

THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM PRESENTED BY THE EXACTNESS OF DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS

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Abstract: *After critiquing various interpretations by conservative scholars for the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27, the present article argues that associating the starting date with Ezra's departure for Jerusalem, having authorization from Artaxerxes I to rebuild the city wall, is the correct understanding of the prophecy. This view, which J. Barton Payne classifies as the traditional view, was espoused by Isaac Newton, E. B. Pusey, Adam Clarke, and other interpreters, who noted that it is 490 years (70 weeks) to AD 33 from Ezra's authorization and departure for Jerusalem. The present study applies the tables of Parker and Dubberstein to locate the Gregorian (i.e., astronomically correct) month and day of Ezra's departure in 458 BC and the month and day of the resurrection in AD 33. When this is done, the traditional interpretation of Daniel's 70 weeks makes the prophecy exact not just to the year, but to the year, month, and day. The theological implication of this exactness is discussed.*

Key words: *Book of Daniel, 70 weeks, biblical prophecy, prophecy fulfillment, Parker and Dubberstein, Robert Anderson, Harold Hoehner, divine omniscience*

A sure way to lose friends and diminish one's influence among colleagues who formerly held one in esteem is to publish yet another dissertation on Daniel's 70 weeks. This will particularly be true if a claim is made that the 70 weeks, or 490 years, of Daniel 9:24 work out exactly to the day. Because of the failure of previous such attempts, J. Paul Tanner writes, "While others have tried to calculate the sixty-nine 'weeks' to the very day, it is better to exercise caution and not be overly speculative about this calculation for several reasons.... This is not to say that the prophecy *cannot* work out to the very day, but only that there are too many unknowns to us today to be able to substantiate this."¹

* Rodger C. Young resides at 1115 Basswood Lane, St. Louis, MO 63132. He may be contacted at rcyoung8@yahoo.com. Acknowledgments: My thanks to Steven Rudd, pastor in Hamilton, Ontario, who suggested in the fall of 2019 that we look more closely at the dates associated with the interpretation that we both held for Daniel's 70 weeks. This resulted in the calculation that is explained in Section IV. After this was done, one of our friends and correspondents, Paul Tanner of Rochester, NY (not the J. Paul Tanner cited below), informed us that Derek Walker, a pastor in Oxford, England, had done the same calculation and had posted it on his website, <https://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/>. Pastor Walker's work was especially useful in showing the errors in the calculations of Anderson and Hoehner, as explained in Section II.

¹ J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 585, 587n288. Because the dispensational viewpoint, which Tanner follows, separates the 70th week from the preceding 69 and makes it yet future, dispensationalists are concerned with determining a *terminus ad quem* for the 69 weeks, not for the 70th week.

I. VARIOUS STARTING TIMES FOR THE 490 YEARS

Following is an overview of the major positions taken by scholars on the starting year of the 70 (or 69) weeks. As a general principle only conservative scholars will be cited, since the views of commentators who take the position that Daniel's prophecies were a fraud perpetrated in the 2nd century BC will not be of help in determining how the weeks are to be measured, despite the critics' attempts to relate them to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.² For effective refutations of explanations that start with an anti-supernatural worldview and thus rule out *a priori* predictive prophecy, the reader can consult any comprehensive conservative commentary. See the commentaries also for the demonstration that Daniel's weeks (שָׁבָעִים) are periods of 7 years and that the מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד of Daniel 9:25 is Jesus the Messiah. These issues are well explained elsewhere and need not be addressed here. The issue that will be addressed is the various starting dates held by conservative scholars for the "going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Dan 9:25) that initiates the 70-week period. These are:

1. *The decree of Cyrus, 537 BC.*³ Those who take this view maintain that the 490 (or 483) years have to be either symbolic or (equivalently) very approximate because 483 years after 537 BC is 54 BC, too early for the ministry of the Messiah described in Daniel 9:24–25. Tanner cites Klieforth as originator of the symbolic view: "T. Klieforth, *Das Buch Daniels* (Schwerin: Sandmeyer, 1868), is said to be the first to establish exegetically the symbolic interpretation, and he is followed in this by both Keil and Leupold (all Lutheran exegetes)."⁴

2. *The seventh year of Artaxerxes I, 458 BC.*⁵ J. Barton Payne characterized this view, which he himself accepted, as the traditional view, citing Pusey as a chief early

² In the words of J. Barton Payne: "A dating of Daniel to the 2nd century B.C. is thus the result, fundamentally, of the presuppositions of skeptical criticism; and it stands opposed to the evidence and testimony. It makes the book's record of itself a deception; and it necessarily involves Jesus Christ—who believed that "Daniel the prophet" did predict Roman imperialism (Mt 24:15)—in a falsehood based on His presumed ignorance of Scripture." J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 372–73.

³ Though Babylon fell to the forces of Media, Persia, and their allies on October 12, 539 BC, and Cyrus himself entered the city 17 days later (*ANET*, 306b), he was at that time still under the suzerainty of his uncle, Cyaxares II (also known as Darius), king of the Medes. See Rodger C. Young, "Xenophon's Cyaxares: Uncle of Cyrus, Friend of Daniel," *JETS* 64.2 (2021): 265–85. A chronological note in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (8.7.1) indicates that Cyaxares/Darius died in late 538 BC. With this understanding, Cyrus's year one (Ezra 1:1) began on Nisan 1 of 537 BC.

⁴ Tanner, *Daniel*, 565n230. Keil is C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, trans. M. G. Easton (1872; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 399–402. Leupold is H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (1949; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), 418–19. Other commentators who take Cyrus's decree as the start of the 490 years and treat them symbolically are John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; originally published in Latin in 1561), 220; Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 206; M. G. Kline, "The Covenant of the Seventieth Week," in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. J. H. Skilton (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 452–69; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 452–53.

⁵ That the 7th year of Artaxerxes was 458/457 BC, not 457/456 as given by some interpreters, is shown in section III.3.

advocate, though Isaac Newton, Humphrey Prideaux, and Adam Clarke advocated it before Pusey.⁶ Given a starting point in 458 BC, the 490 years end in AD 33. This is the interpretation taken in the present article, but it does not seem to be advocated by much recent evangelical scholarship. Therefore a more detailed examination of the historical circumstances, along with a consideration of some of the biblical phrases that are often neglected, will be undertaken in Section III below.

3. *The 19th or 20th year of Artaxerxes, taken as 455 or 454 BC.* This view starts the 70 weeks at the point Nehemiah received permission to resume building the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 2:1–8) or from the time he expressed distress over the state of the city (Neh 1). Recognizing that measuring 483 or 490 years from the traditional date for Artaxerxes's 20th year, 445 BC, would extend beyond any reasonable date for Christ's ministry, Ernst Hengstenberg moved Artaxerxes's 20th year earlier, to 454 BC.⁷ He then dated his *terminus a quo* to 455 BC by making it the time of Nehemiah's prayer before Nisan of Artaxerxes's twentieth year. This would put the *terminus ad quem* of the 483 years as AD 29, the year of the anointing of the Messiah, that is, his baptism by John. Hengstenberg, and Ussher before him,⁸ supported this redating of Artaxerxes by references to various ancient authors, most notably Thucydides, who dated the coming of Themistocles to the Persian court in 474 BC, at which time the reigning king he met was taken to be Artaxerxes, not his father Xerxes. Hengstenberg then dated Artaxerxes's accession year to the time of Themistocles's arrival at the Persian court, 474 BC, thereby giving 455 BC as Artaxerxes's 19th year (Neh 1:1) and Hengstenberg's *terminus a quo* for Daniel's 483 years.⁹

This redating of Artaxerxes can no longer be maintained because of several considerations. One is that the statement of Thucydides that Artaxerxes was the reigning Persian monarch when Themistocles came to Persia is challenged by other

⁶ Payne, *Encyclopedia*, 387; Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 277–78. See Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament Connected*, 2 vols. (1716–1718; repr., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), 1:228–29; Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 4: *The Old Testament: Volume IV—Isaiah to Malachi* (1817; repr., New York: Abingdon, n.d.), 4:602b; Isaac Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (1831; repr., Cave Junction, OR: Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, 1991), 131 (“Count the time from thence [Ezra's going up to Jerusalem] to the death of Christ and you will find it just 490 years.”); E. B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet: Nine Lectures, Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Oxford* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 189. Others who start the 490 years in the 7th (or 6th) year of Artaxerxes include Carl August Auberlen, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelations of St. John*, trans. Adolph Saphir (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1856), 117–19; Charles Boutflower, *In and around the Book of Daniel* (London: SPCK, 1923), 206 (“The Weeks begin in the year 458 B.C., the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, and they end in the year A.D. 33.”); Robert J. M. Gurney, “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24–27,” *ExQ* 53.1 (1981): 32; James Montgomery Boice, *Daniel: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 109; Robert Johns, *The Visions of Daniel the Hebrew Prophet* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow, 2012), 237 (“The decree issued to Ezra by Artaxerxes in 458 BCE provides a near-perfect resolution of the chronological data described in Gabriel's message and therefore must be the one God intended.”).

⁷ Ernst Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, trans. Reuel Keith, abridged by Thomas Kerchever Arnold (1847; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970; original German publication 1828–1835), 437–54.

⁸ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, rev. Larry Pierce and Marion Pierce (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2003), 146. Originally published in 1658.

⁹ Hengstenberg, *Christology*, 448, 452.

Greek writers. Plutarch, in his life of Themistocles (chap. 27) relates that the authors “Ephorus and Dinon and Clitarchus and Heracleides and yet more besides have it that it was Xerxes to whom he came,” not Artaxerxes. Though Plutarch favored the account of Thucydides, he was so uncertain in this regard that in the subsequent narrative he never gives the name of the Persian king with whom Themistocles dealt, calling him only “the king.” But more concrete arguments show that the Persian king in 474 BC was Xerxes, not Artaxerxes:

- Redating Artaxerxes would give Xerxes a reign of only 12 years, 486 to 474 BC. The chronological notes of Esther 3:7, 9:1, and 9:14 indicate that Xerxes was still alive in his 14th year of reign.
- A contemporaneous contract tablet is dated to the 21st year of Xerxes, which is also stated as the accession year of Artaxerxes, in agreement with the conventional dating of Xerxes, 486 to 465 BC.¹⁰
- Parker and Dubberstein list contract texts dated to years 16, 20, and 21 of Xerxes.¹¹

Hengstenberg’s thesis cannot be rescued by assuming a coregency between Xerxes and Artaxerxes that started in 474 BC or at any other time. Artaxerxes was not the eldest son of Xerxes and hence not the heir presumptive. His older brother Darius held that position, so that the only possible coregent with Xerxes would have been Darius. According to almost all ancient historians, Darius was killed by Artabanus, Xerxes’s commander of the guard, after the death of Xerxes, with the consent of Artaxerxes because Artabanus had persuaded Artaxerxes that Darius was the murderer of Xerxes.¹² Consequently there was no time during the reign of Xerxes that Artaxerxes could have been recognized as the heir presumptive or coregent. All these considerations rule out Hengstenberg’s thesis that takes Artaxerxes’s 20th year as 454 BC and the *terminus a quo* for Daniel’s prophecy as 455 BC.

4. *The 20th year of Artaxerxes, taken as 445 or 444 BC.* This is probably the date most commonly accepted by recent conservative commentators. Its appeal is obvious: A major thesis of the book of Nehemiah is the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and Nehemiah was given authority to resume work on the wall in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1–10). The difficulty with this view is that the 69 weeks (483 years) would end in AD 39 or 40, too late for Christ’s ministry. Recognizing this problem, Julius Africanus (early 3rd century AD) proposed that the years of Daniel’s prophecy should not be reckoned as solar years, but as lunar years consisting of 354 days, thereby reducing the 483 years to 475.¹³ Africanus’s idea of shrinking the length of the year was adopted and modified by Robert Anderson, who utilized the concept of a prophetic year consisting of 12 months of 30 days each,

¹⁰ Julia Neuffer, “The Accession of Artaxerxes I,” *AUSS* 6.1 (1968): 62.

¹¹ Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—A.D. 75*, 2nd ed., BUS 19 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), 17.

¹² Neuffer writes: “One other ancient writer mentions the death of Xerxes: Aelian (3d century A.D. or earlier) says merely that he was ‘murdered at night in bed by his son.’ In attributing the murder of Xerxes to his son, he agrees with none of the other historians extant.” Neuffer, “Artaxerxes,” 67.

¹³ Julius Africanus, *Julius Africanus Chronographie: The Extant Fragments*, ed. Martin Wallruff, trans. William Adler, GCS 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 279–85.

giving 360 days per year.¹⁴ Anderson then claimed that his interpretation made the prophecy exact to the day, ending on the tenth of Nisan, AD 32, which he took as the date of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Recognizing the difficulty of dating the crucifixion and resurrection to AD 32, Harold Hoehner, still using the concept of prophetic years, moved everything one year later, once again claiming that the prophecy was exact to the day. The difficulties and errors in Anderson's and Hoehner's interpretations are the subject of the next section.

II. THE TIMESPANS OF ANDERSON AND HOEHNER ARE NOT EXACT

1. *Calculation in The Coming Prince by Robert Anderson.* Anderson's work, though published in 1881, has adherents to this day. His reasoning was as follows. He reckoned the 70th week as yet future, which is the standard dispensationalist viewpoint. Therefore, his concern in calculating was only with the first 69 weeks, that is, 483 years. His starting point was the fourth option discussed above, namely the permission that Artaxerxes, in his 20th year of reign, granted Nehemiah the authority to go to Jerusalem and restore its walls. Anderson took Artaxerxes's 20th year as 445 BC, and, though Nehemiah 2:1 says only that it was in the month of Nisan without giving the day, Anderson assumed it was Nisan 1.

Since 483 years from 445 BC is AD 39, too late to be the time of any event in the earthly ministry of our Lord, in what looks like a modification of Julius Africanus's "lunar years" discussed in the previous section, Anderson assumed that the 483 years were "prophetic years" consisting of 12 months of 30 days each for a total of 360 days per year.¹⁵ Though Anderson expressed his calculation in a different fashion, the effect of this assumption would be to compact the time by a factor that is the ratio of "real" (astronomical) years to "prophetic" years: $360 \div 365.242 = 0.98565$. Applying this shrinking factor to Daniel's 483 weeks gives 476.068 actu-

¹⁴ Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince: The Last Great Monarch of Christendom* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1881), 60–67.

¹⁵ Anderson, *Coming Prince*, 60–67. The present work should not be interpreted as denying that 360-day prophetic years have any place in Scripture. A comparison of Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; and 13:5 shows that prophetic or symbolic months of 30 days with corresponding years of 360 days play a significant part in the prophecies in the book of Revelation. The context of Daniel 9, however, strongly suggests that Judean lunisolar years are intended for the timespans in that chapter. The chapter thus begins (9:1, 2) with Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy for Babylonian dominance and Jerusalem's desolation, with no indication either in Jeremiah or Daniel that these years were to be taken in anything other than the traditional lunisolar sense. In 2 Chronicles 36:21, Jeremiah's 70 years are tied to the Sabbatical cycles, which were calculated according to the lunisolar calendar; to use prophetic years for these would dislocate the annual feasts by 6 months over the course of 35 years. The 70 years of the land enjoying its Sabbaths therefore imply that the Sabbatical years were not observed over a course of 490 years, suggesting the "70 weeks" or 490 years that appear later in the chapter. Consequently, even those commentators who use prophetic years for the 70 weeks later in chapter 9 do not use prophetic years for the 70 years that initiate the chapter and the prophecy. Many commentators also take the 70 "weeks" that are an expansion of Jeremiah's 70 years as representing 10 Jubilee cycles of 49 years each. But Jubilee cycles, like Sabbatical years, had to be calculated using Judea's lunisolar calendar rather than any 360-day year. A proper contextual study of Daniel chapter 9 therefore implies that the chapter is dealing throughout with lunisolar years, not prophetic years.

al (astronomical) years, or 476 years and 24.8 days (Anderson gives the excess as 24 days). Next Anderson consulted with the Astronomer Royal to get the equivalent of Nisan 1, 445 BC (his *terminus a quo*; Neh 2:1) in the Julian calendar as March 14, 445 BC. This is incorrect because Nisan 1 was never that early in the Hebrew calendrical system. According to Parker and Dubberstein, Nisan 1 in 445 BC was April 13, an error of 30 days from Anderson's March 14.¹⁶ He then stated that 476 years after March 14, 445 BC was March 14, AD 32. Anderson errs once again in that his 476 years are actual astronomical years, so that the beginning and ending points should be reckoned by the Gregorian (astronomically correct) calendar, not the Julian calendar. In 445 BC the Gregorian calendar was 5 days behind the Julian calendar, whereas in AD 32 it was only 2 days behind. This means that 476 years after March 14 Julian (March 9 Gregorian), 445 BC, was March 11 Julian (March 9, Gregorian), AD 32, not Anderson's March 14 Julian. Adding 24 days to his incorrect March 14, he determined that the 483 "prophetic years," or 476.068 actual/tropical years, ended on April 6, AD 32,¹⁷ which he took as Nisan 10, the day of the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem. He then declared that his calculation worked out "EXACTLY AND TO THE VERY DAY."¹⁸ But once again the Astronomer Royal's conversion between Judean dates and Julian dates led him astray. According to the tables of Parker and Dubberstein, April 6, AD 32 was Nisan 6, not Anderson's Nisan 10, and hence not the day of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem that Anderson took as his *terminus ad quem*. But the 30-day error in his starting date (March 14, 445 instead of Parker and Dubberstein's April 13) makes the error even greater.

2. *Calculation in Chronological Aspects by Harold Hoehner*. Harold Hoehner (1935–2009) taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, where he was chairman of the Department of New Testament Literature and Exegesis. As a NT scholar, he held to AD 33 as the year of the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection,¹⁹ in agreement with many other evangelical scholars,²⁰ thereby recognizing that Anderson's AD 32 was not tenable. Nevertheless, he agreed with four of Anderson's basic tenets: that the 70th week is yet future, that the *terminus a quo* of the 483 years was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1), that Nehemiah's commissioning should be dated to the first of Nisan (for which no textual support exists), and that "prophetic years" of 360 days each should be used in counting the elapsed time.

¹⁶ Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 32.

¹⁷ Twenty-four days after March 14 is April 7, not April 6.

¹⁸ Anderson, *Coming Prince*, 112. Small caps are in his original.

¹⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 114.

²⁰ See, for example, Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 368; Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 29, 30; Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 280–89; Tanner, *Daniel*, 560; Kurt Simmons, "A Chronology of the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ with Emphasis on the Epiphany and Nativity," *BSac* 178.709 (2021): 53, 54, 61–69; Andrew Steinmann, "Did It Take Forty-Six Years or More to Build the Temple in Jerusalem? Reconsidering John 2:20," *JETS* 65.2 (2022): 319–31.

In order to move the *terminus ad quem* one year later than Anderson's AD 32, Hoehner took Artaxerxes's 20th year as 444 BC rather than Anderson's 445.²¹ His date for Nisan 1, "March 4, or more likely March 5"²² would be February 27 or 28 according to the astronomically correct Gregorian calendar, which is unreasonable because Nisan 1 in the Hebrew calendar was never as early as 21 or 22 days before the spring equinox. This usage of an impossibly early date for Nisan 1 provides the first indication that Hoehner will adopt some dubious measures in order to produce an interpretation of the 70 weeks that is exact to the day as he claimed. Parker and Dubberstein give April 3 for Nisan 1 in 444 BC.²³ This should have been Hoehner's *terminus a quo*, assuming his 444 BC starting year (but see Section III.3 below).

Hoehner used the same shrinking factor as did Anderson to get from "prophetic years" to astronomically correct years. He then stated (correctly) that AD 33 was 476 years after 444 BC (no year zero), but, contrary to what he writes, 476 years after his *terminus a quo* of March 5, 444 BC is not March 5, AD 32. Similar to Anderson's mistake in this regard, he failed to realize that, because Gregorian dates were 5 days earlier than Julian dates in the 5th century BC but only 2 days earlier in the 1st century AD, 476 exact years after March 5 Julian (February 28 Gregorian) 444 BC was February 28 Gregorian or March 2 Julian, AD 33, 3 days earlier than Hoehner's mistaken date of March 5 Julian.²⁴ Then by adding the 25-day excess to his March 5, he arrived at March 30 as his *terminus ad quem*, which was Nisan 10 in AD 33²⁵ and, like Anderson, he gives this as the day of the triumphal entry. But the three-day error just explained means that this should be adjusted to Nisan 7, which is one full week before the day of Christ's death and thus too early to be the day of the triumphal entry. And the whole calculation is thrown off by about a month and a half when Hoehner's impossible date for Nisan 1 in 444 BC (March 5 instead of April 3 as given by Parker and Dubberstein) is considered. An examination of the calculations of both Anderson and Hoehner therefore naturally produces skepticism regarding any claim that the 483 (or 490) years of the prophecy of Daniel 9 are somehow exact to the day.

III. THE CASE FOR THE *TERMINUS A QUO* OF DANIEL 9:24, 25 BEING EZRA'S DEPARTURE FOR JERUSALEM IN NISAN, 458 BC

In Section I.2 it was stated that starting the 70 weeks with the 7th year of Artaxerxes was, according to J. Barton Payne, the traditional view, and several cita-

²¹ Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 127–29.

²² Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 138.

²³ Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 32.

²⁴ Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 138.

²⁵ This agrees with Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 46, if we take the customary assumption that Judea did not observe an intercalary month in AD 33. Since Hoehner was aware of and used Parker and Dubberstein's work elsewhere in *Chronological Aspects*, it appears he chose to disregard their tables when he was determining his *terminus a quo* in 444 BC to try to get the calculation to come out exactly, to the day.

tions were given for those who took this position. What follows shows that, once some ancillary issues are addressed, it is possible to accept a reasonable day, month, and year for the start of the 70 weeks. But first, some issues must be resolved:

1. Did Artaxerxes give Ezra the authority to restore Jerusalem's wall?
2. Can Ezra's going forth from Babylon with Artaxerxes's commissioning be the fulfillment of the promise that a word would go forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Dan 9:25)?
3. When Ezra departed for Jerusalem in Artaxerxes's 7th year, was it 458 BC or 457 BC?
4. In Daniel 9:27, is **הָצִי הַשְּׁבוּעַ** best translated as "in the middle/midst of the week" or "in one half/a half of the week"?
5. Once the best translation of **הָצִי הַשְּׁבוּעַ** is determined, what light does this shed on the activities given for this time period in Daniel 9:27?

1. *Ezra had authority from Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.* Did Artaxerxes authorize the rebuilding of the city, as required by Daniel 9:25? Payne answers in the affirmative. After discussing the rebuilding of the city that was supervised by Nehemiah in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, he explains:

There had been, however, an earlier beginning of restoring the walls under the same monarch, which had been thwarted by the Samaritans (Ezra 4:11, 12, 23). This original attempt must have occurred under Ezra (458 B.C.), whose decree from Artaxerxes granted him just such extended powers (7:18, 25; 9:9).²⁶

Similarly, Gurney:

Now Ezra 4:7–23 indicates that the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem (as opposed to the temple) was initiated by a group of Jews who came to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes I *before* the coming of Nehemiah. The only such group of Jews mentioned elsewhere is the group led by Ezra. According to Ezra 7:7, Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes—that is, 458 BC.²⁷

That Ezra had such authority is shown by the complaints of Israel's enemies that during the days of Artaxerxes and before the sending of Nehemiah to complete the task, construction had begun on Jerusalem's walls. Seeing that the reconstruction work was in progress, they wrote to Artaxerxes as follows:

Be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired.... We make known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River (Ezra 4:12, 13, 16, ESV).

²⁶ Payne, *Theology*, 277.

²⁷ Gurney, "Seventy Weeks," 32.

Ezra would not have undertaken building Jerusalem's walls, thus arousing the alarm of Judah's enemies, unless he had obtained authority from Artaxerxes to do so.

Despite the clear indication from Ezra 4 that Ezra had such authority, some may argue that taking the 7th year of Artaxerxes as the *terminus a quo* of Daniel's 70 weeks is done only because the chronology then works out so well with the years of Christ's ministry. But the author of the Artaxerxes I entry in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, who was interested in reconstructing events associated with that monarch and who presumably had no interest in Daniel's prophecies, also concluded that the events related in the book of Ezra showed that rebuilding Jerusalem's wall had commenced before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem:

Thus during the years of tension in Palestine under Artaxerxes I—i.e., before Nehemiah's time—the reconstruction of the wall of Jerusalem was suspended (by the 'army of Samaria'?) after the letter of accusation from the 'adversaries of Judah and Benjamin' had elicited an explicit command to that effect from the king (Ezra 4:8–23).²⁸

The verses here cited in *CAH* show that accepting that rebuilding of the wall was going on before Nehemiah came to Judah is not a matter of special pleading motivated by a desire to get the years of Daniel's prophecy to end conveniently in AD 33. It is a proper and even necessary inference from the texts in Ezra 4. That is the position taken in the present article, as also advocated by the commentators listed in footnote 6, who maintained that Ezra had authority to rebuild Jerusalem's wall.

2. The "going forth of a word" to rebuild Jerusalem refers to Ezra's departure from Babylon in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:9). The departure of Ezra for Jerusalem on Nisan 1 of Artaxerxes's seventh year provides a reasonable *terminus a quo* for the 70 weeks of Daniel 9. This can be shown by examining the Hebrew of Daniel 9:25 that gives the starting point of the 70 weeks:

מִן־מֶצֶא דְּבַר לְהָשִׁיב וּלְבָנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם

“From the going forth of a commandment [or “word,” *dābār*]
to return and to rebuild Jerusalem ...”

The going forth of a word (*dābār*) in this phrase is expressed by a noun associated with the common verb *yāšā*, to go out or to go forth. The idea of a word going forth is expressed in Isaiah 2:3 (echoed in Micah 4:2) using the same two root words: “The law will go out²⁹ from Zion, the word (*dābār*) of the Lord from Jerusalem” (NIV). Here a commandment (*dābār*) is spoken of as “going forth” (*yāšā*) when those who proclaim it go forth with it. In the Isaiah/Micah case, the one who gave the commandment was the Lord, but the going forth was when his messen-

²⁸ *CAH* 4:155 (1988).

²⁹ *tēšē*, fem. singular imperfect of *yāšā*, in agreement with the verb's subject, *tôrāh*, a feminine noun.

gers left Zion to proclaim the commandment. In a similar way, Artaxerxes gave the commandment at some unspecified time before Ezra went forth (*yāṣā*) with it, but, according to the same usage as in Isaiah/Micah, the actual going forth of the commandment was when Ezra left Babylon with that word/commandment. That was on Nisan 1, year 7 of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:9). Of all the candidates examined above for the *terminus a quo* of Daniel's prophecy, this is the only one that gives a specific day. The position of the present article, however, is not built on this fact; instead, the argument has been made that other considerations are sufficient to choose the general time of Ezra's departure as the most suitable *terminus a quo*. It then just happens that, once this position is taken, the *terminus a quo* can be specified not just according to the year, but according to the month and day. The month and day are specified, but was the year 458 or 457?

3. *Ezra's departure for Jerusalem was in Nisan of 458 BC, not Nisan of 457.* As discussed in Section II.2, Harold Hoehner adjusted his *terminus a quo* to be one year later than Anderson's 445 BC in order to put the *terminus ad quem* in AD 33 instead of Anderson's infeasible AD 32. This necessarily implied that the accession year of Artaxerxes I was the year that began in Nisan of 464 BC (464n) rather than the year beginning in Nisan of 465 (465n). Hoehner defended his 464n date for the beginning of Artaxerxes's rule as follows.³⁰ He argued that in the book of Nehemiah, the Judean Tishri-to-Tishri calendar that had been used for the kings of Judah was applied to Artaxerxes's reign. This is plausible and is supported by comparing Nehemiah 1:1 with 2:1, where 1:1 refers to the month of Kislev (November/December) in Artaxerxes's 20th year and in 2:1 it was still the 20th year although, by Persian reckoning, Nisan 1 marked the beginning of a new regnal year. Consequently, the case that Ezra and Nehemiah both applied Judea's Tishri-based calendar to the reign of Artaxerxes has much to commend it.

After this, however, the issue gets quite involved. Hoehner maintained (p. 127) that "Xerxes died shortly after December 17, 465 B.C. and Artaxerxes immediately succeeded him." This would make Artaxerxes's accession year, according to the Judean calendar, the year that began on Tishri 1 (October 19) of 465 (465t), so that his 20th year would be 445t. When Nehemiah heard the report of the sad state of Jerusalem in Kislev of that year, it would have been in November/December of 445 BC and Nehemiah's interview with Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1–9) would have been in Nisan of 444 BC, Hoehner's *terminus a quo* for Daniel's 69 weeks. This same reasoning would place Ezra's departure for Jerusalem (Nisan 1, Ezra 4:9) at the midpoint of Artaxerxes's 7th year 458t (465t – 7). This would be Nisan of 457 BC instead of the position taken in the current article that it was Nisan of 458.

The problem with Hoehner's analysis is that modern secular sources do not date the death of Xerxes to December of 465, but to August of that year.³¹ Since

³⁰ Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 127–28.

³¹ The impressive list of such authorities includes the following: (1) CAH 5:13n47: "A Babylonian eclipse text has 'Xerxes' son killed him' against a date equivalent to somewhere between 4 and 8 August (Stolper 1988 [B 15] 196–7)." (2) BNP 1:55: Artaxerxes I, "son of Xerxes and Amestris, ascended the throne in August 465 BC after the assassination of his father (Diod. Sic. II, 69.2–6) [I ch. 14]." (3) Lind-

August was before Tishri, this would, by Tishri reckoning, give the accession year of Artaxerxes as 466t instead of Hoehner's 465t, thereby correcting his *terminus a quo* from Nisan of 444 BC to Nisan of 445 BC and his *terminus ad quem* (using "prophetic years") to Nisan of AD 32 (so Anderson).

However, other biblical commentators also want to maintain Hoehner's December 465 date for the accession of Artaxerxes, so this issue needs to be addressed in more detail beyond merely citing the prestigious secular authorities who affirm that Artaxerxes's accession began in August, 4 months earlier. Writers who advocate Hoehner's date for when Artaxerxes began his reign can appeal to the following sources:

- A contemporary papyrus from Egypt, *AP* 6, dated to January 2/3, 464 BC, states that this was in the 21st year of Xerxes and also the accession year of Artaxerxes. In the words of Julia Neuffer, "Its double-year date, in the year 21 of Xerxes and the accession year of Artaxerxes, has been interpreted to indicate that Xerxes had died and Artaxerxes had succeeded him very recently, probably in December, 465."³²
- The Egyptian priest Manetho (3rd century BC) included Artabanus, whom other ancient authorities establish as the murderer of Xerxes, among the Persian rulers of Egypt, giving him a reign of 7 months after the death of Xerxes. This would push the accession of Artaxerxes to late 465 or early 464, consistent with Hoehner's 465t for the accession year of Artaxerxes, using Tishri reckoning. Manetho's account was accepted by Africanus (early 3rd century AD) and by Eusebius, who quoted Africanus.

Contrary evidence against Xerxes living on to December 465 includes the following:

- The tablet *LBART* No. *1419, from the late Hellenistic period, says that Xerxes was killed in approximately August 4–8, 465.³³
- Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus (3.1) says that Artabanus murdered Xerxes, and he was in turn killed by Artaxerxes. Artabanus is called the chief officer of Xerxes, with no mention of him assuming the kingship.
- "There are no known documents dated in the reign of Artabanus in either Egypt or Babylonia. The king list based on Manetho seems to be the only source for such a reign.... Most historians disregard Artabanus, largely because the absence of tablets dated to his reign would indicate that he was not recognized in Babylonia."³⁴

say Allen, *The Persian Empire* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 57: "The king's [Xerxes's] life ended violently within the court in the late summer of 465." (4) Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 17: "Xerxes: Evidence for End of Reign ... (Aug. 4?–8?, 465), death by murder of Xerxes (unpub. eclipse text BM 32234 ... *LBART* No. *1419)." (5) Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 563: "Perhaps Themistocles landed in Asia Minor shortly before the death of the king [Xerxes] (August 465)."

³² Neuffer, "Artaxerxes," 62.

³³ Neuffer, "Artaxerxes," 65. Because the day figure is partly effaced, the exact date within those 5 days cannot be determined more precisely.

³⁴ Neuffer, "Artaxerxes," 70, 71.

If there is any special pleading on the question of when Artaxerxes began his reign, it is from those who follow Hoehner's logic. The main support of that position would seem to be the *AP* 6 papyrus, plus the fact that Manetho gave Artabanus a 7-month reign. But even in those two supports, both from Egypt, a contradiction is evident because *AP* 6 says nothing about Artabanus reigning as king between the 21st year of Xerxes and the accession of Artaxerxes. Neuffer demonstrates that the curious double-dating of *AP* 6 has parallels in other times where there was uncertainty about succession so that, until it was settled who was in charge, contracts were dated according to the year of the deceased king.³⁵ Therefore the most reasonable interpretation of *AP* 6 does not require that Xerxes was still alive in December of 465, and in any event it contradicts an intervening reign of Artabanus. Regarding Manetho's assignment of a 7-month reign for Artabanus following his murder of Xerxes, Neuffer writes, "Yet the interval between the August death date and the January date of *AP* 6 is less than seven months. And an intervening reign of Artabanus would still require a change in Artaxerxes' year numbering afterward to continue with the later attested numbering. Such a change is unattested by any evidence and seems to be unknown in any other case."³⁶ The weak arguments used to support that either Xerxes lived on to December 465, or that Artabanus actually reigned *de jure* instead of just *de facto*, explain why secular historians accept that Artaxerxes's reign must be measured from August 465. With that being the case, accepting Tishri reckoning for his reign in Ezra 9:7 and Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 places his accession year as 466t and Ezra's departure for Jerusalem in his 7th year, 459t, as occurring in Nisan of 458, not 457.

4. In Daniel 9:27, the best translation of *הַשְּׁבִיעִי הָצִי* is "in a half of the week" or "in one half of the week," not "in the middle/midst of the week." In its many occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the most common translation of *הָצִי* (*haši*) is "half," not "midst" or "middle." In the KJV, *הָצִי* is translated "half" 105 times, "part" 3 times, and "midst" or "middle" 9 times. So "half" or "part" is the most common rendering, 108 vs. 9 for "midst" or "middle," or 108 to 8 if we exclude Daniel 9:27 as under consideration. Cases where *הָצִי* can properly be translated as "middle" include Exodus 27:5 and 38:4, where the ledge or grating extends to the middle of the altar (so KJV; NIV and ESV translate as "halfway" in both cases). An example of the more common usage of the word is in 1 Kings 16:21, where *הָצִי* is used 3 times in the same verse: "Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts. Half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri" (ESV). Another example is Isaiah 44:19: "The half I burned in the fire ..."

When translating Daniel into Greek, the LXX, OG, and Theodotion rendered the *הָצִי* of Daniel 9:27 as *ἡμίσει* (nominative *ἡμισυς*), for which the only meaning given in BDAG is "half" (adjective) or "the half" (substantive).³⁷ In Greek, "half"

³⁵ Neuffer, "Artaxerxes," 74–76. Two examples given by Neuffer are the time of uncertainty after the murder of Artaxerxes in late 424 and early 423 BC and the succession of the Babylonian king Kandalanu in 627 BC.

³⁶ Neuffer, "Artaxerxes," 78–79.

³⁷ BDAG 439.

and “middle, midst” are expressed by two distinct words, ἡμισυς and μέσος, with no confusion between them: ἡμισυς is “half” and μέσος is “middle, midst.” Consequently, the Greek-speaking translators understood Daniel 9:27 as saying that a covenant would be confirmed and sacrifice and oblation would cease in one-half of Daniel’s seventieth week, not in the middle of that week. This understanding of the phrase has been followed by many translations into English and other languages.³⁸

In Daniel 9:27, if the Holy Spirit had intended to specify in an unambiguous way that the middle of the week was intended, the word תָּוֶקֶת (*tavek*) would have served that purpose. Gesenius defines תָּוֶקֶת as “the middle of a thing.” It occurs about 411 times in the Hebrew Bible. But it is not used in Daniel 9:27, and no doctrine should be built on a translation that interprets this verse as saying that sacrifice and oblation are taken away in the middle of Daniel’s 69th or 70th week. The preferred translation of חֶצִי as “part” or “half” does not absolutely rule out the idea that the termination of sacrifice and oblation could have been effected at one end of the half week, that is, in the middle of the week; but that the termination occurs at the week’s midpoint would have to be established by other biblical texts, and no such texts exist. The preferred translation, advocated here, allows that the making of a covenant and putting an end to sacrifice and offering could be at any time in the half week. Specifically, it could occur at the very end of the week, or as a process that continues during the half week and culminates at its end. This last interpretation is in agreement with the three-and-one-half year ministry of Christ, culminating in his death and resurrection in Nisan of AD 33. Over two centuries ago Humphrey Prideaux understood Daniel 9:27 in that way, as cited in Adam Clarke’s commentary:

But Dean *Prideaux* thinks that the whole refers to our Lord’s preaching connected with that of the Baptist. וחצי *vachatsi* says he, signifies in the *half part* of the week; that is, in the latter three years and a half in which he exercised himself in the public ministry, he caused, by the sacrifice of himself, all other sacrifices and oblations to cease, which were instituted to signify his.³⁹

Prideaux, therefore, thought that the time of Christ’s ministry, from his baptism by John until his death and resurrection, was three and one-half years. This assessment of the length of our Lord’s ministry is shared by much of early, and also

³⁸ Translations, in various languages, that interpret חֶצִי הַשָּׁבִיעַ in Daniel 9:27 as “in a /one half of the week” rather than “in the middle/midst of the week” include the following: ESV; RSV; NRSV; *Torah Neri’im U-Khetuvim, The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955); Abraham Benisch, trans., *Jewish School and Family Bible*, vol. 4: *Hagiography* (London: James Darling, 1861); Douay-Rheims Bible; English Revised Version; *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*; Wycliffe; Myles Coverdale (1535); *The Holy Scriptures, Faithfully and Truly Translated*; *International Standard Version*; *The Lexham English Bible*; *The Lexham English Septuagint*; *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* (1917); *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (1985); *Complete Jewish Bible*; *American Bible Union Version*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1913); Russian Synodal (official) Version; Vulgate; LXX; Old Greek; Theodotion.

³⁹ Clarke, *Old Testament*, 4:603a.

recent, scholarship.⁴⁰ Daniel 9:27 therefore focuses on just one half of the 70th week because that was the half week in which Christ ministered. This is an additional reason, besides the lexical argument, that argues for translating הַשְּׁבוּעַת הָאֶחָדָה as “in one half of the week”; the prophecy is saying that the significant actions of the predicted Messiah would occur within a three-and-one-half year period. The fulfillment of the prophecy in the half week (three and one-half years) of Christ’s ministry, fall of AD 29 to Nisan of AD 33, is a demonstration of the omniscience of God and the divine inspiration of his word. Within this half week the Messiah would, though “cut off,” bring in everlasting righteousness. This demonstration of divine foreknowledge would be lost if we accept the lexically less-desirable translation of “middle” for הָאֶחָדָה in Daniel 9:27.

5. *Accepting the above interpretations brings consequences for dating and explaining the end to sacrifice and offering in Daniel 9:27.* The arguments given above in favor of 458 BC for the *terminus a quo* of Daniel’s 70-week prophecy, which Payne called the traditional view, result in the 490 years ending in AD 33, the year of our Lord’s passion, according to Hoehner and many other specialists in NT history and chronology. But if AD 33 is the *terminus ad quem* of the 70 weeks, the consequence is that Daniel’s 70th week follows immediately after the 69 weeks. There is no need to sever Daniel’s 70th week from the preceding 69 weeks. This has radical consequences for the interpretation of events that are traditionally associated with the 70th week:

- The 70th week is the time “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness” (Dan 9:24, NIV), all accomplished by the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God. Further, Jesus is the “most holy One” (קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים) to be anointed,⁴¹ and his anointing can then be taken as his baptism by John, as maintained by Payne, Pusey, and other interpreters.⁴² There is no necessity of assuming that the קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים refers to a future temple. In the words of Philip Mauro, “No one will dispute that, when Christ suffered and died on the cross, thus offering ‘one sacrifice for sins forever,’ He then and there caused the sacrifices and oblations of the law to cease as a divine appointment.”⁴³
- Some things in the prophetic words of Daniel 9:26, 27, however, are not included in the final week, nor does a reasonable reading of these verses

⁴⁰ See the discussion of why the ministry of Christ lasted three and one-half years in Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 260–61, where Steinmann writes, “From ancient times the most favored view is that Jesus had a three and one-half year ministry” (260). Similarly, Finegan begins Christ’s ministry in the fall of AD 29 and dates the crucifixion to April 3 (Julian), AD 33 for a three-and-one-half year ministry. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 342, 368. A recent extensive defense of the three-and-one-half year ministry is found in Simmons, “Chronology,” 61–68.

⁴¹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 467: “The fulfillment of Dan 9:24 must be the anointing of the Messiah, not any anointing of the second temple. It is clear in Dan 9:25–26 that the ‘Messiah, Anointed One’ is a person.”

⁴² J. Barton Payne, *Biblical Prophecy for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 20; Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet*, 189; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 467. Steinmann cites also Hippolytus, Tertullian, Theodoret, Calvin (*Daniel*, 2:203), and Young (*Prophecy of Daniel*, 201) who refer the קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים to Christ.

⁴³ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation: A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Boston: Hamilton Bros., 1923), 84.

require that they take place in that week: (1) The prophecy that the “people of the prince who is to come” will destroy the city and the sanctuary was fulfilled when the Roman armies under Titus demolished the city and the temple in AD 70. (2) Many commentators understandably refer “the prince who is to come” to the end-time antichrist, though others refer it to Titus. (3) The very difficult phrase regarding a “desolator” and something happening on “the wing of abomination” in verse 27 also seems to refer to events yet future.

- There is therefore no necessity of referring the making of a covenant and putting an end to sacrifice and offering in the first part of verse 27 to a time yet future. These accomplishments are properly understood as completed in the all-sufficient, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ at the end of Daniel's 70th week.⁴⁴

IV. TAKING EZRA'S DEPARTURE AS THE *TERMINUS A QUO* OF DANIEL 9:24 MEANS THAT THE PROPHECY IS EXACT TO THE DAY

Working from the *terminus a quo* of Nisan 1, 458 BC, the *terminus ad quem* is determined in a straightforward manner without the necessity of postulating prophetic years, taking wrong Julian dates for Nisan 1 in the 5th century BC or the 1st century AD, or mistakenly applying years measured in a Gregorian sense to Julian dates that are separated by over four centuries. All these problems are found in Anderson's and Hoehner's interpretations. Avoiding such pitfalls, the calculation is simple: Nisan 1, 458 BC, was April 8 Julian, which is April 3 Gregorian.⁴⁵ Four hundred ninety astronomically correct years later is April 3 Gregorian, AD 33, which is April 5 Julian and Nisan 16 Judean.⁴⁶ According to a strong consensus among Christian theologians, some of whom were listed in footnote 20, Nisan 16 Judean (April 5 Julian) of AD 33 is the date of our Savior's resurrection. This is the act that vindicated his atoning sacrifice, a sacrifice that, according to Daniel 9:24 and 27, put an end to sin, atoned for iniquity, sealed up vision and prophet, and put an end to the effectiveness (and eventually the practice) of the older covenant's system of sacrifices and offerings. This is a far more suitable *terminus ad quem* than Christ's triumphal entry, held by Anderson and Hoehner, which accomplished none of these things. Even Hoehner could be quoted to this effect, as when he

⁴⁴ “But the Bible mentions no confirmation of the covenant or termination of sacrifices during the future tribulation. The goals that Daniel 9:24 states for the seventy-week period eliminating sin, making atonement for iniquity, bringing in righteousness, sealing visions and prophecy and anointing the most holy (*Messiah* in verses 25–26 means ‘anointed’)—fit the first century rather than today ... the seven-year period of Daniel 9:27 does not give us information about the great tribulation.” Payne, *Biblical Prophecy for Today*, 21. Similarly, Prideaux, after listing the six great accomplishments of Daniel 9:24, declares, “All these were accomplished in that great work of our salvation, which Christ our Lord undertook for us, and fully completed by his death and passion, and his resurrection from the dead.” Prideaux, *Old and New Testament Connected*, 1:228.

⁴⁵ Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 32.

⁴⁶ Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 46.

wrote, "The two greatest events in history were the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord."⁴⁷

V. CONCLUSION: THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM PRESENTED BY THE EXACTNESS OF THE PROPHECY

From a historical perspective it was only fairly recently that it became possible to do the exact-to-the-day calculation of Section IV above, a calculation that resulted in the *terminus ad quem* being the central point of world history. The first requisite for doing this computation was correct determination of the length of the astronomical (tropical) year, which was accomplished by Pope Gregory's astronomer, after which the Gregorian calendar began to replace the Julian calendar in AD 1582. The next step was to establish the correlation between Julian dates (easily converted to Gregorian dates) and the lunisolar dates of the Babylonian and Judean calendars. For this, the crucial breakthrough was the publishing of the second edition (1956) of Parker and Dubberstein's *magnum opus*, cited frequently in the present article.⁴⁸ Given these two requisites, it was only a matter of time until someone would calculate that it was 490 years, exact to the day, from Ezra's departure for Jerusalem in 458 BC until the glorious resurrection in AD 33. And it would be only natural that those who hold 458 BC as the *terminus a quo* of Daniel's 70 weeks would say that the demonstrated accuracy shows this is the proper interpretation of the prophecy.

Those who object to the *terminus a quo* advocated in the present article will, in all likelihood, continue to contend that we should have an explicit statement in Scripture that Artaxerxes authorized Ezra to begin rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. But the fact that Artaxerxes did give such a commission to Ezra is clearly enough indicated in the texts of Ezra 4 and 7 that speak of a rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall before Nehemiah came and completed the task.

If credibility is granted to the traditional *terminus a quo*, an important consequence is that the to-the-day exactness of Daniel's prophecy shows the omniscience of the Giver of the prophecy. The Almighty God, Creator of the heavens and earth, the One who determined the motions of the planets, knew, in the 5th century BC and from all eternity, the exact length of the tropical year. He knew further that it would be 490 years, exact to the day, from Ezra's departure from Babylon to the day of the resurrection. That is why he had Ezra record the day, month, and year. The *terminus ad quem* is the day that shows to all that God accepted the sacrificial offering of his Son, thereby putting an end to the efficacy of the sacrifices and offerings of the Mosaic covenant. If the so-called traditional view advocated here is the correct one, then Daniel's prophecy is a demonstration of God's omniscience in knowing the motion of the planets, a display of his omnipotence in controlling

⁴⁷ Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 95.

⁴⁸ A rather diligent search of the scholarly literature could not find a single study challenging or suggesting revisions of Parker and Dubberstein's 1956 publication. Though Parker and Dubberstein expressed no interest in biblical dates, their research has greatly helped establish the accuracy of OT and NT dates and the integrity of Scripture.

the course of history, and a revelation of the importance he placed on the prophecy's *terminus ad quem* by making it occur, exactly to the day, at the central point in his eternal plan of redemption for all mankind. The theological problem then is to decide whether that was the original purpose of the prophecy, or, if it was not, why it is that by taking that approach the *terminus ad quem* just happens, by supposed coincidence, to be on the day of the resurrection in AD 33.