

**The Seventy Weeks of Daniel:
God's Time-Clock for Israel**

By James D. Price

First written in 1970
Revised in 1976
Revised again in 2008

Copyright © 1970, 1976, 2008 by James D. Price

Table of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	4
Chapter 1 God’s Time Schedule for Israel Is Revealed.....	5
God’s Time-Clock for Israel Will Run For 490 Years	5
Israel’s Time Schedule Is Divided Into Three Periods	7
After the Second Time Period Messiah Is Cut Off,	10
Jerusalem and the Temple Are Destroyed	10
The Third Period Involves Great Tribulation	11
Chapter 2 How Israel’s Time Schedule Has Been Interpreted	13
Theologically Liberal Interpreters	13
Conservative Amillennial Interpreters	13
Conservative Premillennial Interpreters	14
<i>The Ezra Solar Year View</i>	15
<i>The Artaxerxes Lunar Year View</i>	16
<i>The Artaxerxes Sabbath-Year Cycle View</i>	16
<i>The Artaxerxes Prophetic Year View</i>	17
Chapter 3 Problems of Current Literal Views	18
The Problem of Cyrus’ Decree (537 B.C.)	18
The Problem of the Divided Sixty-Nine Weeks	24
The Problem of Antiochus Epiphanes	26
The Problem of Unnatural Divisions of Time	28
The Problem of Unusual Chronology	30
Chapter 4 A Proposed Solution to the Interpretation.....	37
Principles of Interpretation	37
<i>The Use of Natural Time Units</i>	37
<i>The Use of Gaps between Each Time Segment</i>	38
<i>The Use of More Than One Decree</i>	38
<i>The Use of Judgment to End</i>	38
<i>Each Time Segment</i>	38
<i>The Use of the Forty Year Delay Principle</i>	41
<i>The Use of a Gap at the Time of Antiochus</i>	44
The Resultant Interpretation	45
<i>The First Time Segment of Seven Weeks</i>	45
<i>The Second Time Segment of Sixty-Two Weeks</i>	46
Summary	50
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	53
Books	53
Periodicals.....	55

Table of Figures

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1a: Time Gaps in Daniel's 70 Weeks	39
Figure 1b: Time Gap of Antiochus Epiphanes	39
Figure 2: Time-clock Principle Illustrated.....	42
Figure 3: The 40 Year Delay at the Crucifixion	42
Figure 4: The 40 Year Delay at the Babylonian Exile.....	43
Figure 5: The 40 Year Delay in the Days of Ezra	43
Figure 6: The Chronology of the 70 Year Captivity.....	45
Figure 7: The Chronology of the 7 Week Segment	46
Figure 8: The Chronology of the 34 Week Segment	47
Figure 9: The Chronology of the 28 Week Segment	48
Figure 10: Summary of God's Time Schedule for Israel.....	51

THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

The seventy weeks of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27) have been the subject of many books and papers. To add another may seem superfluous, but a careful study reveals that no current interpretation is free from difficulties and problems. Each interpretation makes some kind of concession to circumvent its problems which leaves the careful student with reservations that interfere with a wholehearted acceptance of anyone of them. In this paper an objective analysis is made of the numerous problems of current interpretations, and a new interpretation is proposed that resolves these problems, hopefully without introducing any new ones.

Introduction

In the ninth chapter of Daniel the prophet reveals that in the first year of Darius (538-537 B.C.) he was studying the Scriptures when he was reminded that the Babylonian captivity of the Jews was to last seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12, 29:10) from the year of his own captivity (Jer. 25:1, Dan. 1:1-2). Knowing that the end of the seventy years was near, and knowing the sinful condition of his people, Daniel began to fast and pray that the Lord would be gracious to the Jews, grant them repentance, and restore them to their land. In response to Daniel's concern and prayer, the Lord sent the angel Gabriel to inform Daniel that indeed the captivity would end and the Jews would return to their land. In fact, a new era would begin for the Jews which would not last seventy years, but seventy weeks of years during which time the Jews would be in their holy city Jerusalem under the blessing of the Lord. However, this era would not be the Messianic Kingdom which had been previously revealed to Daniel, but it would parallel the Gentile era revealed in chapters 2, 7, and 8. In addition, the seventy weeks of years would not be one continuous stretch of time, but would be divided into at least three distinct intervals between which would be periods of judgment.

Chapter 1

God's Time Schedule for Israel Is Revealed

The Lord revealed through the angel Gabriel (Dan. 9:24-27) that following the seventy year captivity foretold by Jeremiah (25:11-12; 29:10), a new time period of seventy weeks of years (490 years) would be determined upon the Jews and their holy city Jerusalem which would be divided into three periods: seven weeks (49 years), sixty-two weeks (434 years) and one week (7 years) respectively. After the second time period Messiah the Prince would be cut off, and Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. During the third time period Israel would experience tribulation and desolation.

God's Time-Clock for Israel Will Run For 490 Years

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. (Dan. 9:24)

The term *seventy weeks* (שְׁבַע עֵיָר שָׁבָעִים) must be understood to mean seventy weeks of years (490 years) for the following reasons:

(1) The word שָׁבָעִים means a period of seven (days, years).¹ Ordinarily it is applied to a week of days, but it is the consensus of nearly all scholars that it means a period of seven years in Daniel chapter 9. Those who differ from this view make the week an indefinitely long period of time, not a literal week of days.

(2) The term is used here in contrast to the seventy year captivity (9:2) and would be of no consolation to Daniel and his people if a short period of seventy weeks of days was intended.

(3) The Jews were familiar with the idea of a week of years associated with the sabbatical year (Lev. 25; Deut. 15) and with the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:13, 28, etc.) following seven weeks of years.

¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901; 1955 reprint), 988-89; hereafter as BDB.

(4) Being familiar with the Scriptural teaching concerning the captivity (Lev. 26:33-35; Jer. 34:12-22; 2 Chron. 36:21), Daniel would have known that the 70 years of exile represented 70 sabbatical years which were not kept during the 70 weeks of years (490 years) prior to the captivity. The new seventy weeks of years would be a similar period of time following the captivity. The seventy weeks of years were determined upon the Jews (“thy people”) and upon Jerusalem (“thy holy city”). This identifies the primary criterion for determining when God’s time-clock for Israel would run. The time-clock would run when the Jews were in Jerusalem; it would not run when they were not in Jerusalem. However, this criterion is too general, because the Jews were in Jerusalem from their return under Zerubbabel (537 B.C.) until the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), except for very short periods of time. This period exceeds the 490 years of the prophecy by 117 years. There must be other criteria to explain why the prophetic time-clock did not run at times when the Jews were in Jerusalem. Harry A. Ironside suggested that the clock runs only while Israel is under God’s gracious blessing. He stated:

It is also important to notice that these seventy sevens of four hundred and ninety years are cut off from the entire period of time for Daniel's people, the Jews, and his holy city, Jerusalem. Therefore, the seventy weeks are *only running while there is a remnant in Jerusalem owned of God as His people.*²

In addition William Pettingill suggested that the clock stops when God's relationship with Israel is interrupted. He says:

But what becomes of the centuries of the present Church Age? This whole dispensation, which was a mystery hid in God and not revealed to the fathers, comes in during the gap between the *sixty-ninth* and *seventieth* week. It is not counted, for in Jewish Prophecy God never takes account of the time during which His relations with Israel are suspended.³

These authors are representative of conservative scholars who interpret this prophecy literally. Most of these scholars recognize a time gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week, which gap began just prior to the death of Christ and extends to the seventieth week some time in the future. This is based on the observation that the sixty-

² Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet* (New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1920), 163.

³ William L. Pettingill, *Simple Studies in Daniel* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia School of the Bible, 1920), 96-97.

ninth week ended just before the death of Christ, and that the predicted events of the seventieth week did not immediately follow, nor have they yet occurred. This time gap, when God's prophetic clock for Israel stopped, includes the forty years between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70 during which the Jews were in Jerusalem but not under the gracious blessing of God. Other similar time gaps are demonstrated in subsequent sections of this work.

It is concluded that after the time-clock begins to run, it continues as long as the Jews are in Jerusalem under the gracious blessing of God; it stops when God pronounces judgment upon Israel and remains stopped throughout periods of delayed judgment and exile. During the seventy weeks of years, six conditions were to be fulfilled for Israel:

- (1) to finish the transgression
- (2) to make an end of sins
- (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity
- (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness
- (5) to seal up the vision and the prophecy
- (6) to anoint the most Holy.

Leon Wood⁴ considered the first four to have been completed at Christ's first advent, and the last two to be yet completed at His second coming. Edward J. Young⁵ considered all six to be completed. Clarence Larkin⁶ held that all six will be fully completed only at the second coming of Christ. Since there is a sense in which the fulfillment of each is still incomplete, it seems best to follow Larkin's view.

Israel's Time Schedule Is Divided Into Three Periods

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto 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. (Dan. 9:25)

⁴ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 251.

⁵ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 251.

⁶ Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel* (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1929), 177.

The seventy weeks of years were divided into three periods, the first two of which are mentioned in this verse, and the third is mentioned in verse 27. The first period was seven weeks (49 years), the second was sixty-two weeks (434 years), and the third was one week (7 years). The first two periods ($7 + 62 = 69$ weeks, or 483 years) were to transpire between the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, and Messiah the Prince. Thus the first period (7 weeks) would begin with the issuance of a commandment, and the second period (62 weeks) would end with some event in the life of Messiah the Prince prior to His being cut off (Dan. 9:26). No reason is given for two periods of time between these events unless it is implied that the time-clock stops between the two events. However, in spite of this, most interpreters understand these 69 weeks as one continuous uninterrupted period of time.

The term “going forth of the commandment” is literally translated “a going forth of a word.” The expression “word” (דְּבָרָה) is a very general term that does not necessarily mean a formal edict or decree. However, in this context, an edict or decree is not excluded, and scholars generally accept that idea here. Hence the translation “an issuance of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem” is quite acceptable. The expression has no definite article. Thus it does not necessarily refer to one specific decree; it may imply that there were two decrees, one to start the seven week period, and another to start the sixty-two week period. Although scholars have usually seen only one commandment here, in Hebrew this is the simplest way for Gabriel to refer to two periods with two decrees without making the sentence much longer. The longer sentence would have been: “Know therefore and understand, that from an issuance of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem shall be seven weeks, and from an issuance of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem shall be sixty-two weeks until Messiah the Prince: the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” The longer form of the sentence requires the redundant repetition of the phrase “from an issuance of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem,” and the awkward dangling of the phrase “until Messiah the Prince.” Hebrew, and most other languages, frequently avoids such redundancy by deletion. The use of this deletion principle is illustrated below:

(1) In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 the longer form is used where the phrase “a time” is repeated redundantly 26 times:

To everything *there is* a season,
 A time for every purpose under heaven:
² A time to be born, And a time to die;
 A time to plant, And a time to pluck *what is* planted;
³ A time to kill, And a time to heal;
 A time to break down, And a time to build up;
⁴ A time to weep, And a time to laugh;
 A time to mourn, And a time to dance;
⁵ A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones;
 A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;
⁶ A time to gain, And a time to lose;
 A time to keep, And a time to throw away;
⁷ A time to tear, And a time to sew;
 A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;
⁸ A time to love, And a time to hate;
 A time of war, And a time of peace.

However the short form is used in verse 17: “I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time for every purpose and for every work.” Here the phrase “a time” is deleted the second time even though it does not refer to the same “time.” The phrase “a time for every purpose” refers to the desire of the mind, whereas the phrase “a time for every work” refers to actual deeds.

(2) In 1 Kings 10:25 the long form is used: “vessels of silver, and vessels of gold” where the word “vessels” refers to objects of different material, that is, some vessels were of silver and others were of gold. On the other hand, the short form is used in Daniel 11:8—“vessels of silver and gold.” Here the word “vessels” is deleted even though the word does not refer to the same objects in both cases.

These examples do not prove that Gabriel spoke of two decrees, but they illustrate that the language admits the possibility. Furthermore, if Gabriel intended to refer to one specific decree, it would have been proper for him to use the definite article (מִצְאָה הַזֶּה). The content of the decree “to restore and to build Jerusalem” does not include the expression “the street shall be built again and the wall, even in troublous times.” The term *restore* (הִשְׁבִּיב) literally means “cause to return” and may refer to the Jews—that is, “cause (the Jews) to return.” However, since the clause does not mention the Jews, it is

more likely that “Jerusalem” is the object of both “to restore” and “to build.” The term *street* (רחוב) refers to a broad open place or plaza in the city, usually near the gate, regarded as an essential part of a city.⁷ The term *wall* (תְּרִיז) is used only here in the Bible; it is not the usual word for “wall” but is thought to mean “trench or moat.”⁸

The building of the plaza and wall is not part of the decree, but was to occur during the 69 weeks subsequent to the decree. The text declares that this activity would take place in troublous times, a prediction not likely to be part of a decree.

After the Second Time Period Messiah Is Cut Off,

Jerusalem and the Temple Are Destroyed

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. (Dan. 9:26)

After the second period of sixty-two weeks (434 years) Messiah was to be cut off. No indication is given of how long after the close of the second period this event should take place. However, it is usually regarded as a short time. The Messiah of this verse is “Messiah the prince” of verse 25. The expression *be cut off* (כָּרַת) is the same word used of persons being cut off by the death penalty (Gen. 17:14; Lev. 7:20, 21 f.); in the other places where the word is used of persons it implies some form of violent death.⁹

The expression *and not for himself* is most simply understood as “and he has nothing,” following the common Hebrew idiom for possession. However, this idea does not make good sense in this context, because it does not explain why Messiah would suffer the death penalty. On the other hand, the expression can be understood as “and it is not for him (self)” following a less common reflexive idiom in which the simple pronoun is used rather than the reflexive pronoun “himself.”¹⁰ Thus the rendering of the Author-

⁷ BDB, 932.

⁸ BDB, 358.

⁹ BDB, 504.

ized Version is correct and preferable here because it explains that Messiah would suffer the death penalty not for his own crimes, but vicariously for others. This is in agreement with other prophecies concerning Messiah's vicarious suffering and death (Isa. 53). This verse teaches therefore that Messiah will vicariously suffer the death penalty after the 62-week period.

The expression *the city and the sanctuary* refer to Jerusalem and the temple. The term *the prince that shall come* must refer to someone other than Messiah the Prince of verse 25. This is true because the people of this "coming prince" are the ones who "shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." But the people of Messiah the Prince, commonly regarded as the Jews, have never destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. This coming prince then is more than likely the subject of the next verse (9:27) who is identified as the antichrist and "the little horn" of chapter 7. The only destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that occurred subsequent to Daniel's vision is the Roman destruction of A.D. 70. Other destructions of Jerusalem, such as those in the days of Nehemiah and Antiochus Epiphanes, did not involve the destruction of the temple. Since A.D. 70, there has been no temple; thus the people of the coming prince must be the Romans.

The end of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was to be with a "flood" (פְּשֻׁףִּים) or "overflow." Here the term must be used figuratively of a flood of judgment of God's wrath. The destruction was to be the result of a war during the later phase of which desolations were "determined" (נִקְרָא) a term meaning to determine strictly, irrevocably.¹¹

The Third Period Involves Great Tribulation

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. (Dan. 9:27)

¹⁰ E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910) § 135i; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) § 130. Actually, Hebrew has no reflexive pronoun, so a regular pronoun is used instead.

¹¹ BDB, 358.

The third time period of one week (7 years) begins with the confirmation of a covenant with the Jews. The term “sacrifice and the oblation” is the daily ritual of the temple. Since the temple was to be destroyed after the 62 week period (9:26), this implies that the “covenant” includes rebuilding the temple and the restoration of its sacrificial ritual. The events of the seventieth week, therefore, are future, because they have not occurred since A.D. 70. There are differing opinions as to the identity of the covenant maker. Some say that the antecedent of the pronoun *he* is Messiah, and others say it is the coming prince of verse 26. Both are possible grammatically, but the deeds ascribed to the covenant maker do not correspond with Messiah’s character—i.e., he is not a covenant breaker. Therefore, the covenant maker should be regarded as the “coming prince” of verse 26. This is in keeping with the New Testament references to this verse (Matt. 24:15, 2 Thes. 2:3, 4) which identify these deeds with the antichrist.

In the middle of the week, after 3 ½ years, the coming prince will break the covenant and cause the temple ritual to cease. Following this he will set up what Jesus referred to as the “abomination of desolation” (Matt. 24:14) which was further described by Paul (2 Thes 2:3, 4) and by John (Rev. 13:11-18). The text of the last half of the verse is difficult, but it should be translated as follows: “and on (the) wing of abominations (is) one who makes desolate, even until complete destruction (and that is irrevocably determined) is poured out upon that which is desolated.” Thus the last half of the seventieth week will result in complete desolation and destruction.

Chapter 2

How Israel's Time Schedule Has Been Interpreted

A variety of interpretations have been offered for the seventy weeks of Daniel. The way a person interprets the passage depends on his theological presuppositions. Three different theological perspectives dominate the field of interpreters: (1) those who are theological liberal, (2) those who are conservative amillennialists, and (3) those who are conservative premillennialists.

Theologically Liberal Interpreters

Liberal scholars affirm that Daniel was a fictitious character invented by a pious Jew who wrote the book sometime near the date of Antiochus Epiphanes (c. 165 B.C.). Since they deny the possibility of true predictive prophecy their interpretations focus the final details of the prophecy on the author's current events. Montgomery,¹² for example, takes the 69 weeks as 483 literal years, but dates the beginning at 604 B.C. By admitting some difficulty with dates, he brings Cyrus the Lord's anointed one (Isa. 45:1) on the scene as Messiah the Prince, seven weeks (49 years) later, around 558 B.C. He then assumes a miscalculation by the author and arrives at about 167 B.C. as the end of the sixty-ninth week with the assassination of Onias III, the high priest, corresponding with the cutting off of Messiah. Thus he has two Messiahs. The last week, the seventieth, he regards as the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the coming prince. Although Montgomery attempts a literal interpretation, he is plagued with problems of chronology and correspondence of detail that do not commend his view.

Conservative Amillennial Interpreters

Among conservative scholars there are two general points of view. There are those, such as C. F. Keil,¹³ Edward J. Young,¹⁴ and H. C. Leupold,¹⁵ who discount the

¹² James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Daniel* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1964), 380-393.

¹³ C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

¹⁴ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 3rd printing (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

importance of the literal numbers here. They view the term *week* as figurative of an indefinite period of time, the three time periods are regarded as consecutive, coming to an end about the time of Jesus Christ. These scholars usually are of the amillennial persuasion, holding that the promises of the Messianic Kingdom are fulfilled in the church.

Conservative Premillennial Interpreters

On the other hand, the premillennial scholars interpret the term “week” literally as a seven year period, and they attempt to identify the beginning and end of the time periods with the chronology of history. There are a number of common elements among the various literal interpretations.

- (1) Each begins the time-clock with some decree to restore Jerusalem after Daniel’s prophecy;
- (2) Each regards the time schedule to be continuous for sixty-nine weeks;
- (3) Each places a time gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week;
- (4) Each regards the seventieth week as the future Great Tribulation.

There are four decrees regarding Jerusalem that may serve as the starting point of the sixty-nine weeks:

(1) *The decree of Cyrus* (537 B.C.)¹⁶ as recorded in 2 Chron. 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4, and Ezra 6:3-5. In this decree Cyrus granted the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild their temple, and to restore the temple worship. This decree is rejected as the starting point because the Biblical accounts of the decree do not include a command “to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25), and because it occurred too early in history to account for a 483 year interval between the decree and Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 13th printing (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969).

¹⁶ John C. Whitcomb, Jr., gives the date as Oct. 29, 539 B.C.: *Darius the Mede* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 70-71; but Jack Finegan dates Cyrus’ first official year as 538/537 B.C.: *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), 212.

(2) *The decree of Darius (520 B.C.)*¹⁷ as recorded in Ezra 6:1-12. This decree was merely a reaffirmation of Cyrus' decree and is rejected for the same reasons.

(3) *The decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (458 B.C.)*¹⁸ as recorded in Ezra 7:11-26. This decree granted Ezra permission to return to Jerusalem with those Jews who wished to return, and to collect funds for the support of the Temple. It does not contain the command "to restore and to build Jerusalem," and is usually rejected as the starting point.

(4) *The decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (445 B.C.)*¹⁹ as recorded in Neh. 2:1-8 granting Nehemiah permission to go to Jerusalem to build the city and its wall. This decree is most commonly accepted as the starting point of the sixty-nine weeks. However, since only 475 years intervened between this decree and the death of Jesus Christ, various means have been suggested for explaining how Daniel's sixty-nine weeks of years fit into this short period.

The Ezra Solar Year View

Gleason L. Archer²⁰ starts with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus for the benefit of Ezra (457 B.C.) and using solar years he concludes the sixty-nine weeks in A.D. 25. He justifies the use of this decree on the basis of Ezra 7:6, 7 and 9:9 which imply that Ezra was granted permission to rebuild the city and its walls, even though it was not specifically stated in the Biblical record of the decree. Thus he avoids the problem experienced by others of having to use unnatural time units, but his early concluding date is not satisfactory. This is essentially the view of John D. Davis²¹

¹⁷ Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 213.

¹⁸ Finegan, 213.

¹⁹ Finegan, 213.

²⁰ Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 387.

²¹ John D. Davis, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 4th revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), 163.

although he views the first seven weeks and the seventieth week as symbolical rather than mathematical.

The Artaxerxes Lunar Year View

Archer²² presents an alternate view in which he starts with the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. and using what he calls a lunar year of 360 days, by reckoning the years from new year to new year, and by counting the partial year of 445 B.C. and the partial year of A.D. 31 as whole years, he accounts for 483 lunar years between the acceptable decree and an acceptable year for Christ's death. But Harold W. Hoehner²³ has shown that precise astronomical calculations exclude the year A.D. 31 as the year of Christ's crucifixion.

The Artaxerxes Sabbath-Year Cycle View

Robert C. Newman²⁴ makes use of the Sabbath-year cycle as the unit of time that corresponds with Daniel's "week." He interpreted the text to mean that sixty-nine Sabbath-year cycles would expire between the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. and the cutting off of Messiah in A.D. 30. Making use of relatively late sources to determine the dates for the ancient Sabbath-year cycles, he determined that the 69th cycle was from A.D. 27 to 34. Calculating backward from these dates, the first cycle would be from 449 to 442 B.C. Thus the decree would be in the middle of the first cycle and Messiah's crucifixion would be in the middle of the sixty-ninth cycle. This is in keeping with Jewish practice of counting as whole units the partial units of time at the beginning and end of a time period. He also regards this interpretation to be in agreement with idiomatic Jewish understanding of the expression "after three score and two years."²⁵ Newman's use of the Sabbath-year cycle as a possible understanding of Daniel's "week" is reasonable on the surface, but the word *week* (שָׁבוּעַ) is not used in reference to the Sabbath-year cycle in

²² Archer, 387.

²³ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part V: The Year of Christ's Crucifixion," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 524, October-December, 1974, p. 336.

²⁴ Robert C. Newman, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the Old Testament Sabbath-Year Cycle," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 16 (Fall, 1973) pp. 229-234.

²⁵ Compare "after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31) with "he shall rise (on) the third day" (Mark 9:31).

the Bible, instead, the word *Sabbath* (שַׁבָּת) is used in this context. Moreover, if he accepts the Sabbath-cycle, then he must also accept the jubilee-year cycle, since they are inseparable in Jewish tradition. The jubilee-year cycle adds an extra year of jubilee after seven Sabbath-year cycles, making the total expired time 50 years. In a series of 69 Sabbath-year cycles there would be nine jubilees, thus the total expired time would be $483 + 9 = 492$ years. Calculating backward from his sixty-ninth cycle, the first cycle would then be from 458 to 451 B.C., much too early for the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C.

The Artaxerxes Prophetic Year View

Sir Robert Anderson²⁶ starts with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus which he dated as Nisan 1 (March 14),²⁷ 445 B.C. He ends the sixty-ninth week on the day of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem which he dates as Nisan 10 (April 6), A.D. 32. He then computes the number of days between these two dates to be exactly 483 "prophetic" years of 360 days each, making a total of exactly 173,880 days. He justifies the use of "prophetic" years, which are not truly solar or lunar years, on the basis of prophetic Scriptures that equate the last half of the great tribulation (3 ½ years) with 42 month (Rev. 12:6, 11:3). His calculations are very striking, and many have been persuaded to follow his view. Thus Alva J. McClain²⁸ agrees with Anderson, and John F. Walvoord²⁹ prefers his view but acknowledges the difficulty of his conclusion that Christ died in A.D. 32 because most New Testament chronologists set the event between 29 and 31 B.C. Hoehner³⁰ follows Anderson's calculations, but he corrects the dates to begin in 444 B.C., and end in A.D. 33, a rather late date in comparison with other chronologists.

²⁶ Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, 14th ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregal, 1954).

²⁷ Anderson assumes the date Nisan 1, Nehemiah lists only the month of the decree (2:1).

²⁸ Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecies of the Seventy Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940).

²⁹ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 228.

³⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part VI: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 132, No. 525, January-March, 1975, pp. 47-65.

Chapter 3

Problems of Current Literal Views

Current literal interpretations of Daniel's seventy weeks incorporate several difficulties that must be resolved by their advocates. However, their explanations are not fully convincing, leaving the Bible student unsatisfied or hesitant to accept them.

The Problem of Cyrus' Decree (537 B.C.)

As previously stated, this decree has been rejected by almost all literal interpreters because the Biblical accounts of it do not record a command "to restore and to build Jerusalem." But there are a number of reasons why this decree qualifies as the best candidate for the starting point of the seventy weeks:

(1) Isaiah's prophecy foretold that Cyrus would command the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple:

Who says of Cyrus, "*He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' And to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'*" (Isa. 44:28)

If Cyrus did not command the rebuilding of Jerusalem, then Isaiah's prophecy was not fulfilled. It is generally agreed that Cyrus' decree fulfills this prophecy with respect to the temple. However, if the one part of the prophecy is fulfilled by the decree, then it is reasonable to expect the other part to be fulfilled also, even if its fulfillment is not specifically recorded in Scripture. This prophecy is mentioned by numerous scholars who reject Cyrus' decree as the starting point, but many fail to explain why, according to their view, part of the prophecy was not fulfilled. Others claim that the prophecy was fulfilled, but not in the sense required by Daniel to start the seventy weeks. Hoehner concedes that the city was rebuilt, but he explains it away when he says: "Although it is granted that there were inhabitants and a city was built in Cyrus' time as predicted by Isaiah, certainly it was not a city that could defend itself as described in Daniel 9:25."³¹ Actually the defense of the city implied by 9:25 need not be any greater than that actually

³¹ Hoehner, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks," 53.

experienced by Zerubbabel when, while rebuilding the city and the temple, he was antagonized by his local adversaries. As was stated earlier, the building of the plaza and the wall is not part of the decree to start the seventy weeks; it may be regarded as an event subsequent to the decree. The real issue is that the prophecy requires Cyrus' decree to contain the command to build Jerusalem. If the decree did not contain such a command, then the prophecy was not fulfilled, even though the city was rebuilt to some degree.

(2) Comparison of the text of the decree in Ezra 1:1-4, 2 Chron. 36:22-23, and Ezra 6:3-5 indicates that the first record omitted some of the decree. It is probable that neither record contains the entire decree. The first is in Hebrew and has the form of a royal proclamation, though perhaps in abbreviated form. The second is in Aramaic and has the form of a file abstract of the decree for preservation in the archives.³² This is supported by evidence in Josephus which contains a longer version of the decree, including the command to rebuild the city.

Cyrus also sent an epistle to the governors that were in Syria, the contents whereof here follow: King Cyrus to Sisinnes and Sathrabuzanes, sendeth greetings. I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please to return to their own country, and to rebuild their city, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before. (Antiq. XI, i, 3)³³

This conclusion is supported by an inscription of Cyrus himself. The Cyrus Cylinder recorded the general edict of Cyrus granting freedom to the exiles of many nations and permitting them to return to their homeland.

From . . . to Ashur and Susa, Agade, Ashnunnak, Zamban, Meturna, Deri, with the territory of the land of Gutium, the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose sites were of ancient foundation—the gods, who dwelt in them, I brought back to their places, and caused them to dwell in a habitation for all time. All their inhabitants I collected and restored them to their dwelling place. . . . May all the gods, whom I brought into their cities, pray daily before Bel and Nabu for long life for me.³⁴

³² Archer, 400.

³³ See also Antiq. XI, i, 2; ii, I, 2; iii, 7; iv, 5-7.

³⁴ Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1946), 191.

The edict gives no hint of any restriction placed on the released captives when they return to their homeland to rebuild their temples. In fact, it strongly implies that they were to rebuild their cities. Surely Cyrus granted permission to rebuild their cities; how could he expect the people to pray for him if he refused permission to rebuild the cities of their sacred temples? It is most difficult to imagine that Cyrus' decree would not include permission to build Jerusalem. The alternative is that the Jews built a new temple which they left unprotected amidst the ruins of Jerusalem with hostile enemies nearby. Anderson admits this when he says, "The result was to produce a gorgeous shrine in the midst of a ruined city."³⁵

(3) The Jews understood the command to include the building of the city, and they carried out the command. Josephus understood it so when he said:

When Cyrus had said this to the Israelites, the rulers of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites and the priests, went in haste to Jerusalem. So they performed their vows to God, and offered the sacrifices that had been accustomed to of old times; I mean this upon the rebuilding of their city, and the revival of the ancient practices relating to their worship. (Antiq. XI, i, 3)

About the time that the Jews finished the foundations of the temple, hostilities broke out with the local adversaries who interfered with their building until the reign of Darius.

Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. (Ezra 4:4-5)

The enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to Artaxerxes reporting their building activities and requesting an official restraint be placed on them. Their letter reported their building the city and the wall.

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. (Ezra 4:12; cf. Antiq. XI, ii, 1)

³⁵ Anderson, 62.

Earlier commentators, following the suggestion of Josephus³⁶ have identified this Artaxerxes as the Cambyses of secular history (529-521 B.C.). More recent scholars have followed the suggestion of Keil³⁷ and Young³⁸ that Ezra 4:6-23 represents a parenthetical insertion of examples of typical opposition of a later date, and that the letter of Ezra 4:11-16 was sent to Artaxerxes Longimanus about 448 B.C. in Ezra's day not Zerubbabel's day. Thus it has been inferred that the letter does not establish the fact that Zerubbabel was rebuilding the city. However, whether one follows Josephus' explanation or that of Keil, the text still implies that Zerubbabel was rebuilding the city, otherwise the content of the letter would not be a typical representation of the local opposition, and there would be no reason for the letter to be inserted in chapter 4 out of chronological order.

The building of the city and temple was resumed under the reign of Darius I by Zerubbabel at the influence of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Hag. 1:1-15; Zech. 1:13-17). Haggai urged the Jews to finish the temple on the basis that they had neglected God's house while living at ease in their "ciled houses." His prophecy was directed to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem (Ezra 5:1), thus indicating that Jerusalem was populated with people living in comfortable homes. Zechariah encouraged the people regarding both the temple and the city:

Therefore, thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of host, and a line shall be stretched upon Jerusalem. (Zech. 1:16)

The stretching forth (רָחַץ) of a line over Jerusalem speaks of a measuring line for building.³⁹ Thus Zechariah declares that construction of the city will resume.

³⁶ Antiq. XI, ii, 1.

³⁷ C. F. Keil, *The Book of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther: The Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, reprint), pp. 70-75.

³⁸ Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 381-382.

³⁹ BDB, 640.

Again the local adversaries reported the construction to the Persian emperor Darius (Ezra 5:7-17), in an effort to stop the progress of the Jews. But this time, because of an appeal to search for the record of Cyrus' former decree (Ezra 5:17), permission was granted for the work to continue when Cyrus' decree was found (Ezra 6:1-12). That this decree also included the building of Jerusalem is made clear by Josephus who revealed that this decision was influenced by a personal appeal from Zerubbabel:

Zorobabel put him in mind of the vow he had made in case he should ever have the kingdom. Now this vow was, "to rebuild Jerusalem, and to build therein the temple of God; as also to restore the vessels which Nebuchadrezzar had pillaged and carried to Babylon. (Antiq. XI, iii, 7)

So the king. . . also sent letters to those rulers that were in Syria and Phoenicia to cut down and carry cedar trees from Lebanon to Jerusalem, and to assist him in building the city. . . and all that Cyrus intended to do before him relating to the restoring of Jerusalem, Darius also ordained should be done accordingly. (Antiq. XI, Hi, 8)

Thus the temple was completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18) in 515 B.C. Evidently reasonable progress was made in building the city because some years later in the year 458 B.C., Artaxerxes Longimanus granted Ezra permission to return to Jerusalem to effect certain needed reforms (Ezra 7:11-26). When Ezra arrived with his companions (August 4, 458 B.C.), the Scripture speaks of Jerusalem as a thriving city in which the group could find lodging: "And we came to Jerusalem and abode there three days" (Ezra 8:32). Ezra found no occasion to mourn over the ruinous state of the city, as did Nehemiah some years later. Instead, the city had enough inhabitants to require the services of heralds for public proclamations: "And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity" (Ezra 10:7). Evidently after Ezra had been in Jerusalem for some time the Jews began a new campaign to improve the city of Jerusalem and the walls. At this time the city had a plaza (רחוב)—same word as in Dan. 9:25) associated with the temple: "and all the people sat in the street (רחוב) of the house of God" (Ezra 10:9), and this was before 445 B.C. This activity was observed by the local adversaries of the Jews, and if the suggestion of Keil and Young previously noted on Ezra 4:6-23 is followed, the adversaries reported the building activity to Artaxerxes who wrote back prohibiting further construction. The enemies of the Jews then attempted to stop the building of the city and its walls by force:

Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. (Ezra 4:23)

The hostilities of the local adversaries must have caused a major conflict in 448 B.C. which resulted in some degree of destruction of the city, its walls and gates, but not the temple. Others date this event about 446 B.C., but there is no exact date available, and the enemies of the Jews may have been able to prevent reports from getting to the Persian palace for quite some time. Reports of this conflict had been coming to Nehemiah in Shushan from time to time. When, after much delay, the report of the city's destruction finally arrived, Nehemiah was greatly disturbed. This resulted in the decree of the Persian king granting Nehemiah permission and funds to return to rebuild the city and its wall (Neh. 1:1-2:10).

The above destruction of the city goes unnoticed by most historians, but a careful reading of Nehemiah 1 supports this view. If Jerusalem and its wall had stood in ruins since the days of Zerubbabel's first return, then the report that the city was still in that condition after 90 years would be no cause for concern. But if the reconstructed city and its walls had been just recently destroyed, then Nehemiah had good cause for his fasting and mourning. This view is verified by Josephus:

Now there was one of those Jews that had been carried captive who was cup-bearer to King Xerxes; his name was Nehemiah. As this man was walking before Susa, the metropolis of the Persians, he heard some strangers that were entering the city, after a long journey, speaking to one another in the Hebrew tongue; so he went to them, and asked them whence they came. And when their answer was that they came from Judea, he began to inquire of them again in what state the multitude was, and in what condition Jerusalem was; and when they replied that they were in bad state, for that their walls were thrown down to the ground, and that the neighboring nations did a great deal of mischief to the Jews, while in the day time they overran the country, and pillaged it, and in the night did them mischief, insomuch that not a few were led away captive out of the country, and out of Jerusalem itself, and that the roads were in the day time found full of dead men. (Antiq. XI, v, 6)

Summarizing the point, the Jews understood Cyrus' decree to command the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. They undertook to carry out the command, which, though hindered by their local adversaries, was successful. The reconstructed city was subsequently destroyed just prior to the first return of Nehemiah, who came specifically to restore the recently destroyed city and its walls.

(4) If Cyrus' decree is rejected as the starting point, then there is a period of about 90 years during which God's time schedule for Israel does not take into account and this during a time when Israel for the most part was experiencing God's blessing. On the other hand, Daniel was expecting the introduction of a new era for Israel, and Gabriel's message implied that this new era would begin immediately after the 70 year captivity. Furthermore, Daniel surely knew Isaiah's prophecy concerning Cyrus. With the appearance of Cyrus on the historic scene, and being armed with Gabriel's revelation about the decree, Daniel was in perfect position to negotiate the writing of the decree with Cyrus.⁴⁰ Josephus records that Cyrus issued his decree after having read Isaiah's prophecy.⁴¹ Daniel undoubtedly understood Cyrus' decree to be the one ushering in the new era for Israel. An interpretation that leaves no unexplained time in God's schedule for Israel is to be preferred over one that does.

(5) In the final analysis, the true reason Cyrus' decree is rejected is that it occurred too early to permit the end of the sixty-ninth week to coincide with the life of Jesus Christ. However, this is a problem only if it is assumed that the seven week period and the sixty-two week period run consecutively. But there is reason to believe that there are gaps of time in this period, just as there is a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. If the key to these gaps is understood, there is no reason to have any unexplained time between Daniel and Christ. An interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks that properly takes Cyrus' decree into account is to be preferred to one that explains it away.

The Problem of the Divided Sixty-Nine Weeks

Gabriel revealed to Daniel that the seventy weeks would be divided into three periods, one of seven weeks, one of sixty-two weeks, and one of one week. Yet literal interpreters explain them as though there were only two periods, one of sixty-nine weeks, and one of one week. But actually the number sixty-nine is never mentioned in the prophecy. In fact, the cutting off of Messiah is specifically declared to come after the sixty-two week period, not after sixty-nine weeks. Thus the Scripture seems to emphasize the separateness of the three periods. Furthermore, current explanations of why there is a

⁴⁰ Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 384, 392.

⁴¹ Antiq. XI, i, 1-2.

division of seven and sixty-two are quite inadequate. The usual explanation is that the first 49 years represent the reconstruction era of Nehemiah while the city was being restored. Yet the Scripture states that the walls were completed in 52 days (Neh. 6:15) and shortly thereafter the temple was cleansed (Neh. 13:4-6), and there is nothing in Scripture to indicate any reason for associating 49 years with this reconstruction.

Larkin explains the seven week period as that time between Artaxerxes' decree and the close of Hebrew prophecy and the Old Testament Scripture in 396 B.C.; and he explains the sixty-two weeks as the "Time of Silence" between the close of the Scripture and Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This is an interesting speculation, but it is based on an assumed date for the book of Malachi which cannot be precisely determined. The more commonly accepted date for the book of Malachi is either 458 B.C. or 433 B.C.⁴²

On the other hand, since all agree to a gap between the second and third time period, there is a precedent for expecting a time gap between the first and second period. Larkin acknowledges this possibility:

Now if our present chronology is correct we cannot take either of the first two "Decrees" as a starting point unless we admit that there is a "time space" of 49 or 32 years between the "7 Weeks" and the "62 Weeks," which the prophecy will permit, in fact implies, by the division of the "69 Weeks" into "7 Weeks" and "62 Weeks." . . . From this we see that we must either allow a "Time Space" between the "7 weeks" and the "62 Weeks," or we must use some other method of calculation.⁴³

Larkin, along with the others, preferred to use "some other method of calculation" than to acknowledge a time gap between the periods.

The possibility of a gap is supported by the wording of Daniel 9:25—"an issuance of a decree"—which implies more than one decree by the absence of the definite article. The more restricted wording—"the issuance of the decree"—which would admit only

⁴² Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 348-350.

⁴³ Larkin, 187-188.

one decree, was not used by Daniel. An interpretation that adequately explains the separate time periods of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks is to be preferred over an interpretation that regards them as one sixty-nine week period.

The Problem of Antiochus Epiphanes

It was previously demonstrated that the criterion for God's time-clock to run is that the Jews are in Jerusalem under God's blessing. When the Jews are not in Jerusalem or are under the judgment of God, the clock stops. There was a period of time during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes when the conditions for the time clock to run were not in effect. In the year 168 B.C. Antiochus destroyed Jerusalem and killed many Jews; taking many others captive.

The king sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Judah, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude, and spake peaceable words unto them but all was deceit: for when they had given him credence, he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel. And when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side. But the women and children took they captive, and possessed the cattle. (1 Macc. 1:29-32)

Thus they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it: Inasmuch that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them: whereupon the city was made an habitation of strangers, and became strange to those that were born in her: and her own children left her. Her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her Sabbaths into reproach, her honour into contempt. (1 Macc. 1:37-39)

In December, 167 B.C., under order of Antiochus, the temple of Jerusalem was desecrated and given to idolatry. The law of Moses was rescinded by a decree of the king; circumcision was outlawed, and the sacrifice of swine was instituted on the temple altar.⁴⁴

In 166 B.C. Jerusalem was filled with monuments of the pagan deities. The people were forced to worship the pagan idols and to eat the sacrificial flesh. Those who refused were put to death. The city remained in the hands of pagans until 164 B.C. when

⁴⁴ Bickerman, Elias, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962).

Judas Maccabeus took possession of Jerusalem. Then the Jews cleansed the temple rededicating it on Kislev 25; and they rebuilt the walls of Zion.⁴⁵

Always in the past such events have been permitted by God as judgment for Israel's sin. Under these circumstances it is impossible to understand how God's time-clock for Israel could be running while Jerusalem was destroyed, her inhabitants fled and Israel is under God's judgment. But those who regard the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. to be the starting point of the seventy weeks also regard the clock to run continuously through the years of Antiochus Epiphanes. This is a problem that must be taken into account in the interpretation of the seventy weeks. Interpreters mention these facts but do not explain why according to their reckoning the time-clock continues to run during this period of destruction and judgment.

Probably one reason this problem is passed over is the difficulty of explaining a time gap within the sixty-two week segment, since there is no indication of such a gap in the prophecy. However, it must be remembered that no time gaps are mentioned directly in the prophecy. They have been deduced from the current historic vantage point within the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week.

The principal time details of the prophecy are: (1) the total elapsed time would be seventy weeks of years; (2) an official enactment would mark the beginning of three segments of these seventy weeks; (3) the elapsed time to follow each enactment would be seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week, respectively; and (4) the criterion that determines the reckoning of elapsed time is the Jews in Jerusalem.

The fact that there was no official decree associated with the restoration under the Maccabees explains why a fourth segment was not mentioned. The prophet mentioned only segments associated with future decrees or covenants. A time gap in prophecy should not be regarded as a serious problem. Numerous time gaps are observed in apparently continuous prophecies. There is a gap in the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2,

⁴⁵ Bickerman.

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.

When Jesus read these verses in the synagogue at Nazareth, He stopped reading after “the acceptable year of the LORD,” He closed the book, and declared the prophecy fulfilled. He did not read the rest of the prophecy because there is a time gap between “the acceptable year of the LORD” and “the day of vengeance of our God.”

There is a time gap in the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.” Messiah the Son has been born, but the government has not yet been placed upon His shoulder. The same gap appears in the prophecy of Luke 1:31-33.

There is a time gap in the prophecy of Jesus (John 15:28-29), “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Here the sense of the prophecy implies that the resurrection of the just and unjust will occur in the same hour at the same sound of his voice, and yet other prophecies of the same events make it clear that there will be a time gap of at least a thousand years between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust (Rev: 20:5, 11-15). The same gap must be present in Daniel’s prophecy of these two events (Dan. 12:2).

Thus time gaps may be expected. However, it is a more serious problem for one to regard God’s time-clock to be running when the conditions for it to run are not in effect. An interpretation that takes the Maccabbean destruction of Jerusalem into account is to be preferred over one that overlooks it.

The Problem of Unnatural Divisions of Time

Interpreters who use the decree of Artaxerxes as the starting point have found it necessary to use unnatural divisions of time to explain the expiration of 69 weeks of years in only 475 solar years.

Some use the lunar year (354 days) as the unit of time. This is done on the observation that the Jewish calendar used a lunar month; that is, the first day of the month was determined by the high priest by the appearance of the new moon. This resulted in the Jewish month being either 29 or 30 days long, depending on when the new moon appeared, averaging out to approximately 29 ½ days per month.

Other interpreters use the calendar year or “prophetic year” of 360 days on the observation that certain Scriptures indicate that the Jews seemed to use a 30 day month. For example, during the Genesis flood, five full months are said to be 150 days (Gen. 7:11, 24; 8:3-4). However, it is not certain that the 150th day corresponded with the seventeenth day of the seventh month, nor is it certain that Noah did not arbitrarily use 30 day months since he could not see the moon from inside the ark during the many days of clouds and rain. Again forty-two months (Rev. 11:2) are said to be 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6) although these verses do not refer to the same events and it is not at all certain that they are fully simultaneous and of the same duration.

In any event, both views ignore the fact that the Jews added an intercalary month from time to time to keep their lunar calendar in phase with the solar seasons. Averaging the days of these years over a number of years resulted in an average of 365 ¼ days per year, or a solar year. It was this type of year that the Jews used in reckoning the reign of their kings and all other historical events. It was surely this type of year that Daniel and his contemporaries understood when they used the word “year.” The rule of Biblical interpretation known as *usus loquendi* indicates that the meaning of a word as it was understood by the author and his contemporaries should be used if at all possible. Thus an interpretation that uses solar years is to be preferred over others.

Furthermore, units of measure in the Bible are to be interpreted to the nearest whole unit, not more precisely than that. Jack Finegan stated, “Indeed we recognize. . . a general or normal principle of Jewish reckoning that the part stands for the whole: a part of a month is considered a whole month and a part of a year is considered a whole year.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Finegan, *Handbook*, 90; See also Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdrnans, 1965), 28.

Thus 483 years is to be interpreted to the nearest year as the Jews counted years, not as 173,880 days. When time was to be measured more precisely, the unit of month (Est; 2:12, Rev. 11:2), week (Dan. 10:2) or day (Dan. 1:14) was used. This is particularly true in Daniel where certain long periods of time were measured in days (Dan. 8:14; 12:11, 12). An interpretation that attempts to explain the fulfillment of a prophecy more precisely than the words of the prophecy normally indicate, and that resorts to the use of unnatural time units and unusual chronology in the explanation, must be viewed with a degree of suspicion.

The Problem of Unusual Chronology

Some interpreters who use the decree of Artaxerxes of 445 B.C. as the starting point have found it necessary to assume a date for Christ's crucifixion later than most New Testament chronologists. Ordinarily New Testament chronologists assign the crucifixion somewhere from A.D. 29 to 31. But Sir Robert Anderson assigned the event to A.D. 32, which date he supported with long and detailed arguments. Walvoord commented,

The principal difficulty is Anderson's conclusion that the death of Christ occurred A.D. 32. Generally speaking, while there has been uncertainty as to the precise year of the death of Christ based on present evidence, most New Testament chronologists move it one or two years earlier, and plausible attempts have been made to adjust Anderson's chronology to A.D. 30.⁴⁷

Harold Hoehner has shown that precise astronomical calculations exclude the year A.D. 32 as the year of Christ's death:

There have been several studies in this, and their conclusions are that the only possible times Nisan 14 fell on Friday were in the years of A.D. 27, 30, 33 and 36. Of these, A.D. 27 is the least likely astronomically. In that year it is probable that Nisan 14 fell on Thursday rather than Friday.⁴⁸

Hoehner further stated:

Second, the A.D. 32 date for the crucifixion is untenable. It would mean that Christ was crucified on either Sunday or Monday. In fact, Anderson realizes the dilemma and he has

⁴⁷ Walvoord, 228.

⁴⁸ Hoehner, Harold, "The Year of Christ's Crucifixion," 336.

to do mathematical gymnastics to arrive at a Friday crucifixion. This makes one immediately suspect. Actually there is no good evidence for an A.D. 32 crucifixion date.⁴⁹

However, Hoehner prefers A.D. 33 for the date of the crucifixion, a date even later than that of Anderson. His argument progresses along the following lines:

(1) Christ was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C., in either December of 5 B.C. or January of 4 B.C.⁵⁰

(2) Christ's public ministry began sometime in the summer or autumn of A.D. 29.⁵¹

(3) Christ's public ministry lasted for three and a half years, including four Passovers.⁵²

(4) Christ was crucified on Friday Nisan 14.⁵³

(5) The year of Christ's crucifixion was A.D. 33 based on the above arguments plus the fact that Nisan 1 fell on Friday that year. This date is supported, he feels, by other historical observations.⁵⁴

Although Hoehner's arguments are quite impressive, it must be noted that his conclusions are different from most other New Testament chronologists. The critical point of his argument is the year of the commencement of Christ's public ministry. By

⁴⁹ Hoehner, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks," 64.

⁵⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part I: The Date of Christ's Birth," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 130, No. 520, October-December, 1973, pp. 333-351.

⁵¹ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part II: The Commencement of Christ's Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 521, January-March, 1974, pp. 41-54.

⁵² Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part III: The Duration of Christ's Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 522, April-June, 1974, pp. 147-162.

⁵³ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part IV: The Day of Christ's Crucifixion," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 523, July-September, 1974, pp. 241-264.

⁵⁴ Hoehner, "The Year of Christ's Crucifixion," 332-348.

selecting the late date of A.D. 29 he is able to extend the ministry of Christ to A.D. 33, the date needed to fulfill his interpretation of Daniel's sixty-nine weeks. There are three chronological references to the beginning of Christ's ministry which help to establish the date:

(1) Luke states that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), shortly before the baptism of Jesus.

(2) Luke states that Jesus was "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when his public ministry began.

(3) John records the words of the Jews, in the first year of Christ's ministry, who said that "forty and six years was this temple in building." (John 2:20).

Hoehner justifies the choice of A.D. 29 by assuming that because Luke wrote to a Roman official, Theophilus, he used the Roman method of reckoning the years of Tiberius' reign, starting from the death of Augustus on August 19, A.D. 14 using the accession-year system and the Julian calendar, the first year of Tiberius would be from January 1 to December 31, A.D. 14, and the fifteenth year would be A.D. 29. He discounts other possible methods of reckoning the date that places it (1) in the year A.D. 26, reckoning from Tiberius' co-regency with Augustus; (2) in the year A.D. 27, using the Syrian system which reckons years from the month Tishri; (3) in the year A.D. 28, using the Jewish system which reckons years from the month Nisan.

Hoehner further justifies the date by asserting that A.D. 29 is within the bounds permitted by Luke 3:23 which states that Jesus was "about thirty years of age" when his ministry began. In A.D. 29, Jesus would have been 33 years of age, an age within the range of the term "about," although it seems to stretch the limit.

He further justifies the date by explaining the forty-six years of John 2:20 as referring to the time since the temple (naov") had been completed, not to the time the temple complex (iJerovn) was under construction. This conclusion is based on John's use of the Greek word naov" (temple edifice) rather than iJerovn (temple complex). Since the temple edifice (naov") was completed in 18/17 B.C., forty six years later would be A.D.

29/30, Hoehner's proposed year. However, an earlier date, A.D. 26, meets all the chronological tests better than A.D. 29.

(1) A.D. 26 is the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1-2) as reckoned from the decree by which he became co-regent with Augustus in A.D. 11/12. Although Tiberius was not made joint Emperor with Augustus, he was elevated to the rank of coregent with respect to the provinces and the armies. Although it would be expected that Roman documents and coins would be dated from the year Tiberius became Emperor at the death of Augustus, it is likely that among the provinces, unofficial documents would be dated from the year Tiberius received his provincial power. Alfred Edersheim asserted,

It was according to St. Luke's exact statement, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—reckoning as provincials would do, from his co-regency with Augustus (which commenced two years before his sole reign), in the year 26 A.D."⁵⁵

Although there seems to be no extant evidence to confirm that Luke used this method of reckoning the date, neither is there evidence to firmly deny it. This phrase "fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar" need not be understood as the "fifteenth year of Tiberius *as* Caesar" the normal sense would be to understand "Tiberius Caesar" as the appropriate name to be used subsequent to his becoming emperor. Furthermore, the reign of numerous kings of Israel and Judah were reckoned from the beginning of a co-regency. Edwin R. Thiele declared:

In the case of Israel, a double dating is given from the accession of Joram, the second year of Jehoram of Judah (II Kings 1:17) and the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat (II Kings 3:1). This undoubtedly points to a co-regency between Jehoshaphat and his successor Jehoram, a co-regency which again is referred to in II Kings 8:16. In II Kings 15:5 mention is made of Jotham's judging the land during the illness of his father Azariah. Valuable evidence regarding the existence of a number of other co-regencies is found in the synchronistical data or the data concerning the years of reign.⁵⁶

Thiele recorded seven co-regencies among the kings of Israel and Judah, five of which were included in the total reign of the king, and only two of which were not.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Eerdmans, New American 37th ed., 1956), p. 264.

⁵⁶ Thiele, 32.

⁵⁷ Thiele, 207.

Although this does not prove that Luke reckoned the reign of Tiberius from his coregency, it at least establishes the practice among the Jews.

(2) In A.D. 26 Jesus would be “about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23) more nearly so than any later date. Counting from the birth of Christ, in 4/5 B.C., he would be exactly 30 years of age in A.D. 26.

(3) In A.D. 26/27 the Herodian temple had been under construction for 46 years (John 2:19-20), the reconstruction having been started in 20/19 B.C.⁵⁸

To interpret John 2:20 to mean that the temple edifice has been standing 46 years since its completion is to miss the whole force of the Jews’ reply to Jesus. How long a building has been standing has nothing to do with how long it would take to reconstruct it. But if Jesus claimed to be able to reconstruct in three days what had been under construction for 46 years, and was still not completed, this claim would be regarded by the Jews as incredible. This is obviously the reason why so many translations have rendered the verse as though the construction was still in progress, even though the Greek verb is in the aorist passive tense.

The use of the Greek word *naov*" (temple edifice) here should not confuse the issue. Jesus used the term to refer to his body (2:21) which was indeed a *naov*". But the Jews, completely misunderstanding him, replied with the same term erroneously applied to the entire sacred area in order to exaggerate the incredibility of his claim.

(4) The earlier commencement date (A.D. 26) permits three and a half years for Christ's public ministry, with his crucifixion on Friday, Nisan 14 (April 7), A.D. 30. This is in agreement with astronomical calculations. Finegan says, “astronomically calculated, therefore, the likely dates for the crucifixion of Jesus appear to be either Friday, April 7, A.D. 30, or Friday, April 3, A.D. 33.”⁵⁹ Some have questioned the year A.D. 30 on the

⁵⁸ Hoehner, “The Commencement of Christ’s Ministry,” 50.

⁵⁹ Finegan, *Handbook*, 296.

basis that Nisan 14 may have been on Thursday that year according to precise computer calculations.⁶⁰ However, early Jewish tradition is adequate to resolve the question. In temple times the New Moon was “sanctified” only after the new crescent was sighted by reputable witnesses properly examined to determine their accuracy and agreement with astronomical predictions. Whenever, in marginal cases, the New Moon would cause a Holy Convocation to fall immediately before or after the Sabbath, the priests would deliberately choose the evidence that avoided such a coincidence. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, describing the procedure, says,

Proceedings were at times deliberately prolonged or speeded up, with the occasional choice of some observational post favorable for early sighting of the new crescent (*Ein Tov*), in order to avoid whenever possible a festival day, especially the Day of Atonement, falling immediately before or after the Sabbath.⁶¹

This tradition would have caused the priests to delay the New Moon in the marginal situation of A.D. 30, in order to prevent the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15, which was a Holy Convocation (Num. 28:17-18), from falling on Friday. This delay would then result in Nisan 15 being on Saturday (the Sabbath) and Nisan 14 on Friday. Hoehner says, “The year A.D. 30 has been debated, but it is reasonably certain that Nisan 14 was a Friday that year.”⁶²

After considering all the alternatives Finegan prefers A.D. 26 as the commencement of Christ's ministry and A.D. 30 as year of his death. He says:

The data summarized in the preceding paragraphs . . . are capable of being incorporated in three different chronological schemes of the life of Jesus. . . . Of the three the first makes it possible to take Luke 3:23 in the most exact sense of the words “about thirty” . . . and to take John 2:20 in what may be the most natural sense of these words as counting forty-six years from the time when Herod began rebuilding of the Temple in 19/18 B.C. . . . All together it appears that some preference may be given to the first chronological scheme of the life of Jesus.⁶³

⁶⁰ Hoehner, “The Year of Christ’s Crucifixion,” 336.

⁶¹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) vol. 5, p. 49; Talmudic authorities: RH 2:6-8, 3:1; Sab. 15:3; Suk. 4:2-3; An. 2:2.

⁶² Hoehner, “The year of Christ Is Crucifixion,” 336.

⁶³ Finegan, *Handbook*, 300.

(5) The A.D. 30 date for the crucifixion is in better agreement with the chronology of the Apostolic Age than A.D. 33.

Finegan stated:

If the fourteen years of Gal. 2:1 follow upon the three years of Gal. 1:18, as seems more probable in view of their sequence in the Galatian letter, then the conversion was probably in A.D. 33/34 . . . This date of A.D. 33/34 for the conversion of Paul is after both the spring of A.D. 30 and the spring of A.D. 33, which are dates we have considered probable for the death of Jesus. . . It fits therefore with either date, but more adequate time for intervening events (Ac 1-9) is probably allowed by the earlier alternative which . . . we have preferred anyway. We conclude it to be probable that the death of Jesus was in the spring of A.D. 30 and the conversion of Paul in A.D. 33/34.⁶⁴

(6) The A.D. 30 date of the crucifixion is in agreement with the data given by the earliest Christian historians. Africanus (c. A.D. 170-240) a Christian writer who lived in Emmaus in Palestine, a chronographer highly esteemed by his contemporaries, dated Christ's death in A.D. 29/30 as did Hippolytus of Rome (c. A.D. 170-236).⁶⁵

In summary, it has been shown that interpreters who use the 445 B.C. decree of Artaxerxes as the starting point of Daniel's Seventy Weeks make use of an unusual chronology of Christ's life, resorting to later dates to satisfy their interpretation. On the other hand, earlier dates are preferred by chronologists who are not influenced by a prophetic interpretation. An interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks that uses a commonly accepted chronology is to be preferred to one using an unusual chronology.

⁶⁴ Finegan, *Handbook*, 320.

⁶⁵ Finegan, *Handbook*, 144-145.

Chapter 4

A Proposed Solution to the Interpretation

In this chapter, solution is proposed that endeavors to resolve the various problems previously mentioned and to present a complete explanation of God's Time Schedule for Israel. It begins with Cyrus' decree of 537 B.C., leaving no unexplained time gap between the Seventy Year Captivity and Daniel's Seventy Weeks. It accounts for the divisions of Seven Weeks and Sixty-two Weeks. It accounts for the destruction of Jerusalem, the desecration of the temple, and the slaughter and scattering of the Jews at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. It explains the forty year delay of God's judgment upon Jerusalem between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70, and two similar time delays in previous portions of the Time Schedule.

Principles of Interpretation

The following principles are used in the proposed interpretation: (1) the use of natural time units of measure, (2) the use of gaps between each time segment, (3) the use of more than one decree, (4) the use of judgment at the end of each time segment, (5) the use of the forty-year delay principle, (6) and the use of a time gap at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The Use of Natural Time Units

The time units used in this interpretation are solar years reckoned, as the custom of the Jews was, and still is, from Tishri 1 as the new year. The years are numbered according to the Jewish Era of the World, using Anno Mundi 3828 as the year of the destruction of the second temple corresponding to A.D. 70, and counting backward according to standard chronology.

Time periods are reckoned by counting the partial year at the beginning and end of the time period as whole years, and reckoning the intervening years from new year to new year. This, too, is according to Jewish custom, as previously noted. However, this principle is not imposed more rigidly than the concept of the nearest whole unit warrants. Thus, for example, the forty year period from the crucifixion of Christ, Nisan 14, 3788 A.M., to the destruction of the Temple, Ab 9, 3828 A.M., is actually 39 full years plus two partial years, yet it is rounded off to simply forty years.

The term *week* (שָׁבוּעַ) is regarded as seven consecutive years, but not those corresponding to the Jewish scheme of sabbatical years (שָׁבָת).

The Use of Gaps between Each Time Segment

Since the events of the seventieth week did not follow the close of the sixty-ninth week, it is evident that there is a time gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week during which there was a destruction of Jerusalem and a corresponding exile. The time-clock stopped during this time gap. It is proposed that there was also a gap between the seven week segment and the sixty-two week segment associated with the destruction of Jerusalem and the resultant exile in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, during which the time-clock was stopped, as illustrated in Figure 1 on the next page.

The Use of More Than One Decree

It has been shown that the text of Daniel 9:25 implies more than one decree. It is proposed that each of the three time segments begins with a decree. The seven week segment began with the decree of Cyrus in 537 B.C. The sixty-two week segment began with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus in 444 B.C.⁶⁶ The one week segment will begin with the covenant of the “coming prince” with the Jews (Dan. 9:27), evidently a covenant granting permission to rebuild the temple and to restore the temple sacrifices. (See Figure 1 on the next page.)⁶⁷

The Use of Judgment to End

Each Time Segment

The three time segments define times during which the Jews would be in Jerusalem under the gracious blessing of God. The fact that they would be under God’s blessing does not exclude the possibility of adversity. The adversity during the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah was used by God to strengthen and unify His people. The foretold tribulation of the seventieth week will not be inconsistent with God’s gracious blessing on His people; during those days He will miraculously protect them (Rev. 12:13-

⁶⁶ Hoehner, “Daniel’s Seventy Weeks,” 56-59.

⁶⁷ The dimensions of the diagrams in the figures are not to scale.

17). It is proposed that each segment was brought to a close by a pronouncement of judgment that brought God's gracious blessing to an end and foretold impending destruction and exile.

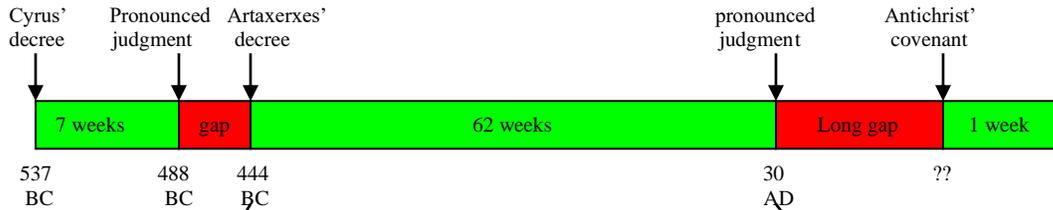


Figure 1a—Time Gaps in Daniel's 70 Weeks

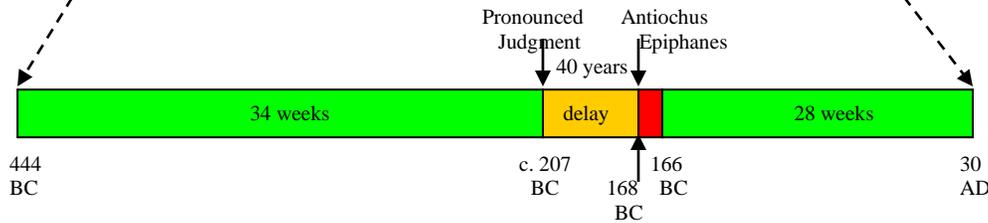


Figure 1b—Time Gap of Antiochus Epiphanes

The first time segment (seven weeks), which began with the decree of Cyrus in 537 B.C., came to an end 49 years later in 488 B.C. with the prophecy of Zechariah:

Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men everyone into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. (11:1-6)

This prophecy is commonly regarded as an announcement of destruction on the land and its people. David Baron noted:

The primary reference is very probably to the physical desolation which is to befall the land in consequence of its being invaded by an enemy . . . But while the physical desolation of the land is that which is primarily set forth in this brief opening section of the chapter, there is also contained in it, if not directly, at least indirectly, an announcement of a destruction of the people.⁶⁸

Most commentators regard this as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. Charles Lee Feinberg stated, “We prefer to understand the passage as a specific reference (although in very general terms, it is true) of the judgment of God upon Israel in the time of the Second Temple at the hand of the Romans.”⁶⁹ This is the opinion also of Ironside, Keil, Dods, Gaebelein, Unger, Collins, and ancient rabbinic tradition. This opinion is probably so popular because of the great prominence of the Roman destruction in contrast with that of Antiochus Epiphanes, and because the destruction at the time of Nehemiah has gone relatively unnoticed.

Actually the order of the text suggests a destruction prior to the time of Christ. Zechariah 11:7-14 is regarded by many commentators to refer to the life of Christ, and the verses that follow are regarded to refer to events following his death. Thomas V. Moore recognized this when he said, “This metaphor describes the storm of invasion, bloodshed, and oppression that should rollover Palestine after the glorious Maccabean era, and before the coming of the Messiah.”⁷⁰ However, he suggested that the reference is to a civil war that caused the Romans to come in and humble the whole land under the power of Rome.

A careful examination of the text identifies the invaders as “neighbors” (vs. 6). The Romans and the Greeks were not regarded as neighbors of the Jews. However, the invaders of Nehemiah’s day were truly neighbors, and best qualify as the objects of this

⁶⁸ David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, 1951), 376-77.

⁶⁹ Charles Lee Feinberg, *God Remembers, A Study of the Book of Zechariah* (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1950), . 200.

⁷⁰ Thomas V. Moore, *A Commentary on Zechariah* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), 171.

prophecy. It is reasonable to conclude that Zechariah foretold the devastation of Jerusalem by their local adversaries which was fulfilled about 448 B.C. (Ezra 4:23-24).

The second time segment, (sixty-two weeks) which began with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus in 444 B.C., came to end with the prophecy of judgment by Jesus Christ on the day of his triumphal entry to Jerusalem just before His crucifixion in A.D. 30.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Luke 13: 34-35)

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hast known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation. (Luke 19:41-44)

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

These prophecies were fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem. The third segment (one week) is yet future and is described in detail in the book of Revelation. Since it brings God's Time Schedule for Israel to an end, the completion of this segment does not necessarily follow the pattern of previous segments, but follows the plan outlined for the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

The Use of the Forty Year Delay Principle

An understanding of the "forty year delay principle" is necessary to explain the running of God's time-clock for Israel. The principle states that, for the Jews, God waits forty years between the pronouncement of judgment and the execution of the judgment, and that during this time His relationship with the Jews is suspended so that they are not under His gracious blessing, as illustrated in Figure 2. The principle is observed to function on a number of occasions when God brought destructive judgment upon Jerusalem.

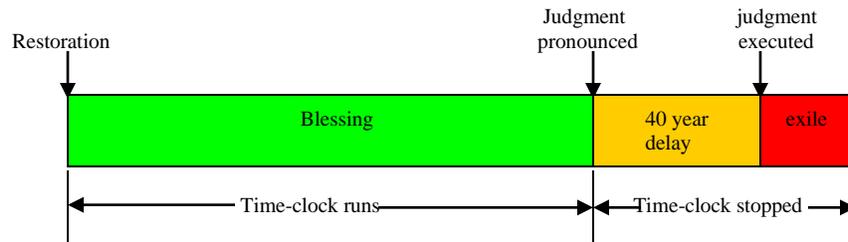


Figure 2: Time-clock Principle Illustrated

(1) There was a forty year delay between Jesus’ pronouncement of judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 30 (Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:24), and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 (see Figure 3).

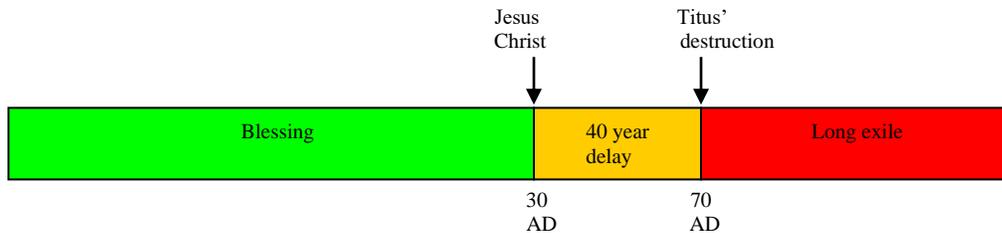


Figure 3: The 40 Year Delay at the Crucifixion

(2) There was a forty year delay between the pronouncement of judgment against Jerusalem by the Prophet Zephaniah (1:1-18) in 626 B.C.⁷¹ and the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. (see Figure 4 on the next page). This same forty year delay was symbolized by the Prophet Ezekiel when, a few years before Jerusalem was destroyed, he was commanded by God to lie on his right side for forty days to bear the iniquity of Judah, each day for a year (Ezek. 4:6).⁷² The Lord indicated through this symbolism that He was bearing the iniquity of Judah forty years—that is, from the pronouncement of judgment by Zephaniah in 626 B.C. until the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by the siege which Ezekiel was portraying (Ezek. 4:1-3). He also indicated

⁷¹ The date is approximate; the prophecy was written in the days of Josiah (1:1) before his reformation; this places the date between 640 and 621 B.C. The forty years symbolized by Ezekiel commends the year 626 B.C.

⁷² Anderson, 26.

through symbolism that He had been bearing the iniquity of the northern tribes since their rebellion in the days of Rehoboam, for He commanded Ezekiel to lie on his left side 390 days to bear the iniquity of Israel, each day for a year. The 390 days represents the total of the years of the reigns of the kings of Judah from Rehoboam to Zedekiah (a total of 393 years counting accession years and co-regencies). The Lord counted the years of the southern kings rather than the northern kings because the southern kings were of the rightful Davidic lineage, and because the northern kings had ceased in 722 B.C. The years were undoubtedly counted from the prophecy of the unnamed prophet (1 Kings 13:1-3) who must have given his prophecy of judgment in Rehoboam's third year (reckoning backward the 390 years of Ezekiel's symbol).

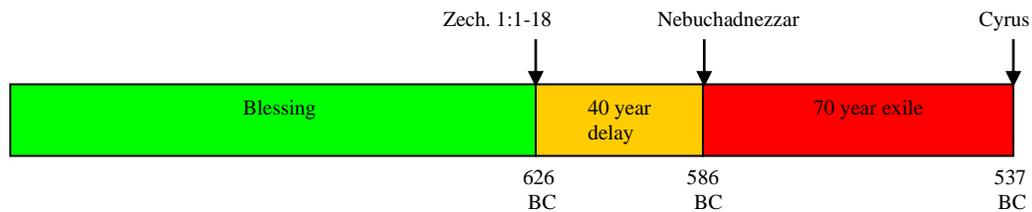


Figure 4: The 40 Year Delay at the Babylonian Exile

(3) The principle is observed in the forty year delay between the judgment pronounced by the Prophet Zechariah (11:1-6) in the year 488 B.C. and the destruction of Jerusalem by local adversaries in the year 448 B.C.

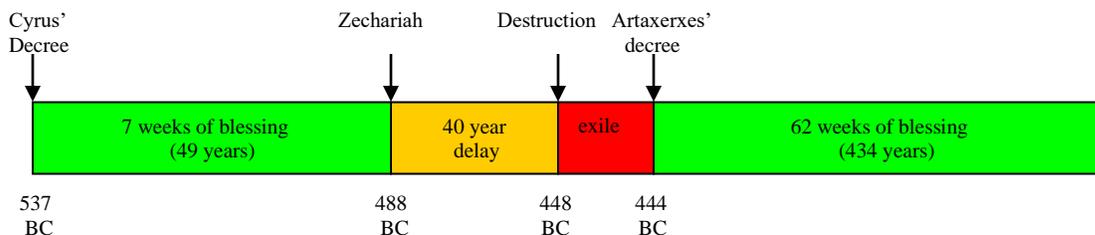


Figure 5: The 40 Year Delay in the Days of Ezra

(4) The principle also is observed to delay certain promised blessings due to sin or unbelief. The promised blessing of entrance into the Promised Land was delayed forty years as a result of Israel's unbelief at Kadesh-barnea. Also Moses' appointment as leader of Israel was delayed forty years by his presumption when he killed the Egyptian.

It is proposed that this forty year delay principle functions in reckoning the time for Daniel's seventy weeks. God's time-clock for Israel runs while the Jews are in Jerusalem under the gracious blessing of God; it stops when judgment is pronounced; it waits forty years for the judgment to be executed; and it remains stopped during the subsequent exile, as illustrated previously in Figure 2. The fact that the seventieth week did not immediately follow the death of Christ proves that the time-clock was stopped during the forty year delay between A.D. 30 and 70. Since the time-clock was stopped during that forty year delay, it is only reasonable to conclude that it stopped also during the forty year delay between 488 and 448 B.C. It also is reasonable to conclude that the forty year delay principle functions throughout the reckoning of the entire seventy weeks of years.

The Use of a Gap at the Time of Antiochus

Since it is observed that God's time-clock runs when the Jews are in Jerusalem under the blessing of God, and is stopped when the city is destroyed and the people are in exile, it is proposed that there was a gap in the time schedule at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes who destroyed Jerusalem in 168 B.C. Furthermore, on the basis of the clearly observed forty year delay principle, it is proposed that there was a forty year delay before this judgment which was initiated by a prophet who pronounced God's judgment against Jerusalem in the year 207 B.C. The identity of the prophet and the content of his prophecy are now unknown. This judgment caused the time-clock to stop for the forty years before the destruction, and to remain stopped during the subsequent exile as previously illustrated in Figure 1b.

The clock did not start again until the year 166 B.C. when Mattathias Maccabeus, a godly Jewish patriot, organized a rebellion against Antiochus. When the forces were set in motion to recover Jerusalem and to restore the temple worship, God's gracious blessing returned to His people and the time-clock started up again. Although the Jews did not regain possession of Jerusalem and restore the temple worship until 164 B.C., the clock continued to run, just as previously it ran between the time of the issuance of the earlier decrees and the time of the actual restoration activity of the Jews. There was no decree associated with this time gap; this explains why the gap was not noted by Daniel: he mentioned the time segments that were identified by decrees and covenants.

The Resultant Interpretation

Based on the foregoing principles, the following interpretation is proposed for Daniel’s seventy weeks. The seventy year captivity began to be counted in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (3154 A.M. or 605 B.C.) when Daniel and his companions were carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1:1-2). That same year Jeremiah gave the prophecy which started the reckoning of the seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12).⁷³ The seventy years came to an end early in 3223 A.M. (Fall of 537 B.C.) when the first captives returned to Israel with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:1-70). This was some months after the decree of Cyrus late in his first year which began, according to Persian reckoning, in the month Nisan of 3221 A.M. (Spring of 538 B.C.).⁷⁴ The seventy years consisted of 68 whole years. (3154 through 3222 A.M.) plus two partial years (3154 and 3223 A.M). (see Figure 6)

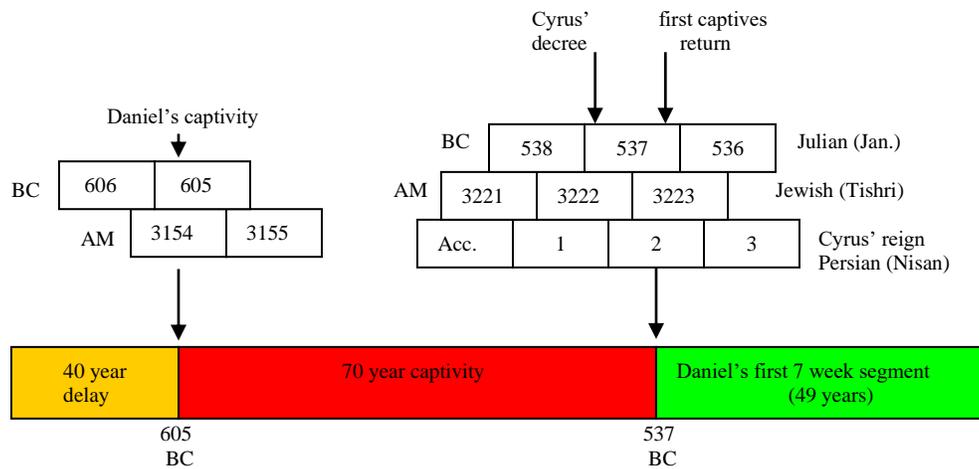


Figure 6: The Chronology of the 70 Year Captivity

The First Time Segment of Seven Weeks

The first time segment was initiated by the decree of Cyrus in 3222 A.M. (Fall of 538 or Winter of 537 B.C.) to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (see Figure 7).⁷⁵ As a result of this decree, Zerubbabel led a group of exiles back to Judah and

⁷³ Jeremiah (25:1) reckoning according to the non-accession method, dates this in Jehoiakim’s fourth year; Daniel (1:1-2) dates the same event in the third year using the accession method.

⁷⁴ Finegan, *Handbook*, 212.

⁷⁵ Note that there is a slight overlap of the seventy year captivity and Daniel's seventy weeks.

Jerusalem. In spite of much delay and opposition, Jerusalem and the temple were restored and the Jews enjoyed the gracious blessing of God for seven weeks of years (49 years). However, due to the Jews' unbelief and apostasy, the Lord pronounced judgment upon them through the prophet Zechariah (11:1-6) in the year 3271 A.M. (488 B.C.). This brought the first time segment to a close, and the time-clock stopped, waiting forty years for the execution of the judgment. Forty years later, in spite of reformation attempts by Ezra in the intervening years, Jerusalem was destroyed by the local adversaries in the year 3311 A.M. (448 B.C.) and the Jews were exiled. The time-clock had counted off 49 years of God's Time Schedule for Israel, and then stopped for 44 years, waiting out the 40 year delay and four years of exile. The 49 years consisted of 48 full years (3223 through 3310 A.M.) plus two partial years (3222 and 3311 A.M.) one of which is rounded off. The forty year delay consisted of 39 full years (3272 through 3310 A.M.) plus two partial years (3271 and 3311 A.M.) one of which is rounded off. The exile extended from 3311 A.M. to 3315 A.M. (444 B.C.).

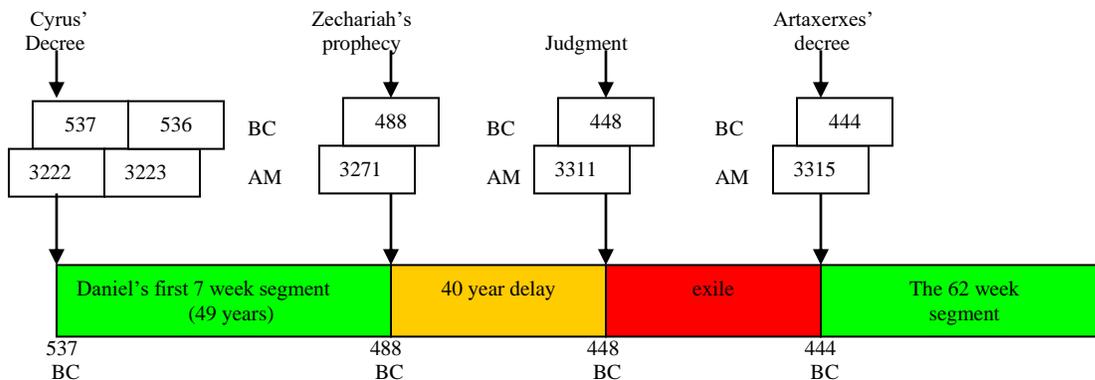


Figure 7: The Chronology of the 7 Week Segment

The Second Time Segment of Sixty-Two Weeks

The second time segment consists of two parts, due to an intervening gap at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The First Part of the Second Segment. The second segment was initiated by the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus to restore and to build Jerusalem in the year 3315 A.M.

(444 B.C., see Figure 8). As a result of this decree, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem with certain Jews to supervise the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple worship. The work was completed in spite of severe opposition, and the Jews enjoyed the gracious blessing of God for 34 weeks of years (238 years).

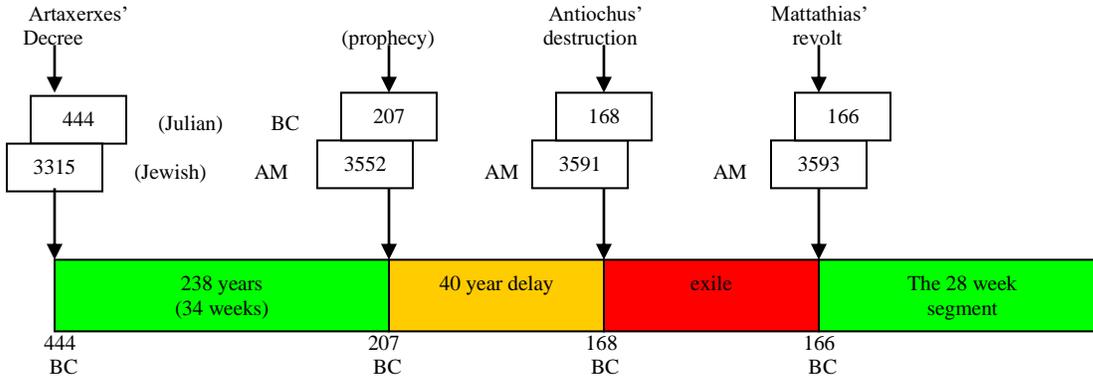


Figure 8: The Chronology of the 34 Week Segment

However, evidently due to unbelief and apostasy of the Jews, the Lord pronounced judgment against them through an unknown prophet in the year 3352 A.M. (207 B.C.).⁷⁶ This brought the first part of the second segment to a close and the time-clock stopped, waiting forty years for the execution of the judgment. Forty years later, in spite of possible reformation attempts in the intervening years by such godly Jews as Ben Sirah, author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, Jerusalem was destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes in the year 3591 A.M. (168 B.C.), and the Jews were exiled. The time-clock had counted off another 238 years of God's Time Schedule for Israel, and then stopped for 42 years, waiting out the 40 year delay and two years of exile. The 238 years consisted of 236 full years (3316 through 3551 A.M.) and two partial years (3315 and 3552 A.M.). The forty year delay consisted of 38 full years (3553 through 3590 A.M.) and two partial years (3552 and 3591 A.M.). The exile extended from 3591 to 3593 A.M. (166 B.C.).

⁷⁶ This is assumed on the basis of the observed principle of a forty year delay before the execution of judgment.

The Second Part of the Second Segment. The second part of the second segment began in the year 3593 A.M. (166 B.C., see Figure 9), when Mattathias organized the rebellion against Antiochus. As a result of this rebellion the Jews were able to recover Jerusalem, rebuild the city and its walls, and restore the temple worship in spite of severe opposition. They then enjoyed the gracious blessing of God for 28 weeks of years (196 years). In the year 3788 A.M. (A.D. 30), because the Jews had rejected Jesus as the Messiah and plotted to kill him, the Lord pronounced judgment against them through Jesus Himself (Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:24, etc.). This brought the second time segment to a close, and the time-clock stopped, waiting forty years for the execution of the judgment. The time clock had counted off sixty-nine weeks ($7 + 34 + 28 = 69$) consisting of 483 years ($49 + 238 + 196 = 483$). Shortly after the time-clock had stopped, Jesus was crucified on the cross as the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

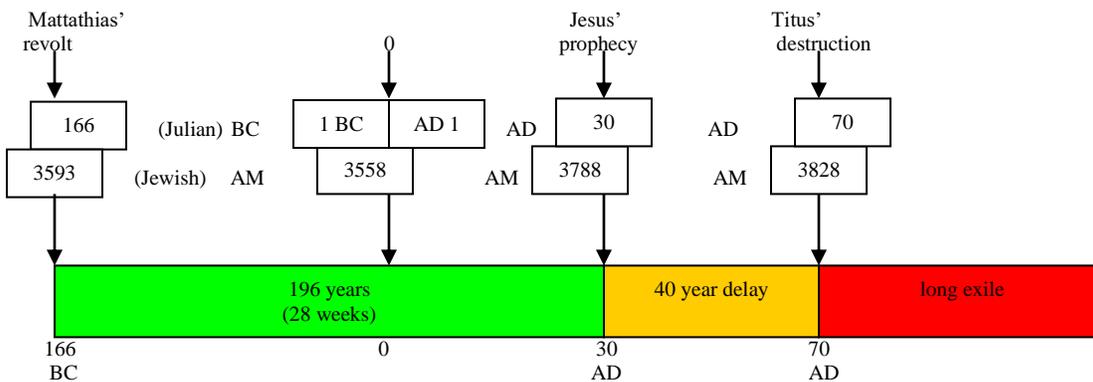


Figure 9: The Chronology of the 28 Week Segment

Forty years later, on the 9th of Ab, 3828 A.M. (August 5, A.D. 70),⁷⁷ in spite of all the preaching of the apostles in the intervening years, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, the temple was torn down, and the Jews went into worldwide dispersion. Since then God's time-clock for Israel remains stopped, awaiting the events that will initiate the final seventieth week. The 196 years consisted of 194 full years (3594 through 3787 A.M.) and two partial years (3593 and 3788 A.M.). The forty year delay consisted of 39 full years (3789 through 3827 A.M.) and two partial years (3788 and 3828 A.M.), one of

⁷⁷ Finegan, *Handbook*, 125.

which is rounded off. The exile has continued from 3828 A.M. (A.D. 70) until the present time.

The Third Time Segment of One Week. The third time segment, Daniel's seventieth week, is yet in the future. It will begin when the "coming prince" (Antichrist) makes a covenant with the Jews to rebuild the temple and restore the temple worship. At that time, in spite of opposition, the Jews will manage to rebuild the temple on its ancient site, and they will enjoy God's gracious blessing for seven years. In the middle of the week, evidently after the temple is completed, Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and cause their worship to cease (Dan. 9:27); he will set up the abomination of desolation in the temple sanctuary (Matt. 24:15), which is probably an image of himself (Rev. 13:14), and he himself will sit in the temple as God, requiring men to worship him (2 Thes. 2:4).

During this time the Jews will be persecuted and pursued by Antichrist, but they will be protected and preserved by God. The last half of the week, known as the Great Tribulation, will be characterized by the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth, and the week will end with Christ, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds with power and great glory, to set up the Millennial Kingdom on earth. Since this is the end of God's Time Schedule for Israel, and the beginning of a new era of God's dealing with man, it is not necessary to presume that there will be a forty year delay and an execution of judgment. The transition from one to the other will be in accordance with Scriptural teaching for that time.

No time in history since A.D. 70 has experienced an expectation of the soon fulfillment of this seventieth week of Daniel as in this present day. Israel has existed as an independent nation in their ancient land since 1948, and they have been in possession of Jerusalem since 1967. Thus it appears that circumstances are right for the time-clock to start again. However, certain conditions still interfere:

(1) Israel does not possess the ancient temple area, and without this area they do not truly possess Jerusalem. This area is still occupied by the sacred mosque of the Muslims, and Israel has made no open effort to obtain the area. In fact, because it is such a sensitive and explosive international issue, Israel has publicly declared that the area should remain neutral.

(2) The seventieth week of Daniel will not begin until a covenant is made with Israel by a future world ruler to grant permission to rebuild the temple and to restore the ancient worship. Such a ruler must have the power and authority to make the covenant and to enforce it. Such a world ruler is not yet on the scene, but the world situation is rapidly moving toward conditions that would make such a world ruler possible.

Summary

The proposed explanation of the seventy weeks of Daniel avoids the problems associated with earlier explanations by employing the following six principles of interpretation:

(1) The use of natural units of time: solar years according to Israel's traditional calendar.

(2) The use of the three distinct time segments specified in Daniel's text: a seven-week segment, a sixty-two week segment, and a one-week segment.

(3) The use of a different royal decree to start the time-clock at the beginning of each of the three segments: The decree of Cyrus to initiate the seven-week segment, the decree of Artaxerxes Longeminus to initiate the sixty-two segment, and the decree of Anti-Christ to initiate the one-week segment.

(4) The pronouncement of judgment to stop the time-clock at the end of each segment.

(5) The use of the principle that judgment is delayed 40-years.

(6) The use of an additional gap at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes when the temple was desecrated, the city razed, and the people in flight. God's time-clock for Israel is summarized in Figure 10 which follows:

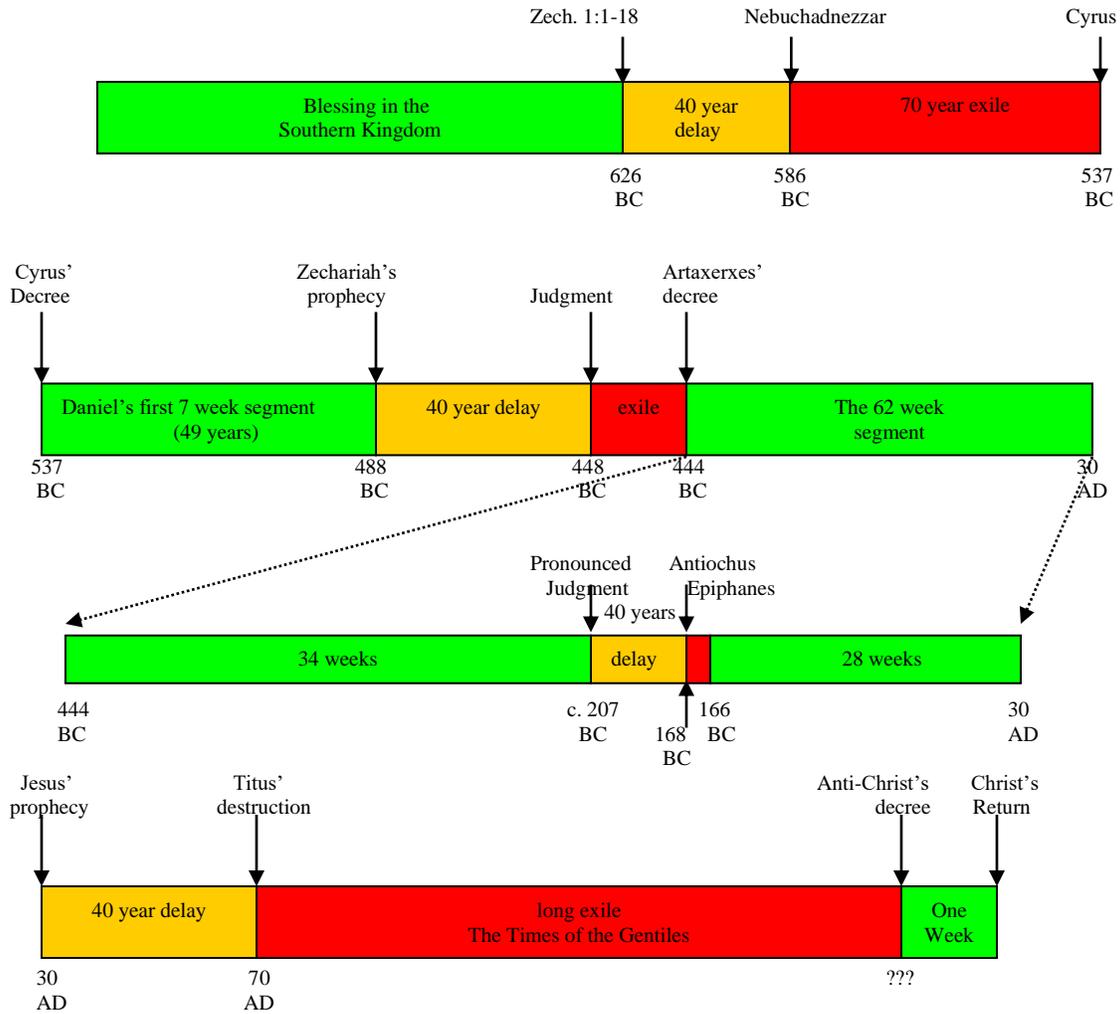


Figure 10: Summary of God's Time Schedule for Israel

APPENDIX
Dates of Important Events

<u>Event</u>	<u>Julian Date</u>	<u>Jewish Date</u>
Daniel's Captivity	605 B.C.	3154 A.M.
Jeremiah's Prophecy of 70 years	605 B.C.	3154 A.M.
Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar	March 16, 597	Adar 2, 3162
Jehoiachin deported	April 22, 597	Nisan 10, 3162
Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar	July 18, 586	Ab 10, 3173
Daniel's Vision of 70 Weeks	538 B.C.	3221/3222 A.M.
Cyrus' Decree	537 B.C.	3222 A.M.
First Return under Zerubbabel	537 B.C.	3223 A.M.
Temple Foundations Laid (Ezra 3:8)	536 B.C.	3224 A.M.
Letter to Darius	520 B.C.	3239 A.M.
Temple Started Again (Hag. 1:12-15)	Sept. 21, 520	Elu1 24, 3239
Temple Dedicated	March 12, 515	Adar 13, 324
Zechariah's Prophecy	488 B.C.	3271 A.M.
Ezra's Return	April 8, 458	Nisan 1, 3301
Ezra's Arrival in Jerusalem	Aug. 4, 458	Ab 1, 3301
Letter to Artaxerxes	448 B.C.	3311 A.M.
Destruction of Jerusalem	448 B.C.	3311 A.M.
Nehemiah hears of destruction	Nov/Dec 445	Kislev 3315
Decree of Artaxerxes	April 44. B.C.	Nisan 3315
Nehemiah Arrives in Jerusalem	444 B.C.	3315 A.M.
Walls Completed	Oct. 444	Elu1 5, 3315
(Prophecy of judgment)	c. 207 B.C.	c. 3552 A.M.
Antiochus destroys Jerusalem	168 B.C.	3591 A.M.
Mattathias' Rebellion	166 B.C.	3593 A.M.
Temple Rededicated	Dec. 14, 164	Kislev 25, 3595
Birth of Christ	5/4 B.C.	3755 A.M.
Prophecy of judgment	March, A.D. 30	Adar/Nisan, 3788
Crucifixion of Christ	April 7, A.D. 30	Nisan 14, 3788
Destruction of Temple	Aug. 5, A.D. 70	Ab 9, 3828

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**Books**

- Anderson, Robert. *The Coming Prince*. Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 1954.
- Archer, Gleason L., Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968.
- Baron, David. London: *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah*. Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, 1951.
- Bickerman, Elias. *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*. New York: Schocken Books, 1962.
- Brown, F., S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press, 1901; 1955 reprint.
- Davis, John D. *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 4th revised edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956.
- Edersheim, Alford. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1956.
- Encyclopaedia Judaica*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1971.
- Feinberg, Charles Lee. *God Remembers, A Study of the Book of Zechariah*. Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1950.
- Finegan, Jack. *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- . *Light from the Ancient Past*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946.
- Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1972.
- Ironside, H. A. *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*. New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1920.
- Kautzsch, E. and A. E. Cowley. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.

Keil, C. F. *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959.

---. *The Book of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther: The Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950.

Larkin, Clarence. *The Book of Daniel*. Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1929.

Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Book House, 1969.

McClain, Alva J. *Daniel's Prophecies of the Seventy Weeks*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1940.

Montgomery, James A. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Daniel*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1964.

Moore, Thomas V. *A Commentary on Zechariah*. London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961.

Pettingill, W. L. *Simple Studies in Daniel*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia School of the Bible, 1920.

Thiele, Edwin R. *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1965.

Walvoord, John F. *Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1972.

Whitcomb, John C., Jr. *Darius the Mede*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959.

Williams, R. J. *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.

Wood, Leon. *A Commentary on Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973.

---. *A Survey of Israel's History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964.

---. *The Prophecy of Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973.

Periodicals

- Hoehner, Harold W. "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part I: The Date of Christ's Birth," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 130, No. 520, October-December, 1973, pp. 338-351.
- . "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part II: The Commencement of Christ's Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 521, January-March, 1974, pp. 41-54.
- . "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part III: The Duration of Christ's Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 522, April-June, 1974, pp. 147-162.
- . "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part IV: The Day of Christ's Crucifixion," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 523, July-September, 1974, pp. 241-264.
- . "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part V: The Year of Christ's Crucifixion," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 524, October-December, 1974, pp. 332-348.
- . "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part VI: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 132, No. 525, January-March, 1975, pp. 47-65.
- Newman, Robert C., "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and The Old Testament Sabbath-Year Cycle," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 16, Fall, 1973, pp. 229-34.