

Nehemiah 8 (plus a whole lot more)

Where Are We?

Recall: Nehemiah (knowingly or otherwise) started a prophetic clock that eventually ushered in the greatest event in human history!

Chart: Prophetic timeline from Daniel 9

Recall:

Daniel 9:25

Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem until [the coming of] the Anointed One, a Prince, shall be seven weeks [of years] and sixty-two weeks [of years]; it shall be built again with [city] square and moat, but in troublous times.

The edict went out from Artaxerxes Longitmanus in Nisan (Nehemiah 2 and historical records set the date). Jewish practice is to count from 1 Nisan, so we start the clock at 1 Nisan.

Therefore, we assume the command goes out from Artaxerxes Longitmanus Nisan 1, 445 BC.

Sir Robert Anderson reached out to Royal Observatory in Greenwich for help determining the exact date of the new moon in the month of Nisan, 445 BC, which would help determine the exact date of the edict, and received a reply from none other than G. B. Airy (yes, THE George B. Airy) who said in a letter of his calculations "...[I] have no doubt of its correctness." ¹

The clock starts **March 14, 445 BC**, Julian calendar (we use the Gregorian calendar, which replaced the Julian calendar in October 1582).

Daniel's prophecy gives an exact term between "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.... With [city] square and moat" and the coming of Messiah the Prince to be sixty-two weeks (of years).

$$69 \text{ weeks} = 69(7) = 483 \text{ years}$$
$$483 \text{ years} * \frac{360 \text{ days}}{1 \text{ Persian year}} = 173,880 \text{ days}$$

¹ The Coming Prince, Sir Robert Anderson, pp 107-108

It turns out that Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey on 10th Nisan.

This is Sunday, **April 6th, A.D. 32.**

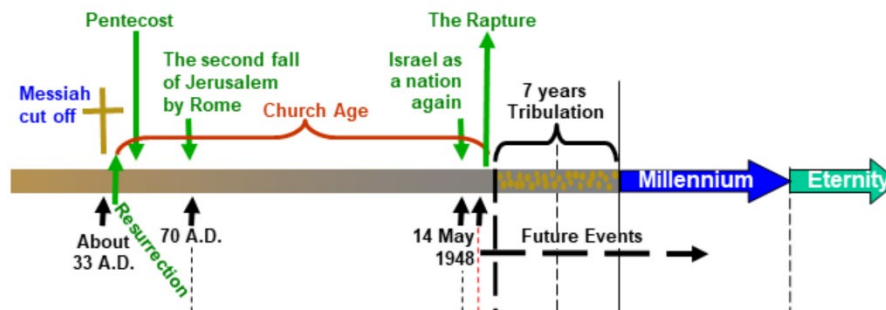
March 14, 445 BC to April 6, A.D. 32 is exactly 173,880 days

This is just ONE example of many that exhibits the Divine authorship of the Word of God. How could such a prophecy be fulfilled with such precision if not written from a Source outside the time domain? Something to think about.

According to Daniel 9:26,

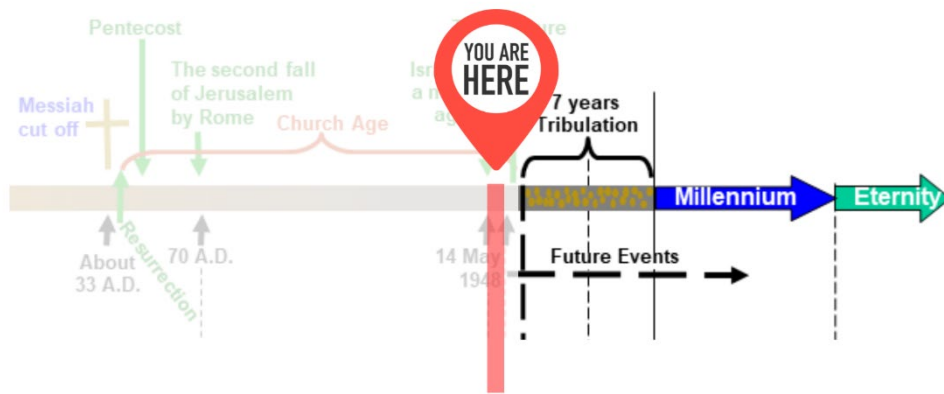
26 And after the sixty-two weeks [of years] shall the Anointed One be cut off or killed and shall have nothing [and no one] belonging to [and defending] Him. And the people of the [other] prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood; and even to the end there shall be war, and desolations are decreed.

This is exactly what happened. *So where are we now?*



What happened May 14, 1948? *Israel officially became a nation in her Biblical homeland!*

So that means we are somewhere between May 14, 1948 and the next major prophetic event: the rapture of the Church.



Back to Nehemiah

Recall from last week:

Nehemiah and his team had finished the wall of Jerusalem, against all odds, in a lightning-fast 52 days. You know how building projects go over budget and over time? This one didn't; that is why their enemies knew it was a legit work from God.

First return under Zerubbabel, no singers mentioned.

- a. Second return under Ezra: singers mentioned but not appointed.
- b. Third return under Nehemiah, singers finally appointed.
- c. The point is they are finally getting back on track as a nation to really worship YHWH.

Last week: Lessons from Nehemiah 7:

1. Never allow others to shape your opinion about another person, good or bad. (6:19)
2. How to get promoted (7:2)
 - a. Be successful in your current assignment

Luke 16:10

He who is faithful in a very little [thing] is faithful also in much, and he who is dishonest and unjust in a very little [thing] is dishonest and unjust also in much.

- b. Be honest, faithful, and full of integrity, no matter who is watching

Ephesians 6:5-8

5 Servants (slaves), be obedient to those who are your physical masters, having respect for them and eager concern to please them, in singleness of motive and with all your heart, as [service] to Christ [Himself]—

6 Not in the way of eye-service [as if they were watching you] and only to please men, but as servants (slaves) of Christ, doing the will of God heartily and with your whole soul;

7 Rendering service readily with goodwill, as to the Lord and not to men,

8 Knowing that for whatever good anyone does, he will receive his reward from the Lord, whether he is slave or free.

Another example of this is found in Paul's letter to the church in Colossae:

Colossians 3:22-24

22 Servants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not only when their eyes are on you as pleasers of men, but in simplicity of purpose [with all your heart] because of your reverence for the Lord and as a sincere expression of your devotion to Him.

23 Whatever may be your task, work at it heartily (from the soul), as [something done] for the Lord and not for men,

24 Knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [and not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [real] reward. [The One Whom] you are actually serving [is] the Lord Christ (the Messiah).

- c. Fear God more than others (it's not a comparison contest, but it is a race)

Proverbs 9:10

The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning (the chief and choice part) of Wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight and understanding.

What is the *fear of the Lord*? Many things, but notice this one:

Proverbs 8:13 KJV

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

If you don't hate what Satan is doing, you are not walking in the fear of the Lord.

If you don't hate sickness, disease, lack, depression, anxiety, selfishness, unrighteous anger... etc... you are not walking in the fear of the Lord.

Jesus got angry. How was this ok? Compassion is love and hate. Not just love. Not just sympathy or empathy. No, that is not compassion.

Matthew 14:14

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with COMPASSION toward them, and he healed their sick.

Compassion: *σπλαγχνίζομαι* = *splagchnizomai* (splagch - it - zo - my)

This is quite the word.

σπλάγγνον = (*splagch* - non) = bowels, intestines, (the heart, lungs, liver, etc.) (seat of violent passions)

The word used in Matthew 14 carries the idea of: *to be moved as to one's bowels, hence to be moved with compassion, have compassion (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity)*

Next lesson from Nehemiah 7...

3. Leadership lesson: Give people real responsibility with real risk (7:3)
4. Nehemiah's plans ALWAYS SUCCEEDED because: (7:5)
 - a. He listened to God
 - b. He acted
 - c. He prayed continually
5. You can (and should) hear from God concerning ANYTHING, big or small (7:65)
6. When you walk in obedience to the Word, God will work supernaturally (7:73)

Nehemiah 8

1 Then all the people gathered together as one man in the broad place before the Water Gate; and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of both men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first of the seventh month.

The first day of the seventh month shows up a lot in the Word.

Leviticus 23:24

Say to the Israelites, On the first day of the seventh month [almost October], you shall observe a day of solemn [sabbatical] rest, a memorial day announced by blowing of trumpets, a holy [called] assembly.

Numbers 29:1

On the first day of the seventh month [on New Year's Day of the civil year], you shall have a holy [summoned] assembly; you shall do no servile work. It is a day of blowing of trumpets for you [everyone blowing who wishes, proclaiming that the glad New Year has come and that the great Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles are now approaching].

Ezra 3:6

From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

Ezekiel receives a prophetic word from God on this day (**Ezekiel 30:20**).

What is so special about this day?

This was the **FIRST** of the three **FALL FEASTS**.

1. Feast of Trumpets (first day of the seventh month)

2. Day of Atonement
3. Feast of Booths (Feast of Tabernacles)

Feast of Trumpets: they would blow trumpets and announce a day of rest unto the Lord.

Yom Kippur is the “day of Atonement.”

The name “Yom Kippur” means “Day of Atonement,” and it is a day set aside to “afflict the soul,” to atone for the sins of the past year. During the Days of Awe, God inscribes all of our names in either the book of life or death. On Yom Kippur, the judgment entered in these books is sealed. Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and G-d, not for sins against another person. To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs you committed against them if possible.²

Now we come to Sukkot (sue-COAT).

This is a seven-day holiday celebrated every year.

Like Passover and Shavu’ot, Sukkot has a dual significance: historical and agricultural. The holiday commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Sukkot is also a harvest festival, and is sometimes referred to as the Festival of Ingathering.

Jewish Feast Days (God’s Appointed Times: Leviticus 23)

Genesis 1:14

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

Seasons = *moed* = Appointed place, appointed meeting; appointed time

There are seven *moeds* that God outlines for His People Israel: three in the Spring, three in the Fall, and one in the middle.

Spring

Passover — Leviticus 23:4-8. **Jesus is our sacrifice to the Father for all sin.**

Unleavened Bread — Leviticus 23:6. **Jesus is our sinless and holy High Priest.**

Firstfruits — Leviticus 23:10. **After 3 days, Jesus rose again as a firstfruits of the dead (setting the stage for us!) to resurrection.³**

² Jewish Virtual Library, Yom Kippur: History & Overview

³ 1 Corinthians 15:20

Between Spring and Fall

Feast of Weeks or Pentecost — Leviticus 23:16. **The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second experience for the believer today after being born again where we are clothed with power from on high to carry out the Great Commission with signs and wonders accompanying.**

Fall

Feast of Trumpets — Leviticus 23:24. **The Rapture of the Church to Jesus in the air will be heralded by a trumpet blast.**

Day of Atonement — Leviticus 16, 23:26-32. **There will be a day of reckoning; where sin is dealt with. The Great White Throne Judgment (while the saints are in Heaven) will take place just before Jesus' final return.**

Feast of Tabernacles or Booths — Leviticus 23:34. Jews are commanded to make temporary dwelling (sleeping and eating) places outdoors and use them for seven days. The rules: the roof must be put on last; made of something that grew from the ground but got cut off. The roof has to be wide enough to let rain in and to see the stars, ideally. The walls can be canvas covering; nailed down. This is to commemorate the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. **At the end of the age, God's children will vacate their temporary dwellings and will live forever in their permanent, Heavenly ones.**

The Water Gate

During Sukkot, the priests would draw water from a nearby brook and bring it through this gate; only used for this purpose during Sukkot. Above the Water Gate, there was a mikvah (ceremonial cleansing bath) used by the high priest only on Yom Kippur (just five days earlier).

Nehemiah 8:1-6

1 Then all the people gathered together as one man in the broad place before the Water Gate; and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel.

But the fact is that Christ (the Messiah) has been raised from the dead, and He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [in death].

Luke 22:20

And in like manner, He took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament or covenant [ratified] in My blood, which is shed (poured out) for you.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of both men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first of the seventh month.

3 He read from it, facing the broad place before the Water Gate, from early morning until noon, in the presence of the men and women and those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

This was quite the church service! “Early morning until noon.”

Notice all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. That is how they could last so long.

You could stay awake in church if you applied yourself to be *attentive to the Word!*

Proverbs 4:20-22 would fit in here nicely. See *The Unstoppable Podcast* Season 4, Episode 5: *2024 Word + Life and Health to All Your Flesh* for a detailed teaching on these verses.

4 Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden pulpit which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

They were serious enough about this they put time, energy, finances, planning, and excellence into this occasion. There is nothing wrong with excellence in a church service, as long as it is an aid to facilitating the move of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Word of God. Nothing wrong with smoke machines and laser lights (as some are so easily offended by) during a worship set if it helps usher people into the Presence of Jesus.

5 Ezra opened the book in sight of all the people, for he was standing above them; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

Maybe this helped them stay awake.

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with faces to the ground.

The people responded. Make it your goal to respond to something every time you learn something from the Word of God. Take some sort of corresponding action to what you have just received.

Notice that the teaching of the Word of God produced the right perspective. They lowered themselves before the Lord. He is God, not us. You should try putting your face to the ground once in a while. It is a good practice and helps you see God more clearly; you are suddenly forced to not look down your nose at anything.

7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah—the Levites—helped the people to understand the Law, and the people [remained] in their place.

As in other places in Ezra / Nehemiah, you could do a nice word study on all these names and make some interesting discoveries (remind me to tell you about the one in Genesis sometime).

8 So they read from the Book of the Law of God distinctly, faithfully amplifying and giving the sense so that [the people] understood the reading.

See Ephesians 4:11-16. God has given the five-fold ministry gifts for “perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...”

Also this was in Hebrew; the people spoke Aramaic (the language of the day). The Hebrew text in Nehemiah suggests there was some translating going on, as well as teaching.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all of them, This day is holy to the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law.

Godly sorrow produces repentance. This is where they were at. The same thing happened to King Josiah many years earlier. It pleases God when our hearts are tender before Him.

But why did the leaders stop the tears? It was not a day of mourning (that was last week). This was to be a day of rejoicing; they were commemorating (Sukkot); which reminded them of God’s continual presence during the wilderness wanderings.

Psalm 16:11

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

I regularly shed tears when I am overwhelmed by an awareness of His presence, but they are not tears of sadness. They are indescribable tears of fulfillment, joy, peace, and power.

10 Then [Ezra] told them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet drink, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And be not grieved and depressed, for the joy of the Lord is your strength and stronghold.

Go on, get busy. Enjoy the presence of the Lord.

You can enjoy the presence of God. It isn't a lemon-sucking fest. Peter said times of refreshing shall come in the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19). Some of you need to start tapping into the emotions that God has intended for you when you are aware of His presence.

11 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, Be still, for the day is holy. And do not be grieved and sad.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, drink, send portions, and make great rejoicing, for they had understood the words that were declared to them.

Thank God, they learned enough to be obedient this time.

13 On the second day, all the heads of fathers' houses, with the priests and Levites, gathered to Ezra the scribe to study and understand the words of divine instruction.

The second day of the seventh month. Notice the elements of sustainable revival:

1. Obedience (to the Word; not much emotion)
2. Encounter (oh, wow, there it is)
3. Diligence (now what do we do?)

14 And they found written in the law, which the Lord had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month

They found it. You have to be looking closely to find things.

15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem, saying, Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.

They are finally getting it. Obedience in action.

There is, in fact, significance to these leafy branches.

Jews are commanded to take four plants – etrog (a citrus fruit native to Israel); lulav (a palm branch); hadas (a branch from a myrtle tree); and, arava (a willow branch).

	Fragrance	No Fragrance
Fruit	Citrus	Palm
No Fruit	Myrtle	Willow

Think about Mark 4 and the parable of the sower... four different kinds of soil (of men's hearts).

16 So the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each on the roof of his house and in their courts and the courts of God's house and in the squares of the Water Gate and the Gate of Ephraim.

17 All the assembly of returned exiles made booths and dwelt in them; for since the days of Jeshua (Joshua) son of Nun up to that day, the Israelites had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.

Since the days of Joshua this hasn't been done? Wow! This is nearly 1000 years. Seriously.

18 Also day by day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast for seven days; the eighth day was a [closing] solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

During the whole Sukkot feast.

Key Takeaways

1. Every Scripture is God-Breathed⁴ and is useful for us personally, corporately, and globally. Personally, since His power, presence, and revelation of Himself is contained in the Bible. Corporately (as the Church) since God speaks direction, wisdom, and revelation to His people. Globally, because God has a plan (remember the *moedim*?)
2. Jesus has come from the Father once before to make perfect atonement for the sin nature of mankind; to buy us off the auction block of Satan and sin; and He is coming again a second time as King over all the earth. It's going to happen, and it is going to happen SOON. We are living in the last of the last days.
3. God has appointed times and seasons. Nehemiah was part of this.
4. Nehemiah was an incredible leader who knew how to find, follow, and fulfill God's will for his life.
5. Nehemiah not only believed God could do stuff; he had the guts to step out in faith and act on what he believed. He saw supernatural success in everything he did because he cultivated a listening ear to the Lord, and he kept moving.
6. An awareness of God's presence brings joy to the believer; fear and sorrow to the unbeliever. Get believing and start enjoying.
7. Standing up may help you stay awake in church. 😊

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16 "Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action)"