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Daniel 9:25

Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;
The street shall be built again, and the wall,
Even in troublesome times.

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"The going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem"

For Daniel this was welcome news, just what he wanted to hear. Not long after this prophetic message, the next king, Cyrus from Persia, made the initial proclamation, giving the Jewish people permission to return to Jerusalem and re-build their temple.

However, the angel Gabriel here was referring to a later stage in the process – the actual re-building of the city of Jerusalem and its wall. That edict did not come until the reign of Artaxeres, a future Persian king – almost 100 years after the initial permission given by king Cyrus.

To initiate the process of re-building Jerusalem, God entrusted that responsibility to Nehemiah, a Jewish officer in the royal court. In his request to the Persian monarch, Nehemiah said, *"If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me*

to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." **That step of faith resulted in the king's favorable reaction: *"So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time."* (Nehemiah 2:5-6)**

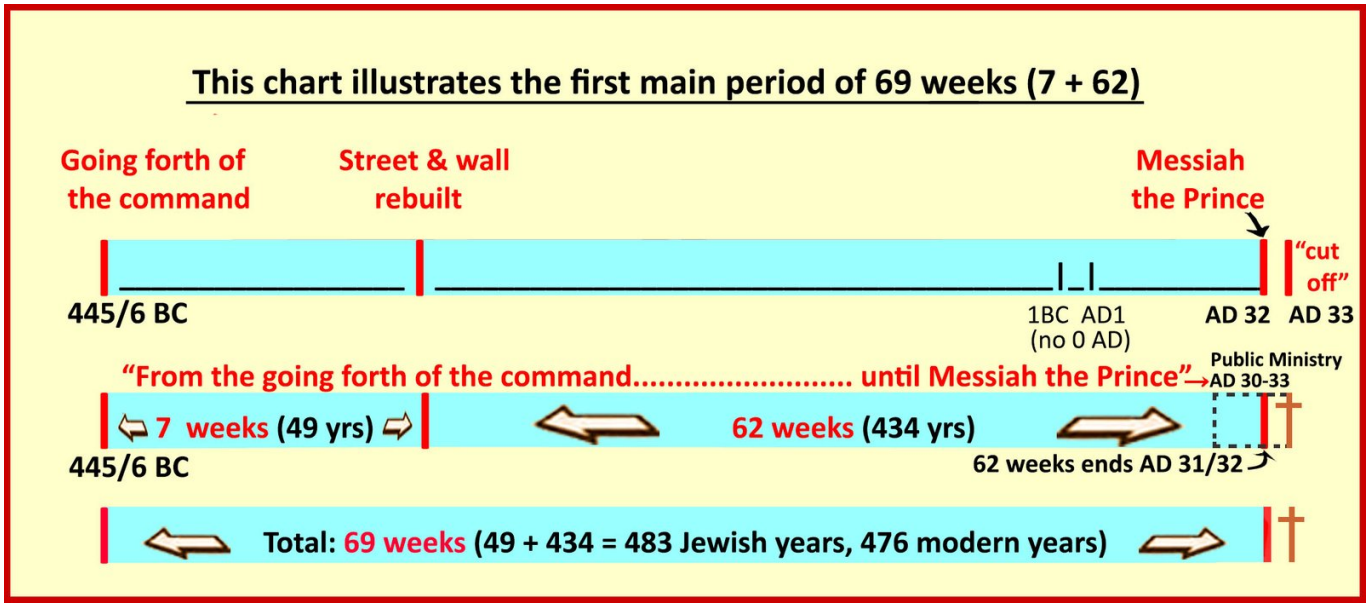
The exact date appears in Nehemiah 2:1 – *"in the month of Nisan* (March or April)*, in the twentieth year of king Artaxerxes",* who ruled 464-423 B.C. If 464 is the first year, then the 20th year, the year of the edict, would be 445 B.C. However, since the date of Artaxerxes' accession is not known precisely, there's a possibility it might have happened in 446 B.C. Interestingly, the month of Nisan is the same month when the Jewish feast of Passover occurs, and hence it was also the same month of the Crucifixion almost five centuries later.

"Until Messiah the Prince"

Gabriel is about to reveal to Daniel the most precious bit of information imaginable: the actual timing for the coming of the Messiah, whom the Jewish people had known was to come and whose arrival they had been longing to see for many generations.

"There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"

The *"seven weeks"* was the 49 years it took to rebuild Jerusalem: *"the street shall be built again, and the wall."* And from then on it was *"sixty-two weeks"*, or 434 years. That, plus the first 49 years, make a total of 483 years from the *"going forth of the command"* until the coming of *"Messiah the Prince"* – an amazingly accurate prediction of the time that was to elapse between these two historical events (as we shall see further on).



"The street shall be built again, and the wall"

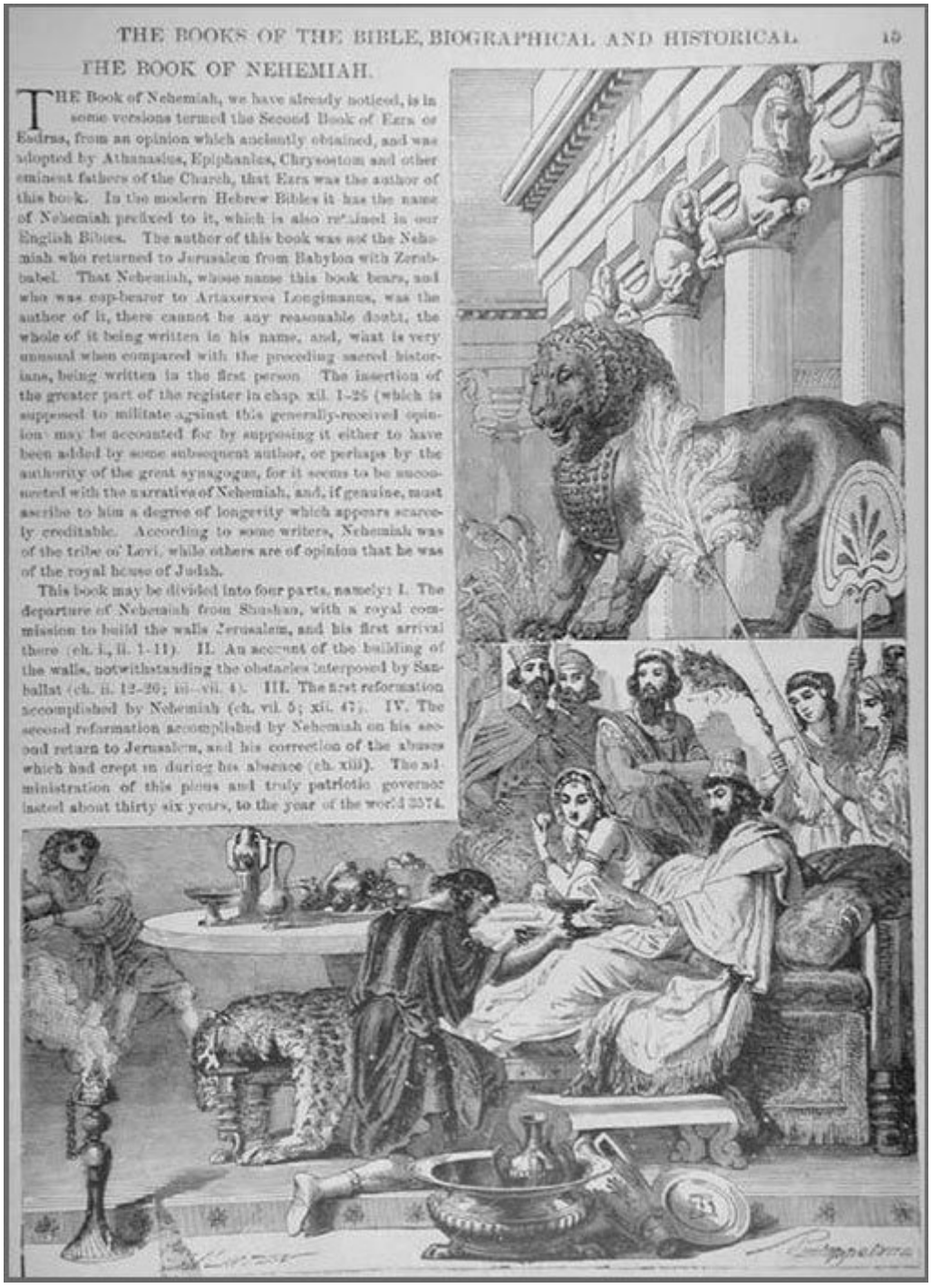
Again, more welcome news for Daniel. As far as the overall prophecy is concerned, these details weren't such an important aspect. But it was important to Daniel, so the angel Gabriel makes sure to make mention of it.

The re-building of Jerusalem, and especially the wall, was a big step as far as the fortunes of the Jewish people were concerned at that time. For without proper defence (a wall), there would be little hope that very many Jews would want to emigrate to an unprotected city. And Jerusalem, despite having a re-built temple 100 years after Cyrus' initial proclamation, still remained in the broken-down state that Nebuchadnezzar's invasion had left it in some 170 years before.

The Persians didn't mind the Jewish people having their temple, but to have a wall and proper defences was a more serious issue. Probably they preferred to keep the city unprotected and thus easier to keep under subjection. But the result was that Jerusalem's future prominence, even survival, was coming into question. And this was a major issue that was begging for a solution in the days of Nehemiah, a Jewish leader of that time. (Read the full story of Jerusalem's restoration in the Book of Nehemiah.)

“In ancient times the ‘gates’ of a city were not just large swinging doors. They were more than this. They were also alcoved rooms attached to the entryway in the walls of the city. These were places for travelers to ‘check in’ with city authorities as they prepared to enter the city. Like our town halls today the gates of the city were the place of governmental power, the place in which resided the city elders. The city gates housed the offices of the magistrates who were the city’s rulers and the guardians of the city’s sovereignty. As well as being the portal of entry into the city they were also the place where the city elders sat to make judgment in matters of law. Like today’s city hall it was here at the city gates where the laws protecting the integrity of the city were enacted and the place where commerce was regulated. The gates were the nerve center of a city and the seat of its civic authority. So when Nehemiah went to the king he was asking for more than just architectural repairs. He was asking for permission to restore all the governmental workings of a city-state.”

(from “Nehemiah and the 70 Weeks of Daniel” by Gavin McKinley)



THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL. 15

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

THE Book of Nehemiah, we have already noticed, is in some versions termed the Second Book of Ezra or Esdras, from an opinion which anciently obtained, and was adopted by Athanasius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom and other eminent fathers of the Church, that Ezra was the author of this book. In the modern Hebrew Bibles it has the name of Nehemiah prefixed to it, which is also retained in our English Bibles. The author of this book was not the Nehemiah who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon with Zerubbabel. That Nehemiah, whose name this book bears, and who was cup-bearer to Artaxerxes Longimanus, was the author of it, there cannot be any reasonable doubt, the whole of it being written in his name, and, what is very unusual when compared with the preceding sacred historians, being written in the first person. The insertion of the greater part of the register in chap. xii. 1-25 (which is supposed to militate against this generally-received opinion) may be accounted for by supposing it either to have been added by some subsequent author, or perhaps by the authority of the great synagogue, for it seems to be unconnected with the narrative of Nehemiah, and, if genuine, must ascribe to him a degree of longevity which appears scarcely creditable. According to some writers, Nehemiah was of the tribe of Levi, while others are of opinion that he was of the royal house of Judah.

This book may be divided into four parts, namely: I. The departure of Nehemiah from Shushan, with a royal commission to build the walls Jerusalem, and his first arrival there (ch. i., ii. 1-11). II. An account of the building of the walls, notwithstanding the obstacles interposed by Sanballat (ch. ii. 12-20; iii.-vii. 4). III. The first reformation accomplished by Nehemiah (ch. vii. 5; xii. 47). IV. The second reformation accomplished by Nehemiah on his second return to Jerusalem, and his correction of the abuses which had crept in during his absence (ch. xiii). The administration of this pious and truly patriotic governor lasted about thirty six years, to the year of the world 3574.

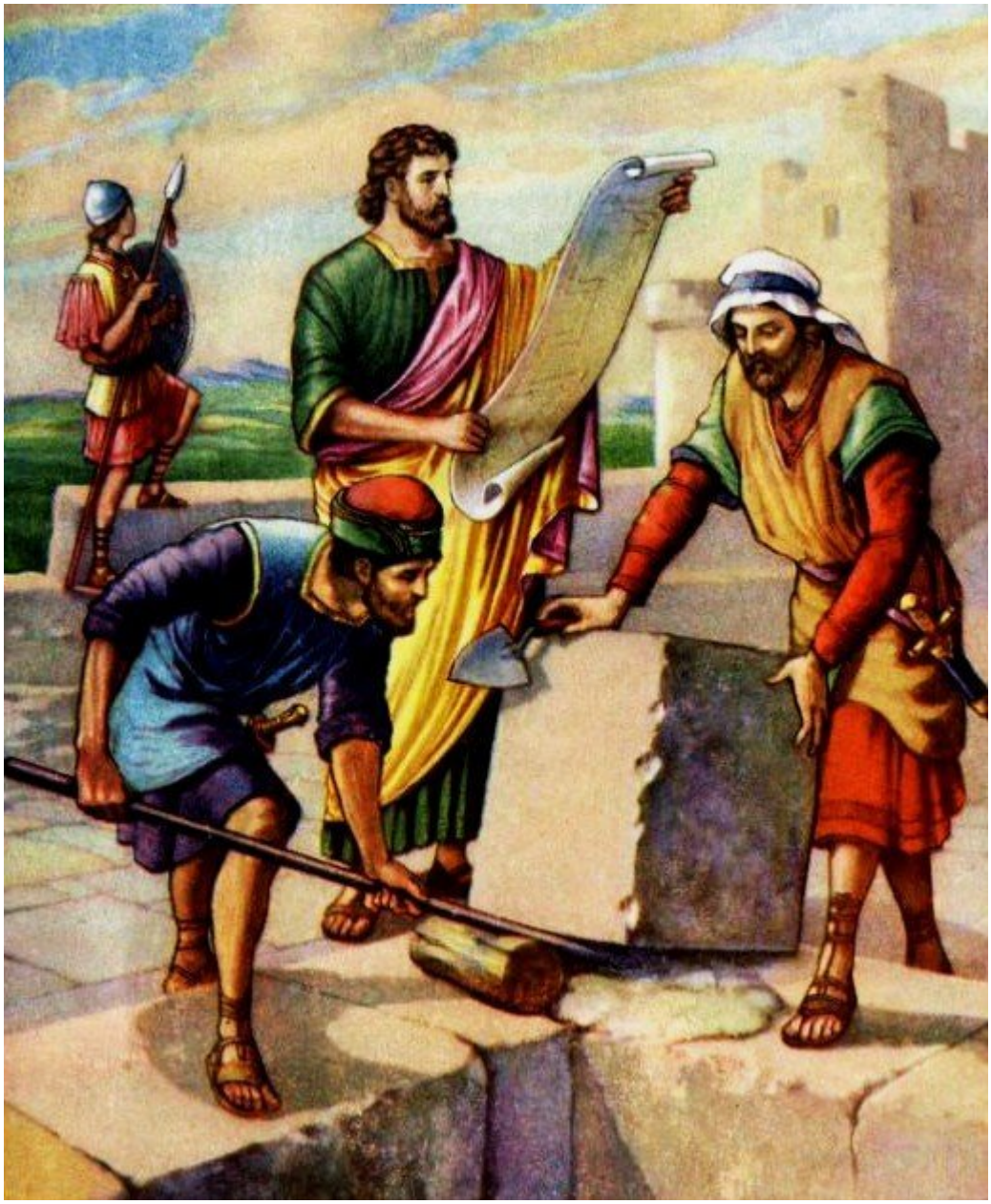
The interesting account of what actually took place when *"the command to restore and build Jerusalem"* was made may be found in the passage of Nehemiah 2:1-8. Set in the palace of the Persian emperor, the story relates how Nehemiah, a prominent Jewish leader who had risen to a

position of influence, made his request to the king:

It so happened that on a certain day Nehemiah was distressing over the fact that the re-population of Jerusalem had made so little progress, and the king couldn't help but notice his unease. When the king questioned why he was *"sad in his presence"*, Nehemiah became *"dreadfully afraid".* (For if one was not obviously happy in the presence of the king, then this could be taken as a sign of dissatisfaction with the king's rule – a matter of serious concern and apt to have serious consequences to Nehemiah.)

Of course, his *"sad face"* was not any fault of the king; but then to reveal the true reason for his *"sorrow of heart"* was also a delicate and dangerous matter. To request the re-building of Jerusalem was about the same as demanding a degree of political autonomy from the Persian empire, not a light matter at all.

However, Artaxerxes, the son of Ahaseurus, was the stepson of his Jewish mother queen Esther. In the days of his father's rule, she had intervened courageously to protect the Jewish people from persecution, the record of which may be found in the Book of Esther. And her lingering influence among her royal descendants may have continued to bring favor to the Jewish people.



Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem. Workers Keep Themselves Armed

Furthermore, Nehemiah, as a cupbearer, was a much trusted official who daily risked his life for the king; it was his job to taste and make sure the king's wine had not been poisoned. For these various reasons Artaxerxes responded graciously to Nehemiah's request and granted him permission to rebuild Jerusalem and its wall and even provided the needed materials to do so.

"Even in troublesome times"

During the re-building of Jerusalem, the Jewish people faced many difficulties from local chieftains who fought a war of attrition, trying in various ways to hinder and subvert the rebuilding of the city. At one point Nehemiah refused an invitation to get embroiled in so-called peace talks, telling his enemies, *"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"* (Nehemiah 6:3)

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Prediction about the Date of Christ's First Coming

***"From the going forth of the command… until Messiah the Prince… shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks… And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off"* (9:25-26a)**

These words contain one of the more interesting and amazing time predictions in the Bible, which we will now look into in more detail since it is a sort of foundation for the next time prediction about the Second Coming. We have already looked at the phrase, *"the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem"* – which is thought to have taken place in the year 445 B.C.

Then comes the phrase *"until Messiah the Prince."* This need not be seen as a single event but could refer to any point of time between Jesus' proclamation at the start of His ministry (about A.D. 30) in Luke 4:18 of Himself as the "Anointed One" to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem three years later (A.D. 33), when the throngs of Jerusalemites proclaimed Him as the Messiah. (Matthew 21:8-9) This latter event (known as Palm Sunday), which happened five days before the Crucifixion (known as Good Friday) when *"Messiah shall be cut off"*, is usually considered the ideal ending date for the 69 (7 + 62) weeks.

Regarding the date of A.D. 33 for the Crucifixion, this would require some explanation. There are various theories as to when it took place. For some information on why the A.D. 33 date has been selected for this

study, see Appendix: Date of the Crucifixion. There may also be some question as to how old Christ should have been at the start of His ministry: was He exactly 30 years old or could He have been a little older? (See Footnote 1.)

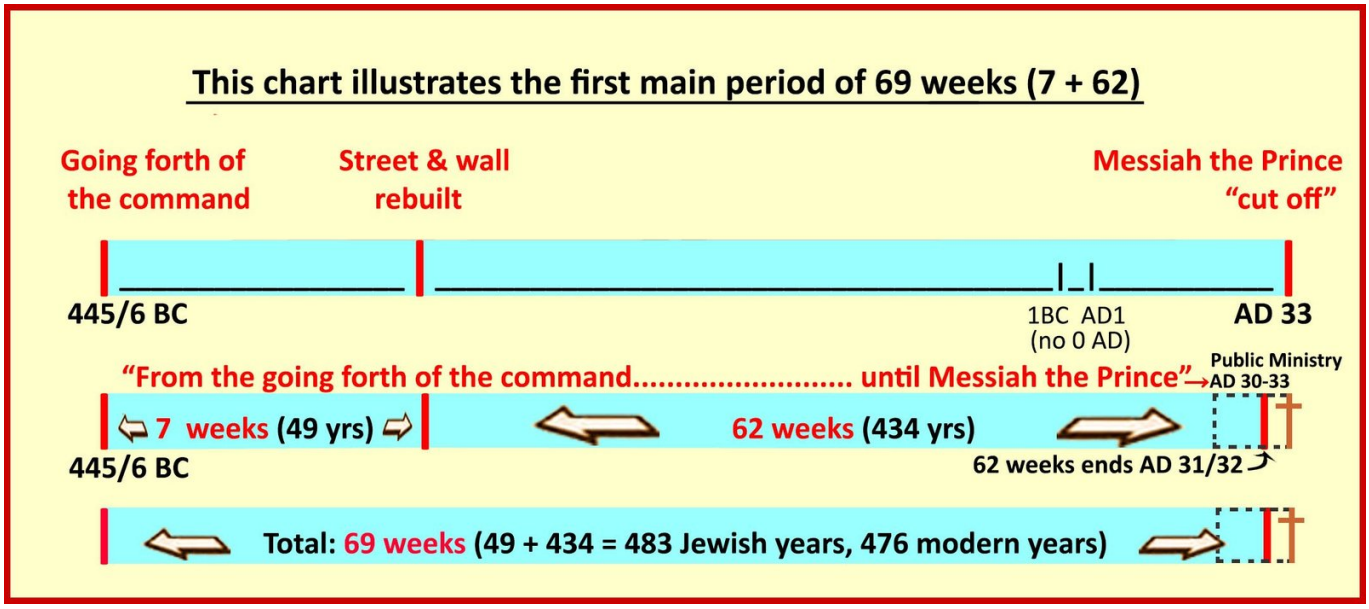
Now, let's do the math, keeping in mind the fact that the years mentioned in the Bible are Jewish years (or lunar years), which are only 360 days long; also, in reckoning years from B.C. to A.D., one year must be omitted. (To move from 1 B.C. to A.D. 1 takes only one year, not two.) Thus, to get from the *"going forth of the command… until Messiah the Prince"* in the time span of 476 solar years could be expressed like this: 445 + 32 – 1 = 476 solar years (but not Jewish lunar years).

The important result of these calculations and the thing to remember is this: the time span that we can gather from the actual chronicles of secular history (measured in terms of 365¼-day solar years*) matches accurately with the angel Gabriel's prediction (measured in terms of 360-day Jewish years). In simple terms, 476 solar years = 483 Jewish years. (See math table below.) (*In our calendar system every fourth year, or leap year, one day is added, meaning that the years are actually 365¼ days in length.)

Jewish (Lunar) Years (360 days each)	Modern (Solar) Years (365 ¼ days each) - based on known historical dates -
69 "weeks"	445 years (445 - 0 BC in solar years)
x 7 years in a "week"	+ 32 years (0-32 AD in solar years)
483 Jewish years	- 1 (non-existent year of 0 A.D.)
x 360 days in one year	476 solar years
173,880 days (= 483 years)	x 365¼ days in one year
	173,859 days (divided by 360 = 483 Jewish years)

In other words, Jesus' crucifixion took place soon after the close of the 483 (7+62 *"weeks"*) Jewish years. And this agrees with what the next

verse 26 tells us – that *"after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off."*



How remarkable! An accurate prediction of the passage of time that would elapse between the date of Artaxerxes' proclamation and the era of Jesus' Messiahship! This truly attests to the marvelous foresight and unseen hand of the Almighty working behind the scenes on the stage of world history.

Even the number of days in 483 Jewish years is almost the same as the number of days in 476 solar years – only 21 days' difference. Who knows? In these calculations, there are certain other factors not taken into account, such as the exact day of the month Nisan when the commandment went forth, which is not known with any great certainty, and certain small discrepancies in the Julian calendar regarding leap years and some other inaccuracies.

Some scholars claim to have taken all these factors into account and come up, through a painstaking study of Biblical and secular history, with the exact same number of 173,880 days (69 Jewish years) for the historical time span between *"the going forth of the commandment"* and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Well, it wouldn't be surprising. God is quite capable of engineering his timetables to pinpoint accuracy if He wants to.

However, the prophecy about the 69 weeks doesn't seem to demand such total accuracy. It merely says that once the time span of 69 weeks has been reached, then *"Messiah the Prince"* will have come: This doesn't have to land us right at the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (although that would be the ideal time since that was Jesus' most obvious proclamation of Himself as the Messiah).

The end of the 69 weeks could land us at any time during His public ministry. Then some time after the end of that 69 weeks He was to be killed. The next verse 26 states, *"And <u>after</u> the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off."* If by chance then the 445 B.C. date for the command to restore Jerusalem is incorrect (and there is some debate as to the possibility that the date could be one year earlier in 446 B.C.), then that would fit also; both starting dates land the end of the 62 weeks at some time during during Jesus' three-year public ministry.

In older teachings on this subject, the date of the *"going forth of the command"* (the beginning of the *"seventy weeks"*) was thought to have occurred in 454 B.C., eight or nine years earlier than 445 or 446 B.C. This former way of reckoning went along with the chronology worked out by Irish Bishop James Ussher in A.D. 1650. His calculations work out fairly closely, but only if the lengthier solar year of 365¼ days and a date for the Crucifixion of A.D. 30 are used.

However, since historians do have a better knowledge now of the true dates, it is better to go by their updated information. And as we have seen, using the shorter Jewish year of 360 days makes the calculation of this time span astonishingly precise – for that time between the *"going forth of the command"* (in 445 B.C.) to *"Messiah the Prince",* which was then followed by His crucifixion.

The former belief that the earlier date of 454 B.C. marked the *"going forth of the command"* may have given some impetus to theories that the final week of the *"70 weeks"* came to pass at the time of Christ; such a date might allow room for that final 7 years to take place back then. However, there are other reasons (already mentioned and some more that will be mentioned later) that show it is better to understand the final *"week"* as the time period prior to Christ's <u>Second</u> Coming (and would have nothing to do with His <u>First</u> Coming).

As for why it is preferable to go by the 360-day year (of 30-day months) rather than the 365¼-day year, see Footnote 2.

It is easy to get lost in all the details of the years, days, calendars, etc. and lose sight of the overall picture. In trying to figure out some of these historical dates, there are about five calendar systems that have to be coordinated: the Roman calendar starting from the founding of Rome around 750 B.C., the Julian calendar (which corrected the Roman calendar by introducing the leap year), the Jewish calendar dating from the Creation, the Persian calendar, and the one we use now called the Gregorian calendar, which is based on the Julian calendar. Each of these has its own peculiar means of measuring the progress of time, and it is a daunting task to try to properly line up all the dates and facts and figures.

Well, we don't want to get bogged down in too much scheming and calculating about these dates. So, to keep it simple, we need only remember that the main point here was the accurate prediction of when Jesus, during His lifetime on Earth, would reveal Himself as the Messiah, which time came to an end at the Crucifixion.

> **The amazingly accurate prediction of the death of the Messiah contained in Daniel 9 is powerful evidence for the supernatural character of Scripture. (John Lennox, *Against the Flow*, 2015, pg. 300).**

God's foreknowledge of events is truly amazing. And, of course, if God can know so far ahead of time those future events, then the rest of the time prophecy about the last seven years of world history (the final 70th *"week"*) must be accurate as well.

A point to keep in mind: the first part of the prophecy (covering the era of 7 weeks and 62 weeks) was geared more for the people of those ancient times prior to Christ's First Coming. This was information they needed to know. In fact, there is some indication that the people, including perhaps the *"wise men from the East"* (Matthew 2:1), were expecting the Messiah because of this prophecy:

> ***"Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and eager to know whether or not John was He. This was the question of the***

***hour and was being discussed everywhere."* (Luke 3:15 – The Living Bible)**

Because of their familiarity with their own calendar system and the Persian calendar and dates of those kings' reigns, the understanding of the prophecy's timing presented less difficulty for people back then. For us however, it is more difficult to wend our way through the labyrinth of dates and calendars and uncertainties of events that transpired 2,000 and more years ago.

Of course, this first part of the 70-weeks prophecy is a great inspiration to our faith, knowing that God's Word did predict Jesus' first coming so accurately (even if it's difficult to pinpoint the exact dates). But it is this second part of the prophecy that really pertains to us. This is the information in the prophecy that we in our day need to understand fully. And this is also the point at which people nowadays are most curious… When is the *"end of the age"*? When will we see the Second Coming of Christ?

As we get closer to the End, God is getting His people ready in various ways. One of those preparations is just to have a better understanding of what His ancient words in the Bible have to say about the near future. During those desperate days of confusion and perplexity, there will be a great spiritual famine, a desperate desire to find out what is going on, to know what God has to say about the future of the world that everyone will see crumbling around them. Undoubtedly, these words in the Book of Daniel will play a key role in providing believers with that much-needed guidance and reassurance.

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FOOTNOTE 1: Luke 3:23 states, *"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age."* Following is some helpful commentary on this:

- **If Jesus was born sometime before Herod the Great's death in 4 B.C. (cf. Matt. 2:16) and began his ministry A.D. 28 (See Luke 3:1), he would have been about thirty years old (or in his early 30s). [from *ESV Study Bible*, pg. 1954, *Crossway Bibles*, 2008]**
- **3:23 *Jesus was about thirty years old:* This is the only reference in the**

NT to Jesus' age during his public ministry, and it is an approximation. Jesus was born 6-4 BC (see note on 2:2) and began his ministry AD 27-29 (see note on 3:1), so Jesus was evidently 31-35 years old *when He began his public ministry.* [*NLT Study Bible*, pg. 1708, *Tyndale Houe Publishers*, 2008]

- **3:23 about thirty years of age. Luke was probably not fixing an exact age. Rather, this was an approximation, 30 being a customary age for entering into the office of prophet (Ezek. 1:1); priest (Num. 4:3,35,39,43,47), or king (Gen. 41:46; 2 Sam. 5:4). [*The MacArthur Study Bible*, pg. 1519, *Thomas Nelson Bibles*, 1997]**

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FOOTNOTE 2: Specific examples in the Scriptures to show that the 360-day year (of 30-day months) was the standard way of measuring time spans (rather than our 365¼-day year):

1) The duration of what is known as the Great Tribulation (a period of time that comes at the very End, right before the Return of Christ) spans 1,260 days according to two Scriptures (Revelation 11:3, 12:6,). The same period of time is also said to span 42 months according to two other Scriptures (Revelation 11:2, 13:5). Mathematically, 1,260 days works out to 42 months of 30 days each. And lastly, this time span is also said to span 3½ years. (Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:14) If the 360-day Jewish year is used, then it all works out very nicely: Three and a half years works out to exactly 1,260 days, or exactly 42 months (of 30 days each).

2) During the Great Flood of Noah's time, Noah recorded the dates from the time that the Flood began (*"the 7th month, the 17th day of the month"*) until the Ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat (*"the 2nd month, the 17th day of the month"*). (Genesis 7:11, 8:4) That's exactly 5 months. It was recorded also as a time span of *"one hundred and fifty days"* (5 x 30). (Genesis 7:24, 8:3) So again we see that the months were 30 days long and the years would have been 360 days.

"All nations, before the just length of the solar year was known,

> **reckoned months by the course of the moon, and years by the return of winter and summer, spring and autumn; and in making calendars for their festivals, they reckoned thirty days to a lunar month, and twelve lunar months to a year, taking the nearest round numbers, whence came the division of the ecliptic [path of the sun's annual rotation] into 360 degrees" (quote from Sir Isaac Newton, 1642-1727, found in *The Coming Prince*, 1894, by Robert Anderson, page 68).**

To be consistent then with how time and years were measured in other parts of the Bible, it would be better to assume that the *"seventy weeks"* should also be measured in 360-day years. And it could be, as some scholars claim, the 360-day measure for years works out perfectly, giving a time span accurate to the exact day – right *"from the going forth of the command"* all the way to Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

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Continue to Part 5: Messiah's Crucifixion and Jerusalem's Destruction – Daniel 9:26