

THE DANIEL PAPERS

Daniel's Prophecy Of 70 Weeks

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Many of us are skeptical about using numbers or statistics to prove a point. Too many good numbers have been combined with bad assumptions to create misleading conclusions.

But when calculations are carefully handled, they can be an important indicator to resolve controversial issues. We can't afford to ignore the numbers that have the potential to resolve such disputes.

Numbers come into play in the ancient writings of the prophet Daniel. Many believe that in one important prediction Daniel showed us how to calculate the time of Messiah's coming. Did he make such a prediction? And if so, what can we conclude? In the following pages, RBC senior research editor Herb Vander Lugt surveys the evidence.

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THE MESSIAH QUESTION

Many orthodox and conservative Jews believe the time is ripe for the coming of Messiah. They see Israel's return to her homeland after more than 1,900 years of national dispersion as having great prophetic significance. They believe the 1948 rebirth of Israel and waves of immigration from all over the world are converging with many other factors to set the stage for the predicted coming of a national Deliverer. They see the coming of this Messiah as being good not only for Israel but for the whole earth. According to the prophet Isaiah, He will cause the nations to "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall

they learn war anymore" (Isa. 2:4).

Many Christians also live with a heightened expectation of the coming of Messiah. They view events occurring in Israel as a likely fulfillment of prophetic Scriptures and have produced a rash of books contending that we are seeing the unprecedented convergence of prophetic indicators. They point out that the increased frequency of natural disasters—floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes—are part of the "last days" scenario described in the New Testament.

Messianic hopes are also being fueled by the fear that before long many religious extremists and even criminal organizations like the Mafia will be able to obtain nuclear weapons. The French scholar Jacques Ellul, for example, has said that whether we like it or not,

a world dictatorship with a central commerce system to monitor business transactions will be a necessity before long. Without it, nuclear weapons will soon be in the hands of criminals and madmen.

Interestingly, both Jews and Christians share the belief that a period of turmoil and distress will precede the coming of Messiah. The Jewish document called “Talmudic Sages” draws a dark picture of this time. Accordingly, one of these Jewish sages wrote, “Let him [Messiah] come, but let me not see him” (Sanh. 98b). And Christians, though differing quite widely in their view of prophesied endtime events, almost unanimously agree that the rise of an evil world ruler and a time of great tribulation will precede Messiah’s return.

Much of this messianic expectation is rooted in the Old Testament prophecy

known as Daniel. No book in the Bible says more about the endtimes than Daniel. Daniel speaks not only of the coming Messiah but of the time of His coming, the marks of His kingdom, and the trouble that will precede it.

***Those who wait
for Messiah know
that His coming
will be preceded by
a day of unequalled
trouble.***

Interestingly, the Jews in the Qumran community, which flourished in the first century before Christ and produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, prized Daniel so highly that they may have had more copies of it than any other book. They left eight complete copies and many fragments.

Daniel And His Book. Daniel was among the first of the Jewish hostages who were deported by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, in 605 BC. He seems to have been from a prominent family, because he was among the first group of young men selected to receive training for government service in Babylon.

Jews and Christians who take their faiths seriously almost unanimously accept Daniel as the author of the book that bears his name. Even though no other records of Daniel's deportation have been found, the historical setting of the book is well-documented by cuneiform texts. Recognized Old Testament scholars like R. K. Harrison, Gleason Archer, and Leon Wood assure us that everything about the book, including the style of the Hebrew language in which most of it was

written and the Aramaic of a few sections, points to sixth-century BC authorship.

But people who do not believe in a personal God and His supernatural involvement in human affairs have a hard time with the idea that it is a sixth-century document. Why? Because in chapters 2 and 7 Daniel presents a foreview of history that took place during the following five centuries—the rise of Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome as world powers. The 8th chapter describes future developments that correspond to the rise of Greece under Alexander the Great, the division of his empire into four kingdoms after his death, and the activities of Antiochus Epiphanes, a Syrian king who became a notorious enemy of the Jews and their religion during the decade of 160 BC. The 11th chapter also contains a detailed account of unnamed

national movements that are now history—the defeat of Medo-Persia by Greece, the partitioning of the Macedonian kingdom into four realms (vv.1-4), the wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids (vv.5-20), and the great persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (vv.21-35). All of these events were spelled out in such great detail and match so well what occurred during the fourth, third, and second centuries BC that nonbelievers insist that these sections of the book had to be written during the second century BC.

Anti-supernaturalist critics of Daniel hold their position with great tenacity, because if they don't they must acknowledge Daniel's ability to predict the future. They give the writing of Daniel a late date in spite of a great deal of evidence to the contrary. As mentioned earlier, the language style

and content indicate that the book was written by someone living in Babylon during the sixth century BC.

***Anyone who denies
the possibility of
predictive prophecy
must assign a late
date to Daniel,
in spite of the
contrary evidence.***

The discovery of excellent manuscript copies among the Dead Sea Scrolls makes it almost mandatory to accept the earlier date for its composition. Why would the Qumran Jews view the book as inspired and make copies of it if they knew it was a contemporary forgery? Two fragments of the book are said by paleographers to be as old as the large Isaiah scroll, which everyone admits was copied several

centuries before 160 BC.

Daniel And Messiah.

While most of Daniel's prophecies were fulfilled before 150 BC and were related to secular history, some were clearly messianic. He depicted a vision in which he saw the "Ancient of Days" seated in the presence of "ten thousand times ten thousand" in a heavenly court scene (7:9-10). He also saw "One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven" to whom the "Ancient of Days" gave "dominion and glory and a kingdom . . . , an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away" (7:13-14). He depicted "Messiah the Prince," who would appear after a time period of 483 years (9:25-26). He spoke of the "time of the end" when a powerful king would meet his doom, and said that after a time of unprecedented tribulation God's people would be "delivered," a

large company who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," and "those who are wise shall shine . . . like the stars forever and ever" (11:40-12:3).

*Daniel saw
'One like the Son
of Man,' who
would come from
the heavens to
rule the earth.*

The coming of someone "like the Son of Man"! A resurrection of bodies! A final judgment! These are magnificent themes that point to the Messiah and His kingdom.

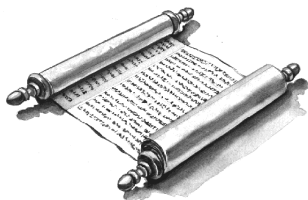
Who is this Messiah and what is His mission? The right answer is a matter of eternal importance. And we believe that it can be found in the Old Testament book of Daniel.

THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL 9

In this study we will focus on the “70 weeks” prophecy of Daniel 9:20-27. We will do so under three headings:

(1) Daniel’s Portrait of the Messianic Age; (2) Daniel’s Messianic Calculations; and (3) Daniel’s View of the Endtimes. The analysis of these verses will raise some important questions. If Jesus is the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, why didn’t He usher in the golden age of peace, prosperity, and righteousness predicted by Daniel? How can we know that the “Anointed One” or “Messiah” of verses 25 and 26 is Jesus Christ? What compelling reasons can be given for inserting a long period of time between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week? These are valid

questions and deserve careful answers.



DANIEL’S PORTRAIT OF THE MESSIANIC AGE (DAN. 9:24)

The place was Babylon. The time was 538 BC. And Daniel, who was more than 80 years old, had been reading the book of the prophet Jeremiah. As he read, he discovered that God had decreed Israel’s time of captivity to last 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10).

This discovery impressed Daniel. He longed for the day when the Jewish people could once again possess the city of Jerusalem and worship in their temple. Since he had been taken captive in 605 BC, 67 years had passed. But he wasn’t

sure that the starting point for the 70 years of judgment was 605 BC. He probably remembered that another group of exiles was deported in 597 BC, and that the final, complete devastation of Jerusalem did not occur until 586 BC. If the 70-year period was reckoned from these dates, the restoration of the Jewish people could be another 20 years away. Troubled by these uncertainties, Daniel began to pray.

The angel Gabriel gave Daniel a timetable for the messianic age.

While Daniel was still in prayer, the angel Gabriel appeared with a prophecy from God. This message had in view far more than the 70 years of judgment Daniel was concerned about. It

would appear to be the master timetable for God's messianic plan.

This prophecy began by predicting that the messianic age would arrive after "70 weeks."

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy (Dan. 9:24).

"Seventy weeks" sounds like a relatively short period of time for Daniel to wait. But almost without exception, Jewish and Christian scholars take the "weeks" (lit. "sevens") to represent "sevens" of years. Since a "week" is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning "a seven," most believe that the 70

weeks is a period of 490 years (70 x 7). Some take the number literally. Others, noting that 7 and 70 often have symbolic significance, view the 490 years as an indefinite span of time. In either case, according to the angel Gabriel, the messianic kingdom that will be ushered in at the close of this 70 weeks will be marked by six elements:

I. Transgression Finished. God's 70 weeks will "finish the transgression." The Hebrew word translated *transgression* carries the idea of rebellion against God. Jews and Christians take this to mean that rebellion against God will end. They also agree that only true believers in God—whether Jew or Gentile—will enter the messianic kingdom. But Christians believe that "to finish the transgression" also includes a national acceptance of Jesus as Messiah.

2. Sin Sealed Up.

Daniel also predicted that the 70-week period would "make an end of sins." The word translated *sins* refers to sins other than revolt or rebellion—general immorality, dishonesty, and the like. The verb in the Hebrew text translated "put an end to" in NIV literally means "to seal up." The margin of the Hebrew text

The coming of the messianic age will bring an end to both secularism and religious pluralism.

uses the word that means "put an end to" or "finish." So most translators have adopted this alternate reading. But the expression "to seal up," the literal rendering of the Hebrew text, should not be lightly dismissed.

R. D. Duncan points out that God “seals up the stars” so they don’t shine and that cold weather “seals up the hand” of men so they cannot continue their daily labor (Job 9:7; 37:7). To “seal up” sin is to place people under complete restraint so that among the citizens of the kingdom, sin will be rare by today’s standards and judgment for wrongdoing will be administered quickly and justly.

Jews and Christians alike believe that this will occur when Messiah rules the world.

3. Wickedness

Atoned For. The third accomplishment of God’s 70-week program is “to make reconciliation for iniquity” or “to atone for wickedness” (NIV). The verb in this sentence is *kaphar*, the Old Testament term used to denote the covering of sin by making a sacrifice. Hebrew scholar Keil says the form of

the verb indicates that the word means “to cover so thoroughly that the sin is obliterated.”

Christians see this as having been fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ, who according to the New Testament gave Himself to die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice. Jewish scholars view the promise of this verse as having to do with reconciliation, but not a reconciliation by a once-for-all sacrifice. They do not accept the idea that Messiah will offer Himself as the final and complete sacrifice. Therefore they take little note of the word *kaphar* as it appears here. They hold that animal sacrifices will be a divine requirement as long as the earth stands. But the words “to make reconciliation for iniquity” seem to denote something unique and special—an atonement that has been accomplished.

4. Righteousness

Established. The conclusion of the 70-week period will also “bring in everlasting righteousness.” This undoubtedly points to the justice and peace of the new social order that Israel has been waiting for since the days of the prophets. It is a mark of the messianic age, which corresponds to what other prophets have also predicted.

According to the prophet Zechariah, it is a coming day of righteousness that will be preceded by a strange mix of national victory and repentance. Zechariah quotes the Lord as saying, “It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn

for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zech. 12:9-10).

***A new world order
will occur after the
nation of Israel
grieves for its sins
against God.***

According to the prophet Ezekiel, the nation will then receive a “new heart” from the One who promised, “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them” (Ezek. 36:26-27).

5. Vision And Prophecy Sealed. The fifth element of Daniel’s messianic portrait is found in the words “to seal up vision and prophecy.” When the messianic age begins, God will, by accomplishing all that was promised through

visions and prophecies, stamp His seal on what His servants had spoken. Finally the whole world will understand prophecies that go all the way back to the time God first spoke to Abraham and said, “Get out of your country, from your

*The messianic age
will be the last
chapter of God’s
vision to use one
nation to bring
blessing to the
whole world.*

family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the

earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3).

6. The Most Holy Anointed. The sixth achievement of Daniel’s messianic portrait involves the anointing of “the Most Holy.” Some Jews see this as being fulfilled in the consecration of a rebuilt temple in the days of a yet undisclosed Messiah. Some Christians also believe “the Most Holy” refers to a rebuilt temple. They take literally the temple description of Ezekiel 40–44 and believe that animal sacrifices will once again be offered at the holy place. They believe that this time, however, the sacrifices will be seen as memorials to the One whom John the Baptist called “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).

Other Christians, while agreeing that Christ’s second coming will usher in this golden age, do not agree that

“the Most Holy” refers to a rebuilt temple. They interpret Ezekiel 40–44 as apocalyptic, as teaching spiritual truths through symbols drawn from a familiar form—the temple. They believe Jesus Himself will be anointed as “the Most Holy.”

While there is much disagreement among Jewish and Christian communities about how all of this will work out, some things are clear. According to Daniel’s portrait, God has a 70-week program that will culminate in an age when spiritual rebellion will end, sin will be restrained, reconciliation will have been accomplished, righteousness will prevail, prophecy will have been fulfilled, and God’s anointing of either a new temple and/or His Messiah will occur.

What remains is for us to consider the actual 490-year time period Daniel predicted.



DANIEL'S MESSIANIC CALCULATIONS (DAN. 9:25-26)

After assuring Daniel that at a predetermined time his people and his holy city would experience the full blessings of the messianic age, the angel Gabriel gave Daniel calculations related to “the Anointed One, the ruler” who is “cut off” so as to “have nothing” (NIV).

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. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined (Dan. 9:25-26).

These verses account for 69 of the 70 weeks (lit. “sevens”) in God’s announced program for Daniel’s people and their city.

This time period begins with “the command to restore and build Jerusalem.” The Hebrew word translated “command” in the KJV is *daber*, which literally means “word” and can refer to a “command,” a “decree,” or a “commission.” It depicts an official authorization, in this case to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

It is necessary to identify the decree in order to know

when the “70 weeks” began. It’s also necessary to determine what happened “7 weeks” after this time span began, to understand why the “69 weeks” is divided into two segments.

This prophecy predicts when Messiah will come, that He will die, and that He will die before the destruction of the temple.

The Pertinent Decree. The Bible records the issuing of three decrees by Gentile kings authorizing the Jews in exile to return to their homeland. The first one was by Cyrus in 539 BC (2 Chr. 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4). But this cannot be the decree Daniel had in mind. It referred only

to the temple, making no mention of the city.

The second royal decree involving the Jews and their homeland was made by Artaxerxes in 458 BC (Ezra 7:11-26). Like the decree of Cyrus, no specific mention is made of rebuilding the city

The “70 week” time period began with the decree in either 458 BC or in 444 BC.

of Jerusalem or its walls. However, Ezra must have viewed this decree as authorizing the rebuilding of the city and its walls, because in his prayer of confession recorded in Ezra 9:6-15 he thanked God for giving them the favor of “the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and

to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem” (v.9).

The third royal decree involving the Jews and their city was issued by the same Artaxerxes in 444 BC (Neh. 2:5-8,17-18). This is specific in authorizing the rebuilding of the city walls.

The 7 Weeks. The text says, “From the going forth of the command . . . there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.” These 69 weeks culminate in “Messiah the Prince.” But why this special mention of 7 weeks? The answer is expressed in the last words of verse 25, “The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.” The 7 weeks that precede the 62 weeks is undoubtedly the time period it took for Ezra, Nehemiah, and others to rebuild the city. According to Barnes and several other trustworthy Bible commentators, the historian Prideaux declared that

Nehemiah's last action in rebuilding the city occurred in the 15th year of the Persian ruler Darius Nothus (423-404 BC). His 15th year was the 49th year from the 458 BC decree. Josephus seems to support this idea in his remarks about the death of Nehemiah. This is remarkable and can be viewed as an indication that the 458 BC date is correct. But it is possible that some rebuilding continued until 49 years after the 444 BC date.

The 69 Weeks. The 62 weeks plus the 7 weeks brings us to the time of "Messiah the Prince" (v.25), the Messiah who will be "cut off and will have nothing" (v.26 NIV). Christian Bible scholars point out that the period of the first 69 "weeks" (483 years) ends in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, and that either start date of 458 BC or 444 BC is possible.

Both the 458 BC and 444 BC dates have their advocates among Bible scholars. Beginning with 458 BC and using standard chronology, one arrives at AD 26, the year Jesus reached the age of 30 (He was born in 4 BC). It was at the age of 30 that a male descendant of Aaron began his priestly duties.

458 BC + 483 years (365 days each) <hr/> AD 26

The text tells us that after 69 weeks (7 + 62) Messiah is "cut off." It doesn't tell us how long after, nor does it indicate that the 70th week would begin as soon as the 69th ended. Bible chronologists generally take either AD 30 or AD 33 as the year of Christ's crucifixion. So adding 483 years to the 458 BC date brings us to the beginning

of Jesus' ministry in AD 26 and allows for Him to be "cut off" in AD 30.

The 444 BC decree of Artaxerxes, however, also deserves serious consideration. If one uses "prophetic years" of 360 days each, it is exactly 483 years (173,880 days) from the day of Artaxerxes decree in 444 BC (Neh. 2:1) to the day of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem during the last week of His earthly

444 BC + 173,880 days (483 prophetic years of 360 days each or 476 solar years of 365 days each)

AD 33

life (Mt. 21). H. W. Hoehner, a respected biblical scholar, details this in his book *Chronological Aspects Of The Life Of Christ*. It was on that day in AD 33 that Jesus officially announced to the Israelites that He was the

Messiah. Later that week He was "cut off" or crucified.

The idea of 360-day prophetic years is taken from the fact that the 1,260 days of Revelation 12:6, the "time and times and half a time" of Revelation 12:14 (3½ years), and the 42 months of Revelation 13:5 are equals—a 3½-year period.

Both of these methods of computing the 483-year time period in relation to Jesus Christ work out in an astounding manner.

The Anointed One.

Starting with either 458 BC or 444 BC, the conclusion of the 483 years does indeed coincide remarkably with the date Jesus Christ presented Himself to Israel as her Messiah. But what if this is only an astounding coincidence? A critique of alternative explanations is in order.

Cyrus And Onias. Some scholars (Christian and

Jewish) begin the 70 weeks with the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC. But, as mentioned earlier, this decree did not authorize the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Furthermore, this approach requires that the numbers given must be taken symbolically. Taking them literally doesn't tie in with any significant dates in the history of Israel.

Other scholars see two "messiahs" in the prophecy and make Cyrus the Great the first "anointed one." They point out that at the time of Jerusalem's complete desolation (587 BC), God assured Jeremiah that the city would be rebuilt (Jer. 29:10). From this authoritative word until Cyrus in 538 BC was indeed 49 years or 7 "weeks." But to make this interpretation work, they must rearrange the Hebrew word order and translate Daniel 9:25-26 as follows:

Know therefore and

understand: From the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem [God's word expressed in Jeremiah 29:10 in 587 BC] until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be 7 weeks; and for 62 weeks it shall be built with streets and moat, but in troubled times. And after the 62 weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.

Most of these scholars view the second "anointed one" as Onias, the legitimate high priest who was murdered in 171 BC without a successor. But the second cluster of 62 weeks from 538 BC to 171 BC is 367 years, not the 434 years Daniel predicted. Moreover, as noted earlier, the translation given by these scholars is possible only if one alters the word order of the Hebrew text and makes

a few changes dictated by opinion, not by the rules of grammar. One should explore all the possibilities of coming up with a workable interpretation of a text as it stands before altering or modifying it.

One should explore all the possibilities of coming up with a workable interpretation of a text as it stands before altering or modifying it.

Cyrus And Phanaias.

Some current Jewish scholars translate Daniel 9:25-26 essentially the same as the Revised Version translators did. They view the 70 weeks as beginning with God's decree announced in Jeremiah 29:10 in 587 BC

and take Cyrus to be the first anointed prince. They see "the Anointed One [who] will be cut off and will have nothing" (NIV) as the priesthood of AD 70. To make Daniel's numbers work out, the advocates of this interpretation use a dating system that brings the 490-year period ("70 weeks") to the time Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. They say the destruction of the temple in AD 70 has ushered in the age of Messiah. From this point on, they say, Israel had no hope but in the Messiah whom God will send to fulfill all the messianic elements Daniel described.

This viewpoint, however, raises even more problems than those considered earlier. The time span from 587 BC to AD 70 is 658 years, not 490. Furthermore, it is difficult to think of either the priesthood or the high priest of AD 70 as being God's

anointed. The last high priest was Phanias who was appointed to this position by a group of zealots after they had killed the Roman appointee Ananias. And the high priesthood during the first century was an office manipulated by the Sadducees and Romans to keep the Jewish people under control. Old Testament qualifications were not even considered. The high priests certainly were not God's appointees.

Jesus Christ. Reading the Hebrew text as it stands and beginning the 483 years of Daniel 9:25-26 with a well-documented royal decree in either 458 BC or 444 BC results in the conclusion that Daniel's 69 "weeks" ends with the date of Christ's presentation of Himself as Messiah.

Moreover, the declaration that this Messiah will be "cut off and will have nothing" (NIV) needs no manipulation

to be seen as a declaration of His crucifixion. The Hebrew word translated

The most logical conclusion is that Daniel's 69 "weeks" ends with the date of Christ's presentation of Himself as Messiah.

"cut off" refers to the execution of wrongdoers (Lev. 7:20; Ps. 37:9; Prov. 2:22). Christians believe this is most appropriate because, according to the New Testament, God made Christ "to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). Although He had never sinned, He died as a wrongdoer to pay the price for our sin. Even the method of His death (crucifixion) was that of a criminal.

Christians believe the expression “will have nothing” is an accurate representation of the fact that Jesus died without apparent followers or possessions. It seemed to onlookers that He was a dismal failure.

The Messianic Age.

But there is a problem. Even those who believe everything the New Testament says about Jesus Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection must admit that Jesus’ coming did not usher in all the blessings listed in Daniel 9:24. He did not “finish the transgression,” “make an end of sins,” “bring in everlasting righteousness,” “seal up vision and prophecy,” or “anoint the Most Holy.”

All that can be argued is that He did “make reconciliation for iniquity” by His sacrificial death. (As noted earlier, the Hebrew text carries the thought of making atonement.) By doing this,

Christians believe, He put an end to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. This concept is stated repeatedly in the New Testament books of Galatians and Hebrews. The message “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31) is offered repeatedly to all people everywhere. In that sense, Christians believe the messianic age has begun. When the Holy Spirit, accompanied by a sound of rushing wind and fiery tongues, descended upon a group of believers 10 days after Christ ascended, the apostle Peter told the crowd that had gathered:

This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

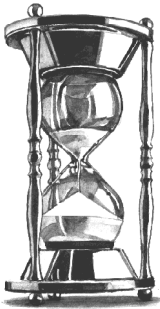
And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:16-21).

Some elements in Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) were not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. But, according to Peter, the age of the Spirit had arrived—the age that would culminate in the celestial disturbances accompanying the second coming of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Christians from the beginning have believed that the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ paid the price for sin, broke the power of death (1 Cor. 15), defeated Satan (Heb. 2:14-15), and ushered in a new age.

When will the full realization of that which Daniel predicted occur?

When will the full realization of that which Daniel predicted occur? Christians believe it will happen when Israel turns to Jesus Christ as Messiah. Remember, Daniel 9:24 opens with the words, “Seventy weeks are determined for *your* people and *your* holy city.” The 69th week has ended, but the last week has not yet begun. It is after 70 weeks that the fullness of the blessings will come.



DANIEL'S VIEW OF THE ENDTIMES (DAN. 9:26-27)

From a New Testament point of view, the term “last days” takes in the entire time period from the apostles to Christ’s second coming. From this perspective, everything in Daniel 9:26-27 that followed Messiah being “cut off” is part of the endtimes. In these verses, Daniel first described what happens after the 69th week ends but before the 70th week begins. Then he depicted the events of this 70th week.

The Destruction Of Jerusalem In AD 70.

After “Messiah the Prince” is “cut off,” the people of a coming prince will destroy Jerusalem.

After the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined (Dan. 9:26).

A new hostile prince comes into the picture. He is literally “a prince, the one coming.” The use of the article in “the one coming” suggests that this coming prince has been introduced earlier. He is undoubtedly the “little horn” of Daniel 7:8,24-26 who makes war with the saints until the Ancient of Days intervenes. He will head the restored Roman Empire in the endtimes.

His “people,” the

Romans, destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. These words in Daniel 9:26 cannot refer to Antiochus Epiphanes of the second century BC, because he destroyed neither the city of Jerusalem nor the temple.

The phrase “the end will come like a flood” (NIV) perhaps points to both the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the end of the age. It will come suddenly and overwhelmingly. Until that end comes, wars will mark human history. And “desolation,” especially in relation to Daniel’s people and his city, will continue.

What desolation? Eric Sauer points out that 1.1 million Jews were killed in AD 70; 500,000 killed in AD 132-134; 1,200 killed in Rhineland, Germany, in AD 1096; 100,000 killed in Bavaria and Austria in AD 1298; 400,000 killed during the Russian-Polish-Swedish war in 1648-1658; and 4 to 6 million killed in Nazi

Germany between 1935 and 1945. And no one knows how much suffering lies ahead for the people the prophet Zechariah called “the apple of His eye” (2:8).

The Antichrist In The 70th Week. The 70th week will begin when someone with authority will make a binding commitment with a group of people called “the many.” After 3½ years he will break his agreement. This will be accompanied by some kind of sacrilege. But in the end, the person who breaks the treaty and engages in this abomination will meet his doom.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is

poured out on the desolate (Dan. 9:27).

It seems obvious that this 70th week does not immediately follow the 69th week. The time period of 7 weeks plus 62 weeks extends from the decree to restore Jerusalem to “Messiah the Prince” (v.25). It is *after* this time period of 49 years plus 434 years that the Messiah is “cut off,” and the city and sanctuary are destroyed. No time spans are given for these events, which are both well-attested historically. Moreover, to view verse 27 as taking us back to the Messiah who was “cut off” doesn’t work out very well. Jesus did not make a covenant. And He wasn’t the kind of man who would make a 7-year covenant and then break it.

Since the events described in verse 27 cannot be tied in with the time of Christ’s crucifixion, the destruction of Jerusalem,

or anything that happened in the first century, the text must look to the future.

***It seems obvious
that the 70th
week does not
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the 69th week.***

The man who “shall confirm a covenant with many for one week” is undoubtedly the ruler introduced to us in verse 26 as “the prince who is to come.” As noted earlier, he is the “little horn” of Daniel 7. He will head a western confederacy of nations, the revived Roman Empire in its “ten toes” phase of Daniel 2:40-43, the “ten horned” phase of Daniel 7:24. This same individual is referred to as the “man of sin” (2 Th. 2:3), the “Antichrist” (1 Jn. 2:18), and the “beast” (Rev.

13:1-10). He will apparently pose as a friend of Israel, giving the Jewish people a sense of security and allowing them to worship in their newly rebuilt temple. Revelation 13 opens with this man receiving the adulation of all mankind. He will have unified the Western world. He will have brought order out of chaos. People will feel confidence in his goodness. It is then that he dares to drop all pretense and show himself to be Satan's henchman. He begins to blaspheme God and "make war with the saints and to overcome them" (vv.6-7). From this point on, he remains in power for 42 months before meeting his doom.

The final statement of Daniel 9:27 is difficult to translate, but the rendering in the NIV clarifies the meaning. He will "set up an abomination that causes desolation." Three New

Testament passages throw some light on these words: Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 13.

Addressing Jewish people, Jesus said, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, . . . then let those who are in Judea flee" (Mt. 24:15). It appears that the image of Antichrist will be placed in the temple and that people will be ordered to worship it. This is the abominable event that will trigger the desolation of the temple and the city of Jerusalem at the end of the age.

Paul, instructing Christian believers about the coming time of tribulation that will precede Christ's return to set up His kingdom, declared that during this period of trouble the "man of sin" will be revealed, describing him

as one “who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God and that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Th. 2:3-4).

“He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god.”

Daniel 11:36

Revelation 13 tells us that he will start a war against the saints and blaspheme God. Then his partner, the False Prophet, will make an image of the Beast (Antichrist) and demand that people worship it or die. Jesus and Paul both indicated that this outrageous blasphemy will take place in the restored Jewish temple. The devil himself as the Antifather (the dragon of Rev. 13:4), the Antichrist (the Beast), and the Antispirit (the

False Prophet) are the infernal trinity. They will attempt to make the restored Jewish temple their religious headquarters, the place where they will be worshiped.

The last words of Daniel 9:27, “until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” (NIV), indicate Anti-christ’s doom. Other Scriptures clearly declare that he will be totally and disgracefully defeated. His final series of battles and his destruction are portrayed in Daniel 11:40-45. This passage closes with the words, “Yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”

Israel’s Conversion In The 70th Week.

Daniel 9 closes, as noted above, with a summary statement about the shocking sacrilege and predetermined doom of the future world ruler the Bible calls the Beast, the man of sin, and

the Antichrist. His defeat is further described in Daniel 11:40-45. But that's not the end of the story. Daniel 12:1-3 gives a summary of what will happen to the Israelites as a nation:

At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:1-3).

“At that time” refers to the

interval between the rise of Antichrist and his destruction. During this time of great tribulation—tribulation for Israel predicted in Deuteronomy 4:30, Jeremiah 30:7, Matthew 24:21-22, and many other Bible passages—the archangel Michael will see to it that the Israelites are not annihilated. Multitudes of Jewish people will repent and believe in their Messiah. Zechariah 12 graphically depicts God's supernatural deliverance of the surviving Israelites at the close of this terrible time. He then describes the repentant nation as Messiah returns to establish His kingdom:

I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him

as one grieves for a firstborn (Zech. 12:10).

The Jewish people who still refuse to believe will be removed in judgment (Ezek. 20:33-38). Therefore, all the Israelites who go into the full blessings of the kingdom age will be true believers, people whose names appear in the book of life. All the promises in Daniel 9:24 will be realized. The prophet Isaiah portrays what will then occur:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth

the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isa. 2:2-4).

And what about the Israelites whose bodies have turned to dust? They will not be forgotten! The Christian scholar Tregelles, following earlier Jewish commentators, translated verse 2, "And many from the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake, these shall be to everlasting life; but those of the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt." The coming of God's Messiah will be a tremendous event for all the believing Israelites of all the ages!

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Are we at a crisis point in human history? Many conservative Jews and Christians believe we are. They see as highly significant the fact that Israel is often at the center of world news with her internal conflicts and her treaties with Arab neighbors. They insist that we are inevitably moving toward such internationalization that mankind is ripe for a world dictator who could easily be the Antichrist.

The Bible tells us what's ahead, but it doesn't tell us what's just ahead.

On the other hand, some Christians believe we are on the verge of a worldwide

spiritual revival. People are becoming alarmed at world conditions. Reports of spiritual awakenings in India, Africa, and countries in Central and South America support this optimistic outlook.

We believe the next event in God's prophetic program is described by the apostle Paul:

The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Th. 4:16-17).

The Scriptures indicate that this "catching up," or rapture, of those who are "in Christ" must take place before Antichrist reveals his true identity.

Paul wrote his letter to the Thessalonians in part because some of them thought they had entered the great tribulation of the endtimes. Paul assured them that they were wrong and said it would not begin until after the man of sin had been revealed (2 Th. 2:1-3). He went on to explain:

Now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way (2 Th. 2:6-7).

It's important that we see the Holy Spirit and the church together as the *restrainer* mentioned in this text. The third-person masculine pronoun suggests the Holy Spirit. As God, He is always present everywhere. He cannot be "taken out of the way." But He can leave the earth as

the *restrainer* when the Lord catches up His church to be with Himself. His departure in this sense will open the door for Antichrist to make his move.

This identification of the *restrainer* fits the context of 2 Thessalonians 2 better than any other suggested interpretation. Good reasons can be given for rejecting the idea that the *restrainer* who will be removed is the devil, an angel, or civil government. This passage of Scripture gives us solid reasons for believing that the return of Christ for His church could occur at any moment.

Believers therefore must live in healthy tension. On the one hand, we are looking for His any-moment coming for us. On the other hand, because we do not know exactly where we are in God's endtime program, we pray and work to spread the good news about Jesus

Christ. The fact that the nation of Israel is making treaties reminds us of Bible passages about the endtimes. It heightens our sense of anticipation. The news about multitudes turning to Christ throughout the world moves us to pray and give and work.

***The Bible has
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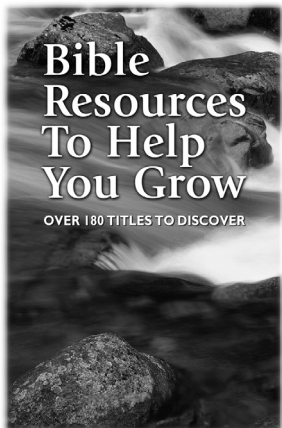
For nonbelievers, the fact that Christ could return at any moment has ominous overtones. The Bible has a solemn warning to those who have heard the gospel and have not believed. Paul declared that when the

Antichrist is revealed, it may be too late for a change of mind:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Th. 2:9-12).

Now is the time to make the decision to trust Jesus as Messiah. Tomorrow may be too late. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

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