

Chronology 316: Timeline of Biblical World History



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Brian K. McPherson and Scott McPherson

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Period Four: From the Beginning of Solomon's Reign to the Destruction of the Temple (Part 4)

Summary of Methods and Results for Calculating this Period of History

In the preceding section we examined various exegetical issues that related to the method of calculating the period from the beginning of Solomon's reign to the destruction of the Temple. In this section we will provide a review of those considerations and some final thoughts on the various methods for calculating this period.

The three options for calculating the duration of this period all involved how transitional years between kings were counted by the biblical authors in the books of Kings and Chronicles. We have seen that the years of the kings of Judah were counted in correspondence to Rosh Hashanah. But, we also know that kings did not always die or begin to reign on Rosh Hashanah each year. These realities create a differential in the starting date for each of the reigns of the kings. Therefore, each king probably took the throne at some point during the year before Rosh Hashanah and, likewise, died at some point during the year after Rosh Hashanah had already passed. We have discussed three methods for how these partial calendar years may have been accounted for by the biblical authors.

The first method theorizes that the biblical authors attributed a full, calendar year to the reigns of all kings who ruled during a transitional year. If this method is true, the biblical authors would be counting any calendar year which saw a transition between kings as two years, one for each of the kings who reigned during that calendar year. The result would be the inflation of the period of the kings by at least one year every time the throne changed hands. Because there are 20 transitions, this method would inflate the total count of the years of this period by 20 extra years. In other words, the number of years recorded in the bible would actually be twenty years more than the true number of years that transpired during this historical period. A straightforward count of the amounts provided in the books of Kings and Chronicles for the reigns of the kings amounts to a total of 433 years from Solomon's coronation to the destruction of the Temple. If this method were employed by the biblical authors then this total (433 years) would need to be reduced by 20 years to compensate for the inclusion of 20 extra years that resulted from counting the transitional years twice. Therefore, if this method were employed by the biblical authors, the actual total of this period would be 413 years.

The second method theorizes that the biblical authors attributed a full, calendar year to the reign of only one of the kings who ruled during a transitional year. If this method is true, the biblical authors would be accurately counting any calendar year which saw a transition between kings as only one calendar year. Therefore, the total that can be derived from a straightforward addition of the numbers provided for the reigns of the kings in the books of Kings and Chronicles would accurately reflect the total duration of this period. If this method were used by the biblical authors then the total time for this period would be 433 years.

The third method theorizes that the biblical authors did not include transitional years in the counts of the reigns of any of the kings who ruled during a transitional year. If this method is true, the biblical authors would not be counting any transitional year and, therefore, reducing their count of the duration of this period by one year for every transitional year. Because there are 20 transitions, this method would erroneously reduce the total count of the years of this period by 20 years. If this method were employed by the biblical authors then 20 years would need to be added to the straightforward total (433 years) to compensate for the omission of 20 transitional years. Therefore, if this method were employed by the biblical authors, the actual total of this period would be 453 years.

In the third part of our study of the period of the kings of Judah we discussed the potential exegetical support for these three options. We segmented our discussion of those exegetical issues by number. The section had 10 points discussing 10 exegetical supports.

Points 1 and 2 both dealt with observable methods of timekeeping that the biblical authors employed regarding durations of time in the period of the kings of Judah. The paragraphs below will discuss the results of our discussion of points 1 and 2.

1. Instances in which biblical authors denote kings who reigned for part of a year include of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin in 2 Chronicles. The treatment of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin in 2 Chronicles conflicts with option one. According to option one, these two kings should have been credited with a full, calendar year each. Because 2 Chronicles does not credit them with a full calendar year, it would seem that the biblical authors were not utilizing a manner of counting the kings' reigns in which partial (transitional) years were credited to kings as full, calendar years. It should be noted that neither option two nor option three is intended to deny that kings reigned for a few spare months here and there that didn't fit into a full, calendar year. To the contrary, both option two and option three assume that kings frequently reigned for several months short of constituting a full year. The purpose of these options is to address how such extra months factor into an overall tally of a king's reign, not to deny extra months. Consequently, the occurrence of odd or extra months here and there is not really contrary to either model, even the infrequent occurrence of a couple of kings who only reigned for a few months. Option two dictates that transitional years (in which two or more kings reign) are counted as a single, full calendar year and ascribed to only one (but not all) of those kings. Ultimately, since both option two and option three

would tend to erase all record of a king who reigned for only a few months, both options equally mandate and predict the occurrence of an exception using months in order to retain record of any king who reigned for less than a full, calendar year. Therefore, from the evidence presented in 2 Chronicles 36, it seems we may only conclude that the biblical authors were not employing option one. But we have no evidence from 2 Chronicles that would dictate which of options two and three is correct.

2. Instances of biblical authors excluding partial (transitional) years from the count of a king's reign would disprove option one. We have at least one instance of this type of exclusion. King David reigned for 7 years and 6 months in Hebron over Judah and for 33 years he reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-7). Yet David's reign is only totaled as 40 years, not 40 years and 6 months. Likewise, as noted previously the reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin only lasted 3 months each, yet neither is given credit for a full, calendar year. These biblical observations would undermine the conclusion that the biblical authors employed option one and would therefore give us reason not to employ option one as we calculate the duration of this period.

Instances of biblical authors including partial (transitional) years from the count of a king's reign would disprove option three. We have two instances where the biblical authors did employ this method to count a period of time. The first instance involved the amount of time that was allotted to the building of the Temple. 1 Kings 6:1 reports that Solomon began building the Temple in the second month (a Spring month) during his 4th year as king. 1 Kings 6:38 reports that the Temple was completed in the eighth month (a Fall month) of Solomon's 11th year as king. Since, Solomon's years of reign were counted from the first day of the seventh month in fall (Rosh Hashanah), the total time it took to build the Temple was 6 years and 6 months (from Spring half way through Solomon's 4th year to Fall just after the beginning of his 11th year). Yet, the biblical authors count the total amount of time it took to build the temple as 7 years, not 6 years and 6 months. By contrast, the timekeeping method proposed by option 3 would require that the partial year (six months) would not be included at all. If, therefore, the biblical authors were employing a timekeeping method proposed by option three, then they should have counted the building of the Temple to have taken 6 years, not 7. These biblical observations would undermine the conclusion that the biblical authors employed option three and would therefore give us reason not to employ option three as we calculate the duration of this period.

The second instance involved the length of Zedekiah's reign. Biblical texts indicate that Zedekiah reigned for 10 years and a little over 10 months. In the fourth month of his 11th year Zedekiah attempted to flee the besieged city of Jerusalem and was captured. In the fifth month, the city and the Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's troops. (Rosh Hashanah, which marked the start of a new calendar year and marked the beginning of a new year of the king's reign, was typically described as being in the seventh month of the year after Passover, which occurred in the month of Nisan, typically identified as the first month.) Therefore, Zedekiah did not reign for 11 full years. He only reigned for

10 full years and a partial year. Yet the biblical texts (and Warner as well) credit Zedekiah with 11 full years, not 10 (2 Kings 24:18, 2 Kings 25:2, 2 Chronicles 36:11, Jeremiah 1:3, Jeremiah 39:2, Jeremiah 52:11). Here we have another instance of the biblical authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles (as well as Jeremiah) counting a partial year of reign as a full calendar year.

Option two would be disproved if we could establish that the biblical authors never counted a partial year as a full calendar year and never excluded a partial year from the total count of the duration of time (at least in all cases where a king reigned for more than one calendar year). Since we have instances of biblical authors counting partial years as full years (the building of the Temple and Zedekiah's 11th year) and instances in which partial years are not counted (the reigns of David, Jehoahaz, and Jehoiachin), we are unable to disprove the biblical use of option two and we have no reason for rejecting this approach as we perform our own calculations. But these examples of biblical timekeeping do provide demonstrations that option three was not employed by the biblical authors.

3. In his book, Dr. Ernest L. Martin reports that the ancient Jews counted the reigns of the kings of Judah in accordance with Rosh Hashanah and antedated reigns that began after Rosh Hashanah to the preceding Rosh Hashanah. Tiberius is cited as one historical example. This would constitute the use of option two by the ancient Jews regarding the reigns of their kings. In this case, the partial year that a king reigned after Rosh Hashanah in the year that he died was not counted in the total years of his reign, but was instead credited as the first year of his successor. This historical information corresponds to exegetical data indicating the biblical use of timekeeping methods consistent with option two wherein transitional years were counted for only one of the kings who ruled during that year. And it supports the conclusion that the amounts provided by the biblical authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles can simply be added together to get an accurate total of the duration of this period.

4. Ezekiel 4 delineates God's count of the years of the sin of Israel and Judah as 390 years and 40 years. This allows for a total of either 430 years if the two figures are to be added together or 390 years if the 40 years are part of the 390 years. These figures correspond simply with the straightforward count of the years of the kings of Judah provided in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Ezekiel could have been measuring from the point when construction began on the Temple to the point when the Temple was destroyed. Using only the numbers provided in the books of Kings and Chronicles, this period contained 430 years. Alternatively, Ezekiel's reference to Israel and Judah separately may indicate that his starting point was the division of the kingdom which took place at Solomon's death. Using only the numbers provided in the books of Kings and Chronicles, this period contained 390 years. The last 40 years of that 390-year period from Solomon's death to the destruction of the Temple were occupied by God's warning and calls for repentance through the prophet Jeremiah. Whichever way we understand Ezekiel 4, it seems to correspond to the straightforward count of the reigns of the kings as provided in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

Warner's alternative model takes Ezekiel's timetable to refer to a period of 430 years that began in Solomon's 23rd year as king. While this model is also possible, the main reason for adopting this approach may be to maintain correspondence with his proposed 120 jubilee calendar rather than because of exegetical necessity. In no way does the possibility of Warner's interpretation of Ezekiel rule out the alternatives.

5. Option three, which Warner employs in his calculations, proposes that the biblical authors did not include transitional years (when two successive kings each reigned for part of the year) in their counts of the kings' reigns. As such, this method calls for adding 1 year to each king's reign to compensate for the omitted partial years. 2 Chronicles 22 and 23 indicate that Athaliah only ruled for 6 full calendar years before she was replaced by Joash at some point during her 7th year. Option three would exclude the partial year which transitioned from Athaliah to Joash from the count of Athaliah's reign. Therefore, if the biblical authors used option three, they should have only counted Athaliah's reign as 6 years long. To compensate for the omission of the transitional year, option three requires adding one year for each monarch (in this case Athaliah) so that we should add 7 years based on Athaliah's reign, not 6. Option three does not warrant the addition of 2 years to the 6 full calendar years Athaliah that reigned according to the biblical data. Here Warner's model appears to be in simple error. Though 1 year is not a great deal of time if we are seeking to simply have a close approximation of world history, Warner's jubilee chronology proposes and requires absolute precision in order to maintain correspondence with the jubilee cycle. Therefore, even though this exegetical evidence doesn't necessarily touch on the validity of options one, two, or three, the reign of Athaliah may be a problem undermining the capacity to maintain Warner's overall model and timetable.

Points 6 through 10 all address potential confirmation that Warner offers for the use of the third option for calculating the duration of the reigns of the kings of Judah.

6. In his current chronology study, Warner states that 2 Chronicles 36:21 indicates that the 70 years of Babylonian exile were, in fact, the accumulation of the required 70 sabbatical years that Israel had neglected over a 500-year period which ended the same year that the 70 years of Babylonian captivity also ended. It is true that adding the 70 years of Babylonian exile to the 430 year period which took place before the Temple's destruction would total at 500 years. And it is true that in any 500-year period there are 70 sabbatical years. Here the question is whether option three is the only method that produces a measurable total of 430 years starting from a discernible and relevant historical event. As we have seen, even if we accept Warner's division of the 500 years into 430 years followed by 70 years of exile, there is nothing in the text of 2 Chronicles 36 that would determine whether the 430 years should start with the visitation in Solomon's 4th year or the visitation in Solomon's 23rd year. Consequently, since 2 Chronicles does nothing to rule the notion that the biblical authors accounted for every year

adequately including the transitional years, this passage does nothing to substantiate the theory that 20 missing years need to be added to the counts given in the bible.

There are also potential problems with the basic idea that the 70 years of Babylonian exile were, in fact, 70 accumulated sabbatical years that Israel had neglected. Even in Warner's model there were only 430 years before the destruction of the Temple. Furthermore, God himself states that the land would have its Sabbaths during the exile. This would only allow for the neglect of 60 sabbatical years and would only therefore necessitate an exile of 60 years to compensate for those neglected sabbatical years. But the exile was for 70 years. To circumvent this discrepancy would require that God measured Israel's time in Canaan land in particular 500-year segments with particular pre-set starting and ending points for which he demanded 70 sabbatical years. While the bible does indicate that there were 500-years between the Exodus and Solomon's 23rd year (as Warner calculates), the Israelites were only in Canaan land keeping the sabbatical years for 450 (or so) years before Solomon's 23rd year. Therefore, the first 40-50 (or so) years of the preceding 500-year period did not involve Israel's living in Canaan land or keeping sabbatical or jubilee years. If God did measure the time of Israel in the Promised Land in particular 500-year periods each containing 70 sabbatical years, then, exegetically speaking, it would seem that the first 500-year period started when Israel actually inherited the Promised Land and began keeping the sabbatical years. This would mean that the first 500-year period did not end in Solomon's 23rd year, but 50 years later during the reign of King Asa. Consequently, the second 500-year period would not end until 50 years after the destruction of the Temple. This would mean the Babylonian exile began 50 years too early.

Additionally, some of the kings of Judah were approved by God as good men who walked in God's ways and obeyed God's commands. This makes it difficult to conclude that sabbatical years were entirely neglected during all of the reigns of both the bad and good kings of Judah from the reign of Solomon and afterward. Consequently, it is unlikely that a total of 70 sabbatical years had been neglected requiring the consecutive occurrence of 70 compensational sabbatical years.

To be clear, Warner's calculation of the period of the kings isn't contradicted by these biblical observations. But these biblical observations also do contradict or affirm the alternatives to Warner's approach. Therefore, 2 Chronicles 36 doesn't provide any confirmation of Warner's chronological method or its results. Nor does it disprove the alternatives.

7. Ezekiel 40:1 makes reference to "Rosh Hashanah" and the tenth day of the month in the 14th year after the destruction of the Temple. Leviticus 25:9 states that on jubilee years, trumpets were to be blown on the tenth day of the month following Rosh Hashanah. In his previous chronology study, Warner took Ezekiel 40:1 to be evidence of a jubilee year 14 years after the destruction of the Temple. However, the occurrence of a jubilee year at that time would conflict with Warner's current model which places a jubilee year 70 years later at the end of the

Babylonian exile. Since jubilee years only took place every 50 years it would not be possible for Ezekiel 40:1 to refer to a jubilee year if there is a jubilee at the end of the exile. Because there is exegetical reason for considering that Ezekiel 40:1 does not refer to a jubilee year, Warner's model is not necessarily contradicted by this passage. However, what we decide about how Ezekiel 40:1 should be interpreted should not be dictated by the desire to avoid a conflict with our chronological model. If it seems that Ezekiel 40:1 does necessitate the occurrence of a jubilee year 14 years after the Temple was destroyed as Warner previously advocated then this conviction should not be cast aside to accommodate a hypothetical chronological model. If we feel that Ezekiel is pointing toward the occurrence of a jubilee year, then we would be led to accept alternatives to Warner's model instead of the calculations he offers. Moreover, the fact is that Warner's model requires dismissing evidence of a possible jubilee year in Ezekiel 40. This dismissal raises the bar concerning the caliber of evidence in other passages that Warner insists identify a jubilee year. In other words, Warner will not be able to insist on a jubilee year in other passages while dismissing evidence for a jubilee year in Ezekiel 40 unless the caliber of the evidence in those passages surpasses Ezekiel 40 and there are no reasonable alternative interpretations of that evidence.

8. Warner cites Jeremiah 34 as evidence of the occurrence of a sabbatical year which was neglected by King Zedekiah. If Zedekiah's 10th year was a sabbatical year (as Warner suggests) this would fit with Warner's chronological approach to the reigns of the kings of Judah. However, it is just as exegetically possible that Jeremiah 34 is indicating that either Zedekiah's 10th or 11th year was a neglected sabbatical year that was followed by a jubilee year in Zedekiah's 11th year or the year after. The occurrence of a sabbatical year followed by a jubilee year would conflict with Warner's model. Additionally, Warner's model isn't the only model that can accommodate the occurrence of a sabbatical year in Zedekiah's 10th or 11th year. These observations undermine the conclusion that Jeremiah 34 provides any confirmation that Warner's calculation of the reigns of the kings of Judah is more biblically sound than the alternatives.

9. Warner cites Isaiah 37 as evidence of the occurrence of the normally-scheduled seventh sabbatical year followed by a jubilee year, which would work with Warner's overall timetable. Specifically, Isaiah 37:30 refers to the Israelites having uncultivated food for two years. Warner argues that this two-year duration refers back to the description of the jubilee year in Leviticus 25:20-22. However, a closer look at Leviticus 25:11, 20-22 reveals that verses 20-22 cannot refer to a jubilee year, but can only refer to a normal sabbatical year that is not followed immediately by a jubilee. Consequently, if Isaiah is referring back to this description from Leviticus, it is proof that Isaiah is not talking about a jubilee year. But most importantly, the text of Isaiah suggests that this two-year period of supernatural provision is not even a sabbatical year. First, Isaiah speaks of a miraculous sign given by God to Hezekiah that for two years the people would eat of what grew of its own accord out of the land without cultivation. The expected occurrence of normally scheduled sabbatical and jubilee years would not seem to constitute a miraculous sign. This consideration becomes all the more potent

when we consider not only that Hezekiah conceived of a “sign” as an event that broke with the normal pattern but also that Hezekiah kept God’s commands like David, maintained regular calendar events mandated by the Law of Moses, and presided over years of surplus food supply due to God’s blessings. These facts, attested to by scripture, make it all the more likely that Hezekiah was already keeping sabbatical years and enjoying God’s promised supernatural provision of food for those years. The occurrence of a regular sabbatical year with its expected provision would not likely have been characterized as a sign from what we know of Hezekiah’s perspective. On the other hand, certainly the occurrence of such supernatural provision in an untimely occasion outside the sabbatical year certainly would constitute such a sign. Second, in Isaiah the immediate historical and textual context lends reasonable support to the idea that these two years of supernatural provision were in direct relation to the interruption of the normal cultivation cycle by the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem, not the sabbatical or jubilee cycle. Support for this conclusion can be seen in the specific Assyrian offer to let the Israelites tend and eat their own crops if they surrendered and the Assyrian’s declared intent to bring the Israelites to eat food in a foreign land. In addition, the passage itself doesn’t contain any of the hallmark language or concepts associated with the jubilee year, such as “release” or “proclaim liberty.” Since Warner himself has on occasion dismissed evidence of jubilee years in Ezekiel 40 and Jeremiah 34, it seems that the evidence in Isaiah 37 is insufficient to identify a jubilee or sabbatical year. Ultimately, these observations undermine the conclusion that Isaiah 37 provides any confirmation that Warner’s calculation of the reigns of the kings of Judah is more biblically sound than the alternatives.

10. Warner points to two extra-biblical texts as confirmation of his method of calculating the period of the kings of Judah. Because we are concerned with deriving a chronology of world history solely from biblical sources, such extra-biblical writers cannot directly testify that Warner’s method or model is necessarily biblically correct. At the most these texts can only confirm that their authors agreed with Warner’s methodology, his results, or both. Some historians and chronologists may agree with Warner’s calculations. Others do not. Those who agree cannot, by their agreement, prove Warner’s correctness any more than those who disagree, can by their disagreement, disprove Warner’s calculations. The weight of a biblically-derived chronology comes not from the agreement of some of the outside sources, but in the necessity of our conclusions on the basis of exegetical data. This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that while Josephus and Warner arrive at the same results regarding the time from Saul to the destruction of the Temple, they disagree with one another regarding the amount of time from the Exodus to the fourth year of King Solomon’s reign. Their agreement with one another regarding one period does not confirm biblical correctness any more than their disagreement with one another regarding another period proves either must be incorrect. But perhaps most interestingly, Warner gives a total of 480 years from Exodus to Solomon’s fourth year, but Josephus gives a total of 592 years for this same period, inflating the total by more than 100 years even by Warner’s calculations. Likewise, while Warner concludes that the year in which Solomon’s palace was completed is 3,000 years from creation, Josephus again gives a count that is more than 100 years longer. Since Warner’s

own calculations demand that Josephus has a tendency to inflate durations by a hundred years or more, it is hard to understand how any agreement with Josephus confirms that accuracy of Warner's counts. It could just as easily be the case that when Warner and Josephus agree, Warner's numbers are inflated just like Josephus' counts. And the discrepancy between them also includes the fact that Josephus doesn't calculate any of these time periods to round totals that equally divide into 50-year jubilee cycles, which is Warner's central theme. As such, the extra-biblical sources Warner cites do not provide compelling reason to conclude that Warner's calculation of the reigns of the kings of Judah is more biblically sound than the alternatives.

A review of these 10 considerations results in the following conclusions. We have biblical information which would weigh against using option one to calculate the period of the kings of Judah. We have biblical information which weighs against using option three to calculate the period of the kings of Judah. But we do not have any information which would weigh against the use of option two or which necessitates option three.

One of the most important considerations that we must keep in mind regarding the three options for calculating the reigns of the kings has to do with the implications they make regarding the sufficiency of the biblical data for deriving accurate chronological conclusions. Of the three suggested methods for calculating the period of the kings, only option two upholds the sufficiency of the data provided by the biblical authors for deriving an accurate chronology of world history. Option one suggests that the data that the biblical authors provided would result in a calculation of the history of this period that is 20 years longer than it actually was. Option three suggests that the data the biblical authors provided would result in a calculation of the history of this period that is 20 years shorter than it actually was. Option one and option three also both imply that the biblical authors did not intend the data that they recorded to give a precise account of the total duration of the period. Otherwise, they wouldn't have left out years or counted years twice. Consequently, adopting option one or option three involves using biblical data in a way that the biblical authors did not intend or design their records to facilitate, which in turn seems to undermine both the sufficiency of the evidence used in the calculations and also the exegetical method known as grammatical historical interpretation. But, option two maintains that the data the biblical authors provided would result in a calculation of the history of this period that accurately counts the total duration of this period. And consequently, option two is consistent with the grammatical historical method and with its own inherent view regarding the authors' intentions as they recorded the data.

The derivation of a chronology of world history that is solely reliant on biblical data inherently requires that the biblical data is entirely sufficient for accomplishing that purpose. And it would seem to imply that the authors who inscribed the data intended it to provide an accurate chronology. Therefore, because it upholds the complete sufficiency of the chronological data provided in the books of Kings and Chronicles and maintains that the authors recorded the

chronological data in a manner that would not require additional information to be supplied by readers, option two seems to be more consistent with the essential premise of the endeavor of constructing a solely biblical chronology. This consideration would support the usage of option two. On the other hand, because they undermine the sufficiency of the chronological data provided in the bible, options one and three seem to be inconsistent with the essential premise of the endeavor itself and for that reason we may reconsider whether we want to employ them in our calculations.

There are several additional points worth considering before we conclude our study of this period. The first point we should consider concerns possible comparisons between the calculation of the reigns of the kings of Judah and the calculation of the ages of the patriarchs when their sons were born.

As we studied the period of the patriarchs from creation to the births of Abraham and Isaac, we noted that the Genesis accounts only provide the number of years that the patriarchs lived when their sons were born. There is no mention of months or days in the father's age at the birth of his son. However, fathers and sons are rarely born on the same day of the year. Therefore, we discussed the possibility that Genesis failed to account for the additional months and days between a father's previous birthday and the birth of their son. We referred to this potential chronological issue as birthday differential.

As we studied the period of the kings, we noted that kings did not always die on the same day. Consequently, because kings were not likely to wait for months to take the throne on the death of their predecessor, kings did not always begin to rule on the same day. But, as with the genealogies in Genesis, the writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles only mention the number of years each king ruled. There is no mention of the extra months and days a king reigned before he died and was succeeded by the next king. In our study, we discussed the possibilities for how to account for the months and days of difference between the anniversary date for when the previous king began to rule and the beginning of the rule of the next king. We referred to this potential chronological issue as "ruling date" differential.

When we discuss these two potential chronological issues side by side, we can see how similar they are. In both cases, the biblical authors only provide the number of years for a patriarch's life or a king's reign. In both cases, the biblical authors do not provide the number of months and days between a father's birthday and his son's birth or between the date on which one king began to rule and the date on which his successor began to rule. In both case, the omission of these differentials in birthdays and ruling dates was related to 20 generations and 20 transitions of kings. Consequently, in both cases a straightforward count of the biblically-provided data could be somewhere between 0 to 20 years in error.

There are several implications of these considerations.

First, it makes sense that the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles would have modeled their timekeeping methods on the methods employed by earlier biblical authors. Therefore, concluding that the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles counted the years of the kings in correspondence with Rosh Hashanah gives strong support to the conclusion that the author of Genesis (Moses) likewise counted the ages of the patriarchs in correspondence with Rosh Hashanah. It should be noted that Warner's approach concludes that the years of the kings corresponded to Rosh Hashanah, but the ages of the patriarchs in Genesis were not. Given the type of evidence we have for each of these conclusions, we need to evaluate whether there is better evidential grounds for concluding that the years of the kings corresponded to Rosh Hashanah than the evidential grounds for concluding that the ages of the patriarchs were reckoned in correspondence with Rosh Hashanah. If the evidential basis is comparable, we would not be justified in reaching opposite conclusions with regard to the years of the kings and the ages of the patriarchs.

Similarly, if we conclude that the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles credited whole or complete years to each king (even assigning transitional years as a whole unit to one king or another), then we have good reason to conclude that the ages of the patriarchs in Genesis likewise counted full, completed years (and not the current year that was still being completed). Again, given the similarities between periods one and four we should be careful about having completely different approaches and conclusions about the way the biblical authors calculated and conveyed amounts of time.

Second, recognizing the similarities between these two periods offers some suggestions regarding our approach to calculating the duration of both periods. For instance, if we decide that there is no need to compensate for birthday differentials in Genesis then, for rational consistency, we may similarly be inclined to decide that there is no need to compensate for differences between the date on which one king began to rule and the date on which his successor began to rule. On the other hand, if we feel, for instance, that there is a need to compensate for birthday differentials in Genesis then, for rational consistency, we might similarly be inclined to conclude that there is a need to compensate for such ruling date differentials in the reigns of the kings of Judah. Since the exegetical circumstances are very similar, our conclusions about the existence of unaccounted time should likewise be similar for both periods.

Furthermore, if we decide compensation is necessary to account for unaccounted amounts of time, then we likewise ought to consider adopting a similar method for compensating for unaccounted months and days in both periods. Once again, since the exegetical circumstances are very similar, our conclusions about how to account for unaccounted time should likewise not be entirely dissimilar.

For example, the biblical and historical evidence we have available would suggest that if we conclude that the years of the kings corresponded to Rosh Hashanah then, likewise, the ages of the patriarchs in Genesis may also have been counted in correspondence with Rosh Hashanah. If therefore, the circumstances with the

kings resulted in unaccounted partial years of rule at the beginning and the end of each king's reign, then, likewise, the circumstances of the patriarchs may result in unaccounted partial years at the beginning of each patriarch's life and in the year their son was born.

Consequently, if we feel the best way to compensate for unaccounted differentials in the birthdays of fathers and sons in Genesis is to add 6 months to each generation, then we might be inclined to address the similar problem in ruling dates among the kings by likewise adding 6 months to the reigns of each of the kings. Alternatively, if we feel that the best way to compensate for unaccounted differentials in the ruling dates of the kings is to add one year to the reigns of the kings, then perhaps we should address the similar problem in the birthday differentials between fathers and sons by adding a year to each generation.

What might seem potentially unjustified is using an approach which reduces the biblical figures by 1 year each and then adds 6 months to each in order to address chronological issues in one period, while using an approach which instead adds a whole year to address similar chronological issues in another period. Taking very different approaches to address the same problem seems uniquely suited toward producing a particularly desirable result. And it potentially undermines the integrity of the model because it may suggest that the approach is not entirely independent of the desired result one is trying to prove. In other words, taking different approaches to the same problem can allow one enough room to tailor the findings toward a preconceived outcome. This would undermine the objectivity and credibility of the process and the results.

Similarly, insisting on a particular approach while dismissing other approaches that seem to have the same merit can likewise convey a lack of objectivity and an unjustified interest in certifying a particularly desirable result that may not otherwise be warranted. While it is certainly understandable to alter our approach (and conclusions) when further consideration or new information discover weaknesses or inadequacies in our previous logic or exegesis, exchanging one approach for a completely different approach without logical or exegetical compulsion or explanation can be the hallmark of the prejudicial pursuit of a particular outcome which may be lacking in confirmation or conclusive support.

An illustration of these potential dangers can be performed through a comparison of the approaches taken in Warner's previous chronology study and those taken in current chronology study. Warner's previous chronology study and his current study offer similar textual observations regarding the calculation of the period of the kings.

In both studies Warner notes the potential problem of unaccounted months between the death of one king and the installation of the next.

[Previous study]

While the lengths of all the kings' reigns are given in Scripture, it is unclear how many months might have passed after the death of one king and the

installation of the next. – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

[Current study]

The next question concerns the counting of partial years. No doubt, kings ascended the throne soon after their successor died. And kings did not likely die or ascend the throne precisely at the beginning or end of a calendar year. Therefore, we must have a system of accounting for partial years. – Tim Warner, Jubilee Calendar, God's Threat to Solomon to the Decree of Cyrus, www.120jubilees.org

Likewise, in both studies, Warner notes the potential problem of not knowing how close the death of a king or the beginning of each king's reign was to the turn of the calendar year.

[Previous study]

Nor is it clear how close to the end of a calendar year a king died or ascended the throne, and whether or not that year was counted as part of his reign if it was very close to a new year. – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

[Current study]

We ought to begin our investigation by making a few common sense assumptions. First, since events are linked to a particular year of a king's reign, **these must be regular calendar years.** 1 If years began whenever a king assumed the throne, and were counted by his anniversary date, it would introduce great confusion into calculating dates based on the number of a king's reign, because years would begin and end at all different times throughout the year. It is apparent that a new continuous calendar was adopted every time a new king came to power, beginning with his first year. Therefore, **for dating purposes, the years must be regular calendar years,** counting from the first month of the year that was reckoned to be that king's first year, not from the actual anniversary of the commencement of that king's reign. – Tim Warner, Jubilee Calendar, God's Threat to Solomon to the Decree of Cyrus, www.120jubilees.org

In both studies, Warner does not credit kings who reigned less than a year with any years of reign.

[Previous study]

Kings that reigned for less than one year are counted as zero, because the successor would likely claim the same year as his first. – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

[Current study]

Our theory is supported by the fact that when a king reigned less than one full year, his reign is given in months and not years. If partial years were counted as whole years, such a king would be said to have reigned one year.

Two of the kings of Judah reigned 3 months each. In these cases, three different kings reigned for parts of a single calendar year (the king who died, his successor who only reigned 3 months, and the next king). Therefore, we do not count these two kings at all in our chronology, but only add the single intervening year in each case. – Tim Warner, Jubilee Calendar, God’s Threat to Solomon to the Decree of Cyrus, www.120jubilees.org

In both studies, Warner accepts the contingency that biblical authors did not include partial years in the total count of a king’s reign. In his previous study (below), Warner allows for the possibility that partial years were counted alongside the possibility that partial years were not counted.

Nor is it clear how close to the end of a calendar year a king died or ascended the throne, and whether or not that year was counted as part of his reign if it was very close to a new year. Below I have listed all the kings of Judah, giving their years reigning. The Babylonian captivity began at the end of Jehoiachin’s reign...The following list contains the years listed in Scripture. **Adding up these numbers gives a total using exclusive reckoning. I have also included in parenthesis the numbers for inclusive reckoning, because it is not clear from the text which method was used, of if either method was used consistently.** – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

In his current study (below), Warner discards the possibility that partial years were counted and instead adopts the option that partial years were not counted.

In the third proposed system, (assuming a Tishri to Tishri, fall to fall reckoning of years), **the first year of a particular king would be counted from Tishri 1 (Rosh Hashanah) after he ascended the throne. If he was installed as King six months before Rosh Hashanah (New Year’s Day), the partial year during which he ascended the throne would not be counted as his first year.** Rather, the following whole year (Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah) would be reckoned as his first year. **Likewise, if a king died during the middle of a year, his reign would be reckoned through the last full year he reigned. If this was the system used, there would be an intervening year between each of the kings listed, the partial year in which a king died, and the rest of the partial year in which his successor assumed the throne.** For example, supposing that years were calculated from fall to fall, if Solomon died in the spring, his last (40th) year would be reckoned as the last full year that he reigned before he died. Even though his son, Rehoboam, was installed on his throne without delay, his son’s reign would not be counted until after Rosh Hashanah had passed again, when his first year would begin. Therefore, the year Solomon died and Rehoboam ascended to the throne would not be counted for either Solomon or Rehoboam, because neither reigned that entire year. **When adding up the kings of Judah given in 2 Chronicles,** we have followed this method, adding one year per king for this transitional year, since **we are assuming that only full calendar years were counted. Our theory is supported by the fact that when a king reigned less than one full year, his reign is given in months and not years.** If partial years

were counted as whole years, such a king would be said to have reigned one year. Two of the kings of Judah reigned 3 months each. In these cases, three different kings reigned for parts of a single calendar year (the king who died, his successor who only reigned 3 months, and the next king). **Therefore, we do not count these two kings at all in our chronology**, but only add the single intervening year in each case. The following list contains the years listed in 2 Chronicles for the Davidic dynasty of the kings of Judah. **According to our reckoning using the above suppositions, from the death of Solomon to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was 413 years.** – Tim Warner, Jubilee Calendar, God's Threat to Solomon to the Decree of Cyrus, www.120jubilees.org

In Warner's previous study, he calculates the period from the beginning of Rehoboam's reign to the end of Zedekiah's reign (when the Temple was destroyed) as between 378 and 394 years.

There is a significant difference in result between using inclusive and excusive reckoning of the kings of Judah. The elapsed time for this period is either 378 years (inclusive), 394 years (exclusive), or somewhere between the two. The last king, **Zedekiah**, was installed at the time the Babylonian captivity began, and **his reign ends with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.** – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

In his current study, Warner calculates the time from the beginning of Rehoboam's reign to the end of Zedekiah's reign (when the Temple was destroyed) as 413 years.

According to our reckoning using the above suppositions, from the death of Solomon to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was 413 years...Using our reckoning, from Solomon's death through the last full year of Zedekiah is 412 years. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem the following year, the 413th year from the death of Solomon. – Tim Warner, Jubilee Calendar, God's Threat to Solomon to the Decree of Cyrus, www.120jubilees.org

It is also noteworthy here that even though both of Warner's studies include a calculation wherein partial years were not counted for by the biblical authors, there is a difference between Warner's results. Both quotes pertain to the period after the death of Solomon beginning with Rehoboam's reign. In his previous study, Warner's largest possible total for the duration of this period is 394 years. This is roughly equivalent to the 393 years that would be derived from a straightforward count of the amounts of the kings' reigns as they are supplied by the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles. In Warner's current study, he calculates this same period of time as 413 years. As we discussed earlier this 413-year total represents the straightforward count of the biblically-supplied amounts plus Warner's insertion of 20 years' worth of partial years which he believes the biblical authors did not account for. The difference between Warner's previous total of 394 years and his current total is roughly equivalent to that 20 year addition.

It is easy to understand the difference in Warner's approach to calculating the duration of this period. And it is easy to understand the resulting difference in Warner's totals. In his earlier study, Warner simply added up the amounts provided in the biblical texts. In his current approach he added an extra 20 years to those biblically-provided amounts.

The difficulty, however, is in understanding what logically or exegetically motivates the change in the approach. In both versions, Warner exhibits an awareness of the same range of logical, biblical, and historical factors. What then is the impetus behind the somewhat significant change in his approach to calculating this period? Of the possible candidates that might be identified as the impetus behind the change in methodology, one of the more significant might be that Warner's previous chronology study does not emphasize or consistently maintain a correspondence with the concept that world history lines up with an exact 120 jubilee calendar. On the other hand, in his current study correspondence with a total 120 jubilee cycles is the chief feature. In this respect we should consider the possibility that the ability to maintain jubilee correspondence may be the most compelling reason for adopting Warner's current approach (option three) as the method for calculating the period of the kings and for excluding otherwise tenable alternatives. To be clear, Warner's previous method and his current method are worth taking the time to evaluate (alongside other alternatives). As we consider which approach we ourselves might assess to be the most valid, we should also consider whether the discriminating factor for selecting an approach should or should not include the unique capacity of a particular approach for deriving a specific outcome that would otherwise not be necessitated by the data.

In his current chronology study, Warner provides insightful advice on this point. As he discusses the tendency of other modern, Christian chronologists he criticizes them for selecting a particular solution "not because scripture requires it, but to align their chronologies with secular chronologies."

Most modern Christian chronologists do not begin the seventy year Babylonian captivity with the destruction of Jerusalem, but with either the end of Josiah's reign or Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation of Jews to Babylon, when Daniel and Ezekiel were taken captive. **This is not done because Scripture requires it, but to align their chronologies with secular chronologies.** – Tim Warner, Jubilee Calendar, God's Threat to Solomon to the Decree of Cyrus, www.120jubilees.org

By the same token perhaps we should also seek to avoid selecting particular solutions to chronological questions solely for the purposes of aligning our chronology with other chronological ideas that are not scripturally necessary.

As we close this section we also want to note that the straightforward count of the reigns of the kings of Judah (which we performed earlier in this study using the data provided in the bible) is not simply a naïve, overly simplistic approach. Rather, there are sound exegetical, linguistic, mathematical, historical, and logical reasons for adopting that straightforward calculation of the period of the kings.

We will conclude our study of this period with a simple two-item list of the possible results for calculating the period from Solomon's coronation to the destruction of the Temple.

1. A straightforward calculation that solely relies upon the amounts of the reigns of the kings as provided by the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles (including Solomon and ending with Zedekiah) and assumes their inherent sufficiency for deriving a total chronology of this period would result in a total duration of 433 years.
2. A calculation that operates on the notion that the authors of the books of Kings and Chronicles omitted 20 years from their count of the reigns of the kings (including Solomon and ending with Zedekiah) would result in a total duration of 453 years.

As in previous sections we will note that even in Warner's chronology many significant events take place in this period which do not occur in round, even-number intervals from creation or in coincidence with jubilee cycles. Among these events are: David's anointing by Samuel, David becoming king of Judah, David becoming king of Israel, Solomon's coronation, the beginning of Temple construction, and the completion of Temple construction. The fact that so many significant events in this period do not fall on the 50-year jubilee cycle is itself a reason to reconsider whether or not to accept the overall premise that a biblical chronology will result in major events lining up with jubilee cycles.

Period Five: The Destruction of the Temple to the Decree of Daniel 9 (Part 1) *Introduction and Calculations Using Secular Chronologies*

Our previous section of this study concluded with the destruction of the Temple at the end of Zedekiah's 11th year as king. This section will resume from that same point and count forward towards the occurrence of the decree or commandment mentioned in Daniel 9:25.

Daniel 9:24-27 provides a prophetic timetable, which we will use in the next segment of our study. However, verse 25 indicates that the period of Daniel 9's prophetic timetable begins with a command to rebuild and restore Jerusalem.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. **25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.** **26** And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut

off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

There are two main approaches to calculating the duration of time that elapsed between the destruction of the Temple and the decree or commandment of Daniel 9:25. The most common method uses secular chronologies to help us understand the amount of time between these two events. This approach operates on the conclusion that the bible doesn't provide any data which would allow us to directly count this segment of history using scripture alone. Here are excerpts from Warner's previous study and our own on this issue.

From Ezekiel's Vision to Jesus' Crucifixion (3419AM – 4000AM) – **The Old Testament does not give us any more definite historical time periods useful for completing our chronology.** – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

“As we begin this period of biblical world history it is important to point out that there are no biblical statements that inform us of the actual number of years occupied by this period. There are passages in scripture which mention various kings and rulers from this time or a particular year of their reign. However, **the bible does not provide information regarding the exact order and number of these rulers, the exact duration of their respective reigns, or a total count of the years from the destruction of the Temple to a particular decree prophesied in the Book of Daniel.**” –Timeline of Biblical World History, biblestudying.net, 2010

More specifically, we could say that the bible does not provide us with a chronology of the time between the decree of Cyrus and the reign of Artaxerxes. Warner comments on this in his current study.

The Bible simply does not give us the chronological data from Cyrus' decree ending the Babylonian captivity until Artaxerxes...As stated above, **the Bible does not give definite chronological data for the period from the decree of Cyrus ending the Babylonian captivity until the reign of Artaxerxes.** – Tim Warner, Introduction to a Standard Biblical Chronology, www.120jubilees.org

In our other studies which discuss biblical chronology we have included calculations which related secular chronologies of this period to the data provided in the bible.

“In order to arrive at the amount of time between the beginning and end of this period, information provided in the biblical texts must be correlated to historical and chronological data provided in other ancient sources. Of course, this endeavor is not a recent or novel one. By comparing events and dates

mentioned in the ancient documents, artifacts, and historical works, historians are able to construct a composite timeline of the events of the ancient world. The timeline of this period of biblical history is well known and well established part of this type of historical study.” –Timeline of Biblical World History, biblestudying.net, 2010

We will repeat the basic methodology that is commonly used to calculate the duration of this period using secular chronologies. However, because the purpose of this chronology study is to provide the reader with information on the options for calculating world history using biblical data, we will then provide a strictly biblical method for calculating this period. This biblical method is possible because of insightful scriptural observations that Warner has made in his most recent chronological study.

What follows will be similar to a calculation of this period that is consistent with common approaches which correlate biblical data with secular chronologies.

The previous segment of world history concluded with the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians. This event is conventionally dated to the year 586 BC.

Judaism - In 587/586 BCE the doom prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel came true. **Rebellious Jerusalem was reduced by Nebuchadrezzar, the Temple was burnt, and much of Judah's population dispersed or deported to Babylonia.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Diaspora - The first significant Jewish Diaspora was the result of the Babylonian Exile (q.v.) of 586 BC. After the Babylonians conquered the Kingdom of Judah, part of the Jewish population was deported into slavery. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Jerusalem - Jerusalem became the spiritual and political capital of the Hebrews. **In 586 B.C. it fell to the Babylonians, and the Temple was destroyed.** - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Daniel 9:25 mentions a decree for the rebuilding of the city and the subsequent reconstruction of its walls and streets in troublous times.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. **25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.** **26** And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the

end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Methods which employ secular chronologies to help calculate the duration of this period commonly understand the decree of Daniel 9:25 to relate to the construction conducted under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and recorded in the biblical books that bare their names.

The Book of Ezra reports that in the 7th year of his reign King Artaxerxes of Persia issued a decree to Ezra authorizing him to beautify the rebuilt Temple and to do whatever Ezra felt was required by God. Verses 13 and 21 record that Artaxerxes himself specifically referred to this authorization as a decree. (Likewise, Ezra 8:36 refers to the authorization given to Ezra by Artaxerxes as “commissions.” The Hebrew word for “commissions” means “law, edict, decree,” Strong’s 01881.)

Ezra 7:1 Now after these things, **in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra** the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, **6 This Ezra went up from Babylon;** and he *was* a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: **and the king granted him all his request,** according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. **7** And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, **unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9** For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him... **12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest,** a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time. **13 I make a decree (02942),** that all they of the people of Israel, and *of* his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee... **18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God...21** And I, *even* **I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree (02942),** to all the treasurers which *are* beyond the river, **that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily...**

Verses 11-21 of Ezra 7 provide the contents of Artaxerxes I’s letter to Ezra. Most of the content articulates Artaxerxes I’s intention to beautify the rebuilt Temple. But, the text of the document also stipulates that Artaxerxes I authorized Ezra to do whatsoever he felt was required. Also important is the fact that in verses 13 and 21 Artaxerxes I himself specifically refers to his authorization to Ezra as a decree.

Ezra 7:12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time. 13 **I make a decree (02942)**, that all they of the people of Israel, and *of his* priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee... 18 **And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God...** 21 And I, *even I Artaxerxes the king*, do make a decree (02942), to all the treasurers which *are* beyond the river, **that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily...**

The following chapter of Ezra details the travels and names of the exiles who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem with Ezra (Ezra 8:1-32.)

After arriving in Jerusalem, Ezra assembles with the leadership and people of the Jerusalem (Ezra 9:1-4.) In Ezra 9:9, Ezra explains that the kings of Persia had given the Jews permission to rebuild the Temple and repair the desolation of the city of Jerusalem and its walls. These words clearly show that Ezra understood that Artaxerxes' decree authorized the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls.

Ezra 9:9 For we *were* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of **the kings of Persia**, to give us a reviving, **to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.**

These events of the Book of Ezra are continued in the Book of Nehemiah where the process of repairing the walls of Jerusalem are recorded in great detail in times of adversity from local enemies who repeatedly sought to disrupt their efforts. All of this seems to fit with Daniel 9:25, which refers to a commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and the subsequent construction of its walls and streets in troublous times.

These events are conventionally dated to the 7th year of the reign of Artaxerxes I in the year 458-457 BC.

Artaxerxes I - Artaxerxes I, d. 425 BC, **king of ancient Persia (464-425 BC)**, of the dynasty of the Achaemenis. – Columbia Encyclopedia

Nehemiah - a charter granted by the Persian king Artaxerxes I to Ezra scholar and priest of the Babylonian Exile empowered him to enforce the Torah as the imperial law for the Jews of the province Avar-nahra (Beyond the River), in which the district of Judah (now reduced to a small area) was located." - Encyclopedia Britannica

Judaism - Nonetheless, intermarriage occurred and precipitated a new crisis when, **in 458, the priest Ezra arrived from Babylon**, intent on enforcing the regimen of the Torah. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Common approaches to calculating this period use the conventional dates assigned to the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians and the decree mentioned by Daniel which is identified with Artaxerxes I's decree to Ezra. The destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians is commonly dated to 586 BC. The decree which Artaxerxes I gave to Ezra in the 7th year of his reign is conventionally dated to the year 458-457 BC. If these dates are used then the total number of years between the Babylonian destruction of the Temple and the decree of Daniel 9:25 would be 128 years (586 BC – 458 BC = 128 years.) This is the main calculation we referenced in our previous chronology study.

Alternatively, some may consider identifying Daniel 9:25's decree with the letter Artaxerxes I gave to Nehemiah in his 20th year. This is the approach Warner took in his previous chronology study.

The command to rebuild Jerusalem, which begins the 69 Sabbatical cycles until Christ, was in the 20th year of Artaxerxes. 10 There must be at least 2 Jubilee cycles (98 years) to account for the remainder of the Babylonian captivity (45 years), the reigns of Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, and the first 20 years of Artaxerxes. Adding two Jubilee cycles (98 years) to the date of Ezekiel's vision in the 18th Jubilee (3419AM), places the 20th Jubilee in the year 3517AM. **This is the year Nehemiah was given the command to rebuild the city and walls of Jerusalem, and is therefore the beginning of Daniel's 70 Sabbatical cycles' prophecy.** – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

In the 20th year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah is informed that the walls and gates of Jerusalem remained broken down and burned with fire.

Nehemiah 1:1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, **in the twentieth year**, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah; and **I asked them** concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and **concerning Jerusalem.** 3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province *are* in great affliction and reproach: **the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.**

After hearing the condition of Jerusalem and its walls, Nehemiah petitions Artaxerxes I for permission to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the city and its gates. Artaxerxes I grants Nehemiah's request and gives him letters to this effect. After receiving permission from the king, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem and tells those living in the city that they should rebuild the wall and gates of the city (v.17.)

Nehemiah 2:1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, **in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king**, *that wine was* before him: and I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence. 2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this

is nothing *else* but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, 3 **And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?** 4 Then the king said unto me, **For what dost thou make request?** So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said unto the king, **If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.** 6 **And the king said unto me,** (the queen also sitting by him,) **For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.** 7 **Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;..** 9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, **and gave them the king's letters.** Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me...11 **So I came to Jerusalem,** and was there three days...17 **Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.**

Conventional dating places the letter given to Nehemiah in 444 BC. This was the 20th year of Artaxerxes I's reign. (Artaxerxes I reigned from 464-425 BC.)

Artaxerxes I - Artaxerxes I, d. 425 BC, **king of ancient Persia (464-425 BC)**, of the dynasty of the Achaemenis. – Columbia Encyclopedia

Biblical Literature - **The first great aim was the rebuilding of the Temple** as the centre of worship and thus also of national existence; **this was completed in 515 under the administration of Zerubbabel** and became the place of uninterrupted sacrificial worship for the next 350 years. **The next task was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which was undertaken by Nehemiah, a Babylonian Jew and court butler who was appointed governor of Judah and arrived in 444.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Nehemiah - The book narrates **the return to Jerusalem of Nehemiah, the cup-bearer of Persian King Artaxerxes I, as governor of the city-state.** In the first period of Nehemiah's governorship **(445-433 B.C.)** as related in the book, **Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Nehemiah - **So about 444 BC Nehemiah journeyed to Jerusalem and aroused the people there to the necessity of repopulating the city and rebuilding its walls.**" - Encyclopedia Britannica

Jerusalem - The Temple was restored (515 BC) **despite Samaritan opposition,** and the city became the centre of the new statehood and its position strengthened when **Nehemiah (c. 444) restored its fortifications.**" - Encyclopedia Britannica

We should note that Nehemiah elsewhere informs us that he was appointed by Artaxerxes I to be governor over the province of Judah (Nehemiah 5:14, 12:26.) We should also note that the exact authorizations and statements given by Artaxerxes I to Nehemiah are not provided in the biblical texts. Likewise, the document that Artaxerxes I gives to Nehemiah is referred to as a letter. No decree or command of Artaxerxes I is mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah.

In our previous chronology study we provided several reasons for taking the decree of Artaxerxes I to Ezra as the decree or command of Daniel 9:25. First, this decree was understood to authorize Ezra to do whatever he felt was required by God. And we know from Ezra 9:9 that Ezra himself understood this to include the restoration of the city and its walls.

Second, this authorization given to Ezra is specifically and repeatedly referred to as a decree or command of the king. While Nehemiah was clearly concerned with the ruinous state of the city and its walls and was given authority as governor of Judah, his appointment is not identified as a decree or command.

Third, even if Ezra and Nehemiah were both given decrees to rebuild and restore Jerusalem and its walls, Ezra's decree came first. Therefore, it is reasonable to give preference to this earlier authorization.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, Daniel 9:25-26 specifies that there would be a period of 69 weeks of years between the decree authorizing the rebuilding of the city and its walls to the death of the Messiah. Daniel 9:25 states that the coming of the Messiah will occur 69 weeks after the issuing of the command to rebuild the city. Daniel 9:26 states that after this 69-week period the Messiah will be cut off (killed.)

Identifying the authorization of Nehemiah as the command mentioned in Daniel 9:25 presents a mathematical difficulty with chronologies constructed from non-biblical sources. Nehemiah's authorization was given in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I (Nehemiah 2:1-9.) This is typically identified as the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes I of Persia, which was the year 444 BC.

If we take 69 weeks to include a period of 483 years and add 483 years to the year 444 BC we arrive at the year 38 AD. Therefore, if 444 BC is the year of the command mentioned in Daniel 9:25, then, using this methodology, the Messiah should have come no sooner than 38 AD. And he would have been killed after this date. (For the sake of calculations, we must keep in mind that there was no year zero between 1 BC and 1 AD.)

Standard historical timelines date Christ's birth anywhere between 6 BC and 1 AD. Biblical information indicates that Jesus was nearly (or exactly) 30 years of age when he began his ministry (Luke 3:23.) Biblical chronologies of Christ's ministry span 3 1/2 years of time (at the most.) If we assume that Christ was born at the latest possible date (1 AD) and add 33 years of his life, ministry, and death,

then Christ would have died in 33 AD at the latest. This is at least 5 years too early to fulfill the timeline specified by Daniel's prophecy.

On the other hand, the decree given to Ezra in Artaxerxes I's 7th year would work perfectly with Daniel's prophecy and historical chronologies. The 7th year of Artaxerxes I was 458-457 BC. If we take 69 weeks to include a period of 483 years and add 483 years to 458-457 BC, we would arrive at the year 25 AD. If we subtract 33 years as the maximum amount of time for Christ's life, ministry, and death then we arrive at the year 7 BC. But the text of Daniel merely requires that the Messiah would have to come at the end of the 483 years. It does not specify that he had to come exactly at that point. Theoretically, Christ could have been born at any point after 7 BC, died 33 years later, and fulfilled the timeline provided in Daniel 9.

In our previous chronology study, we presented historical data that Christ's death is likely to have occurred in the year 29-30 AD and his baptism by John probably occurred near 26 AD. These dates fit very well with calculations employing secular chronological dates and using Artaxerxes I's decree to Ezra in 458-457 BC as the decree of Daniel 9:25. Using this chronology, a 69-week period containing 483 years would start in 458-457 BC and end in 25 AD, the year before Jesus' began his ministry.

(We have been using the year 458-457 instead of simply 458 because the Hebrew civic year begins in fall, while the years of our historical calendar begin in January. The timetable of Daniel 9 uses the Hebrew year, which overlaps two Gregorian solar years and runs from fall of our Gregorian year to fall the following year. Therefore, we have marked the time of Artaxerxes I's decree to Ezra as falling in the Hebrew year that corresponds to 458-457 BC on our modern calendar.)

It is also possible that our standard chronology of history from the Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem to Christ's death may be off by a decade or so. If that is the case then either the decree given to Ezra or the authorization received by Nehemiah would work with Daniel's prophecy.

A third possible decree that has sometimes been identified with the decree of Daniel 9:25 is the decree issued by Cyrus the Great to release the Jewish people to return to their homeland. An example of this kind of reckoning is provided at <http://www.biblicalstudies.com/bstudy/eschatology/daniel.htm>.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4 both report on this decree.

2 Chronicles 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an

house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 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. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Secular chronologies conventionally date the first year of Cyrus as the year 538 BC.

Cyrus the Great - The Chaldaean empire of Babylonia fell to Cyrus in 538 BC. - Columbia Encyclopedia

Babylonian Captivity - 538 - "Decree of Cyrus" allows Judahites to return to Jerusalem. - wikipedia.org

Biblical Literature - In any event, it was from this community that the leadership and the cadres for the resurrection of the Judahite nation and faith were to come when **Cyrus the Great** (labelled "the Lord's anointed" in Deutero-Isaiah) conquered Babylon and **made it possible for them to return (538)**. A contingent of about 50,000 persons, including about 4,000 priests and 7,000 slaves, returned under Sheshbazzar, a prince of Judah. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Babylonian Captivity - also called Babylonian Captivity, the forced detention of **Jews in Babylonia** following the latter's **conquest of the kingdom of Judah in 598/7 and 587/6 BC**. **The exile formally ended in 538 BC, when the Persian conqueror of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great, gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Belshazzar - According to the accounts in the Bible and Xenophon, Belshazzar held a last great feast...**Belshazzar died after Babylon fell to the Persian general Gobyras without resistance on Oct. 12, 539, and probably before the Persian king Cyrus II entered the city 17 days later.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Now, that we have discussed the historical decrees that are commonly identified with Daniel 9:25 we will summarize the secular dates that are given to important events in the period leading up to the Temple's destruction and the subsequent decrees. Afterwards, we will discuss the amounts of time that would be contained

in the period from the destruction of the Temple to Daniel's decree depending on which historical decree is used.

1. By the end of the third year of his reign, King Jehoiakim had become the subject of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. At this time many of the nobles of Judah including Daniel were taken captive to Babylon. Biblically speaking, this is referred to as the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. It is commonly dated to approximately 605 BC.

Jehoiakim – However, when **the Egyptians were defeated by the Babylonians at Carchemish in 605 BC, Jehoiakim changed allegiances, paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon.** – wikipedia.org

Jehoiakim – **From 605 BC, after the Babylonians defeated Egypt, Jehoiakim became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar...** He died in 598 just as Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem. – Columbia Encyclopedia

2. Another deportation of the nobles and a large portion of the population of Jerusalem at the end of the reign of Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin (or Jeconiah) 8 years later. The bible reckons this as Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year of reign. This is conventionally placed in the year 597 BC.

"Judaism - King Jehoiakim's attempt to be free of **Babylonia ended with the exile** of his successor, Jehoiachin, **along with Judah's elite (597);** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Jehoiakim – **According to the Babylonian Chronicles[9], Jerusalem eventually fell on 2 Adar (March 16) 597 BC.** – wikipedia.org

3. The ultimate deportation of the population of Jerusalem and Judah and the destruction of the city, its walls, its houses, and its Temple took place 11 years later at the end of Zedekiah's reign. This is counted as the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. These events are dated to 586 BC.

Judaism - **In 587/586 BCE** the doom prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel came true. **Rebellious Jerusalem was reduced by Nebuchadnezzar, the Temple was burnt, and much of Judah's population dispersed or deported to Babylonia.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Diaspora - **The first significant Jewish Diaspora was the result of the Babylonian Exile (q.v.) of 586 BC. After the Babylonians conquered the Kingdom of Judah, part of the Jewish population was deported into slavery.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Jerusalem - Jerusalem became the spiritual and political capital of the Hebrews. **In 586 B.C. it fell to the Babylonians, and the Temple was destroyed.** - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

4. Ezekiel 40:1 reports a vision he had in the 25th year after the deportation of Jehoiachin, which was the 14th year after the city was destroyed. We know that the deportation of Jehoiachin took place 11 years before destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. So, the 25th year after the captivity of Jehoiachin and the 14th year after the destruction of Jerusalem refer to the same year. The deportation of Jehoiachin is placed in 597 BC and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is placed in 586 BC. Ezekiel's vision took place in the first month of the Hebrew year. This month occurs in Fall. Therefore the beginning of the 14th year after the destruction of Jerusalem would begin in the year 573 BC. This means that Ezekiel's vision took place in Fall of 573 BC.

5. According to biblical texts including Jeremiah 25:11, Jeremiah 29:10, Daniel 9:2, and Zechariah 7:5, Jerusalem would be desolated and the Jews would live in Babylon for a period of 70 years. This 70 year period could refer to several possible durations during this timeframe.

The first possible manner of reckoning the timeframe of these 70 years begins with the subjugation of Jehoiakim. According to the biblical descriptions, Nebuchadnezzar's rule of Judah is said to begin at this time and Nebuchadnezzar's reign is always counted in numbers beginning with this event. Likewise, texts like Daniel 1:1-3 report that Nebuchadnezzar began to remove some of the Jewish nobility at this point as well. As we have seen this is conventionally set in the year 605 BC.

Jeremiah 25:11 refers to 70 years serving the king of Babylon. So, the 70 years may be understood to begin at this time (605 BC.) And as we have seen, the subsequent deportation of Jehoiachin is typically dated to 597 BC. Many important Jewish men and their families were taken to captivity in Babylon at this time and the desolation of Jerusalem continued. In 538 BC, Cyrus became the ruler of the kingdom of Babylon. In the first year of Cyrus' reign over Babylon he released the Jewish exiles to return to Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-8.)

Cyrus the Great - The Chaldaean empire of Babylonia fell to Cyrus in 538 BC. - Columbia Encyclopedia

Babylonian Captivity - 538 -"Decree of Cyrus" allows Judahites to return to Jerusalem. - wikipedia.org

Biblical Literature - In any event, it was from this community that the leadership and the cadres for the resurrection of the Judahite nation and faith were to come when **Cyrus the Great** (labelled "the Lord's anointed" in Deutero-Isaiah) conquered Babylon and **made it possible for them to return (538)**. A contingent of about 50,000 persons, including about 4,000 priests and 7,000 slaves, returned under Sheshbazzar, a prince of Judah. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Babylonian Captivity - also called Babylonian Captivity, the forced detention of **Jews in Babylonia** following the latter's **conquest of the kingdom of Judah**

in 598/7 and 587/6 BC. The exile formally ended in 538 BC, when the Persian conqueror of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great, gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Belshazzar - According to the accounts in the Bible and Xenophon, Belshazzar held a last great feast...**Belshazzar died after Babylon fell to the Persian general Gobyras without resistance on Oct. 12, 539, and probably before the Persian king Cyrus II entered the city 17 days later.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

We should note that 538 BC is 67 years after Nebuchadnezzar is credited with subjugating the kingdom of Judah (in 605 BC.)

We must take into account that it may have taken some time for significant numbers of the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem. With this in mind, it is certainly conceivable that the subjugation to the Babylonians did, in fact, last 70 years just as the bible reports. Under this conception the 70 years would have begun sometime near the year 606-605 BC and ended somewhere near the year 537-536 BC. This duration of time would also fit with Daniel 5:24-31 which records the end of the Babylonian superiority and the subjugation of the realm of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. In this passage the fall of Babylon is announced by words written on a wall stating that the Babylonian kingdom's days had been numbered and finished (v.26.) This may, in fact, refer to the conclusion of the 70 years of Babylonian sovereignty over the kingdom of Judah, when the Medes and Persians took the kingdom under Cyrus the Great.

A second possible identification of the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy can also be produced using the date of the final deportation of the people of Jerusalem and the destruction and burning of the city, its walls, its houses, and the Temple. As we have seen, this event is commonly dated to 586 BC.

If the 70 years of desolation is understood to begin with this event, then it would conclude in the year 516-515 BC. This year, 516-515 BC, is conventionally identified as the date when returned Jewish exiles had finished rebuilding the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

Second Temple – The Second Temple **stood between 516 BCE and 70 CE,** - wikipedia.org

Babylonian Captivity - 520-515 - Return under Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest; rebuilding of the Temple (Second Temple) - wikipedia.org

Both considerations provide working fulfillments of the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah. The strength of the first interpretation is that it emphasizes a 70-year period that was exclusively under the rule of the Babylonians kings before Babylon itself became subjugated by the Medes and Persians. That this is what Jeremiah 25:11 intended to convey is supported by 2 Chronicles 36:20-22 which indicates that Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the first year of Cyrus.

2 Chronicles 36:11 Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem...17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. 19 **And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem,** and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20 **And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:** 21 **To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.** 22 **Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing,** saying, 23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and **he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.** Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

6. In conventional chronologies, the completion of the rebuilt Temple in 516-515 BC falls within the first 6 years of the reign of Darius the Great, a successor of Cyrus.

Darius I – Darius I (Darius the Great) d. 486 BC, **king of ancient Persia (521-486 BC)**, called also Dariavaush and Darius Hystaspis (after his father, Hystaspes or Vishtaspa)... Darius consolidated Persian power in the East, including NW India. **He continued Cyrus' policy of restoring the Jewish state, and under his auspices the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem was completed in 515 BC** For this reason he is mentioned warmly in Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah. - Columbia Encyclopedia

Jerusalem - The city was restored to Hebrew rule later in the 6th cent. B.C. **by Cyrus the Great, king of Persia. The Temple was rebuilt (538-515 B.C.;** known as the Second Temple) by Zerubbabel, a governor of Jerusalem under the Persians. **In the mid-5th cent. B.C., Ezra reinvigorated the Jewish community in Jerusalem.**The city was the capital of the Maccabees in the 2d and 1st cent. B.C. - The Columbia Encyclopedia

This is exactly what the biblical details report. The books of Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah mention the events of this period of time. Each discusses the work of Haggai, Zechariah, Joshua, Zerubbabel and other returned exiles as they worked to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem during the first few years of Darius' reign. Ezra 6:15-16 specifically records that the rebuilt Temple was completed,

dedicated, and in use in the sixth year of Darius. (This would have been the year 516-515 BC.)

Ezra 6:15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. 16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept **the dedication of this house of God** with joy, 17 **And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering** for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

7. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah in particular chronicle: a) the end of Jewish captivity in Babylon and the return of the Jewish exiles and their descendants to Jerusalem, b) the construction and completion of the second Temple, and c) the rebuilding of the walls, gates, houses, and streets of the city of Jerusalem. The accomplishment of these three historic tasks fulfilled biblical prophecy and restored Jerusalem from the desolate condition imposed on it by Nebuchadnezzar.

More specifically, we can see that these two books (Ezra and Nehemiah) discuss the restoring of the city of Jerusalem and its walls as a result of the decrees made during the reigns of Persian kings including: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. As we have seen above, these three kings are commonly identified with Cyrus II (the Great), Darius I (the Great), and Artaxerxes I.

Babylonian Captivity - also called Babylonian Captivity, the forced detention of **Jews in Babylonia** following the latter's **conquest of the kingdom of Judah in 598/7 and 587/6 BC. The exile formally ended in 538 BC, when the Persian conqueror of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great, gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

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Nehemiah - a charter granted by the Persian king Artaxerxes I to Ezra scholar and priest of the Babylonian Exile empowered him to enforce the Torah as the imperial law for the Jews of the province Avar-nahra (Beyond the River), in which the district of Judah (now reduced to a small area) was located." - Encyclopedia Britannica

The fact that Ezra and Nehemiah record the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls during a period ruled by these Persian kings indicates that the all-important decree mentioned by Daniel 9:25 likewise occurred at some point during the reigns of these Persian kings.

Daniel 9:25 Know therefore and understand, *that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem* unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.* 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

As we have seen Daniel 9 speaks of a period of 69 weeks of years between the decree of verse 25 and the coming of the Messiah.

Secular chronologies place the decree of Cyrus in the year 538 BC. If 69 weeks of years is considered to contain 483 (or perhaps 500 years) then a 69-week period that began with Cyrus' decree in 538 BC would end in the year 55 BC. (Alternatively, if the 69 weeks is taken to include 492 years, then 69 weeks of years that began with Cyrus' decree in 538 BC would end in 46 BC.)

Since Christ's birth is typically dated between 7 BC and 1 BC and his death is typically dated to 29-33 AD, using Cyrus' decree and secular chronology would mean either that Daniel's prophecy is fairly imprecise or that there is a gap between the 7 weeks and 62 weeks that Daniel 9:25 states comprise the 69-week period. In the second case, calculating the duration of this period would then require finding a means of identifying when such a gap occurred and determining the amount of time contained in it. These are challenging chronological issues. And these issues may contribute to why it is perhaps more common for biblical chronologists to identify Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra as the decree mentioned in Daniel 9's timetable.

To sum up these considerations, we have three alternatives for calculating the amount of time from the Babylonian destruction of the Temple to the occurrence of the decree mentioned in Daniel 9:25. These three options are based on how we identify the decree mentioned in Daniel 9:25. The Babylonian destruction of the Temple is dated to 586 BC. Cyrus' decree is dated to 538 BC. Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra in his 7th year is dated to 458-457 BC. And Artaxerxes' letter to Nehemiah in his 20th year is dated to 444 BC. Therefore, if Cyrus' decree is identified as the decree of Daniel 9:25 and secular chronological dates are employed then there are 48 years contained in the period between the destruction of the Temple and Daniel 9:25's decree (586 BC minus 538 BC equals 48 years). (Incidentally, we note once again that Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 19 years prior to the destruction of the Temple and adding those 19 years to the standard chronology which includes 48 years between the destruction of the Temple and Cyrus' decree results in approximately 67 years of servitude to Babylon.) If Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra is used and secular chronological dates are employed then the duration of this period is 128 years (586 BC minus 458-457 BC is 128 years). If Artaxerxes' letter to Nehemiah is used and secular chronological dates are employed then the duration of time contained in this period is 142 years (586 BC minus 444 BC is 142 years).

These then are the options if we use secular chronologies to help us understand the biblical data. In our previous chronological study we have offered these options as well as a discussion of biblical factors that may potentially warrant adjustment to the conventional count of the duration of time between the Babylonian destruction of the Temple and Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra. This discussion, which we will reiterate below, illustrated how biblical data may indicate the necessity to adjust the conventional dating of these events.