

Time of the Virgin Birth Set by Daniel, not Micah: Artaxerxes's Decree Set the Timing for the Virgin Pregnancy, Neh 2:1-8; Dan 9:24-26

44. Therefore, the prophecy in Micah 5:2 that Bethlehem in Judea would be the site of the Lord's birth is a statement of future historical fact.
45. Therefore, a question arises: Was Bethlehem the exact place God *desired* the virgin birth to occur or was it simply the place it *did* occur.
46. The answer is not found in observing the activities of Romans and Jews prior to the virgin *birth* but the timing of God regarding the virgin *pregnancy*.
47. Almost the entirety of biblical prophecies hinge on the crucifixion of Christ, for without it the sin issue would still be unresolved, Christ would not be resurrected, and Messianic prophecies, both pre-cross and post-cross, would remain unfulfilled.
48. Daniel set the precise date for the death of the Messiah, the central event in all of human history. His prediction is found in the complicated passage in:

Daniel 9:24 - "Seventy weeks [שְׁבוּעַ' *shavua'* "groups of seven": heptads equaling 490 years] are determined for your people and for your holy city.

v. 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.

49. This "command" is what set the clock running on the dispensation of Israel. The Israelites were granted 490 more years as a client nation. But, at the point of the 483rd year, the Jews would crucify their "Messiah, the Prince."
50. The "command" is explained in this excerpt:

In 444 B.C., dating from the decree by Artaxerxes Longimanus (Nehemiah 2:1-8) to restore and build Jerusalem, the Jews were promised 490 more years to evangelize other nations (Daniel 9:24-26). The term "seventy weeks" used by Daniel refers to a literal period of 490 years. However, 7 years short of the time allotted to them for this particular operation, the cross occurred—Messiah was "cut off" as prophesied in Daniel 9:26—and the Jewish Age was halted. But God still owes Israel 7 more years, and He will keep that promise during the Tribulation ... or that "seventieth week" of Daniel 9.¹

51. This command set in motion a sequence of events that culminated in the Lord's crucifixion:

¹ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Anti-Semitism*, 4th ed (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2003), 81.

Daniel 9:26 - "Then after sixty-two weeks [the 434th year period between the completion of Jerusalem and the public appearance of Messiah], Messiah shall be cut off [the crucifixion], but not for Himself. And the people [the Romans] of the prince who is to come [the Beast-Dictator of the Tribulation] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [Titus's siege in A.D. 70].

52. Therefore, this prophecy set the timing not only for the crucifixion but also the virgin birth which Paul in Galatians 4:4 tells us occurred at "the fullness of time."
53. Therefore, Daniel's prophecy set the timing, not only for the crucifixion but also the virgin birth. Micah's prophecy noted the geographic location of the event but it was Daniel's prophecy that dictated the timing.
54. In order for the timing of the crucifixion to occur on Daniel's schedule, then the virgin pregnancy must occur at a precise time.
55. This pregnancy was the result of a miracle performed by the Holy Spirit, a revelation Gabriel provided prophetically to Mary in:

Luke 2:35 - (Gabriel) said to her [Mary], "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

56. Thus, the timing of the virgin pregnancy was determined by the prophecy of Daniel. The prophecy of Micah simply recognizes where the Christ Child's physical birth will occur.
57. Remember, "prophecy does not determine history." The decision by Augustus to tax the people and to have them return to their hometowns to be registered was the free-will act of a heathen dictator.
58. Further, the protests against this action were conducted by Jews who would within a generation reject the Messiah about to be born.
59. God's infinite mind developed a plan correlating human decisions and their cause-and-effect impacts on history with those events He would initiate from His sovereignty.
60. When issuing the divine decree in eternity past, God considered every person as a free agent. From omniscience He knew when events would occur and all the factors of cause-and-effect that preceded and followed each of them.
61. Into this morass of human machinations He developed a plan that included those sovereign decisions of His own that were to be incorporated into the events of history.
62. PRINCIPLE: In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree.

63. Therefore, the prophecies regarding Messiah were initially intended for the Jew, for Israel, and finally for Judea.
64. Once the Lord began His public ministry His message and His secondary goal was to lead the Jew toward the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant – He would be their King – and the New covenant – His millennial kingdom.
65. But before these things could be accomplished He had to first and foremost become a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the divine plan, the cross had to precede the crown.
66. Because the Jews rejected Jesus of Nazareth, the One who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies referring to the First Advent, then the Lord's message and secondary goal was shifted toward the establishment of the New Testament church.
67. This was the mystery dispensation spoken of by Paul in:

Ephesians 3:9 - ... to bring to light what is the dispensation [οἰκονομία, *oikonomia*] of the mystery [μυστήριον, *mustērion*] which during all previous dispensations has been kept secret in God [the divine decree] who created all things;