

The Appointed Time For Israel

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Our God is a God of purpose and order. Everything He does in accordance with a carefully planned time table, referred to in scripture as "appointed times." All of these appointed times revolve around Jesus the Christ—His birth, His ministry, His sacrificial death, His resurrection, and His return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In Leviticus 23 all of God's festivals are called "the appointed feasts." Some translations may translate it as just "feasts." Leviticus 23:2 says

Leviticus 23:2 (New English Version) "Speak to the Israelites and tell them, 'These are the Lord's appointed times which you must proclaim as holy assemblies—my appointed times.'

So my subject today is going to be on how the Feast of Tabernacles actually pictures the appointed time for Israel. I am going to be using a well-known prophecy in the book of Daniel, it is called the seventy weeks prophecy. We will turn to Daniel 9. In verse 1, it shows us that Darius was the one being spoken about here. Cyrus king of Persia had just defeated the Babylonians and he had placed Darius as king over Babylon.

Daniel 9:2 (NEV) in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, came to understand from the sacred books that the number of years for the fulfilling of the desolation of Jerusalem, which had come as the Lord's message to the prophet Jeremiah, would be 70 years."

Jeremiah had prophesied the period of seventy years of desolation in the land of Judah, while the people were held captive in Babylon. Now let us turn back to II Chronicles 36, and we will see the prophecy leading up to this.

II Chronicles 36:14-20 (NEV) All the leaders of the priests and people became more unfaithful and committed the same horrible

sins practiced by the nations. [same words that is translated as Gentiles] They defiled the Lord's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The Lord God of their ancestors continually warned them through his messengers, for he felt compassion for his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his warnings, and ridiculed his prophets. Finally the Lord got very angry at his people and there was no one who could prevent his judgment. He brought against them the king of the Babylonians, who slaughtered their young men in their temple. He did not spare young men or women, or even the old and aging. God handed everyone over to him. He carried away to Babylon all the items in God's temple, whether large or small, as well as what was in the treasuries of the Lord's temple and in the treasuries of the king and his officials. They burned down God's temple and tore down the wall of Jerusalem. They burned all its fortified buildings and destroyed all its valuable items. He deported to Babylon all who escaped the sword. They served him and his sons until the Persian kingdom rose to power.

This is where Daniel was a young man and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken into captivity to serve the king. Continuing on here,

II Chronicles 36:21 (NEV) This took place to fulfill the Lord's message spoken through Jeremiah and lasted until the land experienced its sabbatical years. All the time of its desolation the land rested in order to fulfill the seventy years.

Now let us go back to Daniel 9, because here Daniel understands that the seventy years of captivity under the Babylonians was over, or nearly over. And because the Medo-Persian empire had defeated the Babylonians and set up a king over the city, Cyrus king of Persia, placed Darius as king over the city. We will pick this up here in verse 3,

Daniel 9:3 (NEV) So I turned my attention to the Lord God to implore him by prayer and requests, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

I am not going to read the entire prayer. That is something you can do later. Now drop down to verse 19.

Daniel 9:19-23 (NEV) O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, pay attention, and act! Don't delay, for your own sake, O my God! For your city and your people are called by your name." While I was still speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my request before the Lord my God concerning his holy mountain yes, while I was still praying, the man Gabriel [We know Gabriel is one of three high-ranking angels. He is before the throne of God as a special messenger for God's people, and he looks like a man.], whom I had seen previously in a vision, was approaching me in my state of extreme weariness, around the time of the evening offering. He spoke with me, instructing me as follows: "Daniel, I have now come to impart understanding to you. At the beginning of your requests a message went out, and I have come to convey it to you, for you are of great value in God's sight. Therefore consider the message and understand the vision:"

This was not a message that was to be sealed until the time of the end, but it to be understood at the time at which it was given.

Daniel 9:24 (NEV) "Seventy weeks have been determined concerning your people and your holy city to put an end to rebellion, to bring sin to completion, to atone for iniquity, to bring in perpetual righteousness, to seal up the prophetic vision, and to anoint a Most Holy Place."

Now here I want to quote from a book, *The Appointed Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by Fred Coulter, but there was actually an appendix in his book which was a research and composition by Carl Franklin. I think that he explains this in simple terms that we all can understand. Carl writes:

He states in verse 24, the seventy weeks prophecy is summed up as a whole. The following verses describe the division of the seventy weeks into three distinct periods. There are 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. Now the words "week" and weeks in these verses are

translated from the Hebrew word Shabua which is a unit of time composed of seven years.

Now these units of time, known today as heptads, were used by ancient Israel to calculate the Sabbatical years. The use of Shabua in the Hebrew text signifies that the seventy weeks are not literal weeks of seven days duration, but are each composed of seven years. Thus the three divisions of weeks in the prophecy add up to a total of 490 years, since the structure of the Hebrew text divides the seventy weeks prophecy into three distinct periods, each segment is to be considered separately.

In other words, the three periods are separated from each other by intervening years. Also in this first verse here, where it says “seventy weeks have been determined,” I want to look at this word “determined” because this will help us understand a little more about what he said.

The word “determined” here can be translated as: decreed; divided. In modern terms it would actually be translated as “marked out.”

So each period that has been “marked out” has significant meaning to it. Now let me explain what I mean by this. You see we can look back in history and see the fulfillment of the first two periods.

Daniel 9:25 (NEV) So know and understand: From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince arrives [we all understand that to be the Messiah], there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will again be built, with plaza and moat, but in distressful times.

Now turn back to II Chronicles and you will see the decree written by Cyrus.

II Chronicles 36:22-23 (NEV) In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the Lord’s message spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord motivated King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his kingdom and also to put it in writing. [notice that it was written down, it was a written decree.] It read: “This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: ‘The Lord God of heaven

has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of his people among you may go up there, and may the Lord his God be with him.”

God is faithful to His Word. He had driven Judah into captivity for seventy years, and now the seventy years was up. That was an appointed time that God gave there when Cyrus issued that decree. That appointed time was for them to return to the land, and actually it was preparation for later on for Jesus Christ to come in the flesh.

Reading from the research and composition of Carol Franklin again, he writes:

The fulfillment of these events is described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. [Ezra of course was the high priest and this was toward the end of seven weeks or 49 years. And Nehemiah was the final governor of that period.] Ezra records the decree of Cyrus and the return of the exiles with Zerubbabel. [Zerubbabel was the first governor and Joshua was the first high priest that was sent back to lay the foundation of the temple.] Throughout the construction of the temple was interrupted for a period of time by persecution from enemies in the surrounding lands, the prophets Haggai and Zephaniah were inspired by God to stir up the people of Judah and Jerusalem to resume the work on the temple.

Now the people responded to the urging of God’s prophets, and under the leadership of Zerubbabel, set to work rebuilding the Temple. A number of years after the completion of rebuilding of the Temple, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem as governor of Judah and led the people in rebuilding the walls of the city.

There was probably a fifteen-year period where they actually had to stop some of the work due to the opposition that they were getting. And when Nehemiah came back on the scene, he was the cupbearer for another king, and this king liked him and he allowed him to return as governor to finish rebuilding the wall and restoring everything in order to the Temple, because the people had fallen back into their old ways.

Nehemiah was governor for about twelve years, then returned back to the king as cupbearer. Before he went back, he had set everything in order and this was in 490 BC, exactly 49 years after the decree from Cyrus in 539 BC. So we see the first division there—seven weeks or 49 years.

Now it is not recorded when the 62 weeks began, but it ended with the arrival of the Messiah. Remember the prophecy. So we can count backwards from the year that John the Baptist came preparing the way for the Messiah in 26 AD, and that brings us to 409 BC. So what significant event took place in 409 BC?

Most scholars set the writing of the book of Malachi, the last prophetic book in the Old Testament, around 400 BC. Now let us look at the very last verses in the book of Malachi.

Malachi 4:5-6 (NEV) Look, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord arrives. He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me, so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment.” [some translations say “with a curse” or “total destruction.”]

Now what did Jesus say to His disciples in Matthew 17 about the Elijah to come?

Matthew 17:10-13 (NEV) The disciples asked him, “Why then do the experts in the law say that Elijah must come first?” He answered, “Elijah does indeed come first and will restore all things. And I tell you that Elijah has already come. Yet they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wanted. In the same way, the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.

Although the book of Malachi is dated around early to mid 400 BC and nobody knows the exact year, this is very compelling evidence to me that this prophetic book was most likely written in 409 BC, exactly 62 weeks or

434 years to the coming of John the Baptist who was the Elijah to come in 26 AD. And what was John the Baptist doing? Preparing the way for the arrival of the Messiah.

Now we have the one week left or seven years. I am not going to get into when this week began, because I do not know and there are many differences of opinions, but I want to go to the end of the seven years and I think we all agree that the completion of the 70th week it marks the return of Jesus Christ to the earth and completes the prophecy.

There are six things listed that God intends to do here. Remember that in the beginning, that first verse said that, “it was determined concerning Israel and Jerusalem.” So when Christ returns will be the end then of the 490 years. Now something interesting here, where have we hear the number 490 before?

Matthew 18:21-22 (NEV) Then Peter came to him and said,
“Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times!

70 times 7 = 490. Does this number 490 have to do with forgiveness? That is what this prophecy is really all about. It is about God’s forgiveness and restoration of His people Israel.

Now here is what God intends to do for Israel. The first thing he says is that He is going to put an end to rebellion.

I want to begin this section with looking at the Hebrew definition of the word “sin,” because in the first three items we have listed here, it mentions transgression, sin, and iniquity. The word translated “transgression” in the New Kings James version is translated as “rebellion” in the New English translation, which I think is more accurate. All sin is bad and results in death, but some sins are just simply worse than others.

The Hebrew word for transgression is *pesha* and it is about as bad as it gets. According to Michael Heiser, a Hebrew scholar, he says this means outright rebellion against known law. In other words, they are saying, “I’m going to

live my life *my* way, and I don't care what You say, God. I'm not going to obey Your law. I'm just gonna live my life, do it my way."

Now when Jesus Christ returns to the earth, He is going to bring this type of rebellion from Israel to an end. So what is He going to do? Turn to Zephaniah 3 and we will see the answer.

Zephaniah 3:11-13 (NEV) In that day you will not be ashamed of all your rebelliousness against me, for then I will remove from your midst those who proudly boast, and you will never again be arrogant on my holy hill. [This is as Christ returns and there is only going to be a small remnant left and notice what He is going to leave us with.] I will leave in your midst a humble and meek group of people, and they will find safety in the Lord's presence. The Israelites who remain will not act deceitfully. They will not lie, and a deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths. Indeed, they will graze peacefully like sheep and lie down; no one will terrify them."

Christ is going to bring Israel's rebellion to an end. The second thing He is going to do is to bring sin to completion or as the NKJV says, "make an end of sins." Now this Hebrew word for sin here is *chata*, which means to fall short; or to miss the mark. It is a generic word for sin, and it covers a wide variety of meanings. But remember, any sin not repented of will result in death. So what is Christ going to do to bring Israel's sin to completion? There are many verses in the prophets that you could use, but I chose to use Joel.

Joel 2:28-29 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh [Now according to Hampton Kirklees, another Hebrew scholar, he said, this Hebrew meaning literally means all kinds of flesh. He is not going to pour out His spirit on everybody at this one time, but He will on the whole house of Israel. And he explains it here.]; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

God is going to give His Spirit to old men and women, young men and women, little boys and girls, even babies that are born to Israel will have God's Spirit in those days.

The third thing He is going to do is to atone our iniquity or make reconciliation for iniquity. The Hebrew word for iniquity is *avon* which means adversity, depravity, and according to Michel Heiser, it is an act of defiance or rebellion, but just not as bad as *pesha*, but it is still rebellion. It is plain stubbornness; or stiff-neckedness.

I Samuel 15:23 (NEV) For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

The English word reconciliation here is translated from the Hebrew word *kippa*. It refers to the process by which physical defilement impurity and spiritual and moral sin is covered or set aside. When *kippa* is accomplished the break between man and God is healed and that is why we celebrate Atonement before the Feast of Tabernacles. Let us turn to Micah 7 where it says:

Micah 7:18-19 Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

They will be reconciled to the true God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and then they will know that Jesus is the Lord and Jesus will reconcile them to the Father.

The fourth thing that He is going to do is to bring in perpetual righteousness or everlasting righteousness. Righteousness is going to spring fourth from Israel to all the world. Turn to Isaiah 2.

Isaiah 2:2-3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the

mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The last sentence in Isaiah 26:9 says, “the inhabitants of world will learn righteousness.” Now turn to Zechariah 8.

Zechariah 8:22-23 Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.’ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’”

Isaiah 30:20-21 And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. [now we see where we come into play] Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

Those in the first resurrection will be priests of God and will be teaching the world the way of righteousness starting with the house of Israel. We are here to be prepared to be those priests in that first resurrection.

The fifth thing that will be done is to seal up the prophetic vision. This will fulfill this prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. God is once again going to choose Jerusalem as His place for His throne.

The sixth thing is to anoint the Most Holy. The Hebrew word used here for “Most Holy” is the same word spoken twice. However, this word never refers to a person, but rather always refers to a place or a thing. The New English version translates this correctly by saying “to anoint a Most Holy

place.” Now let us dig into the scriptures and see where that is. Turn to Ezekiel 43.

Ezekiel 43:7 (NEV) He said to me: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will live among the people of Israel forever. The house of Israel will no longer profane my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their spiritual prostitution or by the pillars of their kings set up when they die.

Drop down to verse 12.

Ezekiel 43:12 (NEV) “This is the law of the temple: The entire area on top of the mountain all around will be most holy. Indeed, this is the law of the temple.

Now turn over to Ezekiel 45:3.

Ezekiel 45:3-4 (NEV) From this measured area you will measure a length of 8¼ miles and a width of 3 miles; in it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. It will be a holy portion of the land; it will be for the priests [that is you and I hopefully], the ministers of the sanctuary who approach the Lord to minister to him. It will be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary.

That is where God’s throne is going to be, the Most Holy place. It is the Most Holy place because God is there and the God’s Family is going to be there.

In summary, this prophecy reveals that God has an appointed time for Israel to restore them to the nation that He intended them to be from the very beginning, a holy and righteous nation. This is done by putting an end to sin and rebellion by saving a remnant that is humble and meek; by making an end to sin by pouring out His Spirit on the whole house of Israel. He is going to bring about reconciliation for iniquity through the forgiveness of their sins.

He is going to be ushering in everlasting righteousness being taught by the Family of God, to Israel and then to all of the world, fulfilling the prophecy concerning Israel and Jerusalem. And anointing the Most Holy place which is the sanctuary and temple of God that is in Jerusalem. (Daniel 9:24)

Turn to Matthew 24 and I want to show you just how close we really are to this time, because Jesus gives us an indication here.

Matthew 24:10 (NEV) “Then many will be led into sin, and they will betray one another and hate one another.”

If you do not think that this has begun, just Google Herbert Armstrong's name and you will see the blogs and articles against him, people blaming the church for their messed up lives, not realizing that it is sin that has destroyed their lives. They have turned away from God's truth.

Matthew 24:11 (NEV) “And many false prophets will appear and deceive many.”

How many were deceived and have left the truth and gone back into the world? A leader of one of the churches claims to be the prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy 18, and has deceived many into believing him. Has he not read in Acts 3, where Peter makes a direct reference to that prophet in Deuteronomy was Jesus Christ! How many were deceived by the minister who claimed to be one of the Two Witnesses?

Matthew 24:12 (NEV) “and because lawlessness [sin] will increase so much, the love of many will grow cold.”

Now the reason I bring this up is to show you how close we really are. I am not saying that this has been completely fulfilled, because I do not believe it has. I think there is more to come. But you and I need not worry but forever cling to the truth.

I will close here with Matthew 24:32-33, as Jesus gives us the Parable of the Fig Tree.

Matthew 24:32-33 (NEV) “Learn this parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near, right at the door.”