

The 20th year Artaxerxes - Nehemiah 2:1

Abstract

As the historical testimony of the prophets closes, we must weigh the evidence of Persian, Babylonian, and Greek sources to establish the date of the 20th year of Artaxerxes. The date 474 BC appears reasonable as Artaxerxes first year as the Persian “Governor beyond the River,” but not as the “Great King.” As a governor, he was a “king” (*Basileus*) over the Persian dominions of present day Cyprus, Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel. The Governor Artaxerxes would have direct administration of Jerusalem; hence, the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1) ruling over Jerusalem is 454 BC. Both Persian and the Greek records speak of “kings” when referring to individuals who held governing authority, but were subject to the Great King. Since both Artaxerxes and his father the Great King Xerxes were both alive, a harmonized reading of seemingly conflicting history over the last two millennia is posited. Nonetheless, any “argument from silence” needs to be taken cautiously.

Persian History

Reconstructing Persian history would be straightforward if we could use Persian source materials. However, as a contemporary Iranian historian observes: “Persian history has always suffered from a lack of documentation. When documents are available, they are often difficult to read, and when readable they are not readily understandable. One must then speculate on its meaning and its implications. In this climate of uncertainty, irrational speculations can blossom...” [Soudavar–2012]. Records from the reigns of Persian kings Xerxes I (485 – 464 BC) and Artaxerxes I (465 – 424 BC) transition from clumsy, but enduring, clay tablets, to perishable parchment and Egyptian papyrus. These perishable materials showed great advantage for rapid preparation, transport, and storage [Joannes–1995]. However, they have only been preserved in dry climates. In Ezra 6:2 we read of a perishable “roll” being located in the archives. Because such perishable source materials from near Eastern archeology generally are lacking, we need to resort to three important classical Greek historians to provide the narrative:

Herodotus (born 484 BC) author of *The Histories*, born in Halicarnassus (modern-day Bodrum, Turkey) was a contemporary of Artaxerxes I and grew up under Persian rule. His instincts are those of a good anthropologist rather than a strictly “scientific historian.” He traveled extensively, was fascinated by cultural diversity, and eagerly reported what people said and believed—even while expressing his doubts as to the truth of their reports.

Thucydides (born 471 BC) was a defeated Athenian general who turned to writing history after he was relieved of command. He was a younger contemporary of Artaxerxes I. His *History of the Peloponnesian War* recounts the warfare between the rival alliances led by Sparta and Athens through the year 411 BC. Thucydides has been called the father of “scientific history” because of his strict standards of evidence-gathering and analysis of cause and effect without reference to intervention by the gods.

Diodorus Siculus (active 60 – 30 BC) authored the first universal history of mankind. His *Library of History* recounts earliest history up to his day. It is arranged geographically, describing regions around the world including Egypt, India, Arabia, Greece and Europe.

Dating Artaxerxes I

“Artaxerxes” or, “He who reigns through Truth/Right Order” [Arjomand-1998] was a name assumed upon accession to becoming the “Great King” or “King of Kings.” We know neither the birth name of Artaxerxes, nor the year of his birth.

In year 20 Artaxerxes I gave his trusted cup-bearer Nehemiah a commission to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1). Establishing the date of this event has created confusion because there are two different lines of testimony. Diodorus in his *Library of History* places Artaxerxes I on the throne in 464 BC. Hence, his twentieth year would be 444 BC. Claudius Ptolemy (2nd century AD) adopted Diodorus’ dating in his influential *Canon*, which provided a list of kings from various countries spanning a 900-year period. Subsequently, these dates then were copied into the Eusebius *Chronicles* during the 4th century AD. However, a differing, second line of testimony occurs when historical events are correlated with the historical writings of Thucydides. Then the date Artaxerxes became a governor, or sub-king to Xerxes is 474 BC and this also was the date Nehemiah was using.

Summarizing the debate over the last two millennia [McNeil-1970]; “That Thucydides’... is the best evidence we have, no one will deny... If, on the other hand, we refuse to accept Thucydides’ order on faith but try to check it against what can be learned from other sources, it soon becomes clear that no check is possible. The only other connected account of the period 465-450 [BC] is Diodorus, who may be dependent, at least to some extent, upon Thucydides... [and wrote] centuries after the events.”

Olympiad Chronology

The BC/AD dating system had not been developed even in the time of Eusebius (260-340 AD) [Eusebius - *Chronicles*] and dating the reign of Artaxerxes as the Great King requires reviewing the Greek Olympiad chronology system. Every four years in the mid-summer around August, the Greek city-states, swore an oath to lay down their weapons and meet together in truce, if not in peace, for the Olympic competition. Because these Olympiads were not linked to the reign of a specific king, or a specific kingdom, they provide a convenient method for dating historical events.

The Olympiad counting system began in mid-summer and Olympic years always cover portions of two of our Julian years (from mid-August to the following mid-August). Olympiad counting was adopted in Greece well before the time of Artaxerxes. The date for starting this counting was 776 BC as Olympiad 1. Olympiad reckoning employed both the number of the Olympiad and the year within the cycle, 1-4; the Olympiad itself was held on year 1.

Eusebius in his *Chronicles* carries the Olympiad dating from its inception in 776 BC through until 217 AD, the 249th Olympiad. Olympiad dating is completely reliable for dating the Persian invasion of Greece by Xerxes, the father of Artaxerxes, in 480 BC [Shaw-2003]. Some unpublished efforts have suggested robust correlation of the Olympiad and current dating using total solar eclipses such as the one in Sicily 310 BC. [Hagen-2017]

“Great King” and “king”

What does “king” mean? This question seems to have an obvious answer, but this has been a source of confusion. Following military conquest, subject peoples often were permitted to have kings of their own ethnicity and apparatus of state. When Israel was conquered in the first Babylonian captivity, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made Zedekiah the vassal king of Jerusalem. 2 Kings 24:17-18, “And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father’s brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah...and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem...” However, the title of “Great King” was reserved for the emperor ruling over his subject kings.

The Persians referred to vassal kings as “kings.” Xerxes had an inscription carved into solid rock on the outskirts of Hamadan, Iran reading; “Ahura Mazda [i.e. “Wise Lord”] is a great god ... I am Xerxes, the Great King, King of Kings, king of the lands of many people, king of this great earth far and wide, son of Daris the king, the Achaemenid.” Xerxes I would claim 28 subject peoples. Subsequently, his son Artaxerxes I would claim 31 peoples [Briant-2002]. We have direct proof that Xerxes I permitted subservient kings, in the following text: “[written] in the first year of Xerxes... the accession year of king Belsimanni [*of Babylon*]”; BM 87357 [Waerzeggers-2004]. In the longest extant Persian inscription, Darius I described nine leaders of rebellions against him early in his reign as “these are the nine *kings* whom I captured in these battles.” Of these nine “kings”, four were noblemen, two were clan chiefs, two were satraps, and one was a governor. [Missiou-1993]

The Greeks were repulsed by the non-democratic nature of everything Persian. Their use of the title “king” (*basileus*) appears to be connected “with the renewal of contacts between Greece and the Near East. There from the late 9th century on the Greeks made their acquaintance with real kings, and for some reason or other they found the old established [word] *basileus* an appropriate enough title to denote those monarchs.” [Signor-1988] Among the Greeks, literary support for the usage of “king” as applied to Persian vassal rulers is found in the patriotic play play, *The Persians*. This popular play by Aeschylus was written in 472 BC, just eight years after the actual failed invasion of Greece in 480 BC. In *The Persians*, the chorus sings of four Persian satraps who were, “...*kings themselves*, yet vassals of the Great King.”[line 24] Thucydides would have grown up viewing repeat performances of *The Persians*, and to native Athenians like Thucydides, all of these Persian rulers were arrogant, undemocratic, autocratic, and tyrannical “kings.”

When Thucydides calls Artaxerxes “newly come to kingship [*basilountas*]” (Thucydides, 1.137), he should not be understood to mean Artaxerxes was now “Great King,” or “King of kings.” Artaxerxes now had power and authority as a “king” not as a democratically elected leader.

However, the historian Herodotus, who grew up under Persian rule, differentiated the Great King, Governors, and popularized the Persian word “satraps” (a lesser governor) for Greek readers. Thucydides and Herodotus are living and writing at the same time, but each using “king” with a slightly different meaning.

Governor beyond the rivers

What station might Artaxerxes have held as a “king?”

The testimony of history harmonizes if Artaxerxes I was the “Governor beyond the rivers” newly appointed in 474 BC. This office administered portions of Asia Minor and the coastal zone all the way to Egypt; “...in this province was all Phoenicia, and the part of Syria *called* Palestine, and Cyprus” [Herodotus, *Histories* 3.91]. Three individuals are named as “Governor of Babylon and Across-the-River” between 535 - 486 BC [Stolper-1989]. Xerxes I came to throne as the Great King in 486 BC. One of these three has been identified in both Persian and the Biblical record of Ezra, “Tatnai, governor on this side the river” (Ezra 5:3; 6:6,13) [Jursa-2007].

After Xerxes I came to power, through the reign of his son Artaxerxes I, the archives *thus far* have yielded no record using the title of “Governor beyond the rivers” for over fifty years. [Stolper-1989] An argument from silence needs to be taken cautiously. Clearly this administrative unit with strategic access to Egypt and Europe did not go away. A plausible explanation may be that Xerxes placed the administration of this province under a governor who actually was living “beyond the rivers” i.e. beyond Carchemish in present day Turkey over 1,000 km from Susa and Persepolis. All communications between the capital and “beyond the rivers” were written on light, easy to travel, but expensive and perishable parchment rolls rather than clay tablets. Hence, no communications survived.

The “Governor beyond the rivers” position emerges again in the clay tablet record five years before the close of the reign of Artaxerxes I. Initially, a certain ethnic Babylonian named Belsunu became a “satrap” (a lesser governor) of the broad area beyond the River. He was an administrator who could and did report directly to the Great King. Belsunu seemed to be based conveniently in Babylon a short distance from Susa, hence he was more readily accessible by clay tablet communication. Following the death of Artaxerxes I, Belsunu was promoted to “Governor of Babylon” and then a few years later he was further promoted to “Governor beyond the Rivers.” [Stolper-1985]

Chronology of Xerxes and Artaxerxes Based on the Olympiads

Xerxes' Invasion of Greece (480 BC) through Artaxerxes 1 becoming King or Governor Beyond the River (474 BC)

Olympiad 75.1 (480 BC; Xerxes year 5/6): The following events seem to be a reasonable chronological sequence [Taylor-1790]. As year 5 of the reign of Xerxes closed, he invaded Greece. Xerxes crossed into Europe with a massive Persian land force of 400,000 or more soldiers and was met by famed resistance at Thermopylae led by 300 heavily armed Spartans commanding a force of around 7,000. This small cohort could only hold back the invasion for three days. The Persians advanced and burned the deserted Athens to the ground. In a remarkable military reversal, the **Athenian commander Themistocles** defeated the Persian fleet at Salamis Bay (October 480 BC). This Greek victory forced the larger part of the Persian invading force to retreat back to Asia.

The historian Herodotus reports the Persian invasion and gives a timeline. [Herodotus, *The Histories*, 7.20] “Reckoning from the recovery of Egypt, Xerxes spent four full years in collecting his host and making ready all things that were needful for his soldiers. It was not till the close of the fifth year [of his reign] that he set forth on his march [*against Greece*], accompanied by a mighty multitude.”

Diodorus further anchors the 480 BC invasion date with the 75th Olympiad. Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca historica*, 11.1: “The preceding Book, which is the tenth of our narrative, closed with the events of the year just before the crossing of Xerxes into Europe ... the Eleians celebrated the Seventy-fifth Olympiad [480 BC]... It was in this year that **king Xerxes made his campaign against Greece...**”

Olympiad 75.2 (479 BC; Xerxes year 6/7) Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 9 – concludes the history of the Persian invasion the following summer, when the Persian forces remaining in Greece were defeated at Platea – ending the last Persian incursion on the Greek mainland. The Spartan leader Pausanias who led the Greeks is important later in this narrative.

Olympiad 75.3 (478 BC; Xerxes year 7/8): The Athenians return to rebuild. Pausanias, the Greek Spartan captures most of Cyprus.

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.89: “When the Persians, defeated by the Hellenes on sea and land, had retreated from Europe, and the remnant of the fleet, which had taken refuge at Mycalè, had there perished...Meanwhile the Athenian people, now quit of the Barbarians, fetched their wives, their children, and the remains of their property from the places in which they had been deposited, and set to work, rebuilding the city and the walls.”

Thucydides, 1.93: “Thus the Athenians built their walls and restored their city immediately after the retreat of the Persians.”

Thucydides, 1.94: “Pausanias the son of Cleombrotus was now sent from Peloponnesus with twenty ships in command of the Hellenic forces; thirty Athenian ships and a number of the allies sailed with him. They first made an expedition against Cyprus.”

Olympiad 75.4 (477 BC; Xerxes year 8/9): Thucydides, 1.94: “...afterwards against Byzantium, which was in the hands of the Persians, and was taken while he [Pausanias] was still in command.”

After Victory – Treason

Olympiad 76.1 (476 BC; Xerxes year 9/10): Pausanias is recalled to Sparta “give account of his command” we learn in addition that there was a great deal of dismay about reports of his extravagant life style and the accusation that he was acting like a Persian, i.e. tyrannical and arrogant. “Inherent in the term [“Medizing” or acting like a Mede, i.e. Persian] was the implication that collaborators with the Great King had rejected the peculiar manner of life characteristic of the Greek world in favor of the corrupting the East. Thucydides' account of the Medizing activity of Pausanias at Byzantium furnishes the classic illustration of this accusation (1.95, 128-34). In the aftermath of the Persian war the victor of Plataea [Pausanias] was charged with tyrannical conduct and conspiracy with Persia-he is said to have dressed and entertained in the Persian fashion, sought the hand of the Persian king's daughter, and travelled with a foreign bodyguard of Medes and Egyptians. All these allegations evoke the opulence that surrounded the courts of the Persian-supported tyrants and satraps.” [Graf-1984]

Thucydides, 1.128: “The story is as follows:—When Pausanias the Lacedaemonian was originally summoned by the Spartans to give an account of his command at the Hellespont, and had been tried and acquitted, he was no longer sent out in a public capacity, but he hired a trireme of Hermionè on his own account and sailed to the Hellespont, pretending that he had gone thither to fight in the cause of the Hellenes. In reality he wanted to prosecute an intrigue with the King [i.e. Xerxes], by which he hoped to obtain the empire of Hellas.”

Olympiad 76.2 (475 BC; Xerxes year 10/11): Pausanias treachery was found out and he met a miserable death in Sparta.

The heroic admiral Themistocles maintained a high profile and persuaded Athens to frustrate a Spartan realignment of power [Botsford-1910]. Possibly, Themistocles' undoing occurred when his unbridled ambition was manifest. “[The Areopagus] occupying a place strikingly like that of the American Supreme Court [was weakened by] Themistocles ... [who] deprived the Areopagus of its supervisory power - an action dictated by personal motives.” [Robinson-1903] In response to Themistocles' power play, the Athenians frustrated Themistocles' plan by ostracizing him. This meant he needed to leave Athens for ten years of exile.

While he was in exile, the Spartans provided evidence that Themistocles also was a traitor. Themistocles upon learning this now fled for his life, staying ahead of his pursuers until he finally reached a safe haven in the Greek colony of Ephesus. This is the Ephesus of the New Testament in Persian-controlled Asia Minor.

Thucydides, 1.135: “Now the evidence which proved that Pausanias was in league with Persia implicated Themistocles; and the Lacedaemonians sent ambassadors to the Athenians charging him likewise with treason, and demanding that he should receive the same punishment. The Athenians agreed...”

The recognition of 475 BC for the flight of Themistocles has caused debate for two millennia. Recognizing that the scholarly community is tired of the debate, it nonetheless still does reemerge; “We may say that to place the ostracism of Themistocles in the period between 476/5 and 471/0 receives strong support from the ancient testimony and an intelligent understanding of Pausanias’ career. I should not press the synchronism more closely than this.” [Lenardon-1959]; others have more narrowly placed this as between 474 and 472 [Ure-1921]

Apart from the account of Thucydides, we may refer back to the classical Greek tragedy, *The Persians* (written in 472 BC). Within the play, the Persian historical figures are accurately identified and named. However, the heroic Greek admiral Themistocles was never mentioned. Why? Because he already had been ostracized and subsequently implicated as a traitor. Therefore, Themistocles could not have been judged as a traitor in 465 BC (seven years after *The Persians* was written).

Olympiad 76.3 (474 BC; Xerxes year 11/12; Artaxerxes becomes *basileus* i.e. Governor): Themistocles reached safety in Ephesus and wrote the new *basileus* Artaxerxes who had just succeeded to the office.

Thucydides, 1.137: “...he [Themistocles] at length arrived at Ephesus...He then went up the country in the company of one of the Persians who dwelt on the coast, and *sent a letter to king [basilea] Artaxerxes the son Xerxes, who had just succeeded to kingship (governorship) [internal note: γράμματα πρὸς βασιλέα Ἀρταξέρξην τὸν Ξέρξου νεωστὶ βασιλεύοντα – grammata pros basilea Artaxerzeen tou Xerxou neoosti basileuonta]* The letter was in the following words, “I, Themistocles, have come to you, I who of all Hellenes did your house the greatest injuries so long as I was compelled to defend myself against your father...” In this letter, Greek admiral Themistocles was explaining to Artaxerxes why he defended Greece against Xerxes!

Event Contradictions Occur when Adding 9 years to the Chronology

Through this linkage of historical incidents, the date of 474 BC for the first year of Artaxerxes is consistent with the current textual evidence. To add nine years into this narrative is strained. Diodorus, writing over 400 years later reported that Themistocles wrote to king Xerxes, not to Artaxerxes. Plutarch (45-120 AD) directly addressed this question in *Themistocles*, 27.1: “Now Thucydides and Charon of Lampsacus relate that

Xerxes was dead, and that it was his son Artaxerxes with whom Themistocles had his interview; but Ephorus and Dinon and Clitarchus and Heracleides and yet more besides have it that it was Xerxes to whom he came. With the chronological data Thucydides seems to me more in accord, although these are by no means securely established.” Here, Plutarch reads Thucydides to say that Xerxes was dead. However, this is an incorrect inference. The account does not say Xerxes was dead.

Ephorus only survives in fragments, but he is also a contemporary of Artaxerxes and this history fragment, suggests that after Themistocles spent a year of learning Persian, he then traveled over 1,000 km to either Susa or Persepolis to meet the Great King Xerxes and pledge his support. He was granted three cities in Magnesia near to Ephesus for his maintenance and lived there long enough to mint coins that have been recovered by modern archeologists. True to his large ego – these are considered to be the first coins in history to show a ruler!

Once again, there is a problem with the current chronology consensus placing Themistocles in Magnesia sometime after 463 BC. [Marr-1994] “In the ancient sources, which makes its first appearance at Thucydides 1.138.5, that, when Themistocles had fled into exile and been given the equivalent of political asylum by the Persian King Artaxerxes, he was ‘given’ three Asiatic Greek cities of Magnesia, Myus and Lampsacus. There is an amount of scholarly controversy over how the King could ‘give’ Lampsacus, a city of great strategic importance on the Hellespont, which, by the mid-460s, was almost certainly within the ambit [control] of the Delian league, i.e., no longer his to give.”

The answer of course is to adjust the chronology and move the gift of these cities back by ten years. Themistocles wrote to “new king” Artaxerxes in 474 BC, and then a year later after learning Persian, he met with the “Great King” Xerxes and was given asylum and support in 473 BC.

Conclusion

This reading of history harmonizes the historical confusion. Artaxerxes was a “king” while his father Xerxes - the “Great King” was alive. A careful reading of Thucydides will show that he never wrote that Xerxes was dead even though some classical authors mistakenly inserted this inference into their accounts. Themistocles simply opened correspondence with the nearby Persian official of the highest rank and influence— Artaxerxes—who controlled the critical crossroads “beyond the Rivers.” Both Nehemiah and Themistocles would begin counting the advancement to power of Artaxerxes in 474 BC, hence, his “twentieth year” would be 454 BC.

by Richard D. Doctor, July 1, 2017

Appendix A—The Assassination of Xerxes and the Oslo Chronology

Recently, the *Oslo Chronology* set forth by Rolf Furuli (a Lecturer at the University of Oslo) comes to the 474 BC date for the 1st year of Artaxerxes I using three adjustments to the current scholarly consensus on dating. [Furuli-2012] This chronology critically

depends on Xerxes being assassinated in 474 BC. However, the *Oslo Chronology* appears to be unlikely [Stolper-1988]; “The most exact known evidence for the date of Xerxes’ death is the Babylonian astronomical text BM 32234, containing reports of lunar eclipses arranged in eighteen year groups. The pertinent portion of the text, the beginning of column 4 of the reverse, describes an eclipse on 5-6 June 465 BC, adding: (*date translated to current calendar as 4-8 August 465 BC*) ‘Xerxes’ son killed him.’ ” Other texts would place Artaxerxes gaining the throne following the palace intrigues in December 465 BC, which is consistent with [Depuydt-1995]; “January 464, is the earliest known date for Artaxerxes I. It is found, not in a cuneiform text, but in an Aramaic document (AP 6)... The Egyptian new year fell sixteen days earlier on 17 December 465. If the news of Artaxerxes’ accession had reached Elephantine at the southern border of Egypt from Babylon or from another capital of the empire by 2 January 465, then surely the accession must have occurred before the Egyptian new year of 17 December 465.” Alternatively, the palace intrigue following the assassination might have delayed the clear securing of power by Artaxerxes I for a few months until both his brother and the actual assassin had been executed.

The Egyptian dating system is robustly cross-linked to our current BC/AD system. Furuli develops an extensive argument suggesting errors in the interpretation of BM 32234. He then delivers arguments against the Elephantine papyrus dates using Cowley for the papyrus dates [Cowley 1923; Furuli vol.1, p.256-295]. Furuli references, but does not employ, the refinement for cross-linking Egyptian and Julian dates published somewhat later. [Parker-1946] This study was used for a critical reexamination of the Elephantine papyri [Horn-1954] and all this scholarship feeds [Porten-1996] cited by Furuli. Furuli dissents from these conclusions and to cite one critical example, for *Year 6 of Artaxerxes I* as “nothing but speculation because there is no evidence in favor of his [i.e. Porten’s] suggestions.” [Furuli 1, p. 287] One could only suggest a reference back to the earlier more extensive scholarship of Horn and Wood where they write, “AP8. Kislev 21 [Jewish dating] = Mesore 1 [Egyptian dating], year 6 of Artaxerxes I.-*The papyrus is well preserved and creates no reading problems.* [Emphasis added] However, the dates as given can be made to agree by no known methods, so that a scribal error must be involved.” This document emerges from the Jewish community near present day Aswan, Egypt and is the wedding gift of a house from a father to his daughter and son-in-law. AP9 is a codicil amendment to document AP8 again with the same well-preserved but problematical date. Following through on four different conjectures about the possible discrepancies of these texts, Horn and Wood cautiously conclude, “If the date line of the papyrus needed no emendation to achieve an agreement with astronomical facts, we should have the proof here that the Jews of Elephantine had failed to observe a second Adar in harmony with the Babylonian year in 462 BC and had not inserted it during the years 461 and 460; in that case they were one lunar month behind the Babylonian calendar.”

The AP8/AP9 texts would seem a perfect proof case for the *Oslo Chronology* which could show that Kislev 21 aligned perfectly with Mesore 1 in 468 BC. This procedure could be repeated for all the other double-date papyri using the *Oslo Chronology* for the recalibrated dates. But this and all the other double-dated Elephantine papyri are passed

over in silence. The Elephantine papyri as translated by Horn find Xerxes I was alive in BC 471, at least 3 years *after* the *Oslo Chronology* proposes he was assassinated [Horn, *op. cit. on AP5*] they also are completely consistent with Artaxerxes I coming to the throne in 465 BC [Horn, *op. cit. on AP6*]. To this lay author it seems as though the *Oslo Chronology* forth an improbable construct to make the 474 BC date work.

Appendix B - Bible Student Dating

The problem dating the reign of Artaxerxes is treated by Pastor C.T. Russell, *The Time is at Hand - Studies in the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, chap.3, p. 67); “The date of Nehemiah's commission is ordinarily stated to be B.C. 445. But Dr. Hale's work on chronology [Hale-1830] (pages 449 and 531) and Dr. Priestlie's treatise on the "Harmony of the Evangelists" (pages 24-38) show this common view to be nine years short, which would give B.C. 454 as the true date of Nehemiah's commission; and with this date Daniel's prediction (Chapter 9:25), concerning the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem, agrees.” To expand upon Vol. 2, an extensive and elegant article in support of the B.C. 454 dating was written by the Bro. John Edgar and published in the *Watchtower* June 15, 1905 (R.3574).

Dr. Joseph Priestley (Priestlie) the famed English scientist who discovered oxygen, also was a Biblical scholar. Writing about the 70 weeks of Daniel [Priestley-1790]: “In the preceding computation I suppose an error of ten years in the time allotted by all chronologers to the reign of Xerxes. But this I think has been sufficiently proved by Lauchlan Taylor, in his *Essay on the Revelation*, viz. that in reality, he did not reign more than eleven years, though the *Canon* of Ptolemy gives him twenty-one. This appears to me to be a discovery of so much consequence in chronology, and especially for the interpretation of prophecy, that I shall subjoin all that he has said upon this subject in a distinct Section.” The work by Lauchlan Taylor [Taylor-1790] does indeed cite the Classical Greek historians and is elaborated here.

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