

# THE MESSIAH: THE TIME OF HIS KINGDOM PREDICTED

## *THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL 9:24-27 EXPLAINED*

*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, 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. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:24-27)*

### SUMMARY

According to a prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27, given by the angel Gabriel in about 538 B.C., the Messianic kingdom would be established 69 weeks after a commandment is issued to restore and to build Jerusalem. In the Hebrew language the word for *week* (shabua), being derived from the word for *seven* (sheba), may consist of either days or years, depending on context. All Biblical scholars agree that we are dealing here with 483 years, which is 69 multiplied seven times. The year from which to begin the calculation is the seventh year of the Persian king Artaxerxes Longimanus or 458 B.C., when he issued a decree that allowed Ezra to begin his journey to Jerusalem on the first day of the first month, which would be 8 April in our calendar. There are 457 years and about nine months from this time to the beginning of the Christian era. Adding the 25 years and three months remaining in the 483 years, we arrive at 26 A.D., when John the Baptist began his ministry and baptized Jesus, who began his own ministry later the same year. According to the same prophecy, the Messiah would be killed in the middle of the seventieth week or three and a half years later, after which the city and temple would be destroyed.

### INTRODUCTION

The prophecies of the coming Messiah, who would be both true God and true man (Isaiah 9:6), born of a virgin (Genesis 3:15,20) of the lineage of David (II Samuel 7:12) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), would die in Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:10) for our sins (Isaiah 53:5) and rise from the dead (Psalms 16:10) and establish an everlasting kingdom (II Samuel 7:13) of righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16) and peace (Isaiah 11:10), consisting of both Jews and Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6), were incontrovertibly fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth, who is to this day known by the name of Christ, a

Greek name equivalent to Messiah in Hebrew and Anointed One in English. As for the time of his appearance, the prophecies that existed before Daniel indicated only that he would appear after the fall of the Babylonian empire (Jeremiah 25:12 and Habbakuk 2:2-14).

In Daniel 9:1-2 we learn that Daniel, a captive in Babylon since about 606 B.C., came to understand in the first year of Darius the Mede, about 538 B.C., while reading the prophecies of Jeremiah, that the captivity of his people would last 70 years. We find accordingly in Jeremiah 29:10 the Lord's promise, in regard to Jerusalem: "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." A chronological note at Jeremiah 25:12 in older editions of the Authorized Version of the Bible sets the approximate time of the captivity as 606 B.C. to 536 B.C. Thus, about two years after the Medes and Persians had defeated the Babylonians, Cyrus the Persian succeeded Darius the Mede as king in Babylon and issued a proclamation in his first year, about 536 B.C., calling for the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4 and 6:3-5).

The Lord goes on to say in Jeremiah 29:12, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you." He also promises in Isaiah 65:24: "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." This is in accordance with God's promise in Leviticus 26:40-45 to have mercy on a contrite Israel and with Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple in I Kings 8:22-53. In Daniel 9:3-23 we learn, accordingly, that while Daniel was yet confessing his own and his people's sins and praying for the promised restoration of Jerusalem, the angel Gabriel came with a prophecy that revealed the precise time of the advent of the long-awaited Messianic kingdom. Thus the aged Daniel, yearning for home after long years of captivity, heard of a future restoration of much greater magnitude and significance than he had expected. In the following pages, God willing, we will provide the conscientious reader with information from readily available sources that will enable him to correctly understand how this remarkable prophecy was fulfilled, to free himself from erroneous or deceptive expositions, and to counter the objections of Bible critics and scoffers.

## VERSE 24

*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, 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.*

### *The 70 Weeks*

The precise time revealed here for the accomplishment of this prophecy is 70 weeks. This period could have been expressed in other units of time, but the number 70 is significant because of its symbolism. Seventy is a multiple of *ten*, which signifies completeness (Genesis 31:7), and *seven*, which symbolizes divine perfection (Genesis 2:3). We are reminded here of the punishment for sin that the people of Daniel had been suffering for 70 years and of the response of Jesus to Peter's question as to how often we are to forgive our brother: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). Daniel is thus informed that transgression and sin

would continue to exist until the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, when everlasting righteousness would finally reign.

The Hebrew word for “week” (*shabua*) is derived from the word for “seven” (*sheba*) and consists of either seven days or seven years, depending on the context, as all Hebrew lexicons agree. See, for example, Leviticus 25, where we learn that the Hebrews counted not only weeks of days but weeks of years, and Genesis 29:26-28, where Jacob receives Rachel in return for a week, that is, seven years, of work for her father Laban. Also, in Daniel 10:1,2, we see that in the third year of Cyrus, about 534 B.C., or approximately two years after this king had issued his proclamation, Daniel “was mourning three full weeks.” A marginal note of the translators in the Authorized Version informs us that in the Hebrew text these “full weeks” are literally “weeks of days” (*shabuim yomim*). If Daniel believed that the 70 weeks were to be counted from the proclamation of Cyrus, the prophecy had not been fulfilled and opposition to the work of restoration was emerging (Ezra 4:4-5). He then received in a vision another prophecy with a detailed account of major events that were yet to occur, which made him understand that “the time was long” (Daniel 10:1). It is universally agreed, therefore, even by Jewish scholars, that the 70 weeks require not weeks of days but weeks of years, that is, 70 times 7, or 490 years, for fulfillment.

### *The Most Holy*

The prediction of a holy ruler in a perfect kingdom is, of course, fulfilled only in Jesus of Nazareth. The people of this Anointed One (Acts 10:38) and Holy One (Luke 4:34) are his own children (John 11:52), the fruit of his travail on the cross. They, being justified freely by grace (Romans 3:24) and anointed (II Corinthians 1:21) under a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34), are as righteous as he himself is (I John 3:5-7), for the law of his kingdom, under which God does not impute sin (Romans 4:7,8), abrogates the former law, that of Moses (II Corinthians 3:11), under which sin and transgression reigned (I Corinthians 15:56). In this spotless Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), whose day Abraham rejoiced to see (John 8:56), all believers, from the beginning to the end of the world, find transgression and all sin ended, atonement and reconciliation accomplished, and everlasting righteousness established, not by sight but by faith (II Corinthians 5:7). These holy brethren (Hebrews 3:1) or saints (Romans 1:7) constitute the true temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16,17), which is also called the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23).

## **VERSE 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.*

## Commentators Confused

Gabriel here sets the *terminus a quo* or the point from which the weeks to the Messiah are to be counted. The calculation is to begin from the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. He then begins to divide the 70 weeks into phases. During the first seven weeks, the street and wall would be rebuilt. Then, 62 weeks later, the Messiah would appear. Thus a total of 69 weeks would elapse from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the advent of the Messianic era.

The so-called Church Fathers are in helpless disarray in regard to the interpretation of these 70 weeks, as are reformers, chronologists and commentators. Calvin, commenting on Daniel, aptly sums up the situation that existed in his time: “This passage has been variously treated, and so distracted, and almost torn to pieces by the various opinions of interpreters, that it might be considered nearly useless on account of its obscurity.” He then sets the *terminus a quo* at the beginning of the reign of Cyrus, which takes us nowhere.<sup>1</sup> Even Luther is unable to adequately explain the prophecy, for in his *Preface to Daniel*, he begins counting from the second year of Darius Hystaspes or about 520 B.C. Archbishop Ussher, whose calculations, made in the seventeenth century, are said to be the source of the marginal dates of the Bible, differ from them here. The marginal date given for the seventh year of Artaxerxes at Ezra 7:7 is 457 B.C., but Ussher gives 474 B.C., having adjusted the years of Artaxerxes, evidently in order to render the twentieth year of this king acceptable as a *terminus a quo*. The editors of the revised English edition of Ussher’s work base Ussher’s date on an alleged co-regency of Xerxes and Artaxerxes beginning in 474 B.C., supposedly confirmed by “hieroglyphic inscriptions in Egypt,” which they leave unidentified.<sup>2</sup> Renowned historian Humphrey Prideaux, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, finds, quite correctly as we shall see, that the *terminus a quo* is the seventh year of Artaxerxes, but he goes on to say that the restoration actually occurred under Cyrus and that the prediction of a restoration under Artaxerxes is to be understood not “literally” but “figuratively”.<sup>3</sup> In his nineteenth-century commentary on Daniel, Albert Barnes first quotes Professor Stuart, who writes in his *Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy* (page 104) that it would require “a volume of considerable magnitude” to even present a history of the “ever-varying and contradictory opinions of critics” on this passage and that “a candid, and searching, and thorough critique” of this passage is something still to be desired. After quoting Stuart’s prayer (“May some expositor, fully adequate to the task, speedily appear!”), Barnes goes on to adopt Ussher’s twentieth year of Artaxerxes as his own *terminus a quo*, which he is unable to defend any better than does Ussher.<sup>4</sup> The highly esteemed nineteenth-century commentators Keil and Delitzsch, throw up their hands in despair, concluding with Prideaux that the whole prophecy is of a symbolic nature.<sup>5</sup> In his lectures on Daniel, the learned Reverend E. B. Pusey realizes that the *terminus a quo* is the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, but assuming, contrary to most historians,<sup>6</sup> that Artabanus, the assassin of Xerxes, reigned for seven months between Xerxes and Artaxerxes, he sets the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes not in 465 B.C. but a bit later, in the middle of 464 B.C., and makes his seventh

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: 1999), Vol. 13, pp. 195, 210.

<sup>2</sup> James Ussher, *The Annals of the World* (Green Forest: 2003), p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations* (Edinburgh: 1799), Part I, Vol. 2, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes, Critical, Illustrative, and Practical on the Book of Daniel* (New York: 1857), pp. 369-394.

<sup>5</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody: 1996), Vol. 9, p. 758.

<sup>6</sup> Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian of the first century B.C., writes, for example, that, upon killing Xerxes, Artabanus was in turn slain by Artaxerxes. See his *Historical Library*, 11.69.

year 457 B.C.<sup>7</sup> Expositors of our day continue to differ with one another, but many agree that the *terminus a quo* is indeed the seventh year of Artaxerxes. The views of popular preachers and TV evangelists, many of whom have become entangled with the “dispensationalism” of the popular *Scofield Reference Bible*, according to which the seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled, are not worthy of serious consideration.

*The Terminus ad quem: 26 A.D.*

The safest way out of this maze is to seek first the *terminus ad quem*, that is, the point at which the 69 weeks end, and to count back to the *terminus a quo*. Doing so, we learn from Mark 1:14-15 that Jesus began his own ministry with the words, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” The date given here in the margin of older Bibles is 26 A.D., which is also when John the Baptist began his own ministry earlier the same year. Jesus says accordingly in Luke 16:16: “The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” To confirm this date, we must turn to the third chapter of Luke, where we are informed that it was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar that John the Baptist began his ministry (verse 1) and baptized Jesus, who was about 30 years of age (verses 21-23). Roman historians agree that Tiberius was made joint ruler over the provinces with his stepfather Augustus at the time of a triumphal military celebration held in honor of the former. This celebration, which occurred in the year 765 from the foundation of the city of Rome, corresponds to our year 12 A.D. and would be viewed in the provinces as the first year of the rule of Tiberius.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, since Augustus was still alive, it was not a question of dating from the following calendar year, as might have been the case if Tiberius had succeeded him. Since Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:19), which occurred after passover and shortly before the lunar eclipse that is mentioned by Josephus<sup>9</sup> and astronomers have calculated as having occurred on 13 March in the Roman year 750, that is, 4 B.C.,<sup>10</sup> we will agree with modern chronologists and the margins of our Bible that Christ was born about four years before the Christian era or in the Roman year 749, that is, 5 B.C. This would make him 30 years old in 26 A.D. and 33 and a half years old at his crucifixion in 30 A.D. Our *terminus ad quem* is, therefore, the year 26 A.D.

Dionysius Exiguus, who established the method of reckoning our Christian era in the sixth century A.D., calculated that Christ was born in the Roman year 753, that is, 1 B.C. He accepted December 25 as the birthday of Christ, as had earlier Christian chronologists, and made the ensuing Roman year, 754, the first year *anno domini*. The four-year discrepancy with other chronologists is said to have been caused by the fact that, setting the year 1 A.D. from the twenty-eighth year of

---

<sup>7</sup> E. B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet: Nine Lectures, Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Oxford* (London: 1880), p. 169. In a footnote on the same page, Pusey is less precise about the year but more extensive in his reasoning, saying that “it is clear, from the sequence of events in Neh. 1:2, Ezr. 7:7-9, that Chisleu fell earlier in the year of his reign than Nisan, and Nisan than Ab (July, Aug.). Then the reign of Artaxerxes must have begun between Ab and Chisleu (Nov., Dec.) 464 B.C., and the Edict, in his seventh year, in accordance with which Ezra and his colony set out in Nisan, must have been at the end of 458 or the beginning of 457.”

<sup>8</sup> See the selections from Roman historians in our Appendix. According to Jack Finegan’s *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Peabody: 1998), p. 330, the precise date of the celebration is 23 October.

<sup>9</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.6.4.

<sup>10</sup> See Finegan, p. 294.

Augustus, Dionysius reckoned from the year 727, when this emperor adopted his name, rather than from 723, the year of the battle of Actium.<sup>11</sup>

The specific date of December 25 in the Church calendar for the birth of Christ has nothing to do with any Roman pagan celebrations on that day, as we hear so often parroted, but with the simple fact that the early church, which set this date, believed that the burning of incense by Zacharias in Luke 1:10, with the multitude praying outside, as described in Leviticus 16:17, occurred on the Day of Atonement, that is, on the tenth day of the seventh month according to the Mosaic calendar (Leviticus 16:29).<sup>12</sup> Since the early Church evidently knew that this festival was celebrated, according to our calendar, in late September of that year, the birth of Christ in late December of the following year was determined by adding the six months of Elisabeth's pregnancy mentioned in Luke 1:36 to the nine months of that of Mary. Thus, the Day of Annunciation, when Mary learned that she was to be the mother of the Saviour, is March 25, and St. John's Day, which commemorates the birth of John the Baptist, is June 24, nine months after his conception and six months before the birth of Christ. Regardless of whether this view of the early Church is accurate, Christ's ministry began, as we have shown above, in 26 A.D., evidently in the latter part of the year, for John's ministry had to run its full course after beginning earlier the same year, perhaps after the annual flooding of the Jordan (Joshua 3:15 and 4:19), in which the people were baptized (Mark 1:5), and when John, too, would have been about 30 years of age, the age of adulthood for priestly families (Numbers 4:43).

### *The Terminus a quo: 458 B.C.*

Having determined the *terminus ad quem*, we can now find the *terminus a quo* by counting back 69 weeks of years, that is, 483 years, from 26 A.D. All historians agree that the only source connecting the Persian era with our own is found in *The Almagest*, the major work of the second-century pagan astronomer Ptolemy. An appendix of his book contains tables known as the *The Canon of Kings*, which documents the years of the reigns of ancient kings from the Assyrian king Nabonassar to the Roman king Antoninus.<sup>13</sup> In our own Appendix the reader will find the relevant portion of Ptolemy's *Canon*, where we see in parallel columns the names of the kings from Cyrus to Tiberius, the number of years of their reigns, and the lengths of their reigns according to the Nabonassar era. We have added a third column, consisting of the corresponding years of the Christian era, which have been derived from those of Nabonassar, using the following standard formula: For years B.C., the year of the Nabonassar era is deducted from 748, and for years A.D., 747 is deducted from the year of the Nabonassar era.<sup>14</sup>

To avoid possible confusion resulting from calendar conversions and complications caused by the transition from B.C. to A.D., we will first use the Nabonassar era as the basis for our calculations. Applying the formula for conversion to the Nabonassar era, we find that the year 26 A.D. is equivalent to the year 773 of the Nabonassar era. Subtracting 483 years from the year 773, we arrive at the year 290 of the Nabonassar era, which is the seventh year of Artaxerxes

<sup>11</sup> See John Bond, *Handy-Book of Rules and Tables for Verifying Dates with the Christian Era* (New York: 1966), Preface, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> See Finegan, p. 327.

<sup>13</sup> An English version of *The Almagest* is included in *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: 1952), Vol. 16. Ptolemy's *Canon* is in Appendix A, p. 466.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Bond, p. 197.

Longimanus. Using now the formula for conversion to the Christian era, we find that this year is equivalent to 458 B.C. in our calendar. From Ezra 7:7-9, we learn that the seventh year of Artaxerxes is the very year in which Ezra, in response to a royal decree, began his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem on the first day of Nisan, the first month in his calendar, which, according to chronologists, is equivalent to 8 April.<sup>15</sup> The royal decree authorized him to return with other priests and Levites to Jerusalem to bring certain vessels needed for the Jewish temple worship and money to buy needed offerings, but more importantly, to reestablish the law of Moses with magistrates to enforce it. Thus we conclude that the year 458 B.C. is the *terminus a quo*. A period of 457 years and about nine months extends from this time to the beginning of the Christian era. Adding the 25 years and three months remaining in the 483 years, we arrive at the beginning of 26 A.D., when John the Baptist began his ministry and baptized Christ, who then began his own ministry.

### *Jewish Expositors*

Jewish expositors, sensing that the *terminus ad quem* points too closely to Jesus of Nazareth, have invented various schemes to deflect it in other directions. The Jewish calendar, which is based on the *Seder Olam Rabbah*, concocted by the second-century Rabbi Halafta, resorts to abridging the length of the Persian Empire to about 53 years (374-321 B.C.) from its true length of about 207 years (538 to 321 B.C.), evidently in order to make Daniel's prophecy apply more to the second-century false messiah Simon Bar Kokhba than to Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>16</sup> Modern Jews, compelled by reality, generally accept the standard chronology of the Persian era but resort to various other expedients to obscure the obvious reference to Jesus of Nazareth. Some, for example, try to shift the events of Ezra and Nehemiah from the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus to that of a later king, Artaxerxes Mnemon, known as Artaxerxes II -- something that would never have occurred to them if they were dealing with an aspect of history that was not so clearly connected with the name of Jesus. However, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which is by no means friendly to Christianity, has to admit in regard to the events of Ezra and Nehemiah, that "the attempts to place them in the reign of Artaxerxes II are not convincing."<sup>17</sup> Even modern Jewish reference works are forced to concur, admitting that though the arguments for the shifting of the king and the emendation of the dates are numerous, most of them rely on specious considerations and dubious textual interpretation. Jewish expositors are thus left clinging to the false claim of Bible critics that their book of Daniel is nothing more than a collection of legends and bogus prophecies compiled and concocted during the intertestamental period as propaganda in the wars of the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphanes. However, neither they nor any so-called Christian expositors are able to squeeze the 70 weeks into any amenable chronological framework, even starting as early as 606 B.C. and ending as late as 164 B.C.

---

<sup>15</sup> See Finegan, p. 268.

<sup>16</sup> See Ussher, Appendix G, pp. 931-934.

<sup>17</sup> See entry under Artaxerxes, 1911 edition, Vol. 2, p. 661.

## *The Hebrew Accents*

Pusey points out in a footnote that critics, who correct the text at will, “have all at once discovered in this case the value of the tradition of the Hebrew accents.”<sup>18</sup> These *accents* are diacritical marks added to the Hebrew text by the Masoretic scribes in the obscure past, which are still found in all Hebrew Bibles. They are no longer fully understood and are by no means part of the sacred text. Yet Jewish translators, finding that the accent known as *atnach* separates the “seven weeks” from the “threescore and two weeks,” use it to justify placing a full stop or semicolon between these two numbers in their English versions. Thus, in their translations, they render the words in question, with slight variations, in the following meaningless manner: “From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto one anointed shall be seven weeks; and for threescore and two weeks, it shall be built again.” Many so-called Christian translators, including those of the Revised Standard Version, have felt the same need to obscure this passage, using the same stratagem. The text of our Authorized Version indeed recognizes a pause after the words “seven weeks” but renders it correctly as a comma, for its presence indicates only that the 69 weeks to the Messiah are to be divided into two periods, one of seven weeks and another of 62 weeks.

## *Chronological Problems Solved*

As critics are eager to point out, the decree of Artaxerxes, which is preserved in the Hebrew Old Testament in Ezra 7:12-26 in the original Aramaic, the official language of the Persian Empire, does not seem to meet the description of a commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem as required by the prophecy in question, for the restoration had already begun under Cyrus and the temple was even rebuilt. In reply, it should be noted, first of all, that Cyrus, who is mentioned by name long before his birth and is called the Lord’s anointed in Isaiah 45:1, is “raised up in righteousness” in verse 13 to build God’s city and free his captives, “not for price or reward.” Cyrus is thus quite clearly a type or figure of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ, who died to liberate the captives of sin, freely and without any merit or worthiness on their part, and was raised up in righteousness to build the new and spiritual Jerusalem. Next, we must turn to II Chronicles 36:20, where we read that those who were carried away to Babylon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, remained there “until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.” Neither Cyrus nor any other king is mentioned here, for there were, in fact, three Persian kings, namely Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, who issued decrees to restore Jerusalem. Thus we read in Ezra 6:14 in regard to the elders of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple, which was completed in the sixth year of Darius or about 515 B.C.: “They builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.” It is to be carefully noted here that the *commandment* is first and foremost the commandment of God and is rendered not in the plural (commandments) but in the singular (commandment). As for the *commandment* of the three kings, it too is rendered in the singular, as is the very word “king,” for it was issued on behalf of God and in response to his *one* commandment.

---

<sup>18</sup> Pusey, p. 173.



It is essential, therefore, to bear in mind, that the decrees of these three kings constitute *one* commandment, and, strangely enough, the work is said here to have been completed even before the third king, Artaxerxes, issued his own decree in 458 B.C. -- over half a century later. We read accordingly in Ezra 1:1, in regard to the first king, that it was the Lord who “stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” to make his proclamation. Then in Ezra 6:12 Darius, the second king, calls on “the God that hath caused his name to dwell there” to “destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem.” Finally, in Ezra 7:23, Artaxerxes, the third king, says, “Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven.”

Thus we see that there are three aspects to this *commandment* of God and the three Persian kings: 1. Under the decree of Cyrus of about 536 B.C., the people returned to Jerusalem. 2. Under the decree of Darius Hystaspes of about 520 B.C., the temple was rebuilt. 3. Under the decree of Artaxerxes of 458 B.C., Ezra returned with a body of people to beautify the temple and to reestablish the theocracy. It is only the final decree, which called for the reestablishment of the law of God with magistrates and judges to enforce it, that renders the commandment complete, and it is only from this point that anyone can claim to count the time to Christ. To claim otherwise would be to view modern Israel, for example, as being established before 1948, the year that the state was finally established on its own legal basis. Moreover, the time of seven weeks or 49 years assigned by Gabriel for the building of the street and wall precludes us from counting from either of the first two decrees, for the wall was not finished until the twentieth year of Artaxerxes or about 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 6:15).

To counter the objection of those who seek a *terminus a quo* in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when the king allowed Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem to build the wall of the city, as described in the first chapter of his book, it need only be pointed out that nowhere in the book of Nehemiah is mention made of any decree. In fact, the opposition that Nehemiah encountered from the surrounding adversaries, as described in the sixth chapter of his book, proves that it did not exist, for had he been in possession of a royal decree, he needed only to show it to them to silence their opposition to his building project, as occurred in the time of Darius Hystaspes (Ezra 6:1-14). Nowhere, in fact, in any of the three decrees of the Persian kings is any mention made of the actual building of any wall or buildings other than the temple. Thus the words of verse 25 of Gabriel’s prophecy are fulfilled to the letter, which predicted that the street and wall would be built again “in troublous times.” It is only logical, as was assumed by Artaxerxes himself in Nehemiah 2:4-6 and as we read in Haggai 1:4, that houses would be built and that a wall was needed, but this being left unspecified in the royal decrees, the adversaries found a basis for causing trouble by challenging the legality of the whole project as early as in the time of Cyrus (Ezra 4:5-7).

## VERSE 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.*

## *The Death of the Messiah*

Here we learn that after the Messiah begins his ministry he will be “cut off,” but the time of his death is not specified until the next verse. It is said only that it will occur *after* 62 weeks. Gabriel goes on to say that his death will be “not for himself,” for he will by his death redeem the whole human race from sin, death, hell and the devil. In the margin of uncorrupted Bibles we find an alternate translation of these words, indicating that this portion of the Hebrew text can also be interpreted by the words “and shall have nothing.” These strong words together with the words “cut off” indicate that the Messiah would be rejected and killed by his own people. The fulfillment of this prophecy is boldly stated by Peter to the Jews in Acts 5:30,31: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

## *Messiah's New People*

Gabriel then goes on to reveal that in spite of the unbelief of the Jewish nation, the Messiah would retain a people of his own, over whom he would rule as a Prince, and that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed by a torrent of war and destruction. This came to pass in 70 A.D., as Jesus had predicted (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and as secular history informs us. The fact that the Messiah would have a new people is also predicted in Isaiah 65:14,15: “Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.” This agrees with John 1:11,12: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” We learn, however, from Luke 19:41 and John 11:35 that Jesus wept over the Jews, whose unbelief led them to pressure Pilate to accede to their will to have him crucified (John 19:16.). Thus we see that the spiritual plight of the Jews is not due to any refusal on Christ's part to have them in his kingdom but to their own dreadful words that no corruptor of Holy Scripture can expunge for them, which are recorded in Matthew 27:25: “His blood be on us, and on our children.” Although these words, according to the same verse, were uttered by “all the people,” they were by no means uttered by Christ, whose call for forgiveness (Luke 23:34) and whose blood, which “speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24), mean more to God than does their call for punishment on themselves and their children. Hope remains, therefore, that the spirit of grace and of supplications promised in Zechariah 12:10 will again be poured out upon the inhabitants of modern Jerusalem and that they will, as we read in our uncorrupted King James Version, “look upon me [that is, God] whom they have pierced” and “mourn for him [that is, for Christ], as one mourneth for his only son” and “be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

## **VERSE 27**

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

### *The Length of Christ's Ministry*

Here the third period or final week of the 70 weeks is finally introduced, and the time of Christ's death, which brings the temple worship to an end, is set more precisely. It is to occur in the middle of the seventieth week or 30 A.D. Thus his ministry will last not for a whole week of seven years but for only the first half of the final week or about three and a half years. Our Bible margins, which agree with Ussher, that Christ was crucified in 33 A.D.,<sup>19</sup> are in error here. The true length of Christ's ministry is confirmed by adding the three passovers recorded in John 2:13, 6:4 and 18:28 to one that is unmentioned but clearly implied in John 4:35. The offering of Christ's body causes the animal sacrifices and food offerings to cease, for he is the antitype of the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament, as explained in Hebrews 9:24-26: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." In Hebrews 10:1 we read further: "The law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." And then in verses 9 and 10 we see in regard to the coming of Christ and the establishment of his covenant that "he taketh away," that is, he abolishes, the first covenant, "that he may establish the second" and that "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

### *The Destruction of Jerusalem*

The final words of the prophecy are: "and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." This means that Christ's sacrifice renders the temple desolate, for, as we have seen above, there will be no more use for an earthly sanctuary, the types and shadows of the Old Testament prophecies having been fulfilled by his death. The earthly temple remains, therefore, in utter and permanent destruction. Wherever men think they worship God, though they have killed Christ and eliminated him from their hearts by unbelief, there is, in fact, only an overspreading of abominations in place of the living Saviour, which eventually brings desolation as a punishment upon the spiritually desolate. The earthly temple and city predicted by Gabriel, which disappeared long ago, were only symbolic of true restoration for the children of Israel and all men in a spiritual temple and heavenly city under the law of the kingdom of Christ, the only law that brings peace of conscience to sinners because, under it, sin, not being imputed, no longer exists in the sight of God, having been removed by the Lamb of God (John 1:29). The earthly Jerusalem, a figure of the heavenly city, was established under the law of Moses, a law that man cannot keep because of his

---

<sup>19</sup> Ussher, p. 819.

sinful nature, and was destroyed. The city that exists today in Israel under its own laws and under the name of Jerusalem is temporal and is as subject to sin and destruction as was the former city, but the heavenly Jerusalem, adhering to divine law, the law of the Kingdom of Christ, is sinless (Revelation 21:27), universal (Zechariah 2:4,5) and eternal (Hebrews 13:14).

## CONCLUSION

The prophecy of the 70 weeks given to Daniel foretells, before the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple had even begun, that they would again be destroyed. Thus, all the zealous efforts described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah to establish a holy city and people, as required by the law of Moses, were doomed to failure, for the law could not prevent its most arduous adherents from crucifying the Messiah any more than it could prevent the zeal of Saul of Tarsus from persecuting the Church (Philippians 3:6). Thus, the work of reconciling God with man was accomplished not by the law, “in that it was weak through the flesh,” (Romans 8:3), but by the bitter suffering and bloody death of the Son of God on our behalf. That justification before God requires nothing further on the part of man in the way of works or merits of any kind is indicated by Christ’s final words on the cross: “It is finished” (John 19:30). The whole work of redemption, as predicted by Gabriel, was, therefore, completed in seventy weeks of years, and 40 years after the crucifixion the physical Jerusalem and its obsolete earthly temple were destroyed.

The Hebrew Bible, of which we have an accurate translation in the Old Testament of our Authorized or King James Version, has, through God’s providence, been preserved and copied throughout the centuries not by Christians but by Jews. Thus, if the prophecy of the 70 weeks as found therein can be harmonized with Christ’s first coming and crucifixion from secular sources, that is, from the standard chronology of Ptolemy, who was entirely objective, being neither a Christian nor a Jew, it will have to be acknowledged by all that Jesus of Nazareth, the only child of his age to escape the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem and all its coasts, as related in Luke 2:16, is the sole legitimate claimant to the title of Messiah, having fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament. Since this same Jesus, who has ascended to Heaven (Psalms 110:1), will return in power and glory with all his saints (Daniel 7:14,22) to judge both the living and the dead (Daniel 12:2), it would behoove every human soul to flee from erroneous and deceitful explanations of Daniel 9:24-27, which remain for many a vain refuge that will be of no avail on that final and dreadful day when the heavens and earth, together with all the dens and rocks of the mountains (Revelation 6:15) and, needless to say, all spiritual and cynical subterfuges in which unbelievers trust, will be burned with fervent heat (II Peter 3:12).

Warren Hepokoski  
October 27, 2008

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, Albert. *Notes, Critical, Illustrative, and Practical on the Book of Daniel*. New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1857.
- Bond, John. *Handy-Book of Rules and Tables for Verifying Dates with the Christian Era*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966.
- Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Reprint of the Edinburgh edition of Thomas Myers. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999.
- Finegan, Jack. *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964. Revised edition: Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.
- Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Reprint of the Edinburgh edition of T. & T. Clark, 1866-91. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Prideaux, Humphrey. *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations*. Glasgow: James and Andrew Duncan, 1799.
- Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemaeus). *The Almagest*. English text published as Volume 16 of *Great Books of the Western World*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1952.
- Pusey, E. B. *Daniel the Prophet: Nine Lectures, Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Oxford*. London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1880.
- Ussher, James. *The Annals of the World*. London: E. Tyler, 1658. Revised edition of Larry and Marion Pierce. Green Forest: Master Books, 2003.

## APPENDIX

### PTOLEMY'S CANON OF KINGS FROM CYRUS TO TIBERIUS

King	Number of Years	Nabonassar Era	Christian Era
Cyrus	9	210-218	538-530 B.C.
Cambyses	8	219-226	529-522 B.C.
Darius Hystaspes	36	227-262	521-486 B.C.
Xerxes	21	263-283	485-465 B.C.
Artaxerxes Longimanus	41	284-324	464-424 B.C.
Darius Nothus	19	325-343	423-405 B.C.
Artaxerxes Mnemon	46	344-389	404-359 B.C.
Ochus	21	390-410	358-338 B.C.
Arogus	2	411-412	337-336 B.C.
Darius Codomanus	4	413-416	335-332 B.C.
Alexander the Great	8	417-424	331-324 B.C.
Philip Aridaeus	7	425-431	323-317 B.C.
Alexander Aigos	12	432-443	316-305 B.C.
Ptolemy Lagos	20	444-463	304-285 B.C.
Ptolemy Philadelphus	38	464-501	284-247 B.C.
Ptolemy Euergetes I	25	502-526	246-222 B.C.
Ptolemy Philopater	17	527-543	221-205 B.C.
Ptolemy Epiphanes	24	544-567	204-181 B.C.
Ptolemy Philometor	35	568-602	180-146 B.C.
Ptolemy Euergetes II	29	603-631	145-117 B.C.
Ptolemy Soter	36	632-667	116-81 B.C.
Ptolemy Dionysius	29	668-696	80-52 B.C.
Cleopatra	22	697-718	51-30 B.C.
Augustus	43	719-761	29 B.C. - 14 A.D.
Tiberius	22	762-783	15-36 A.D.

#### Notes on Ptolemy's Canon

Only the portion of Ptolemy's canon that is relevant to our study is given above. The original canon contains the lengths of reigns of all kings from the Assyrian king Nabonassar, whose reign is calculated from noon of 26 February in 747 B.C., to the Roman king Antoninus, whose rule ended in 160 A.D. The original canon is in an appendix in Ptolemy's second-century astronomical work, *The Almagest*, and is recognized by all legitimate historians as the only reliable source connecting the chronology of Assyrian and subsequent kings with our own time. Ptolemy's canon makes no mention of any king whose reign does not extend into the next calendar year, and if a king dies

before the new year in Ptolemy's Egyptian calendar, the year of his death in that calendar is assigned to his successor. Thus, Tiberius, for example, reigned until his death on 16 March in 37 A.D., but the year of his death is assigned by Ptolemy to the following ruler. Due to this and other factors, such as the transition from B.C. to A.D., a shifting New Year's day (Thoth 1) in the Egyptian calendar until 22 B.C. (when it was set permanently on August 29), and other complications connected with calendar conversions, the reigns of kings may be found to differ slightly when comparing Ptolemy's data with that found in historical works based on our own calendar. Ptolemy lived, of course, long before the time of Dionysius, who established the method of reckoning the Christian era in the sixth century A.D. The formula used for converting years of the Nabonassar era to those of the Christian era is, for years before Christ, to deduct the given Nabonassar year from 748, and, for years after Christ, to deduct 747 from the given year. It should also be noted that in the canon the nine years assigned to Cyrus begin with his victory over the Babylonians, not with his direct rule in Babylon, which begins in about 536 B.C., and that the reign of Tiberius begins upon the death of Augustus, not with his joint rule over the provinces, which begins in 12 A.D.

### **The Testimony of Humphrey Prideaux to the Reliability of Ptolemy's Canon**

"Ptolemy's canon being fixed by the eclipses, the truth of it may at any time be demonstrated by astronomical calculations, and no one hath ever calculated those eclipses, but hath found them fall right in the times where placed; and therefore, this being the surest guide which we have in the chronology, and it being also verified by its agreement everywhere with the holy scriptures, it is not, for the authority of any other human writing whatsoever, to be receded from." (*The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations*, Part I, Vol. II, p. 297)

### **The *Terminus a quo* of the 69 Weeks of Years to the Messiah**

"This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord and of his statutes to Israel: Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire

concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, and all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem, that thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy god, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.” (Ezra 7:6-26)

### ***The Terminus ad quem of the 69 Weeks of Years to the Messiah***

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:1-6)

“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.” (Luke 3:21-23)



“The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” (Luke 16:16)

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:14,15)

### **Selections from Roman Historians that Document the Joint Reign of Tiberius and Augustus over the Provinces**

“At the request of his father, the Senate and people of Rome decreed that Tiberius should have equal authority with him in all the provinces and armies. For indeed it was absurd that the provinces, which were being defended by him, should not be under him, and that he who was foremost in bearing aid should not be viewed an equal in the honor to be won. On returning to the city, he celebrated the triumph over the Pannonians and Dalmatians, long since due him but postponed because of a succession of wars, the magnificence of which who would marvel at in Caesar? Yet who would not wonder at the kindness of fortune to him? For the most eminent enemy leaders were not just reported slain but were displayed in chains in the triumph. It was my lot and that of my brother to participate in it among men of distinction and men awarded distinguished honors.” (Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History* 2.121)

“After two years, Tiberius returned from Germany to the city and celebrated the triumph that he had postponed, and with him were the generals for whom he had obtained the triumphal regalia. And before turning to enter the Capitol he descended from the chariot and knelt at the feet of his father, who was presiding over the ceremonies. He sent Bato, the leader of the Pannonians, to Ravenna, after presenting him with valuable gifts in gratitude for having allowed him to escape with his army from a dangerous entrapment. Then he held a banquet for the people on 1,000 tables and gave 300 sesterces to every man. From the spoils he restored and dedicated, in his name and that of his brother, the temple of Concord and that of Castor and Pollux. Not long afterward, the consuls had a law passed that Tiberius should rule the provinces jointly with Augustus and hold the census with him.” (Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* 3.20,21)