

THE DECREE TO RESTORE AND BUILD

(DANIEL 9:25)

Much controversy surrounds the meaning of the “going forth” (*mowtsa*) command or decree (*dabar*) to restore God’s people back to Israel’s theocracy (Daniel 9:25) (the context goes beyond the physical city). Various translations have adapted these phrases:

- “from the issuing of a decree” (NAS, NIV)
- “from the issuing of the command” (NET)
- “from the time the command is given” (NLT)
- “from the time the word went out” (NRS)

Intriguingly, though this verse states that the **prophetic command** will begin a 483-year period, many expositors loosely apply its onset to:

- When Ezra started his journey – or
- When he arrived in Jerusalem – or
- Worshipping God in the fall of the year after his arrival.

The text says “from the issuing of the decree” – this is specific.

The last part of verse 25 relates to what is to be restored. Gabriel’s message to Daniel is in direct answer to his informative prayer earlier in the ninth chapter. Literalists read into that verse a rebuilding of city assets. But the theme of Daniel 8–12 is highly symbolic and full of important spiritual metaphors. The actual city **and** temple restoration was ordered by Cyrus decades before. Isaiah actually prophesied 150 years before he would be that person.

“This is what the LORD says – I am the LORD ... who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers ... who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’ I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 44:24, 28; 45:13 – NIV). (Cyrus was even named as the restorer before he was born!)

The historical restoration of that desolate Judean country is another topic beyond the purpose of this discussion. It is important to note that Artaxerxes I’s decree in Ezra 7:11-26 is spiritual and orders the Jewish theocracy to be re-established. That command fits the theme of a spiritual restoration in preparation for Messiah the Prince (9:25). It also maintains the elevated objectives of the deliverance motif in the collective *mareh* prophecies of Daniel 8–12.

At the *terminus a quo* (beginning) of the “seventy weeks” prophecy is a command, word or decree (*dabar* – H) to “restore.” The prophecy – which is time driven – **begins** when this word goes out. If the distinct time periods and their endings noted are precise, so must be their time and date of onset. Evidence suggests that the Magi from the east were students of Jewish writings when they made the discovery of the time of the Messiah’s birth. Daniel 9 contributed to that understanding. It is a prophetic record of details.

The restoration decree was given by Artaxerxes I. This man was king of Persia from 465 to 425 B.C., his reign ending when he died.

The Bible notes that Ezra, with the decree in hand (Ezra 7:11), left for Jerusalem on Nissan 1 (7:9) and arrived in that city on the fifth month (7:9). This journey occurred in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign.

The dating is problematic since there were three calendars in use at this time:

1. Egyptian dating
2. Babylonian/Persia dating
3. Jewish Tishri to Tishri dating¹

In Juarez Rodrigues de Oliveira's excellent study on these timing issues,² he notes that S. H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood's reference concluded that the seventh year was the fall of 458 B.C. to the fall of 457 B.C.³ This could then tie to Ezra's record, revealing the secular reign in which Ezra made the journey during the sacred Jewish year.

In spite of a long and peaceful Medo-Persian reign, this was noted:

"There are no archeological remains of the reign of Artaxerxes I, with the exception of a single inscription on a building in Susa and an alabaster vase in Paris which bears his name in Persian, Susian, Babylonian cuneiform, and in hieroglyphs. All information concerning him is derived from the accounts of Greek writers, especially the fragments of Ctesias, and from the statements of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah."⁴

The Greeks gave him the name Longimanus because his right hand was longer than his left.⁵ Thus, Artaxerxes I is noted in literature as Artaxerxes Longimanus.

Additional information came to light in Ptolemy's Canon with *The Almagest* and through the *Elephantine Papyri*.⁶

Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah used regnal (reigning) years related to the kings, making the "accession year" year zero, then applying it to the Jewish civil 12-month calendar, running from Tishri 1 to Elul 29. Thus, Artaxerxes I's seventh year was the seventh **full** year of his reign, beginning in the fall with the month of Tishri. This system of applying kingdom leadership goes back to Solomon's time.⁷ This reckoning was used in spite of the earlier Babylonian calendar year (with Abib or Nissan beginning their year) paralleling the Jewish sacred year throughout the Medo-Persian Empire.

¹ Oliveira, Juarez Rodrigues de; *Chronological Studies Related to Daniel, 8:14 and 9:24-27* (Imprensa Universitaria Adventista, Brazil, 2004), pp. 3-5.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ "Artaxerxes I," www.Jewishencyclopedia.com

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶ Cross, Frank M.; *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 94 (1975), pp-5-18 (web and referenced Oliveira, p. 3.

⁷ Shea, William H.; *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, February 1, 1991, pp. 115-138.

Artaxerxes I's father was Xerxes (Esther's husband, King Ahasuerus). He was murdered by an aide (Artabanus) in 465 B.C. The month is unclear from the literature. The **ascension** year for Artaxerxes I then was from 465 B.C. to the next Tishri 1 of 464 B.C. In 464 B.C. the regnal years would then start to be counted.⁸ Coordinating three calendars will be done graphically further on in this article.

Ezra notes that he left Babylon with a "copy of the letter" or decree (Ezra 7:11) on the first day of the first month and arrived on the first day of the fifth month at Jerusalem (7:9), using the Hebrew sacred year. When the term "month" is used, the Jewish writers revert back to the sacred calendar, beginning with Nissan (Abib). If this had not been so, the thousands traveling with him would have traveled in the winter or wet season [i.e., Tishri–Shevat (secular year)]. It would have been nearly impossible to travel during those cold and rainy months.

The men were taking with them their wives and children, and all their substance, besides returning large treasures of the temple for its service to Jerusalem. The time and organization had to be optimal and extensive.⁹ **The decree had to have been months before this journey** started in the spring of 457 B.C. (still during Artaxerxes I's seventh year).

Again, though much of the analysis is on 457 B.C., related to Ezra's travel and arrival in Jerusalem, Daniel 9:25 specifically states that the 490 years begins with the issuing of the decree.

"We must remember that Ezra started on his trip on Nisan 1 (Ezra 7:6-8), and that the decree was issued some unspecified time before he started on his trip (Ezra 7:6, 11). The decree (Ezra 7:13-26) permitted him to collect gifts in the province of Babylon and to gather the people (Ezra 7:13, 15-16), before he started on his journey on the first day of the first month in the 7th year of reign of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:9, 13-16, 27-28). The first day of the month (Nisan 1), the date Ezra left Babylon, is the exact beginning of the Babylonian/Persian year. Nobody can *prove from the Bible* that the decree was issued in Artaxerxes' seventh year, as is frequently intended by referring the reader to Ezra 7:7."¹⁰

It is assumed that it was issued on the Day of Atonement (or the day after) to end the 490-year and 2300-year prophecies on a Day of Atonement. It is assumed that the decree must have been issued the fall previous to that Nisan 1 – i.e., 458 B.C.

"It must be pointed out again that many Adventist writers assert that Artaxerxes' decree was issued in his seventh year, but biblically no one can guarantee that the decree was issued in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, because the chronological information in Ezra 7 is related to the trip, not to the issuing of the decree, which happened some time before Ezra started on his trip. What we can guarantee is that Ezra traveled in the seventh year."¹¹

Based upon S. H. Horn's conclusions that the seventh year was 458–457 B.C. (Tishri to Tishri) and the assumption that the decree was in the fall of 458, the following section summarizes these issues.

⁸ Cowley, A. E.; *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1923). Papyrus No. 6 appears on pp. 15-18 of this work (a quote by Shea).

⁹ White, Ellen, G.; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 615.

¹⁰ Oliveira, *op cit.*, p. 4.

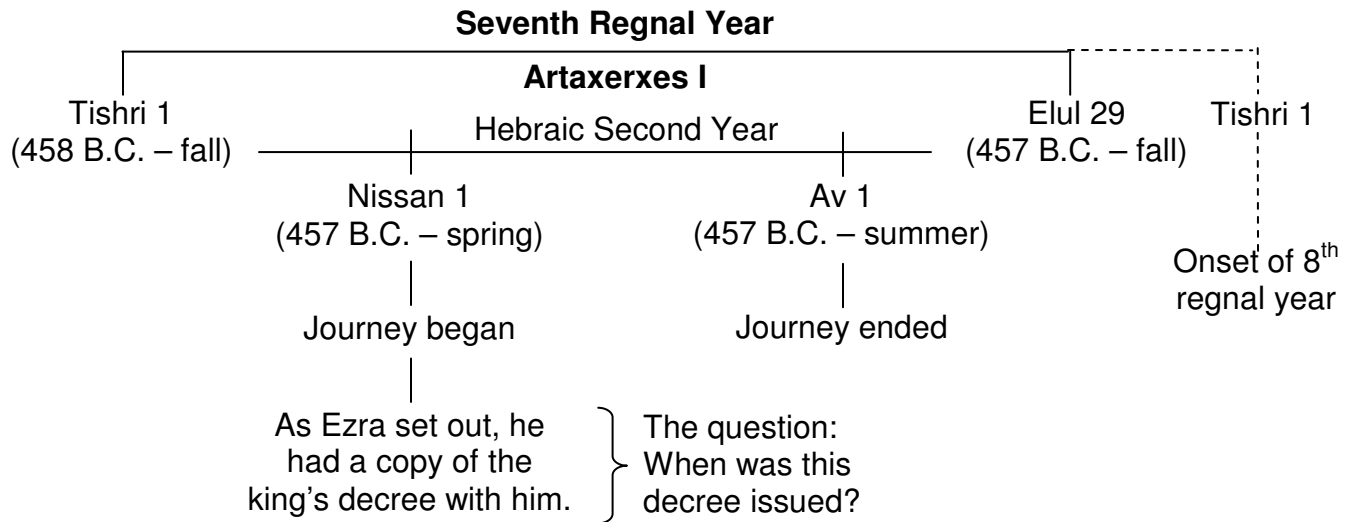
¹¹ Oliveira, *op cit.*, p. 19

The Prophecy, the Decree, the Fulfillment

Tishri 1 through Elul 29 = Solar/Civil Year Calendar	
<u>Gregorian Years</u>	<u>Regnal Years for Artaxerxes I</u>
465* – 464 (Elul 29)	Artaxerxes I's ascension year
464 – 463	1 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
463 – 462	2 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
462 – 461	3 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
461 – 460	4 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
460 – 459	5 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
459 – 458	6 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
458 – 457	7 Tishri 1 – Elul 29
Nissan 1, 457 B.C. – Ezra left Babylon	
Av 1, 457 – Ezra arrived in Jerusalem	
*(December 17 – Xerxes murdered in many documents)	

The *years* of kingdom rule are based upon solar time. This would cover from the month of Tishri to the end of Elul. As Artaxerxes I assumed power, first in the **ascension** “year,” then the **regnal** years, this graphic display unfolds how to parallel various calendrical cycles:

Notice how the events and markers of the last regnal year associated with this prophecy flow in this sequence.



To understand the timing of the issuance of Artaxerxes' document, we must review another **Daniel's of this vision** that was given five to six years previously.

The vision of the ram, he-goat and little horn had ended (Daniel 8:12). This was called *hazon* or “the vision” (which began with Daniel 8:2). Then Gabriel came on the scene and asked Jesus, the “whoever it may be,” the “one saint speaking,” the “certain saint” (all elevated, respectful language), timing questions related to the “little horn” (Daniel 8:13). That

part of Daniel's vision/audition was still designated *ha hazon*. Jesus, however, responds to another vision (8:14) that was then called the *mareh* (8:26).

Ha hazon and the *mareh* visions were not finished at that time because Daniel fainted (8:27). It would be completed in Daniel 9 and 10. Though the Hebrew analysis of these "visions" is extensive, a resumé of these two is very helpful:

<u><i>ha hazon</i></u>	<u><i>mareh</i></u>
<u>(conflict between good and evil)</u>	<u>(deliverance message for God's people)</u>
Vision for the far future, called "time of the end"	Daniel finally understands (Daniel 10:1)
Sealed portion of Daniel	Not sealed
Wouldn't be understood until the "time of the end"	Many timing prophecies within the <i>mareh</i> :
(When God's wrath comes	2300 years – identified as "evening morning"
When sin reaches its peak	490 years
When Jesus has a "host" or corporate body	3½ years
When the little horn/vial person/king of the north exerts its global power)	1290 days
	1335 days

The 2300-year prophecy of Jesus' (Note: KJV is not translated correctly; NIV is better) in Daniel 8:14 is continued by Gabriel in 9:24-26a. In 8:26 Gabriel notes that the *mareh* was the **evening and the morning** and it was "true."

That is profound information. This is how the Daniel 8:14 wording actually flows in Hebrew: "Until 2300 evening morning holiness vindicated." Gabriel said that he came to give Daniel skill and understanding (9:23). Therefore: "understand the matter and consider the [*mareh*] vision" (9:23). The **deliverance** counsel begins with 9:24. The 8:14 introduction theme fits after the word "cease" in verse 9:27.

The late Jewish scholar Umberto Cassuto, in his book *From Adam to Noah: A Commentary of Genesis I–VI* (never finished), 1961, noted that when the words "evening morning" are in that order, it is a sacred allusion. Indeed, the great Day of Atonement was the day when God's judicial decisions were made and cleansing occurred. That occurred on Tishri 10. It was a sacred time that began the evening before by putting away all sin from the precincts of the sanctuary – at the end of that day everything was without sin. Holiness had come in once again.

*"Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.... Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the **ninth day of the month at even**, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath"* (Leviticus 23:27, 31-32). Thus, the evening occurred first, then the morning of the next day. A sacred period is in evidence.

Thus, the evening–morning designation is symbolic in these prophecies for Atonement. That truly was when holiness was vindicated or legally adjudicated. Thus, in Daniel 8:14 we know it is 2300 years because it is 2300 evening-morning Atonements – an annual, recurring event.

Since the 490-year prophecy is a *mareh* message that has a beginning decree (9:25) and since the 2300 evening–morning prophecy is also part of the *mareh* message that begins with an Atonement, Daniel 9’s vision must commence with this fall feast! Thus, though we do not have a historical Medo-Persian secular document to affirm this, this prophecy notes that it must be the beginning of both prophecies in the fall before Ezra leaves in the spring of the next year.

That means that the 483-year period (9:25 – seven weeks, sixty and two weeks) decree to re-establish holiness begins on Atonement – Tishri 10 of 458 B.C (or the next day). Tishri 1, 458 to Elul 29, 457 B.C. would be Artaxerxes I’s regnal year *seven*. It is assumed that Christ’s baptism was His *début* into His three and a half years of ministry preceding the Cross. This would, therefore, be:

From the decree to restore to Messiah the Prince is 483 years. $483 + 1 - 458 = 26$ A.D. – anointing/baptism of Jesus in the fall.

This date is at variance with the many baptismal years of some scholars. But it solves many other issues.

Another issue then relates to when Jesus died. The full-moon Passover was Thursday evening into Friday, 30 A.D. At this time it was three and a half years after the fall of 26 A.D. One would have to go astronomically to 33 A.D. before that would occur again (which many in the evangelical world do). The latter, however, would require an alternative interpretation of Daniel 9 at variance with proper exegesis. There is no Friday Passover at full moon in 31 A.D.

Does all this affect the 2300-year prophecy? Yes – but when one understands its great meaning in light of the other end-time periods of the *mareh*, a beautiful message for the end-time saints unfolds. The sanctuary, its cleansing, the judgment, the perfecting of a holy people and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness with the vindication of God’s character are all given in judicial briefs in Daniel 8–12!

Calendar Year Associations (Based on calculations – not observed new moons)							
Year B.C.	Month	Babylonian Month	Hebrew Year A.M.	Hebrew Month	Event	Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Judah – use Tishri	Daniel 9:25
459	Jan/Feb	Shabatu	3302	Shevat			
	Feb/Mar	Addaru		Adar			
		Addaru II					
	Mar/Apr	Nisanu		Nisan			
	Apr/May	Aiaru		Iyar			
	May/Jun	Simanu		Sivan			
	Jun/Jul	Duzu		Tammuz			

	Jul/Aug	Abu		Av			
	Aug/Sep	Ululu		Eulu			
	Sep/Oct	Tashritu		Tishri		6 th regnal	
	Oct/Nov	Arahsamnu		Heshvan			
	Nov/Dec	Kislimnu		Kislev			
	Dec/Jan	Tebetu		Tevet			
458	Jan/Feb	Shabatu	3303	Shevat			
	Feb/Mar	Addaru		Adar			
	Mar/Apr	Nisanu		Nisan			
	Apr/May	Aiaru		Iyar			
	May/June	Simanu		Sivan			
	Jun/Jul	Duzu		Tammuz			
	Jul/Aug	Abu		Av			
	Aug/Sep	Ululu		Eulu			
	Sep/Oct	Tashritu		Tishri 10	Artaxerxes' decree (458 B.C.) (Day of Atonement or next day)	7 th regnal	483 years begin
	Oct/Nov	Arahsamnu		Heshvan			
Nov/Dec	Kislimnu	Kislev					
Dec/Jan	Tebetu	Tevet					
457	Jan/Feb	Shabatu	3304	Shevat			
	Feb/Mar	Addaru		Adar			
	Mar/Apr	Nisanu		Adar II ed			
	Apr/May	Aiaru		Nisan 1	Ezra leaves Babylon with multitude		
	May/June	Simanu		Iyar			
	Jun/Jul	Duzu		Sivan			
	Jul/Aug	Abu		Tammuz			
	Aug/Sep	Ululu		Av 1	Ezra arrives in Jerusalem 1 st day of 5 th month 7 th year		
	Sep/Oct	Tashritu		Eulu			
	Oct/Nov	Arahsamnu		Tishri		8 th regnal	
Nov/Dec	Kislimnu	Heshvan					
Dec/Jan	Tebetu	Kislev					
456	Jan/Feb	Shabatu	3305	Tevet			
	Feb/Mar	Addaru		Shevat			
	Mar/Apr	Nisanu		Adar			
	Apr/May	Aiaru		Nisan			
	May/June	Simanu		Iyar			
	Jun/Jul	Duzu		Sivan			
	Jul/Aug	Abu		Tammuz			
	Aug/Sep	Ululu		Av			
	Sep/Oct	Tashritu		Eulu			
	Oct/Nov	Arahsamnu		Tishri		9 th regnal	
Nov/Dec	Kislimnu	Heshvan					
Dec/Jan	Tebetu	Kislev					
455	Jan/Feb	Shabatu	3306	Tevet			
	Feb/Mar	Shabatu		Shevat			

The issue that is paramount in this study relates to why Tishri 10 (or 11) must be the “time” for the decree of Artaxerxes I in 458 B.C., in what appears to be early in his seventh as king. This gave Ezra a period of 7–8 months to gather the select tribes and ready them for the lengthy trek. Even that seems brief in light of all the planning and gathering of temple furnishings for a Jerusalem journey.

The Shemita within Man’s Decree

God’s restoration decree (490 years of final mercy) would begin with man’s decree, filled with sympathetic support to Israel’s God. In a direct probationary order He structured this period to represent five numeric calipers:

1. Its declaration in 458 B.C announced that a time limit on God’s mercy had been set in motion.
2. It was divided into sacred periods – 70 Sabbaticals and 10 Jubilees – all highly symbolic for deliverance and restoration.
3. Within its timing infrastructure, the first advent would occur.
4. At its end, redemptive history is closed. The tenth Jubilee reveals this to be the era when the Second Advent occurs.¹²
5. The 490 years begin in the fall and is based on solar years. Thus, it ends in the fall. That means the Second Advent occurs in the fall.¹³

God instructed Moses that a Passover lamb was to be chosen four days before that sacred day. That means that on Abib 10 the lamb was chosen – on Abib 14 (Passover) it was slain. The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem occurred on Abib 9 (Sunday). The lamb would be chosen the next day (Monday). But now – the real “Lamb” had come and was rejected.

“Jerusalem had been the child of His care, and as a tender father mourns over a wayward son, so Jesus wept over the beloved city. How can I give thee up? How can I see thee devoted to destruction? Must I let thee go to fill up the cup of thine iniquity? One soul is of such value that, in comparison with it, worlds sink into insignificance; but here was a whole nation to be lost. When the fast westering sun should pass from sight in the heavens, ***Jerusalem’s day of grace would be ended.*** While the procession was halting on the brow of Olivet, it was not yet too late for Jerusalem to repent. The angel of mercy was then folding her wings to step down from the golden throne to give place to justice and swift-coming judgment. But Christ’s great heart of love still pleaded for Jerusalem, that had scorned His mercies, despised His warnings, and was about to imbrue her hands in His blood. If Jerusalem would but repent, it was not yet too late. While the last rays of the setting sun were lingering on temple, tower, and pinnacle, would not some good angel lead her to the Saviour’s love, and avert her doom? Beautiful and unholy city, that had stoned the prophets, that had rejected the Son of God, that was locking herself by her impenitence in fetters of bondage,—her day of mercy was almost spent!”¹⁴

The purpose of the 490-year prophecy was to bring an end to sin, anoint the most Holy and see everlasting righteousness arrive. Jesus said that it wouldn’t happen with the Jewish people! (Matthew 21:43, 23:36-38, Daniel 8:14).

¹² White, Ellen G.; *Christian Teachings of Ellen G. White*, pp. 95-96.

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 399.

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 577-578.

That means that the probationary time **either** was a prophecy totally cancelled at the Cross or it was put on hold and a “tarrying time” began until another group of loyalists could be found. Prophecy invokes the latter (another topic). There is a pending three-and-a-half-year period waiting for a purified people to emerge and vindicate God’s character. (That’s why apocalyptic prophecy has so many three-and-a-half-year periods.) This is how they are presented:

1. 42 months – used when persecution is disclosed.
2. 1260 days – used when God’s people can do a “countdown.”
3. Time, times, and an half – used when the prophetic Jewish feasts are to be a tool.

Thus, the three and a half years must finalize a Sabbatical cycle and match the Passover Feast on a Friday. Is God numerically precise regarding the end or was He only so for the first advent? The prophecies of Daniel take us to the **deliverance of God’s people** and the **special resurrection** (Daniel 12:1-2). They are atomic-clock precise.

“The sky opened and shut and was in commotion. The mountains shook like a reed in the wind, and cast out ragged rocks all around. The sea boiled like a pot and cast out stones upon the land. And as God spoke the day and the hour of Jesus’ coming and delivered the everlasting covenant to His people, He spoke one sentence, and then paused, while the words were rolling through the earth. The Israel of God stood with their eyes fixed upward, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah, and rolled through the earth like peals of loudest thunder. It was awfully solemn. And at the end of every sentence the saints shouted, “Glory! Alleluia!” Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God; and they shone with the glory, as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked could not look on them for the glory. And when the never-ending blessing was pronounced on those who had honored God in keeping His Sabbath holy, there was a mighty shout of victory over the beast and over his image.

“Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest [the 10th Jubilee that finishes the 490 years after a ‘tarrying time’]. I saw the pious slave rise in triumph and victory and shake off the chains that bound him, while his wicked master was in confusion and knew not what to do; for the wicked could not understand the words of the voice of God.”¹⁵

This expositor clearly knew of the delay **and** the finishing of the last three and a half years¹⁶ with a final Jubilee.

Evidence (historical and Biblical) suggests that Artaxerxes I’s decree occurred in the fall of 458 B.C. This would give winter months’ preparation for a spring trip westward, north and then south to Palestine. This puts Christ’s baptism at the fall of 26 A.D. and the crucifixion at 30 A.D. at Spring Passover. That would then coincide with the known full moon on Thursday–Friday, Abib 14–15, when Calvary had to have occurred.

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¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 282.