which we have already examined throughout this study):

- Zechariah 9:9 – the *method* of the King's presentation had been foretold
- Daniel 9:25, 26 – the *moment* of the King's presentation had been foretold
- Psalm 118:21-29 – the *meaning* of the King's presentation had been foretold

So, by a careful examination of all of the relevant information, we can clearly conclude that the ending point of Daniel's sixty-nine weeks is the Triumphal Entry, occurring on **Monday, Nisan 10 (March 30), 33 AD.**

Ending Point = Nisan 10 (March 30), 33 AD

1. Emil G. Hirsch and Michael Friedländer, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, entry "Day (Hebrew, 'yom')," *JewishEncyclopedia.com*. (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5007-day> - Retrieved 6/18/18)
2. "Calendar for March 33 A.D. (Israel)," *TimeAndDate.com*. (<https://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/monthly.html?year=33&month=3&country=34> - Retrieved 12/5/17)

CHAPTER 8

TESTING OUR CALCULATIONS

Now it is time to do the calculations and find out if the duration of this prophecy truly fits with the beginning and ending points we have proposed. You may recall the depths that we've plunged in order to conduct a thorough examination of all of the evidence necessary to bring us to these proposed points. Neither the beginning point nor the ending point has been proposed in a haphazard fashion. If one looks at all the evidence in an open-minded way, one would be hard-pressed to find any other dates that can legitimately be put forward as alternatives. We can never be accused of torturing, manipulating, or backfilling the data to make it fit with what we "want it to be." Throughout this study, extreme effort has been made to not only cite reliable academic sources, but to also let the data speak for itself.

So, with that in mind, if the dating duration of this prophecy truly does fit, one should recognize the implications that would carry. The idea that a prophecy, written some five hundred years before its fulfillment – with such specificity and accuracy involved – could be coincidental, is beyond absurd.

So then, if we do find that these proposed dates fit within the sixty-nine-week duration of this prophecy, that would be overwhelming proof that the Bible is not simply some quaint man-made

outdated religious book. Rather, it would be a profound indicator that the origin of the Bible is from outside our dimension of time altogether. Only a Being outside of time could so precisely pinpoint future events and dates. With that said, let's do a quick review of what we have concluded thus far.

The beginning point of Daniel's sixty-nine weeks is the going forth of a "commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." We have determined that Artaxerxes Longimanus issued the command to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem during the month of **Nisan, (or our March/April), of 444 BC.**

The ending point of Daniel's sixty-nine weeks is the presentation of the "Messiah the Prince," meaning the anointed ruler – a Messianic anticipation, which according to the gospel accounts, Jesus fulfilled at – and only at – the Triumphal Entry. We have shown this event to have occurred on **Nisan 10 (March 30), of 33 AD.**

Our next task will be to calculate the time span in between these two points in order to see if the sixty-nine weeks of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy actually fits. As we begin, there is a very important adjustment we need to make in order to ensure that our calculations will be accurate, as intended by scripture. This adjustment involves the recognition of using a 360-day year rather than a 365.25-day solar year. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, with modern astronomy, one can reckon a year very precisely as being 365.24219 days.¹ However, most ancient cultures utilized a 360-day year to reckon time. When one investigates the ancient calendars of India, Persia, Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Central and South America, and China, it is enlightening to recognize that they uniformly had twelve thirty-day months (a few had eighteen twenty-day months) making a total of 360 days for the year. And they had various ways of intercalating days (for leap years) so that the year would come out correctly. Although it may be strange to present-day thinking, it was common in those days to think of a 360-day year.²

Note: There have been some who have conjectured that the apparent worldwide calendar changes that took place in approximately 701 BC

(according to ancient records) to abandon the 360-day year had something to do with Earth and Mars being on “resonant orbits.” The Earth had an orbit of 360 days and Mars would have had one of 720 days. Every 104 years, there would be a near-pass-by between Mars and Earth when the two orbits crossed. Such an event would set up what is referred to as an orbital resonance – described as somewhat like a tuning fork effect, which would involve a transfer of energy, ultimately resulting in the Earth picking up $5 \frac{1}{4}$ days (equaling $365 \frac{1}{4}$ days) per year.³

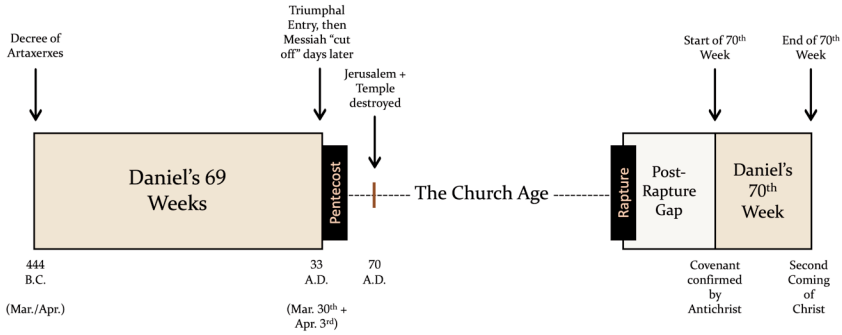
But second, the most obvious reason why a 360-day year is required to accurately calculate Daniel’s sixty-nine weeks of years is because the Bible describes Daniel’s seventieth week as consisting of 360-day years.

One segment of the prophetic years cannot be calculated using, for instance a $365 \frac{1}{4}$ -day year, while a different segment is calculated another way. There must be consistency throughout the seventy prophetic weeks, as they are all one prophecy.

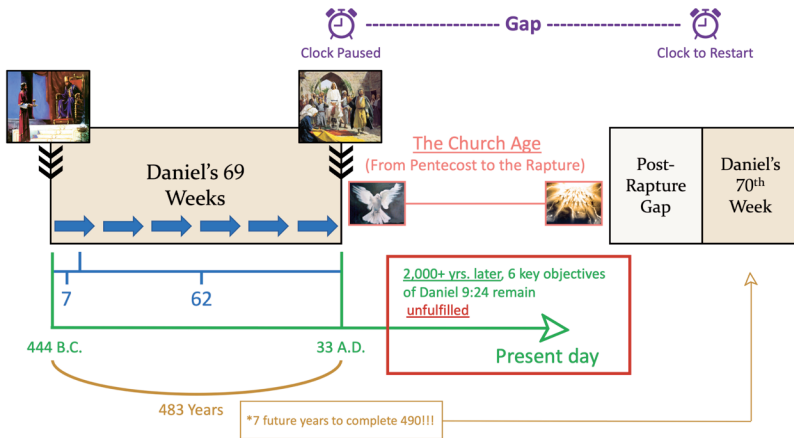
The Bible actually reveals to us this clue in quite convincing fashion! Let’s examine Daniel’s seventieth week, which is the final week of years (or final seven years) of this prophecy. This segment, as we detailed earlier, is separated from the first sixty-nine weeks by a gap in which the Church Age occurs. We are living in this gap right now.

Daniel's 70 Weeks Timeline

(Daniel 9:24-27)



Daniel's 70 Weeks



The Bible describes the seventieth week in terms of a future period of seven years that will take place prior to the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom where He will rule on Earth. This seventieth week is often called the “Tribulation” by Christians, and is precisely detailed for us in Daniel and Revelation. Let’s examine what these details in Daniel and Revelation tell us regarding this final week of years.

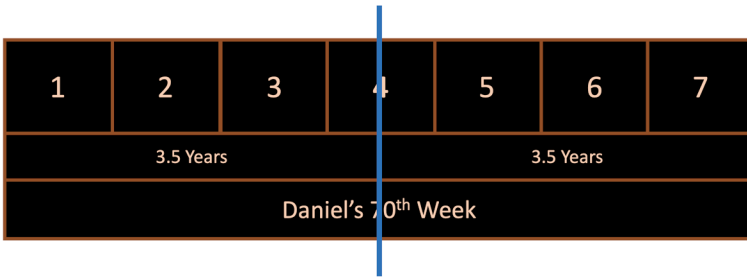
First, a covenant will be confirmed by the Antichrist at the begin-

ning of the **seven years of Daniel's seventieth week** (Daniel 9:27), but he will break it in the middle of the week.

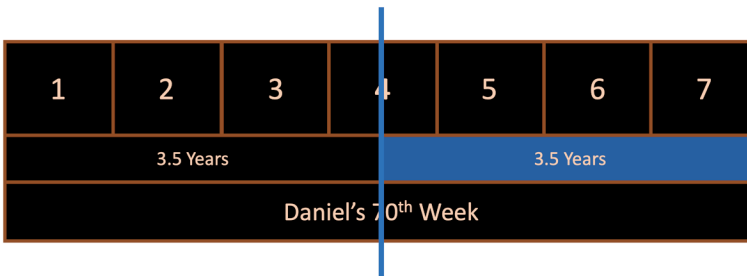
And he shall confirm the **covenant with many for one week**: and in **the midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...

-Daniel 9:27a

So, we see the seven years split into a first half (3.5 yrs.) and a last half (3.5 yrs.).



Scripture tells us that in the **last half of the week** (or the last 3.5 years), there will be terrible times of trouble and persecution on earth, but specifically centered on the Jewish people.



This time period of three and a half years is further broken down for us in another way mentioned in Daniel 7:24-25, which describes it

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

lasting for “a time (one year), times (two years), and the dividing of time (half a year),” another way of saying three and a half years.

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until **a time and times and the dividing of time.**

-Daniel 7:25

This phrase is also mentioned in Daniel 12:7.

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a **time, times, and an half**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

-Daniel 12:7

However, it is not until the New Testament that the duration of the year is known. John uses the same terminology of “**time, times, and half a time**” in Revelation 12:14.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a **time, and times, and half a time**, from the face of the serpent.

-Revelation 12:14

Speaking of that same time period several verses earlier in the same chapter, John describes it as **1,260 days**.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there **a thousand two hundred and threescore days.**

-Revelation 12:6

John again uses this figure of **1,260 days** in Revelation 11:3.

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a **thousand two hundred and threescore days**, clothed in sackcloth.

-Revelation 11:3

But in the previous verse (Verse 2), he describes that same time period as being **forty-two months**.

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 foot **forty and two months**.

-Revelation 11:2

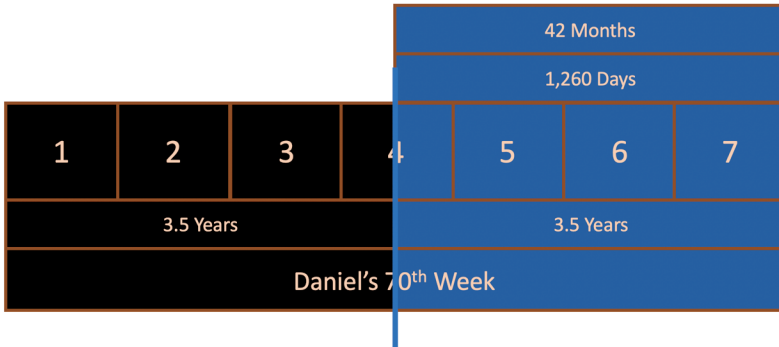
Also, this **forty-two-month** period is mentioned in Revelation 13:5, which speaks of the same period of persecution.

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue **forty and two months**.

-Revelation 13:5

So, we can see very plainly that the Bible goes to great lengths to discuss this latter half of Daniel's seventieth week in great detail. After examining all of the relevant verses above, we can clearly see that the forty-two months = the 1,260 days = the time, times, and half a time (or 3.5 years) = the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:27).

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy



Hence, Daniel’s seventieth week is comprised of thirty-day months and 360-day years (42 months x 30 days per month = 1,260 days; 1,260 days / 3.5 years = 360 days per year). So, we confidently conclude that if God measures Daniel’s seventieth week by 360-day years, then we are required to apply 360-day years to the first sixty-nine weeks in order to correctly calculate the prophecy.

Note: We may term a 360-day year as a “prophetic year,” as we find this measurement repeatedly used in scripture.

Now that we have unlocked this key of using 360-day (prophetic) years, let’s perform our calculation.

-The Beginning Point: Nisan (or our March/April), of 444 BC

-The Ending Point: Nisan 10 (or our March 30), of 33 AD

The angel Gabriel told Daniel that there would be sixty-nine weeks (or sevens) of years between the command to rebuild Jerusalem (beginning point) and the presentation of the Messiah the Prince (ending point). First, we need to convert the prophetic years into the terms of our modern calendar. To do that, we need to figure out how many days are in sixty-nine weeks of years. Once we do that, we can then convert it into Julian, or solar years.

Sixty-nine sevens of 360-day “prophetic years” is exactly 173,880 days.

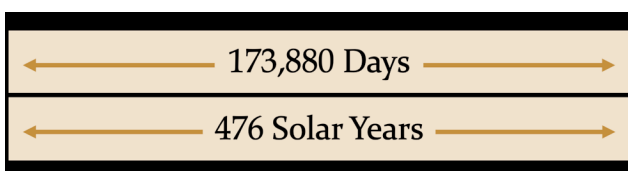
$$(69 \times 7 = 483 \text{ yrs.} \times 360 \text{ days/yr.} = 173,880 \text{ days total})$$



Because our dates for the crucifixion of Christ and the Triumphal Entry are Julian Calendar dates, for consistency, we will continue to use the Julian Calendar instead of our more recent Gregorian Calendar. However, no matter which calendar we decided to use, our conclusion would ultimately be the same. So then, let’s now convert the 173,880 “prophetic year” days into Julian years so we can take a look at our calendar and see if this prophecy truly fits.

173,880 “prophetic year” days is equal to 476.05749 Julian solar years.⁴

$$(173,880 / 365.25 \text{ days [the \# of days in a Julian year]} = 476.05749 \text{ years.})$$



Note: If you’re interested, this would equal 476.06767 Gregorian solar years, so you can be assured it is truly inconsequential for our

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

purposes here. $173,880 / 365.242190419$ tropical year days = 476.06767 years.

So, the duration of Daniel’s sixty-nine weeks is equal to 476 solar years when converted into the terms of a calendar system that we can use to see if this prophecy truly was accurate.

Keep in mind that the .05749 (Julian) or .06767 (Gregorian) remainder is unimportant to us, since we are only concerned with calculating this prophecy to the year, as that was the unit of measure given by Gabriel to Daniel. As stated earlier in this study, the answer cannot be more precise than the unit of measure given (which in this case, is years, or weeks of years).

Next, we need to calculate how many solar years were between Nisan of 444 BC and Nisan 10 (March 30th) of 33 AD. Will the duration between these two dates turn out to be solar years?

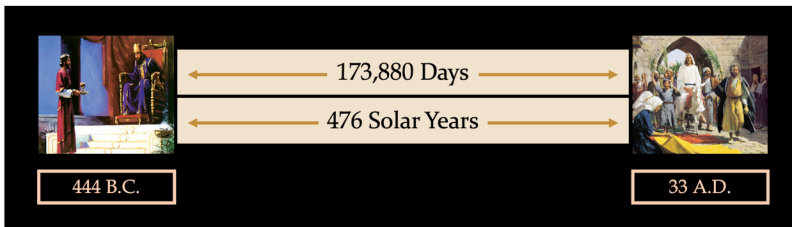
Yes! The duration on our modern calendars between Nisan of 444 BC and Nisan 10 of 33 AD is exactly 476 solar years – precisely what God had spoken to Daniel through Gabriel, half a millennium ahead of time!

$$(444 + 33 = 477 - 1 = 476 \text{ solar years})$$



For your calculations, to cross from BC into AD, you simply add the two dates together and then subtract one, since there is only one year between 1 BC and 1 AD. In other words, there is no “year zero.”⁵

So, the Daniel 9:25 prophecy turns out to be accurate down to the very year – the 173,880 prophetic year days (or 476 solar years) equals precisely the duration of time between our beginning and ending points!



In other words, when you convert Daniel’s sixty-nine “sevens” of 360-day prophetic years (173,880 days) into the terms of our modern calendar, you find that they turn out to be equivalent to 476 solar years. Because we now have a duration compatible with our modern calendars, we can then figure out if the 476 solar years fit within the duration between our beginning and ending points. **When we measure the duration between them, we do discover that there were exactly 476 years between the decree of Artaxerxes in the month of Nisan of 444 BC and the presentation of the “Messiah the Prince” to Israel on Nisan 10 (March 30), of 33 AD – the Triumphal Entry!**

Recall the words of Jesus on the terminal day of this prophecy as He entered Jerusalem, having just witnessed the unbelief of the religious leaders.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least **in this thy day**, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

...

because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

-Luke 19:41-42, 44b

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Gabriel's prophecy, given to Daniel five centuries beforehand – and translated into Greek three centuries beforehand – was established **precisely to the very year predicted!** What was God's margin for error? Zero! Daniel was told the precise time that the Messiah would present Himself as a King to Israel – and that's exactly what Jesus did, right on time! As we can see from the words of Jesus Himself, Israel should have recognized the time of their visitation. How? From this prophecy in Daniel 9:25! They were given the timeline!

This simply could not have happened by accident, especially with the precision it requires, as well as its alignment with what we know from secular history regarding these dates. For this reason, many consider the Daniel 9:25 prophecy to be the single greatest apologetic for the validity of the Bible as being the inspired Word of God, originating outside of our time domain. When you go through the trouble of proving each aspect of this the way we have in this study, it is an airtight apologetic to the validity of God and the Bible. Although at times during this study, you surely thought we were going overboard with how in-depth we got with proving each aspect of this prophecy. But now that we are finished, you should have an even greater appreciation for this prophecy knowing how conclusive the evidence we investigated actually was!

We need to recognize the unique privilege inherent in the present day that we are living in. Today, by virtue of hindsight that's anchored by the accumulated knowledge of history and science, we have better ability to understand certain scriptures that are prophetic in nature – such as Daniel 9. Because of this, there is a responsibility upon us that goes along with having these privileges. We would do well to take up our responsibility for these privileges by learning these incredible prophecies of the scriptures and using them as witnessing tools to spread the knowledge of Christ and the accuracy of the Bible to those who are willing to hear it. The Daniel 9:25 prophecy carries with it immense weight as regards to evidence that the Bible truly is God's written Word.

MICHAEL FILIPEK

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2. Hoehner, pp. 135-136.
3. Chuck Missler, *Daniel's 70 Weeks*, Coeur d'Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 2015, pp. 35-38.
4. "Understanding Julian Calendars And Gregorian Calendars In Genealogy," *GenealogyInTime.com*. (http://www.genealogyintime.com/GenealogyResources/Articles/understanding_julian_calendars_and_gregorian_calendars_in_genealogy_page2.html - Retrieved 10/06/19)
5. Claire Gillespie, "How to Calculate Years Across BC and AD," Apr. 26, 2018, *Sciencing.com*. (<https://sciencing.com/calculate-years-across-bc-ad-8433373.html> - Retrieved 10/06/19)

CHAPTER 9

SOME UNLIKELY CONFIRMATIONS

A testimony is ascribed more validity when a witness has nothing to gain but everything to lose. When a witness' testimony goes against that witnesses' own biases, it is overwhelmingly likely to be a true report. Well, we receive the most astonishing confirmations of our conclusions by the least likely of all witnesses – Judaism!

Obviously, the Jews represent the group most vehemently opposed to the idea of Jesus being the Jewish Messiah. And yet, some of the greatest evidences that Jesus in fact, had to be the Messiah, come from none other than the Jewish rabbis! Although they reject the Messianic claim of Jesus, the Jewish scriptures, Jewish history, thought, and tradition all offer astonishing proof that the Messiah could only have come at one particular time. This time turns out to be exactly when Jesus – and only Jesus (as far as a realistic Messianic candidate) – showed up! And this time turns out to be exactly at the expiration of Daniel's countdown! We are not simply making this claim as Christians. Rather, it is their own scriptures, history, and records that bear this out!

But it doesn't end there. Jewish history and tradition actually record a series of miraculous events that took place in the time between Jesus's death and the Temple's destruction by the Romans in

70 AD. So, from the Jews' own writings, we find the expectation that one who was the Messiah would arrive exactly at the time Jesus did. We find that in fact, the Messiah could have *only* arrived at that time, which their scriptures require and the writings of their rabbis readily admit. Furthermore, they then document miraculous signs that strongly indicated the Messiah had already come and the Messianic window was closed. The fact that these admissions are coming from the people most opposed to Jesus being the Messiah lends tremendous validity to the accounts we will examine.

We will go through three subsections in order to investigate this evidence. First, we will examine the recorded testimony of the rabbis themselves, which will prove that they always believed Daniel 9:25 was a Messianic countdown and their admissions that this time period has already elapsed. Then, we will examine the evidence from the Jews' Old Testament scriptures (the Tanakh) that proves the timeline for the Messiah's arrival has already passed. And lastly, we will examine the rabbi's documentation of a number of miraculous events that clearly indicate that the window for the Messiah's arrival had passed.

Rabbinic Testimony

As we have detailed throughout this study, Daniel 9:24-27 details a prophecy that described exactly when the Messiah was expected to appear. This was a passage of scripture well known by all religious Jews during the first decades of the first century of this era. And we do know that there was amongst the Jews, a widespread anticipation of a coming Messianic age – just around the time of Jesus. Even in the New Testament, we see this implied through the examples of Simeon and the prophetess Anna, who were waiting for the Messianic redemption of Israel (Luke 2). But let's see if the Jewish sources agree.

First, we will note the work of Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. As his doctoral thesis, Silver wrote a brilliant analysis of Jewish Messianic thought over the last two thousand years. He illustrates that there was a tremendous explosion of Messianic expectation during the first few

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

decades of the first century at the very time Jesus of Nazareth made His claims to be Israel's true Messiah.

Prior to the first century (CE [or AD]) the Messianic interest was not excessive...The First Century, however, especially the generation before the destruction [of the Second Temple] witnessed a remarkable outburst of Messianic emotionalism. This is to be attributed, as we shall see, not to an intensification of Roman persecution, but to the prevalent belief **induced by the popular chronology of that day** that the age was on the threshold of the Millennium ... when Jesus came into Galilee, "spreading the gospel of the kingdom of God" and saying the "time is fulfilled" and the "Kingdom of God is at hand," he was voicing the opinion universally held that ... the age of the kingdom of God was at hand...**it was this chronological fact which inflamed the Messianic hope rather than the Roman persecutions.** ... It seems likely, therefore, that in the minds of the people the Millennium was to begin around the year 30 C.E. ... The Messiah was expected around the second quarter of the First Century C.E. because the Millennium was at hand. Prior to that time he was not expected, because according to the chronology of the day the Millennium was still considerably removed.¹

Rabbi Silver's exhaustive research conclusively demonstrates that the ancient Jewish sages understood from the Bible's prophecies that the Messiah was expected to appear in the first half of the first century AD, in the lifetime of the generation that witnessed the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.

He tells us that the Messiah was not expected prior to the first century "because of the chronology of the day." (Daniel's chronology?) It was this understanding of biblical chronology and prophecy, rather than the suffering of the people (as some today claim), that led to the tremendous expectation that the Messiah was soon to come. Silver concludes that the chronology of that day referred to calculating the beginning of the Millennium, which the Jews believe brings along with it the Messiah. Or was it the opposite? Did the Jews of that time

believe the Millennium was approaching due to the fact that Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah's arrival was soon to conclude? It would seem that many Jews were aware of the nearness of the conclusion of Daniel's sixty-nine week prophecy. Either way, we understand that the time of Jesus was a time of Messianic anticipation unlike any other time in history.

Let's now examine some more specific admissions by the Jewish rabbis that prove the Jews of ancient times always viewed the Daniel 9:25 prophecy as being a countdown to the Messiah's appearance.

Jonathan ben Uzziel was a well-known Jewish rabbi who lived close to the time of Christ, during the time of Roman-ruled Judea. Ben Uzziel was one of the eighty Rabbinic sages who studied under Hillel the Elder (Hillel was arguably the most important figure in Jewish rabbinical history). Ben Uzziel was considered Hillel's top student and is mentioned in the Talmud in three places (Sukkah 28a, Bava Batra 133b, Megillah 3).²

The Talmud relates that Jonathan ben Uzziel fashioned an Aramaic translation of the Prophets (Megillah 3a). In the Targum of the Prophets, in Tractate Megillah 3a, we read:

And Yonatan ben Uzziel also sought to reveal a translation of the Writings, but a Divine Voice emerged and said to him: It is enough for you that you translated the Prophets. The Gemara explains: What is the reason that he was denied permission to translate the Writings? **Because it has in it a revelation of the end, when the Messiah will arrive. The end is foretold in a cryptic manner in the book of Daniel,** and were the book of Daniel translated, the end would become manifestly revealed to all.³

Another Talmud translation puts the reason as: "Because the date of the Messiah is foretold in it."⁴

Later on, we will discuss some of the reasons why the Jewish leadership would have been so afraid of Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah's timeline being "manifestly revealed to all."

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Note: The Jews have always associated the Messiah's coming with "the end." Although we recognize that Jesus's Second Coming will occur at the end and usher in the Millennium, we also recognize His First Coming (unlike the Jews). This is why many of these quotes from Jewish sources associate the Messiah only with the end, not realizing His First Advent has already occurred.

So, we can see clearly that Jonathan ben Uzziel (and the Talmud – the backbone of Rabbinic Judaism) clearly admit that Daniel's prophecy referred to the coming of the Messiah, and even provided a timeline for the date of His arrival. We also see that they were afraid of this information being revealed to the common people.

Moses ben Nachman, commonly called Nachmanides, was a very prominent Medieval Jewish scholar who lived between 1194 and 1270 AD. Nachmanides (incorrectly) developed a prediction that the Messiah would arrive in 1356 AD, basing his prediction on a verse in Daniel.⁵ The point here is that prominent Jewish scholars have always seen a Messianic timeline in the book of Daniel.

Moses ben Maimon, commonly known as Maimonides, became one of the most prolific Torah scholars of the Medieval period. His fourteen-volume *Mishneh Torah* still carries significant canonical authority as a codification of Talmudic law.⁶

Maimonides also acknowledged that the prophetic writings of Daniel include content related to the Messiah's appearance. Around 1200 AD, he wrote the following in *Iggeret Teiman* (Epistle to Yemen), connecting the writings of Daniel with the "appearance of the Messiah."

This, O our brethren, is one of the greatest pillars of the Israelite faith: that **there will surely rise a [messianic] leader [qa'im]...from all that Daniel and Isaiah say and from all that the sages mentioned...Daniel followed up [what Isaiah stated] with the appearance of the Messiah.**⁷

Maimonides further admitted that Daniel did indeed expound

upon the mystery of the Messiah's arrival, but referred to an interesting Rabbinic curse found in the Talmud that prohibited anyone from attempting to calculate a Messianic timeline.

And Daniel has explained to us the great depth and mystery of the End of Days. And for this reason the sages (may their memory be a blessing) warned against calculating the End of Days and reckoning the period of the coming of the Messiah, because it would cause the common fold to stumble and mislead them if that time arrived and he had not come...⁸

Maimonides also referred to this Rabbinic curse in his *Mishneh Torah*.

One should not try to determine the appointed time for Mashiach's coming. Our Sages declared: "May the spirits of those who attempt to determine the time of Mashiach's coming expire!"⁹

It is interesting to consider the reasons behind this curse. Of course, some try to simply pass it off as a practical way of eliminating disappointment and unbelief if the prediction were to fail. However, it is more reasonable to consider the fact that the calculation of the Messiah's arrival (based on the correct understanding of Daniel 9:25) would lead one to the conclusion that Jesus was that Messiah.

The rabbis could not allow this! We conclude that this is the most probable reason for the Rabbinic curse on examining this calculation. Let's examine this further to determine if such a conclusion is really valid.

The Rabbinic curse we just discussed is found in the Talmud, and it seems to make clear the rabbis' concerns.

Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end (Messiah's advent). For they would say, since the predetermined time has arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come.¹⁰

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Regarding the Messianic arrival, the Talmud further records:

Rab said: **All the predestined dates [for redemption] have passed,** and the matter [now] depends only on repentance and good deeds.¹¹

Keep in mind that what the Jews traditionally mean by “the redemption,” is the arrival of the Messiah, their “Redeemer.”¹²

So then, what was said in these Talmudic passages indicates that at least some of the rabbis did indeed recognize that the predicted time for the arrival of the Messiah had passed. Furthermore, because it had passed, they admit that their redemption cannot depend on the arrival of the Messiah, as that window had closed, but rather on the performance of “good deeds.” Because of this, and their knowledge that Daniel Chapter 9 predicted the time during Christ’s ministry, they were likely concerned that this knowledge would cause Jewish people to recognize that He was the Messiah. To solve this problem, they pronounced a curse on those who attempted to calculate the dates for the Messiah’s arrival – with Daniel 9:25 being the most obvious example.

So, let’s review our conclusions. We have examined a number of Jewish sources that make several points clear to us:

- The time in which Christ lived was a time of intense Messianic anticipation, suggesting that the Jews of that time recognized that Daniel’s Messianic timeline was reaching its fulfillment.
- The rabbis clearly admit their belief that Daniel provided prophetic insight into the time of the Messiah’s arrival.
- The rabbis clearly recognized that the timeline for the Messianic fulfillment had elapsed, and forbade any attempts for the common people to understand it.

We then, based on this first subsection involving Rabbinic Testi-

mony, recognize the credibility that Rabbinic Judaism lends to our understanding of the Daniel 9:25 Prophecy. As we stated in the beginning, when a witness' testimony goes *against* that witness' own biases, it lends tremendous validity to the accuracy and authenticity of the subject. Of course, nobody is more biased against the Messianic claims of Jesus than the Jews – and yet, even their own writings, beliefs, and traditions clearly support our understanding of the Daniel 9:25 Prophecy.

Scriptural Testimony

We will now take a look at the scriptural evidence that makes it clear the Messianic advent had to have already occurred. We will look at four different prophecies that all require this understanding.

The Daniel 9:25-26 Prophecy

Our first example is, very appropriately, located within the chapter we have been studying. Let's take a moment to reread Daniel 9:25-26, because within Verse 26 is the key to understanding the first example of why – from their own scriptures – the Jews are forced to acknowledge that the scheduled time for the Messiah's appearance has passed.

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: **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.

-Daniel 9:25-26

We see that in Verse 25, the Messiah is said to arrive at the conclu-

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sion of the sixty-nine weeks. Then, in Verse 26, it is said that after their conclusion, the Messiah would be “cut off,” and following that, the city and the sanctuary (Jerusalem and the Temple) would be destroyed. So clearly, this means that the Messiah’s arrival had to **precede** the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.



69 Weeks → Messiah Cut Off → City + Temple Destroyed

Note: Before moving on, we should note the significance of the Hebrew term for “cut off,” which is *karath* (Strong’s #H3772). This word literally means to be “cut off, cut down, or cut asunder,”¹³ and is often used to mean that one would be executed or killed. Interestingly, this word also is used to imply the “cutting of a covenant,” in which in ancient times, two people would literally cut off a piece of animal flesh and pass between the pieces while making vows. Is there any word that better summarizes the work of Christ on the cross? He was “cut off” and rejected by His people, the Jews, and was then executed. But this act of laying down His life was the cornerstone upon which the New Covenant was based upon! So, there should be no confusion regarding this expression “cut off.” It means the Messiah would be executed after the conclusion of the sixty-nine weeks – which, as we have proven, Christ was (four days, as we count, following His Triumphal Entry).

Let’s get back to the subject of Verse 26, which makes clear that the Messiah would be cut off, and then following that event, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. So, this obviously means that the Messiah’s arrival (and death) would have to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Our knowledge of history during this period is extremely clear.

Around forty years after Christ's death, there was a prince who came – and with his army destroyed the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the Temple). This prince was Titus Vespasian, whose father Vespasian had just succeeded Nero as the Roman Emperor. Titus besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 AD.^{14 15}

So again, from the Jews' own scriptures, it is clear that the Messiah should have both come and died prior to the year 70 AD. It cannot be made any clearer. It is impossible for the Jews to deny this.

Furthermore, the fact that the Second Temple was destined to be destroyed was undeniably recognized by the ancient rabbis. In *The Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Nazir 32b) we read an interesting discussion about the Second Temple and its destruction in connection with the Daniel 9 prophecy.

The Gemara responds: Although they might have known that the Second Temple would be destroyed, as the verse speaks of three Temples, did they know when it would be destroyed? Would they have considered that it might occur in their lifetimes, preventing them from sacrificing their offerings? Abaye said: And did they not know when? But isn't it written: "Seventy sevens are decreed upon your people and upon your sacred city" (Daniel 9:24), which indicates that the Second Temple would be destroyed seventy Sabbatical cycles of seven years after the destruction of the First Temple, which is 490 years.¹⁶

Although they mistakenly believed it would happen after the entire seventy weeks (instead of after the first sixty-nine, as the passage clearly says), this still clearly demonstrates that the rabbis tied the Daniel 9:25 prophecy to the destruction of the Second Temple. Since, in the same portion of scripture we read that the Messiah was to be cut off prior to the destruction of the Temple, it is obvious that the Jews always believed that the Messiah would arrive before its destruction. Furthermore, our examination of the writings of the rabbis in the previous subsection clearly demonstrates that they always did associate the writings of Daniel with the Messianic advent. So, there is no way for them to avoid the obvious conclusion – they are forced to

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admit that either Daniel was a false prophet, or the Messiah's first advent has already come. To avoid this, modern Jews have developed unusual interpretations of these passages that often deny Daniel is even speaking of the Messiah.

We should recognize that any chance of a first Messianic arrival post-70 AD is unscriptural. If a Jewish Messiah had come, He would have to have both arrived and been killed at some time prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Only one candidate fits this requirement – Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and death occurred neatly about forty years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and whose death occurred only days after His presentation as the Messianic King at the Triumphal Entry – the culminating day of Daniel's countdown. This all fits in perfectly with the prophetic timetable in Daniel 9:25-26.

His arrival fulfilled the Mosaic Law, and the Temple's soon-after destruction ensured that the Jews could no longer observe the Law even if they wanted to. The One whom the Law pointed towards had come and gone, but they had not recognized Him.

The Haggai 2:6-9 Prophecy

Although Daniel 9:25-26 is the clearest and most well-known scriptural passage that requires a pre-70 AD Messiah, it is not the only one. Haggai's prophecy in Haggai 2:6-9 also indicates that the Messiah would appear before the Temple's destruction in 70 AD.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, **it is a little while**, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

And I will shake all nations, and **the desire of all nations shall come**: and **I will fill this house with glory**, saith the Lord of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

The **glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former**, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

-Haggai 2:6-9

This portion of scripture makes several specific predictions:

1. The desire of all nations (a title of the Messiah) will come.
2. God will fill this house (the Second Temple, 516 B.C to 70 AD) with glory.
3. The glory of this (Second) Temple will be greater than the First Temple built by Solomon.
4. The message is to be fulfilled soon: “it is a little while.”

To the Jewish mind, the coming of the Messiah is believed to be an event that truly will “shake the heavens and the earth” (as mentioned in the passage). The coming of Christ as the Messiah truly did shake the heavens and the earth like no other event in history (in fact, history itself is divided based upon his birth – BC and AD). Although the Jews fail to recognize the fact that the Messiah would have Two Comings, they do associate the Messiah’s arrival with a great shaking of heaven and earth. Because they only recognize what we would call the Second Messianic Coming, they traditionally associate the Messianic arrival with the elevation of Israel to a place of national prominence in the coming Kingdom Age.

In this coming age, the Messiah (here referred to as “the desire of all nations”) will be sought, not only by the nation of Israel, but by the Gentile nations as well. And obviously, that’s also happening now ... in fact, the only nations seeking the Jewish Messiah Jesus Christ are the non-Jewish nations. It is enlightening to note that the Jews have always applied this title – “the desire of all nations” – to the Messiah. In fact, the well-known first century Jewish rabbi Akiva ben Yoseph applied this term to the false-messiah Simon Bar Kokhba, whom he had hoped would lead the Jews in throwing off their Roman oppressors.^{17 18} There should be no confusion as to the Messianic meaning of the phrase, “the desire of all nations.”

So, the prophet states that God would fill “this Temple” with glory. The key question here is, which Temple? The obvious answer is that Haggai was referring to the one that was being rebuilt during his day (the Second Temple). We can tell this by the context of the passage,

and the fact that Haggai's ministry occurred right near the conclusion of the rebuilding of the Second Temple. He states that the glory of this latter Temple, would exceed that of the former. However, we know that from an architectural point of view, the Second Temple never came close to matching the glory and splendor of the First Temple built by Solomon – even with the beautification project undertaken later by Herod.

Everything about the Second Temple was lesser than the First Temple. One of the main distinctions, aside from the architecture, is that according to the testimony of Rabbinic Judaism, the *Shekinah* glory of God never filled the Second Temple in the way that it did the First. That being said, as we will learn in the following subsection, we will find out that the *Shekinah* was not entirely absent during this period.¹⁹

So then, if this is the case that the Second Temple was in all apparent ways lesser than the First, what could the Haggai prophecy be referring to? How could the glory of God fill the Second Temple to the point of exceeding the glory of the First? One way would be for the “Desire of All Nations,” the Messiah of Israel, to come to that Second Temple – and that is what the context of this passage seems to imply, as it is unquestionably Messianic.

The rabbis believed that the glory of God dwelt in the Messiah. Therefore, His appearance in the Second Temple would certainly qualify as an event that would cause the glory of the latter Temple to exceed the former.

But this would require that the Messiah must have appeared in the Second Temple prior to its destruction in 70 AD. But if we search the ancient Jewish sources, we do not find any event that could qualify as a fulfillment.

But during His life, Jesus of Nazareth taught in the Second Temple. The first time was at the age of twelve. Jesus later prophesied its destruction in Luke 19:43-45, specifically attributing it to the fact that the Jews “did not know the time of (their) visitation.” This visitation was referring to His Messianic arrival just at the time predicted by Daniel!

Jesus of Nazareth was the only noteworthy person in history who claimed to be the true Messiah, who appeared in Jerusalem's Second Temple before its destruction by Rome. Surely the life, ministry, teachings and bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth have shaken the foundations of the earth. Many peoples have come to the "Desire of All Nations" and His presence in the Second Temple certainly caused the glory of that Temple to exceed the glory of the first, as He was literally God wrapped in flesh!

The Genesis 49:10 Prophecy

Yet another marker requiring that the Messiah had to have appeared prior to 70 AD (more specifically, in this case, prior to 6-7 AD, as we will find out) is found in a prophecy God gave Jacob that is recorded in Genesis 49. Verse 1 reads:

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

-Genesis 49:1

Jacob addressed each of his sons individually with prophecies concerning the future of their descendants. When Jacob addressed Judah, he made this declaration:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

-Genesis 49:10

The word "scepter" refers to sovereignty and legal authority, particularly the right of the Jews to enforce the Mosaic Law. The name "Shiloh" is a well-known title of the coming Messiah. For instance, in *The Babylonian Talmud*, we see the following.

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R. Johanan said: For the sake of the Messiah. What is his [the Messiah's] name? – The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, until Shiloh come.²⁰

The Jews always took this passage in Genesis as a Messianic anticipation. The following are several additional ancient Jewish Targums on Genesis 49:10 that clearly depict Shiloh as a Messianic reference (targums, or targumim, are ancient Rabbinical paraphrases or explanations of scripture).

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan states:

Kings shall not cease, nor rulers, from the house of Jehuda [Judah], nor sapherim teaching the law from his seed, till the time that the King the Meshiha [Messiah], shall come,²¹

Targum Onkelos states:

He who exerciseth dominion shall not pass away from the house of Jehuda [Judah], nor the saphra from his children's children for ever, until the Meshiha [Messiah] come, whose is the kingdom, and unto whom shall be the obedience of the nations...²²

These are ancient Jewish paraphrases of Genesis 49:10 from highly-regarded targums. We can see very clearly that Jewish tradition always saw the Messiah in Genesis 49:10. In this prophecy God promised that the tribe of Judah (the southern kingdom of Judah) would not lose its sovereign identity and right to administer the Mosaic Law (which naturally includes the right to capital punishment of criminals) before the appearance of Shiloh, the Messiah.

Throughout the centuries, Judah had always retained the ability to do this. Even during the Babylonian Captivity, the Jewish people retained the ability to run their own courts and systems of religious laws (see Ezra 1:5, 8, where we read of the priests and prince of Judah,

still in existence even after seventy years away from Israel). The scepter had not been lost even during the Babylonian captivity.

This continued under the Persians, the Greek Seleucids, and the early years of Rome's rule over Judea. Judah retained its ability to administer religious law up until the first quarter of the first century AD.

The records of Jewish/Roman historian Flavius Josephus reveal that during the life of Jesus, Israel's Sanhedrin court lost its power to judge capital cases (meaning those involving the death penalty) after Caesar appointed a Roman procurator – Caponius – around 6/7 AD to rule Judea directly.^{23 24}

When this happened, the legal power of the Sanhedrin was immediately restricted and their adjudication of capital cases was lost. Josephus, who records the illegal assemblance of the Sanhedrin in an attempt to condemn James the brother of Jesus to death, confirms this transfer of power.

Some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrin without his [meaning Roman] consent.²⁵

This recorded instance took place shortly after the life of Christ, demonstrating that this restriction was still active.

This is also recorded in the Talmud, though they place the Sanhedrin's loss of power forty years before the Temple's destruction, which would be about a twenty-year difference from Josephus, yet still within the lifetime of Christ.

Forty years before the destruction of the Second Temple, the Sanhedrin was exiled from the Chamber of Hewn Stone and sat in the store near the Temple Mount. ... Once the Sanhedrin left the Chamber of Hewn Stone, the court's power to judge capital cases was nullified.²⁶

The New Testament also supports the fact that the Sanhedrin had lost its power to command the death penalty, which forced them to

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bring Jesus as a prisoner before the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate to have him issue a death sentence.

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

-John 18:31

Of course, under the Mosaic Law, it was lawful for them to condemn people to death – revealing that the context of this passage was Roman law. Roman law prohibited them from doing so. Ironically, as the Jewish leaders were bringing Jesus before Pilate for sentencing, they were acting out the fulfillment of this prophecy! Recall the words of the prophecy: “the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, **until Shiloh come...**”

The Messiah (Shiloh) *had* come, and exactly during His lifetime, the Jews lost their self-governance. Why? Because with the Messiah’s arrival, the Mosaic Law was fulfilled. And because He fulfilled the Mosaic Law, it was no longer operable! But the Jews did not understand this. They failed to recognize that Jesus, as the Messiah, was present amongst them at that very time and was the cause for their loss of judicial sovereignty!

In fact, a book originally written in French toward the end of the 1800’s records a quote from one of the ancient rabbis describing his contemporaries’ reaction to this loss of sovereignty.

Rabbi Rachmon says: “When the members of the Sanhedrim found themselves deprived of their right over life and death, a general consternation took possession of them; they covered their heads with ashes, and their bodies with sackcloth, exclaiming: ‘Woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah and the Messiah has not come!’”²⁷

They actually thought that the Torah, the Word of God, had failed! They should have known better. The scepter had indeed been removed

from Judah, but Shiloh *had* come. While the Jewish leaders wept in the streets of Jerusalem, a young son of a carpenter was growing up in Nazareth. He would later present Himself as the *Meshiach Nagid*, the Messiah the King, at the very time that had been predicted by the angel Gabriel to Daniel five centuries earlier.

But the main point we're making here is that the ancient Jewish leaders understood that once the scepter had been removed from Judah, the timeframe that the Messiah could arrive had passed forever.

The 1 Chronicles 17:10-14 Prophecy

The Davidic Covenant, crucial to Biblical Messianism, is found in two segments of scripture. The first (2 Samuel 7:11-16) concentrates mainly on David's immediate son, Solomon, although there are allusions to the eternal reign of the Messiah. The second (1 Chronicles 17:10-14) deals with David's distant son or descendant, the Messiah.

And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee:

But I will settle **him** in mine **house** and in my **kingdom for ever**: and **his throne shall be established for evermore**.

-1 Chronicles 17:10-14

This passage makes four Messianic promises to David, all evident in Verse 14:

1. An eternal house or dynasty
2. An eternal kingdom
3. An eternal throne
4. An eternal son – (“settle him in mine house and in my kingdom *forever*”)

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The Jews have always – and still do – affirm that this passage, the Davidic Covenant, is part of the Messianic criteria that must be fulfilled by any candidate.²⁸

This covenant narrows down the scope of the preceding covenants God had issued. He had formerly promised that the future Messiah would first come through the lineage of Adam (in other words, a human), then through Abraham, then through Jacob, then through Judah, and now, through David.

This automatically requires that the Messiah come prior to 70 AD since, in that year, all of Israel's genealogical records were lost when the Romans destroyed the Temple (the Temple housed the records). Within a few decades of 70 AD, it was impossible to prove who was a son of David and who was not.²⁹

But the real point here is that without the genealogical records that were kept in the Temple (which was destroyed in 70 AD), how is one to prove that he is a descendant of David? Obviously, there is no way to do this post-70 AD. Therefore, it follows that the Messiah must have arrived before 70 AD.

So, after conducting an in-depth examination of these four prophetic concepts from the Jewish scriptures (and supported by the ancient Jewish rabbinical sources), we can see tremendous evidence that supports our calculated chronology of Daniel 9:25.

In this subsection concerning scriptural testimony, we have examined several Old Testament Messianic prophecies and ancient rabbinical interpretations. We have seen a number of indicators that pinpointed or bookended the time of the Messiah's coming. According to the scriptural testimony, and in line with the interpretations and beliefs of the ancient Jewish scholars, the Savior was to:

- Have both arrived and been killed at some time prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD (Daniel 9:24-27).
- Appear in the Second Temple (Haggai 2:6-9).

- Arrive during the time when membership in the tribe of Judah could confidently be traced and before the scepter had departed from them (Genesis 49:10).
- Arrive during the time when the line of David could be proven (1 Chronicles 17:10-14).

Remarkably, after the time of Jesus and the following events that occurred in 70 AD, none of these criteria could ever exist again! However, when Jesus was growing up in Nazareth, the genealogical records proving the lineage of Judah and David were still in existence, the scepter had not passed from Judah, and the Second Temple was still standing. The Messiah would in fact arrive just on time, and fill the Second Temple with His glory, as He repeatedly entered it and taught the people during His earthly ministry. But after Jesus's death, the scepter had already been removed and the Second Temple was soon destroyed.

So, we continue to see our understanding of the Daniel 9:25 Messianic timeline verified by none other than the Old Testament, or the Tanakh – the Jews' own scriptures. As we've mentioned several times, when a witness' testimony goes *against* that witness' own biases, it lends tremendous validity to the accuracy and authenticity of the subject. Of course, nobody is more biased against the Messianic claims of Jesus than the Jews – and yet, even their own scriptures clearly support our understanding of the Daniel 9:25 Prophecy.

But the evidence doesn't end there. Next, we will examine a series of miraculous occurrences that would leave one no option other than to believe the window for the Messiah's appearance must have closed, and the former days were now ended.

Miraculous Testimony

Jewish history and tradition actually record a series of miraculous events that took place approximately forty years prior to the Temple's destruction by the Romans in 70 AD. We have already established

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earlier in this study that Jesus died in 33 AD – this we know confidently. 33 A.D. is approximately forty years prior to 70 AD. Coincidence? We will let you decide.

We will examine each of these historically recorded miracles. And as you will see, these miracles will force one to acknowledge that the Messiah must have already come and the window for His arrival had closed. These miraculous occurrences also strongly indicate that the former times were passed, and the Temple and sacrificial system had been fulfilled. Let's investigate some of these miracles that were recorded by the Jewish rabbis – the most unlikely sources of Christian corroboration.

In the centuries following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 AD), the Jewish people began writing two versions of Jewish thought, religious history, and commentary (we have referenced these already in this study). One was written in so-called Palestine and became known as *The Jerusalem Talmud*. The other was written in Babylon and was known as *The Babylonian Talmud*. Both of these central sources of Rabbinic Judaism record these miracles.

We read in *The Jerusalem Talmud*:

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, 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.³⁰

A similar passage in *The Babylonian Talmud* states:

Our rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ["For the Lord"] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-colored strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the Hekel [the Holy Place in the Temple] would open by themselves.³¹

Since both the both of these sources recount the same information, this indicates that the knowledge of these events was accepted by the Jewish community at large. But what are these passages talking about? They agree on four notable Temple-related miracles that took place about forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.

Can we recall any significant event that happened just around that time? Obviously, as we have already stated, the answer is yes! Not just any event, but the literal central event in all of human history – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in 33 AD – the event so central to human history that our reckoning of time itself is divided based upon His birth (BC and AD, or the modern creation BCE and CE). So, let’s discuss each of these miracles in more detail and see if we uncover any evidence that may indicate that they may have had some connection to the death of Israel’s Messiah.

#1 – The Miracle of the Lot

The lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand.³²

The lot [“For the Lord”] did not come up in the right hand;³³

The first of these miracles concerns a random choosing of the “lot” (black and white stones), which was cast on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). The lot chosen determined which of two goats would be “for the Lord” and which goat would be the *azazel* or “scapegoat.” The goat for the Lord was offered up as a blood sacrifice, and the other which was determined to be the scapegoat, was sent away into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:7-10).

When the High Priest randomly selected one of the two stones in his right hand, the chances of selecting black or white would obviously be fifty-fifty. So, each year, the chances of selecting a black stone would be just as likely as selecting a white stone.

But for forty years in a row – beginning in the early 30s AD and lasting until the ending of this practice when the Temple was

destroyed in 70 AD – the Jews record that the High Priest always ended up with the black stone (“for Azazel”) in his right hand – and *never* the white stone (“for the Lord”). The idea that this could occur by chance for forty years straight is irrational, indicating that it must have been miraculous.

This was considered an ominous event and signified something had fundamentally changed in this Yom Kippur ritual.³⁴ This casting of lots is also accompanied by yet another miracle, which is described next.

#2 – The Miracle of the Red Cord

The crimson thread remained crimson,³⁵

Nor did the crimson-colored strap become white;³⁶

Each year before this *Yom Kippur* ritual, the high priest would tie a cord of red painted wool between the horns of the scapegoat. He also tied another such cord around the neck of the goat reserved for the sin offering, so that it might not be commingled with the other goats held for the remaining offerings of the day. The cord used for the scapegoat was later divided in two. One piece remained between the scapegoat’s horns, and the other half hung upon the opening of the hallway leading to the Temple, so that all might see it.^{37 38}

In years when the sacrifice was accepted by God and atonement was granted Israel, both parts of the cord miraculously turned white.³⁹ Therefore, when all eyes saw this incredible picture of God’s forgiveness, the hearts of the people rejoiced. But this unexpectedly changed in the early 30s, AD. The Jewish records state that the thread stopped turning white about forty years prior to the Temple’s destruction in 70 AD.

This undoubtedly caused much stir and consternation among the Jews. The *Yom Kippur* ritual is directly linked to Israel confessing its sins and ceremonially placing the sins of the nation upon the sacrificial goat. The sin was then removed by this goat’s death. Sin was

represented by the red color of the cloth (the color of blood). But the cloth remained crimson – that is, Israel’s sins were not being pardoned and “made white.” You may recall this theme being expressed in Isaiah.

Come, let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet [crimson], they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as [white] wool.

-Isaiah 1:18

The rabbis actually associate this passage with the *Yom Kippur* ritual in the Talmud, Tractate Yoma, 68b.⁴⁰

The clear indication is that something had changed in the early 30s AD. Clearly, God wasn’t accepting the sacrifices of goats and lambs anymore. Atonement apparently was to be gained in some other way. Undoubtedly, the impactful event here was the atoning death of the true *Yom Kippur* Lamb – Jesus Christ in 33 AD. He Himself was put to death as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Because His death was the fulfillment of the symbolism that *Yom Kippur* was instituted to look toward, atonement was now no longer achieved through the two goats offered.

The ultimate Lamb had already come. Like an innocent sacrificial lamb, the Messiah was put to death, though no fault was found in Him! But unlike Temple sacrifices or the *Yom Kippur* events – where sin is only covered over for a time – the Messianic sacrifice comes with the promise of forgiveness of sins for all mankind for all time, to those who obey Him. When Jesus came, He ushered in the New Covenant that had been promised to Israel. With this New Covenant came new salvation commands (Acts 2:38; etc.). God’s objective now was for all humanity to be saved through the institution of the Church – His ultimate plan for a bride.

This stoppage of the miraculous red cord ritual was an indicator that the Jews needed to recognize their true Messiah, understand that the Levitical system He instituted was now fulfilled, and obey the commands of this Messiah to enter into the salvation that His work

on the cross provided. The New Covenant was now in place and He was no longer honoring Old Covenant practices.

#3 – The Miracle of the Temple Doors

They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open.⁴¹

The doors of the Hekel [Temple] would open by themselves.⁴²

The next miracle that the Jewish authorities record was that the Temple doors would swing open all by themselves at the sixth hour of each night. This too, occurred about forty years before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, meaning it took place in the early 30s AD. But where it gets really interesting is in the fact that the Temple doors were absolutely monstrous doors made of brass and trees from Lebanon. They were anchored with iron bolts into a floor made of one enormous stone. They were so huge that it took twenty men to open or close the doors.⁴³

A leading Jewish religious leader of that time, Yohanan ben Zakkai, declared that this was a sign of impending doom, indicating that the Temple itself would soon be destroyed. *The Jerusalem Talmud* states:

They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open. 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, that the fire may devour your cedars!’” (Zechariah 11:1).⁴⁴

The first century Jewish/Roman historian Josephus, who lived around that time, also recorded this incident, also providing us with a description of the immense size of these doors.

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner (court of the) temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by

twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.⁴⁵

Might the doors opening be to signify to us that all may now enter the Temple, even to its innermost holy sections, and that God had opened up relationship to all that will follow Him? Amazingly, Josephus actually follows up his account of this miraculous phenomenon by admitting that the common-people did interpret it this way.

This also appeared to the vulgar [commoners] to be a very happy prodigy [phenomenon], as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness.⁴⁶

Josephus (as well as the earlier quote from *The Jerusalem Talmud*) records that the religious leaders, however, interpreted it very differently. They saw it as an ominous sign indicating that the Temple would soon be destroyed.⁴⁷ Interestingly, both groups were correct!

The record of the miraculous phenomenon of the Temple doors opening by themselves indicates the Lord's presence had departed from the Temple. This was no longer just a place for high priests alone, but the doors swung open for all to enter the Lord's house of worship. In addition, by reading the New Testament, it is made clear to us that during New Covenant times, the Lord would not dwell in buildings, but rather within the hearts of men who would receive His Spirit (Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

A similar miraculous incident was recorded in the New Testament, involving the veil that draped the entranceway to the Holy of Holies (the most Holy place, where God's glory dwelt). This veil signified that man was separated from God by sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). Only the high priest was permitted to pass beyond this veil once each year (Exodus 30:10; Hebrews 9:7) to enter into God's presence for all of Israel and make atonement for their sins (Leviticus 16).

This was a curtain that according to ancient Jewish sources, was

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forty cubits high and twenty cubits wide, about four inches thick, and took three hundred priests to carry it when it needed to be immersed and cleaned. Forty cubits high would mean it was at least sixty feet high.⁴⁸

Whether or not this is an exaggeration, it certainly conveys to us the main point here – the veil was massive. The size and thickness of the veil make the events occurring at the moment of Jesus’s death on the cross so much more momentous. The gospel of Matthew records what happened at the moment Jesus died on the cross.

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

And, behold, **the veil of the temple was rent in twain** [ripped in two] **from the top to the bottom**; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

-Matthew 27:50-51

So, what do we make of this? What significance does this torn veil have for us today? Above all, the tearing of the veil at the moment of Jesus’s death dramatically symbolized that His sacrifice, the shedding of His own blood, was a sufficient atonement for sins. It signified that now the way into the Holy of Holies – representing personal access to God – was open for all people, for all time, both Jew and Gentile – this being the New Covenant.

When Jesus died, the veil was torn, and God moved out of that place, never again to commune with people primarily through an earthly residence made with hands (Acts 17:24). God was finished with the Old Covenant, and the Temple and Jerusalem were left “desolate” (destroyed by the Romans) in 70 AD, just as Jesus prophesied in Luke 13:35.

#4 – The Miracle of the Temple Menorah

The western light went out...⁴⁹

Nor did the western most light shine...⁵⁰

The fourth miracle was that the most important lamp of the seven candlestick Menorah in the Temple – the westernmost lamp – went out, and would not shine. Why would this be a miracle? Actually, like the Red Cord, it's sort of a miracle in reverse. Let's examine this.

First, we need to understand that before the 30s AD, this westernmost lamp would stay miraculously illuminated each night. According to Tractate Menachot in the Talmud, every night the lamps would run out of oil and burn out, with the exception of the westernmost lamp, which miraculously continued to burn. The next morning the other six lamps would be filled with oil and have new wicks put in them, and then be lit with the fire from the western lamp, which though it was the exact same size as the other lamps, with the same amount of oil, would always be miraculously still burning. They would then snuff out this lamp, refill the oil and replace the wick as they had done with the other lamps, and relight the western lamp with the same fire. This way the fire light of the Menorah never went out. It was continually burning, signifying God's continuing presence in the Temple.⁵¹

But now, around the early 30s AD, this abruptly stopped and the westernmost light would no longer miraculously illuminate. Something out of the ordinary was going on. The "light" of the Menorah – representing contact with God, His Spirit, and His Presence – was now removed.

After the death of the Messiah in 33 AD, great trouble and overwhelming trials began to come upon the Jewish nation. Jesus Himself had foretold it. As He was led away to be crucified, Jesus warned the women of Jerusalem.

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

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For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

-Luke 23:28-31

So, the destruction of Jerusalem should not have been new news to anyone familiar with the words of Christ. In this Miracle of the Menorah, we can see yet another profound indicator that the former times and symbols had been fulfilled in the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Further Miracles

The miracles we have discussed so far seem incredible, but the record of strange and supernatural occurrences doesn't stop there. The First Jewish Revolt (66-70 AD), took place directly before the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.⁵²

Interestingly, there is widespread historical attestation of miracles that also took place around this time. These other miracles include the following, which are recorded by historians from all different backgrounds including Roman, Jewish, and Christian.

- On Nisan 8 (about a week before the Passover feast) of 66 AD, at around 3:00 AM, an extremely brilliant light hovered around the Altar and the Inner Temple for thirty minutes before leaving. This light, recognized as the *Shekinah* Glory of God leaving the Temple, went to the Mount of Olives and stayed there for three and a half years, which all the people were aware of.

Earnest Martin wrote about this event, saying the following.

There is also another reason why Christians in the first century were very interested in the Mount of Olives. This is because it was believed that the *Shekinah* Glory of God which supposedly dwelt inside the Holy of Holies at the Temple left the sanctuary and went to the Mount

of Olives and hovered over that spot at the time of the Roman/Jewish War which ended in A.D. 70. The fact that the Shekinah Glory left the old Temple and migrated to the top of the Mount of Olives was an important event to Eusebius (Church historian and scholar, 260?-340? A.D.).⁵³

- A few days following the feast, before sunset, a bizarre occurrence was witnessed. This occurrence was so bizarre that Josephus admits it is hard to believe, and yet, it was witnessed by many. Before sunset, chariots of fire and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen circling in the sky around the city.
- Then, at the feast of Pentecost, the priests felt a thunderous quaking in the Inner Court of the Temple, and heard a voice like a great multitude, which said, "Let's leave here."^{54 55 56 57}

These miraculous events must have been widely attested, as their recording in multiple different early histories shows (Josephus, Tacitus, Eusebius, et al.). These events all clearly demonstrate the glory and presence of God leaving the Temple prior to its destruction. Even Josephus himself summed up his conviction, which the masses came to believe, that God had turned away from His sanctuary,⁵⁸ and that the Temple was no more the dwelling place fit for God,⁵⁹ because God had fled from His sanctuary.⁶⁰

Amazingly, this same type of thing had already happened when God's *Shekinah* Glory left the Temple prior to the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. During Judah's apostasy in the sixth century BC, the prophet Ezekiel saw the *Shekinah* Glory depart from the Temple and travel east, also to the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-23).

We should recognize the clear message these miraculous occurrences profoundly demonstrate to us. This message is conveyed to us in the New Testament book of Hebrews, which was written in the last several years that the Temple was still standing. The existence of the

Temple represented the Old Covenant, but would soon be destroyed as the Old Covenant fully transitioned over to the New. Hebrews 9:8-9 refers to the physical Temple as being associated with the Old Covenant age that was passing away. Hebrews 8 goes on to describe how Christ fulfilled the symbols of the Temple rituals, and that through His ultimate sacrifice, the New Covenant with man was established.

With this New Testament explanation, we can be sure of the reasons why these miraculous events took place in the years between Jesus's death and the final destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. The Old Covenant had passed, and a New (and better) Covenant had commenced.

So, after examining these four recorded miracles in the early 30s AD, as well as the additional miraculous events around 66 AD, we are left with the inescapable conclusion that the time for the Messiah's arrival had passed and the rituals and symbols of the Old Covenant had been fulfilled. This fits in perfectly with all we have examined earlier regarding the time of Christ's life and death. As the Messiah, He came at exactly the time the prophet Daniel predicted – which we have shown in this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, our goal was to examine confirmations regarding our conclusions about Jesus Christ being the fulfillment of Daniel 9:25, with these confirmations coming from the most unlikely source possible – Judaism itself. To accomplish this, we examined testimony from three different perspectives that all decisively support our conclusions about Daniel 9:25 – the rabbinic, the scriptural, and the miraculous.

By examining the rabbinic testimony, we have proven that the Jews always believed that Daniel 9:25 was a Messianic countdown, and that by their own admissions, this time period has already expired with the only legitimate Messianic candidate being one Jesus Christ.

Then, we examined the evidence from the Jews' own scriptures –

or what Christians call the Old Testament – that proves the timeline for the Messiah’s arrival has already long passed. We cited a number of scriptures which unmistakably required His arrival before certain events that we know took place during and soon after the life of Christ.

Lastly, we examined the historical documentation of a number of miraculous events that clearly reveal that the window for the Messiah’s arrival had passed – all happening shortly after the death of Christ, and directly before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple – the final harbinger of the fulfillment of the Old Covenant.

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CHAPTER 10

OUR FINAL CONCLUSION

We began this study by proving that Daniel was written long before the events he described took place. We then painstakingly combed through the data in order to establish the beginning and ending point of his prophecy. We then painstakingly combed through the data to prove that Christ was the fulfillment of this prophecy, and that His fulfillment of it took place accurately to the very time predicted. Considering all of this evidence objectively, who can really doubt that the ending point of this prophecy was indeed the year of the crucifixion and resurrection of the one Messiah that God sent to Israel? Who can deny that He is the one and only true Messiah – God Himself come in flesh in the form of the man, Christ Jesus? Who else has fulfilled the amazing prophecy of Daniel 9 and the sixty-nine weeks?

The evidence is overwhelmingly clear – one man fulfilled the Daniel 9:25 prophecy, and did so with astonishing precision. The accounts of this man’s life in the gospels record His miraculous acts and His death, burial, and resurrection as the one true redemptive Lamb of God and sinless Messiah.

Two clear facts emerge from our study, which demand from us a response:

#1 – It is an inescapable realization that the Bible is a book that provably finds its origin outside of our time domain. Only a Being outside of our physical reality, who is outside of the physical limitations of our time dimension, could predict future events with such startling accuracy. Only a Being like this could be the true inspiration and author behind this prophecy.

#2 – It is also an inescapable realization that Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel 9:25, thereby validating His identity as the Messiah, God come in the flesh. The fact that there was a prophecy with such specificity as this one, which actually was fulfilled hundreds of years later with astonishing precision, suggests to us that God indeed inspired this prophecy. The fact that Christ fulfilled it then suggests the validity of the New Testament.

These two facts support each other and suggest strongly to us that when viewed together, they validate one another, leaving an immense decision before us. If the Bible's content is provably prophetic, then the evidence demonstrates that the Bible is not from man, and it therefore must be taken seriously. When we take it seriously, and read its content, we are presented with the life and works of Jesus Christ, which culminate in the New Covenant message of the Gospel in the Book of Acts (the Gospel, meaning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The record of the Church that began after the life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ utterly changed the world forever. The New Testament continues to present the unavoidable truth that we all should acknowledge – that Jesus Christ is that one promised Messiah, and that we should put our trust and obedience in Him as our Lord and Savior. We are then told how to apply this truth of the Gospel to our own lives through obedience (Acts 2:38). The rest of the New Testament (the epistles) are letters to the churches (the churches are simply groups of people who did apply the Gospel to their own lives through obedience).

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So, the final question, then, is will we obey what we have demonstrated to be true? And will we respond in obedience to the objective evidence? Will we obey the commands of the One who fulfilled the Old Testament with astounding precision?

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