

Daniel 9 – Its Chronology and Meaning.

Daniel 9 is one of the most difficult and controversial prophecies in the Tenach. It would be hard to find another prophecy where the Christian and Jewish interpretations (let alone what scholars say about it) are so incompatible. Christians contend that it is a perfect calculation of the coming of Jesus. Jews see it as setting the outline for the second temple period which was a test as to whether the Jewish people would return completely to the service of HaShem or not. Scholars see it as referring to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus. At the core of these disagreements is the chronology of the Babylonian and Persian Kingdoms and their rule until the founding of the Seleucid kingdom. In this paper I will be discussing Daniel, but with the perspective of the chronology of the events, and the effect this has on the interpretations.

This paper is divided into 5 parts/chapters with a conclusion. These parts are:

1. Discusses the Secular chronology and how modern Christians interpret Daniel 9 using it.
2. Discusses the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology and how the Rabbis interpret Daniel 9.
3. Discusses the Christian interpretation of Daniel 9 and compares it to the Biblical chronology.
4. Discusses the problems with the secular chronology and how to understand the Biblical chronology and Rabbinic interpretation of Daniel 9 if we take the secular chronology as the correct one.
5. Discusses problems with the modern Christian interpretations.

I have also added a number of Appendices with important extra information. These are:

1. Rashi's alternative view of the chronology of Persia.
2. Ibn Ezra's view of the chronology of Persia.
3. Josephus and Daniel 9.
4. Early Church Fathers and Daniel 9.

Part 1 – The Secular Chronology and the Christian Interpretation of Daniel 9

In the following chart I have compiled the dates given in the scholarly sources of the chronology of the Babylonian and Persian period in Judea until Alexander.¹

Chart 1 Chronology - Scholarly.

Ruler/Event	Secular Date ²	Alternate Date ³	Date From Creation ⁴
Nevuchadnesser becomes ruler over Judea	605 -562 BCE.		3319 – 3362
Exile of Jeconiah	597 BCE.		3327
Destruction of Temple by Babylonia	586 BCE.		3338
Evil Merodach	562-560 BCE		3362 – 3364
Nergal Sharezzar	560-556 BCE		3364 – 3368
Labash Merodach	556 BCE		3368
Nabonidus	556 – 537 BCE	556 – 539 BCE	3368 – 3387 (3368 – 3389)
Belshazzar	552 – 537 BCE	552 – 539 BCE	3372 – 3387 (3372 – 3389)
Persian Conquest of Babylonia under Cyrus	537 BCE	539 BCE	3387 (3385)
Cyrus	537-527 BCE	539-530 BCE	3387- 3397 (3385-3394)
Cambsyses	529-522 BCE	530-522 BCE	3395-3402 (3394-3402)
Rule of the Magi		522-521 BCE	3402-3403
Darius (I)	521-486 BCE		3403-3438
Xerxes (I)	485-465 BCE		3439-3459
Artaxerxes (I)	465-424 BCE	465/4-424/3	3459-3500
Xerxes (II)	423 BCE		3501
Darius (II)	423-405 BCE		3501-3519
Artaxerxes (II)	404-359 BCE		3520-3565
Ochus – Artaxerxes (III)	358-338 BCE		3566-3586
Arses	337-336 BCE		3587-3588
Darius (III)	335-330 BCE		3589-3594
Alexander the Great Defeats Persia	330 BCE	332 BCE	3594 (3592)
Destruction of the Second Temple	70 CE		3993

I have added a third column which is very important in understanding the chronological issues involved. Usually the dates are based on looking back from the year 0, which makes it hard to see what the differences are between the two chronologies and where they arise. The Jewish and secular dates not

¹ The primary sources I am using for the dating issues are the Artscroll books on Tenach: Daniel, Ezra, and Nechemiah; and the book Jewish History in Conflict by Mitchell First. I have attempted to be as accurate as possible, but I assume a margin of error of +/- 3 years which does not effect the point of this paper.

² These are the standard dates that we find in scholarly works, they are based on Ptolemy.

³ These dates are based on other sources I have seen. My intention here is only to give a rough outline of the situation and not a rigorous scholarly treatment of the secular dating. It should be understood that any dating calculations for a period in the past like this cannot be 100%.

⁴ This is the Jewish dating from the time of Adam/Creation. I am using this so that we can have a standard with which to compare the different dating calculations which see the BCE date as different. The date for synchronization is that of the destruction of the temple: 3338. I am using this throughout even though as Artscroll notes, it is 1 year off and should be 3339.

only don't agree when look at this way, but it is hard to see what the problems are. I have therefore added a date that can be used to compare the two. This is the Jewish date from creation. When dealing with secular dates, I adjust for the difference to the Jewish date, based on the number of years the secular chronology has. The 'base' date used is the date of the destruction of the First Temple. That date is 3338 AC (After Creation) which is 586 BCE according to the secular chronology and 422 BCE according to the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology. This way we can have a standard way of comparing the secular chronology with the Seder Olam/Biblical/Rabbinic chronology.

I would like to now explain how Christians see Daniel 9 fulfilled using the secular chronology. While the whole of Chapter 9 is critical to understand the full intent of the prophecy (we have Daniel's prayer and the 490 years is the answer), for my purposes now, I will quote only from the relevant verses dealing with the chronology:

(24) Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to forgive iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint the most holy place. (25) Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto one anointed, a prince, shall be seven weeks; and for threescore and two weeks, it shall be built again, with broad place and moat, but in troublous times. (26) And after the threescore and two weeks shall an anointed one be cut off, and be no more; and the people of a prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; but his end shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. (27) And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease; and upon the wing of detestable things shall be that which causes desolation; and that until the extermination wholly determined be poured out upon that which causes desolation.'

According to the modern Christian view there is a 70 week period (490 years) that is divided into two periods: one of 69 weeks (seven and threescore and two⁵) and the other of 1 week. That is 483 years and 7 years. Also they understand that when Daniel says 'the going forth of the word' that it refers to some kind of a decree to rebuild the city. The Christian sources point out that there four possible decrees for when the period starts:

1. The Decree in the first year of Cyrus mentioned in 2 Chronicles 22-23; Ezra 1:1-4, 6:3-5. This would be in 537 BCE (3387 AC) or 539 BCE. (3385 AC)
2. The Decree in the second year of Darius I mentioned in Ezra 5:3-17. This would be around 519/518 BCE (3405/3406 AC)
3. The Decree in the eighth year of Artaxerxes to Ezra mentioned in Ezra 7:11-26. This would be 457 BCE (3467 AC)
4. The Decree in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah mentioned in Nehemiah 2:1-8. This would be 445/444 BCE (3479/3480 AC)

The first two yield dates that cannot apply to Jesus and Christians find some reason why they could not be the ones meant by Daniel. We will discuss this in the fifth part of this paper.

The most commonly used decree is the last one, to Nehemiah. This has the 483 years starting in 445/444 BCE (3479/3480 AC), the 20th years of Artaxerxes I, which according to their understanding of the

⁵ I will later discuss the problem of dividing the years in this manner and other problems with the Christian calculations

chronology is the time of the decree in Nehemiah. However there is a problem with this calculation. If we add 483 years to 445/444 BCE we end up at 37/38 CE (3960/3961 AC) which is not acceptable. Therefore instead of using the regular solar year, they propose what they call a 'prophetic year' of 360 days. They then convert these shorter 483 years of 360 days to longer solar years of 365.25 days. $((483 \times 360) / 365.25) = 476$. If we count from 445/444 BCE, 476 years later is 32/33 CE (3955/3956 AC), which is claimed to be the year of the crucifixion of Jesus. The last year is put off into the future after a gap which so far is almost 2000 years.

There is a second explanation of Daniel 9, but this one uses the decree to Ezra by Artaxerxes in his eighth year as the starting point. This makes the start date for the 483 years at 457 BCE (3467 AC). 483 years later is 27 CE (3950 AC). That is when Jesus' ministry was to have started. Then 3+ years later in 30 CE he is killed and another 3+ years later Stephen is killed and Paul converts, fulfilling the 490 years.

We will be analyzing these views and their validity later. My purpose in this section was to introduce the secular dating and then show how Christians attempt to use it to make Daniel 9 fit for Jesus. I will critique these interpretations based on the secular chronology in the fifth section. In the next section I will go into the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology, and in the third section I will see if we can fit any of these Christian interpretations into that Biblical/Rabbinic chronology.

Part 2 – The Biblical/Rabbinic Chronology and Daniel 9

The Biblical/Rabbinic chronology is based totally on those events which appear in the Tenach with the length of the reign of the kings being either from the text itself or from tradition as reflected in Seder Olam. The kings listed are based only on what appears in the Tenach. After the chart, I will give a full explanation of the sources for this chronology.

Chart 2 – Biblical/Rabbinic (Seder Olam) Dating

Ruler/Event	Secular Date based on Biblical/Rabbinic Calculation ⁶	Date From Creation	Source	Years based on Seder Olam
Nebuchadnezzar becomes ruler over Judea	440-396 BCE	3320-3364		
Exile of Jeconiah	433	3327		
Destruction of First Temple	422 BCE	3338		
Evil-Merodach	396-373 BCE	3364-3387	2 Kings 25:27 ⁷	23 years
Belshazzar	373-371 BCE	3387-3389	Daniel 7, 8 ⁸	3 years
Darius the Mede	371-369 BCE	3389-3390	Daniel 6:29	1 year ⁹
Cyrus	371-367 BCE	3389-3393	2 Chronicles 36:22-23	3 years
Ahasuerus	366-353 BCE	3394-3407	Ezra 4:7	14 years
Darius the Persian	353 - 318 BCE	3407-3442		35 years
Completion of Second Temple	352	3408		
Alexander	317-311 BCE	3442 – 3448	Daniel 11:2	
Destruction of Second Temple	69 CE	3828		

Before discussing the details of this chart I would like to make some general comments. With regards to the Babylonian period there is a difference in the rulers between what appears in the Tenach and what appears in the secular chronology. However, there is almost no difference between them as to when the period started and ended: 3220 - 3389 in the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology and 3319 - 3387 (3385) in the secular. Likewise in the Persian period until Darius, both the Biblical/Rabbinic and secular chronologies have ending times almost the same: Biblical/Rabbinic 3442 and the secular 3438. These differences are well within what we find in ancient sources, where disagreements are common on the exact length of the reigns of kings.

⁶ This is the secular date, BCE, calculated based on the Biblical/Rabbinic years.

⁷ Verse states that Evil-Moradach released the king 37 years after taking him into captivity. He was exiled in 3327 so Evil-Moradach's reign starts in 3364.

⁸ There is no explicit length of Belshazzar's reign, however Daniel 7 is in the 1st year and Daniel 8 is in the 3rd year. Seder Olam states that Daniel 5 which deals with Belshazzar's downfall is at that time.

⁹ Together with Cyrus

For the Babylonian dynasty, we know of only three kings from Tenach: Nevuchadnesser, Evil-Merodoch and Belshazzar. Based on 2 Kings 25:27 and Jeremiah 52:31, Nevuchadnesser handing the kingdom over to Evil Merodoch 37 years after Jeconiah went into exile. Since he went into exile in 3327, Evil-Merodoch became king in 3364. The only other Babylonian King mentioned is in Daniel (7 and 8) Belshazzar. Daniel only mentions his first and third year. There is a limitation on how long he could have been king as he was dethroned by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus took over the next year. 2 Chronicles 36:22 states that the 70 years given for Babylonia from when they conquered Judea as stated in Jeremiah ends in first year of Cyrus (3320-3390).¹⁰ So Darius must have ended his kingdom before that. Only one year is mentioned in Daniel with regards to Darius the Mede, so it is assumed he ruled for one year (3389). That would be when Belshazzar ended his rule. Seder Olam understands that Belshazzar only ruled for the three years that Daniel mentions and the other years are for Evil-Merodoch. That means Evil-Merodoch was the ruler from 3364-3387, 23 years, and Belshazzar was the ruler from 3387 to 3389, a total of 3 years. While there are significant differences between the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology and the secular chronology as to the rulers themselves, they are not that different when looked at from the viewpoint of how long the period lasted..

It is with the Persian dynasty that the significant differences develop. The secular chronology has 8 kings after Darius the Persian, while there are none in the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology. What is the cause of this difference? We must turn to Daniel himself for this. In Daniel 10:20 the angel Michael says that the prince of Persia was to depart soon and the prince of Greece was coming to take his place. That prince is the heavenly angel of that people. Daniel was being told that the end of the Persian period and the beginning of the Greek period would soon occur. Then the angel Michael spoke to Daniel:

(1) And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to be a supporter and a stronghold unto him. (2) And now will I declare unto thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and when he is waxed strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. (3) And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. (4) And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; but not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion wherewith he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

Here it is stated clearly that the Persian dynasty will be composed of 3 more kings for a total of 4 kings including Darius.¹¹ After that will come a mighty king whose kingdom gets divided into four, a clear allusion to Alexander.

These three kings are easy to name. Daniel mentions the first year of Darius the Mede and also the third year of Cyrus (10:1). Ezra and many other books of the Tenach mention Cyrus. So we have Cyrus with Darius the Mede. In the book of Esther (3:7) there is a king Achashverosh who ruled at least 12 years. Ezra also mentions Darius the Persian, and an Achashverosh between Cyrus and Darius the Persian. Since there cannot be another Achashverosh this must be the same one as in Esther.¹² Therefore we have the following three kings following Darius the Mede, in order: Cyrus, Achashverosh¹³ and Darius the Persian.

¹⁰ The secular chronology does not have this as they date from 3319-3387(3385)

¹¹ Rashi brings a view that the fourth king is not Darius by Cambyses who ruled for less than a year. A chart of Rashi's view is brought in Appendix 1. There is another view that sees the fourth king as coming after Darius the Persian unlike the view of Seder Olom and Rashi. This is the view of Ibn Ezra among others and appears in Appendix 2

¹² If there was another Achashverosh we would have a total of 5 kings instead of the 4.

¹³ Some sources say that Cambyses is the same as Achashverosh, but this is not certain.

In Ezra and Nechemiah there is a mention of a king Artachshastra. According to Seder Olam and the Talmud this is another name for Darius the Persian. Since according to Daniel 11 there can not be another king after Darius the Persian, no other conclusion is possible. It is Darius the Persian, the last Persian king, who is killed by Alexander the Great. Since there are 3 years mentioned for Cyrus in Daniel and 12 for Achashverosh in the book of Esther, there are two years left over for this period. The book of Esther indicates that Achashverosh continued to rule, so they are given to him in the Seder Olam chronology.

Careful analysis of other books of the Tenach yields data that supports the Seder Olam order. One of those is from the Book of Esther. Esther 3:7 mentions the 12th year of Achashverosh. When is this? According to Seder Olam it is 3406 AC. According to the secular chronology there are two possibilities. If we say Achashverosh is Artaxerxes then the 12th year is 3471 AC, and if he is Xerxes it is 3451 AC. However in Esther 2:5 it says that Mordechai was among those who went into exile with Jeconiah in 3327. According to Seder Olam he would have been 79 at the time which is possible. But according to the secular chronology he would have been either 124 or 144!!! This is not very likely.

In Ezra 7:8 it says that Ezra came to Jerusalem in the 7th year of Artachshastra. Who is this Artachshastra? In chapter 6:17 we see that Darius built the temple and ended it in his 6th year. Chapter 7 starts saying ‘after these things’ and indicates that it is in the 7th year of the king Artachshastra. The wording ‘after these things’ indicates in the Tenach a short period of time. According to Seder Olam, this Artachshastra is Darius the Persian, and chapter 7 is the year after chapter 6. This fits in quite well. However, if we say this is the king Artaxerxes, then the scholarly chronology places 57 years (3409 – 3466 AC) between chapter 6 and chapter 7! Even if we say that it is Xerxes we have 37 years (3409-3446 AC). Neither seems to fit two events said to be one after the other.¹⁴

In Nehemiah chapter 12 we have a list of Priests and Levites who came with Zerabavel in the first year of Cyrus (secular: 3387 Seder Olam 3389). In chapter 10 we have another list of Priests and Levites but they were those who signed the covenant in the time that Nehemiah was in Jerusalem which according to Nechemiah 2:1 was in the 20th year of Artachshastra. According to the secular chronology this is either Artaxerxes (3479) or Xerxes (3459). This would be either 72 or 92 years later. However according to Seder Olam it is Darius the Persian (3427) a period of 38 years.

If we compare the lists we have some interesting results. Even though in all the genealogy lists we rarely find names repeated, we have 9 Priests common to both chapters. They are:

Chart 3

Name	Verse in Nehemiah 12	Verse in Nehemiah 10
Seraiah	1	3
Jeremiah	1	3
Amariah	2	3
Malluch	2	5
Hattush	2	5
Meremoth	3	6
Abijah	4	8
Miamin	5	8

¹⁴ Seder Olam dates are only 4 years less.

Shemaiah	6	9
----------	---	---

There are 5 more that because of the similarity may be the same people. They are:

Chart 4

Name in Nehemiah 12	Verse in Nehemiah 12	Name in Nehemiah 10	Verse in Nehemiah 10
Ezra	1	Azariah	3
Shechaniah	3	Shebaniah	5
Ginnetho	4	Ginnethon	7
Maadiah	5	Maaziah	9
Bilgah	5	Bilgai	9

Of the Levites 4 appear in both places:

Chart 5

Name	Verse in Nehemiah 12	Verse in Nehemiah 10
Jeshua	8	10
Binnui	8	10
Kadmiel	8	10
Sherebiah	8	13

Of 30 names in Nehemiah 12 we have 13 that are certainly in both chapters and a possible 5 others, making 13 or 18 of 30 Priests/Levites who came with Zerabavel still alive in the time of Nehemiah. Considering they would have to be at least 20 (possibly 30) to be counted, it is likely that it is 38 years later as Seder Olom has it rather than 72 or 92 years later as the secular chronology has it.

We must conclude that the dating and order of Seder Olom fits much better than the secular dating to what appears in the text. This should not be strange as the Tenach was the history book used by Seder Olom to base its history upon. It only supplemented dates from tradition that are not explicitly stated.

While the basic chronological issues have been addressed already, there are a few issues we need to address in order to understand how the Rabbis understood Daniel.

First is that the Rabbis understood Daniel 9 in much different way than the Christians. The Christians see it as a prediction of the Messiah's coming. While the Rabbis see it as the presentation of a test. The return to the land of Israel would be like the original entrance there. In Deuteronomy 27 we see that when they were to enter the land they were presented with choices, for good or otherwise. The same is here with Daniel 9. They were given a period of time in which they would either correct their sins which had caused the Babylonian exile or they would be forced, as with after the destruction of the First Temple, to go into exile to atone for those sins. In that sense, rather than this being a positive message of salvation, it is a conditional message with the threat of destruction and exile paralleling what we see in Deuteronomy. They could not rely on a positive outcome, as there was no such promise, unlike the

Christian view which sees this as a promise of a positive outcome – the coming of the Messiah and salvation from sin.

Second, the Rabbis divide these 490 years into three periods:¹⁵ 7 weeks, 62 weeks and a final week, which is divided in half. Only in the last period are the years themselves of importance. That week is divided. The other periods are just weeks. This means the first period ends around 49 years, the second around 483 years, and following the second period the third occurs which is divided into two periods of 3 ½ years.

Finally, there is a major conceptual difference. Christians interpret the timing as related to some kind of decree. The 70 weeks are to start with a decree, and they attempt to find that decree and calculate from that time. However, the Hebrew word in Daniel 9:25 is ‘devar’ (דבר) which just means a word, or a message and in verse 23 it is used as the divine message that was sent through the angel. We never find that word used to indicate a ‘decree’ as opposed to a ‘message’. The Rabbis, therefore, look to start their dating of the 70 weeks at some prophecy that relates to what Daniel had been asking, i.e. the meaning of Jeremiah’s prophecy and when the exile would end.

In order to fully understand the message given to Daniel, we need to know what the angel was responding to. In Daniel 9:1-2 we read: *“In the first year of Darius the son of Achashverosh, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel meditated in the books, over the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet that He would accomplish for the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years.”* Daniel was considering some prophecies, with regards to 70 years, given by HaShem through Jeremiah. We know of two such prophecies.

The first is Jeremiah 25:11 which says: *“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and a waste; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”* Here is a prediction of the destruction of Babylonia after a period of 70 years servitude by Israel. This period started when Nevuchadnesser became king in 3319, and ended when Babylon was overthrown in 3389 by Darius the Mede 70 years later. Since Daniel was speaking AFTER Babylonia had fallen, this prophecy had already been fulfilled.

The second is Jeremiah 29:10: *“For thus said the LORD: After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will remember you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.”* In HaShem’s message to the Jewish people who had gone into exile, HaShem said that after 70 years of the kingdom of Babylonia they would be allowed to return ‘to this place’. This may be the cause of Daniel’s meditation. Was this prophecy to start at the same time as the previous one? If so, then why hadn’t they returned? If it is not, then when do the 70 years start?

It appears that Daniel did not know if they were the same. Daniel refers to the 70 years of desolation, but wondered when this period would be considered to have ended. It is important to note that Jeremiah 29:10 was said a number of years before the destruction of the Temple and the land was laid waste. However many other prophecies that relate to their return were given at various times. For example Jeremiah 32, was in the year that the Temple was destroyed and the city was laid waste.

¹⁵ There are some Christian authors who will try and find an event after this first period, but this is not the usual understanding.

The angel's answer was not just for Daniel's question with regards to the Jeremiah prophecies, but also he had another message, a new one with regards to 70 weeks. Because the angel has related this new prophecy in relationship to Daniel's questions about Jeremiah's prophecy, it is reasonable to assume that there is some relationship between the 70 years and the 70 weeks. Either the beginning of these 70 years and the new prophecy are the same, or one of the endings of the periods in this new prophecy corresponds to the end of the 70 years.

Daniel understood that Jeremiah related to the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 3338. It was to this the angel referred. The angel's answer was simple. There are three periods starting at the same time as the 70 year period: the destruction of the First Temple. The 'word' referenced in Daniel 9:25, is to the prophecy given in the last year of the Temple, possibly Jeremiah 32. The 70 year period spans from 3338 when the Temple was destroyed until 3408 when Darius allowed the completion of the rebuilding of the temple.

The first period that the angel told Daniel about starts in 3338. Daniel was told that an anointed one would come and start the building of the Temple and the people would start to return and live in the land. At the end of 2 Chronicles we read that in the first year of Cyrus an end came of the prophecy of Jeremiah, and that HaShem inspired Cyrus to allow the Jewish people to return and settle and build the Temple. This was 7 weeks after the destruction of the Temple (51 years) in 3390. This is the first period and its relationship to the Jeremiah prophecy. As we know in Isaiah 45:1, Cyrus is referred to as an 'anointed one' so the anointed one is Cyrus.¹⁶

The 62 week middle period is described as troubled times. This clearly describes what it was like from the time of Cyrus on. In Ezra 4:5-6, we see that, although people were living there, there were constant efforts to thwart the rebuilding of the city from the time of Cyrus until Darius. After Darius came the Greek period and then the Roman. One need only look at Josephus to see that it was a time of trouble and disorder.

The final period starting around 3820 saw an agreement with the Romans which fell apart after 3 ½ years leading to a three year and a half year war with Rome that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The person cut off can be either the King Agrippa or the High Priest, both of whom lost their positions in Judea at that time. I would point out that Christians understand 'cutting off' as being killed, but that is not what the word means. The verse says 'יכרת משיח ואין לו'. This translation is 'the anointed will be cut off and he will have nothing.' The words 'ואין לו' literally means 'there is nothing to him'. This indicates the anointed has lost something that he had before.

From the destruction of the First temple in 3338 until the destruction of the second Temple in 3828 is 70 weeks (490 years). The anointed Cyrus comes 7 weeks (51 years) after the destruction of the First Temple. The agreement with Rome comes after 69 weeks. 3 ½ years later the war starts, and lasts for 3 ½ years. Following Seder Olam and the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology all the prophecies for this period fit. All the Jewish interpreters follow the basic concepts and understanding of the prophecy, even those Jewish interpretations that differ from Seder Olam in when the 70 weeks start and who the kings were¹⁷.

¹⁶ There are two other possible anointed ones mentioned in Rabbinic sources. Since in Biblical usage, an anointed one can be a High Priest or Ruler, there are two other possible candidates. In Ezra 3:2 the Priest Yeshua, and the Ruler Zerabavel are mentioned.

¹⁷ See appendix 2.

Part 3 – Can the Christian Interpretation of Daniel 9 fit the Biblical/Rabbinic Chronology?

What if the Biblical/Rabbinic chronology is right? Are the modern Christian interpretations still possible? Can they be made to work? The answer to this is, NO.

We can look at this a few ways. First let's work backwards on the chronology. The key years are from 27 – 33 CE. These are AC 3786 – 3792. If we subtract 476 and 483 from them, we get the following: 3310 – 3316, and 3303 – 3309. Both ranges pre-date Nevuchadnesser!! The other way is no better. Since there is no king Artaxerxes, neither of these start dates exist at all!!

What is even more serious is that the secular chronology is agreed by all to not agree with the Biblical one. I do not see how one can avoid saying that Daniel is in error, and maintain the modern Christian interpretation. This certainly effects the belief of 'inerrancy'. In fact, we have a catch 22 situation here. If Daniel's chronology is correct, the modern Christian interpretation is false. But, if it is not correct, then is there any prophecy at all for a Christian to use¹⁸? Even if we try and use the view of the Ibn Ezra in Appendix 2 we can only get 51 more years, which is still in the period of the Babylonian domination.

¹⁸ I will be looking at the other way in the next section, and answering these questions from a Jewish POV.

Part 4 – Can the Rabbinic Interpretation of Daniel 9 fit the Secular Chronology?

In this section we shall explore whether the Rabbinic Interpretation of Daniel can be maintained if the secular chronology is correct. Before doing that I would like to point out that this is a problem that has been addressed many times. A good example is a web site by Brad Aaronson based on the work of Dr. Chaim Heifetz and his reconstruction (<http://starways.net/lisa/essays/heifetzfix.html> .) I would like to point out some of the problems with the secular chronology and then address what we can do with Daniel if they would be correct.

Mitchell First¹⁹ makes the following comment with regards to those who reject the historical accuracy of Daniel 11: “The response of those who do not have this belief, e.g. most modern scholars, is usually that chapters 7-12 of the book of Daniel were authored or put into final form in the 2nd century BCE, at a time when the true chronology of the Persian period was forgotten.” One of the problems with this statement is that it is inaccurate. As we have seen before, when we compare the secular chronology until Darius the Persian with the Seder Olam chronology, the number of years is very close. Those differences that occur are actually quite typical for historical documents as we shall soon see. It would seem that the amnesia was very selective, starting in the middle of the Persian period at a time closer to the 2nd Century, while the older events are more accurate.

While the scholars discount the reliability of the Biblical text, what about the reliability of the dating they use? It is based on the list of kings of Ptolemy which is taken from the Greek Historians. Ptolemy is an important and interesting person. As First²⁰ says, “Ptolemy’s concern was not history but astronomy.” His accuracy on the list of kings may be compared to his more important work his astronomy. His geocentric view of the universe hampered science for almost 1500 years. He wrongly interpreted his observations. That does not give us much confidence in his history.

After pointing out the many disagreements among the Greek historians as to the Persian period First states, “It should be pointed out that the Greek historians are also not in agreement on multitudes of historical details and much information furnished by them is viewed as extremely unreliable. Nevertheless, it is assumed that they would have had no reason to fabricate the basic outline of the Persian period.”²¹ Greeks are not fabricators, but the Bible is?

How reliable are the Greek historians? Let’s look at Herodotus who is the main Greek historian. In the introduction to The Histories by Herodotus there is a discussion²² of his accuracy as an historian. Even in antiquity he was controversial. In ancient times “no historian was more censured the Herodotus.”²³ He goes on: “In modern times, too, Herodotus’ credibility has been questioned... Archaeology has given us new evidence for the cultures of Egypt and the Ancient Near East, which can then be used to test Herodotus’ narrative. Early in the twentieth century doubts were raised that Herodotus ever went to Egypt, and more recently some have suspected that he never traveled anywhere at all. One study has even proposed that Herodotus’ source citations (‘the Persians say’, ‘the Spartans say’), which are usually assumed to be genuine native tradition, were invariably invented by Herodotus himself. In this view Herodotus is more writer of fiction than of history.”²⁴ Anyone who has read Herodotus wonders when fantasy ends and history begins.

¹⁹ Jewish History in Conflict, Jason Aronson, 1997 page 205.

²⁰ Ibid page 164 footnote 11.

²¹ Ibid footnote 9.

²² John Marincola, Herodotus The Histories, Penguin Books 1972, pages xxv-xxviii.

²³ Ibid page xxvi

²⁴ Ibid page xxvii

I think an unbiased person (at least unbiased against the Bible) would come to the conclusion that it is quite possible that the Greek historians would fabricate, especially Herodotus.

I would like to ignore what I have said above and look at Daniel 9 and the Rabbinic interpretation with the assumption that the secular chronology is correct irregardless of my personal biases and opinions. I think the first issue we need to look at is: Where do the differences between the secular and Biblical chronology come from? Having that, we might be able to propose some sort of reconciliation of the two.

As we have seen before, until the time of Darius the Persian, the chronology is very close. There are some differences in names, but the differences are within what is acceptable. However, from then until the Greek administration there are major differences. If we look at the Daniel prophecy we see that all of the differences occur during the middle period of 62 weeks (434 years). This means that our explanation must tell us why that period would be longer.

Before positing an explanation we need to look at the issue of whether such a change makes Daniel a false prophet? If we accept that it is more than 490 years, then what Daniel said is not true. Wouldn't that make him a false prophet? Actually it depends. We see that in the book of Jonah that Jonah was sent to bring a message of destruction of the city of Nineveh. However it was not destroyed? The reason was that they repented and so were spared. We see from this, that a prophecy of destruction can fail to occur as a prophet says, and the prophet is still a true prophet. In our case that would apply, as I stated before, the Jewish understanding is that the period of the Second Temple was a test, and that if they repented and corrected their sins of the First Temple period, it would be good, if not they would need to go into exile again. This is a prophecy, much like the one of Jonah, which could be nullified or delayed, without affecting the status of the prophet who brought it.²⁵

There are a few reasons I have found in the Tenach to effect a change in a prophecy. One is in Jonah where the people repented and destruction was averted. A second is with Achav, who repented and the destruction was put off until after he died²⁶. Finally, we see that throughout the First Temple period, due to HaShem's mercy, the decree of destruction was put off.

Since the first reason does not seem to apply, it can possibly be one of the other two. There is another possible reason. The Greeks were to come and destroy the Persian Kingdom. This was the kingdom whose kings allowed the building of the new Temple. It may be that HaShem, in reward for this, extended their kingdom. Obviously we could not know what HaShem's reasons were since they have not been revealed to any prophet.²⁷

Let us now turn to the critical question, IF there has been a change, what is the status of Daniel's 70 week prophecy?? There are three possibilities that I can imagine:

1. The prophecy is null and void, and that there is no longer a prophecy that we can look to that tells when the Second Temple is to be destroyed.
2. Since the second period was the one affected, only that part has been nullified, and the 1 week (7 year) period is in force, which historically did occur.

²⁵ This would not be the case according to those Christian interpretations that this prophecy is about the Messiah and his bringing redemption from sin into the world, which is a clear positive prophecy.

²⁶ 1 Kings 21:27-29

²⁷ This is, of course, speculative as the author maintains that the Biblical chronology has not been proven incorrect.

3. Rather than being totally nullified; the clock was stopped after Darius and restarted in the Greek period. The extra years are just removed, and the 62 weeks continued with that gap. This is like the extra month that is added from time to time to the Jewish year to correct for the difference in length between a lunar and solar year. Even though the year is longer, it is still one year. Likewise here the period is longer, but does not affect anything.²⁸

If the secular chronology were correct we do not know why after Daniel, HaShem would change the time, and everything here is speculation. The point here is to show that even under the secular chronology the Jewish interpretation of Daniel 9 would still be valid, and our acceptance of Daniel as a prophet unchanged.

²⁸ If I had to make a choice I would say that this third one is the most likely.

Part 5 – Does the Christian Interpretation Work For The Secular Chronology?

While the two modern Christian interpretations use the secular chronology they have quite a few problems. Obviously one of them is that they need to deny the truth of the chronology of Daniel 11 and the other Biblical sources. In Appendix 4 I discuss a number of the early Church Fathers who discuss Daniel 9 and some of them did accept Daniel 11 as being accurate and even agreed in whole or in part with the Rabbinic interpretation..

If we look at these modern interpretations, one of the problems is that they point out a serious issue of chronological and dating. The issue is when was Jesus crucified? One has it 30 CE the other has it 33 CE. This disagreement points to a larger issue of dating the events in the life of Jesus, something that is fraught with controversy. While this issue is outside the purpose of this paper, a few points need to be mentioned so that we can understand that this date problem is not accidental, but part of a greater dating problem.

In order to see the problem we need only look at some of the data from the New Testament. Luke 3:23 says that Jesus was about 30 when he started his ministry. According to John there were 3 Passovers²⁹, so Jesus was crucified at about 33 years of age. According to Matthew, Jesus was born in the time of Herod who died in 4 BCE. This means the latest Jesus could have become 30 would be 27 CE and the latest crucifixion would be 30 CE. However most of the dates I see are either 5 or 6 BCE, making the crucifixion 28 or 29 CE.

In Luke 3:1-2 we are told that John the Baptist started his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius. We know that Jesus has to start his ministry after John. Tiberius became Emperor in August 14 CE. That would be his first year. His 15th year would start in August 28 CE. If Jesus started his ministry in the same year as John, then the earliest he could be crucified is 31/32 CE. It is doubtful that Jesus started the same year as John, since John was already famous when they met. It must be a year or two later.

There are many more factors involved here. For example John 2:20, at the beginning of his ministry, says it is 46 years that the Temple had been built by Herod. He started it in 20 BCE, so the beginning of Jesus' ministry would be in 27 CE, which would contradict Luke where it could not start before 28 CE. John 8:57 has the Jews saying to Jesus that he is not yet 50 years old. Many understand this to mean he was in his 40s, 10 years older than Luke. We can see why there is disagreement as to when he died.

We also see disagreement as to when the period of the 70 weeks starts. This also seems to show the same attempt to manipulate the dates to fit the desired results. As I mentioned, the word used in Daniel 'devar' does not mean decree, but just a declaration or message. For example, Tertillian calculated the time from when Daniel received his message from the angel. Hippolytus starts it at the same time as the Jewish interpreters do. Aphrahat starts it with Cyrus, which is rejected by the two interpretations we have mentioned. The decree from Cyrus would have seemed to be the decree most supportable from the Tenach as it is mentioned in numerous places. The problem, of course, for these dates is that the date would not fit for their calculations. When one looks into the literature³⁰ one sees that making it apply to Jesus is a key part of this.

²⁹ The Synoptics have only one and the usual way of solving this problem is to assume there were three and that the Synoptics have left out two of them. I will follow that view here. There is another solution. That is to say there was only one, but that John's gospel is not written in chronological order.

³⁰ An example of this is the work 'Chronological Aspects of the Life of Jesus' by Harold Hoener which rejects the first two 'decrees' one of the reasons being that it cannot fit for Jesus.

Then we have a problem with how many weeks we are dealing with and how many years that is. Both interpretations merge the 7 and 62 weeks, but they don't both have 483 years. One goes through an interesting calculation in order to make his 483 years fit his start and end date. The other can get to his date without it.

However there is a problem with 69 years. That is that Daniel does not say 69 years, but 7 years and 62 years. There are two reasons why we know these are separate periods. First, in verse 26 it says "after the 62 weeks". Had a period of 69 weeks been intended, it would have said "after the 69 weeks". Something separates the first 7 from the second 62. Nothing is known to have happened in either 408 BCE or 396 BCE, so these two periods need to be combined into one.

A second problem is that in Hebrew one does not say 69 as: "seven and sixty and two". There are no examples of this in the Tenach at all. One says "sixty and nine". There is really a simple reason for this. All number systems are based on either counting 5's or 10's or 20's. This corresponds to the number of digits on one hand, two hands, or two hands and feet. Most systems used are based on 10s. The Mayan system was based on 20. Our word 'score', for example, means 20. No numerical counting system exists in the world that gives us the number 69 by saying 7 and 62. Hebrew is no exception to this rule.

As to the last week, that is also a problem. According to the first we have a large gap between the 69 weeks and the last week; a gap of almost 2000 years. In Daniel we are told there is a 70 week total period and such a gap is not credible. Some say that the last week applies to the destruction of the Second Temple, which introduces a much smaller gap, but still one of about 40 years, which is around 5 weeks. With no explanation of why there needs to be a gap at all, this is just wishful thinking.

The second view sees the last week starting with Jesus ministry and 3 ½ years later he dies. But the last 3 ½ years is a problem, and is said to terminate either at the death of Stephen or at the conversion of Paul. Hoener³¹ mentions a few problems with this interpretation of the last week. First, how does the wording 'cutting off' apply to the beginning of Jesus' ministry? Second what 'covenant' did Jesus confirm as said in verse 27? Third, since the sacrifices did not end with Jesus' crucifixion after the 3 ½ years this cannot apply to him. Finally there is not the least hint from the verses that the end of the 7 years is to refer to either the death of Stephen or to Paul's conversion. I would like to add that the dates of these two events are themselves speculative.

The final problem is with the 'prophetic year'. We see something like this in the Church Father Africanus, who rather than using a 'prophetic' year dealt with the difference between the solar and lunar year. He did some math gymnastics to get to his required 475 years. The fact is that there is no such thing as a 'prophetic year'.³² The problem is that all years are counter from the first of Nisan (the first month) until the last day of Adar (the twelfth month.) How many days are contained in a year, has no relevance. The Hebrew calendar like the Greek and a number of other lunar calendars added month from time to time so that the lunar and solar calendars would be in sync. The Islamic calendar does not, so that the Islamic year 'floats'. But in all cases a year is from the first day of the first month to the last day of the last month. That is how they are counted in the Tenach. It is interesting to ask why is it ONLY with regards to a calculation trick to make the years fit an interpretation that we find this 'prophetic

³¹ 'Chronological Aspects of the Life of Jesus', Harold Hoener, Zondervan, 1977 pages 125-126

³² It is interesting to note that Velikovsky in his *Worlds in Collision* brings evidence that at one time the year was made up of 12, 30 day months, but that it changed during the First Temple period. This is found all over the world. One example of vestiges of it is the 360 degrees in a circle. A full discussion is outside of the scope of this paper, and has little relevance, since we are talking about years and not days.

year' and not for the 70 year prophecies of Jeremiah? For example Babylonia lasted exactly 70 years and not less as a 'prophetic' year would require.

To summarize the problems with the Christian calculations (and here I include those in Appendix 4) is that there is no agreed on start date, no agreed on end date, and no set periods. Everything seems to be changeable. It is an interpretation that has no rules, except that to needs to apply to Jesus.

This contrasts with the Jewish interpretations which are consistent in most things and just changing based on an interpretation of Daniel 11. End time, length, and division of the periods are all in agreement. The only real difference is whether the 70 weeks starts at the destruction of the First Temple and that there are 3 kings after Darius, or if it is with Darius himself, and there are 4 kings.

Conclusion

There is strong evidence to show that the Biblical chronology is that of Seder Olam. This is not just from the text, but Jewish tradition and even some of the early Church Fathers agreed to this. We can also say that whether we accept the Biblical chronology or the secular one, the interpretation of Daniel 9 by the Rabbis is the most consistent, and fits better than any of the Christian ones. It is simpler and has fewer problems associated with it.

Appendix 1 – Rashi’s Alternative view

Ruler/Event	Secular Date based on Biblical/Rabbinic Calculation	Date From Creation
Nebuchadnezzar becomes ruler over Judea	440-396 BCE	3320-3364
Exile of Jeconiah	433	3327
Destruction of First Temple	422 BCE	3338
Evil-Merodach	396-373 BCE	3364-3387
Belshazzar	373-371 BCE	3387-3389
Darius the Mede	371-369 BCE	3389-3391
Cyrus	371-367 BCE	3389-3393
Cambyses	367 BCE	3393
Ahasuerus	366-353 BCE	3394-3407
Darius the Persian	353 - 318 BCE	3407-3442
Completion of Second Temple	352	3408
Alexander	317-311 BCE	3442 - 3448
Destruction of Second Temple	69 CE	3828

There are no serious differences between this view and that of Seder Olam. It is based on what some have suggested that Achashverosh is really one of the names of Cambyses.

Appendix 2 - Alternative Rabbinic View – Ibn Ezra

Ruler/Event	Secular Date based on Biblical/Rabbinic Calculation	Date From Creation
Nebuchadnezzar becomes ruler over Judea		3320-3364
Exile of Jeconiah	484 BCE	3327
Destruction of First Temple	473 BCE	3338
Evil-Merodach	447-424 BCE	3364-3387
Belshazzar	424-422 BCE	3387-3389
Darius the Mede	422-420 BCE	3389-3391
Cyrus	422-418 BCE	3389-3393
Ahasuerus	417-404 BCE	3394-3407
Darius the Persian	404-393 BCE	3407-3418
Second Temple	403 BCE	3408
Artachshastra (Xerxes ?)	393 - ? BCE	3418-?
Nehemiah	373 BCE	3438
Alexander	? -311 BCE	?-3500
Destruction of Second Temple	69 CE	3879

The Ibn Ezra has a different calculation of Daniel 9, and so his order is a bit different. He starts the 49 years from the prophecy of Daniel, understanding the Hebrew ‘devar’ (word) as the same one in the previous verse which the angel told to Daniel. He has 19 years for Cyrus and Achashverosh, 12 for Darius and 20 for Artachshastra until Nehemiah who is the anointed one after 7 weeks. He counts the 434 years of the Second Temple from that time, plus some until Vespasian (Titus) comes.

There are a number of difficulties with this interpretation. As mentioned in Part 2 with regards to the secular dating we still have a large amount of time between Ezra 6 and 7 (25 years.) There are 49 years between Nehemiah 10 and 12. While this is certainly better than the secular chronology, it seems to be difficult to maintain.

With Artachshstra being the last king before Alexander we have another problem. How long did he rule? In order to get the earliest date for the end of the Persian Empire (332) Artachshastra would have to have ruled for 60 years. This is the total length of BOTH Xerxes and Artaxerxes according to the secular chronology. Not impossible, but we see no evidence of that. Because of these problems, I have only mentioned this in this appendix as it is difficult to defend,

Appendix 3 - Josephus and Daniel

Does Josephus verify the Jewish commentators' view of Daniel as a reference to the destruction in 70 CE or not? Does he use the Biblical chronology or the Greek/secular one? Does Josephus say anything specifically about the book of Daniel? His works are basically historical in nature and do not deal with exegesis. But in this case, there is a lot of information as to how Daniel was understood by Josephus.

In his work Antiquities Book 10 he discusses Daniel. In the last two chapters (10, 11) he covers much of the book of Daniel and the prophecies that are in it. These two chapters follow chronologically the order of Daniel and the events that it relates to.

Chapter 1 of Daniel is in Antiquities Book 10 10:1-2;

Chapter 2 appears in 10:3-5 Interestingly Josephus says "Daniel did also declare the meaning of the stone to the king; but I do not think proper to relate it, since I have only undertaken to describe things past or things present, but not things that are future." The translator Whiston³³ comments, "Josephus has left out the prophecy of the destruction of the Roman empire, obviously since he was writing under their eye. He does however not leave it out, but just hints at it."

Chapter 3 appears in 10:5.

Chapter 4 in 10:6.

Chapter 5 in 11:2-4.

Chapter 6 in 11:4-6.

Chapter 7 is not mentioned openly but alluded to in 11:7.

Chapter 8 is in the first half of 11:7. He mentions specifically that the prophecy of 8:12-13 about the sacrifices refers to the time of events of Antiochus Epiphanies. This is repeated in Book 12 7:6.

Chapter 9 appears in 11:7. As to the destruction mentioned in Daniel 9, in 11:7 Josephus says, "In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them." He has once again minimized a negative comment about the Romans. This seems to refer to Daniel 9:26. The confirmation is found later in The Wars of the Jews Book 6, Chapter 2:1, where it discusses the destruction of the city. Whiston comments³⁴, "This was a very remarkable day indeed, the seventeenth of Panemus [Tamuz] A.D. 70, when according to Daniel's prediction the Romans 'in half a week caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease.' Dan. 9:27, for from the month of February A.D. 66, about which time Vespasian entered this war, to this very time was just three years and a half. See Bishop Lloyd's Tables of Chronology, published by Mr. Marshall, on this year. Nor is it to be omitted, what very nearly confirms this duration of the war, that four years before the war began, was somewhat above seven years five months before the destruction."

We can now confirm the understanding of our Rabbis as to the final 7 years as predicted by Daniel and culminating in the destruction of the Temple. As Whiston points out the events start around seven years

³³ The Works of Josephus, translated by William Whiston, Hendrickson, 1987 page 280.

³⁴ Ibid page 731

earlier. Yosiphon³⁵ mentions that the main sacrifices were stopped three and a half years before the destruction (Chapter 77) at the start of the war, which Whiston confirms to have been at that time. At the end of the seven years, after three and a half years after the stopping of the sacrifices, the temple is destroyed. This is exactly as Daniel had said.

We see that Josephus understands Daniel 9 as referring to the destruction of the second Temple. What is his view of the Kings of the Persian dynasty, and the length of time of the Persian Kingdom?

In Book 11 of his Antiquities he goes through the history from Cyrus until Alexander. Cyrus is mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2. Cambyses is mentioned in chapter 2 and is said to have had a reign of 6 years. Darius is mentioned in chapter 3 and 4. Xerxes is mentioned in chapter 5 where he is said to be the king of Ezra and Nechemiah. Chapter 6 is about Artaxerxes also called Cyrus who he says is Achashverosh. Chapter 7 mentions another Artaxerxes and Darius who in the next chapter is conquered by Alexander. From this we see that he has most, but not all, of the Persian kings as they are in the Greek chronology.

We need to examine how long of a period he has for the Persian period. In this there is a lot of confusion. In the Jewish War Book 1 chapter 3 he says that Aristobolus became king 471 years after the return from Babylonian exile. That would be the first year of Cyrus (537 BCE), making this event occurring in 66 BCE. This would seem to fit. However in the 6th Book chapter 4 he says that the Temple was destroyed 639 years and 45 days after the second year of Cyrus. That would make the second year of Cyrus 570 BCE, which is much too early. In the Antiquities Book 13 chapter 11 he has Aristobolus becoming king 481 years after the return from the Babylonian exile, 10 years later then in the Jewish War. In Book 20 chapter 10 he says that the family of Yeshua were high priests from the time of Cyrus until Antiochus Eupator, a period of 414 years. This comes out to 123 BCE which is about 40 years too late.

In Summary, Josephus understands that the interpretation Daniel 9 is like that of the Rabbis, referring to the destruction of the second Temple. However, he is working from a different chronology than Seder Olam.

³⁵ This is a Hebrew version of Josephus' works.

Appendix 4a – Ancient Christian Views of Daniel 9

While many of the Church Fathers assumed as fact that Daniel 9 applied to Jesus. Very few of them actually attempted to show how it did. Those who did explain Daniel seem different one from the other. The first is from the 2nd century and the last is from the 5th century. All of them have problems, some of which relate to chronology issues.

Another interesting point is how often this prophecy is associated with the destruction of the Temple. I believe that they came to this view based on their understanding of two verses in the New Testament: Matthew 24:15: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” and Luke 21:20: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.” It would appear that some believed that the desolation of Luke is the same as in Matthew. The surrounding of Jerusalem would obviously bring to mind the Jewish War that led to the destruction of the Temple. This would lead to attempts to make the Daniel prophecy apply to both Jesus and the destruction of the Temple. Tertullian is a good example of this attempt.

We will be looking at the explanations of Daniel 9 of the early church fathers in chronological order. The complete texts appear in Appendix 4b. In examining what the Church Fathers had to say we will concentrate of the following chronology issues:

1. When do the 70 weeks start?
2. When do they end?
3. How do they divide the 70 weeks, if at all?

One note in the dating: Some of the Church Fathers used dates based on the Olympiads. This is the four year cycle between the times that the Greek city states would hold their Olympic games. The Greek year started in the fall, so the first year of the First Olympiad was 777/776 BCE. The way this would work is easy to see by an example. Let’s take the 3rd year of the 22nd Olympiad. This is 21 Olympiads and 2 years after the first. That comes to 84 years plus 2 more years, 86 years after the first Olympiad which would be 691/690 BCE.

The first Church Father is Clement of Alexander [150 - 215 CE.]. In his work *The Stromata*, or *Miscellanies* in chapter XXI “The Jewish Institutions and laws of far higher authority than the Philosophy of The Greeks” he deals with Daniel 9 and the chronology.

Clement appears to understand Daniel in an allegorical manner. He states: “*That the temple accordingly was built in seven weeks, is evident; for it is written in Esdras. And thus Christ became King of the Jews, reigning in Jerusalem in the fulfilment of the seven weeks.*” Here he compares the 7 week first period needed to build the temple and compares it to Jesus showing that he believes in both a literal and allegorical meaning.

Then he says: “*And in the sixty and two weeks the whole of Judaea was quiet, and without wars* “. And then he says: “*The half of the week Nero held sway, and in the holy city Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius. And Vespasian rose to the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place.*” We see that he divided the period into three parts; 7 weeks 62 weeks and one week divided in half. He seems to

indicate (although I am not certain) that the first messiah is the high priest Joshua, which would fit. The final week he sees as being divided, and ending with the destruction of the temple.

That he appears to hold to the Seder Olam chronology or one close to it is seen from what he says: *“Then, from the seventy years' captivity, and the restoration of the people into their own land to the captivity in the time of Vespasian, are comprised four hundred and ten years”*

There are some problems however. He does seem to have problems with the length of times for various dynasties, and unless there were some errors in the original manuscript it is hard to see how to reconcile them. However on the main points: 1. Division into three parts 2. Start point and end point all agree with the Jewish view.

The next of the Church Fathers is Julius Africanus [160-240 CE.] In his Extant Fragments of the Five Books of the Chronography of Julius Africanus he discusses Daniel 9. He is clearly not following the Seder Olam, but has some significant differences with the secular chronology.

He starts the period from *“the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia.”* However he states that this is *“the 115th year of the sovereignty of the Persians.”* This would be 422 BCE according to the secular chronology instead of 445 which is the secular date for the 20th year of Artaxerxes. He also seems to have problems with the length of the Greek domination. He states: *“we find the sovereignty of the Persians comprising a period of 230 years, and that of the Macedonians extending over 370 years, and from that to the 16th(1) year of Tiberius Caesar is a period of about 60 years”* This would mean a total of 660 years from the time of Cyrus. But according to the secular chronology 660 years after Cyrus is the year 122 CE.

His actual calculation of the 70 weeks starts at Artaxerxes. It is complex so let me quote it in full:

“3. It is by calculating from Artaxerxes, therefore, up to the time of Christ that the seventy weeks are made up, according to the numeration of the Jews. For from Nehemiah, who was despatched by Artaxerxes to build Jerusalem in the 115th year of the Persian empire, and the 4th year of the 83d Olympiad, and the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes himself, up to this date, which was the second year of the 202d Olympiad, and the 16th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, there are reckoned 475 years, which make 490 according to the Hebrew numeration, as they measure the years by the course of the moon; so that, as is easy to show, their year consists of 354 days, while the solar year has 365 1/4 days. For the latter exceeds the period of twelve months, according to the moon's course, by 11 1/4 days. Hence the Greeks and the Jews insert three intercalary months every 8 years. For 8 times 11 1/4 days makes up 3 months. Therefore 475 years make 59 periods of 8 years each, and 3 months besides. But since thus there are 3 intercalary months every 8 years, we get thus 15 years minus a few days; and these being added to the 475 years, make up in all the 70 weeks.”

The 4th year of the 83rd Olympiad comes out to be 446/445 (331 years) one year off. This places the start of the Persian Empire at 561 BCE. The 2nd year of the 202nd Olympiad comes out to be 29/30 CE (805 years). Tiberius became Caesar in 14 CE, so his 16th year would be 30 CE. The period between these two events is 475 years.

His ‘adjustment’ of the years is also interesting and foreshadows what will later be used in the most popular modern interpretation, as I mentioned in part 5. He is saying that since a year is 12 months and they add 3 months every 8 years, we need to see how many extra years there are. They come out to be about 15, which when added to 475 is equal to the required 490 years.³⁶

However the problem is the same here. The Jewish calendar is lunar-solar as it is adjusted for the seasons because the Torah says that Passover needs to be in the spring. A year is from the 1st day of Nisan until the next 1st day of Nisan no matter how many days. How many months to a year is never mentioned in the Tenach with regards to years. This is just an artificial way of getting his desired result.

To summarize: Africanus adopts a secular chronology (with some modifications). He has only one period of 70 weeks without division. He starts from Artaxerxes and introduces a mathematical calculation to get to his desired date.

Tertillian (160 – 220 CE) in his “Answer to The Jews” CHAP. VIII.—of the times of Christ’s birth and passion, and of Jerusalem’s destruction discusses Daniel 9. I have to say that his explanation is the one that is the strangest and hardest to justify for many reasons.

First he divides the period into two parts, but the way he does it is unique. The first period is 62 ½ weeks until the birth of Jesus as he says: “*There are, (then,) made up 337 years, 5 months: (whence are filled up 62 hebdomads and an half: which make up 437 years, 6 months:) on the day of the birth of Christ.*”

He starts his calculation from the time of Daniel’s prophecy: “*We shall count, moreover, from the first year of Darius, as at this particular time is shown to Daniel this particular vision; for he says, "And understand and conjecture that at the completion of thy word(8) I make thee these answers." Whence we are bound to compute from the first year of Darius, when Daniel saw this vision.*”

He ends the 70 weeks at the destruction of the temple: “*Vespasian, in the first year of his empire, subdues the Jews in war; and there are made 52 years, 6 months. For he reigned 11 years. And thus, in the day of their storming, the Jews fulfilled the 70 hebdomads predicted in Daniel.*”

Tertillian has a 106 year long Persian dynasty disagreeing with both the secular and Seder Olam calculation, although he does follow a Biblical chronology of 4 kings after Darius. He has the following: Darius 19 years; Artaxerxes 41 years; Ochus (who is also called Cyrus) 24 years; Argus one year; Darius, who is also named Melas, 21 years. After that he has Alexander for 12 years. He has 337 years 5 months from Alexander until the birth of Jesus. Then 52 years 6 months until the destruction of the Temple. None of this fits any chronology that we have.

While his view is unique still it has some similarities to the Biblical chronology. He starts Daniel at the time of Daniel himself, like the Ibn Ezra in Appendix 2. He likewise has the same number of kings as the Ibn Ezra. He ends it at the destruction of the temple. His total length of time is consistent with the Biblical chronology.

³⁶ It is quite amazing how he could do that without a calculator.

The next is Hippolytus [170-236 CE.] Hippolytus has an interesting approach. First he understands the period as divided into three as in the Jewish understanding. He states: *“Having mentioned therefore seventy weeks, and having divided them into two parts, in order that what was spoken by him to the prophet might be better understood, he proceeds thus, “Unto Christ the Prince shall be seven weeks, which make forty-nine years.”* He also mentions who he thinks is the ‘Christ’ after 7 weeks: *“Now of what Christ does he speak, but of Jesus the son of Josedech, who returned at that time along with the people”*

This would seem to indicate that he starts the 70 weeks at the same time as Seder Olam, with the destruction of the temple, however that is not the case, and so he seems to have a chronological error here. He states that: *“For after the return of the people from Babylon under the leadership of Jesus the son of Josedech, and Ezra the scribe, and Zerubbabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of David, there were 434 years unto the coming of Christ”* The problem is that for the secular chronology 434 years after this event is 103 BCE, much too early. And for the Seder Olam chronology it is 64 CE. Neither seems to fit.

What makes this worse is that he states: *“the Persians held the mastery for 330 years,(6) and after them the Greeks, who were yet more glorious, held it for 300 years”* Which does not fit the facts for anyone. The secular chronology has a little more than 200 for the Persians, and The Greeks were for a similar period. Seder Olam has the Persian period much smaller.

One other thing we see is that he has the kings in Daniel 11 as the Ibn Ezra does. *“For after Cyrus arose Darius, and then Artaxerxes. These were the three kings; (and) the Scripture is fulfilled. “And the fourth shall be far richer than they all.” Who is that but Darius, who reigned and made himself glorious,--who was rich, and assailed all the realms of Greece? Against him rose Alexander of Macedon”* None of this can fit in with his chronology of Persian and Macedon.

To summarize he does divide the periods as does the Jewish interpretation, and has the kings of Persian as does Ibn Ezra, He appears to start the 70 weeks at the same time as the Jewish interpretation, but because of his serious chronological errors it is impossible to make anything fit clearly.

In his "Demonstrations" Aphrahat (270 - 345 CE) mentions Daniel and his calculation of the weeks a few times. He does not give a full accounting so it is hard to say exactly what he means. He states in Demonstration 21: *“And Jerusalem has been inhabited, after the Babylonians laid it waste, during those seventy weeks about which Daniel testified.”* This indicates he counts the 70 weeks from when they returned under Darius the Mede or possibly Cyrus, until the city is laid waste again under the Romans. In the 17th Demonstration he says: *“After sixty-two weeks shall Messiah come and shall be slain.”* This would indicate that he divides the period into three: 7, 62, 1. However the specifics for the 7 years, or the last year are not clear.

From this we see that he does not appear to be using either the secular or the Biblical chronology. According to the Biblical chronology 490 years from the time of Cyrus is many years after the destruction. In the secular chronology the time from Cyrus is too short. Even if we start in the 20th year of Artaxerxes we end up with a date of 44 CE. His placement of the 62 weeks is also unclear. If we count the 62 weeks from the beginning leaving 8 weeks until the destruction we have a date of 14 CE.

Cyril of Jerusalem [315-386] in his Catechetical Lectures has a totally different approach. He starts the calculation from Darius the Mede³⁷ (one year before Cyrus) as he says: “*Now Darius the Mede(9) built the city in the sixth year of his own reign, and first year of the 66th Olympiad according to the Greeks*” This comes out to 517/516 (260 years). However the secular chronology has the 6th year as 515 BCE. He ends it 483 years later when Herod becomes king as he says: “*And Herod is king in the 186th Olympiad, in the 4th year thereof.*” This comes out to 34/33 BCE (743 years). However his intention here is unclear. While there are 483 years between these two events, the significance of the year 34/33 BCE is unclear. Herod became king in 42 BCE. The final week is not interpreted.

Cyril uses the secular chronology, and divides the period in two. The first period starts with Darius’ 6th year and ends in the middle of Herod’s reign. He ends his commentary with these words: “*Of the times, therefore, thou hast for the present this proof, although there are also other different interpretations concerning the aforesaid weeks of years in Daniel.*”

Sulpitius Severus (363 – 425 CE). In his “The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus”, BOOK II. CHAPTER XI he discusses Daniel. First he states: “*But from the restoration of the temple to its destruction, which was completed by Titus under Vespasian, when Augustus was consul, there was a period of four hundred and eighty-three years. That was formerly predicted by Daniel, who announced that from the restoration of the temple to its overthrow there would elapse seventy³⁸ and nine weeks.*” Here we see that he has two periods 69 weeks and 1 week, and that the 69 weeks starts at the restoration of the Temple and ends at its destruction by the Romans. This places the restoration of the Temple at 412 BCE.

He gives another piece of information which appears to cause some problems. He states: “*But the completion of the restored city is related to have been effected in the thirty-second year of the reign of Artaxerxes. From that time to the crucifixion of Christ; that is, to the time when Fufius Geminus and Rubellius were consuls, there elapsed three hundred and ninety and eight years.*” He places the death of Jesus 398 years after the city is completed. The question is this before, after or the same as the time of the restoration of the temple?

He also states that: “*Now, from the date of the captivity of the Jews until the time of the restoration of the city, there were two hundred and sixty years.*” This means the city was restored according to the scholarly chronology in 326 BCE. That would mean Jesus was killed 71 CE, much too late. However the situation is worse for the Biblical chronology, so he must have a chronology which has more years than for the secular chronology.

To conclude, Sulpitius Severus has only two periods, one of 69 weeks and the other of 1 week which he does not detail. Daniel’s prophecy is to end at the destruction of the temple. He starts it when the Temple is restored, but his Persian chronology appears to be longer than the secular one. He seems to be using the following dates: 627 BCE for the captivity of the Jews; 414 BCE for the restoration of the Temple; and 367 for the restoration of the City. This is using 70 CE for the destruction of the Temple and 30 CE for the death of Jesus. We see that the captivity is too early and the restorations too late.

³⁷ This should be Darius the Persian, as it was he who allowed the building of the city in his 6th year.

³⁸ The text says seventy, but it is clear that it should be sixty.

What we see from here is that the early church fathers wanted to use Daniel 9 as a prophecy for Jesus, but had problems finding a way to fit the interpretation to the chronology. Not one of them agrees with the other, nor do they agree with what is presently presented as the Christian interpretation of Daniel 9. Many also needed to work into their chronology the destruction of the Second Temple. Many of the Church Fathers seemed to be working from a chronology closer to the Seder Olam, but they all seem to have some confusion, even those who are using a chronology that is much closer to the secular one.

This contrasts with the Jewish view which maintains a greater consistency. The Jewish view always ends at the same place and divides the 70 weeks into the same three periods. Even though there is a disagreement between when it starts and whether there are 3 or 4 kings, the number of years are not as different as we find in the Church Fathers.

Appendix 4b Texts from Church Fathers

The Fathers appear in Alphabetical order.

APHRAHAT

THE "DEMONSTRATIONS" OF APHRAHAT.

Demonstration V.--OF WARS.

21. And concerning the saints of the Most High (Daniel) said thus:--They shall inherit the Kingdom for ever.(1) For these rested a little from the burden of kings and princes,(2) namely, from after the death of Antiochus till the sixty-two weeks were fulfilled. And the Son of Man came to free them and gather them together, but they did not receive Him.

Demonstration XVII.--OF CHRIST THE SON OF GOD.

10. But, thou fool, the prophets suffer thee not to say that Christ has not yet come; for Daniel confutes thee,(6) saying:--After sixty-two weeks shall Messiah come and shall be slain. And in His coming shall the Holy City be laid waste, and her end shall be with a flood. And until the accomplishment of the things that are determined, shall she continue in desolation.

Demonstration XXI.--OF PERSECUTION

4. And from the time that Jerusalem was laid waste by the Babylonians until the present time is nine hundred and fifty-five years. And Jerusalem has been inhabited, after the Babylonians laid it waste, during those seventy weeks about which Daniel testified. Then it was laid waste in its last destruction by the Romans, and it shall not be inhabited again for ever, for it abideth in desolation until the accomplishment of the things determined.(2) So then, all the years of the former and latter desolation of Jerusalem have been four hundred and sixty-five years, and when thou dost deduct from them the seventy years of Babylon, they have been three hundred and ninety-five years

Clement of Alexander: The Stromata, or Miscellanies

CHAP. XXI.--THE JEWISH INSTITUTIONS AND LAWS OF FAR HIGHER ANTIQUITY THAN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE GREEKS.

From the captivity at Babylon, which took place in the time of Jeremiah the prophet, was fulfilled what was spoken by Daniel the prophet as follows: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to seal sins, and to wipe out and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies. Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the word commanding an answer to be given, and Jerusalem to be built, to Christ the Prince, are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; and the street shall be again built, and the wall; and the times shall be expended. And after the sixty-two weeks the anointing shall be overthrown, and judgment shall not be in him; and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary along with the coming Prince. And they shall be destroyed in a flood, and to the end of the war shall be cut off by: desolations. And he shall confirm the covenant with many

for one week; and in the middle of the week the sacrifice and oblation shall be taken away; and in the holy place shall be the abomination of desolations, and until the consummation of time shall the consummation be assigned for desolation. And in the midst of the week shall he make the incense of sacrifice cease, and of the wing of destruction, even till the consummation, like the destruction of the oblation."(1) *That the temple accordingly was built in seven weeks, is evident; for it is written in Esdras. And thus Christ became King of the Jews, reigning in Jerusalem in the fulfilment of the seven weeks. And in the sixty and two weeks the whole of Judaea was quiet, and without wars. And Christ our Lord, "the Holy of Holies," having come and fulfilled the vision and the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Holy Spirit of His Father. In those "sixty and two weeks," as the prophet said, and "in the one week," was He Lord. The half of the week Nero held sway, and in the holy city Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius. And Vespasian rose to the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place. And that such are the facts of the case, is clear to him that is able to understand, as the prophet said.*

The captivity lasted for seventy years, and ended in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, who had become king of the Persians, Assyrians, and Egyptians; in whose reign, as I said above, Haggai and Zechariah and the angel of the twelve prophesied. And the high priest was Joshua the son of Josedec. The times of the Persians are accordingly summed up thus: Cyrus reigned thirty years; Cambyses, nineteen; Darius, forty-six; Xerxes, twenty-six; Artaxerxes, forty-one; Darius, eight; Artaxerxes, forty-two; Ochus or Arses, three. The sum total of the years of the Persian monarchy is two hundred and thirty-five years.

Alexander of Macedon, having despatched this Darius, during this period, began to reign. Similarly, therefore, the times of the Macedonian kings are thus computed: Alexander, eighteen years; Ptolemy the son of Lagus, forty years; Ptolemy Philadelphus, twenty-seven years; then Euergetes, five-and-twenty years; then Philopator, seventeen years; then Epiphanes, four-and-twenty years; he was succeeded by Philometer, who reigned five-and-thirty years; after him Physcon, twenty-nine years; then Lathurus, thirty-six years; then he that was surnamed I Dionysus, twenty-nine years; and last Cleopatra reigned twenty-two years. And after her was the reign of the Cappadocians for eighteen days.

Accordingly the period embraced by the Macedonian kings is, in all, three hundred and twelve years and eighteen days.

And from the taking of Babylon to the death of Alexander, a hundred and eighty-six years. From this to the victory of Augustus, when Antony killed himself at Alexandria, two hundred and ninety-four years, when Augustus was made consul for the fourth time. And from this time to the games which Domitian instituted at Rome, are a hundred and fourteen years; and from the first games to the death of Commodus, a hundred and eleven years.

Then, from the seventy years' captivity, and the restoration of the people into their own land to the captivity in the time of Vespasian, are comprised four hundred and ten years: Finally, from Vespasian to the death of Commodus, there are ascertained to be one hundred and twenty-one years, six months, and twenty-four days.

Demetrius, in his book, On the Kings in Judaea, says that the tribes of Juda, Benjamin, and Levi were not taken captive by Sennacherim; but that there were from this captivity to the last, which Nabuchodonosor made out of Jerusalem, a hundred and twenty-eight years and six months; and from the time that the ten tribes were carried captive from Samaria till Ptolemy the Fourth, were five hundred and seventy-three years, nine months; and from the time that the captivity from Jerusalem took place, three hundred and thirty-eight years and three months.

Philo himself set down the kings differently from Demetrius.

Besides, Eupolemus, in a similar work, says that all the years from Adam to the fifth year of Ptolemy Demetrius, who reigned twelve years in Egypt, when added, amount to five thousand a hundred and forty-nine; and from the time that Moses brought out the Jews from Egypt to the above-mentioned date, there are, in all, two thousand five hundred and eighty years. And from this time till the consulship in Rome of Caius Domitian and Casian, a hundred and twenty years are computed.

Cyril of Jerusalem CATECHETICAL LECTURES

19. But we seek still more clearly the proof of the time of His coming. For man being hard to persuade, unless he gets the very years fear a clear calculation, does not believe what is stated. What then is the season, and what the manner of the time? It is when, on the failure of the kings descended from Judah, Herod a foreigner succeeds to the kingdom? The Angel, therefore, who converses with Daniel says, and do thou now mark the words, And thou shalt know and understand: From the going forth of the word for making answer(7), and for the building of Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince are seven weeks and three score and two weeks(8). Now three score and nine weeks of years contain four hundred and eighty-three years. He said, therefore, that after the building of Jerusalem, four hundred and eighty-three years having passed, and the rulers having failed, then cometh a certain king of another race, in whose time the Christ is to be born. Now Darius the Mede(9) built the city in the sixth year of his own reign, and first year of the 66th Olympiad according to the Greeks. Olympiad is the name among the Greeks of the games celebrated after four years, because of the day which in every four years of the sun's courses is made up of the three(1)(supernumerary) hours in each year. And Herod is king in the 186th Olympiad, in the 4th year thereof. Now from the 66th to the 186th Olympiad there are 120 Olympiads intervening, and a little over. So then the 120 Olympiads make up 480 years: for the other three years remaining are perhaps taken up in the interval between the first and fourth years. And there thou hast the proof according to the Scripture which saith, From the going forth of the word that Jerusalem be restored and built until Messiah the Prince are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. Of the times, therefore, thou hast for the present this proof, although there are also other different interpretations concerning the aforesaid weeks of years in Daniel.

Hippolytus

The interpretation by Hippolytus, (bishop) of Rome, of the visions of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, taken in conjunction.(3)

7. Since, then, the Persians held the mastery for 330 years,(6) and after them the Greeks, who were yet more glorious, held it for 300 years, of necessity the fourth beast, as being strong and mightier than all that were before it, will reign 500 years. When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.

11. Since, then, the angel Gabriel also recounted these things to the prophet, as they have been understood by us, as they have also taken place, and as they have been all clearly described in the books of the Maccabees, let us see further what he says on the other weeks. For when he read the book of Jeremiah the prophet, in which it was written that the sanctuary would be desolate seventy years, he made confession with fastings and supplications, and prayed that the people might return sooner from their captivity to the city Jerusalem. Thus, then, he speaks in his account: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was king over the realm of the Chaldeans, I Daniel understood in the books the number of the years, as the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishment of the desolation of Jerusalem in seventy years," etc.

12. After his confession and supplication, the angel says to him, "Thou art a man⁽¹⁾ greatly beloved:" for thou desirest to see things of which thou shalt be informed by me; and in their own time these things will be fulfilled; and he touched me, saying, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to seal up sins and to blot out transgressions, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy; and thou shalt know and understand, that from the going forth of words for the answer, and for the building of Jerusalem, unto Christ the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks."

13. Having mentioned therefore seventy weeks, and having divided them into two parts, in order that what was spoken by him to the prophet might be better understood, he proceeds thus, "Unto Christ the Prince shall be seven weeks," which make forty-nine years. It was in the twenty-first year that Daniel saw these things in Babylon. Hence, the forty-nine years added to the twenty-one, make up the seventy years, of which the blessed Jeremiah spake: "The sanctuary shall be desolate seventy years from the captivity that befell them under Nebuchadnezzar; and after these things the people will return, and sacrifice and offering will be presented, when Christ is their Prince."⁽²⁾

14. Now of what Christ does he speak, but of Jesus the son of Josedech, who returned at that time along with the people, and offered sacrifice according to the law, in the seventieth year, when the sanctuary was built? For all the kings and priests were styled Christs, because they were anointed with the holy oil, which Moses of old prepared. These, then, bore the name of the Lord in their own persons, showing aforesaid the type, and presenting the image until the perfect King and Priest appeared from heaven, who alone did the will of the Father; as also it is written in Kings: "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do all things according to my heart."⁽³⁾

15. In order, then, to show the time when He is to come whom the blessed Daniel desired to see, he says, "And after seven weeks there are other threescore and two weeks," which period embraces the space of 434 years. For after the return of the people from Babylon under the leadership of Jesus the son of Josedech, and Ezra the scribe, and Zerubbabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of David, there were 434 years unto the coming of Christ, in order that the Priest of priests might be manifested in the world, and that He who taketh away the sins of the world might be evidently set forth, as John speaks concerning Him: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!"⁽¹⁾ And in like manner Gabriel says: "To blot out transgressions, and make reconciliation for sins." But who has blotted out our transgressions? Paul the apostle teaches us, saying, "He is our peace who made both one;"⁽²⁾ and then, "Blotting out the handwriting of sins that was against us."⁽³⁾

30. "There shall stand up yet three kings," he says, "in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all." This has been fulfilled. For after Cyrus arose Darius, and then Artaxerxes. These were the three kings; (and) the Scripture is fulfilled. "And the fourth shall be far richer than they all." Who is that but Darius, who reigned and made himself glorious,--who was rich, and assailed all the realms of Greece? Against him rose Alexander of Macedon, who destroyed his kingdom; and after he had reduced

the Persians, his own kingdom was divided toward the four winds of heaven. For Alexander at his death divided his kingdom into four principalities. "And a king shall stand up, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of Egypt."

39. Thus, then, does the prophet set forth these things concerning the Antichrist, who shall be shameless, a war-maker, and despot, who, exalting himself above all kings and above every god, shall build the city of Jerusalem, and restore the sanctuary. Him the impious will worship as God, and will bend to him the knee, thinking him to be the Christ. He shall cut off the two witnesses and forerunners of Christ, who proclaim His glorious kingdom from heaven, as it is said: "And I will give (power) unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."(3) As also it was announced to Daniel: "And one week shall confirm a covenant with many; and in the midst of the week it shall be that the sacrifice and oblation shall be removed"--that the one week might be shown to be divided into two. The two witnesses, then, shall preach three years and a half; and Antichrist shall make war upon the saints during the test of the week, and desolate the world, that what is written may be fulfilled: "And they shall make the abomination of desolation for a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

Julius Africanus The Extant Fragments of the Five Books of the Chronography of Julius Africanus

On the Seventy Weeks of Daniel.

1. This passage, therefore, as it stands thus, touches on many marvellous things. At present, however, I shall speak only of those things in it which bear upon chronology, and matters connected therewith. That the passage speaks then of the advent of Christ, who was to manifest Himself after seventy weeks, is evident. For in the Saviour's time, or from Him, are transgressions abrogated, and sins brought to an end. And through remission, moreover, are iniquities, along with offences, blotted out by expiation; and an everlasting righteousness is preached, different from that which is by the law, and visions and prophecies (are) until John, and the Most Holy is anointed. For before the advent of the Saviour these things were not yet, and were therefore only looked for. And the beginning of the numbers, that is, of the seventy weeks which make up 490 years, the angel instructs us to take from the going forth of the commandment to answer and to build Jerusalem. And this happened in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia. For Nehemiah his cup-bearer besought him, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be built. And the word went forth commanding these things; for up to that time the city was desolate. For when Cyrus, after the seventy years' captivity, gave free permission to all to return who desired it, some of them under the leadership of Jesus the high priest and Zorobabel, and others after these under the leadership of Esdra, returned, but were prevented at first from building the temple, and from surrounding the city with a wall, on the plea that that had not been commanded.

2. It remained in this position, accordingly, until Nehemiah and the reign of Artaxerxes, and the 115th year of the sovereignty of the Persians. And from the capture of Jerusalem that makes 185 years. And at that time King Artaxerxes gave order that the city should be built; and Nehemiah being despatched, superintended the work, and the street and the surrounding wall were built, as had been prophesied. And reckoning from that point, we make up seventy weeks to the time of Christ. For if we begin to reckon from any other point, and not from this, the periods will not correspond, and very many odd results will meet us. For if we begin the calculation of the seventy weeks from Cyrus and the first restoration, there will be upwards of one hundred years too many, and there will be a larger number if we begin from the day on which the angel gave the prophecy to Daniel, and a much larger number still

if we begin from the commencement of the captivity. For we find the sovereignty of the Persians comprising a period of 230 years, and that of the Macedonians extending over 370 years, and froth that to the 16th(1) year of Tiberius Caesar is a period of about 60 years.

3. It is by calculating from Artaxerxes, therefore, up to the time of Christ that the seventy weeks are made up, according to the numeration of the Jews. For from Nehemiah, who was despatched by Artaxerxes to build Jerusalem in the 115th year of the Persian empire, and the 4th year of the 83d Olympiad, and the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes himself, up to ibis date, which was the second year of the 202d Olympiad, and the 16th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, there are reckoned 475 years, which make 490 according to the Hebrew numeration, as they measure the years by the course of the moon; so that, as is easy to show, their year consists of 354 days, while the solar year has 365 1/4 days. For the latter exceeds the period of twelve months, according to the moon's course, by 11 1/4 days. Hence the Greeks and the Jews insert three intercalary months every 8 years. For 8 times 11 1/4 days makes up 3 months. Therefore 475 years make 59 periods of 8 years each, and 3 months besides. But since thus there are 3 intercalary months every 8 years, we get thus 15 years minus a few days; and these being added to the 475 years, make up in all the 70 weeks.

SULPITIUS SEVERUS
THE SACRED HISTORY OF SULPITIUS SEVERUS.
BOOK II. CHAPTER XI.

There was at that time at Babylon one Nehemiah, a servant of the king, a Jew by birth, and very much beloved by Artaxerxes on account of the services he had rendered. He, having inquired of his fellow-countrymen the Jews, what was the condition of their ancestral city; and having learned that his native land remained in the same fallen condition as before, is said to have been disturbed with all his heart, and to have prayed to God with groans and many tears. He also called to mind the sins of his nation, and urgently entreated the divine compassion. Accordingly, the king noticing that he, while waiting at table, seemed more sorrowful than usual, asked him to explain the reasons of his grief. Then he began to bewail the misfortunes of his nation, and the ruin of his ancestral city, which now, for almost two hundred and fifty years, being leveled with the ground, furnished a proof of the evils which had been endured, and a gazing-stock to their enemies. He therefore begged the king to grant him the liberty of going and restoring it. The king yielded to these dutiful entreaties, and immediately sent him away with a guard of cavalry, that he might the more safely accomplish his journey, giving him, at the same time, letters to the rulers requesting them to furnish him with all that was necessary. When he arrived at Jerusalem, he distributed the work connected with the city to the people, man by man; and all vied with each other in carrying out the orders which they received. And already the work of rebuilding[1] had been half accomplished, when the jealousy of the surrounding heathen burst out, and the neighboring cities conspired to interrupt the works, and to deter the Jews from building. But Nehemiah, having stationed guards against those making assaults upon the people, was in no degree alarmed, and carried out what he had begun. And thus, after the wall was completed, and the entrances of the gates finished, he measured out the city for the construction by families of houses within it. He reckoned, also, that the people were not adequate in numbers to the size of the city; for there were not more of them than fifty thousand of both sexes and of all ranks--to such an extent had their formerly enormous numbers been reduced by frequent wars, and by the multitude kept in captivity. For, of old, those two tribes, of whom the remaining people were all that survived, had, when the ten tribes were separated from them, been able to furnish three hundred and twenty thousand armed men. But being given up by God, on account

of their sin, to death and captivity, they had sunk down to the miserably small number which they now presented. This company, however, as I have said, consisted only of the two tribes: the ten[2] which had previously been carried away being scattered among the Parthians, Medes, Indians, and Ethiopians never returned to their native country, and are to this day held under the sway of barbarous nations. But the completion of the restored city is related to have been effected in the thirty-second year of the reign of Artaxerxes. From that time to the crucifixion of Christ; that is, to the time when Fufius Geminus and Rubellius were consuls, there elapsed three hundred and ninety and eight years. But from the restoration of the temple to its destruction, which was completed by Titus under Vespasian, when Augustus was consul, there was a period of four hundred and eighty-three years. That was formerly predicted by Daniel, who announced that from the restoration of the temple to its overthrow there would elapse seventy and nine weeks. Now, from the date of the captivity of the Jews until the time of the restoration of the city, there were two hundred and sixty years.

Tertillian in his "Answer to The Jews"

CHAP. VIII.--OF THE TIMES OF CHRIST'S BIRTH AND PASSION, AND OF JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION.

Accordingly the times must be inquired into of the predicted and future nativity of the Christ, and of His passion, and of the extermination of the city of Jerusalem, that is, its devastation. For Daniel says, that "both the holy city and the holy place are exterminated together with the coming Leader, and that the pinnacle is destroyed unto ruin."(7) And so the times of the coming Christ, the Leader,(8) must be inquired into, which we shall trace in Daniel; and, after computing them, shall prove Him to be come, even on the ground of the times prescribed, and of competent signs and operations of His. Which matters we prove, again, on the ground of the consequences which were ever announced as to follow His advent; in order that we may believe all to have been as well fulfilled as foreseen.

In such wise, therefore, did Daniel predict concerning Him, as to show both when and in what time He was to set the nations free; and how, after the passion of the Christ, that city had to be exterminated. For he says thus: "In the first year under Darius, son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who reigned over the kingdom of the Chaldees, I Daniel understood in the books the number of the years. ... And while I was yet speaking in my prayer, behold, the man Gabriel, whom I saw in the vision in the beginning, flying; and he touched me, as it were, at the hour of the evening sacrifice, and made me understand, and spake with me, and said, Daniel I am now come out to imbue thee with understanding; in the beginning of thy supplication went out a word. And I am come to announce to thee, because thou art a man of desires;(1) and ponder thou on the word, and understand in the vision. Seventy hebdomads have been abridged(2) upon thy commonalty, and upon the holy city, until delinquency be made inveterate, and sins sealed, and righteousness obtained by entreaty, and righteousness eternal introduced; and in order that vision and prophet may be sealed, and an holy one of holy ones anointed. And thou shalt know, and thoroughly see, and understand, from the going forth of a word for restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem unto the Christ, the Leader, hebdomads (seven and an half, and(3))62i and an half: and it shall convert, and shall be built into height and entrenchment, and the times shall be renewed: and after these 62 hebdomads shall the anointing be exterminated, and shall not be; and the city and the holy place shall he exterminate together with the Leader, who is making His advent; and they shall be cut short as in a deluge, until (the) end of a war, which shall be cut short unto ruin. And he shall confirm a testament in many. In one hebdomad and the half of the hebdomad shall be taken away

my sacrifice and libation, and in the holy place the execration of devastation, (and(4)) until the end of (the) time consummation shall be given with regard to this devastation."(5)

Observe we, therefore, the limit,--how, in truth, he predicts that there are to be 70 hebdomads, within which if they receive Him, "it shall be built into height and entrenchment, and the times shall be renewed." But God, foreseeing what was to be--that they will not merely not receive Him, but will both persecute and deliver Him to death--both recapitulated, and said, that in 62 and an half of an hebdomad He is born, and an holy one of holy ones is anointed; but that when 7 hebdomads(6) and an half were fulfilling, He had to suffer, and the holy city had to be exterminated after one and an half hebdomad--whereby namely, the seven and an half hebdomads have been completed. For he says thus: "And the city and the holy place to be exterminated together with the leader who is to come; and they shall be cut short as in a deluge; and he shall destroy the pinnacle unto ruin."(7) Whence, therefore, do we showy that the Christ came within the 62 and an half hebdomads? We shall count, moreover, from the first year of Darius, as at this particular time is shown to Daniel this particular vision; for he says, "And understand and conjecture that at the completion of thy word(8) I make thee these answers." Whence we are bound to compute from the first year of Darius, when Daniel saw this vision.

Let us see, therefore, how the years are filled up until the advent of the Christ:--

For Darius reigned . . . 19 years.

Artaxerxes reigned . . . 41 years.

Then King Ochus (who is also called Cyrus) reigned. 24 years.

Argusone year.

Another Darius, who is also named Melas, 21 years.

Alexander the Macedonian, 12 years.

Then, after Alexander, who had reigned over both Medes and Persians, whom he had reconquered, and had established his kingdom firmly in Alexandria, when withal he called that (city) by his own name; (10) after him reigned, (there, in Alexandria,)

Soter 35 years.

To whom succeeds Philadelphus, reigning 38 years.

To him succeeds Euergetes, 25 years.

Then Philopator 17 years

After him Epiphanes, 24 years.

Then another Euergetes 29 years.

Then another Soter 38 years.

Ptolemy 37 years.

Cleopatra 20 years 5 months.

Yet again Cleopatra reigned jointly with Augustus. 13 years.

After Cleopatra, Augustus reigned other. 43 years.

For all the years of the empire of Augustus were 56 years.

Let us see, moreover, how in the forty-first year of the empire of Augustus, when he has been reigning for 28 years after the death of Cleopatra, the Christ is born. (And the same Augustus survived, after Christ is born, 15 years; and the remaining times of years to the day of the birth of Christ will bring us to the 41 year, which is the 28 of Augustus after the death of Cleopatra.) There are, (then,) made up 337 years, 5 months: (whence are filled up 67 hebdomads and an half: which make up 437 years, 6 months:) on the day of the birth of Christ. And (then) "righteousness eternal" was manifested, and "an Holy One of holy ones was anointed"--that is, Christ--and "sealed was vision and prophet," and "sins" were remitted, which, through faith in the name of Christ, are washed away(1) for all who believe on Him.

But what does he mean by saying that "vision and prophecy are sealed?" That all prophets ever announced of Him that He was to come and had to suffer. Therefore, since the prophecy was fulfilled through His advent, for that reason he said that "vision and prophecy were sealed;" inasmuch as He is the signet of all prophets, fulfilling all things which in days bygone they had announced of Him.(2) For after the advent of Christ and His passion there is no longer "vision or prophet" to announce Him as to come. In short, if this is not so, let the Jews exhibit, subsequently to Christ, any volumes of prophets, visible miracles wrought by any angels,(such as those) which in bygone days the patriarchs saw until the advent of Christ, who is now come; since which event "sealed is vision and prophecy," that is, confirmed. And justly does the evangelist(3) write, "The law and the prophets (were) until John" the Baptist. For, on Christ's being baptized, that is, on His sanctifying the waters in His own baptism,(4) all the plenitude of bygone spiritual grace-gifts ceased in Christ, sealing as He did all vision and prophecies, which by His advent He fulfilled. Whence most firmly does he assert that His advent "seals visions and prophecy."

Accordingly, showing, (as we have done,) both the number of the years, and the time of the 62 and a half fulfilled hebdomads, on completion of which, (we have shown) that Christ is come, that is, has been born, let us see what (mean) other "7 and an half hebdomads," which have been subdivided in the abscision of(5) the former hebdomads; (let us see, namely,) in what event they have been fulfilled:--

*For, after Augustus who survived after the birth of Christ, are made up 15 years.
To whom succeeded Tiberius Caesar, and held the empire 20 years, 7 months, 28 days.*

(In the fiftieth year of his empire Christ suffered being about 30 years of age when he suffered.)

Again Caius Caesar, also called Caligula, . . . 3 years, 8 months, 13 days.

Nero Caesar, . . . 11 years, 9 months, 8 days .

Galba 7 months, 6 days.

Otho 3 days.

Vitellius, . . . 8 mos., 27 days.

Vespasian, in the first year of his empire, subdues the Jews in war; and there are made 52 years, 6 months. For he reigned 11 years. And thus, in the day of their storming, the Jews fulfilled the 70 hebdomads predicted in Daniel.

Therefore, when these times also were completed, and the Jews subdued, there afterwards ceased in that place "libations and sacrifices," which thenceforward have not been able to be in that place celebrated; for "the unction," too,(6) was "exterminated" in that place after the passion of Christ. For it had been predicted that the unction should be exterminated in that place; as in the Psalms it is prophesied, "They exterminated my hands and feet."(7) And the suffering of this "extermination" was perfected within the times of the 70 hebdomads, under Tiberius Caesar, in the consulate of Rubellius Geminus and Fufius Geminus, in the month of March, at the times of the passover, on the eighth day before the calends of April,(8) on the first day of unleavened bread, on which they slew the lamb at even, just as had been enjoined by Moses.(9) Accordingly, all the synagogue of Israel did slay Him, saying to Pilate, when he was desirous to dismiss Him, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children;"(10) and, "If thou dismiss him, thou art not a friend of Caesar;"(11) in order that all things might be fulfilled which had been written of Him.(12)