

# A Zero Year

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What about a Zero year in calendar counting? Does it invalidate our chronology for the 2300 days and 70 weeks of Daniel, or any other prophetic links?

My first reaction to the question is that this matter of a “zero” year is sometimes raised by others as a “red herring” to invalidate our accepted chronology or to cast doubt on Brother Russell’s use of dates. I could simply say that 2300 days and 490 years (70 weeks) are correctly accounted for in our chronology and you may either label the beginning point as 454 BC or 455 BC. Otherwise I could make some long-winded comment. So take your pick. Here is the long version:

First let’s look at the big picture of marking dates. A study of calendar systems shows that local cultures and societies have adopted various ways of marking years. There were Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian Calendars. There were Hebrew Lunar calendars, and solar calendars, Julian and Gregorian calendars. Various methods were used to label the months and years, some from notable events or counting from some generally accepted marker like the reign of a king or an Olympiad. None of these were adequate to reference an exact year beyond the relative limited scope of a calendar system adopted for local cultural and social events.

With the onset of historian’s recording (or estimating) events long before their lifetime, it has become customary to use our Gregorian Calendar (more adapted to the solar cycles) and simply give prior years a label, regardless of the calendar labels used in previous centuries. This had the advantage of using a consistent time-ruler. For convenience they drew a line in time, before which they call BC and afterward AD years. In the Christian community this was convenient to point to a year in the era before Christ.

Historians were generally not involved with measuring long lengths of time prophecies across this line. It simply gave them an arbitrary label for years to indicate events. They used this standard year label to bring consistency from ancient writers who referenced and measured from a certain year of a king, or from a battle with victory or defeat, or an event such as an earthquake or flood, that people reading the account were familiar.

Now let’s take an example. I will use some arbitrary dates for illustration (close but not exact). Historians record that King Herod built (reconstructed) his temple in Jerusalem in BC 21 and completed in BC 20. Let’s assume a calendar marker in BC 20, though in that year was no such Gregorian label. Historians record the temple destroyed in AD 70 and might say the temple stood for 90 years (20 + 70). This would be true if the temple was complete in January BC 20 and destroyed at the end of AD 70, otherwise there may be a few months difference. Someone might contend that it was only 89 years if completed in the Spring of BC 20 and destroyed in the Spring of AD 70. ( $19.75 + 69.25$  or if someone wants to deal with whole numbers and no zero year:  $20 + 70 - 1 = 89$ )

Now astronomers don’t draw a line in history with the year BC 1 on one side and AD 1 on the other. They use a ruler with a zero year in the middle. Therefore they say “we will call that year that Herod built the temple to be BC 19. That is because they regard Historian’s BC 1 to be Astronomy BC 0. Astronomers call history BC 2 as Astronomy BC 1. Historians concede and say: OK, Herod built his temple in BC  $19\frac{3}{4}$  and it was destroyed in the Autumn of AD 70, not the spring (or some fraction but rounded to a full year to justify the reference to 90 years).

Now let me review this matter of the 2300 days, which also affects the 70 weeks as its forepart. History still uses its general labels of Gregorian years (beginning in January and ending in December) to reference some event. But ancient records had their own year beginnings and were marked in reference to kings and variable events noted above. The 20th year of Artaxerxes is variously deduced and recorded by historians as:

454 (full year)

455 (year 454 + 1/4 or 454.25)

Hengstenberg identifies the event in 455 BC.

Brother Edgar references it as 454.25

Brother Russell simply indicates whole years and notes 454.

One can deal in fractions and not worry about the zero year, i.e.:

$$454.25 + 1845.75 = 2300 \quad \text{or:}$$

$$454 + 1846 = 2300 \quad \text{or:}$$

$$455 + 1846 (-1 \text{ for no zero}) = 2300$$

$$454.25 + 35.75 = 490 \text{ (70 weeks) or:}$$

$$454 + 36 = 490 \text{ or:}$$

$$455 + 36 (-1 \text{ for no zero year}) = 490$$

Why do I say this matter of a zero year is a “red herring”?

The 20th year of Artaxerxes as occurring in the Autumn of 455 is treated extensively by Edgar in section LIX of Great Pyramid Passages volume 2 and in my paper on “Marking Time.” Edgar chose to deal in fractions rather than whole years and so indicated points within any year. Counting whole years at both ends of a time marker would normally require subtracting 1 for the absence of a zero year, unless the points marked began on January 1 and ended on December 31. In such a case you would not subtract the 1.

Brother Russell dealt with whole years and was not attempting to split these hairs (or the herring). For the average reader he showed that  $454 + 1846 = 2300$ . He did not attempt to explain what month of the Autumn of 455 might have begun the prophecy nor what month in AD 36 or 1846 (before the year was complete) that the prophecies were realized.

It is a “red herring” because the issue is not the month of a year, nor even how we label those BC years. The question behind the herring is whether we should even use the 20th year of Artaxerxes as the beginning marker at all, and whether or not AD 33 at the cross is the “midst of the week”, and whether or not our accepted chronology is even a valid ruler. The truth is that we have a valid ruler and chronology.

So that’s the long winded version.