

John's Gospel and the Chronology of Daniel 9's First Sixty-Nine Heptads

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Determining the Proper Decree

The decree that meets the requirements of Daniel 9:25 is in Nehemiah 2:1. Hoehner assumes a date of Nisan 1,¹ which Nehemiah 2:1 allows. That decree was made in the month of Nisan in Artaxerxes' twentieth year. Artaxerxes became king soon after his father's death (December 17, 465 BC). Horn and Wood demonstrate that Persia then used an accession-year calendar.² Artaxerxes' twentieth year (on an accession-year calendar) was Nisan 464–Adar 463 BC. Nisan 1, 444 BC, would be the earliest date for the covenant. Nisan 1, 444 BC, was probably March 5, 444 BC; although March 4, 444 BC is not impossible.

Determining the Extent of Sixty-Nine Heptads

Prophetic Biblical calendars use a 360-day year.
Sixty-nine (69) heptads of years (69×7) = 483 years.
 $483 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days}$ (483×360) = 173,880 days.

Converting the Sixty-Nine Heptads into Solar Years

A solar year has 365.24219879 days (= 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 49.975 seconds).
 $173,880 \text{ days} = 476.067662981008 \text{ solar years}$ ($173,880 \div 365.24219879$).
 $476.067662981008 \text{ solar years} = 476 \text{ years, } 24 \text{ days, } 17 \text{ hours, } 7 \text{ minutes, and } 15.68 \text{ seconds.}$

Determining When the Sixty-Ninth Heptad Ended

476 years after 444 BC = 33 AD (remember, there was no year "0" in Julian/Gregorian calendars
 $476 - 444 = 32$, but this converts to AD 33, because the year "0" is skipped.
Twenty-four (24) days after March 5 is March 29.
However, 24 days and 17 hours is almost 25 days, so I see the end of the 69 heptads as March 30.

Relating the End of the Sixty-Nine Heptads to our Calendar

Palm Monday AD 33 was March 30. Messiah the Prince presented Himself to Jerusalem that day. That fulfilled Daniel 9:25, with the completion of the seven heptads plus the sixty-two heptads.

Statements in John's Gospel that Pertain to This Chronology

Prior to Palm Monday (John 2:4; 7:30; and 8:20), Jesus said that His hour had not yet come. Note Jesus' answer to His disciples' concern that He would be killed, if He went to Bethany because of Lazarus. He spoke of twelve hours of daylight. His point in John 11:9 was that He would not be killed until daylight ended (hinting at the end of the sixty-ninth heptad). Starting on Palm Monday (John 12:12-50), Jesus said that His hour had come (John 12:23; 13:1; 17:1). Jesus was crucified the following Friday (April 3, AD 33). Daniel 9:26 says that Messiah would be cut off after the completion of the 69th heptad.

¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie, 1977), 138.

² S. H. Horn and L. W. Wood, "The Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 13 (January, 1954): 4.

Excerpts from Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects, Relating to Matthew 12:40* (pp.72-74)

The one problem that is proposed against the Friday view is Matthew 12:40, that He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. Admittedly, this is the most difficult verse for those who hold the Friday view, but it is not as formidable as it first appears. One must examine all the evidence at hand. First to be discussed is the New Testament evidence. The most frequent reference to Jesus' resurrection is to have occurred on the third day (not the fourth day) (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4). In John 2:19–22 where Jesus spoke of His resurrection, He stated that He would be raised up in three days and not on the fourth day. There are four passages (Matt. 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) which speak of Christ's resurrection as occurring "after three days," but this is speaking of the same time period as on "the third day" for the following two reasons: (1) The three Markan passages are paralleled by one or two of the other synoptic gospels, and in each case the other synoptic does not use "after three days" as Mark does but "on the third day" (Mark 8:31 = Matt. 16:21/Luke 9:22; Mark 9:31 = Matt. 17:23; Mark 10:34 = Matt. 20:19/Luke 18:33). Thus, the two phrases mean a period extending to the third day. (2) In Matthew 27:63 where the Pharisees before Pilate state that Jesus had predicted that "after three days I will rise again," the Pharisees then asked Pilate if they could have a guard of soldiers to secure the sepulcher until the third day. The phrase "after three days" must have been equivalent to "the third day," or otherwise the Pharisees would have asked for a guard of soldiers until the fourth day.³

Having looked at the New Testament evidence,⁴ was this standard Jewish thinking or not? If one looks in both the Old Testament and Rabbinic literature, one sees that it would agree with the New Testament evidence. Therefore the next piece of evidence to be examined is the Old Testament. There are several Old Testament references which show that a part of a day is equivalent to the whole day. In Genesis 42:17 Joseph incarcerated his brothers for three days, and then in verse 18 he spoke to them on the third day, and from the context released them on that day. In 1 Kings 20:29 Israel and Syria camped opposite each other for seven days, and on the seventh day they began to battle each other. In 2 Chronicles 10:5 Rehoboam stated that the people of Israel were to return to him in/after (cf. LXX) three days, and in verse 12 Jeroboam and the people came to Rehoboam on the third day. In Esther 4:16 Esther asks the Jews, "Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day," and then she would go in to the king, and in 5:1 Esther went in to the king on the third day. Finally, in 1 Samuel 30:12 an abandoned Egyptian servant had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights, and in verse 13 he states that his master left him behind three days ago. Thus, the Old Testament gives the picture that the expressions "three days," "the third day," and "three days and three nights" are used to signify the same period of time.

Having seen that the Old Testament evidence lines up with the New, the final piece of evidence to be examined is the Rabbinic literature. It is interesting to note that the same concept is borne out in Rabbinic literature. There are several passages found in Jewish literature which combine Jonah 1:17 ("Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights") with the Old Testament passages listed in the above paragraph.⁵ Furthermore, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah (lived ca. A.D. 100), who was the tenth in the descent from Ezra, stated: "A day and night are an Onah ['a portion of time'] and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it."⁶

In conclusion, when one examines all the evidence, it seems that the New Testament, the Old Testament, and Rabbinic literature all agree that a part of a day is counted as a whole day-and-night. Thus, the expressions: "the three days and three nights," "after three days," and "on the third day" are all one and the same time span. These all support the fact that Christ was crucified on Friday and was resurrected on Sunday.

³ Possibly some could argue the fourth day after Jesus' death is meant since the request was made on the day after His death. But it seems more likely that the Pharisees were reckoning from the date of Christ's death. It is interesting to note that in all other instances Matthew uses the phrase "on the third day" and never "after three days." Thus it seems that the Pharisees were reckoning from Jesus' death.

⁴ For usage in Greek literature outside the New Testament, see Frederick Field, *Notes on Select Passages of the Greek Testament* (Oxford 1881), pp. 8–9.

⁵ Midrash Rabbah: Genesis lvi. 1 (on Gen. 22:4); Genesis xci. 7 (on Gen. 42:17–18); Esther ix. 2 (on Esther 5:1); Midrash on the Psalms: Ps. 22:5.

⁶ Jerusalem Talmud: Shabbath ix. 3; cf. also Babylonian Talmud: Pesahim 4a.