

The Timing of the Coming of the Messiah

Daniel 9 prophecy

Sir Robert Anderson, described perhaps the greatest Old Testament prophecy, if his calculations were accurate. Anderson was the Assistant Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police (Scotland Yard) from 1888 to 1901; he was also a theologian and author. He wrote many books related to Christianity, science and prophecy, including *The Coming Prince*. In this short volume, Anderson makes the case for a remarkable Old Testament prophecy from the prophet Daniel. While the Israelites were certainly comforted by prophecies predicting their enemies would eventually be destroyed, there was a far more reassuring prophecy described by Daniel. He predicted the coming of a Messiah, a Saviour who would deliver the Jews. Daniel's prophecy was incredibly specific. I'll do my best to reconstruct the case made by Anderson, but I encourage you to research his work for yourself.

In 538 B.C. Daniel wrote the following bold prediction:

Daniel 9:25

"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven "sevens" of years and sixty-two "sevens" of years".

In this prophecy (written 538 years before Christ was born), Daniel claimed there would be 69 "sevens of years" between the issuing of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the appearance of the Messiah. In 464 BC, Artaxerxes, a Persian king, ascended to the throne. Nehemiah, the Jewish cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, was deeply concerned about the ruined condition of Jerusalem following the defeat of the Jews (Nehemiah 1:1-4). As a result, he petitioned the king:

Nehemiah 2:5,6

"Send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it. So it pleased the king to send me".

According to the Old Testament, the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued "in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (Nehemiah 2:1). The Jewish calendar month was Nisan, and since no day is given, it is reasonable to assume the date would be understood as the first, the Jewish New Year's Day. And, in the Julian calendar we presently use, the corresponding date would be March 5, 444 BC.

So when did the Messiah appear? Jesus, on numerous occasions, forbade and prevented his followers from revealing His identity as the Messiah. He frequently performed miracles and swore His

disciples to silence, saying his “hour has not yet come” (John 2:4, 7:6). But, on March 30, 33 A.D., when he entered Jerusalem on a donkey, he rebuked the Pharisees’ protest and encouraged the whole multitude of his disciples as they shouted, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord”. Jesus even said, “If these become silent, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:38-40). This was the day on which Jesus was publicly declared the Messiah.

Let’s compare then, the date of the decree (**March 5, 444 BC**) with the date of Jesus’ declaration (**March 30, 33 AD**). Before we begin, we must clarify (as noted by Anderson) an important feature of the Jewish prophetic year: It was comprised of twelve **30 day months** (it had 360 days, not 365 days).

Since Daniel states **69 weeks of seven years** each, and each year has **360 days**, the following equation calculates the number of days between March 5, 444 BC (the twentieth year of Artaxerxes) and March 30, 33 AD (the day Jesus entered Jerusalem on the donkey):

$$69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880 \text{ days}$$

Now let’s compare Daniel’s prophecy with the true interval between the two events. The time span from **444 BC to 33 AD is 476 years** (remember 1 BC to 1 AD is only one year).

And if we multiply **476 years x 365.2421879 days** per year (corrected for leap years), we get the result of **173,855** days. Close, but not precisely what Daniel predicted (although I still think this is pretty amazing). Now let’s add back the difference between **March 5 and March 30 (25 days)**.

What is our total? You guessed it, **173,880 days, exactly as Daniel predicted**.

The ancient Jews were careful to use prophecy as a measuring stick. If someone claimed to be a prophet, yet his predictions did not come true, he was abandoned and his writings did not make it into the Canon of Scripture:

Deuteronomy 18:22

If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.

The Destruction of The Temple in Jerusalem

Malachi 3:1 states that the Messiah will come to the temple:

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.” (John the Baptist). “Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to this temple; the messenger of the covenant, who you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.”

Therefore, when the Messiah comes, he will come to the temple. As the temple was destroyed in AD70, Messiah had to have come by then.

After the total of 69 “sevens”, Daniel explains how the Messiah (Anointed One) will be killed:

Daniel 9:26 states: “After the sixty-two “sevens”, the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing.”

Daniel 9:26 continues to explain how at the end of this period, when the Messiah has been, and been killed, the temple will be destroyed:

“The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.”

This means that the Messiah has to have come before the Temple was destroyed, or never at all. As we know from history, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD70. Messiah had to have arrived by AD70.

In verse 27, Daniel’s prophecy continues to explain how sacrifice for sins will be dealt with after the 69 “sevens”, a 70th “seven”:

“He will confirm a covenant with many for one “seven”. In the middle of the “seven” he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.”

Jesus’ death was to deal with atonement and an end to sacrifices in response to our sins.

With the destruction of the temple, several things came to an end:

- No temple has ever been built there again.
- No priesthood ever restored as every son of Aaron was slain
- No more priestly sacrifices
- No atonement by a High Priest

Removal of The Sceptre of Judah

Genesis 49:10:

“the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” (NB Shiloh means peace, or bringer of peace)

The “Sceptre” is the “tribal staff”, and each tribe of Israel had one. It was their identity, and the Messiah would come before the “sceptre” of Judah passed away. Even under captivity in Babylon, it never lost its identity/sceptre. They still had their own judges and lawgivers.

However, two things would happen after the advent of the Messiah:

1. Removal of the sceptre/identity of Judah

2. Suppression of Judah's judicial power.

The first sign of the removal of the sceptre of Judah happened with the appointment of Herod the Great, who had no Jewish blood. He succeeded the Maccabean princes, the last Jewish kings in Jerusalem.

The suppression of the judicial power happened with Herod's successor, and son, Archelaus who reigned from 11AD (22 years before Jesus' crucifixion). Working on behalf of the Romans, the supreme power of the Sanhedrin (ruling council of Rabbis) was removed, so that the rulers could exercise "the sovereign right over life and death sentences."

The Jewish Talmud says: A little more than forty years before the destruction of the temple" (i.e. Around AD30 when Jesus began his ministry) "the power of pronouncing capital sentences was taken away from the Jews." (Talmud, Jerusalem, Sanhedrin, fol 24, recto.)

Rabbi Rachmon said: "Woe unto us, for the sceptre has departed from Judah, and the Messiah has not come!" (Talmud 21/28-30)

The Jews knew what these things meant, and even when the sceptre was removed, and the suppression of Judah's judicial power was suppressed, then the Messiah had to have arrived.

By the words of the Old Testament, the prophecies and even the Jewish Talmud, messiah was expected, and had to have arrived by AD70. And Jesus arrived precisely when the prophecy of Daniel said so.