

**Aim:****Refer:** The Great Controversy chapter 18, Nehemiah

In the book of Ezra we read that in the first year when King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon he made a decree that the Israelites who wanted to could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, but before they had finished, their enemies caused problems and they stopped building until the time of King Darius of Persia when the prophets Habakkuk and Zephania told them that God could not bless them because they had finished their own houses but had not rebuilt His. Then they resumed the work and finally finished the temple.

Then in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, he had sent Ezra the scribe and priests to teach the people about God and appoint leaders for them.

Turn to the book of Nehemiah chapter 1 and read verse 1

How many years after Ezra went to Jerusalem is it? ( $12 - 7 = 5$  years)

Where did Nehemiah live? (Susa – the same place that Esther lived if you read Esther 1:2)

What was Nehemiah's job? See the very last sentence in chapter 1

Read verse 2-4

Read chapter 2:1-3

Discuss why Nehemiah was terrified.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers says, "*Waiting on Providence, Nehemiah had discharged his duties for three months without being sad in the king's presence; but on this day his sorrow could not be repressed. His fear sprang from the king's abrupt inquiry. A sad countenance was never tolerated in the royal presence; and, though Artaxerxes was of a milder character than any other Persian monarch, the tone of his question showed that in this respect he was not an exception.*"

In other words Nehemiah had done his work for three months without showing his worry and people who worked for the king were not allowed to be sad in his presence. Plus, if the king didn't like what Nehemiah was thinking of asking, the king had the right to order Nehemiah killed.

Read verse 4-5

The king is favourable to Nehemiah's request, so Nehemiah also asks for timber from the king's forests and the king agrees. In his twentieth year as king, Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to officially rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem and appoints him to be the governor while he is there.

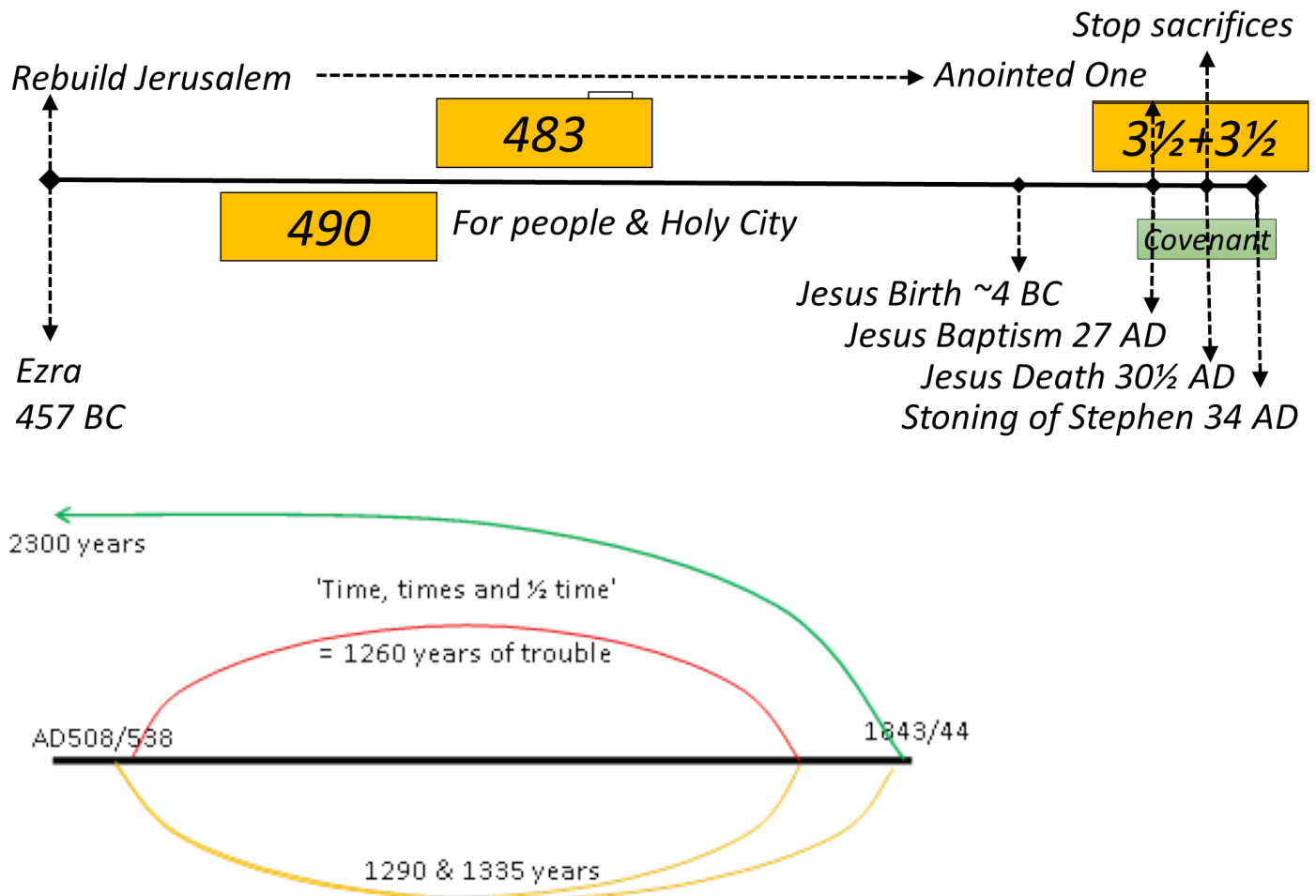
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Now we jump forward to 1782 when William Miller was born in America. Although his family was not well off he seemed bound for honour and wealth; he had many good character habits including a love of study, honesty, careful thinking, and management of money. His mother was a religious woman but as a young man William adopted the view of some of his associates, that God created the world but then left it alone to run itself – this idea was called deism. It was not till William was thirty-four that he became aware of his sinful condition; he realised he needed help but did not know where to turn. In his search he finally turned to the Bible and found the Saviour.

When they heard the news, his associates were very ready to point out all the arguments that Miller himself had formerly used against religion and Miller didn't know the answers so he started studying the Bible, thinking that if it was truly inspired by God, it should be able to explain itself. He kept notes and compared various texts. He found that the 1000 years which many people believed would happen on earth would actually happen in heaven, and he was very interested to learn about the second coming and the signs that would happen before, many of which were being fulfilled. The same was true of the visions of Daniel.

Do you remember what visions Daniel had?

- Statue
- Four beasts
- Ram and Goat
- The prophecy of when the Messiah would come (see picture)
- The prophecy of the little horn and persecution (see picture)



At the end of Daniel's vision of the Ram and Goat Daniel heard an angel say, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Daniel 8:14<sub>KJV</sub>

Miller realised this prophecy had not yet been fulfilled; he concluded if the earth was the sanctuary the cleansing would refer to the cleansing at the second coming but did not know when the prophecy started. With excitement he continued to study, spending days and nights at it, He eventually concluded that the 2300 days started with the command to rebuild Jerusalem and would finish in 1844 –in only 25 more years from then! He felt he should share this news but hesitated in case he was wrong,

At first he shared it with friends and colleagues but in 1831 he finally agreed to preach publicly. From that time on he travelled around preaching in various cities and in 1833 he was recognised as a minister by the Baptist Church. As a minister he received a small income but not enough to support his travelling so his wife and children stayed on the farm and with very careful saving managed to earn enough to feed themselves and support the preaching.

The prophecies of Daniel were suddenly starting to make sense. In fact, William Miller wasn't the only one studying them at this time and we will learn about more people next week.

If there is time have a look at Nehemiah 5  
Read verse 1-3, 7 to see what the problem was.

The previous governors had taxed the people more than they should have, but many of those who did have money were making loans to their fellow Jews and getting richer by charging interest while the poor became poorer. What did Nehemiah tell them to do? Verse 10-11

Nehemiah actually goes on to say that even though as governor he was entitled to receive an income from the people, he didn't use it and lived on his own money instead.

Discuss what we can learn from this? (We are not to take advantage at the expense of other people)

If there is time also look at Nehemiah 13:15-21  
What similar things might happen these days?  
What can we learn from this?