

## Chapter 7

### God's Timetable

God isn't finished with Israel, although there have been many times in her long history where a casual glance might have led someone to that conclusion. During one of these times, a bright young man of noble lineage named Daniel had been carried off to Babylon from his home in Jerusalem, never to return. Daniel's faith and courage during his long and illustrious career as a high ranking civil servant—one of the "wise men" of Babylon—singled him out as a man God could trust to receive the most sweeping prophecies in the entire Hebrew Bible. What Yahweh told him would prove to be the key to the chronology of God—His timetable for the whole human race.

In 538 B.C., sixty-seven years after he had been hauled off as a prize of war, Daniel realized that the prophet Jeremiah had predicted (in Jeremiah 25:11) that Judah would serve the king of Babylon for only seventy years—the time of her punishment was nearly over. Naturally, being a man of God and a "wise man" to boot, Daniel began to pray that God would fulfill his promise. (There's a lesson in there for us: if you want your prayer answered, pray for what you know God wants.) God had every intention of keeping His word, but He gave Daniel a bit more than he bargained for. We pick up the story in the ninth chapter:

**"Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Yahweh my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:**

**"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." (Daniel 9:20-24)**

Gabriel had just turned on the information fire hose. If we're going to drink it in, we'll need to slow it down to a trickle. First, what does "seventy weeks" mean? A "week" is literally a "seven." It could be seven days or seven years. The context is the key, and the context here clearly indicates that a seven-year "week" is meant. (Seventy weeks of days is only sixteen months, not nearly enough time for the fulfillment of the whole prophecy. And elsewhere when Daniel means a

week of seven days, he spells it out, as in 10:2, “three weeks of days.”) “Seventy weeks” is therefore seventy seven-year periods, or 490 years.

A year, by the way, would have been reckoned by Daniel to be an even 360 days—twelve months of 30 days each—not the 365.24219879 days we know and love. The Babylonians and their “guests” actually observed two calendars, a complicated lunar based model, which added seven intercalary months every nineteen years to adjust for the shifting seasons, and this 360-day schematic version, which compensated by adding five days at the end. Don’t think of them as naïve and backward for this practice. They were quite aware that the real year was about 365¼ days long. But these calendars made far more practical sense in the days before sophisticated mathematics, precise methods of measuring the sun’s path, and robust means of communicating what had been observed. With a lunar system, everyone had a reliable way to periodically “set their clocks”—since a lunar cycle took 29.53 days to complete, every new moon marked a new “moonth.” But in practice, the 360-day civil calendar was easier to use and communicate.

More to the point, Yahweh (who is always more precise in His use of terminology than we are) never actually used the term “year” to describe the duration being described. He referred to them as “times,” and called seven of them a “seven,” but the Hebrew word for “year” (*shannah*) does not appear. It’s merely a convenient (though inaccurate) way to express “360 days.”

“Your people” meant Israel, and “your holy city” meant Jerusalem. Although Daniel had spent his entire adult life in Babylonian society, he never lost sight of who he was—one of God’s chosen. He personified the pilgrim mentality that Yahweh wanted in his people.

The sledding gets heavier with the phrase “finish the transgression.” The breaking of God’s law was why Israel had been removed from the land of promise in the first place. It was the reason Daniel was here on his knees, begging for God’s mercy and restoration. Was Gabe telling him that there would someday be no more such transgression, that the apostasy of his people would have seen its last day? It must have seemed too good to be true.

“To make an end of sins” went even farther. Who could imagine a world—or even a nation—without sin? The Levitical sacrifices had been instituted to temporarily cover over the sins of the people, but *this* would require something more substantial, something permanent, something universal. Besides, the temple had been destroyed—almost fifty years ago now. Israel couldn’t have made sacrifices to atone for their sins if they wanted to. No, this would have to be something bigger than all that: this would have to be Yahweh’s doing.

**“To make reconciliation for iniquity.”** By this time, Daniel’s head must have been swimming. This was the one thing most desired by fallen man (or at least it should have been)—reconciliation with God, erasing the curse that had come upon us because of our sin. Perhaps Daniel thought back to Yahweh’s promise to Abraham: “In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” How could this be? What would God do? Whatever it was, it would happen within this 490-year period.

**“To bring in everlasting righteousness.”** Yes, that would follow our reconciliation, wouldn’t it? Daniel’s heart must have leapt at the word “everlasting.” It meant that once God had achieved his purpose, we would never again fall into sin. That implied that we would be fundamentally different than we are now—no more these frail, mortal creatures who can’t seem to make it through the day without grieving our Maker, but sinless, immortal beings walking in complete harmony with God and man. If there’s a Chaldean word for “wow,” he must have said it.

**“To seal up vision and prophecy.”** *Okay*, he must have thought. *At least this is familiar ground.* Daniel had been receiving visions and interpreting prophetic dreams since he was a young man. Gabriel was telling him that everything he had foreseen would come to fruition. For that matter, everything that had been seen by *all* of God’s prophets would come to pass; all of the dreams and visions, all of the one-on-one revelations, the types, the metaphors, the dress rehearsals—they would all be fulfilled when these last 490 years of Israel’s future history were finished.

**“And to anoint the Most Holy.”** This “Anointed One,” or Messiah, would be the great king who had been prophesied to reign forever from the throne of David. Daniel would have been quite familiar with his people’s expectations of this man, for his lineage and character had been prophesied. The time of His coming, however, had not.

Gabriel’s message continues: **“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.”** (Daniel 9:25) The word for “Prince” (Hebrew: *nagiyd*), stresses the aspect of command, whether civil, military, or religious. The root of this word, *nagad*, means to “stand boldly out opposite—to manifest, expose, predict, explain, or praise....” It’s not a stretch, then, to describe Messiah the Prince as a bold commander and prophet, anointed by Yahweh to be the manifestation of His power.

Daniel 9:25 is a passage that drives the skeptics nuts. It pinpoints the starting date of the “seventy weeks” period, and it specifies a length of time that is to pass before Messiah, “the Prince,” is to appear. As we’ll see in a moment, the

prediction is so precise and verifiable, it *requires* a miraculous knowledge of future events. Critics of the Book of Daniel have tried for years to establish a date of its writing hundreds of years after his death. Its plethora of specific and detailed prophecies about the times of the gentiles—prophecies that were fulfilled to the letter—prove that Yahweh’s knowledge transcends time, and/or that His ability and willingness to manipulate world events transcends the power of mortal man. And that makes their unbelief look foolish (which it is). So they usually suggest a date after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.). But the Talmud supports authorship by the historical sixth-century Daniel. And, unfortunately for them, there’s the little matter of the Septuagint: the Old Covenant scriptures were translated into Greek in Alexandria around 275 B.C. It’s hard to translate something that hasn’t been written yet.

Also, late second century B.C. fragments of Daniel have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QDan<sup>c</sup>-4Q114)—making second-century authorship highly unlikely. But even if the book *had* been written in the second century B.C., it wouldn’t help the case of the anti-prophecy critics in the case of the passage at hand, Daniel 9. This prophecy’s fulfillment occurred well into the first century A.D.

The chronology works out like this. The starting gun was a “command to restore and build Jerusalem.” This is not the edict of Cyrus (who had merely authorized the rebuilding of the temple) which was made in the same year as Daniel’s vision, but rather the proclamation of Artaxerxes Longimanus almost a hundred years later: “**And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I [Nehemiah] took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.’ So I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, ‘May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?’ Then the king said to me, ‘What do you request?’ So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, ‘If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.’ Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), ‘How long will your journey be? And when will you return?’ So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.**” (Nehemiah 2:1-6)

Most scholars (including the esteemed Sir Robert Anderson, whom I believe was the first to calculate this) peg the twentieth year of Artaxerxes at 445 B.C. It’s simple arithmetic. His father, Xerxes (a.k.a. Ahasuerus, husband of Queen Esther) died in 465; add twenty years to that and you come to 445. But they fail to take into account the little drama that transpired following the death (okay, *murder*) of Xerxes. The king had been killed in his sleep by an ambitious fellow named

Artabanus, the king's vizier or bodyguard, who also (according to Aristotle) killed the heir apparent, Darius. Another royal son, Hustapis, was out of the country, safe for the moment. That left Artaxerxes, a mere teenager at the time. Artabanus left him alive, figuring he could rule through him as regent. Then, seven months later, he changed his mind and tried to kill him, too. But as luck would have it, the lad killed Artabanus instead. Hustapis showed up shortly thereafter and tried to claim the throne, so Artaxerxes killed him as well. These guys needed a Constitution in the worst way. Anyway, all this maneuvering took the better part of a year: thus Artie apparently wasn't able to assume the throne until 464. That would make the starting date of Daniel's prophecy the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan, 444 B.C.

From this date, we must count "**seven weeks and sixty two weeks.**" That is, there would be forty-nine years until Jerusalem's "street and wall" were built, "**even in troublesome times**"—the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah relate just how troublesome they were—and another 434 years, or 483 years total, "**until Messiah the Prince.**" 483 years times 360 days—the length of the Hebrew prophetic year—comes out to 173,880 days, or 476 solar years and 25 days inclusive, i.e., to the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, or March 28, A.D. 33. And on March 28, A.D. 33, if my calculations are correct, Yahshua of Nazareth rode into Jerusalem on a donkey amid the adulation of a teeming throng of Jewish worshipers in town for the Passover holiday. Messiah the Prince had come.

God's Passover lamb had entered the household of Israel, just as the Torah required. Four days later, on April 1<sup>st</sup> (or the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Passover) that is, immediately "**after the sixty-two weeks,**" Yahshua was "**cut off, but not for Himself,**" a polite euphemism for being scourged within an inch of his life with a Roman flagrum, crowned with a wreath of cruel thorns, mocked, spat upon, crucified, and placed cold and dead into a borrowed tomb—though he was guilty of no crime. David had seen it: "**Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully. Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it.**" (Psalm 69:4)

Confirmation of the A.D. 33 date comes from several sources. First, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan fell on a Friday in 33 on the Julian calendar, but on a Monday in 32, a poor fit for the Gospels' chronology. Second, there was a lunar eclipse on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 33, the very time of Christ's crucifixion. All three synoptic Gospel writers recorded it. "**Now from the sixth hour [noon] to the ninth hour there was a darkness over the land.**" (Matthew 27:45) An ordinary eclipse, of course, can't account for three hours of darkness but it's a significant sign nevertheless. And then there's the matter of the letter written by Pontius Pilate explaining to the Emperor why he crucified Yahshua of Nazareth. The letter, now in the British Museum, is dated "The 5<sup>th</sup> of the calends of April," *calends* referring to the beginning of a month. If the crucifixion took place in A.D. 33, the letter was

written on the first Tuesday after the event. But in 32, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan fell on April 12—seven days *after* the procurator wrote his letter. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that Daniel’s first 69 weeks fell between 444 B.C. and A.D. 33.

There is a gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks. We know this because several events are predicted to occur between the two periods. First is the “cutting off” of the Messiah. And the passage continues: **“And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with [or like] a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.”** (Daniel 9:26) This must have knocked the wind out of Daniel’s sails. He had been praying that the city and sanctuary would be restored. God, through Gabriel, is stating here that they will be, only to be destroyed a second time!

Remember, this is a continuation of the thought, **“Messiah will be cut off....”** There is a causal relationship between the two events. It’s not hard to figure out who “the people” who would trash Jerusalem are, of course. The Romans under Titus pummeled their rebellious province of Judea, starting in 67 A.D., capping their achievement with the sacking of the besieged and starving Jerusalem in 70. As Yahshua had predicted, not one stone of the temple was left upon another—the Roman soldiers completely dismantled the magnificent building looking for gold. (**“The prince who is to come”** is a character who will have a major role in events still future; we’ll talk about him later.)

The phrase, **“Till the end of the war desolations are determined,”** brings tears to my eyes. You see, the war should have ended with the fall of Jerusalem. There were no longer any meaningful targets in all of Judea. But 967 diehard Zealot rebels holed up in Herod’s Dead Sea retreat, Masada, and the Romans under Flavius Silva, who refused on principle to let it go, spent seven months and hundreds of thousands of man-hours of Jewish slave labor building an earthen ramp through a gorge so they could storm the virtually impregnable fortress. But on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (The Feast of Unleavened Bread), 73 A.D., the night before the Romans finally breached the wall, all of the Jewish defenders—all except one woman who lived to tell the tale—committed mass suicide rather than submitting to the Romans. They destroyed everything of intrinsic value, leaving the Romans nothing to loot, but left untouched enough food and water to hold out for several years, their mute testimony to the Romans of what the Zealot leader, Elazar Ben-Yair had written: “It will bear witness when we are dead to the fact that we perished not through want but because, as we resolved at the beginning, we chose death rather than slavery.” The Jewish defenders were passionate and courageous, but the prophecy had been written: **“Till the end of the war desolations are determined.”**

\*\*\*

Sixty-nine of the seventy weeks are thus accounted for. There is but one seven-year era left in which to complete the amazing list of events in Daniel's prophecy. The revelation goes on to describe events within this 70<sup>th</sup> week, and we will address them in due course, for they are still future. The gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks is *outside* the time period Gabriel told Daniel had been **"determined for your people and your holy city."** In other words, God is not specifically dealing with the nation of Israel or with Jerusalem at this time, and has not been doing so for the past two millennia or so. He hasn't forgotten about them, but this is not their time. "Their time" will begin again when this final "week" commences.

If you will recall from chapter 3, the Talmud predicted that the third two-thousand-year slice of human history—this same chunk of time we've been discussing, the gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week—would be the age of Messiah. And indeed, the called-out assembly of those who recognize Yahshua as their Messiah have been God's focus during this time. But the whole Daniel 9 prophecy is about this same personality, "Messiah the prince." The Jews by Daniel's time had well-defined expectations of who this Messiah, the Anointed One, would be.

When John the Baptist was asked, **"Are you the prophet?"** (John 1:21) his questioners were referring to a prophecy from Moses: **"Yahweh your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of Yahweh your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'** And Yahweh said to me: **'What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.'**" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19) Experiencing the glory of Yahweh had been too much for the elders of Israel. God knew that only a Man could communicate with them in terms they could comprehend. Here He predicts that this Man would be a Jew, a prophet like Moses, who would speak the words of Yahweh. "The Prophet" would turn out to be the same person as "the Messiah," though this was still being debated in Yahshua's day. John was not "the Prophet," and he said so. Yahshua was.

The Jews no doubt missed it, but when Moses asked God to choose a man to lead Israel after him, His answer was prophetic of the Messiah: **"Then Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying: 'Let Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of Yahweh may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.'** And Yahweh said to Moses: **'Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in**

**whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him...."** (Numbers 27:15-18) Many people know that "Joshua" is the same name as Yahshua, the Anglicized "Jesus." What's interesting here is Joshua's *father's* name: Nun means "perpetual." In effect, the Spirit-filled man to be "set over the congregation," who would be their leader and shepherd, would be called Yahshua—which means Yahweh is Salvation—Son of the Everlasting.

Moses wasn't through with the subtle prophecies. When blessing the people near the end of his life, he addressed the tribe of Judah: **"Hear, Yahweh, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people; Let his hands be sufficient for him, and may You be a help against his enemies."** (Deuteronomy 33:7) Messiah's established lineage from the house of Judah (cf. Genesis 49:10) is in view here. Moses was imploring Yahweh to bring the *Messiah* to his people.

Messiah was expected to come from Judah's royal line, the family of David: **"Yahweh tells you that He will make you [David] a house [a royal dynasty]. 'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.... And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.'"** (II Samuel 7:11-12, 16; cf. I Chronicles 17:1-15) Thus he was to be both a prophet (like Moses) and a king (like David). The length of His reign was unprecedented: it would last "forever." He was also to be a priest, but not of the order of Aaron, for that would have required Him to be of the tribe of Levi, not Judah. But David wrote of Him, **"Yahweh has sworn, and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'"** (Psalm 110:4) This too was something unique: no one had ever been a prophet, priest, *and* king.

What would His reign be like? David's dying words were, **"When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth."** (II Samuel 23:3-4 NIV) Would Messiah be any less righteous, any less kind to His people? No. The Jews expected someone just like David had described.

Benaiah predicted to Solomon that Messiah's reign would be one of peace, in contrast to the bloodshed wrought by his father's enemies: **"Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from Yahweh.... The king said moreover to Shimei, 'You know, as your heart acknowledges, all the wickedness that you did to my father David; therefore Yahweh will return your wickedness on your own head. But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before Yahweh forever.'"** (I Kings 2:33, 44-45) The first-century Jews who longed for a warrior-prince Messiah to rid them of the Roman scourge (as Bar Kochba tried to do a hundred years later) should have

read this passage. Once Yahshua has taken the throne of Israel, His will be a reign of peace.

The length of Messiah's reign, described here as "forever," was restated in dozens of places, such as Psalm 89:3-4: **"I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'" Or, "For thus says Yahweh: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.'" (Jeremiah 33:17)**

Daniel was no doubt quite familiar with the writings of the prophet Isaiah, who lived about 150 years before his time. Isaiah's Messianic revelations went well beyond lineage and length of reign. They delved into the very personality of the Holy One. **"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law."** (Isaiah 42:1-4) Here is a picture of a gentle, quiet man, One who didn't have to file an environmental impact report every time He opened His mouth. He would nonetheless succeed in bringing justice to the whole world, especially to the gentiles. The Jews, presuming this would entail harsh punishments for their oppressors, probably liked that line a lot. They failed to realize that justice for the gentiles included mercy for those who turned to God, believing in and accepting Yahshua's offer of redemption. This explains why so many Jews had trouble with the concept of gentiles in the congregation of Yahweh.

Isaiah, speaking for the Messiah, went on to say, **"The Spirit of Yahweh is upon Me, Because Yahweh has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that He may be glorified."** (Isaiah 61:1-3) Here is a picture of the Anointed One, filled with God's Spirit, offering salvation and healing to the poor in spirit, replacing all the bad things in their lives with wonderful gifts from the hand of God. But in the same breath he warns of a coming day of judgment, and it's the same Person dishing out the comfort and the vengeance. If you'll recall, Yahshua applied this prophecy to His own first-century advent, but He cut off the text at **"the acceptable year of Yahweh."** Everything else, beginning with vengeance, is on *our* horizon.

For sheer prophetic clarity, you can't beat Isaiah's sweeping description of the Messiah: **"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon**

**His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor [or wonderful Counselor], Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of The Lord of hosts will perform this.”** (Isaiah 9:6-7) Notwithstanding the usual disconcerting prophetic convention of lumping widely separated manifestations into the same sentence, this is without doubt the most significant Messianic prophecy in the entire Bible. First, it confirms that He will be human, born into the world as a child, a son, and a physical heir to the throne of David. For all practical purposes, the first-century advent aspect of this prophecy ends there. No one has been able to demonstrate his royal Jewish lineage since the Temple genealogical records were destroyed in 70 A.D. And no one other than Yahshua of Nazareth has ever emerged as a plausible candidate for the job—never mind Bar Kochba and a plethora of others who gathered followers to themselves for a short time. Yahshua has no qualified historical rivals. If there were any, the skeptics would have found them by now.

The yet-to-be-fulfilled part is where Isaiah’s prophecy really gets interesting. Daniel’s understanding of who Messiah would be had to have been shaped by this passage. We could surmise that His being called Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace, as well as His role as the eternal King reigning upon David’s throne, were all confirmations of earlier revelations. But when Isaiah states that He will be “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father,” and in the same breath says that He will come as a child, we have a whole new paradigm (though Messiah’s deity becomes somewhat more apparent through Yahweh’s choice of words in the original Hebrew text). This is Emmanuel, God with us.

Remember Daniel 9:24? **“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.”** The only way any of this could happen would be for God Himself to enter human history. He did—and He will again. Finishing the job will take only seven more years....

\*\*\*

We now have a pretty good idea of God’s timetable for the Jews: sixty-nine weeks down, one week to go. But what does He have in mind for the gentiles, who, after all, comprise 99.8% of the world’s population? As it turns out, Daniel was shown the broad sweep of gentile progress as well. Much of what he was shown is now history, prophecies that proved so detailed and accurate that armies

of liberal scholars felt compelled to label his book a fraud. Though they're a fascinating study, most are beyond the scope of this book. But some of his revelations spill over into events and situations yet future to us.

When we speak of "the times of the gentiles," it should be understood that the Bible does not concern itself with all of human history, but only that portion of it that bears directly upon the unfolding of God's plan of redemption. For all practical purposes, that means restricting the revelations to events that affect the Jews—Yahweh's vehicle for our salvation. Thus what happened (or will happen) in East Asia or South America has little bearing on the subject. It's not that God doesn't know or care about Japan, it's just that the Japanese don't play a pivotal role in this particular human drama.

By the same token, nations and peoples who interacted with the Jews receive a lot more Biblical "press" than their intrinsic significance might indicate. Who cares what the Babylonians, Canaanites, or Moabites did, anyway? Yahweh does, because their influence compromised the Jews' relationship with Him. As we look at Daniel's visions of the gentile kingdoms, then, bear in mind that the nations he "saw" all conquered and occupied Jerusalem, each in its turn.

Daniel's first brush with the times of the gentiles was a little bumpy. It all started when Arioch, Captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, came to him and announced, "Sorry, kid. You're one of the king's wise men, so I've got to kill you." *Excuse Me?* "Yeah, the king had this dream, and nobody could tell him what it was all about, so I'm supposed to chop you up in little pieces and burn your house down. No offense." *None taken. But what was that part about a dream? My God knows all about this stuff, Ari. Shoot, He probably gave him the dream in the first place. Gimme a couple days, and I'll ask Him.*

Okay, that's a paraphrase. The whole story is in Daniel, chapter 2. We'll pick up the narrative where young Daniel is making his subsequent appearance before the most powerful man on earth: "The king answered and said to Daniel, whose [Babylonian] name was Belteshazzar, 'Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?' Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, 'The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these'....

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became

like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” (Daniel 2:26-28, 31-35)

We aren’t told if the king couldn’t remember the dream or was merely being wiser than his wise men. I suspect it was the latter. After all, anybody can come up with an interpretation for a dream (even one as weird as this), but it can really be hard to verify his assessment. Seeing the contents of another man’s dreams, however, requires some divine help, which Daniel had and Nebuchadnezzar needed. Remember, too, that this was a politically charged situation. If the dream meant bad news for the king, the seer could lose his head even if he told the truth. Fortunately for Daniel, the king could feel good about this one. Notice how deftly Daniel stroked the king’s ego while ascribing none of Yahweh’s glory to him: **“This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.”** (Daniel 2:36-39) *Good news, bad news, Nebuchadnezzar. Yes, you’re the top guy now, but your kingdom won’t last forever. It will be followed by a string of others that will be progressively inferior to yours. Go figure.*

We needn’t be thrown off by the phrase “rule over all the earth,” something none of the kingdoms being referred to literally achieved—something *no* earthly kingdom has ever achieved (yet). The word for “earth” is the Chaldean *ara*, equivalent to the Hebrew *eretz*, which can mean country, earth, field, ground, land, wilderness, or world. It doesn’t necessarily mean this planet.

Daniel didn’t know who some of these nations would be—yet. In subsequent visions, he would be given detailed information about most of them, but for now he just saw trends, symbolized by a succession of metals, each less valuable but greater in strength than the one that preceded it. The first kingdom, the head of gold, was identified as Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon. In a later vision, Daniel described it like this: **“I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.”** (Daniel 7:2-4) Whereas “the land” is often a symbol of Israel, “the sea” is a common Biblical metaphor for the gentile world. The word for “wind,” the Chaldean *ruwach*, can mean mind, spirit, or wind. The implication can be drawn that the “winds of heaven” are metaphorical of the mind or Spirit of God—in other words, Yahweh has stirred up these “beasts,” these

gentile nations, for His own divine purposes. Babylon, the first beast, was strong like a lion and swift like an eagle, but its wings were clipped and it had a change of heart when its greatest king was humbled by God and incapacitated by a seven-year period of insanity. The story is recounted in the fourth chapter of Daniel. Holding Nebuchadnezzar's vacant throne open during his time of madness stands as one of the great political achievements of human history—this *must* have been the head of gold.

The second kingdom, represented by the statue's chest and arms of silver, was that of the Medes and Persians, who conquered Babylon in Daniel's lifetime. It, too was described in a later vision: **"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'"** (Daniel 7:5) Later still, a third vision revealed more about the second kingdom: **"Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great."** (Daniel 8:3-4) The Persians gained ascendancy over their allies the Medes, hence they were the side that was "raised up," and the second horn which grew higher. The three ribs in the Bear's mouth probably refer to their most significant conquests, Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylonia (539), and Egypt (in 525).

The third kingdom, seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the statue's belly and thighs of bronze, would prove to be Greece under Alexander of Macedon. **"After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it."** (Daniel 7:6) Dealing with the symbols, we observe that leopards are swift and deadly hunters. This one was made even more so by virtue of his four wings and four heads—a reference to Alexander's four generals, Lysimachus, Cassander, Ptolemy, and Seleucus.

These men are also referred to in Daniel's later vision: **"And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns [Media and Persia], which I had seen standing beside the river [Ulai], and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven."** (Daniel 8:5-8) All these horns symbolize power. The floating goat with the horn of note seen trampling Media-Persia is obviously Greece. The large horn is

Alexander, whose conquest was indeed “sudden.” And the four replacement horns are again his four generals, who split up the conquered lands between them after Alexander’s death.

Before you get all impressed with my brilliant scholarship, I’ve got a confession to make: Late in Daniel’s life, Gabriel and another angel specifically told him who the second and third kingdoms were going to be. Media/Persia, the second kingdom, and Greece, the third, were peoples Daniel would have been quite familiar with, considering his office as a Chaldean Wise Man. But the prophecy came in “the third year of Belshazzar’s reign,” i.e., 551 B.C, fully twelve years before the fall of Babylon, when the very idea would have sounded preposterous: **“Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, ‘Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be. The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.”** (Daniel 8:18-22)

Fifteen years later (i.e., 536 B.C., three years after the Persians had taken over) Daniel was given more information: **“Behold, three more kings [after the current king, Cyrus] will arise in Persia [Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius I Hystapes, a.k.a. “Darius the Great”], and the fourth [Xerxes] shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. Then a mighty king [Alexander the Great] shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.** (Daniel 11:2-4) Alexander died at the tender age of 33 after carving out the largest empire the world had yet known. His only son, Alexander Aegus, born after his death to his Bactrian princess Roxana, would not live long enough to follow in his father’s footsteps. The empire, rather, was literally “divided toward the four winds,” when Alexander’s four generals split up the spoils among them.

By now, you’re probably muttering something like, “Gee, that’s just swell, but what on earth does it have to do with the future? I thought this was supposed to be a book about eschatology.” In my experience, it’s hard to figure out where you’re going if you don’t know where you are. The four great gentile kingdoms described in Daniel (of which we have reviewed three) are the matrix of human history leading us inexorably toward the Kingdom of Yahshua. They are, if you will, the road upon which the salvation of mankind has been revealed, like Burma

Shave signs along the way (ask your grandfather about those). So before moving on to the fourth kingdom, let's take a moment to check our bearings.

We began with Babylon, or more properly Neo-Babylon, the “head of gold.” It's ironic that the kingdom God used as His hammer of judgment upon apostate Israel was heir to the very originator of organized false worship, Nimrod's ancient seat of power. On the other hand, Israel had been warned that if they would not observe God's law, **“Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone.”** (Deuteronomy 28:64) In other words, “If you won't honor the true God in the land of promise, then you can go and serve false gods someplace else.”

Yahweh held Babylon responsible for her own sins as well. The Medes and the Persians were raised up to deliver God's vengeance upon Babylon, and did so handily in October, 539 B.C. In the first chapter, I mentioned the book of Esther among a mere handful of writings in the Bible that did not refer to the last days. Though it doesn't, directly, the story of Esther is pivotal in God's plan of redemption through the Jews—through the Jewish Messiah. Yahweh's promise to preserve the Jews, and through them the Messianic line, came to a crisis during the reign of the Persian King Ahasuerus (a.k.a. Xerxes). His hasty and ill-conceived edict to execute every Jew in his realm—which was at the time virtually every Jew on earth—was thwarted by the courage of his beautiful Israelite Queen Esther who interceded for her people.

Ironically, it was this same Xerxes who had been prophesied by Daniel “to stir up all against the realm of Greece.” It took 130 more years, but the military pressure he and his successors brought to bear on this loosely affiliated collection of independent city-states eventually created a political climate in which a strong central ruler could arise. That man, as we have seen, was Alexander, who in thirteen short years united Greece, crushed Persia, and spread Hellenism from Egypt to India. Though his empire promptly fragmented upon his death, the influence of Grecian culture and language remained. By the time the fourth great gentile empire made its entrance onto the world's stage, the entire middle-eastern world was united by custom and tongue, if not by politics. Koine Greek, the most precise and expressive language on earth, was everyman's second language, much as English is today. The world was almost ready for the coming of its Messiah.

\*\*\*

Nebuchadnezzar's statue dream hadn't stopped with Greece, the belly of bronze, but had continued right down to the toes. At this point we need to stop

and consider just what the statue meant: It's a timeline—it represents the whole of gentile history as it relates to Yahweh's plan of redemption through Israel.

Babylon, the head, was the first significant gentile power to “own” the land of promise. Yes, it's true that Assyria under Sennacherib had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and as many as forty-six cities within Judah, but they were stopped cold at the gates of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (cf. II Kings 18, 19). Egypt for a time controlled the territory and derived tribute from it, but they never settled it, nor did they take Jerusalem. But Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar did all of those things. Media/Persia did the same, as did Greece, controlling the Levant first under the banner of Ptolemy and later, after the battle of Panion in 200 B.C., the Seleucids. The key, therefore, seems to be Jerusalem—what happened there in the past and what will happen there in the future.

The fourth kingdom starts where the Greeks left off, but if we examine the prophecies carefully, we will discover that this last kingdom, even today, hasn't come to an end. We're definitely down past the ankles, but we haven't yet reached the toes. Let's pick up the Biblical narrative as Daniel explains to Nebuchadnezzar what the statue means from the knees downward:

**“And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. (Daniel 2:40-43)**

In a later vision, Daniel again encountered this kingdom, this time as the last of the four beasts emerging from the sea: **“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it.... Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet.... Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces.’” (Daniel 7:7, 19, 23)**

There's only one logical candidate for the fourth kingdom. Rome not only conquered much of the lands previously taken by the first three, the Land of Promise in particular, it fits Daniel's description perfectly. It was extremely strong and perfectly ruthless, shattering everything in its path. It had two “legs,” or branches as it developed, the western empire ruled from Rome, and the eastern

empire, Byzantium, ruled from Constantinople. Its vast holdings made the empire a hodgepodge of dissimilar races and cultures, strong in places, weak in others, and forever threatening to crumble from its own weight. “Iron mixed with clay” is an apt description of historic Rome.

Rome is also the logical successor to the first three gentile kingdoms. Like Babylon, Persia, and Greece, it ruled Judea and Jerusalem with an iron hand (or should I say, foot). Rome played a personal (though unenviable) role in the redemption of mankind, for it was a Roman governor who gave the order to crucify the Messiah. Roman soldiers drove in the nails, gambled for his clothes, and pierced his side. But Roman rule also facilitated the spread of the Gospel. The *Pax Romana*, the enforced orderliness of society that followed Roman conquest from the Danube to the Sahara and from Spain to Syria, made it possible for Christians to move without restriction and with a minimum of danger from one end of the empire to the other.

You may be thinking, “Rome is dead, and has been for sixteen hundred years. How can it be the *final* gentile kingdom?” Though dead as a political entity, Rome lives on today through our languages and institutions, our affiliations, religious traditions, attitudes, and laws. Its ghost haunts our heritage in ways the earlier civilizations can’t approach. Even the glory of ancient Greece came down to us primarily through the filter of Roman society. Rome’s children are the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Its grandchildren are the nations and states of Europe and the Americas.

I can still hear you protesting: “What about Islam? Muslims have held Jerusalem for all but a few of the years since they took it in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and lost it in the 20<sup>th</sup>.” Though that’s true, Islam has no role to play in the redemption of mankind (quite the opposite, in fact). That job was finished under the Romans, 537 years before Muhammad drew his first breath. They are (like Assyria) merely a tool in the hand of Yahweh to chastise and test His errant children—until He is ready to achieve His purposes. We haven’t seen the last of *dar al-Islam*.

\*\*\*

With all this talk about “God’s Timetable,” I’m sure some of you are beginning to harbor suspicions about my sanity. After all, didn’t Yahshua say, “No man knows the day or the hour?” And doesn’t it necessarily follow that we aren’t to enquire about the timing of anything in His plan? Let me assure you, it’s far worse than you’ve imagined. I have become convinced that we not only *should* look into the subject, but that He has told us the exact dates of all of the major last days milestones (with one exception). Not in so many words, you

understand—you have to do the math, and you have to first come to grips with the fact that Yahweh has not told us anything on a pointless whim. Everything that's in His word is there for a reason. Because the subject of chronology is going to be spread out over this entire book, I've boiled down the essentials of this narrow subject into an appendix, entitled, "No Man Knows... What God Has (and Hasn't) Told Us About The Chronology Of The Last Days." Please avail yourself of this information, if you're not too uncomfortable thinking outside the traditional box.

Meanwhile, I assume you've noticed that I've been doing lots of judicious editing in my presentation of Daniel's prophecies concerning the gentiles. So far, I have covered only those passages that help to define God's broad timetable. There are significant truths in Daniel that I have not addressed, usually because their fulfillments are still in our future. Please be assured, I have not ignored them, only postponed them. The sections describing Rome are among those that flow seamlessly, as prophecies are wont to do, from one timeframe to another. On the one hand, Rome is obviously Daniel's fourth kingdom; on the other hand, the same kingdom is seen in specific and detailed prophecies which have seen no fulfillment in all of history—yet.

Just as Yahshua is called the "Son of God," one who has the attributes and authority of His Father, there is a future political entity on the horizon that could be called the "son of Rome," a confederacy embodying all of the triumphs and terrors of its ancestor, Imperial Rome. Pictured as the fourth beast, it is said to have "ten horns." That is, it will be comprised of ten nations. An eleventh "horn," a little one, will destroy three of the ten, growing in power and ambition and doing all kinds of unpleasant things until the beast is itself destroyed. As I said, this is all future; we will discuss it all in due time.

But how is the fourth beast "different from all other kingdoms?" We read that, **"The beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time."** (Daniel 7:11-12) Whereas the first three beasts, or kingdoms, were absorbed into the nations that came to rule them, extending their lives for a time, the fourth will be completely and suddenly destroyed. And what happens to the world it dominated? **"The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever."** (Daniel 7:18)

When explaining the first dream to King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel had concluded by telling him how the times of the gentiles would end: **"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the**

silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” (Daniel 2:44-45) Every gentile nation in history had a beginning and will see its end. But the Kingdom of God will not end.

Nebuchadnezzar had seen a Stone crush all of the gentile kingdoms, grinding the whole statue to dust and dispersing their pretensions of grandeur to the wind, starting with the final permutation of ungodly power, the feet of iron and clay—the son of Rome. **“A stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”** (Daniel 2:34-35) The “Stone” that achieves all this, the Stone that “became a great mountain and filled the whole earth,” is none other than Yahshua the Anointed One, who will sit upon the throne of the Kingdom of God forever.

The dream is certain, and the interpretation is sure.