

Dating the birth and baptism of Jesus

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Dating the birth of Jesus

Having just mentioned the birth of Jesus, this might be a good time to ask when it occurred. It is probably worth pointing out that the year in our current widely accepted dating system was originally established to mark the years from the time Jesus was incarnated. This dating system was devised five centuries after the time of Christ by [Dionysius Exiguus](#)¹ for the purpose of specifying Easter dates,² but it was not widely used until after A.D. 800.^{3 4} Even then the [Julian calendar](#), which was introduced by [Julius Caesar](#)⁵ in 46 B.C. was the predominant calendar throughout western civilization. In fact, it was not until 1582 that Pope [Gregory XIII](#)⁶, using the Dionysius year and a slight modification to the Julian months, introduced what is probably now the most widely used calendar ever.^{7 8} There was no single year numbering system used in conjunction with the Julian calendar. The principal method was to specify the year or the years elapsed from when two named consuls took office.⁹ I believe it was common throughout history to mark the passage of time in this way as well as from significant events, such as the founding of an empire or nation. In the following verse, often used to date the baptism of Jesus, Luke used the start of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, but also added some consuls currently in office:

[Luke 3:1](#) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, [Luke 3:1 NKJV](#)

In addition to dating from its emperors, some events were dated from the start of the Roman Empire. Dating from the start of an empire, is usually done after the fact and can at times be a bit ambiguous. It would not be surprising that Christians would consider the incarnation, conception or birth of Jesus as a significant event for dating purposes. But as mentioned above, this was done more than five centuries after the fact, and although there is no universally accepted date for the birth of Christ, the one our common dating system is based on is off by a few years.¹⁰ The designation for this dating system is Anno Domini, which is Latin for: *In the year of our Lord*.

Probably the primary event that pushes birth of Jesus into the B.C. years is the death of Herod the Great, who is a key character in [Matthew 2](#). It is pretty widely accepted that Herod the Great died in the year 750 of Rome which corresponds to the year 4 B.C.^{11 12 13} If this date is correct, then the birth of Jesus must have occurred in or before the

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysius_Exiguus

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anno_Domini#History

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anno_Domini

⁴ Bond, John James. *Handy-Book of Rules and Tables For Verifying Dates with the Christian Era*. London, George Bell & Sons, 1875, p10. <https://books.google.com/books?id=F3mcB6GnOtlC&pg=PR10>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Gregory_XIII

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_calendar

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_calendar#Year_numbering

¹⁰ Gilbert, George Holly. *The Student's Life of Jesus*. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1900, p19.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=FDANAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA19>

¹¹ Gilbert. p19. <https://books.google.com/books?id=FDANAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA19>

¹² Morrison, William Douglas. *The Story of the Jews Under Roman Rule*. New York & London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1895, p90.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=U18NAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA90>

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great#Death

year 4 B.C. The Bible doesn't tell us how much time elapsed between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi and Herod's killing of the children in Bethlehem. Considering that he chose to kill boys up to two years of age leads many to speculate that there was up to two years between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi.

Another historical event associated with the birth of Jesus is the census mentioned Luke 2, which was responsible for bringing Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

[Luke 2:1](#) And it came to pass in those days [that] a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. ⁴ Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, [Luke 2:1-4 NKJV](#)

In these verses two names are mentioned, the first of which, Caesar Augustus, is no problem because he was known to have lived until A.D. 15.¹⁴ Quirinius as governor of Syria, however is a bit problematic.¹⁵ It has been historically documented that he did not become governor of Syria until the year A.D. 6, at which time Herod was already dead.^{16 17} So, instead of using this to reinforce the date, we need to find a way to explain the apparent contradiction. Luke actually mentions two census', this one, which he designates the first, and one in [Acts 5:37](#). The latter is supposed to be the census of A.D. 7 during the well-known governorship of Quirinius, hence the mention of "the first" in [Luke 2:2](#).¹⁸ It seems that much of the writing I came across addressing this subject referenced the research and writings of William Ramsay. In a book published by him, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*,¹⁹ he mentions two of his earlier books with these comments. In the first, *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170*,²⁰ he wants to show that the book of Acts is a trustworthy historical document. In the second, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*,²¹ he aims to show that Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; but he is possessed of the true historic sense. Ramsay's general approach to explaining this apparent contradiction seems to be to find weaknesses in the arguments. Secondly, to show that Luke is credible and accurate as a historian, implying that his writings can be treated as a historical source. Finally, to use new archaeological findings, such as the mounting evidence that Quirinius was likely a co-governor of Syria at the time of the "first census" when Herod was still alive. What all this means is that there is no undeniable evidence of the truth of Luke's statement, but neither is there undeniable proof that he was wrong.

The death of Herod places a limit on how late you can set the date of Jesus' birth. On the other side, [Luke 3](#) places a limit on how early you can set the birth of Jesus.

¹⁴ Morris, Robert. *The twelve Caesars (Julius to Domitian)*. La Grange, Kentucky, Published for the author, 1877, p 13.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=mf4VAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA13>

¹⁵ Gilbert. p14-18. <http://books.google.com/books?id=FDANAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA14>

¹⁶ Morrison. p121. <http://books.google.com/books?id=U18NAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA121>

¹⁷ Fallows, Samuel. *The Popular and critical Bible encyclopedia*. Chicago, The Howard-Severance Company, 1911, p424.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=LLNUAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA424>

¹⁸ Sweet, Louis Matthew. *The Birth and Infancy of Jesus Christ*. London, Paris, New York and Melbourne, Cassell & Company, Limited, 1907, p334-343. <https://books.google.com/books?id=P8cOAAAIAAJ&pg=PA334>

¹⁹ Ramsay, Sir William Mitchell. *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*. London, New York, Toronto, Hodder & Stoughton, 1915, p222. <https://books.google.com/books?id=NC9VAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA222>

²⁰ Ramsay, Sir William Mitchell. *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170, Seventh Edition*. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903. <https://books.google.com/books?id=tj5AAAAAYAAJ>

²¹ Ramsay, William Mitchell. *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1898.

<https://archive.org/stream/stpaultraveller01ramsgoog>

[Luke 3:1](#) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, [Luke 3:1 NKJV](#)

[Luke 3:23](#) Now Jesus Himself began [His ministry at] about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) [the] son of Joseph, [the son] of Heli, [Luke 3:23 NKJV](#)

The date of the baptism which coincides with the start of the ministry of Jesus will be discussed in greater detail in, [Dating the baptism of Jesus](#), and is also scrutinized in [Appendix B in Daniel's seventy week prophecy](#). So, when Luke says Jesus was about thirty years of age, one must decide what qualifies as "about thirty." Is thirty-one about thirty? Is thirty-two about thirty? So, if we are able to choose the year A.D. 27 for the baptism, then thirty would place the birth at 4 B.C., thirty-one would place it at 5 B.C., etc... This is how the A.D./B.C. math works: $27 - 30 - 1$ (because there is no year zero) = -4 which is 4 B.C. Based on this logic, I wouldn't want to go earlier than 6 B.C.

Considering what has been presented, I am comfortable placing the birth of Jesus between 6 and 4 B.C., which agrees with many scholars and historians.^{22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30} The conversion between Julian Period (J.P.), Dionysian era (B.C./A.D.) and "ab urb condita" (A.U.C.) "founding of the city of Rome," are as follows:

Julian day 0 = January 1, 4713 B.C.³¹

1 A.U.C. = 753 B.C.³²

Hence, 4709 J.P. would be 4 B.C. and 750 A.U.C would be 4 B.C. Of the material I referenced, I found Christopher Benson's book the most thorough and objective.

What do you believe?

- Why didn't Christians get their act together right away and document the exact birthdate of Jesus?
- In light of [Daniel 7:25](#) which speaks of one who will "intend to make alterations in time," do you find it of any significance that a Pope is responsible for the current dating system we use?

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/?title=Anno_Domini#Historical_birth_date_of_Jesus

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_Jesus#Date_of_birth

²⁴ Benson, Christopher. *The Chronology of our Saviours Life or An Inquiry into the True Time of the Birth, Baptism, and Crucifixion, of Jesus Christ*. Cambridge, University Press, 1810, p116. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA116>

²⁵ Strong. <https://archive.org/stream/newharmonyexposi00stro#page/n67/mode/2up>

²⁶ Wieseler, Karl. *A Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels*. Cambridge, Deighton, Bell & Co. 1864, p125.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=OEVVAAAACAAJ&pg=PA114>

²⁷ de Pressensé, Edmond. *Jesus Christ: His Times, Life, and Work*. London, Jackson, Walford, & Hodder, 1866, p210.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=tcY0AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA210>

²⁸ Townsend, George. *The New Testament Arranged in Historical & Chronological Order*. Boston, Crocker & Brewster, 1844, p51.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=1uUsAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA51>

²⁹ Mann, Nicholas. *Of the True Years of the Birth and Death of Christ*. London, printed for J. Wilcox at Virgil's-Head, overagainst the New-Church in the Strands, 1733. <https://books.google.com/books?id=YapCAQAAMAAJ>

³⁰ Ferguson, James. *Astronomy Explained Upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles*. Philadelphia, printed for and published by Matthew Carey, 1809, p423. <https://books.google.com/books?id=iLkNAQAIAAJ&pg=PA423>

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_day

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ab_urb_condita#Relationship_with_Anno_Domini

- Does the fact that our current widely accepted dating system, which counts years from the birth of Christ, add to the credibility of the Gospel or not?

Dating the baptism of Jesus

The reason why the date of this event is interesting was mentioned when we discussed the birthdate of Jesus. The two are intertwined, and one must at the very least, not conflict with the other. The date of the baptism, which most agree is the start of the public ministry of Jesus, plays a pivotal role in [Daniel's seventy week prophecy](#). I will lean heavily on the work of Christopher Benson³³ which was also used in the discussion dating the birth of Jesus. Since he so thoroughly and convincingly argued the birth of Jesus to have occurred in April J.P. 4709 which is April 4 B.C., he uses that as a starting point for dating the baptism. His first step is to use the somewhat vague statement of Luke.

[Luke 3:23](#) Now Jesus Himself began [His ministry at] about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) [the] son of Joseph, [the son] of Heli, [Luke 3:23 NKJV](#)

Benson agrees that the statement is somewhat vague but argues, assuming that Luke knew exactly how old Jesus was, that he wouldn't have said thirty if he knew Jesus to be twenty-nine or thirty-one. So, he begins with the assumption that Jesus was baptized some time during his thirtieth year of life. That would be between April J.P. 4739 and April J.P. 4740, or A.D. 27 – 28.³⁴ [Recall from [Dating the birth of Jesus](#), we determined that 0 J.P. = 4713 B.C., remembering to account for the fact that there is no year zero between B.C. and A.D.] Then he proceeded check whether there were conflicts with other historical events such as:

[Luke 3:1](#) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, [Luke 3:1 NKJV](#)

The primary date given here is the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. The death of his predecessor, Augustus Caesar, is known to be the 19th of August, J.P. 4727. Adding fifteen years to that would yield J.P. 4741, which is a year or two past 4739-4740 that was asserted. Right away this seems like a non-starter, except for the fact that there is plenty of evidence that Tiberius was a co-regent with Augustus for a couple years before he became sole emperor.³⁵

Providing the reference, but not repeating Benson's extensive and thorough analysis of the subject, I will state that he believed the most likely date for the baptism of Jesus was in November J.P. 4739,³⁶ also known as A.D. 27. If you are interested in reading some of the dates proposed by other scholars, see the references provided in my discussion of Daniel's [seventy week prophecy](#).

What do you believe?

- Do you think that maybe the disciples and early Christians documented some of these important dates and facts but they have been lost to us now?

³³ Benson, Christopher. *The Chronology of our Saviours Life or An Inquiry into the True Time of the Birth, Baptism, and Crucifixion, of Jesus Christ*. Cambridge, University Press, 1810, p55. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA175>

³⁴ Benson. p178-181. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA178>

³⁵ Benson. p189. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA189>

³⁶ Benson. p188. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA188>

- Do you think it's important to know the year Jesus was baptized?
- Do you think Jesus explained the [seventy week prophecy](#) to the disciples after His resurrection? If so why didn't one of the Gospels include it?

Appendix B – Prophetic time & Daniel's 70-week Prophecy

I believe that one of the primary purposes of the prophecies given to us in the Bible is to give it credibility. If we believe that the Bible is the Word of God to us, and that it contained predictions of events that actually happened, then we can have faith that God knows and cares about our future. At this point in time, I believe that most Bible prophecies have been fulfilled, but that is a subject which is much debated. My reason for this belief is that when the prophecies are studied, and the key to unlocking them is discovered, a picture begins to emerge which looks a lot like the history of our world.

I believe the majority of prophecies in the Bible are found in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Daniel, through dreams and visions he received or interpreted, gives us a picture of world history which stretches from his time to the end of the world. If we can find consistency in one of the more obvious prophecies in Daniel, we will hopefully have some of the tools necessary to pursue an understanding of other Bible prophecies and hopefully even some of Daniel's more difficult ones.

Seventy-week prophecy

For me, the key to unlocking this understanding is the 70-week prophecy in Daniel

[Daniel 9:24](#) "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. ²⁵ "Know therefore and understand, [That] from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, [There shall be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. ²⁶ "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it [shall be] with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate." [Daniel 9:24-27 NKJV](#)

It seems fairly obvious that this prophecy is talking about the coming of the Messiah. So, the natural questions are:

1. What and when is the starting event?
2. What and when is the ending event?
3. What is the literal duration of the 70 weeks?

The answer to the first question is stated pretty clearly, "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." The when is not quite as straightforward. There were actually three notable events involving the Jews, building and a Medo-Persian king.

1. Somewhere around 538-536 BC at the end of the seventy years of captivity, Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.^{37 38 39 40 41 42}
2. In 457 BC, the fifth month of the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, Ezra carried a decree from the King providing supplies for the temple services and commanding that Jewish law or government be re-established. Bypassing the challenges in arriving at this date for now, here are some references from admittedly religious sources.^{43 44 45 46 47}
3. In 445 BC, the 20th year of Artaxerxes I, Nehemiah travelled to Jerusalem with letters from the king to supply material for the completion of the work begun in 457 BC.^{48 49}

The second question concerning the ending event is really not so much about the end as it is about the end of all the subdivisions of the 70 weeks.

- 7 weeks – The verse says it will be built again with plaza and moat, but according to [Nehemiah 6:15](#), the wall was completed in 52 days. So I really don't know exactly what major event marked the end of the first 49 years. Some say that was when the full government was re-established. In a footnote, Maxwell said "Unfortunately, historical records from Palestine around the year 408 are too scanty for this concept to be verified."⁵⁰
- 62 weeks – Messiah will be cut off *after* this
- 1/2 week – Messiah will put an end to sacrifices and grain offerings
- 1/2 week – to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*

Since the Bible doesn't conveniently give us dates, scholars have attempted to correlate historical references to statements in the Bible to arrive at dates for the birth, death and baptism in the life of Jesus. As will be seen, there are differences of opinion but generally accepted ranges on these proposed dates.⁵¹ A couple common approaches to dating the start of Christ's ministry are:

³⁷ [Ezra 1:1-4](#)

³⁸ Abbott, Jacob. *Cyrus the Great*. New York and London, Harper Brothers Publishers, 1901, p 222.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=gOU9AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA222>

³⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/538_BC

⁴⁰ Guy, Joseph. *Guy's General School Question Book*. London, Baldwin and Cradock, 1829, p 9.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=mvgIAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA9>

⁴¹ Tyler, Moses Coit. *Library of Universal History - Volume II*. New York and Chicago, Union Book Company, 1899, p 382.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=uMw6AQAAMAAJ&pg=PR382>

⁴² Clare, Israel Smith. *Illustrated Universal History: Being a clear and concise history of all nations*. J. C. McCurdy & Co. Philadelphia, PA; Cincinnati, OH; Chicago, IL, St. Louis, MO, 1881, p 25, 34. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Cs1EAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA25>,

<http://books.google.com/books?id=Cs1EAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA34>

⁴³ [Ezra 7:13-28](#)

⁴⁴ Rollin and other authentic sources. *Ancient History - History of the Persians*. London, Religious Tract Society, 1842, p 74.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=opCAAAIAAJ&pg=PA74>

⁴⁵ Nicoll, W. Robert; Smith, G. A., *The Expositor*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1906, p 9.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=B6cQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA9>

⁴⁶ Power, Francis Armstrong. *The Book of Texts of Ancient and Modern History, &c*. London, Sampson, Low, Marston & Co. 1879, p

230. <https://books.google.com/books?id=iYkBAAAQAAJ&pg=PA230>

⁴⁷ <http://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/prophecy/when-did-seventy-weeks-daniel-924-begin>

⁴⁸ [Nehemiah 2:1-8](#)

⁴⁹ Nicoll. p9. <https://books.google.com/books?id=B6cQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA9>

⁵⁰ Maxwell, C Mervyn. *God Cares vol1 – The Message of Daniel for you and your family*. Nampa, ID, Pacific Press Publishing

Association, 1981, p218.

⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_Jesus

- [Luke 3:1-3](#) tells us that in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, John the Baptist began preaching. However there are two possible dates for the start of the Tiberius' reign. 11 or 12, when he became co-regent⁵² with Augustus, or 14 when Augustus died.⁵⁴ This would place the start of the ministry of John in the year 26/27 or 29, with the baptism marking the start of Jesus' ministry presumably shortly after. Those who don't choose the co-regent option and wish to harmonize this statement with the following forty-six year dating approach, claim the 15th year of Tiberius, 781/2 from the founding of Rome, or 27/28 AD as the end of John the Baptist's ministry.^{55 56}
- Another popular method for dating the ministry of Christ is from the statement, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" [John 2:20](#) The thinking is that the Temple had been in under some form of construction since Herod began building it forty-six years ago. Multiple sources place this statement during the first Passover of Christ's ministry in the year 781 from the founding of Rome, or 27 AD give or take a year.^{57 58 59 60}

The book of John clearly mentions three Passovers in the adult life of Jesus from which we conclude that His ministry was at least two years. [[2:23](#), [6:4](#), [11:55](#)] Some propose the feast of the Jews in [John 5:1](#), was also a Passover, which would make His ministry at least 3 years.

There are of course ranges in the dates proposed for all of the following events. I have proposed a specific set of dates (except for the birth of Jesus) for the following events with references:

⁵² "Rome," *The Encyclopædia Britannica - Eleventh Edition*. New York, The Encyclopædia Britannica Company, 1911, p 648.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=1i4qAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA648>

⁵³ Gilman, Daniel Coit. *The New International Encyclopædia*. New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1911, p 485.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=eNM7AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA485>

⁵⁴ Morris, Robert. *The twelve Caesars (Julius to Domitian)*. La Grange, Kentucky, Published for the author, 1877, p 13.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=mf4VAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA13>

⁵⁵ Didon, Henry. *Jesus Christ, Our Savior's Person, Mission and Spirit*. New York, D Appleton & Company, 1891, p 409.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=ZHRCAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA409>

⁵⁶ Pressensé, Edmond De. *Jesus Christ: His Life, Times, and Work*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1871, p 223.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=l7k0AQAAIAAJ&pg=PA223>

⁵⁷ Didon. p 409. <http://books.google.com/books?id=ZHRCAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA409>

⁵⁸ Pressensé. p 223. <http://books.google.com/books?id=l7k0AQAAIAAJ&pg=PA223>

⁵⁹ Hill, William Bancroft. *The Life of Christ*. New York, Fleming H. Revell, Company, 1917, p 55.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=FFNCAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA55>

⁶⁰ Gilman. p 485. <http://books.google.com/books?id=eNM7AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA485>

- 6-4 BC. Birth of Jesus^{61 62 63 64}
- 27 Baptism of Jesus (Fall)^{65 66 67 68}
- 31 Crucifixion of Jesus (Passover/Spring)^{69 70}
- 34 Stoning of the deacon Stephen, and end of probation for the Jewish Nation (Fall)^{71 72 73}

If we choose 457 BC, we can create the following timeline showing the prophetic week and the year. The fall/spring distinctions are needed to account for the half years. I would like to point out that the exact year for the birth of Jesus is not critical, because the prophecy doesn't have any subdivision terminating on that event. It should however be consistent with the statement that Jesus was about thirty years of age when He began His ministry [[Luke 3:23](#)]. The year 4 BC is considered the latest because it is generally accepted to be the year that Herod the Great died.

⁶¹ Benson, Christopher. *The Chronology of our Saviours Life or An Inquiry into the True Time of the Birth, Baptism, and Crucifixion, of Jesus Christ*. Cambridge, University Press, 1810, p116. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA116>

⁶² Wieseler, Karl. *A Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels*. Cambridge, Deighton, Bell & Co. 1864, p125. <https://books.google.com/books?id=OEVVAAAACAAJ&pg=PA114>

⁶³ G. F. P. *Sunday-School Lessons on the Life of Jesus*. Boston, Unitarian Sunday-School Society, 1881, p6. <https://books.google.com/books?id=qNwPAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA6>

⁶⁴ Bond. p12. <https://books.google.com/books?id=F3mCB6GnOtIC&pg=PR12>

⁶⁵ Benson. p188. <https://books.google.com/books?id=SwAWAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA188>

⁶⁶ Pinnock, W. H., *An Analysis of Ecclesiastical History from the Birth of Christ to the Council of Nice, A.D. 325.*, Cambridge, Hall & Son, 1852, p16. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ss0CAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA16>

⁶⁷ Hales, William. *New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy - Vol 1*. London, C. J. G. & F. Rivington, 1830, p 97. <http://books.google.com/books?id=zFkQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA97>

⁶⁸ Fallows, Samuel. *The Popular and critical Bible encyclopedia*. Chicago, The Howard-Severance Company, 1911, p424. <http://books.google.com/books?id=LLNUAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA424>

⁶⁹ Pinnock. p29. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ss0CAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA29>

⁷⁰ Hales. p 98. <http://books.google.com/books?id=zFkQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA98>

⁷¹ Pinnock. p45. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ss0CAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA45>

⁷² Shimeall, R. C., *The Age of the World*. New York, Swords, Stanford & Co. 1843, p 238. <http://books.google.com/books?id=zN83AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA238>

⁷³ Hales. p 99. <http://books.google.com/books?id=zFkQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA99>

Week	Year/Event
0	457 BC Artaxerxes' decree
	≈
	6-4 BC Jesus was born
	1 BC to 1 skipped year 0
69	27 Jesus was baptized
Mid wk	31 Jesus was crucified
70	34 Stephen stoned/gospel to gentiles

Day for a year conclusion

While there are variations for the dates proposed, if we put them all together in the timeline above, they interlock like pieces of a puzzle. If we are willing to accept this timeline as fulfillment of this prophecy, then the inescapable conclusion is that a day in prophecy can and in many cases will be interpreted as a literal year. This conclusion should not be too surprising given the fact that often time prophecies are composed of symbols that represent something else literally. The following bible verses also give credence to the idea of a day representing a year:

[Numbers 14:34](#) "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, [namely] forty years, and you shall know My rejection. [Numbers 14:34 NKJV](#)

[Ezekiel 4:6](#) "And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year. [Ezekiel 4:6 NKJV](#)

Time, times, half-time

One other prophetic time unit that needs to be addressed are the terms "time" and "times." These are used several times in Daniel and Revelation. Probably the most straight forward explanation comes from the book of Daniel, where he tells Nebuchadnezzar that he will lose his mind and his kingdom for seven times which was well accepted to mean seven years.

[Daniel 4:25](#) They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. [Daniel 4:25 NKJV](#)

It is not my preferred practice to draw major conclusions from a single verse, but as we discuss days in a month in the next section, we will see how everything fits together like a puzzle.

Days in a month and days in a year

Now, if we should find ourselves having to convert from prophetic years or months to days, it would be necessary to know how many days are counted in a month and how many days are counted in a year. Obviously we know that a solar year is approximately 365.25 days, but that doesn't mean in prophetic symbols that the same number of days should be used to represent a year. In fact, for the sake of using symbols it might make more sense to use more symbolic numbers. For example, 360 days in a year, like 360 degrees in a circle. 12 months of 30 days each would also multiply out to 360 days in a year. Can we find any basis for these numbers in the Bible? Let's take a look at the Genesis story of the flood.

[Genesis 7:11](#) In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. [Genesis 7:11 NKJV](#)

[Genesis 7:24](#) And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days. [Genesis 7:24 NKJV](#)

[Genesis 8:4](#) Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. [Genesis 8:4 NKJV](#)

From these three verses we have a span of 5 months and presumably the same span given as 150 days. Some simple math will reveal that in this case dividing 150 days by 5 months yields 30 days/month. Let's take a look at another.

[Revelation 11:1](#) Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot [for] **forty-two months**. ³ "And I will give [power] to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth." [Revelation 11:1-3 NKJV](#)

This prophecy in Revelation seem to equate a 42 month period with 1260 days. Dividing 1260 days by 42 months gives us 30 days/month which seems to support the use of uniform 30 day months in prophetic time.

[Revelation 12:13](#) Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male [Child]. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for **a time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ [see footnote] [Revelation 12:13-18 NKJV](#)

[Revelation 13:1](#) Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like [the feet of] a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who [is] like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" ⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for **forty-two months**. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with

the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. [Revelation 13:1-10 NKJV](#)

These verses we just read from Revelation seem to equate the "time, times and half a time," which I previously determined to be 3.5 years, to the 42 months which I also previously determined to be equivalent to 1260. If we divide 1260 days by 3.5 years, we get 360 days/year.

Conclusion and Summary

I believe that based on these examples, not to mention the nice math of using the round numbers 30 and 360 rather than dealing with the fractions that would be involved with using lunar months or solar years, that prophetic time should be calculated in this way:

- The conversion from prophetic time to real time should be used if the prophecy is given in terms of symbols that represent something else
- 1 day in prophetic time is 1 year in real time
- 1 month in prophetic time is 30 days in prophetic time and 30 years in real time
- 1 year in prophetic time is 360 days in prophetic time and 360 years in real time
- 1 "time" is 1 year of prophetic time and 360 years in real time
- 1 "times" is 2 years of prophetic time and 720 years in real time
- 1 "half time" is 1/2 a year of prophetic time and 180 years in real time