

70 Weeks of Daniel – Starting Point

70 Weeks of Daniel – 490 years Dan 9:24. The angel informs Daniel that seventy sevens of years were "determined" (or marked out) upon his people, and upon his holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy (place).

69 weeks (7 weeks plus 62 weeks) – 483 years –

"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince" (Dan. 9:25).

We must determine with **certainty the event from which the count of the seventy weeks was to begin**; notwithstanding it was given directly from heaven, and notwithstanding it is recorded for our benefit in the inspired Scriptures. This will be of no use to us whatever unless the starting point be certainly known.

It is equally important that the starting point cannot be certainly known unless it be revealed in the Scriptures, and in such way that the **ordinary reader can "know and understand" it beyond a doubt.**

This essential matter, however, is revealed in the Word of God; and moreover the information is given in a manner so plain and so simple that the any man seeking the truth need not err.

The right way of getting at the chronology of the **prophecy is so simple and obvious that a child can readily comprehend it.** All we need to do is to ascertain from the Word of God the two events specified by the angel,

(1) the going forth of the "commandment" and

(2) the manifestation of "Messiah the Prince."

Having definitely fixed these two events (which the Scriptures enable us to do with certainty) we know from the prophecy itself that from the one to the other is just 483 years.

By this method we have no need of a system of chronology.

Important Note:

[Most methods of procedure for accounting of the 483 years are fundamentally wrong in that they try to make events of Bible-history fit in with a man-made chronological scheme, but the fact is that every chronological System covering the period we have to do with (i. e., from the beginning of the Persian monarchy down to Christ) is largely a matter of guesswork. All those systems, without any exception, are based upon the "canon" of Ptolemy, that is to say, a list of supposed Persian kings, with the supposed length of the reign of each, which list was compiled by Ptolemy, a heathen astronomer and writer of the second century A. D. But Ptolemy does not even pretend to have had any facts as to the length of the Persian period (that is to say, from Darius and Cyrus down to Alexander the Great). Ptolemy estimates or guesses this period to have been 205 years long. And this is what has caused all the trouble and uncertainty; for every one who has attempted

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to construct a Bible chronology has based himself on Ptolemy's estimate. In a word then, there is no chronology in existence of the period from Cyrus to Christ except in the Bible.

In order to show how great is the uncertainty as to the length of the Persian empire, we have only to mention, the fact that, according to Jewish traditions in the days of Christ (which surely are as much to be trusted as heathen traditions of a later date), the period of the Persian kings was only 52 years. Here is a difference of 153 years, and that in regard to a matter, which is essential to an understanding of this prophecy. Sir Isaac Newton says that "some of the Jews took Herod for the Messiah, and were called 'Herodians.' They seem to have grounded their opinion on the 70 weeks." Inasmuch as the accession of Herod was 34 years before Christ, it is evident that the opinion of the Herodians required a comparatively short Persian period. On the other hand, the opinions of certain modern expositors are based upon a Persian era of supposedly long duration.]

But we are not left to choose between Jewish traditions and heathen traditions, or to base our conclusions upon either. For the Word of God shows us plainly what was the beginning of the prophetic period; and with that information in our possession, we know certainly that it was just 483 years "unto Christ." Therefore, we are bound to reject any and every chronological scheme, whether from Jewish or heathen sources, and any and every system of interpretation based thereon) which conflicts with the facts revealed in the Scriptures.

Now lets move onto scriptures to determine the starting point –

THE DECREE OF CYRUS THE GREAT

We will now proceed to show that the point of beginning of the seventy weeks is that great epoch-making and divinely-prompted decree of Cyrus the Great, whereof a record is given in 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23, and also in Ezra 1:1-4.

The proof is not only clear, simple and absolutely conclusive for all who believe the Word of the Lord, but it was given under circumstances which were designed to inspire wonder and admiration at the marvelous ways of God in bringing to pass that which He has purposed and promised to perform.

Turning to Isaiah, Chapters 44 and 45, we find there God's promise that Jerusalem should be rebuilt and its captives restored to their home, and 'not only so but we find that God mentioned by name the very man, "**Cyrus,**" by whom that promise was to be accomplished. The proof that King Cyrus was the one who should give the commandment (or word). for the restoring and rebuilding of Jerusalem, is forceful and impressive, and designed so as the Scripture itself declares, **because it was spoken by the mouth of the Lord two hundred years before Cyrus came to the throne.**

The passage begins with the words, "*Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it*" (Isa. 44:23).

Evidently God is here calling attention to a work of great importance and one in which He takes special delight. It was to be a work, moreover, by which the tokens of the liars (those who consulted omens) were to be frustrated, and the

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"diviners" made mad, and the "wise men" turned backward, and their knowledge made foolish (v. 25).

*Notwithstanding all that opposed His will, the high walls and strong gates of Babylon, and the wisdom of the astrologers, soothsayers and Chaldeans, God would "confirm the word of His servant, and perform the counsel of His messengers"; for it was He "that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof; that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; **that saith of CYRUS, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, EVEN SAYING TO JERUSALEM, THOU SHALT BE BUILT; AND TO THE TEMPLE, THY FOUNDATION SHALL BE LAID**" (vv. 26, 27).*

We pause at this point to call to the reader's mind that when the time for the fulfillment of this prophecy by Isaiah was at hand, the *last Babylonian King, Belshazzar, was carousing with a thousand of his courtiers* in fancied security behind the strong walls of Babylon, while the armies of Darius and Cyrus were besieging the city. Then appeared the **part of a man's hand, tracing upon the wall those four words**, which declared the doom of Babylon, though the magicians, and astrologers and soothsayers were confounded by them, and their wisdom turned to foolishness.

Moreover, secular history has preserved for us the fact that the engineers of Cyrus' army dug a new channel for the river Euphrates which ran through the city (thus fulfilling the words, "and I will dry up thy rivers") and Cyrus entered by way of the dry bed of the stream. Thus were the "two-leaved gates" of Babylon opened to God's appointed conqueror, **who was to be a "shepherd" and a deliverer to His people**. The next verse of the prophecy speaks of this:.

"Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings -see Daniel 5:6, where it is said of Belshazzar, when he saw the handwriting on the wall, "so that the joints of his loins were loosed"- "to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut" (Isa. 45:1).

Here is God's own testimony that King Cyrus, and not one of his successors, was to give the "commandment" whereby Jerusalem was to be rebuilt and its inhabitants restored. Nothing could be plainer than the words, "He (Cyrus) shalt perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shalt be laid." This proof cannot be overthrown.

Indeed none who believe the Scriptures to be inspired will even question it.

** Having this to guide us we must needs decline to follow those who, with a faulty heathen chronology as their only guide, grope for some event, long after Cyrus was laid in his grave, which can be taken as "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem."

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No further evidence is needed.

BUT! in this exceedingly important matter God has been pleased to give proof upon proof. Thus in Isaiah 46:13 we have this further word concerning Cyrus:

"I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; HE SHALL BUILD MY CITY, AND HE SHALL LET GO MY CAPTIVES."

No one who believes the Word of God will, with this Scripture before him, dispute for a moment that it was by Cyrus that Jerusalem was rebuilt and its captives restored to it.

Here are two things which God distinctly foretold were to be done by Cyrus (**and this was 200 years before he came to the throne-one**);

first he was to rebuild the city,

and second he was to restore the captive Jews to their home.

These are the very things mentioned by the angel to Daniel; for he said, "from the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem."

And the Scriptures make it plain that Cyrus made haste to fulfill this Word of God; and moreover that he knew just what he was doing, and why.

There is truth here which, with a little attention, we can get hold of, and which, when understood, will both clear all uncertainties away, and also will fill us with admiration because of the wonders and perfections of the Word of God.

Observe then that, when the angel mentioned "the commandment to restore and to build," Daniel would have known from the prophecy of Isaiah (which was familiar to him, as we shall see) that it was Cyrus who would issue that command. Now Cyrus was at that time co-ruler with, and subordinate to, "Darius the Mede" (Dan. 9:1). But in less than two years Cyrus became the sole ruler; and it was in the very first year of his reign that he issued the foundations decree, which gave new existence to the Jewish nation.

As stated Daniel knew the prophecy of Jeremiah which gives the length of the captivity is expressly stated in Daniel 9:2. But that he also knew the prophecy of Isaiah, which foretold that the captivity would be ended by the decree of Cyrus, appears by reference to the decree of that monarch, which is partly quoted by Ezra. These are the words: "Thus saith Cyrus, King of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah" (Ezra 1:2).

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It is clear that this "charge" came to Cyrus, not through the book of Jeremiah, but through that of Isaiah; for it is in Isaiah that God, speaking to Cyrus who was yet unborn, charged him to build the city and temple and to release the captive Jews. It will thus be seen that God has given to Cyrus a remarkable place in His Word and in the execution of His plans.

Daniel had not learned about the ending of the captivity by a direct revelation from God, but "by books" - evidently not the book of Jeremiah only, but that of Isaiah also.

We too have the same "books" that Daniel had; and we have also the book of Ezra, which contains a record of the great decree of Cyrus; and these several "books" give all the light that is needed to make the matter perfectly clear.

Josephus - CONCERNING CYRUS

But here is the extraordinary case of a distinct prophecy, in plain words, of what God purposed to do, coupled with the name of the man by whom God purposed to do it.

Note: The only like case where an action is described and the name of the man who was to perform it is given before he was born, is that of King Josiah (I Kings 13:2, fulfilled 2 Kings 23:15-17).

It is interesting in this connection to see how this matter was understood by learned Jews in ancient times.

We find recorded in the history of Josephus, that Cyrus wrote throughout all his dominions that "God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth" and that "He indeed foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in the country of Judea." Josephus goes on to say that, when Cyrus had read the words of the prophet Isaiah, "He called for the most eminent Jews in Babylon and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and TO REBUILD THEIR CITY JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE OF GOD."

Josephus also gives a copy of a letter written by Cyrus to the governors that were in Syria, which letter begins as follows:

"King Cyrus to Sisinnes and Sathrabuzzanes, sendeth greeting.

I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please [to do so] to return to their own country, and TO REBUILD THE CITY, AND TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE, OF GOD AT JERUSALEM on the same place where it was before" (Ant. Bk. XI, Ch. 1, sec. 1 & 3).

But if the fact be, then to take any other event as the starting point is to falsify the prophecy.

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It is a choice between the clear statements of the Word of God and the guesses of heathen historians and astronomers.

This is written for the benefit of those who accept the Word of God as conclusive.

EZRA

It is true that Ezra, in the very brief statement he gives of the decree of Cyrus, does not specifically mention the building of the city. But that emission affords no ground whatever for assuming that the decree of Cyrus did not provide for the rebuilding of the city, much less does it afford reason for setting aside the word of the Lord spoken by Isaiah.

In fact the decree of Cyrus, under which the Jews were, one and all, permitted to return to Jerusalem, and under which over forty-two thousand did return at once, necessarily implied permission to build houses to dwell in. The building of the temple is the most important matter, and that is why it is specifically mentioned in Ezra's brief reference to the decree of Cyrus. But, according to the prophecy of Isaiah "the commandment to rebuild the city was to be joined with that to rebuild the temple. Hence when we have found the commandment to rebuild the temple we have found that to rebuild the city.

It should be observed that the words of Gabriel call for the going forth of a commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. Those words fit the decree of Cyrus which was promulgated throughout his dominions, and which is expressly called by Ezra a "commandment" (Ezra 6:14).

Furthermore, that the building of Jerusalem did actually proceed under the decree of Cyrus, appears from the fact that, at a time when only the foundation of the temple had been laid, the adversaries complained that the Jews were "rebuilding the rebellious and bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and have joined the foundations" (Ezra 4:12).

That statement of the adversaries was not a fabrication; for it is fully corroborated by Haggai, who (prophesying during that same period of the cessation of work on the temple) said that the people were dwelling in their own ceiled houses, and that they ran every one to his own house (Hag. 1:4, 7, 8).

Moreover, it will be observed, in reading the book of Ezra, that he speaks throughout of Jerusalem as an existing city, and in chapter 9:9 He gives thanks to God that He had given them "a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem."

Upon a careful reading of Ezra, chapters 6 and 7, it will be seen that what is there recorded agrees with and fully supports the Scriptures heretofore cited, showing that the work then in progress at Jerusalem, and which the enemies of the Jews sought to hinder, was based entirely upon the decree of Cyrus. For when those adversaries complained by letter to King Darius concerning the work of rebuilding the temple (which the Jews had resumed under the stimulus of the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah),

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Darius caused search to be made amongst the archives in the house of rolls (Ezra 6:1), and he found the decree of Cyrus commanding that the temple be rebuilt; and upon the authority of that decree of Cyrus, his successor Darius issued the decree mentioned in Ezra 6:6-12.

The completion of the temple is mentioned in Ezra 6:14, 15, and it is said that it had been done "according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius"- that of Darius being merely a re-affirmation of the decree of Cyrus, which had given the authorization for the entire work of restoration.

NEHEMIAH'S WORK ON TEMPLE WALL – Completed in 52 days "Neh 6:15"

The tidings from Jerusalem. In chapter 1 Nehemiah relates that, while he was attending to his customary duties in the palace of the king certain brethren came from Jerusalem with tidings to the effect that those in the province of Judah, who had been left of the captivity, were in great affliction and reproach. Further they reported, saying, "the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (Neh. 1:1-3).

The effect of this report upon Nehemiah shows clearly that it was of a fresh and unexpected calamity they were speaking. For he relates that, when he heard those words, he sat down, and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. The record makes it plain that the cause of his distress was not the condition of the Jews in the province, but the tidings of the damage which had been done to the walls and gates of the holy city.

Note: That could not possibly have been the destruction wrought by Nebuchadnezzar, for that had taken place more than a hundred years previously. Nehemiah had known about *that* all his life. His brethren, when he asked them "concerning Jerusalem," could not have told him, as a piece of news, of the damage that had been done a century before. That would not have been news to him, nor would the hearing of it have plunged him into deep distress. He states that he had not been sad beforetime in the king's presence (2:7); but now his sorrow was so great that he could not banish the evidences of it from his countenance even in the king's presence. There must have been a cause for this; and nothing but unexpected tidings of a *fresh* calamity to the beloved city could account for his acute distress. With the walls damaged and the gates burned with fire, the city was exposed to her enemies, and the new temple itself was in danger of being again destroyed.

In this report we have an indication of the "troubulous times" foretold by the angel Gabriel (Dan. 9:25).

In chapter 2 we have the account of Nehemiah's request to the king, and of the "letter" given to him. There is no decree, no "commandment," nothing what so ever about rebuilding the city.

And how could there be in view of the word of the Lord concerning Cyrus, saying, "He shall build My city"? It is true that Nehemiah made request that the king would send him to the city of his father's sepulchers, that he might "build it." But the word here

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rendered “build” is of very broad meaning, and would be appropriate to describe the *repairing* of the damage to the walls and gates, which in fact is what it does mean in this instance. Nehemiah only sought permission to restore the parts that had been freshly destroyed. This will be shown below.

What Nehemiah meant by his request appears in verses 7 and 8, namely, letters to the governors beyond the river to give him safe passage (in other words a *passport*), and also a letter to the keeper of the king’s forest to supply “timber to make beams for *the gates* of the palace which appertained to the house, and *for the wall* of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into.” These requests the king granted. Manifestly those letters do not constitute a commandment to rebuild the city.

Finally, it clearly appears by chapter 3 that the work, which Nehemiah did during his stay in Jerusalem was the *repairing* of the *wall* and of the *gates* of the city. The word “repaired” is used over twenty times in that chapter to describe that work. It was a *small work* (comparatively to the work of rebuilding the city and temple) for it was completed, notwithstanding all hindrances, ***in the short space of 52 days, less than two months (6:15)***. In the third and fourth chapters of Nehemiah we find frequent incidental references to *houses already existing in Jerusalem*, and occupied by the owners thereof, but not a word as to any *building of houses* at that time.

Dan. 9:24-25	Isaiah, Chapters 44 and 45
Dan. 5:6	Isa. 44:23 v25 v26 v27
Dan. 9:1-2	Isa. 44:23-45: 14
	Isa. 45:1
Ezra, chapters 6 and 7	Isaiah 46:13
Ezra 1:1-4	
Ezra 2:1-6 v65	I Kings 13:2, fulfilled 2 Kings
Ezra 4:12	23:15-17
Ezra 6:1 v6-v12 -- Ezra 6:6-12	
v14 v15	Hag. 1:4, 7
Ezra 7:6	
Ezra 7:11- 28	2 Chronicles 36:22, 23,
Ezra 9:9	Nehemiah 1:1-3 6:15 2:7-8