

3. WHERE IS CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

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We are on assignment to find where Jesus found himself in the OT Scriptures. Read about himself he certainly did, for he said, “**The Scriptures bear witness of me**” and, “**Moses wrote about me**” (John 5: 39, 46).

We have now reached an exciting --- and rather challenging --- part of the journey. Jesus not only believed the Danielic predictions that he was **the Son of Man** destined to rule over the kingdom of God, but also that as Messiah, first he **must suffer many things and be killed** ((Mk. 8: 31-32). As we shall see, he also read this in the Book of Daniel.

THE ANGEL GABRIEL

The only OT Book which names the angel Gabriel is Daniel. Besides Daniel, Gabriel appears only to two others --- to the father of John the Baptist, Zecharias and, to the mother of Jesus, Mary. The significance of Gabriel’s connection with these three people will appear shortly.

Although Gabriel had **the appearance of a man** (Dan. 8:15), Daniel’s reaction to his first visit was exactly as mine (and probably yours) would have been with the sudden appearance of this supernatural visitor. Daniel shook with fear and fell on his face and descended into a comatose sleep. Gabriel had to touch him, wake him up, and tell him to stand up to listen (Dan. 8:18).

No such reaction is recorded the second time Gabriel appears in chapter nine. Daniel is a little more comfortable the second time round, it seems. Gabriel has been sent from the throne-room of heaven in response to Daniel’s agonized prayers and confessions for the sorry state of God’s folks.

DANIEL 9: 24-27

Let’s take a ‘squiz’ at what are the most controversial verses in the Book of Daniel --- **Daniel 9: 24-27**. In fact, one expositor’s famous remark sums up our challenge eloquently when he writes that, **the history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks of Daniel is the Dismal Swamp of O.T. criticism.**¹

Daniel is about to hear staggering things concerning the future of his people Israel, the holy city Jerusalem and its Temple, and indeed, events concerning the last days of our planet as we know it today. He is assured that God has not abandoned His people or forgotten His promises --- even though everything is calculated to doubting that, for Israel is in exile and the City and the Temple are in ruins.

Gabriel will show Daniel the whole momentous sweep of human history right up to the time God’s universal kingdom of righteousness is ushered in. **Whether we like it or not, God’s great eschatological purposes for the entire world are bound up in Israel’s history and fortunes!**

THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF YEARS

Gabriel summarises the whole future of planet earth in the ‘famous’ prophecy of **The Seventy Weeks of Years**. We find --- and so did Jesus --- the death of the Messiah explicitly foretold by Gabriel in the **Seventy ‘sevens’** outlined in **Daniel 9: 24-27**. Let’s read what the angel Gabriel says to Daniel:

¹ Montgomery as cited in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Revised Ed., General Eds., Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, Zondervan, 1995, p168.

Seventy “weeks of years” [= 490 years] are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish 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 the most holy [the holy place or the holy one?].

Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of Messiah the Ruler there will be seven “weeks”. Then for sixty-two “weeks” it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

And after sixty-two “weeks”, a Messiah [Anointed one] shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of [another] prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: His end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. And he [the desolating prince] shall make a strong covenant with many for one “week”; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abomination shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator (Dan. 9: 24-27). ²

THE SON OF MAN WILL BE “CUT OFF”

This cryptic oracle is challenging for a number of reasons, but I will keep it down to a minimal simplicity (I hope)! To the best of my knowledge, this is the only specific prophecy stating both that the Messiah would be killed, and when exactly he would be put to death.

First, from Daniel’s perspective, this prophecy states that **after** one week of years [7 X 7= 49 years] the decree to rebuild Jerusalem will go forth. This happened under the Persian king **Artaxerxes’ I**. Then, says Gabriel, **after** a further **sixty-two weeks** of years there will arise the Messiah --- another 434 years on top.

After this 69th (sixty-ninth) **Heptad** of years the Messiah will be **cut off, and shall have nothing (vs. 26)** --- a prediction that when Messiah dies he will not have received his promised kingdom --- yet! Messiah’s death will come after Daniel’s 69th prophetic week. ³

THE SEVENTIETH WEEK

The angel Gabriel seems to indicate that the last week of the prophecy, the 70th week, is annexed or severed from the previous 69 weeks; an indeterminate hiatus will devolve before the commencement of the final 70th week, and the “Grand Finale” when **everlasting righteousness** becomes the order of the day! There has been a gulf of 2,000 years time-lapse between the 69th **heptad** and the start of the 70th week! Which is to say, the 70th week is still in the future. ⁴

During this stand-alone final “week” God is going to again work particularly with the remnant faithful nation of Israel. To use the apostle Paul’s language, there is going to come a day when God will **graft** a repentant Israel back into His end-time purposes. Israel’s present **partial hardening** will come to an end after this gap-period (called **the times of the Gentiles**) has run its course.

² The Hebrew word for “week” is *shavua*, and the Greek word *heptad* is equivalent to 7 years, hence the expression “week of years”. Some actually translate it as “seventy ‘sevens’, and ‘sixty-two ‘sevens’, etc.

³ The Hebrew word for **cut off** means “to kill” or “to put to death”.

⁴ To grasp why the final 70th week has been annexed from the previous 69 weeks a careful study of 12 (twelve) passages is required. In essence Jesus and the NT writers see the final week with its Great Tribulation and the Desolator who abominates as still unfulfilled (e.g. **Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 1-2; Rev. 17-18**). Nothing in world history or Israel’s history has yet satisfied the requirements of this 70th week, which means this last week is yet to begin. In the NT the final seven-year period concludes with the **Parousia**, the literal return of Messiah to raise the righteous dead, to deliver Israel, to destroy the Antichrist, and to claim his universal kingdom of righteousness on behalf of His Father God!

It is during this final 70th week that **the Abomination of Desolation** occurs, triggering the Great Tribulation (GT) which Jesus described as the worst period of suffering the world has ever had **from the beginning** of human history, and which **never will be again** (Matt. 24: 21).

Therefore, those commentators who do not see Daniel’s 70th week as still unfulfilled commit a critical error. For, to believe the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Roman Titus completed Daniel’s prophecy of **The 70 Weeks of Years** commits one to the incomprehensible belief that the Great Tribulation has been running ever since! That’s an impossibility given the GT lasts but 3-and-a-half years, or half way through the final 70th week of years (e.g. Rev. 11:2; 12: 6; 13:5, etc.).

Now, whilst the world has been in a general state of distress, both before and after Jerusalem’s destruction by the Romans, by no stretch of the imagination did **the sign of the Son of Man** coming in the clouds with all the mighty angels of God to **gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other**, occur (Matt. 24: 31). Even the skeptics know the simple fact that Christ has not returned, for they deride our great hope by mocking, **“Where is the promise of His coming”** (2 Peter 3: 4)? Sometimes unbelievers see clearer than the sons of light (someone else said that before me)!

Jesus did not appear to the world just **as lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west** in A.D. 70 (Matt. 24: 27). Messiah’s Millennial Kingdom was not inaugurated at that time. As **John Lennox**, Christian apologist and mathematician rightly explains,

It is obvious that the finishing of transgression and bringing in of everlasting righteousness, promised in Daniel 9:24, did not occur in AD 33, 70 or any subsequent time up to the present ... Justice is not done, the saints do not receive the kingdom, nor is everlasting righteousness brought in until the Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24: 30).⁵

Or, to use Gabriel’s language, A.D. 70 did not see **an end to sin**. Rather, it’s been exactly as Gabriel told Daniel --- and what Jesus himself said --- **even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined** (Dan. 9: 26; Matt. 24: 6-8). A.D. 70 did not **bring in everlasting righteousness** (Dan. 9: 24)!

And most definitely, by no stretch of the imagination in AD 70 was there **the resurrection of those who sleep in the dust of the earth to everlasting life** that Daniel and Jesus agree will happen **after** the Great Tribulation, **after** the **abomination of desolation** and at the appearing of Christ in his glory (Dan. 12: 1; I Thess. 4: 16f).

However, even if we stick to the many commentators who insist that Daniel’s 70th week was completed at the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the period of 490 years (**“seventy weeks of years”**) looks like this according to the Catholic theologian **Brant Pitre** :-

THE TIME OF MESSIAH’S DEATH IN DANIEL 9. ⁶

Daniel’s Prophecy	Historical Events	Dates
Going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem.	Decree to rebuild Temple by king Artaxerxes of Persia.	ca. 457 BC

Seventy weeks of years.	70 X 7 years = 490 years	457 BC - AD 33

⁵ John Lennox, *Against the Flow: The Inspiration of Daniel in an Age of Relativism*, Monarch, Oxford UK, 2015, p305
⁶ Chart taken from Brant Pitre, *The Case For Jesus: the Biblical and historical Evidence For Christ*. Image, NY, 2016, p116

Messiah will be 'cut off'.

Jesus is crucified.

ca. AD 33

City and Sanctuary destroyed. Romans destroy both.

AD 70 ⁷

John D. Lennox arrives at the same time for Christ's crucifixion by correcting the start-time for the decree by Artaxerxes I, making him issue his decree in the year 444 B.C. (Ezra 4:21) and by calculating according to the Jewish solar calendar which was almost certainly the schedule used in Daniel. ⁸ Lennox says,

Hence ... 490 minus 7 = 483 years from the decree would bring us to what we call the first half of the first century AD. In fact, it brings us to the 30's AD, which is remarkable since Daniel says that at that time an anointed one shall be cut off (Daniel 9: 26), surely this was fulfilled when Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be the anointed one (Messiah) of God, was "cut off" by being crucified in Jerusalem -- in or around AD 30. ⁹

As I have already stated, this prophecy of **The 70 Weeks of Years** is, to the best of my knowledge, the only place in Jesus' Bible where both the fact of Messiah's death and the timing of his being killed appear together. It is indeed, a remarkably specific timeline for the arrival and execution of Israel's future Messianic Ruler.

What a faith-builder this is! The OT precisely predicted that the Messiah would come and be killed around AD 30! This is exactly how the prophecy was viewed by Josephus the First Century Jewish historian in his *Antiquities*, 10.267-68;

We are convinced ... that Daniel spoke with God, for he did not only prophesy future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time at which these would come to pass.

This Messianic interpretation of Daniel 9: 24-27 has a long tradition in the church, especially from the end of the Second Century onwards. The Fourth Century historian Eusebius, writing in *The Proof of the Gospel*, 8.2.389 summarises this tradition succinctly;

We must count the numbers, that is to say the seventy weeks, which are 490 years, from the going forth of the word of answer and from the building of Jerusalem. This took place in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, King of Persia. For Nehemiah his cup-bearer made the request, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and the order went forth to carry it out ... And from that date to the coming of Christ is seventy weeks.

Daniel's prophecy clearly anticipated Christ's arrival and crucifixion in the First Century! No wonder even non-believers in Jesus of Nazareth like Josephus were over-awed at the accuracy of Daniel's predictions.

⁷ I believe commentators who follow this timeline fail to consider that the heptads should be calculated according to the Jewish lunar calendar, and not our Gregorian solar calendar. This system also accords with the Babylonian reckoning suitable to Daniel's period.

⁸ The command to rebuild Jerusalem is connected to either of two decrees made by Artaxerxes I; Either to Ezra ca 458 BC or to Nehemiah ca 445 BC. Therefore, the end of the first set of 'seven weeks' (49 years) coincides with the completion of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah in restoring Jerusalem in either 409 BC or 396 BC.

⁹ John Lennox, *Against the Flow: The Inspiration of Daniel in an Age of Relativism*, Monarch, Oxford UK, 2015, p298

BACK TO GABRIEL

I mentioned previously that Gabriel appears by name to only three persons in the entire Bible --- to Daniel, to Zecharias and to Mary. Observe the connecting dots ...

This angel appears to Daniel at **the time of the evening sacrifice (Dan. 9:21)**. Is it a coincidence that, when he next appears, Gabriel comes to Zecharias (who is the ministering priest in the Temple) **at the hour of the incense offering?** Timing in this case is instructive! Another critical prophetic announcement is about to be announced!

Gabriel stands **to the right of the altar of incense (Lk. 1: 10-11)** close to the Golden Lampstand (the Menorah). Placement also is significant, for Gabriel is probably symbolically portraying the fact that, the Messiah will be both sacrifice and light for Israel and the world! He stands there between altar and lampstand to announce that Zecharias's miracle boy is going to announce the Messiah's arrival! Gabriel tells Zecharias that he and Elizabeth will have a son who will be the forerunner of the Messiah, the Anointed one. Which is to say, Gabriel is announcing they were at the fulfilment of the 69th "week" --- right on cue!

A few months later, Gabriel next appears to Mary. He announces the miraculous birth of the long-awaited Messiah of Israel (and of the world) will be conceived by the overshadowing power of God's Spirit and the holy child **to be begotten in her will be the Son of God, the Messiah (Lk. 1:35)**. The great eschatological hour of salvation has come. God has not forgotten His promises. He has not abandoned His people. He has not forgotten the salvation of the world through Israel's Messiah! He has not forgotten the prophecy he sent Gabriel to outline for Daniel in **The Seventy Weeks of Years**.

Thus, in the Bible, Gabriel is always associated with matters of eschatology --- what the old-timers called the *denouement* of this present age. Gabriel is always associated with God's world-changing supernatural interventions into the prophetic movement of history.

COINCIDENCE?

When Zecharias doubted the word of Gabriel that he and his wife Elizabeth would parent the **forerunner** of Messiah, the angel of the LORD rebuked him, **"I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time"** (Lk. 1: 19-20).

Does failure to believe Gabriel still bring a curse of muted silence?

I wonder, I just wonder whether the church --- which by and large misses or dismisses Gabriel's message concerning God's prophetic outline of **The Seventy Weeks of Years** --- has not suffered a similar judgment to Zecharias? Has our failure to proclaim the great predictions of the Gospel message of Christ's coming universal Kingdom of everlasting righteousness --- which Christ himself also endorsed from Daniel --- muted the Spirit's power from the church's witness?

To disbelieve Gabriel, to disbelieve Daniel, is to also fail to **hold the testimony of Jesus** and is to quench his **spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19: 10)**.

How long before Daniel's final 70th week begins, we do not know. Daniel's predictions concerning the Son of Man (which Jesus loved and trusted so much) must be very near to happening. One thing is for sure, though. Jesus saw in **Daniel the prophet** his Messianic calling --- he must be killed before he would rule the world in God's kingdom of everlasting righteousness. Surely the informed and wise believer will listen to Gabriel through Daniel, too **(Matt. 24: 15)!**

