

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Timeline Unfolds

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:25-27)

Verse twenty-five distinguishes this prophecy from all other Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament in that it stipulates a specific timeline in which the Messiah, God Incarnate, would come into the world. To be valid and meaningful, a timeline must have a beginning point and an ending point. Gabriel reveals the beginning point to Daniel in Verse twenty-five.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem....

Daniel is living in the late sixth century B. C. He has just realized that God imposed a seventy year exile upon his beloved people because of their sins. Those seventy years are almost over. Soon the Jews will be released from their exile and be allowed to return to Judah.

In fact both Scripture and non-Biblical history record several edicts from Babylonian-Medo-Persian kings related to the Jews' return from this exile. Apparently the Jews found it difficult to take their release seriously at first. We find much about this era in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Some Bible students date the beginning of this prophetic timeline at Cyrus' decree. Some two hundred years or more before the Jews' release from Babylonian exile, God revealed the name and role of Cyrus to Isaiah. (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1) Based on the timeline's termination with the coming of Jesus, this date appears to be several years too early. Admittedly the task of precisely dating Old Testament events is challenging because of limited reconstruction abilities and resources. The release decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26) seems to fit the overall timeline most nearly. Generally this decree is dated around 457 B. C. Tom Constable's *Expository Notes on the Whole Bible* date the

decree at 457 B. C. If we subtract 457 from 490, the years included in Gabriel's revelation to Daniel, we have 33. Thus the climax of the four hundred ninety years from Artaxerxes' decree takes us precisely to the time of Jesus. Various dates are offered for this decree that would date the end of the four hundred ninety years from 26 A. D. to 33 A. D. If we subtract the seventieth week (the time from the command to rebuild the city "...unto Messiah the Prince..."), sixty nine weeks takes us to around 26 A. D. The beginning of Jesus' ministry is dated sometime from 26 A. D. to 30 A. D. It is therefore my belief that the Artaxerxes decree is the correct beginning date for the prophecy.

Why the various subdivisions in the sixty-nine week timeline? It would appear that the rebuilding process, once it began seriously, took at least forty nine years, the first seven weeks of the prophecy. After the rebuilding, the next prophetic event occurs at the end of the sixty-ninth week, the coming of "Messiah the Prince." "...threescore and two weeks..." (sixty two weeks) plus the first seven weeks equals sixty-nine weeks; four hundred eighty three years.

Dispensational advocates attempt to make a case that at the end of the sixty-ninth week, God's primary purpose in Jesus' First Advent was defeated and frustrated with His crucifixion, so God suspended His prophetic calendar or time line indefinitely. They refer to this interruption as a prophetic "parenthesis." In their teaching the final week of this prophecy correlates with their final week of "Great Tribulation" at the end of time. Various dispensational advocates differ widely—and vigorously—regarding when the "rapture," a term that never appears in our King James Bible, shall occur. Will the "rapture occur at the beginning of the week, at the end of the week, or in the middle of the week? They

vigorously debate this question, but seldom agree on the answer. Various dispensationalists strongly defend each option. I offer that the whole of dispensational theology errs at its roots by destroying the integrity of Gabriel's revelation in their parenthetic insertion of an extended and indefinite time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. Let me give you an example. If I had never driven from my home in Riverside, California to San Francisco, California, and I knew that you had driven the course many times, I would naturally ask you to give me some clues as to the trip. How far is it? What route should I take? How long should I schedule to make the drive? The actual distance is around five hundred miles. However, if you were to tell me that the distance is four hundred miles, what would I expect when my automobile's odometer reported that I had driven four hundred miles? Would I not naturally expect to see the city limits of San Francisco immediately ahead of me? What would be my reaction when, at the four hundred mile marker, I saw only orchards and crops in the San Joaquin Valley, with a mileage marker ahead of me reporting that San Francisco lies yet another hundred miles ahead of me? Would I not question your facts? And well I should. Would you restore my confidence if you responded that you did not include a distance "parenthesis" for the last hundred miles? Hardly! The measure of time or of distance must be sequential and inclusive, or we destroy the integrity of the measurement. Dispensational advocates of this prophecy wholly destroy the integrity of Gabriel's prophecy with their theoretical "parenthesis" of unmeasured time before we arrive at the seventieth week.

The internal evidence in the prophecy for inclusion of the seventieth week in chronological sequence with the first sixty-nine is substantial. Consider the following:

1. *And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself....* Gabriel does not tell Daniel that Messiah is to be "cut off," a rather clear reference to the crucifixion, at the end of the sixty-ninth week, but rather "**after**" the sixty-ninth week. Thus sometime in the seventieth week we should expect to see a record of Jesus' crucifixion.
2. *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week....* Ah, in a prophecy of seventy weeks—and sixty-nine have already been accounted for, we should be logically and reasonably looking for an accounting of the seventieth or final week. Here it is. It is a week in which "he," a rather likely reference to Messiah, since Messiah, not the dispensationalist's antichrist, is the central

figure in this prophecy, shall confirm His covenant with many.

3. *...and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease....* Precisely in the middle of the seventieth week, "he," again a logical and reasonable reference to Messiah, the central figure in the prophecy, causes Jewish sacrifices to cease, to end. What happened in the temple in Jerusalem that precisely coincided with Jesus' death on the cross just outside the city? Both Matthew and Mark report a common event.

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.... (Matthew 27:51)

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. (Mark 15:38)

Once the temple veil that hide the priestly work in the inner sanctuary was torn apart, the priest could no longer attend to the sacrifices that had occurred there.¹ Further, once Jesus, God's one and only true "Lamb" who was to take away the sins of His people by one sacrifice, had performed His sacrificial (both priestly and sacrificial lamb) offering, any subsequent pretense of animal sacrifices in the temple would be a meaningless farce.

4. By John's inspired account of the number of annual feasts Jesus attended during His public ministry, we gain a rather clear indication that Jesus' public ministry covered approximately three and a half years. Let's see if we have this all together. Jesus confirms His covenant in His personal ministry for three and a half years. "After" the sixty-ninth week and in the precise middle of the seventieth week, Jesus dies for our sins, causing the Old Testament Jewish symbolic sacrifices to cease. And through the testimony of the apostles to the Jewish people for the next three and a half years, the covenant is in fact confirmed for the full prophetic seventieth week in immediate sequence to the other sixty-nine weeks of Gabriel's prophecy.

¹ In fact the Jews continued their animal sacrifices until the Romans desecrated and destroyed the temple in 70 A. D. However, the greater question relates to when God ceased to recognize those sacrifices. Why would God honor such sacrifices when the sinless Lamb of God to whom they pointed had already made His personal sacrifice? Once Jesus died for our sins those sacrifices were meaningless; so far as pleasing God is concerned they ceased.

Further, if we look back at the six prophetic accomplishments that were to mark this seventy week prophecy, they all are accomplished in Jesus' coming, death and resurrection. We have no Biblical, prophetic, or logical need to stretch the prophetic calendar to the breaking point—or to stretch it at all for that matter. Everything Gabriel prophesied was accomplished exactly as he indicated within the prophetic four hundred ninety years of the prophecy.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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