

THE TIME OF YOUR VISITATION

by Thomas Ice

A week before His resurrection on Easter Sunday, Jesus made, what is called, His triumphal entry into Jerusalem among much pomp and fanfare. While the people were happy and celebrating His entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:35-40), Jesus was sad and wept over the city (Luke 19:41). At that point Jesus announced to the people, "If you had know in this day, even you, the things which make for peace" (Luke 19:42)! Our Lord prophetically described the judgment that would come upon Jerusalem and her people because of their rejection of Him (Luke 19:43-44a). Then He declared the reason for such judgment upon the city of Jerusalem which He greatly loved. It would be "because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44b). How was it that Israel is being held accountable for "this day" (Luke 19:42) and "the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44b)? How were the Jews to have known *when* her Messiah was to visit them? Israel was to know these things because of prophecy.

UNIQUENESS OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

The Bible is unique when compared to all the other "holy books" and religions of the world because its truthfulness is based upon prophecy and history. All the other religions of the world are based upon a person's philosophy or ethical stipulations. Biblical Christianity has those elements, but it has more. The veracity of the Bible is rooted and grounded in history—whether or not certain events either prophesied or reported in Scripture actually have taken place. It matters whether creation literally took place; whether Adam's fall into sin occurred; whether the global flood took place; whether Israel was delivered out of Egypt at the Exodus; whether God made His covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai; whether Jesus was born, lived, died, resurrected and ascended into heaven. It matters whether prophecy predicting the return of Christ is true and will occur in the future. If any of these, and many other historical events, did not take place then as Paul said of the resurrection "we [Christians] are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19).

Prophecy is part of the historicity of the Bible. If prophetic prediction is not fulfilled literally in history than God and His word could be proved to be false. But God's record is 100%. This is one of the key areas that separates biblical Christianity from all the other religions of the world is that God's prophecy is 100% accurate. Let's look at the example of the seventy weeks of Daniel.

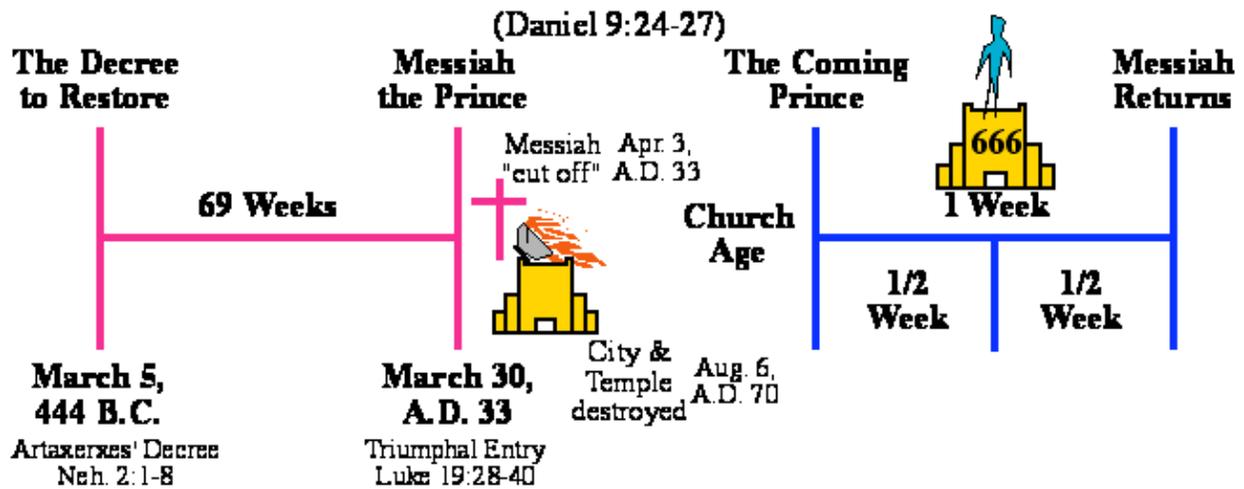
ISRAEL'S PROPHETIC TIME TABLE

In the instance of the seventy weeks of Daniel, the Bible is so specific in its prediction that we see God giving a prophecy that is so accurate that it was fulfilled down to the very day. Jews who were following the prediction of Daniel 9:24-27 would have known that Jesus had to be the Messiah because of this prophecies chronological accuracy. How did it work?

The prophecy of the seventy weeks was given to Daniel by God while Daniel was in the Babylonian captivity (Daniel 9:1; 2 Chronicles 36:21-23; Ezra 1: 6:3-5). Daniel was

concerned for his people who were nearing the end of their seventy-year captivity. In Daniel's vision he was reassured that God had not forgotten His chosen people. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that God would bring Israel back into their land and would one day set up the messianic kingdom. What was unexpected for Daniel, was the revelation that all of this would not be fulfilled at the end of current seventy-year captivity in Babylon, but at the end of the future seventy-week period described in 9:24-27. It is at this point that the angel Gabriel reveals to Daniel God's time-frame of the seventy weeks of years as a framework for Israel's history. (Note the chart below that provides an explanation of this time-frame.¹)

Daniel's Seventy Weeks



EXPLANATION OF DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS OF YEARS

69 x 7 x 360 = 173,880 days

March 5, 444 B.C. + 173,880 = March 30, A.D. 33

Verification

444 B.C.. to A.D. 33 = 476 years

476 years x 365.2421989 days = 173,855 days

+ days between March 5 and March 30 = 25 days

Totals = 173,880 days

Rationale for 360-Day Years

1/2 week—Dan. 9:27

Time, times, 1/2 time—Dan. 7:25, 12:7; Rev. 12:14

1,260 days—Rev. 12:6, 11:3

42 months—Rev. 11:2, 13:5

Thus: 42 months = 1,260 days = time, times, 1/2 time + 1/2 week

Therefore: month = 30 days; year = 360 days

Daniel's prophesied period of time was to begin with "the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25). The only decree that matches this is the one that Artaxerxes, King of the Medio-Persian Empire, issued to Nehemiah (Neh. 2:1-8). Nehemiah started rebuilding Jerusalem on March 5, 444 B.C. This began the countdown of the first sixty-nine weeks of years that culminated in Christ's Triumphant Entry on March 30, A.D. 33 (Luke 19:28-40). The chart above provides the data and explanation of this prophecy. This is why any biblically literate Jew would have to know that Messiah the Prince would be cut off after the sixty-nine weeks of years (Dan. 9:25-26). Jesus was crucified a few days later. Jesus of Nazareth is the only One who could have fulfilled that prophecy. He did fulfill that prophecy just at the Bible predicted.

This is one of the dozens of prophecies that Christ fulfilled literally at His first coming and we can know for certain that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Thus, we can trust God that Christ's work on the cross was what it took to pay for the sin of those who believe on His name.

FUTURE PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

In the same way that every prophecy was literally fulfilled by Jesus of His first coming, so will the hundreds of prophecies related to His second coming be fulfilled literally. In fact that final week of years in Daniel's prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. There has been, thus far, about a 2,000-year postponement of the fulfillment of the final week of years in Daniel's prophecy. But it too will be literally fulfilled just like the first sixty-nine weeks of years were literally fulfilled.

The seventieth week of Daniel is the basis in the Bible for a future seven-year period known as the tribulation. This era follows the rapture of the Church and will be a time of unparalleled suffering and turmoil. The seven-year period of Daniel's seventieth week provides the time span to which a whole host of items are associated. Some of those descriptive terms include: tribulation, great tribulation, day of the Lord, day of wrath, day of distress, day of trouble, time of Jacob's trouble, day of darkness and gloom, and wrath of the Lamb.

CONCLUSION

Luke tells us that at the time of Christ's first coming there was a group of Jewish people in the temple "who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). When Jesus the Messiah was presented to them, even though a baby, they received Him. Yet the majority of the nation rejected Jesus. Those who received Him were looking for Him, apparently, because they knew His time was coming near.

Paul tells Church Age believers that we are "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." But that's not all. He says that while we are doing that we are to be "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:12-13). Unlike the Jews of the Old Testament we do not have a specific timeframe for when Messiah will return. That is why the New Testament tells us to always be ready. We are to always be ready by looking every day, every hour, every minute, and every

moment for the return of our Savior. What about you? Are you serving the Lord while at the same time looking for the Blessed Hope? Maranatha!

ENDNOTE

¹ This chart and explanation is adapted from Harold H. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), pp. 138-39.