

THE MESSIAH'S ARRIVAL REVEALED

Daniel 9

INTRODUCTION

On November 19, 1863, four months after the horrific battle at Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln delivered what many consider one of the most profound and memorable speeches ever given in American history, the Gettysburg Address. Edward Everett, the featured speaker, spoke for two hours; President Lincoln spoke for less than two minutes. Many people didn't even hear what the President said because they were moving and stretching after having sat for Mr. Everett's speech.

Yet to his credit, Mr. Everett, after hearing President Lincoln's speech, realized what Lincoln had accomplished. In a hand written note to the President Mr. Everett said, "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

There is only one photograph of President Lincoln at this event and it wasn't even of his speech because his speech concluded before the photographers had time to change film and setup a shot of the President.

One of the most profound speeches ever given in American history was a non event. The people weren't expecting it, weren't ready for it and it came and went with little more than polite applause. Most of them missed it.

The most important birth in the history of the human race was virtually a non event. The people of Israel weren't expecting it, weren't ready for it and when it came it went largely unnoticed.

But they should have been expecting it. They should have been looking for it. Their spiritual leaders should not have been taken by surprise because God had revealed the time of the Messiah's arrival. They had God's Word and specifically they had the book of Daniel, the same book of Daniel that is in your Bible. And there in the book of Daniel God had revealed the time when Messiah would come to earth

Please turn with me to Daniel chapter 9.

IN 539B.C. GOD REVEALED THE TIME OF MESSIAH'S COMING

(Daniel 9:1-2; Jeremiah 25:10-14, 29:10-14; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Leviticus 26:34-35)

Daniel was swept up in the first Babylonian deportation of Israelites out of the Promised Land in 605B.C. He was trained in the literature and language of the Babylonians and made to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. In 539B.C. the Medo-Persian empire defeated the Babylonians and Daniel was retained by King Darius to serve the Medo-Persian government. In that same year of 539B.C. Daniel was studying the book of Jeremiah when he made a most wonderful discovery:

¹In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) — ²in the first year of his reign (539B.C.), I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the

word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Daniel 9:1-2

Daniel was studying the same book of Jeremiah that's in your Bible and mine. He first read Jeremiah 25:11

¹¹This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Jeremiah 25:11

Then he read Jeremiah 29:10-14.

¹⁰“For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Jeremiah 29:10-14

70 years of captivity was not an arbitrary period of time decreed by God. In the Mosaic Law God provided a sabbatical year every seventh year during which the Israelites were to let their fields lie fallow and rest. They were to trust God to bless them with bumper crops in the sixth year that would carry them through the Sabbath year and the year following. In Israel's history, the nation failed to observe the Sabbath year 490 years or 70 cycles of 7 years. So God removed the people from the land for 70 years to give the land its rest.

The first deportations out of the Promised Land took place in 605B.C. 605B.C. minus 70 years is 535B.C. Daniel was reading these passages in Jeremiah in 539B.C. Daniel realized that the end of Israel's captivity was just three to four years away.

Daniel knew that returning to the land depended on the nation of Israel repenting as we studied in the Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). So in response to the discovery that the 70 years were almost completed, Daniel prayed a prayer of repentance on behalf of his people. Daniel's prayer is recorded in verses 3 through 19.

DANIEL EXPECTED THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM TO BE SET UP IN 535B.C.

(Daniel 9:3-23; Deuteronomy 30:1-2)

³Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. ⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.

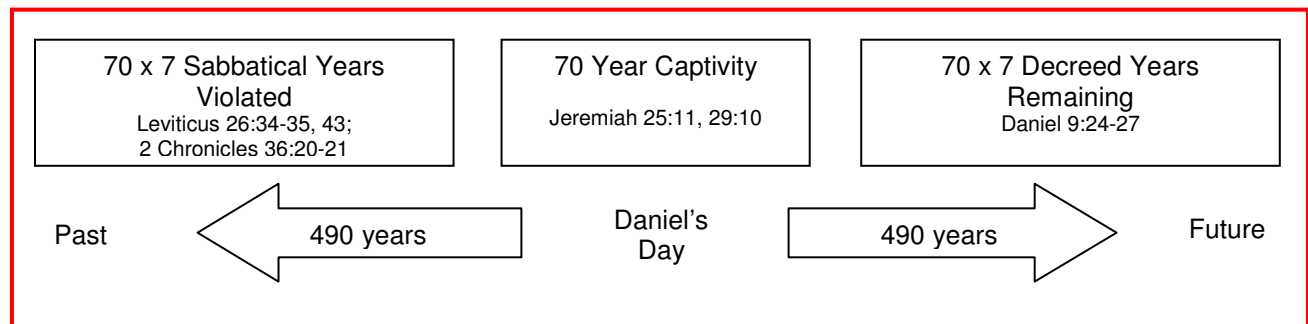
Daniel 9:3-5

Daniel's confession continues through verse 19. God actually interrupted Daniel's prayer through the arrival of the angel Gabriel.

²⁰While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel... the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. ²²He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. ²³At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

Daniel 9:20-23

Daniel was thinking that with the completion of the 70 years of Exile in 535 B.C., God was going to set up the Messianic Kingdom. But God sent the angel Gabriel to correct Daniel's misunderstanding. Using a play on words, God revealed that Messiah's Kingdom will be set up not after the seventy years of Exile, but after seventy weeks of years are fulfilled. This is a further play on the seventy weeks of sabbatical years that were ignored by Israel and for which they were punished by seventy years of captivity.



MESSIAH'S KINGDOM WILL COME AFTER SEVENTY WEEKS OF YEARS

(Daniel 9:24-27)

²⁴"Seventy weeks (sevens) are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

Daniel 9:24

The word *weeks* should be translated *sevens*. This word in Hebrew refers to a "seven" of anything. It is similar to our word "dozen". In this context it refers to a seven of years. Seventy sevens of years is 490 years. Now, because the ESV uses *weeks*, I will use the term *weeks*. But you understand that a week in this context is seven years.

Gabriel revealed to Daniel that the Messiah's Kingdom will be set up after a period of seventy weeks of years; a period of 490 years. Gabriel also explained to Daniel that when those 490 years are completed, six things will have been accomplished.

The Purpose of the Seventy Weeks

to finish the transgression,

The *transgression* is the nation of Israel's rejection of Messiah (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). When the seventy weeks are complete, Israel will accept Jesus as Messiah and their transgression of rejection will be brought to an end.

to put an end to sin,

To put an end literally means *to seal up*. The word *sin* refers to sins of daily life. When the seventy weeks are fulfilled Israel will cease to sin against God in her daily life. (cf. Ezekiel 36:26-29).

to atone for iniquity,

By the completion of the seventy weeks, a sacrifice will have been made with the power to forgive Israel's iniquities. This anticipates the blood sacrifice of Jesus.

to bring in everlasting righteousness,

This could be literally translated *to bring in an age of righteousness*. This refers to the Kingdom of the Messiah.

to seal both vision and prophet,

To seal means *to completely fulfill*. When the seventy weeks are fulfilled, all prophecies will be fulfilled. There will be no more visions or prophecies.

to anoint a most holy place.

This refers to the Jewish Temple. When the seventy weeks is completed, the Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem.

When we think about what we have already studied about the New Covenant we realize that these six things correspond to things promised in the New Covenant. When Messiah comes to set up His Kingdom on earth that will be the time that Israel enters the New Covenant. Messiah will set up His Kingdom when the seventy weeks are completed.

The thing we need to keep in mind is that the seventy weeks of years is divided into three blocks of time and that the seventy weeks of years are not completed in one block of time. This we will see in just a moment.

But first, we need to understand that Gabriel revealed to Daniel the start date of the seventy weeks.

THE COUNTDOWN OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS STARTED IN 444B.C.

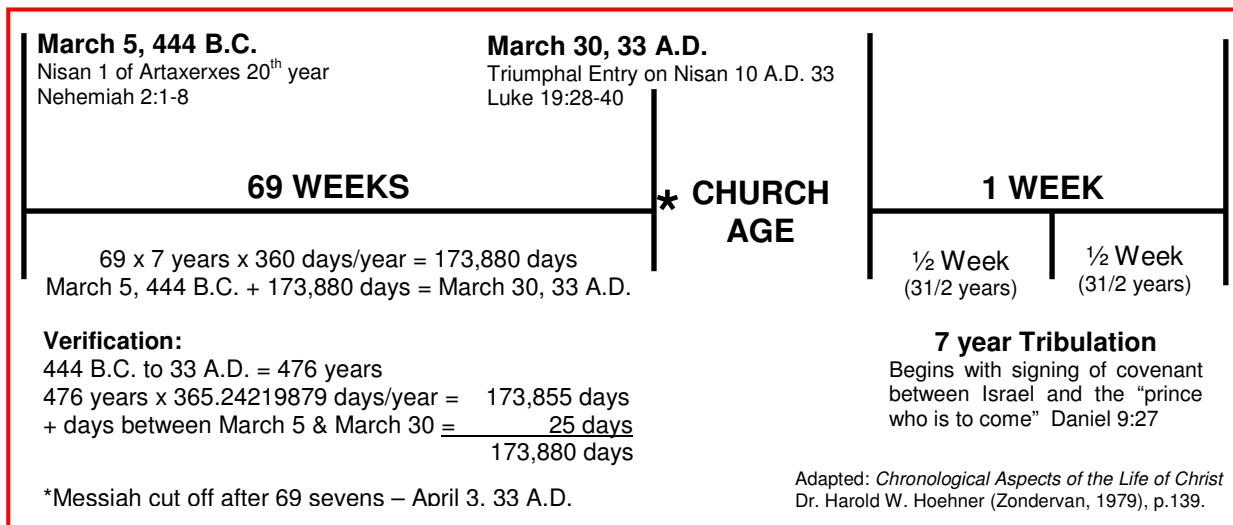
²⁵Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one (lit. Messiah), a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then (and) for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one (lit. Messiah) shall be cut off (killed) and shall have nothing.

Daniel 9:25-26a

Gabriel revealed that the start of the seventy weeks will be a decree given to restore and build Jerusalem. A decree was made in 444B.C. by the Persian King Artaxerxes that fulfills this prophecy and time sequence.

Further, Gabriel revealed that the seventy weeks is divided into three separate units: seven weeks, sixty two weeks and one week. The first two units follow one after the other and during these sixty nine weeks or 483 years, Jerusalem would be rebuilt, but in troubled times. And Gabriel made it clear that the Messiah would be on the earth during the latter years of this period because after the 483rd year, Messiah would be killed.

So, knowing that the decree was made in 444 B.C., one could calculate 483 years and arrive at a date when Messiah would be on the earth. Here is a chart that will hopefully make it a little clearer to you. Without going into detail, the Jewish calendar was reckoned according to 30 days in a month or 360 days in a year. The Jews then periodically added months to reconcile their calendar with the annual cycle of the sun.



I include this chart for those detail oriented people in our family. But the first point I want you to understand is that the nation of Israel should have been expecting, should have been on the alert, should have been on the lookout for Messiah in 1 A.D. because of the prophecy of Daniel.

Second, this prophecy of the sixty nine weeks reveals the death of the Messiah – this is a clear prophecy of the death of Jesus Christ which occurred immediately after the completion of the 483 years. The blood sacrifice of Jesus is the sacrifice that makes possible the forgiveness of the nation of Israel at the completion of the seventy weeks.

Third, you should realize that by 33 A.D., 69 of the seventy weeks had been completed. What about the final week? When will it be fulfilled?

But before we answer that question, Gabriel revealed something that would happen in the gap between the 69th week and the 70th week.

BETWEEN THE 69TH AND 70TH WEEK JERUSALEM WILL BE DESTROYED

(Daniel 9:26b; Luke 21:20-24)

26And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

Daniel 9:26

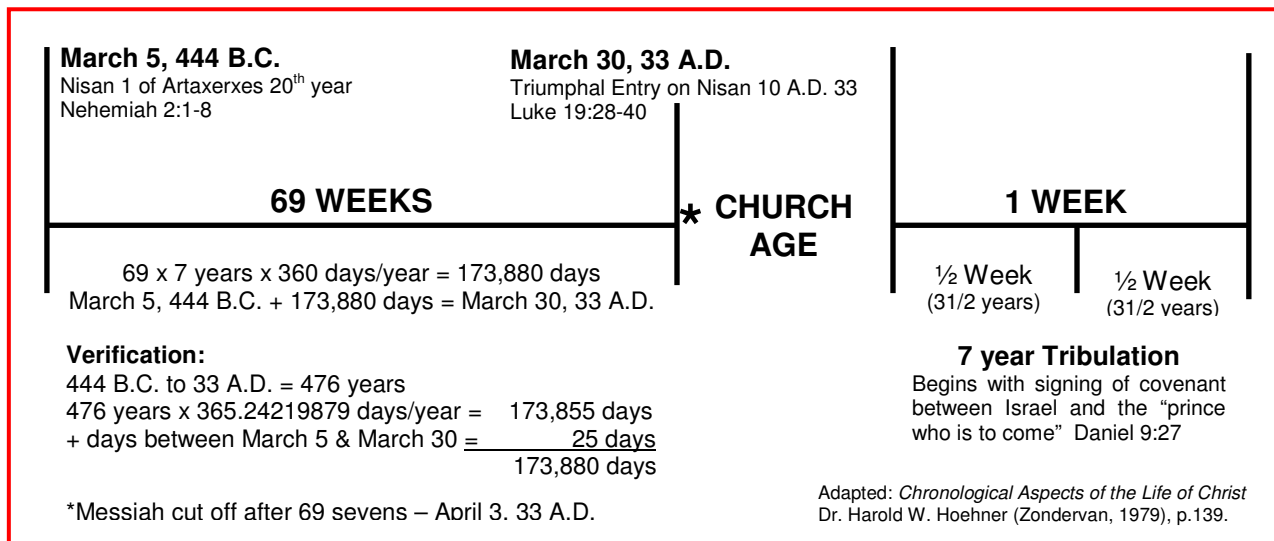
This prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was fulfilled in 70 A.D. by the Romans. This then gives us further data about the prince mentioned here: *the prince who is to come*. Since 70 A.D. we know the nationality of the prince who is to come – he will be a Roman. This *prince who is to come* is the key to the final week, the seventieth week.

THE 70TH WEEK BEGINS WHEN THE PRINCE MAKES A SEVEN YEAR (1 WEEK) COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

(Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-31)

27And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

Daniel 9:27



The seventieth week of Daniel is still future to us. It will begin when the prince who is to come signs a seven year covenant with the nation of Israel. It is this passage that informs us that the Tribulation period will be seven years long. This passage also reveals that mid way through the seven years he will violate the covenant and prohibit the making of sacrifices and giving of offerings in the Temple. This passage also informs us that either before or during the first half of the Tribulation, a Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Without going into detail, this Temple is not the one mentioned in verse 24. The Temple in verse 24 will be built and consecrated after the seventy weeks are fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

Here is the bottom line I want you to take home from this study: the nation of Israel should not have missed the first coming of Messiah; the nation of Israel should not have missed the birth of Jesus their Messiah. They had a time frame that God had revealed to them through their prophet Daniel.

And here is the take home for us: in light of the fulfillment of the first 69 weeks of this prophecy, we should not miss the second coming of Jesus. Now you may not even believe in Jesus yet, but I would challenge you to think about this prophecy. For me its persuasive evidence that the Bible is not simply a man made book. This prophecy and many others convince me that God had a hand in the writing of the Bible. Jesus Christ came 483 years after the decree was given. That could not have been contrived by man. I really encourage you to think about this and embrace that the Bible is God's Word and Jesus is the promised Messiah and the Savior of our souls.

Just as the spiritual leaders of Israel should have been on the alert for the first coming of Messiah, Jesus teaches us to be on the alert for His second coming. We should be students of prophecy and discerners of the times. After teaching about the second coming of Christ, the Apostle Paul admonished the believers in Thessalonica:

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The next prophetic event we are looking for is the Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) when Jesus comes and removes the church from the earth some time prior to the seventieth week, the Tribulation. In the New Year we will be studying the Rapture in detail. But here's the bottom line: fulfilled prophecy should motivate us to live godly lives and to live every day in expectation of the Rapture. The Rapture shouldn't catch us by surprise. The Apostle John encourages us this way:

²⁸And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

1 John 2:28