

THE DANIEL 9:25 PROPHECY

AN EXACT TIMELINE FOR THE
ARRIVAL OF THE MESSIAH



MICHAEL FILIPEK

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PUBLISHING

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1	1
<i>Establishing the Reliability of the Book of Daniel</i>	
Chapter 2	7
<i>Introduction to Daniel 9:25</i>	
Chapter 3	17
<i>The Beginning Point - "The Commandment to Restore and to Build Jerusalem"</i>	
Chapter 4	30
<i>The Dating of the Beginning Point</i>	
Chapter 5	40
<i>The Ending Point - "The Messiah the Prince"</i>	
Chapter 6	51
<i>The Dating of the Ending Point (Part 1) - The Date of the Crucifixion</i>	
Chapter 7	87
<i>The Dating of the Ending Point (Part 2) - The Date of the Triumphal Entry</i>	
Chapter 8	92
<i>Testing Our Calculations</i>	
Chapter 9	105
<i>Some Unlikely Confirmations</i>	
Chapter 10	139
<i>Our Final Conclusion</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	143

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING THE RELIABILITY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

As incredible as Bible prophecy is, it is imperative to first establish that the writing of a given prophecy must predate its fulfillment in time. Thus, before even beginning with the real content of this study, the first point that must be addressed involves the issue of determining *when* the Book of Daniel was actually written. Much of Daniel involves astonishingly accurate prophecies – prophecies that were so precisely fulfilled in history that unbelieving scholars have claimed that Daniel must have been written after the fact. Obviously, in order to prove that the Book of Daniel is genuine prophecy, it must be shown to have been written well before the fulfillments of the events it foretells (this will be referred to as the *early* dating, as opposed to the *late* dating proposed by critics).

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, feel free to consult the companion study entitled, “Establishing The Prophetic Validity Of The Book Of Daniel”. In that study, evidence is examined revealing 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 aforementioned prophecy in Daniel 11, which concerns fulfillments in the intertestamental period, it’s *not* a concern for the purposes of this study. The reason is the prophecies to be discussed 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 (and no obviously, no scholar would dispute that Daniel was written prior to that time). Consequently, even if the critics were correct in their late dating of Daniel to the second century BC, it would in no way invalidate the prophetic nature of Daniel 9 (the topic of 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 no scholar would disagree with).¹ Let’s briefly detail some of the evidence that proves this – and in fact, even points to the *earlier* date of authorship, as Daniel’s book itself claims. Three main points of evidence will be surveyed.

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 **Thus, it should be recognized 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! The plain fact that it was included in the Septuagint demonstrates 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 instantaneously, indicating that Daniel must have been originally composed quite some time before (which is consistent with the early dating).

The second point of evidence relates to 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, 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 obviously makes the late dating impossible. 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 instantaneously, 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 – which detailed 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!

In sum, these three powerful points of evidence not only show that Daniel was written prior to the time of Christ, but they point toward the conclusion that it was even written prior to the late dating of the critics, establishing confidence in the prophetic validity of Daniel.

But 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 it is accepted that

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Daniel was written prior to the events it foretells, can it be confirmed that the Daniel text found in modern Bibles has been transmitted reliably over time? Can there be confidence that the text has not been notably changed or altered over the centuries and millennia? The Dead Sea Scrolls conclusively provide the answer. The Old Testaments (including Daniel) found in most English Bibles today are translated from a Hebrew/Aramaic source text called the Masoretic Text. This textual tradition is the official Hebrew/Aramaic text of modern Judaism and is also what Christians would call the Old Testament. 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, modern scholars are now, for the first time in history, able to compare the current Hebrew and Aramaic text of Daniel found in Bibles today (that comes from source texts whose earliest extant copies date to 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, the earliest extant Hebrew Bible manuscripts date to around 1000 AD. How could it be confidently verified that Daniel hadn't dramatically changed since around the time of Christ and before? Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there could be no such assurance. But since their discovery, they can be compared with modern Bibles to determine whether the text has changed. Put yet another way, modern scholars can now look at over two thousand years of Hebrew text transmission and see firsthand how much – if at all – the Old Testament has changed from 200 BC up until today. And when this kind of analysis was performed, what did scholars 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

The Dead Sea Scrolls are profound textual witnesses that demonstrate that the faithful preservation of Daniel in the Masoretic Text, confirming that the Hebrew and Aramaic text of Daniel translated in modern Bibles is reliable! Consequently, it can be concluded on the basis of strong evidence that Daniel's prophecies were not only written well before the time of Christ, but that the current text of Daniel in modern Bibles today has been transmitted reliably. The recognition of both of these facts support the validity of the amazing prophecy found in Daniel 9 that will be explored in this study!

1. John J. Collins, "Current Issues in the Study of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, Vol. I, ed. John J. Collins, Peter W. Flint, Boston: Brill, 2001, p. 2.
2. The Editors of Encyclopedia, article "Septuagint," May 12, 2020, *Encyclopedia Britannica*. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Septuagint> - Retrieved 8/9/18)
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4. Frank M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 2nd ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961, p. 43.
5. Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969, p. 1127.
6. Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, in *Josephus, The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, XI, 8.5, p. 368.
7. Ibid.
8. Ernst Wurthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 35.
9. Jeff A. Benner, "A History of the Masoretic Hebrew Texts," *Ancient Hebrew Research Center*. (<https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/biblical-history/a-history-of-the-masoretic-hebrew-texts.htm> - Retrieved 2/10/21)
10. Alfred Mertens, "Das Buch Daniel im Lichte der Texte vom Toten Meer," in *Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien* 12, Wurzburg: Echter Verlag, 1971, p. 31.

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. As this study will demonstrate, 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 the domain of time. According to the Old Testament, the prophesied Jewish Messiah figure could only appear at a very specific time. As will be shown, Jesus Christ alone precisely fulfilled this prophecy – demonstrating the supernatural origin of the Bible and legitimizing His true identity as God manifest in flesh!

It is necessary to begin with some background information that allows a more full understanding of the context of this prophecy in Daniel. 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 instru-

ment 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 that will soon be discussed). 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. The last four verses of Daniel 9 record this seventy weeks prophecy.

As was 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 complete this age of human history and bring about the Messianic Kingdom). This prophecy not only provides a countdown to the Messiah, but also acts as the backbone or framework for the timeline of all future Bible prophecy. To set the stage for

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

understanding Daniel 9:25, let's first read the 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 that must be understood concerns the term “weeks.” In modern culture, most are 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” 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, like the modern understanding of a “week.” But this word can also refer to a heptad of years – or a “week of years.”² ³ The latter is the case in this prophecy, as will become evident. Thus, 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.

There are several other key points that must be observed in Daniel 9:24. First, as has already been mentioned but should be strongly emphasized, the focus of the passage is on the **Jews** and **Jerusalem**, not the Church nor the Gentile world (“**upon thy people** and **upon thy holy city**”). Hence, this prophecy is written to a very specific group. It is critical that this context is maintained. 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.

Secondly, the passage lists six key objectives that will be accomplished by the time these seventy weeks have concluded. It is critical to recognize that these objectives in total 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 in the text, it leaves the interpreter to find a plausible explanation of what they mean. This turns out not to be overly difficult given a solid understanding of the Bible as a whole – and especially the Old Testament. 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 these themes are examined in light of Old and New Testament prophecy, it also becomes evident that although some may have been fulfilled – or may have *begun* to be fulfilled – in the most ultimate sense, they will be brought to complete fulfillment when national 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

extensive period of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).

- “*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), the basis for this future reconciliation of Israel to her Messiah.
- “*To bring in everlasting righteousness*” – This 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. By analogy, 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 describes this prophetically in great 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).

From this, it can be understood that God will accomplish these six outcomes in anticipation of the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, which directly follows the end of the seventieth week. Contin-

uing into the following verses of this prophecy, it will be seen that Daniel describes the Messiah's mission to Israel, beginning with a countdown that led to His Triumphal 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. Thus, the ultimate restoration of Israel is yet future. The expected time of completion is the end of the Tribulation (the "seventieth week") as Christ returns and inaugurates His Millennial Kingdom. All of these six objectives must be achieved in order to bring about this future Kingdom Age. Therefore, because they have *not* yet been fully achieved at this present time, the seventy week prophecy has not yet been completed. Instead, it has been paused, which will be discussed in further detail shortly.

Continuing into Daniel 9:25, as this prophecy continues, a startling prediction is 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 noted, there exists a total of seventy "weeks of years," or four hundred ninety years in total. 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 ($7 + 62 = 69$). The verse says that these sixty-nine weeks would be a countdown that *begins* with a commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and *ends* 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."

This then makes obvious the necessity of a "pause" alluded to earlier. Remember, it was observed that because the six key objectives have not yet been fully achieved at this present time, then the seventy

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

weeks prophecy has not yet been completed. This requires that some part of it is still future – yet, it will be shown that the sixty-ninth week ended with the coming of Christ around two thousand years ago. That fact alone necessitates a pause or a gap of time after the ending of the sixty-ninth week. Let's take some time to fully understand that conclusion.

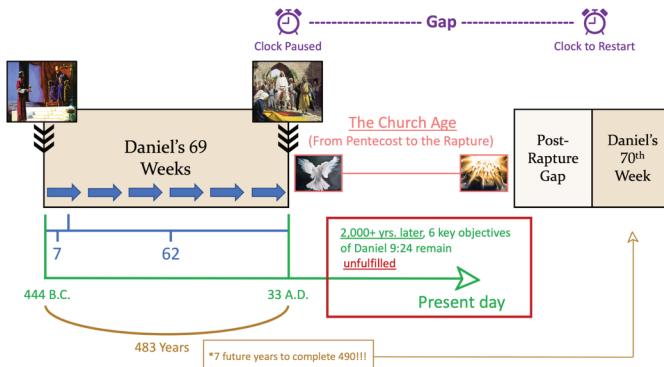
What is the reason that a pause and a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks is logically necessary? The answer is because verse 25 provides a beginning point for the seventy weeks prophecy, but also an ending point for the conclusion of the sixty-ninth week. By reading verse 25, it is seen that the seventy week countdown would *begin* at the **decree to rebuild Jerusalem** (“from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem”). It's then said 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 Thus, the sixty-nine weeks would run continuously from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem up until the coming of the Messiah the Prince. A thorough examination will be undertaken to irrefutably identify both of these points and then locate when they took place in history. It will be shown that the *beginning* point occurred during the reign of the Persian Empire, around the mid 400s BC (the year 444 to be exact), and that the *ending* point took place in 33 AD. The purpose of stating these conclusions now is that the awareness of these dates (especially the beginning point) substantiates the necessity of presuming a pause and a gap being inserted after the completion of the sixty-ninth week. In order to ensure this logic is understood, consider the following rationale.

Assuming it is known that the seventy weeks began in the 400s BC (as will be thoroughly proven 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, or 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 it began, then there must be 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.

As mentioned, it is clear that this time gap is situated between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, and that this time gap is mostly filled with the time period known as the Church Age – which is presently transpiring. This is clear because, as will be demonstrated in the chapters ahead, it is known 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, this prophetic program for Israel was paused as they rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ, and God then introduced His interim program called the Church, where the gospel would be preached to all nations and the Jews would be scattered in worldwide exile.

Daniel's 70 Weeks



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. Scripture reveals that God deals with each group mutually exclusively, as this timeline makes clear. While that

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

topic cannot be adequately engaged here, it is recommended to consult the companion study entitled “Understanding The Distinction Between Israel And The Church”. Thus, it is clear that at the conclusion of the sixty-ninth week, the prophetic weeks were paused. The final week – the seventieth week – awaits a future fulfillment.

The content of this study will mainly deal 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 that the Bible details more precisely than any other period of time in history. This final week is described thoroughly in Jesus’s Olivet Discourse (Matthew 23, Mark 13, Luke 21), Revelation, and is also referred to in many other places throughout the Old and New Testaments. As noted earlier, it’s 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 as stated, this study will focus on the first sixty-nine weeks, as this period of time involves the incredible sixty-nine week countdown to the Messiah detailed 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 has strictly fixed beginning and ending points, a thorough investigation will need to be undertaken in order to identify both of these points. This will allow a determination of whether this prophecy was actually fulfilled – and if so, how accurate was it?

Therefore, the first question that must be examined is, “what is the beginning point?” The beginning point, as verse 25 stated, 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, this event must first be identified in history.

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2. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, ed. Stephen D. Renn, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005, pp. 884, 1036.
3. *Strong's Concordance*, entry “7620, shabua,” *BibleHub.com*. (<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7620.htm> - Retrieved 2/20/19)
4. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Updated and Expanded Ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, p. 1548.

CHAPTER 3

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

In the last chapter, it was observed that the Daniel 9:25 prophecy describes a clear beginning point: “the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” In order to eventually locate a date for this beginning point, it needs to be identified historically. Is there such an event in recorded history? Obviously, it is vital to start with the correct event. If the beginning point is wrongly identified, the objective of this study will be doomed from the start. As a result, this needs to be considered with careful precision.

Four different historical decrees have been suggested as the possible beginning point of this prophecy. The scriptural and historical context of each must be precisely examined in order to determine which (if any) applies to Daniel 9:25.

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

The context of the first decree under consideration 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, 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, it is necessary to make note of several points involving these two potentially confusing passages.

Note #1

Some claim that Isaiah 44:28 (the first of the two passages above) supports the view that Cyrus's decree included the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and therefore could act as the prophecy that initiates the Daniel 9:25 countdown. In order to understand why they believe this, let's begin by re-reading the passage.

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's easy to see how a casual reader might arrive at the conclusion that this verse is saying Cyrus's 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 essential considerations.

First, it must be recognized that this is God speaking, *not* Cyrus. Secondly, this is God speaking about *His own 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. This is obscured in some English translations, such as the *King James Version*, where it's hard to understand who is saying what. However, by looking at verses 24-28 of this chapter in, for example, the *English Standard Version* (ESV), the message becomes readily discernible.

²⁴ 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,²⁵ who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish,²⁶ 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’; ²⁷ who says to the deep, ‘Be dry; I will dry up your rivers’; ²⁸ 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)

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 also take a look at the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (HCSB) rendering.

²⁴ 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; ... ²⁸ 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)

Thus, although there is some ambiguity in certain 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 noted earlier – is probably the most confusing passage, which at first, may appear to support the idea that Cyrus’s decree may have included the rebuilding of the city. Let’s re-read this passage.

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.

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

-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 would indicate that God is saying Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem. But the questions 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 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.

This passage records that at that later time, the city is still desolate and the walls were still “broken down.” In other words, it had not yet been rebuilt. Thus, Cyrus could not have built it, and Isaiah 45:13 could not be claiming he would. The Hebrew text in Nehemiah 2:13 states explicitly that the walls and gates were still 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 Again, if Cyrus’s decree included rebuilding the city and the walls, why is the city still in ruins much later during Artaxerxes reign? Clearly, it can be seen 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 reason 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 that 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” (*christos* – Strong’s #G5547). Hence, it can be known that Cyrus was a typological figure that in some ways profiled the future arrival of the true Messiah.⁴ For example, Isaiah states 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 they might be explained, what is definitely clear is that Cyrus’s decree did *not* give permission for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, *nor did it result* in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. As this investigation continues, 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 to discuss this first decree option in order to better understand what it actually said.

The ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus records that upon 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 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). Cyrus began his decree with these words:

¹ 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

in Judah. ² 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 1:2-3

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

22 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, ²³ 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 says 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 states 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). This resulted in the temporary stoppage of the work.

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

As a result, 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 the biblical recording of this decree and this story that nowhere does Cyrus issue a command to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem itself, as the Daniel 9:25 prophecy would require. Further, nowhere in this story is there any biblical verification that the prophetically required city infrastructure (the wall and the streets – “**the street** shall be built again, and **the wall**, even in troublous times” – Daniel 9:25b) was rebuilt. To the contrary, as the later story of Nehemiah indicates, the city 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* in Jerusalem. The

relevant passages consulted demonstrate a continual focus on only the reconstruction of the Temple itself, and not the city. Therefore, this first decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1:1-4 can be ruled out of consideration as being the 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’s 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 the 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 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. Thus, this second decree also can be ruled out.

#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:

²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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

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 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

Thus, it is clear that the decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Ezra 7:11-26 can also be ruled out.

#4 – The Decree of Artaxerxes I (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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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." It is helpful to recall that the wall was one of the components specifically mentioned in the Daniel 9:25 prophecy.

So, it would seem that a clear winner has been identified! 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:

17 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. **18** 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, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

-Nehemiah 2:17-18

Consequently, all the proof needed has now been identified. It can be seen that at this time, the city of Jerusalem (the walls, gates, etc.) was still not rebuilt, meaning none of the earlier decrees could have been the starting point. Unlike earlier decrees, this command by Artaxerxes *did* concern the rebuilding of the actual 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 should be 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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 the beginning point has been positively identified with a specific historical event, the next task will be to determine *when* in history this event took place. In other words, can this event be accurately assigned a historical date? In the next chapter, it will be shown that the answer is yes! The evidence will demonstrate that this decree was issued in the spring, during the Hebrew month of Nisan (modern March/April), of 444 BC, in Artaxerxes's twentieth year of reign (Nehemiah 2:1). Since Nehemiah 2:1 already provides all of this information except for the year, then the method for determining this year of 444 BC is all that must be shown.

1. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, p. 179.
2. Strong, p. 1501.
3. LiteraryDevices Editors, "Synecdoche," *LiteraryDevices.net*. (<https://literarydevices.net/synecdoche/> - Retrieved 12/20/18)
4. Strong, p. 1684.
5. Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, XI, 1.2, p. 343.
6. Finegan, p. 267.
7. Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. - A.D. 75*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007, pp. 15 and 30.
8. Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977, pp. 124.

CHAPTER 4

THE DATING OF THE BEGINNING POINT

Now that the beginning point has been successfully identified with a specific historical event, it now must be determined whether it can be assigned a date with any level of certainty. In this chapter, the evidence will demonstrate that the decree of Artaxerxes (previously identified as the beginning point) was issued in the spring during the Hebrew month of Nisan (equivalent to modern March/April) in the year 444 BC, in the twentieth year of his reign. As was mentioned at the close of the previous chapter, many of the clues concerning the dating of this decree are already provided in the biblical record. Nehemiah states all of this information, except of course what year this took place by the modern calendar reckoning. Thus, the main task here will be to explain the how the year 444 BC is determined 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 (modern 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,

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

-Nehemiah 1:1

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 begins 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

Thus, 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 a significant clue that will be used to determine this dating with precision! To have Nisan (March/April) *later* than Kislev (November/December) and **both be in the same year** is meaningful. The Jews had two different calendars – a religious (or Nisan-to-Nisan calendar) as well as a civil (or Tishri-to-Tishri calendar). The obvious conclusion is that Nehemiah was using the Tishri-to-Tishri (civil calendar) dating method.¹

In order to understand this fully, it is necessary 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 of particular relevance (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 is seen from this chart, when using the civil calendar (as opposed to the religious calendar), the Hebrew months of Kislev (November/December) and Nisan (March/April) both occur in the same year. Knowing that Nehemiah was using a Tishri-Tishri civil calendar reckoning will help enable the accurate dating of the decree of Artaxerxes.

As a historical sidenote, 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 located in the Nile River 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, it can be recognized that Nehemiah was obviously using a Tishri-to-Tishri calendar reckoning.

The next task will be to determine the date of the beginning of Artaxerxes's reign in order to figure out when his twentieth year was. In order to do this, some historical background information must be reviewed. 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 is seen 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. However, he 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). Thus, there is 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 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 will be displayed shortly, let's designate 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 calculation purposes here. So, **December of 465 BC** is the 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.

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy



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.



This explanation should provide 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 the dating of these events.

Before pausing to better understand these different regnal methods, it was concluded that according to the evidence now known from ancient histories and writings, the Persian king Artaxerxes began to rule around December of 465 BC. **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 the modern calendar of January through December. As was noted earlier in this chapter, Nehemiah was using the Jewish civil calendar that began with the month of Tishri (September/October). Thus, 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 the modern calendar would be Tishri 464 to Tishri 463 BC. This could be charted as follows (see Jewish Tishri-Tishri year).

The Accession Of Artaxerxes

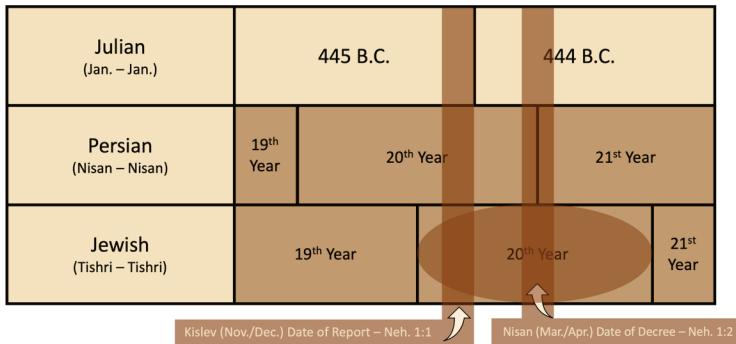
Julian (Jan. – Jan.)	465 B.C.		464 B.C.		463 B.C.	
Persian (Nisan – Nisan)		21 st Year of Xerxes	Accession Yr. Of Artaxerxes	1 st Year of Artaxerxes' Reign	2 nd Year of Artaxerxes' Reign	
Jewish (Tishri – Tishri)	20 th Year of Xerxes	21 st Year of Xerxes	Accession Year of Artaxerxes	1 st Year of Artaxerxes' Reign	2 nd Yr.	
Artaxerxes' Accession c. December, 465 B.C.						

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	2 nd Yr.	
Artaxerxes' Accession c. December, 465 B.C.						

Now that the date of the beginning of Artaxerxes's reign has been identified, it will be easy to determine the date of the twentieth year of his reign. Of course, the information provided on the last chart simply gets pushed forward by twenty years, yielding the month of Nisan of the year 444 BC. This could be charted as follows.

The Decree Of Artaxerxes



As Nehemiah records, the report of Jerusalem's desolate conditions was given in Kislev, according to Nehemiah 1:1, which on the modern 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 the modern calendar is now 444 BC. So, again, it is clear that **the decree of Artaxerxes (described in Nehemiah 2:1) would have occurred in Nisan (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, this author could not find convincing enough evidence to confidently make this claim. But since the prophecy in Daniel 9:25 was given in years ("weeks" of years), then trying to count it in terms of smaller units of measure, such as days, minutes, or seconds should not be a concern. 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. This study will keep

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

things simple, only taking claims as far as the supporting evidence allows, this author believes scripture intends. Nailing this decree date down to sometime during the month of Nisan of the year 444 BC is as precise as can be achieved while still maintaining accuracy, and is perfectly sufficient for the purposes of this study.

In conclusion, it can be said with confidence that the decree of Artaxerxes described in Nehemiah Chapters 1 and 2, which marks the beginning point of Daniel's countdown, took place in the month of **Nisan, (our March/April), of 444 BC** on the modern calendar.

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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, it was clearly established that the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, as issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus during the month of **Nisan**, (March/April), of 444 BC, marks the beginning point of the Daniel 9:25 countdown. Let's again review the 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 might one proceed from here? Well, the obvious answer is to consider Messianic candidates and then

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

investigate if there's any record any of them ever presented themselves as a Messianic prince. Obviously, for Christians, this search will begin and end with the most well-known Jewish Messianic figure in history – Jesus Christ – and there isn't a close second. But does He fit the evidence?

At the outset, it should be acknowledged that there is evidence in the name Jesus Christ itself, as being the fulfillment 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, scholar 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 thoroughly and ample Jewish references will be provided 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.

If it's known that the sixty-nine weeks of years are to end with the *meschiach nagid* (the “Messiah the Prince/King”), and it's assumed that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, then **the next question must be, “when did Jesus Christ ever present Himself as the Messiah the Prince/King?”** It must be determined if there ever was a time when Jesus did this, and if so, whether the dating fits.

Often, the gospels describe 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 yet. Then, one day, Jesus did something strange. He not only permitted it, but He deliberately arranged it. Jesus told His disciples to go to a certain place to find a donkey, and He even gave them a sort of “password” to use so the owner would release it to them. The disciples then brought the donkey to Jesus, and He rode it into Jerusalem to fulfill the Messianic prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9. In order to answer the question at hand, it's necessary to pay close attention to the wording found in this Old Testament prophecy, which Jesus was fulfilling on that day.

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

Of great significance is Zechariah's specific mention of the "King" coming unto Israel (or being presented to Israel). The following excerpt is John's account of the fulfillment of this event, which is often referred to as Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, **13** 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. **14** And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, **15** Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, **thy King cometh**, sitting on an ass's colt. **16** 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 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 Messiah to Jerusalem. As was mentioned above, this event was the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, occurring four days before He is then killed on Passover. It's celebrated in Christianity on Palm Sunday, although this event actually seems to have occurred on a Monday (to be discussed in a following chapter). **The Triumphal Entry is the first and only occasion where Jesus ever allowed Himself to be proclaimed as a Messianic King!** It should be stressed that Zechariah 9:9 actually *requires* that He did, as seen in the phrase "thy King cometh unto thee."

But there's more. It's essential to become familiar with the following prophetic verse, found in the Psalms. Many Christians are

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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 believers can certainly rejoice for each day God has given, it's important to recognize that this verse was celebrating a very *specific* future day in history. To fully understand which specific day it anticipates, it is necessary to examine the accounts of the Triumphal Entry found in the gospels (Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12). All four of these gospel accounts record the story of Jesus riding the donkey into Jerusalem. On this day, people began throwing down their palm branches in front of Him as He rode down the path. When they ran out of branches, they began to throw down their coats. The gospels also record that the crowds were singing a Messianic quotation from the same chapter in Psalms that was just mentioned (Psalm 118:24), found only two verses later. This passage is Psalm 118:26, which provides the context to understand what "day" verse 24 was referring to!

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

-Psalm 118:26a

Keep that in mind while reading Matthew's recording of the Triumphal Entry:

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

Thus, it is seen that the crowds on the day of Jesus's Triumphal

Entry were singing the Messianic anticipation from Psalm 118:26, confirming what “day the Lord has made” in verse 24. Obviously, it referred to this day being described, showing its significance. Luke’s account records even more detail, and supplying an additional confirmation of this.

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 the earlier question of “when did Jesus allow Himself to be called the King?” This again confirms the Triumphal Entry as the day being prophesied of in Zechariah and the Psalms. 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. Thus, by the gospels’s own testimonies of this event being a fulfillment of Psalm 118:26, it is understood 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, it can be seen 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 to

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

be examined, which will soundly prove this while allowing a full recognition of what was transpiring on this special day.

As “Gentiles” separated from the Jewish culture of that day and time, it is easy to read about the crowd singing this quote, but yet miss the larger point in the Hebraic sense. But luckily, whenever modern observers run the risk of missing the point, the Pharisees always seem to appear in the story to unwittingly ensure that doesn’t take place. They became nearly deranged with anger when they heard 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 such 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 what was stated earlier, about this particular day being of such significance, in that Jesus was presenting Himself to Israel as the *meschiach nagid* – the Messianic Ruler. Notice Jesus’s frank reply to the Pharisees’s 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! Thus, it abundantly 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. It's seen fulfilled here *and only here*, on this specific day, during Jesus's First Coming. This was the *only* day Jesus ever allowed 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 outwardly 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 condition of their hearts, which explains why He cried the following, as Luke records in this same chapter.

⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ⁴² 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

In a stunningly anticlimactic turn, Jesus suddenly began to *weep* over the city! This was 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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 states that the national blindness on Israel will last until the “fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25-26). This aligns with the testimony of the Old Testament prophets, which anticipated the eventual salvation of the unfaithful Jewish nation(Isaiah 45:17-19, et al.). Eventually, they will recognize Him and acknowledge Him (Zechariah 12:10; Hosea 5:15).

In fact, they will even use the same Messianic phrase 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 describing 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 the King, their prophesied Messianic Kingdom would have to be temporarily postponed. Instead, they would have to endure a time of national desolation until the time of the end. Jesus said the Jewish nation wouldn’t see Him again *until* they cry out to Him in repentance, finally acknowledging Him as their Messiah. And at His Second Coming, this time they *will* be in faith, and will petition His return, proclaiming this Messianic greeting when He comes.

³⁷ 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! ³⁸ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. ³⁹ 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

Scripture makes clear that this will happen at the end of the future seventieth week (Zechariah 8-14; Revelation 7-19), and that the remnant Jews acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah while 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

Note: The Hebrew word translated “early” in that passage actually means “diligently” or “earnestly” (*shachar* – Strong’s #H7836).^[69]

Thus, 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 in Daniel 9:25, and other supporting passages! Continuing, Jesus then stated that for this reason, Jerusalem would soon be destroyed “because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

⁴³ 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, ⁴⁴ 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.” He was declaring 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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). Of course, this is the verse that directly follows Daniel 9:25, further revealing the astonishing precision and foreknowledge of God. It says that after “threescore and two weeks” (in other words, after the 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 killed (*karath* – Strong’s #H3772).⁷



Because of this tragic ignorance stemming from their widespread unbelief, 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”.

This is profound to consider – Jesus actually held them *accountable* to know this prophecy and expect it at that very time! They should have known and been watching for that day, but they failed to recognize it as the fulfillment of this countdown, and the consequences were severe.

In conclusion, the expected ending point of Daniel’s countdown has now been established (the coming of the “Messiah the King,” meaning the anointed ruler – a Messianic anticipation). Further, this

event has been conclusively shown to have been fulfilled at the only time Jesus presented Himself as that Messianic King: the Triumphal Entry. **Next, the actual calendar date of this event must be determined in order to realize whether this ending point actually fits the prophetic timetable.**

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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.
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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

The way the dating of the Triumphal Entry will be investigated will consist of two parts. First, in this chapter, a conclusive date for the crucifixion of Jesus must be identified. After that is accomplished, then in the next chapter it will be possible to backtrack several days prior to that date, to when Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. This two-part endeavor has been split into two chapters, as the first task of proving the date of the crucifixion is a bit extensive. It is necessary to go into substantial depth in order to ensure the correct dating for the ending point is identified.

There are eight Biblical clues that will be consulted in order to understand precisely when Jesus died (right down to the year, season, month, day, and hour). As will be evident, this exercise will not be built upon extrapolating a date based upon one mention or reference. Instead, these clues will build upon one another, further solidifying the eventual conclusion. The Bible gives us many clues as anchor points to allow this date to be identified 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. This is stated 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} Thus, 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

It is known from secular historical sources that Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from 26-36 AD, under the emperor Tiberius.⁶ The possible date range can then be narrowed down by a number of years, to between **26 and 36 AD**.

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

The Bible provides a clue that allows a close approximation of the date of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. This clue is based on Luke's

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

very historically specific statement in Luke 3:1-3 about the ministry of John the Baptist, which shortly preceded that of Jesus.

¹ 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 Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, ² Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

-Luke 3:1-3

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 the majority of 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 The more likely year is autumn of 29 AD, for reasons that will now be explained.

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 therefore appear that Luke is intending his gospel to be addressed to and 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). Based on this, it is reasoned then 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 accession-year system) ran from January 1st, 29 AD to December 31st, 29 AD. This is the rationale for assigning 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). Thus, it is reasonable to 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 justification for this is that 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 Thus, there is reason to believe that Jesus was baptized and began His public ministry in the fall of 29 AD.

Next, it is necessary to determine the length of Jesus's public ministry, from its beginning until His death. John's gospel records 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

There was also a Passover in Galilee midway through His public ministry.

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

-John 6:4

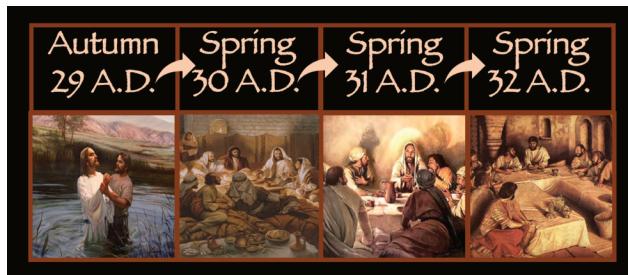
The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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

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

Consequently, three definitive Passovers can be identified following the beginning of Jesus's ministry in 29 AD. If these three are added to 29 AD, it would then be evident that no crucifixion date prior to 32 AD could be a viable option.



Does this mean 32 AD *has* to be the crucifixion date of choice? Many believe the answer is no, as numerous scholars suppose the existence of an additional Passover included in the gospels that may have not been mentioned explicitly. In *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Jack Finegan outlines this possibility, pointing out some of the passages that may potentially indicate a fourth Passover.¹³ Andrew Steinmann advocates the same in *From Abraham To Paul: A Biblical Chronology*.¹⁴ Anyhow, the date range can now be narrowed to between 32 and 33 AD.

Before moving on to our next clue, there is another passage that should be considered, as it seems to provide a confirmation of the aforementioned conclusion. As was stated, Jesus's baptism took place during Tiberius's fifteenth year, which was reasoned to be 29 AD, probably in late summer or early autumn. Corroboration 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, according to many scholars, 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 that the specific Greek term used for “temple” in this passage specifically focuses on the Temple building itself, and not the surrounding precincts and courtyards.^{15 16}

¹⁷



Josephus records 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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 anniversary 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 was concluded earlier, His baptism would have occurred in 29 AD.²⁰



So again, by starting with 29 AD and adding the three separate Passovers (at least) that took place during Christ's ministry, one would arrive at 32 AD as the earliest date for the crucifixion. But before closing this chapter, several additional observations should be acknowledged.

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, an overly dogmatic conclusion should be avoided. Any calculation of this sort needs to allow for slight variability (give or take a year). Nevertheless, this

exercise undertaken in Clue #3 does help to generally verify the earlier calculation of the fifteenth year of Tiberius.

Note #2:

In this Clue #3, it must be admitted that different scholars have different views regarding the calculations of the events 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 proposed for them should be viewed as inexact, and may vary by several years. So, for those readers who disagree with some of the scholarly opinions advocated here, please forbear until some of the further clues are examined. Regardless of what is concluded from the dating of this Clue #3, the remaining clues ahead 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 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, the gospels appear to be in agreement that Jesus must have been crucified on a Friday, which is the preparation day for the weekly

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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. This is stated in John 19:14.

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

-John 19:14

That is to say, it was Friday of the Passover week. John 19:31 also shows 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

In this passage, it is important to note 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.” Simply put, Jesus was crucified on a Friday (preparation day), and the next day was a Sabbath. Obviously, the Jews didn’t want dead bodies laying uncovered on a Sabbath. Moreover, this Sabbath was also a “high” Sabbath. A high Sabbath refers to one of the seven Levitical feasts.²² Therefore, this passage is stating that one of the seven Levitical feasts (in this case, the Feast of Unleavened Bread) fell on a normal Saturday Sabbath. This important point will be further discussed in detail in the following clue, as it will be a critical piece of information to understand.

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. This is an attempt at supporting 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, and it is for the seventh day Sabbath (Exodus 16:5); *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.

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

The context in this statement by Josephus clearly 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. Thus, it can be concluded that the crucifixion happened on a Friday sometime between 32 and 33 AD.

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

As has already been 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). The goal

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

now in Clue #5 will be to specifically demonstrate 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 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 days are reckoned today). 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	
Nisan 14 "Eve of Passover"	Nisan 15 "Unleavened Bread"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lambs killed (about 3 p.m.) • Lambs prepared and roasted (about 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sundown begins the 15th (about 6-7 p.m.) • Ritual Seder meal then commences
↑ Sundown (about 6-7 p.m.)	

With this in mind, it will be helpful to look at several of the additional passages that associate the crucifixion with the beginning of Passover, and look for significant 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 John 19:14, it is made clear that Jesus was crucified on the “preparation of the Passover,” or in other words, the Friday of Passover week, which has already been shown in the last clue. The next passage will supply a unique hint that will help reveal whether this Friday was the 14th or the 15th.

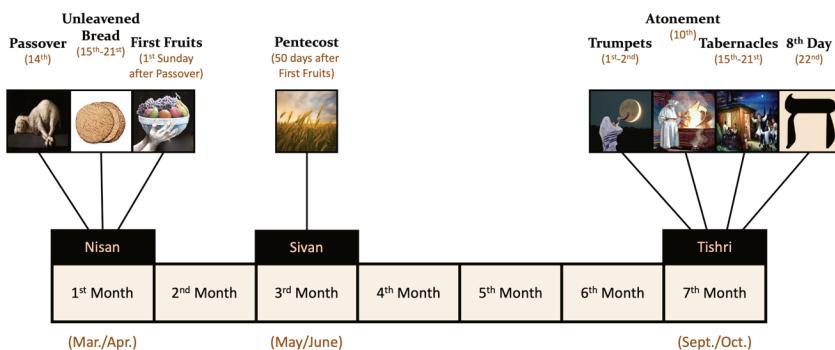
The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

-John 19:31

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

In John 19:31, it again confirms that Jesus was crucified on a preparation (or a Friday), before a weekly Sabbath. But this key passage also gives 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 simple. **If one of the seven Levitical feast days fell on a normal seventh-day Sabbath, it was referred to as a High Sabbath.**²⁴ In this case, since 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, consider to the following chart:

The Hebrew Religious Calendar



The three Levitical feast days of Passover season are shown on the left of the above chart. Passover (or *Erev Pesach*, the Eve of Passover) fell on Nisan 14, Unleavened Bread fell on Nisan 15, and First Fruits fell on the first Sunday after Passover. Which of these three feasts/days then could John 19:31 be referring to by calling the Sabbath after Jesus’s Friday crucifixion a “high day?” Right away, First Fruits can easily be eliminated, since by definition, it took place on a Sunday rather than a Saturday. Consequently, 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 any additional clues that can be used to answer this question? 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

John states 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. When did Jesus's trial take place in relation to this Seder? This passage itself (along with the storyline of all four gospels) record 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 John 18:28). It states that *at this time*, the Jewish religious leaders refused to enter the Praetorium because they needed to stay ceremonially undefiled, since they were preparing to eat the Passover Seder later after nightfall. John's account tells that Jesus was crucified later *that same day* (John 19:14), *prior to nightfall* when the Jews were preparing to eat their Seder. If 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. **Thus, the conclusion is clear that Jesus died on Friday of Passover, the 14th of Nisan, the day the lambs are killed.**

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy



The New Testament continually returns to this theme of Jesus dying as the 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 clearly what the Bible does record.

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

-1 Corinthians 5:7b

Based on all of this, it can be concluded that the crucifixion happened on a **Friday, the eve of Passover – the 14th of Nisan – sometime between 32 and 33 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. Beginning with what has been concluded 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 33 AD**), the exact year can be even more precisely determined through utilizing 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. Sir Colin J. Humphreys (a British scientist, Oxford professor, and Bible scholar) and W. Graeme Waddington (his astrophysicist colleague) computed the visibility of the lunar crescent seen from Jerusalem using the most current astronomical theory, in which considerable confidence can be placed.²⁶ The dates of Nisan 14 (Passover) for the period between 30-36 AD are given in the below table.

Note: So far in this study, the possible date range for the crucifixion has already been narrowed down to the years of 32-33 AD. Nevertheless, data from between 30 and 36 AD is included in the chart. Any uncertainties are noted in the footnotes to the table. As can be seen, 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

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.

* 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.

† In each of these cases it is not impossible, but highly improbable, that Nisan 14 would have occurred on the preceding day.

-Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, A Lunar Eclipse And The Date Of Christ's Crucifixion," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.2, 1992, pp. 331-351, and Table 1, p. 335.

Based on the information shown in the above chart, there are only two possibilities between 30 and 36 AD for the crucifixion of Jesus. During those years, Nisan 14 (Passover) only fell on a Friday twice:

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

If the expanded date range of 30 to 36 is allowed, then these two dates are the only ones that are astronomically and calendrically possible for the crucifixion.^{27 28} However, as has already been concluded from earlier clues, the date of 30 AD should be viewed with significant skepticism, since it has already been determined that 32

AD is the earliest viable 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 the dating that has been presented concerning those events, and who still view 30 AD as an option, that date will be considered for now. But as will be further shown in the clues ahead, 30 AD will not work.

Thus, it can be concluded that, given the expanded date range, April 7, 30 AD and April 3, 33 AD are the only two viable options from an astronomical perspective. To aid in choosing between these two dates, there is further ample and fascinating evidence. Two reasons from secular history and astronomy will be examined, which should result in a conclusive determination of the correct date of 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, a brief history lesson is in order.

Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus was the emperor of Rome from 14-37 AD, succeeding his stepfather Augustus, the first Roman emperor. But once reaching his mid-sixties, Tiberius had begun to lose interest in the daily routine of governing his empire. Consequently, he decided to enter “semi-retirement” on the Island of Capri in 26 AD. There, out of the public eye, he embraced a life of extreme depravity and cruelty. But he still needed a political representative through whom he could retain control of his empire. For that reason, he appointed a regent in Rome named Aelius Sejanus, who had previously been captain of the Praetorian Guard (the elite guard of the Imperial Roman army). Sejanus had appeared to be loyal to Tiberius, but behind the scenes he was a cunning and ruthless man.

During the five years that he ruled the empire as a personal representative of Tiberius, Sejanus plotted and carried out the banishment, imprisonment, suicide or other elimination of many of his own oppo-

nents and Tiberius's potential successors. The Roman historian Tacitus extensively chronicled these political maneuverings of Sejanus, chronicling how he might one day plot and murder his way to the throne.²⁹ If it hadn't been for the intervention of Tiberius's trusted sister-in-law Antonia, Sejanus might have been successful in stealing the throne. Because she wasn't a candidate for the throne, and was also part of Tiberius's family, she retained a certain credibility. While nearly all communication from Rome filtered through Sejanus's control, Antonia managed send a secret letter to Tiberius in Capri, exposing the details of Sejanus's plot. 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. At the letter's surprise ending, Tiberius unleashed a severe denunciation of Sejanus, demanding his arrest. In complete shock, he was arrested and executed that same day: October 18, 31 AD.

Why does this date of October 18, 31 AD matter for determining the correct date of the crucifixion? It matters because Roman and Biblical histories intersect in a way that will help us eliminate one of the two potential dates for the crucifixion. During his time in power, Sejanus put many of his own political appointees in place, including Pontius Pilate, who was made Prefect of Judea about the time Tiberius left Rome for Capri. It's also significant to recognize that Sejanus was a notorious anti-Semite. The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher and writer Philo of Alexandria made note of Sejanus's "hatred of and hostile designs against the Jewish nation."³⁰ In a way similar to that of his boss Sejanus, Pilate also carried out anti-Jewish policies as he governed Judea. Pilate's ill treatment of the Jews is well documented in both secular histories and the New Testament. For example, 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. 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 20:4. With full knowledge of this, Pilate proceeded to install images of Tiberius in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem – a massive offense to the Jewish population he governed. In his *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus records:

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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Another example of this was recorded by Philo of Alexandria, who reports that Pilate also planned to erect a colossal idol in the Holy of Holies itself, the most sacred part of the Temple in Jerusalem. He wrote:

Now the thing proposed to be erected is a colossal statue ... in the inmost part of the temple, in the very holy of holies itself³³

Josephus also reports that Pilate also seized religious offerings made by worshiping Jews and used them to finance Roman infrastructure projects. *The Wars of the Jews*, Book II, Chapter 9.4 records how Temple donations were seized by Pilate and redirected to fund Roman aqueducts.³⁴ The New Testament gospel of Luke also records that Pilate killed Jewish worshipers and mingled their blood with that of their religious sacrifices, which was an extreme desecration to the Jews.

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

-Luke 13:1

Further yet, the gospel of John records that at the crucifixion, even while succumbing to the demands of the Jewish religious leaders, Pilate ridiculed them by posting a disdainful notice on Christ's cross, declaring Him "the King of the Jews."

¹⁹ And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was Jesus Of Nazareth The King Of The Jews. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

-John 19:19-22

But all this raises a significant question about the crucifixion of Jesus. As Philo records, Pilate's habitual pattern was to avoid doing "anything which could be acceptable to his subjects" the Jews.³⁵ Knowing this about his antagonistic toward them, why would he now surrender to the demands of the Jewish leaders who wanted Jesus to be put to death? Since the New Testament records Pilate being unable to find Jesus guilty of any illegal acts, why wouldn't he have simply released Jesus, knowing this would irritate the Jews? His usual practice would be to do exactly such a thing. What was different now?

Interestingly, the Biblical record *does* reflect Pilate's intention to release Jesus, and states that He almost did. But something had changed, which prompted him to deviate from his normal tendencies and instead, grudgingly give in to their demands. What changed? Consider the following historical explanation, as it will demonstrate that the earlier year option of April 7, 30 AD can be conclusively eliminated from consideration.

What had changed was the political situation involving Sejanus! Sejanus was now dead. And even worse for Pilate, after the surprise execution of Sejanus in the fall of 31 AD, Tiberius began to vigorously 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 barbaric treatment of Sejanus's allies. Section LXII records one example of this.

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

Similarly, in *The Annals*, Book VI, Tacitus writes:

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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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 began to reverse Sejanus's orders, including his anti-Semitic policies. Philo records how Tiberius reversed course on these policies, comforting the Jews who Sejanus had persecuted.

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

In his determination to root out any traces of Sejanus in his empire, Tiberius made it his priority to exterminate political appointees that had been loyal to Sejanus; including governors that had been installed by Sejanus – *officials like Pilate!*

Consequently, it's significant to understand the tense political climate that Pilate was living under, which would have powerfully influenced his behavior at the time of Jesus's trial. After Sejanus's death on October 18, 31 AD, Pilate lived in a dangerous political

context. If Jesus's trial happened *after* this date, Pilate's uncharacteristic demeanor toward Jesus and the Jewish leadership can be well understood! At this moment of history, his prejudices against the Jews could draw the attention of Tiberius and identify himself as one still carrying out the policies of Sejanus. Knowing this context, it is easy to understand why Pilate would have been so intimidated by the chants of the Jews and of the Jewish religious leaders who were demanding Christ's execution. John 19 records this. While reading through this excerpt, keep in mind the political climate just described, and notice how it becomes obvious in the description of this event.

12 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. **13** 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. **14** And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! **15** 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. **16** Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

-John 19:12-16

Thus, from the witness of recorded history, a deeper understanding can be gained concerning the political context of this chapter. **This is strong historical evidence 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.** This, along with the earlier evidence demonstrating 32 AD as the earliest possibility, combines to make a strong argument for **April 3, 33 AD** as being the correct date for the crucifixion.

Clue #8 – Lunar Eclipse Data

Based on the information presented thus far, it can be safely concluded that Jesus was crucified on April 3, 33 AD. But there is further evidence of an astronomical nature that would seem to overwhelmingly clinch this in favor of 33 AD. Let's consider a significant argument that originated from the words of the apostle Peter in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. This will add one final piece of evidence about the day of the cross.

The Bible records that the resurrected Messiah instructed His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they received power from the Holy Spirit. Clearly, they were confused, wondering if Jesus was going to institute His earthly Messianic Kingdom at that time (Acts 1). But they obeyed His command and awaited the outpouring of the Spirit in the Upper Room. They were still there for the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after the Sunday that followed Passover.

Like each year this time, Jerusalem was full of worshippers from all over the Near East. While in the Upper Room following Jesus's instructions to await the Holy Spirit, Acts records that suddenly, some startling things began to take 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).

In response to this unexpected outburst, much confusion ensued among the onlookers. Foreign Jewish pilgrims to the feast heard their own native languages being spoken by the Galilean disciples and were amazed and puzzled. Some hecklers in the crowd supposed that they were in a drunken state. But hearing this, the Apostle Peter arose amidst the confusion and preached to them the first sermon of the Church Age, declaring his divinely-inspired explanation of what was

happening. Peter argued from the words of the prophet Joel recorded around 835 BC, as is recorded in Acts Chapter 2.

¹⁴ 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: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷ 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: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: ¹⁹ And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: ²¹ 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 made a statement that is highly significant to the identification of the crucifixion date. He says the following.

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*. 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 asserted that Joel's prophecy had been fulfilled (at least

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

partially) and that his listeners knew it. **He stated 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 actually occurred. Both men took for granted that everybody in their audience knew about these celestial wonders that had recently taken place. That is powerful evidence that they had actually occurred. Of particular interest, 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.

It needs to be understood that although the Bible describes these same astronomical signs occurring in an ultimate eschatological (relating to the end-times) sense in the 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 (a 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 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

Ancient sources reveal conclusively that the phrase from Acts 2:20 (“the moon turned to blood”) is a graphic ancient description of a lunar eclipse, which enables yet another precise verification regarding the dating of the crucifixion. The reason an eclipsed moon appears blood-red is well-known, and the effect has been well-documented. During an eclipse, even though 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, resulting in the reddish color being prominent.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

Another confirmation comes from the work of 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). Stephenson is the author of the well-known work *Historical Eclipses and Earth’s Rotation*. He also contends 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 being one of the astronomical signs or wonders the Jews had apparently witnessed, he was describing a lunar eclipse.

With the foundation of Johannes Kepler's equations of the Laws of Planetary Motion, the occurrences of historical eclipses can be determined precisely. 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 Meeus and Mucke to more accurately take into account the long-term changes in the earth's rate of rotation.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ ⁴⁹ These calculations closely agree with ancient 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. During this period, there was only one lunar eclipse at Passover time, visible from Jerusalem – that being on **Friday, April 3, 33 AD** (highlighted in red). This acts as a further confirmation of 33 AD as being the correct date 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

* 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.

-Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, A Lunar Eclipse And The Date Of Christ's Crucifixion," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.2, 1992, p. 345.

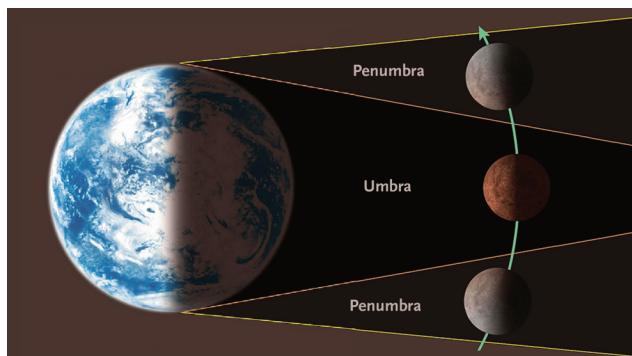
Humphreys and Waddington (the two British Oxford science professors mentioned earlier) give the following description of this eclipse.

Calculations show that the eclipse on April 3, 33 AD 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 Jerusalem horizon at about 6:20 PM (the start of the Jewish Sabbath and also near to the start of the Passover Seder in 33 AD), 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, also 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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, a computer model of the universe can be created. In just minutes, thousands of sky maps can be produced, which were a great labor before computers. The universe can be animated in real-time at any speed chosen, making months pass in moments, or “winding back the clock” to see what the sky looked like at any point in history. In fact, using these computer programs, the sky can be viewed 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 above quote by Humphreys and Waddington (“The start of the eclipse was invisible from Jerusalem, being below the horizon...”⁵⁶). With software however, what the onlookers on that day could *not* see now *can* be seen, as Earth’s shadow began the eclipse. Researcher Rick Larson, the creator of the documentary *The Star of Bethlehem* observed that when this is done, it is observed 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. It was an event predicted hundreds of years earlier through the prophecy of Joel; and now, thousands of years later, with the science of astronomy, it can be precisely verified – even down to the exact year, day, hour, and minute. **This confirmation allows Friday, April 3, 33 AD to be overwhelming accepted as being the date of the crucifixion.**

Now that the date of the crucifixion has been established with incredible certainty, the effort to pinpoint the expected date of the ending point of the sixty-nine week countdown can be continued.

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The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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MICHAEL FILIPEK

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CHAPTER 7

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

Now that the first part of identifying the date of the ending point has been completed (identifying the date of the crucifixion), the second part of that task can now be performed. This will involve the identification of the date on which the Triumphal Entry took place. Once accomplished, it will then be possible to calculate whether or not this proposed ending point actually fits the sixty-nine week prophetic timetable. By taking into account the eight clues examined in Part 1, it has already been determined that Christ's crucifixion took place on April 3, 33 AD. The next step will be to backtrack several days from the crucifixion in order to identify the dating of the Triumphal Entry.

From the record of the Passion Week of Christ given in the gospels, the exact day of the Triumphal Entry can be discerned. John's gospel is of particular help concerning this task, as he provides 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). In the next verse, John records that the Triumphal Entry took place “**on the next day**.”

12 **On the next day** much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, **13** 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. **14** And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, **15** Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt.

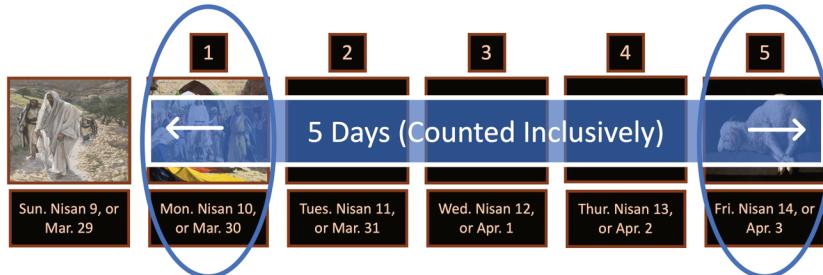
-John 12:12-15

Thus, 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 to reckon this time with precision, it is necessary to take into account a significant difference in the way the ancients reckoned time in comparison to the way it is reckoned today. In the ancient world, when one counted a sequence, one counted the day that *began* 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 states that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. However, by analyzing the relevant passages, it should be recognized 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. It is imperative to recognize that this is how the ancients reckoned time. Since the date of the crucifixion has been identified as Friday, Nisan 14, or April 3, 33 AD, then if counted inclu-

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

sively (as the ancients did), five days before would be Monday, Nisan 10, 33 AD.



But what does that date translate to on a modern calendar? Obviously, it's as simple as 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 Adar 10	2 Adar 11	3 Adar 12	4 Adar 13	5 Adar 14	6 Adar 15	7 Adar 16
8 Adar 17	9 Adar 18	10 Adar 19	11 Adar 20	12 Adar 21	13 Adar 22	14 Adar 23
15 Adar 24	16 Adar 25	17 Adar 26	18 Adar 27	19 Adar 28	20 Adar 29	21 Nisan 1
22 Nisan 2	23 Nisan 3	24 Nisan 4	25 Nisan 5	26 Nisan 6	27 Nisan 7	28 Nisan 8
29 Nisan 9	30 Nisan 10	31 Nisan 11				
Phases of the Moon: 8:0						

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

Thus, it can be demonstrated from scripture that the Triumphal Entry took place on Monday, Nisan 10, 33 AD. This date on the modern calendar would be March 30, 33 AD – and is the proposed ending point for the sixty-nine-week countdown.

But before moving on, one astonishing detail regarding Jesus's precise fulfillment of this day (Nisan 10) should be recognized. 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.

³ 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: ⁴ 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. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: ⁶ 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 "lamb selection day" day that He instituted into the Jewish culture 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 according to modern time reckoning) 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 according to modern reckoning), He was inspected and proclaimed to be spotless and blameless by no less than the following witnesses:

- Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:4)

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

- 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)

Thus, it can be understood that the Triumphal Entry took place *exactly* on the specific day intended. And the Old Testament prophets clearly foretold this event with astonishing detail in the following three passages that have been previously examined:

- 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

Therefore, through a careful examination of all of the relevant information, it can be confidently concluded that the ending point of Daniel's sixty-nine weeks is the Triumphal Entry, occurring on **Monday, Nisan 10 (March 30), 33 AD.**

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CHAPTER 8

TESTING OUR CALCULATIONS

It is now time to perform the final calculations necessary to determine whether the duration of this prophecy truly fits with the beginning and ending points that have been proposed in this study. Before beginning, it should be remembered how carefully each aspect of this has been researched in order to conduct a thorough examination of all of the evidence necessary to arrive at these proposed points. Neither the beginning point nor the ending point has been proposed in a haphazard fashion. If all of the evidence presented is analyzed without bias, one would be hard-pressed to find any other dates that can legitimately be put forward as alternatives. An honest researcher never wants to be accused of torturing, manipulating, or backfilling the data to make it fit with a desired conclusion. One must simply go where the evidence leads. Throughout this study, extreme effort has been made to not only cite reliable academic sources, but to also let the data speak for itself.

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 it is found 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 the 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 has been 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." It has been shown that Artaxerxes Longimanus issued the command to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem during the month of **Nisan, (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 the Triumphal Entry. This was shown to have occurred on **Nisan 10 (March 30), of 33 AD.**

The next task will be to calculate the time span in between these two points in order to determine whether the sixty-nine weeks of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy actually fits. At the outset, there is a very important adjustment needed to be made in order to ensure that the calculations to be performed 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 requiring 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) to ensure their calendar tracked correctly. Although it may be strange to present-day thinking, it was common in those days to think of a 360-day year.²

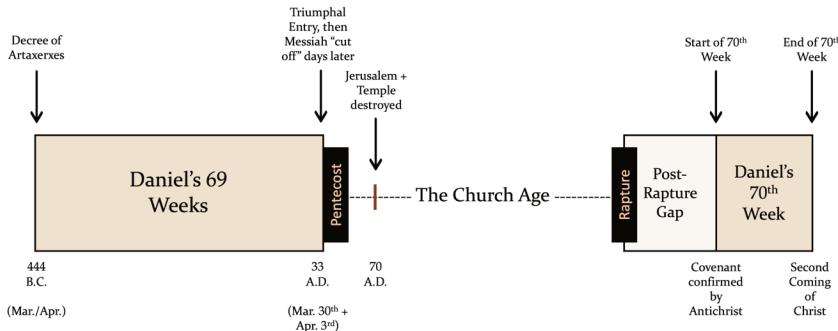
Note: There have been some who have conjectured that the apparent worldwide calendar changes that took place in approximately 701 BC (according to ancient records) to abandon the 360-day year had something to do with Earth and Mars being on “resonant orbits.” According to this theory, the Earth had an orbit of 360 days and Mars an orbit 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 secondly, 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 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 detailed earlier, is separated from the first sixty-nine weeks by a time gap in which the Church Age occurs. This gap is occurring presently.

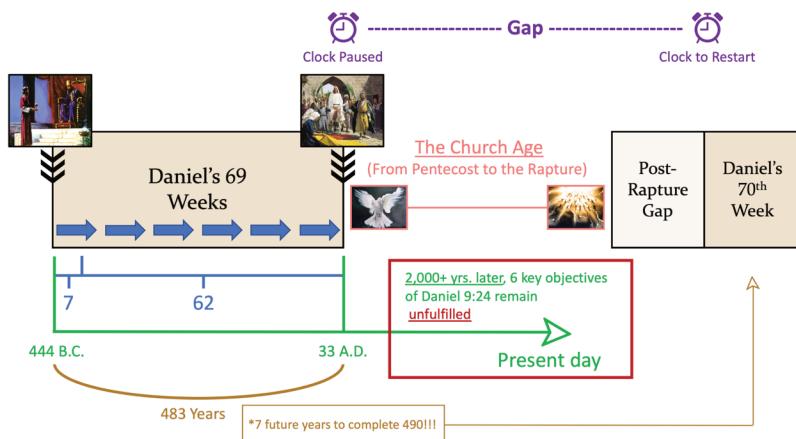
The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Daniel's 70 Weeks Timeline

(Daniel 9:24-27)



Daniel's 70 Weeks



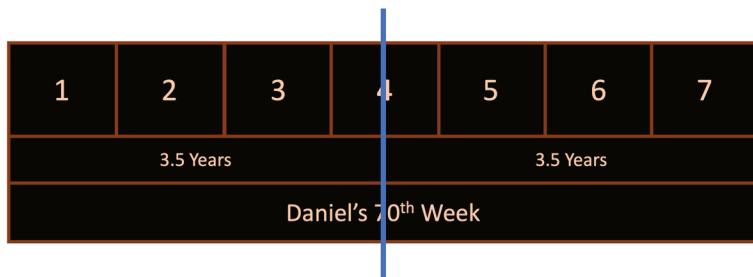
The Bible describes the seventieth week as a future period of seven years that will take place prior to the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom where He will physically rule on Earth from Jerusalem. This seventieth week is often called the “Tribulation” by Christians, and its time divisions are precisely detailed in Daniel and Revelation. First, a covenant will be confirmed by the Antichrist at the beginning of the seven years of Daniel's seven-

tith week (Daniel 9:27), but he will break it in the middle of the week.

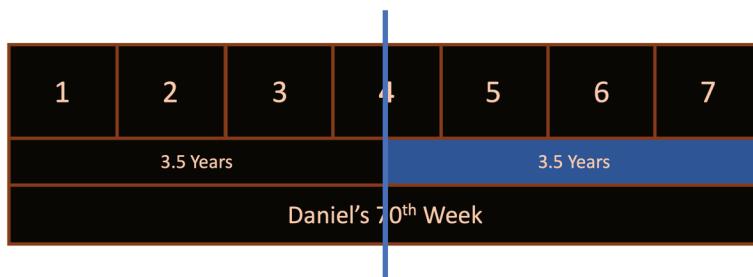
And he shall confirm the **covenant with many for one week**: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease ...

-Daniel 9:27a

Thus, the seven years are split into a first half (3.5 years) and a last half (3.5 years).



Scripture states 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 in another way, which is seen in Daniel 7:24-25. This passage 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 sware 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 *exact duration* of the year is known. This is easily seen, as the following equivalent timing expressions are understood. First, 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 described 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

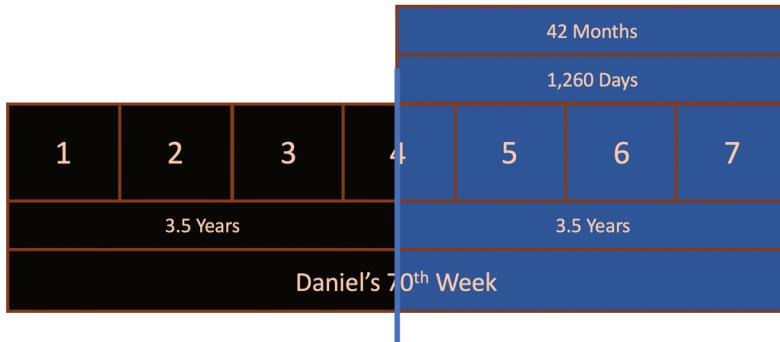
Also, this **forty-two-month** period is mentioned in Revelation 13:5, which speaks of the same period of persecution.

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

Thus, it is evident that the Bible goes to great lengths to discuss the timing of this latter half of Daniel's seventieth week. After connecting all of these relevant verses, it's obvious 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 ($42 \text{ months} \times 30 \text{ days per month} = 1,260 \text{ days}$; $1,260 \text{ days} / 3.5 \text{ years} = 360 \text{ days per year}$). Consequently, the conclusion is that if God measures Daniel's seventieth week by 360-day years, then it is necessary to apply 360-day years to the first sixty-nine weeks in order to correctly calculate the prophecy.

Note: A 360-day year may be referred to as a “prophetic year,” as this measurement has been repeatedly used in scripture.

Now that this key of using 360-day (prophetic) years has been unlocked, let's perform this 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, it is necessary to convert the prophetic years into the terms of the modern calendar.** To do that, it must be determined how many days there are in sixty-nine weeks of years. Once that is known, it can then be converted 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, the Julian Calendar will continue to be used for this exercise, instead of the more recent Gregorian Calendar. However, no matter which calendar is used, the conclusion would ultimately be the same. So then, let's now convert the 173,880 “prophetic year” days into Julian years so it can be determined whether this prophecy truly fits.

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

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



Note: This would equal 476.06767 *Gregorian* solar years, making the difference truly inconsequential for the calculation purposes here (173,880 / 365.242190419 tropical year days = 476.06767 years).

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

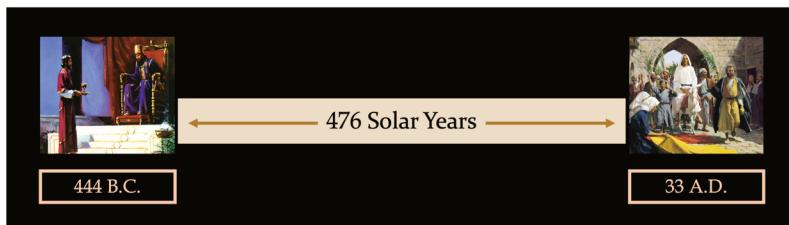
Thus, the duration of Daniel's sixty-nine weeks is equal to 476 solar years when converted into the terms of a calendar system that we can use to see if this prophecy truly was accurate.

Keep in mind that the .05749 (Julian) or .06767 (Gregorian) remainder is unimportant to this calculation, since the only concern is 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, it is necessary to calculate how many solar years occurred between Nisan of 444 BC and Nisan 10 (March 30th) of 33 AD. Will the duration between these two dates turn out to be 476 solar years?

Yes! The duration on the modern calendar 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!

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



Concerning this calculation, in order to cross from BC into AD, the two dates must first be added together, and then one year must be subtracted, since there is only one year between 1 BC and 1 AD. In other words, there is no “year zero.”⁵

Thus, the Daniel 9:25 prophecy turns out to be accurate down to

the exact year – the 173,880 prophetic year days (or 476 solar years) equals precisely the duration of time between the beginning and ending points!



Put simply, when Daniel's sixty-nine “sevens” of 360-day prophetic years (173,880 days) are converted into the terms of the modern calendar, they are found to be equivalent to 476 solar years. That conversion allows the determination of whether the 476 solar years fit within the time duration between the beginning and ending points. **The conclusion is 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!**

It is enlightening to 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.

⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ⁴² 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. ... ^{44b} **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.**

-Luke 19:41-42, 44b

Gabriel's prophecy, given to Daniel five centuries beforehand, and translated into Greek three centuries beforehand, **was established precisely to the exact year predicted!** What was God's margin for error? Zero! Daniel was told the precise time that the Messiah would

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

present Himself as a King to Israel; and that's exactly what Jesus did, right on time! As is seen 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 exact timeline!

This simply could not have happened by accident, especially with the precision it requires, as well as its alignment with what is known 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 the domain of time. When one takes the time to meticulously work through each aspect of this, it yields a non-debatable apologetic for the validity of God, the Bible, and the messianic identity of Jesus Christ. At times throughout this study, it was necessary to delve into great detail in order to prove each aspect of this prophecy. But now that this task is complete, you should have an even greater appreciation for this prophecy, knowing the conclusiveness of the evidence that was investigated.

It is important to recognize the unique privilege inherent in the present day and age. Today, by virtue of hindsight that's anchored by the accumulated knowledge of history and science, it is more possible than ever before to understand certain scriptures that are prophetic in nature – such as Daniel 9. As a result, there is a unique responsibility upon us that goes along with having these privileges. We would do well to take 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.

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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's testimony goes against that witness's own biases, it is overwhelmingly likely to be a true report. Well, it turns out that the most astonishing confirmations of the conclusions of this study are supplied 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 ancient Jewish rabbis! Although they reject the Messianic claim of Jesus, it will be shown that the Jewish scriptures, Jewish history, Jewish thought, and Jewish 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 – exactly at the expiration of Daniel's countdown! This is not a claim invented by Christians. Rather, it is the Jewish 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, the Jews' own writings confirm the expectation that the Messiah would arrive exactly at the time Jesus did. In fact, the Messiah could have *only* arrived at that time, which their scriptures require and the writings of their rabbis readily admit. Further yet, they then historically documented 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 Jewish Messiah lends tremendous validity to the accounts that will be examined.

Three subsections containing different categories of evidence will be investigated. First, the recorded testimony of the rabbis themselves will be examined, which will prove that they *always* believed Daniel 9:25 was a Messianic countdown, and will betray their admissions that this time period has already elapsed. Then, evidence from the Jews' Old Testament scriptures (the Tanakh) will be examined, proving that the timeline for the Messiah's arrival has already passed. And the third subsection will reveal 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 detailed throughout this study, Daniel 9:24-27 records a prophecy that described exactly when the Messiah was expected to appear. This was a passage well known by all religious Jews during the first decades of the first century of this era. And it is well-known that just around the time of Jesus, there was a widespread anticipation of a coming Messianic age amongst the Jews. Even in the New Testament, this is clearly implied through the examples of Simeon and the prophetess Anna, who were waiting for the imminent Messianic redemption of Israel (Luke 2). But let's see if the Jewish sources agree.

As his doctoral thesis, Rabbi Abba Hillel 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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

expectation during the first few 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 CE. ... The Messiah was expected around the second quarter of the first century CE 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 states 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, what is clear is 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). The Targum of the Prophets, in Tractate Megillah 3a, reads:

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, 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" will be examined.

Note: The Jews have always associated the Messiah's coming with "the end." Although Jesus's Second Coming will occur at "the end"

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

of the Inter-Advent Age and usher in the Millennium, Christians of course 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.

Thus, 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. Significantly, it was also shown that these the rabbis 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 developed an incorrect prediction that the Messiah would arrive in 1356 AD, and yet it is significant that based his prediction on a verse in Daniel.⁵ The point is that it can accurately be said that throughout time, prominent Jewish scholars have recognized 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 inter-

esting 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 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! This seems to be the most probable reason for the rabbinic curse on examining this calculation. Further examination will help determine if such a conclusion is really valid.

The rabbinic curse 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

Regarding the Messianic arrival, the Talmud further records:

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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

It should be noted that what the Jews traditionally mean by “the redemption,” is the arrival of the Messiah, their “Redeemer.”¹² Consequently, the statements found within these Talmudic passages indicate 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 can no longer depend on the arrival of the Messiah, as in their thinking, that window had closed. Instead, it would now depend upon the performance of “good deeds.” Because of this, along with their knowledge that Daniel Chapter 9 did predict 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.

Thus, in this first subsection regarding rabbinic evidence, a number of Jewish sources have been examined, making several points clear:

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

Based on all of this, it can be said that rabbinic Judaism itself actu-

ally lends credibility to the interpretation of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy advocated in this study. As was previously stated, when a witness's testimony goes *against* that witness's own biases, it provides 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 traditional writings and beliefs clearly support the understanding advocated by Christians.

Scriptural Testimony

The next category of evidence to be examined is the scriptural evidence requiring the Messianic advent to have already occurred. Four different prophecies will be surveyed, all requiring this understanding.

The Daniel 9:25-26 Prophecy

The first example is, very appropriately, is connected with the central passage of this study. Let's take a moment to reread Daniel 9:25-26, because verse 26 contains the key to understanding the first example of why the Jews are forced by their own scriptures to acknowledge that the scheduled time for the Messiah's appearance has passed.

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: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. **26** 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

In verse 25, the Messiah is said to arrive at the conclusion of the

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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. Thus, 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, it is significant to note 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 (Genesis 15:12-21). 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! Thus, 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 has been shown, Christ was shortly after His Triumphal Entry).

Returning back to the subject of verse 26, it 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.

Modern knowledge of the history of 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 any clearer. It is impossible for the Jews to coherently deny this without deliberately altering the meaning of these clear verses.

Furthermore, the fact that the Second Temple was destined to be destroyed was also undeniably recognized by the ancient rabbis themselves. *The Babylonian Talmud* (Tractate Nazir 32b) preserves 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 demonstrates that the rabbis tied the Daniel 9:25 prophecy to the destruction of the Second Temple. Since, in the same portion of scripture it is seen 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, the writings of the rabbis examined in the previous subsection clearly demonstrates that they always did associate the writings of Daniel with the Messianic advent. Therefore, there is no

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

way for them to avoid the obvious conclusion 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.

It should be recognized 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 aligns 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.

6 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; **7** 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. **8** The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. **9** 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 for 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 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 Christians 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 (an event to take place at the Lord’s return).

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 currently 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.”

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). This is obvious from 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, 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 Temple, and it lacked a number of key spiritual indicators that were present in Solomon's Temple.¹⁹ That being said, as will be discussed in the following subsection, the *Shekinah* was not entirely absent during this period. In fact, the rabbis also admit this.²⁰ But if this was the case, 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. However, if the ancient Jewish sources are searched, no event that could qualify as a fulfillment is found; that is, except for Jesus of Nazareth. During His life, Jesus taught in the Second Temple. The first time was at the age of twelve. He 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) 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, *The Babylonian Talmud* in Tractate Sandhedrin 98b, says the following.

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.²¹

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 (tar-

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

gums, 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,²²

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 ... ²³

These both are ancient Jewish paraphrases of Genesis 49:10 from highly-regarded targums. It can thus be seen 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, which mentions 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 named Caponius around 6/7 AD to rule Judea directly.²⁴ ²⁵ 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 assemblage 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.²⁶

This recorded instance took place shortly after the life of Christ, demonstrating that this restriction was still active. It is also recorded in the Talmud, though it places 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.²⁷

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

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

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 1800s 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!’”²⁸

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 being made 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 17:11-14) deals with David's distant son or descendant, the Messiah. The second of the two will receive focus here. This passage says:

11 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. **12** He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. **13** 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: **14** But I will settle **him** in mine **house** and in my **kingdom for ever**: and **his throne shall be established for evermore.**

-1 Chronicles 17:11-14

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*”)

The Jews have always (and still do) affirm that the content of this passage concerning the Davidic Covenant is part of the Messianic criteria that must be fulfilled by any candidate.²⁹ 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. But 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, which was the repository of

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

these records. As a result, within a few decades of 70 AD, it was impossible to *prove* who was a son of David and who was not.³⁰ But the real point here is that without the genealogical records that were kept in the Temple (which were destroyed in 70 AD), how is one to prove that he's 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.

In conclusion, after conducting an in-depth examination of these four prophecies from the Jewish scriptures (and supported by the ancient Jewish rabbinical sources), tremendous evidence can be witnessed in support of the calculation of the Daniel 9:25 chronology, as presented in this study. A number of indicators have been noted, allowing the time of the Messiah's coming to be determined. 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.

Thus, the understanding of the Daniel 9:25 Messianic timeline that has been presented in this study is verified by none other than the Old Testament, or the Tanakh – the Jews' own scriptures. As has been mentioned several times, when a witness's 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 the Christian understanding of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy.

But the evidence doesn't end there. Next, a series of miraculous occurrences will be examined, which will force the conclusion that 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. This study has already established that Jesus died in 33 AD. This date of 33 A.D. is approximately *forty years* prior to 70 AD. Coincidence?

Each of these historically recorded miracles will be examined individually, forcing the conclusion that the Messiah must have already come and that the possible window for His coming has long been 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 refer-

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

enced 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. *The Jerusalem Talmud* states:

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.³¹

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.³²

Since 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.

Might one recall any significant event that happened just around that time? Obviously, 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 the modern 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 try to uncover any connection to the death of Israel’s Messiah.

#1 – The Miracle of the Lot

The Jerusalem Talmud:

The lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand.³³

The Babylonian Talmud:

The lot [“For the Lord”] did not come up in the right hand³⁴

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.³⁵ The casting of lots is also accompanied by yet another miracle, which is described next.

#2 – The Miracle of the Red Cord

The Jerusalem Talmud:

The crimson thread remained crimson,³⁶

The Babylonian Talmud:

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

Nor did the crimson-colored strap become white;³⁷

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.^{38 39}

In years when the sacrifice was accepted by God and atonement was granted Israel, both parts of the cord miraculously turned white.⁴⁰ 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.” This theme is expressed in Isaiah 1:18.

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

Interestingly, in the Talmud, Tractate Yoma, 68b, the rabbis actually associate Isaiah 1:18 with the *Yom Kippur* ritual.⁴¹

As should be clear from this “red cord miracle,” 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

The Jerusalem Talmud:

They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open.⁴²

The Babylonian Talmud:

The doors of the Hekel [Temple] would open by themselves.⁴³

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.⁴⁴ 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* records this.

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).⁴⁵

The first century Jewish/Roman historian Josephus, who lived around that time, also recorded this incident, also preserving 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.⁴⁶

Might the doors opening be to signify 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.⁴⁷

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.⁴⁸ 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 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.⁴⁹ Whether or not this is an exaggeration, it certainly conveys 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.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. **51** And, behold, **the veil of the temple was rent in twain**

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

[ripped in two] **from the top to the bottom**; and the earth did quake,
and the rocks rent;

-Matthew 27:50-51

So, what can be concluded from all 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 Jerusalem Talmud:

The western light went out...⁵⁰

The Babylonian Talmud:

Nor did the western most light shine...⁵¹

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.

First, it must be understood that prior to the 30s AD, this westernmost lamp would remain 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.⁵²

But now, around the early 30s AD, this abruptly stopped and the westernmost light would no longer miraculously illuminate. Clearly, something had changed. 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.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. **29** 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. **30** Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. **31** 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. Thus, this miracle of the menorah acts as a fourth miraculous indicator that the former times and symbols had been fulfilled in the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Further Miracles

The four miracles 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.⁵³ And interestingly, there exists widespread historical attestation of miracles that also took place around this time. These other miracles include the following, as recorded by historians from a wide variety of backgrounds including Roman, Jewish, and Christian.

- On Nissan 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.).⁵⁴

- 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.”⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ ⁵⁷ ⁵⁸

These miraculous events must have been widely attested, as their recording in numerous early histories shows (Josephus, Tacitus, Eusebius, et al.). They all clearly demonstrate the glory and presence of God leaving the Temple prior to its prophesied destruction. Even Josephus himself summed up his conviction, which the masses came to believe, that God had turned away from His sanctuary,⁵⁹ and that the Temple was no more the dwelling place fit for God,⁶⁰ because God had fled from His sanctuary.⁶¹

Amazingly, this same type of event had already happened once before 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).

The profound implications of these miraculous occurrences should not be overlooked. In fact, it is conveyed to us clearly 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 the Temple 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, the reason these miraculous events took place in the years between Jesus’s death and the final destruction of the Temple in 70 AD can be clearly known. 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, the inescapable conclusion is the time for the Messiah's arrival had passed and the rituals and symbols of the Old Covenant had been fulfilled. This aligns perfectly with all that has been 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 has been conclusively shown in this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the goal was to examine confirmations regarding the conclusion that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Daniel 9:25, with these confirmations coming from the most unlikely source possible – Judaism itself. To accomplish this, corroborating testimonies from three different perspectives were examined (rabbinic, scriptural, and miraculous).

By examining rabbinic testimony, it's been shown 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. By examining scriptural testimony, it's been shown that according to their own scriptures (or what Christians call the Old Testament) the timeline for the Messiah's arrival has already long passed. Several key scriptures were noted, unmistakably requiring His arrival *before* certain events that history shows took place during and soon after the life of Christ. And by examining the historical documentation of a number of miraculous events that took place in the years *after* Jesus's death and *prior* to the destruction of the Temple forty years later, compelling evidence can be seen confirming that the window for the Messiah's arrival had passed.

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CHAPTER 10

OUR FINAL CONCLUSION

The first task of this study was to show evidence that the book of Daniel (and therefore the Daniel 9:25 prophecy) was written long before the events he described took place. Next, the relevant information was systematically examined, allowing the beginning and ending points of his prophecy to be understood. Further facts were surveyed, showing 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 this study, which demand from any reader a response:

#1 – It is an inescapable realization that the Bible is a book that provably finds its origin outside the domain of time. Only a Being outside of the physical reality, who is outside of the physical limitations of the dimension of time, 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 given a prophecy filled with such specificity as this one, which actually was fulfilled hundreds of years later with astonishing precision, suggests 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 that when viewed together, they validate one another, leaving an immense decision before you. 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 it is taken seriously, and its content is read, the reader is 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 – as defined by Paul in 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 all should acknowledge – that Jesus Christ is that one promised Messiah, and that all should put their trust and obedience in Him as Lord and Savior. Consequently, the final question, then, is will you obey what has been demonstrated to be true? And will you respond in

The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy

obedience to the objective evidence? Will you obey the commands of the One who fulfilled the Old Testament with astounding precision? This author prays that you do. May God bless you in Jesus's name.

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