

The Starting point of the 70 “sevens” in Daniel 9 and some consequences with appendices on Darius the Mede and the chronology of Jesus

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Presentation of the problem

The prophesy of Daniel about the 70 “sevens” is for many Christians probably a well known text or better: a well known problem.

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven sevens.

Then for sixty-two sevens it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

And after the sixty-two sevens, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall not have. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one seven, and for half of the seven he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

Daniel 9: 24-27, English Standard Version with changes

As my mother language is not English I don't know about sensibilities concerning Bible translations. If I read an English Bible, I usually use the New International Version, but in an article I sometimes I prefer other versions, if they are closer to the Hebrew text and sometimes I have to adapt an attractive text to what we read in Hebrew.

1

The Hebrew text has *sevens*, *not weeks*, like some translations have it. It is however clear that “weeks” of seven years are meant.

2

There are three periods: one of 7, one of 62 “sevens” and one of 1 “seven”.

3

The end of the whole series of periods brings the end of the problem of sin and also the end of the fulfillment of all prophesy. We have to think about an

end time situation.

4

The starting point is the moment of *the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem*. Establishing when that word took place, is the main goal of this article.

5

After the first period there is *an anointed one, a prince* in the Hebrew text. Theodotion, whose translation can be found in the Septuaginta, has *a ruling anointed one*, but adds the 62 “sevens” in a strange way immediately after the 7 “sevens”. I prefer to follow what I see as the natural division of the Hebrew text and I changed the English Standard Version I quoted at the beginning of my article in that way. After reading this article you will see that we will get a good result with it.

6

After the 62 “sevens” an anointed one will be cut off. The Hebrew text says that he has not. What he is missing is not mentioned. Theodotion translates that he does not have a judgment or he is adding what he thinks to be the meaning.

7

In *the anointed one that will be cut off* many explanations see Jesus. But who should be identified as the *anointed one, a prince*, remains a riddle.

So we get this summary

“sevens”	years	end	interpretation
7 “sevens”	49 years	an anointed one, a ruler	?
62 “sevens”	434 years	an anointed one killed	Jesus
1 “seven”	7 years	all finished	end time

In order to establish historical facts it was necessary to make more extensive studies of some matters. I did not want to make the line of thought in the main part of the article unclear. So historical matter can be found in 3 appendices.

Three decrees of Persian kings

Daniel receives our prophesy in the first year of Darius the Mede (Daniel 9: 1).

The years of the Persian kings, like those of the Babylonians, were counted in a way we do not know in our time. Their first regnal year began only at the first New Year's Day **in** their reign, somewhere in March. The days before that

were counted as belonging to the deceased king (1). Darius the Mede functioned under the Persians. Daniel lived in Persia. So probably Darius the Mede counted his years in the same way and Daniel knew the same system as normal where he lived. Babel was conquered in October 539. The first year of Darius the Mede began in March 538 and lasted until March 537. For Daniel the end of the 70 years of the Babylonians against Jerusalem, about which Jeremiah spoke (25: 11; 29: 10), counted from 607, was near. We have to look for a decree to build Jerusalem. There can be found three initiatives by Persian kings.

a The proclamation of Cyrus in his first year.

We read in Ezra 1: 1-4

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”

It is clear that this decree contains the order to build the temple. The temple can be seen as a part of Jerusalem. So it is possibly the starting point of the 70 years. Ezra makes clear that this proclamation was a fulfillment of the prophesy of Jeremiah that Daniel had in mind.

Cyrus conquered Babel in 539. Some take that year as the first year he ruled over Jerusalem. But we still have Darius the Mede. Most people who think he really existed give him only about 2 regnal years. I don't know why. But it works and it so seems to be sound. The problems regarding Darius the Mede will be discussed in the first appendix. Then Cyrus' first year for Jerusalem was 537. I write *for Jerusalem*, because Cyrus became king of Persia in 559.

b The order by Artachsasta to Ezra.

We read in Ezra 7: 12-26 about the order for Ezra to make a journey to Jerusalem in the 7th year of Artachsasta. It concerns mainly the service in the temple. But in verse 25f. we read also

And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them. Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

These words see in Jerusalem not only a place for religious activities, but also a center of administration and justice. Building is implied.

The 7th year of Artachsasta is 458-457. I have to write a combination of two of our years because the Persian New Year's Day was not January 1, but somewhere in March. A Persian year in that way belongs to two of our years.

c The order by Artachsasta to Nehemiah.

Ezra was in the first place a priest and a theologian (Ezra 7: 11). Nehemiah was a politician. His duty was to restore the temple and the walls (Nehemiah 2: 8). He got his order in the month of Nisan in the 20th year of Artachsasta, that is 445 (Nehemia 2: 1). It is clear that we are talking about building.

How to find the startingpoint?

Let us try to see which way to count gives acceptable results.

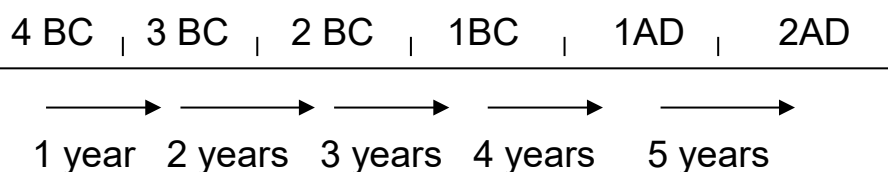
A year Zero did not exist

In the 6th century Dionysius Exiguus invented our Christian calendar. He did not use a year Zero. Europe learned that number from the Arabs some time later.

That means that we have to go from the year 1 BC to 1 AD. There are consequences for counting the years over that frontier without 0.

Let us think about a cat that was born in 4 BC and died in 2 AD. How old was the cat at its death?

We are inclined to say 6 years. But 5 years is the truth:



We will have to use this rule (one year less than you think it is) when we will count the years over the frontier between 1 BC and 1 AD.

In our first scheme we will show where we will get starting from the three decrees of the Persian kings we just discussed. We will use normal years of 365 or 366 days and only the results after the periods of 7 and 62 years will be shown.

3 starting points →	539 or 537	458-7	445
7 “sevens” 49 years	490 or 488	409-8	396
62 “sevens” 434 years	56 or 54 B.C.	26-27 AD	39 AD
1 “seven” 7 years			

In many studies a prophetic year of 360 days is used. So we will show the dates using the year of 360 days for the same periods.

3 starting points →	539 or 537	458-7	445
7 “sevens” 49 years	489 or 486	408-7	395
62 “sevens” 434 years	63 or 61 B.C.	19-20 A.D.	32 A.D.
1 “seven” 7 year			

After the 62 “sevens” we should reach an important year in the life of Jesus, for after the 62 years a Messiah is killed without (what should probably be added) judgment or guilt. So we can only accept the years 26-7 in the first scheme and the year 32 in the second one.

But from another point of view the year 32 cannot be accepted. In Appendix 2 I will show that Jesus died and resurrected in the year 29.

So there is until now one possible solution:

3 starting points →		458-7	
7 “sevens” 49 years		409-8	
62 “sevens” 434 years		26-27 AD	
1 “seven” 7 years			

An important problem is to find the anointed one, the prince in 409-8. In that time Nehemiah was active. He was a politician. Everyone whom God gave a special task can have been anointed, but Nehemiah as a prince or a real important ruler??

We should add that it is strange, that the proclamation of Cyrus, about which Ezra states that it was a fulfillment of the prophesy by Jeremiah, does not give acceptable dates.

Looking in another direction

Until now we followed the direction of the studies before me: look for an order of a Persian king. But there are more options. Is it possible that God spoke about a word he gave Himself?

Literally we should translate

from the uttering of the word to restore and build Jerusalem

Word is the normal translation of the Hebrew word that was used here (דָּבַר), but that word can get a lot of special meanings if we look to the context in which it was used. *Order* is possible.

So God answer to Daniel's question concerning the end of the 70 years he found in the book of Jeremiah can be:

Wait until someone will give the order to rebuild Jerusalem and 49 years later there will come an anointed prince.

or

Wait until I will give the order to rebuild Jerusalem and 49 years later there will come an anointed prince.

or

Count from the moment I spoke about the rebuilding of Jerusalem and 49 years later there will come an anointed prince.

Until now we only reckoned with the first possibility. The third one will give us a very attractive solution. So let us look for the possibility.

The passages in which Jeremiah mentions the period of 70 year (2), gives only words of revenge, promises of return and of other blessings, but nothing about the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Another text however does.

*“Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it—the Lord is his name: Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them with the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil. Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. **I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and build them as they were at first.** I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city*

shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

“Thus says the Lord: In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste without man or beast,’ in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord:

*“Give thanks to the Lord of hosts,
for the Lord is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!”*

For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 33: 2-11

We should compare the beginning of the prophesy in the book of Daniel

*Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to **restore** and **build** Jerusalem*

with a sentence in this prophesy of Jeremiah

*I will **restore** the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and **build** them as they were at first.*

In Hebrew both words that have been translated with *restore* have the same grammatical root: **הִשְׁבִּיתִי** and **לְהַשִּׁיב** and the same is true for *build*: **בָּנִיתִים** and **לְבָנוֹת**.

Daniel had searched in the book of Jeremiah.

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Daniel 9: 1-3 NIV

He had found a text about a period of 70 years and he had asked God what would be happening. Now God gives the answer with another text of the prophesies of Jeremiah. He gave a word concerning the restoration of Jerusalem Himself. But when did He give that?

At the beginning of Jeremiah 33 we find (NIV)

While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him a second time

In Jeremiah 32: 2 we find that the prophet was in prison just before and during the capture of Jerusalem – that is in 586. The first period of the 70 “sevens” lasted 49 years. So that period would end in 537, shortly after the year in which Daniel got his answer.

We already saw that Babel was taken in 539. It happened October 12. Darius the Mede was reigning. In 537 Cyrus (or Kores in Hebrew and in several translations) would have his first year as king of Jerusalem. The text of the 70 “sevens” says

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven sevens.

Daniel knew the prophecies. So he was able to link the anointed prince with

*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.”’
This is what the LORD says to his **anointed**,
to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of*

Isaiah 44: 28 – 45: 1 NIV

So we can fix the first period of 7 “sevens” (49 years) between 586 and 537. This is a good choice because now the proclamation of Cyrus is a fulfillment of the prophesy of Jeremiah indeed.

The period between the 7 “sevens” and the 62 “sevens”

We saw that the period of 62 “sevens” probably ends with an important fact in the time of Jesus' ministry. The consequence is that the beginning of the period should be found somewhere around 410.

Then we get a period from 537 until 410 that was not counted in the “sevens”. No problem, for the time in not counted either between the period of 62 “sevens” and the period of one “seven” that clearly belongs to the end time.

What is important to realize about the period between 537 and 410? We come to a very important article by Hendrik Koorevaar. It was originally written in German (2). There exist also Dutch and English versions (3).

Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible. It seems to be a repetition of what can be read elsewhere in the Old Testament. Koorevaar makes it clear that the book of Chronicles was written with the intention of closing and sealing the Old Testament canon and that it was added by Nehemiah as an explanation of the main themes of the Old Testament also. Chronicles ends with (NIV)

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the LORD their God be with them.”

This decree by Cyrus should be seen as a new starting-point in the history of the Jewish people and the temple. The realization of that temple lasted however until the time of Nehemiah. After that period Nehemiah closed and sealed the canon. I would like to add: and the 62 “sevens” could start.

So it is important to realize that, as far as we saw until now, the periods of the “sevens”, and also the period that was not counted with “sevens”, can be characterized as “waiting for”

- ° During the first period one should wait for the decree of Cyrus.
 - ° During the period between 537 and Nehemiah one should wait for the temple and Jerusalem to be built and for the canon to be closed.
 - ° During the period of 62 one should wait for the times of Christ to come.
- The difference is that the **length** of the period between 537 and Nehemiah depended of the activities and the belief of the builders.

The period of 62 “sevens”

At the beginning of the 62 “sevens” the temple had been built and the canon was closed. Normal life could begin. Could, but the prophesy says

but in a troubled time.

The problems of the times of the Maccabees are known. Then shortly before the time of Jesus the people lost all independency to the Romans. What can be seen as the end of the 62 “sevens”? We are looking for an important fact that can be considered as a frontier. For what comes after the

frontier is a series of facts:

*And **after** the sixty-two sevens,*

° *an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.*

° *And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.*

° *Its end shall come with a flood,*

° *and to the end there shall be war.*

(Desolations are decreed).

We know that Jesus died in 29 (see Appendix 2), that the city and the temple were destroyed in 70 and the the end has to come later. So the frontier has to be found before 29.

There we find the beginning of ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist.

Mentioning John the Baptist is finding a frontier:

The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingship of God is preached,

Luke 16: 16

So the period of 62 “sevens” ended when John the Baptist began to preach. The very official way in which the beginning of John's ministry is dated suggests that we have to do with an important fact indeed. In Luke 3: 1-2 we read (NIV)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene — during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

In Appendix 3 it will be shown that we are in the year 26-27 AD. Now it is possible to date the beginning of the period of 62 “sevens” and therefore the closing of the canon of the Old Testament in 409-408 BC.

Further periods

We found a new solution for the starting point of the 70 “sevens”. There were some consequences as to the beginnings and the ends of other periods. I would like however to leave all end time matter to others. The only connection with our investigation is that we found that one should establish for each period what God was / will be waiting for.

So the details of the rest I leave for other persons.

Result:

° **First period, 7 “sevens”**. From God's word to Jeremiah in 586 until 537, when Cyrus allowed the Jews to build the temple.

° **Transitional period**. Until Nehemiah completed the building of the temple and of Jerusalem and closed the Old Testament in 409-408.

° **Second period, 62 “sevens”**. Until John the Baptist, who closed the period of the Law and Prophets.

° **Transitional period**. Until circumstances will be favorable to start the last period.

° **Third period, one “seven”**. Troubled end time circumstances. Probably waiting for fulfillment of Matthew 23; 39

For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’

Appendix 1

Darius the Mede

Darius the Mede is a king that is not known from Persian texts. That does not give problems.

Belshazzar, the Chaldean king in Daniel 8, was a problem too. Until a text was found (5) that explained that the crown prince (Belshazzar) was functioning as king when the real king, Nabonid, was absent:

*He entrusted the "Camp" to his oldest (son), the firstborn,
The troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command).
He let (everything) go, entrusted the kingship to him
And, himself, he started out for a long journey,
The (military) forces of Akkad marching with him;
He turned towards Tema (deep) in the west.
He started out the expedition on a path (leading) to a distant (region).
When he arrived there,
He killed in battle the prince of Tema,
Slaughtered the flocks of those who dwell in the city (as well as) in the
countryside,
And he, himself, took his residence in [Te]ma, the forces of Akkad [were
also stationed] there.*

For Darius the Mede there exists a Greek text which possibly makes an allusion to him and his father. As far as I know this connection was not made before. Aeschylus wrote a tragedy, *The Persians*, in which he described what happened (in his imagination) when Xerxes got home after his disaster against the Greeks. In the tragedy Aeschylus lets the spirit of Darius, the father of Xerxes, appear. Darius starts some generations before his time:

*For Medus was first to be the leader of its host;
and another, his son, completed his work
since wisdom ruled his spirit.
Third, after him, Cyrus, blessed in good fortune,
came to the throne and established peace for all his people.
The Lydians and Phrygians he won to his rule,
and the whole of Ionia he subdued by force;
for he won the favor of the gods through his right-mindedness.
Fourth in succession, the son of Cyrus ruled the host.
Fifth in the list, Mardus came to power, a disgrace to his native land
and to the ancient throne; but he was slain by the guile
of noble Artaphrenes in his palace,*

*with the help of friends whose duty this was.
 And I in turn attained the lot I desired,
 and many a campaign I made with a valiant force;
 but disaster so dire as this I brought not upon the state.
 Yet Xerxes my son, youth that he is, has the mind of youth
 and does not remember my injunctions.*

Aeschylus, *The Persians* 765 ff., translation H.W. Smyth

So Darius mentions the following kings:

explanation

Medus	
his son	
Cyrus	the king who allowed the Jews to build the temple
the son of Cyrus	known to us as Cambyses
Mardus	mostly called Smerdis
Darius	known from the book of Daniel
Xerxes	the Ahasuerus in the book of Esther

Medus, or in Greek Μῆδος (Mèdos), can be taken as a name or as a nationality.

Taken as a name - the first king of a lineage can be seen as the original king of the Medes who gave his name to the people. But here we are only 2 generations before Cyrus, and that is not the time of the origin of the Medes. Therefore we prefer to translate "a Mede". That remembers us of

In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, a Mede by descent who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans

Daniel 9: 1

So we find

in the Bible:	Chaldeans – Ahasuerus – Darius the Mede, his son – Cyrus
in The Persians:	a Mede – his son – Cyrus

It would be very strange if there were another Mede and his son just before Cyrus. So Aeschylus made an allusion to Darius the Mede and his father.

Appendix 2

The year of Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

In Galatians 1 and 2 Paul is telling about the contacts he had had with the apostles in Jerusalem after his conversion:

I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they praised God because of me.

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.

Galatians 1: 17 – 2: 1 NIV

This second visit, after 14 years, must be the same that is reported in Acts 11 and 12. The Christians in Antioch heard about a famine in Jerusalem and decided to send help.

The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 11: 29-30 NIV

In the same time Herod died

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned

from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

Acts 12: 19-25 NIV

We know that Herod died in the year 44. So we can reckon back to Paul's conversion. In Galatians Paul was writing about 3 and 14 years between his conversion and the visit to Jerusalem in 44.

The first reaction is to add 3 and 14. But 17 years before the year 44 is the year 27. That is too early for Paul's conversion. From the resurrection of Jesus to that conversion we should reckon with more than a year if we read in Acts what happened during that time.

But the year 26 or 25 is too early for the resurrection, for that date does not fit within the chronology of Jesus. The only way to understand Paul's 3 and 14 years is to reckon both from his conversion.

So using Galatians and Acts that conversion has to be put in 30 and Jesus' resurrection in 29.

But there is more. There exists a verse in the Gospel of John that gives a chronological clue

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a Great Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

John 19: 31 NIV adapted

I adapted the text to the Greek original that has *Great Sabbath*. The Great Sabbath is a special Sabbath, the last Sabbath before Pesach. If we search the Jewish calendar on the internet (I used Kaluach), we learn that between the year 27 AD and 33 AD only 29 AD has the Great Sabbath where it should be, just before Pesach.

Conclusion: the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus took place in 29.

Appendix 3

The beginning of his ministry of Jesus and that of John the Baptist

The chronology of the ministry of Jesus can be found when we think about the feasts that are mentioned by John in his gospel:

- John 2: 13 Passover
- John 5: 1 Passover, Pentecost or Feast of Tabernacles
- John 6: 4 Passover
- John 7: 2 Feast of Tabernacles
- John 10: 22 Hanukah
- John 12: 1 Passover with the resurrection of Jesus in 29

Reckoning back from 29 we get

- John 12: 1 Passover in 29
- John 10: 22 Hanukah in 28
- John 7: 2 Feast of Tabernacles in 28
- John 6: 4 Passover in 28
- John 5: 1 Passover or Pentecost or Feast of Tabernacles in 27
- John 2: 13 Passover in 26 or 27, depending of our choice in John 5: 1

In Luke 3: 1-2 we read (NIV)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene — during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Jesus was baptized soon. In Luke 3: 23 is written (NIV)

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.

The normal solutions reckon with the Syrian counting of the years of the emperors (6). In that way of counting the second year of an emperor began on the first New Year's Day in his reign. In Syria the new year began on October 1.

Augustus died on Augustus 19 in the year 14. So the second year of Tiberius began in the Syrian system on October 1, 14. Then his 15th year began on October 1, 27.

Problem.

Passover in 27 was **before** Tiberius' 15th year.

There exists a solution. Tiberius was the partner of Augustus in his emperorship before Augustus died. Then the “first year” of Tiberius can be found before August 9, 14. I will quote the relevant texts

Velleius Paterculus writes (II 121 1)

..... at the request of his father that he (Tiberius) should have in all the provinces and armies a power equal to his own, the senate and Roman people so decreed.

translation F.W. Shipley, series Loeb Classical Library

Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius* (paragraph 21), shows that Tiberius got that power soon before Augustus' death.

A law having been not long after carried by the consuls for his being appointed a colleague with Augustus in the administration of the provinces, and in taking the census, when that was finished he went into Illyricum. But being hastily recalled during his journey, he found Augustus alive indeed, but past all hopes of recovery, and was with him in private a whole day.

translation Thomson

As a rule a census occurred every 5 years in order to registrate all Roman citizens. The census we read of is mentioned in the *Fasti Ostienses* (7). For the year 14 it gives

Augustus for the third time and Tiberius held a census. Registered were of the Roman citizens 21,9XX persons. Augustus died August 19.

I wrote 21,9XX persons (21 thousand nine hundred and some more), for the text has a gap there. So the census was completed just before Tiberius left for Illyria. That departure took place just before Augustus died.

Cassius Dio (LVI 28 1) gives more details:

When Lucius Munatius and Gaius Silius had been installed as consuls, Augustus with seeming reluctance accepted a fifth ten year term as head of the State. He again gave Tiberius the tribunician power,

translation E. Cary, series Loeb Classical Library

We see Augustus as an emperor, but being an emperor was something new then. The Romans knew kings in the beginning of their history, but they did not want to have kings or a monarchy. So Augustus tried to avoid to seem a monarch. His emperorship was officially a cumulation of positions that were known during the Roman Republic.

Every year he was consul. He was tribune permanently, but he was elected for it from time to time. In the quoted text Cassius Dio writes how he was made a tribune again. Being a tribune was the most important part of being an emperor. Because Augustus was tired, Tiberius was made a tribune too. Cassius Dio gives a clear date: the consuls he mentions are those of the year 13.

Tiberius was made a tribune again. So he had had an important position before also.

In our days important events are memorated on special stamps or coins in order to make them important for the people. Nothing new. In the years 13 or 14 there was an issue of coins with Augustus and Tiberius on it.



In the same year a coin was struck with on one side Tiberius and on the reverse a four-in-hand. The goal of these coins was obviously to proclaimate the new position of Tiberius.



Conclusion:

It is possible to count the years of Tiberius from 13 AD. That is certainly possible in the provinces because Tiberius got the new position certainly in the provinces.

Then the 15th year of Tiberius began on October 1, 26. Passover in John 2: 13 fell in that way in the 15th year of Tiberius indeed.

Christ was born before 4 BC. In that year Herod died. Between the murder on the children of Bethlehem and Herod's death some time had passed. He could not be born between Passover in the year 6 AD and Passover 5 AD, for if He was born then, he would be 12 years old in the year 8 AD when during Passover Jerusalem was not safe. Jesus could not travel alone. About the situation in Jerusalem in 8 AD Flavius Josephus (8) wrote

As Coponius, who we told you was sent along with Cyrenius, was exercising his office of procurator, and governing Judea, the following accidents happened. As the Jews were celebrating the feast of unleavened bread, which we call the Passover, it was customary for the priests to open the temple-gates just after midnight. When, therefore,

those gates were first opened, some of the Samaritans came privately into Jerusalem, and threw about dead men's bodies, in the cloisters; on which account the Jews afterward excluded them out of the temple, which they had not used to do at such festivals; and on other accounts also they watched the temple more carefully than they had formerly done.

Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XVIII 29-30

So Jesus was born in 5 BC, but after Passover. Then He was about 30 years in 26-27.

Notes

- 1 R.N. Frye, *De erfenis der Perzen* (= *The Heritage of Persia*), Amsterdam 1963, p. 85
- 2 25: 11; 29: 10 and contexts
- 3 H.J. Koorevaar, *Die Chronik als intendierter Abschluß des alttestamentlichen Kanons*, Jahrbuch für Evangelikale Theologie 11, 1997, p. 42 vv.
https://www.academia.edu/10072530/Die_Chronik_als_intendierter_Abschluss_des_alttestamentlichen_Kanons._Jahrbuch_f%C3%BCr_Evangelikale_Theologie_11_Wuppertal_e.a._R._Brockhaus_Verlag_1997_p._42-76
- 4 H.J. Koorevaar, *De afsluiting van de canon van het Oude Testament*, in P. Nullens (red.), *Dicht bij de Bijbel*, Heverlee 1997, p. 63 vv.
https://www.academia.edu/10072623/De_afsluiting_van_de_canon_van_het_Oude_Testament._In_Nullens_P._red._Dicht_bij_de_Bijbel._Heverlee_Bijbel_instituut_Belgi%C3%AB_1997_p._63-90
H.J. Koorevaar, *Chronicles as the Intended Conclusion of the Old Testament Canon*, in J. Steinberg, T. J. Stone (eds.). *The Shape of the Writings*. Siphrut: literature and theology of the Hebrew Scriptures, 16. Winona Lake, Indiana 2015, p. 207-235.
https://www.academia.edu/37247899/Chronicles_as_the_Intended_Conclusion_of_the_Old_Testament_Canon_In_Steinberg_Julius_and_Timothy_J._Stone_eds._The_Shape_of_the_Writings._Siphrut_literature_and_theology_of_the_Hebrew_Scriptures_16._Winona_Lake_Indiana_Eisenbrauns_2015_p._207-235
- 5 J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts 'Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton – New Jersey 1969³, p. 313
- 6 E.J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, London 1968, p. 24 vv.
- 7 V. Ehrenberg – A. H. M. Jones, *Documents illustrating the Reigns of Augustus & Tiberius*, Oxford 1955², p. 40
- 8 http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0037-0103_Flavius_Josephus_The_Antiquities_Of_The_Jews_EN.pdf.html