

COMMENTS ON HOEHNER'S CHRONOLOGY

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Soli Deo Gloria!

In my own studies, the chronological aspects of Daniel's 70 Weeks and the associated date for the crucifixion of Christ are consistent with those presented in the classical work, The Coming Prince by Sir Robert Anderson, first published in 1895. A more modern treatment, widely accepted as definitive by contemporary Bible scholars, is found in Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ by Harold W. Hoehner (1977). Although the modern trend is to prefer Hoehner's treatment and conclusions over Anderson's, I believe there are flaws in Hoehner's analyses that should continue to make the classic work by Anderson to be preferred.

Daniel's 70 Weeks. Hoehner's calculations regarding the first 69 Weeks are exactly the same as Sir Robert Anderson with one exception. He reckons the date for the decree of Artaxerxes permitting the rebuilding of city of Jerusalem, including its "wall" (Dan9:25), to be 444 BC rather than 445 BC (Anderson); this one year offset from Anderson's calculations results in a triumphal entry of Christ and His crucifixion occurring in 33 AD, rather than Anderson's **32 AD**. Nehemiah 2:1 gives the date of the decree as the month of "Nisan" in "the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king". Hoehner concedes 445 BC is the correct date on the Julian calendar, as given in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. However, he argues that according to Persian custom, the year in which a monarch's reign began (or partial year; i.e., until the first day of the new year) was considered the "ascension year" (e.g., 445 BC), not the "first year" of his reign, and for this reason the "first year" of the reign of Artaxerxes would have been considered to be 444 BC. However, this assumes the chronological designation given in Nehemiah 2:1 corresponds to Persian, rather than Jewish, convention. However, it is the Jewish month (i.e., Nisan) that is given in Scripture, not Persian. There is no indication from the text of Scripture that the Persian chronological convention is to be used; rather, it is more natural to assume a Jewish reckoning. Thus, Hoehner's argument for a 444 BC date as the beginning of the 69 Weeks over 445 BC is not convincing.

Crucifixion of Christ. From above, Hoehner's evaluation of Daniel's 69 Weeks results in 33 AD for the crucifixion of Christ. He also evaluates the date of the crucifixion using other considerations, which he asserts independently result in 33 AD. However, there are some presuppositions associated with those considerations that are either arbitrary or untenable.

First, Hoehner presupposes the crucifixion of Christ occurred on a Friday¹, which he says limits the possibilities to 30 or 33 AD. However, during Passion Week the Passover occurred on a Thursday, which in and of itself precludes both 30 and 33 AD, whereas Passover occurred on a Thursday in **32 AD**. Second, he assumes Jesus' public ministry was three and a half years, and he reckons the unnamed feast in John 5:1 to be a fourth Passover observed

¹ This is an error of Biblical interpretation that results from the assumption that since the day after the Passover/crucifixion of Christ was a "sabbath" (Jn19:31), the crucifixion must have occurred on a Friday, with the day after being the weekly sabbath. However, the day after Passover is always a "high" sabbath, since it begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Lev23:4-7). Thus, there is no Biblical warrant that demands the crucifixion occurred on a Friday.

during Jesus' ministry (however, in the context of John 5, this feast is naturally understood to be the Feast of Trumpets). Four Passovers during Jesus' public ministry would allow for a duration of three and a half years, but only three Passovers (with the crucifixion occurring on the third Passover) limits Jesus' ministry to a maximum of 3 years, which is more consistent with the Biblical record (cf. Luk13:6-9). This is important, since Hoehner accepts a date of 29 AD for John's baptism of Jesus (i.e., the beginning of Jesus' public ministry), as given in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Beginning in 29 AD, a three and a half year ministry allows for a crucifixion in 33 AD, but a three year ministry would put it in **32 AD**. Thus, Hoehner's independent assessments for the date of the crucifixion of Christ include some presuppositions that are arguable at best, and untenable at worst. Again, Anderson's analyses that resulted in a crucifixion in **32 AD** remain credible, and in a number of ways are to be preferred as being more consistent with the Biblical record.