

# Fulfillment of the Prophecy

by Sir Robert Anderson

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*The sermon explores the fulfillment of biblical prophecies, particularly focusing on the Seventy Weeks prophecy and its implications for faith in divine revelation.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 29:29, Daniel 9:24, Zechariah 9:9, Luke 19:39, 2 Timothy 3:16

**Topics:** "Biblical Prophecy", "Messiah's Arrival"

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## Description

Sir Robert Anderson delves into the fulfillment of prophecy, particularly focusing on the relationship between the events of the Passion and the twenty-second Psalms. Despite the profound spiritual depths in the Psalmist's words, the prophecy's testimony is clear and accessible to all. The sermon addresses the controversies surrounding the interpretation of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between inherent difficulties in the prophecy and those arising from debates. Through meticulous historical and biblical analysis, the sermon highlights the precise fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the Messiah's arrival and the transfer of earthly power, ultimately challenging skeptics and reinforcing the divine nature of prophecy.

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## Transcript

"THE secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children." (Deuteronomy 29:29) And among the "things which are revealed" fulfilled prophecy has a foremost place. In presence of the events in which it has been accomplished, its meaning lies upon the surface. Let the facts of the Passion be admitted, and their relation to the twenty-second Psalm is indisputable. There are profound depths of spiritual significance in the Psalmist's words, because of the nature of the facts which have fulfilled them; but the testimony which the prophecy affords is addressed to all, and he who runs may read it. Is it possible then, it may be asked, that the true interpretation of this prophecy of the Seventy Weeks involves so much inquiry and discussion?

Such an objection is perfectly legitimate; but the answer to it will be found in distinguishing between the difficulties which appear in the prophecy itself, and those which depend entirely on the controversy to which it has given rise. The writings of Daniel have been more the object of hostile criticism than any other portion of the Scripture, and the closing verses of the ninth chapter have always been a principal point of attack. And necessarily so, for if that single passage can be proved to be a prophecy, it establishes the character of the book as a Divine revelation. Daniel's visions admittedly describe historical events between the days of Nebuchadnezzar and of Antiochus Epiphanes; therefore skepticism assumes that the writer

lived in Maccabean times. But this assumption, put forward without even a decent pretense of proof, is utterly refuted by pointing to a portion of the prophecy fulfilled at a later date; and accordingly it is of vital moment to the skeptic to discredit the prediction of the Seventy Weeks.

The prophecy has suffered nothing from the attacks of its assailants, but much at the hands of its friends. No elaborate argument would be necessary to elucidate its meaning, were it not for the difficulties raised by Christian expositors. If everything that Christian writers have written on the subject could be wiped out and forgotten, the fulfillment of the vision, so far as it has been in fact fulfilled, would be clear upon the open page of history. Out of deference to these writers, and also in the hope of removing prejudices which are fatal to the right understanding of the subject, these difficulties have here been discussed. It now remains only to recapitulate the conclusions which have been recorded in the preceding pages.

The scepter of earthly power which was entrusted to the house of David, was transferred to the Gentiles in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, to remain in Gentile hands "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The blessings promised to Judah and Jerusalem were postponed till after a period described as "seventy weeks"; and at the close of the sixty-ninth week of this era the Messiah should be "cut off."

These seventy weeks represent seventy times seven prophetic years of 360 days, to be reckoned from the issuing of an edict for the rebuilding of the city - "the street and rampart," of Jerusalem.

The edict in question was the decree issued by Artaxerxes Longitmanus in the twentieth year of his reign, authorizing Nehemiah to rebuild the fortifications of Jerusalem.

The date of Artaxerxes's reign can be definitely ascertained - not from elaborate disquisitions by biblical commentators and prophetic writers, but by the united voice of secular historians and chronologers.

The statement of St. Luke is explicit and unequivocal, that our Lord's public ministry began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. It is equally clear that it began shortly before the Passover, The date of it can thus be fixed as between August A.D. 28 and April A.D. 29. The Passover of the crucifixion therefore was in A.D. 32, when Christ was betrayed on the night of the Paschal Supper, and put to death on the day of the Paschal Feast.

If then the foregoing conclusions be well founded we should expect to find that the period intervening between the edict of Artaxerxes and the Passion was 483 prophetic years. And accuracy as absolute as the nature of the case permits is no more than men are here entitled to demand. There can be no loose reckoning in a Divine chronology; and if God has deigned to mark on human calendars the fulfillment of His purposes as foretold in prophecy, the strictest scrutiny shall fail to detect miscalculation or mistake.

The Persian edict which restored the autonomy of Judah was issued in the Jewish month of Nisan. It may in fact have been dated the 1st of Nisan, but no other day being named, the prophetic period must be reckoned, according to a practice common with the Jews, from the Jewish New Year's Day.[1] The seventy weeks are therefore to be computed from the 1st of Nisan B.C. 445.[2]

1. "On the 1st of Nisan is a new year for the computation of the reign of kings, and for festivals." - Mishna, treatise "Rosh Hash."

2. The wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days" (Nehemiah 6: 15). Now fifty-two days, measured back from the 25th Elul, brings us to the 3rd Ab. Therefore Nehemiah

must have arrived not later than 1st Ab, and apparently some days earlier (Nehemiah 2:11). Compare this with Ezra's journey thirteen years before. "For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month (Ab) came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him" (Ezra 7:9). I infer therefore that Nehemiah also set out early in the first month.

The chronological parallelisms between the respective journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah have suggested the ingenious theory that both went up to Jerusalem together, Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 2 relating to the same event. This is based upon the supposition that the regnal years of Artaxerxes, according to Persian computation, were reckoned from his birth, a supposition, however, which is fanciful and arbitrary, though described by its author as "by no means unlikely" (Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch., 2., 110: Rev. D. H. Haigh, 4th Feb., 1873).

Now the great characteristic of the Jewish sacred year has remained unchanged ever since the memorable night when the equinoctial moon beamed down upon the huts of Israel in Egypt, bloodstained by the Paschal sacrifice; and there is neither doubt nor difficulty in fixing within narrow limits the Julian date of the 1st of Nisan in any year whatever. In B.C.. 445 the new moon by which the Passover was regulated was on the 13th of March at 7h. 9m. A. M.[3] And accordingly the 1st Nisan may be assigned to the 14th March.

3. For this calculation I am indebted to the courtesy of the Astronomer Royal, whose reply to my inquiry on the subject is appended:

"ROYAL OBSERVATORY, GREENWICH."

June 26th, 1877.

"SIR, - I have had the moon's place calculated from Largeteau's Tables in Additions to the *Connaissance des Temps* 1846, by one of my assistants, and have no doubt of its correctness. The place being calculated for - 444, March 12d. 20h., French reckoning, or March 12d. 8h. P. M., it appears that the said time was short of New Moon by about 8h. 47m., and therefore the New Moon occurred at 4h. 47m. A. M., March 13th, Paris time."

I am, etc.,

" (Signed,) G. B. AIRY."

The new moon, therefore, occurred at Jerusalem on the 13th March, B. C. 445 (444 Astronomical) at 7h. 9m. A. M.

But the language of the prophecy is clear: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks." An era therefore of sixty-nine "weeks," or 483 prophetic years reckoned from the 14th March, B.C. 445, should close with some event to satisfy the words, "unto the Messiah the Prince."

The date of the nativity could not possibly have been the termination of the period, for then the sixty-nine weeks must have ended thirty-three years before Messiah's death.

If the beginning of His public ministry be fixed upon, difficulties of another kind present themselves. When the Lord began to preach, the kingdom was not presented as a fact accomplished in His advent, but as a

hope the realization of which, though at the very door, was still to be fulfilled. He took up the Baptist's testimony, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." His ministry was a preparation for the kingdom, leading up to the time when in fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures He should publicly declare Himself as the Son of David, the King of Israel, and claim the homage of the nation. It was the nation's guilt that the cross and not the throne was the climax of His life on earth.

No student of the Gospel narrative can fail to see that the Lord's last visit to Jerusalem was not only in fact, but in the purpose of it, the crisis of His ministry, the goal towards which it had been directed. After the first tokens had been given that the nation would reject His Messianic claims, He had shunned all public recognition of them. But now the twofold testimony of His words and His works had been fully rendered, and His entry into the Holy City was to proclaim His Messiahship and to receive His doom. Again and again His apostles even had been charged that they should not make Him known. But now He accepted the acclamations of "the whole multitude of the disciples," and silenced the remonstrance of the Pharisees with the indignant rebuke, "I tell you if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." (Luke 19:39, 40)

The full significance of the words which follow in the Gospel of St. Luke is concealed by a slight interpolation in the text. As the shouts broke forth from His disciples, "Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!" He looked off toward the Holy City and exclaimed, "If thou also hadst known, even on this day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!"[4] The time of Jerusalem's visitation had come, and she knew it not. Long ere then the nation had rejected Him, but this was the predestined day when their choice must be irrevocable, - the day so distinctly signaled in Scripture as the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold thy King cometh unto thee!" (Zechariah 9:9) Of all the days of the ministry of Christ on earth, no other will satisfy so well the angel's words, unto Messiah the Prince."

4. *ei egnos kai su kai ge en ta hamera tauta ta pros eipanan sou k. t. l.* (Luke 19:42). The received text inserts *sou* after *hamera*, but the best MSS. (Alex. Vat. Sin., etc.) agree in omitting it. *kai sou*, "thou also, as well as these my disciples." *kai ge et quidem* - "even" (Alford, Gr. Test. in loco). The Revised Version reads, "If thou hadst known in this day," etc.

And the date of it can be ascertained. In accordance with the Jewish custom, the Lord went up to Jerusalem upon the 8th Nisan, "six days before the Passover." [5] But as the 14th, on which the Paschal Supper was eaten, fell that year upon a Thursday, the 8th was the preceding Friday. He must have spent the Sabbath, therefore, at Bethany; and on the evening of the 9th, after the Sabbath had ended, the Supper took place in Martha's house. Upon the following day, the 10th Nisan, He entered Jerusalem as recorded in the Gospels. [6]

5. "When the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus," i. e., Nisan (Josephus, Wars, 6. 5, 3). "And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand, and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem, before the Passover, to purify themselves... Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany" (John 11:55; 12:1).

6. Lewin, *Fasti Sacri*, p. 230.

The Julian date of that 10th Nisan was Sunday the 6th April, A.D. 32. What then was the length of the period intervening between the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the public advent of

"Messiah the Prince," - between the 14th March, B.C. 445, and the 6th April, A.D. 32? THE INTERVAL CONTAINED EXACTLY AND TO THE VERY DAY 173, 880 DAYS, OR SEVEN TIMES SIXTY-NINE PROPHETIC YEARS OF 360 DAYS, the first sixty-nine weeks of Gabriel's prophecy.[7]

7. The 1st Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (the edict to rebuild Jerusalem) was 14th March, B. C. 445. The 10th Nisan in Passion Week (Christ's entry into Jerusalem) was 6th April, A. D. 32. The intervening period was 476 years and 24 days (the days being reckoned inclusively, as required by the language of the prophecy, and in accordance with the Jewish practice).

But  $476 \times 365 = 173,740$  days

Add (14 March to 6th April, both inclusive) 24 days

Add for leap years 116 days

Equals a total of 173,880 days

And 69 weeks of prophetic years of 360 days (or  $69 \times 7 \times 360$ ) 173, 880 days.

It may be well to offer here two explanatory remarks. First; in reckoning years from B. C. to A. D., one year must always be omitted; for it is obvious, ex. gr., that from B. C. 1 to A. D. 1 was not two years, but one year. B. C. 1 ought to be described as B. C. 0, and it is so reckoned by astronomers, who would describe the historical date B. C. 445, as 444. And secondly, the Julian year is 11m. 10 46s., or about the 129th part of a day, longer than the mean solar year. The Julian calendar, therefore, contains three leap years too many in four centuries, an error which had amounted to eleven days in A. D. 17527 when our English calendar was corrected by declaring the 3rd September to be the 14th September, and by introducing the Gregorian reform which reckons three secular years out of four as common years; ex. gr., 1700, 1800 and 1900 are common years, and 2000 is a leap year. "Old Christmas day" is still marked in our calendars, and observed in some localities, on the 6th January; and to this day the calendar remains uncorrected in Russia. (See Appendix 4, p. 306 note 8.)

Much there is in Holy Writ which unbelief may value and revere, while utterly refusing to accept it as Divine; but prophecy admits of no half-faith. The prediction of the "seventy weeks" was either a gross and impious imposture, or else it was in the fullest and strictest sense God-breathed.[8] It may be that in days to come, when Judah's great home-bringing shall restore to Jerusalem the rightful owners of its soil, the Jews themselves shall yet rake up from deep beneath its ruins the records of the great king's decree and of the Nazarene's rejection, and they for whom the prophecy was given will thus be confronted with proofs of its fulfillment. Meanwhile what judgment shall be passed on it by fair and thoughtful men? To believe that the facts and figures here detailed amount to nothing more than happy coincidences involves a greater exercise of faith than that of the Christian who accepts the book of Daniel as Divine. There is a point beyond which unbelief is impossible, and the mind in refusing truth must needs take refuge in a misbelief which is sheer credulity.

8. theopneustos (2 Timothy 3:16).

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