

Amazing Facts Study Guide 18 - Right on Time! Prophetic Appointments Revealed!

Fasten your seat belt! You're now going to explore the longest time prophecy in the Bible - a prophecy that perfectly predicted the first coming of Jesus and the time of His death. In Study Guide 16, "Angel Messages from Space," you learned that God has an extremely important message the world must hear before Christ's return! The first point commands people to worship God and glorify Him, because the hour of His judgment has arrived (Revelation 14:7). In Daniel 8 and 9, God reveals the date for His final judgment to begin and powerful prophetic clues proving Christ as the Messiah. Thus no prophecy in all of Scripture is more vital - yet few people are aware of it! Others completely misinterpret it. Please read Daniel chapters 8 and 9 before starting this Study Guide, and ask God's Spirit to guide you in understanding this phenomenal lesson.

1. In vision, Daniel saw a two-horned ram pushing west, north, and south and conquering every beast he met (Daniel 8:3, 4). What does that ram symbolize?

"The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." Daniel 8:20.

Answer: The ram is a symbol of the world kingdom of Medo-Persia, which was also represented by the bear of Daniel 7:5. The prophecies of the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation follow the principle of "repeat and expand," which means they repeat prophecies covered in earlier chapters of the book and enlarge upon them. This approach brings clarity and certainty to Bible prophecies.

2. What striking animal did Daniel next see?

"And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation." Daniel 8:21, 22.

Answer: Next in Daniel's vision, a male goat with one huge horn suddenly appeared, traveling at great speed. He attacked and conquered the ram. Then the great horn was broken off and four horns arose in its place. The rough male goat symbolized the third world kingdom of Greece, and the huge horn symbolized Alexander the Great. The four horns that replaced the great horn represent the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided. In Daniel 7:6, these four kingdoms are represented by the four heads of the leopard beast, which also symbolizes Greece. These symbols are so fitting that it is easy to identify them in history.

3. According to Daniel 8:8, 9, a little horn power next arose. What does the little horn represent?

Answer: The little horn represents Rome. Some have suggested that the little horn represents Antiochus Epiphanes, a Seleucid king who ruled over Palestine in the second century B.C. and who disrupted the Jewish worship services. Others, including most leaders of the Reformation, have believed that the little horn represents Rome in both its pagan and papal forms. Let's examine the clear Bible evidence for this:

A. In harmony with the prophetic rule of "repeat and expand," Rome must be the power represented here because both chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel point to Rome as the kingdom that follows Greece. Daniel 7:24-27 also establishes the fact that Rome in its papal form will be succeeded by the kingdom of Christ. The little horn of Daniel chapter 8 fits this pattern exactly: It follows Greece and is finally supernaturally destroyed or "broken without hand" at Jesus' second coming. (Compare Daniel 8:25 with Daniel 2:34.)

B. Daniel chapter 8 says the Medo-Persians would become "great" (verse 4), the Grecians "very great" (verse 8), and the little horn power "exceeding great" (verse 9). History is clear that no power following Greece became "exceeding great" other than Rome.

C. Rome extended its power to the south (Egypt), the east (Macedonia), and the "pleasant land" (Palestine) precisely as the prophecy predicted (verse 9). No major power other than Rome fits this point.

D. Only Rome stood up against Jesus, "the prince of the host" (verse 11) and "the Prince of princes" (verse 25). Pagan Rome crucified Him. It also destroyed the Jewish temple. And papal Rome effectively caused the heavenly sanctuary to be "cast down" (verse 11) and "trodden under foot" (verse 13) by replacing the essential ministry of Jesus, our High

Priest in heaven, with an earthly priesthood which claims to forgive sins. No one but God can forgive sins (Luke 5:21). And Jesus is our only Priest or Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

4. Daniel 8 informs us that this little horn power would also destroy many of God's people (verses 10, 24, 25) and cast truth to the ground (verse 12). When a saint asked how long God's people and heavenly sanctuary would be trodden under foot, what was heaven's reply?

"And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Daniel 8:14.

Answer: Heaven's reply was that the sanctuary in heaven would be cleansed after 2,300 prophetic days, or 2,300 literal years. (Study Guide 15 gives a full explanation of the prophetic day-for-a-year principle found in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34.) We have already learned that the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary took place on the day of atonement in ancient Israel.

On that day God's people were clearly identified as His, and the record of their sins was removed. The wicked who clung to sin were cut off forever from Israel. Thus the camp was cleansed from sin.

Heaven was here assuring Daniel that sin and the little horn power would not continue to prosper, control the world, and persecute God's people endlessly. Instead, in 2,300 years God would step in with the heavenly day of atonement, or judgment, where sin and sinners would be identified and later removed from the universe forever. Thus the universe will be cleansed from sin. The wrongs against God's people will at long last be righted, and the peace and harmony of Eden will once again fill the universe.

5. What urgent point did the angel Gabriel repeatedly stress?

"Understand, O son of man: for at the *time of the end* shall be the vision." "I will make thee know what shall be *in the last end* of the indignation." "Wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be *for many days*." Daniel 8:17, 19, 26, emphasis added.

Answer:

Gabriel repeatedly asserted that the 2,300-day vision involved events in the end-time, which began in 1798, as we learned in Study Guide 15. The angel wanted us to understand that the 2,300-day prophecy is a message which applies primarily to all of us who are living in the end-time of earth's history. It has special meaning for today.

Introduction to Daniel Chapter 9

After Daniel's vision of chapter 8, the angel Gabriel came and began explaining the vision to him. When Gabriel reached the point of the 2,300 days, Daniel collapsed and was ill for some time. He regained his strength and resumed doing the king's business but was much concerned regarding the unexplained portion of the vision--the 2,300 days. Daniel prayed earnestly for his people, the Jews who were in captivity in Medo-Persia. He confessed his sins and pleaded with God to forgive His people. Daniel chapter 9 begins with the prophet's earnest prayer of confession and appeal to God.

Please take time now to read Daniel 9 before proceeding further with this Study Guide.

6. While Daniel was praying, who suddenly touched him and with what message (Daniel 9:21-23)?

Answer: The angel Gabriel touched him and stated he had come to explain the rest of the vision described in Daniel chapter 8 (compare Daniel 8:26 with Daniel 9:23).

7. How much of the 2,300 days would be allotted to (or cut off for) Daniel's people, the Jews, and their capital city, Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24)?

Answer: Seventy weeks were to be "determined upon," or cut off, for the Jews. The seventy prophetic weeks equal 490 literal years (70 x 7 = 490). God's people would soon be returning from captivity in Medo-Persia, and God would cut off 490 years from the 2,300 years and allot them to His chosen people as another opportunity to repent and serve Him.

8. What event and date were to mark the starting point for the 2,300-day and 490-year prophecies (Daniel 9:25)?

Answer: The starting event was a decree from Persian King Artaxerxes authorizing God's people (who were captive in Medo-Persia) to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. The decree, found in Ezra chapter 7, was issued in 457 B.C.--the seventh year of the king (verse 7)--and was implemented in the autumn. Artaxerxes began his reign in 464 B.C.

9. The angel said that 69 prophetic weeks, or 483 literal years (69 x 7 = 483), added to 457 B.C. would reach to the Messiah (Daniel 9:25). Did it?

Answer:

Yes, indeed! Mathematical calculations show that moving ahead 483 full years from the fall of 457 B.C. reaches the fall of A.D. 27. The word "Messiah" means "anointed" (John 1:41, margin). Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38) at His baptism (Luke 3:21, 22). His anointing took place in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), which was A.D. 27. *And to think the prediction was made more than 500 years before!*

Then Jesus began to preach that "the time is fulfilled" (referring to the 483 years which were to reach to the Messiah). He thus audibly confirmed the prophecy (Mark 1:14, 15; Galatians 4:4). So Jesus actually began His ministry by clearly referring to the 2,300-day prophecy, stressing its importance and accuracy. This is awesome and thrilling evidence that:

- A. The Bible is inspired.
- B. Jesus is the Messiah.
- C. All other dates in the 2,300-day/490-year prophecy are valid. What a firm foundation on which to build!

10. We have now considered 483 years of the 490-year prophecy. There is one prophetic week, or seven literal years, left (Daniel 9:26, 27). What happens next? When does it happen?

Answer: Jesus is "cut off" or crucified "in the midst of the week," which is three and one-half years after His anointing--or the spring of A.D. 31. Please notice how the gospel is revealed in verse 26: "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."

No, praise God, when Jesus was cut off, it was not for Himself. He "who did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22) was crucified for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3; Isaiah 53:5). Jesus' priceless life was lovingly and willingly offered to save us from sin. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! Jesus' atoning sacrifice is the very heart of Daniel chapters 8 and 9.

11. Since Jesus died after three and one-half years, how could He "confirm the covenant with many" for the full final seven years, as the prophecy in Daniel 9:27 mandates?

Answer: The covenant is His blessed agreement to save people from their sins (Hebrews 10:16, 17). After His ministry of three and one-half years ended, Jesus confirmed the covenant through His disciples (Hebrews 2:3). He sent them first to the Jewish nation (Matthew 10:5, 6), because His chosen people still had three and one-half years remaining of their 490-year opportunity to repent.

12. When the 490-year period of final opportunity for the Jewish nation ended in the fall of A.D. 34, what did the disciples do?

Answer: They began preaching the gospel to other people and nations of the world (Acts 13:46). Stephen, a righteous deacon, was publicly stoned in A.D. 34. From that date onward the Jews, *because they rejected Jesus and God's plan*, were no longer God's chosen people or nation. Instead, God now counts people of all nationalities who accept and serve Him as *spiritual Jews*. They have become His chosen people--"heirs according to the promise." Spiritual Jews do, of course, include Jewish people who individually accept and serve Jesus (Galatians 3:27-29; Romans 2:28, 29).

13. After A.D. 34, how many years of the 2,300-year prophecy remained? What is the ending date for the prophecy? What did the angel say would happen on that date (Daniel 8:14)?

Answer: There were 1,810 years remaining (2,300 minus 490 = 1,810). The ending date for the prophecy is 1844 (A.D. 34 + 1810 = 1844). The angel said the heavenly sanctuary would be cleansed, or the heavenly judgment would begin. (The earthly sanctuary was destroyed in A.D. 70.) We learned in Study Guide 17 that the heavenly day of atonement, or judgment, was slated for the end time. Now we know that the beginning date is 1844. God set this date. It is as certain as the A.D. 27 date for Jesus to become the Messiah. God's end-time people must be announcing it

(Revelation 14:6, 7). You will be thrilled and gratified to learn the details of the judgment in Study Guide 19. In Noah's day, God stated that the Flood judgment would occur in 120 years (Genesis 6:3)--and it happened. In Daniel's day, God stated that His end-time judgment would begin in 2,300 years (Daniel 8:14)--and it happened. God's end-time judgment has been in session since 1844.

Meaning of the Atonement

The English word "atonement" originally meant "at-one-ment;" that is, a state of being "at one" or in agreement. It denotes harmony of relationship. Perfect harmony originally existed throughout the universe. Then Lucifer, a brilliant heavenly angel (as we learned in Study Guide 2), challenged God and His principles of government. One-third of the angels of heaven joined Lucifer's rebellion (Revelation 12:3, 4, 7-9).

This rebellion against God and His loving principles is called sin in the Bible (Isaiah 53:6; 1 John 3:4). It brings heartache, confusion, chaos, tragedy, disappointment, sorrow, betrayal, and evil of every kind. Worst of all, its penalty is death (Romans 6:23)--from which there is no resurrection--in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Sin spreads faster and is more lethal than the most deadly type of cancer. It put the universe itself in jeopardy.

So God cast Lucifer and his angels out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9), and Lucifer received a new name--"Satan," which means "adversary." His fallen angels are now called demons. Satan seduced Adam and Eve, and sin thus came upon all humans. What a horrendous tragedy! The devastating conflict between good and evil had begun, and evil appeared to be winning. The situation seemed hopeless.

But, no! Jesus, God's Son--deity Himself--who was more than equal to all the people who would ever live on earth, agreed to sacrifice His life to pay the death penalty for every sinner (1 Corinthians 5:7). By accepting His sacrifice, sinners would thus be freed from the guilt of sin (Romans 3:25). This glorious plan also included Jesus entering a person's life when invited (Revelation 3:20) and changing him to a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). It provided power from Jesus to resist Satan and to restore every converted person to the image of God, in which he was created (Genesis 1:26, 27; Romans 8:29).

This blessed atonement offer includes a plan to isolate sin and destroy it--including Satan and his fallen angels, plus all who join him in rebellion (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 21:8). Further, the full information regarding Jesus and His loving government and Satan and his diabolical dictatorship will be taken to every person on earth so all can make an intelligent, informed decision to align either with Christ or Satan (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6, 7).

The case of every person will be examined in the heavenly courtroom (Romans 14:10-12), and God will honor the choice of each individual to serve either Christ or Satan (Revelation 22:11, 12). Finally, after eradicating sin, God's plan is to create new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17), where sin will never again rise (Nahum 1:9), and give it to His people as their home throughout eternity (Revelation 21:1-5). The Father and Son will then dwell with their people in perfect joy and harmony forever.

All of this is included in the "at-one-ment." God has informed us of it in His Word and demonstrated it in the Old Testament sanctuary services, especially the day of atonement. Jesus is the key to the atonement. His loving sacrifice for us on Calvary makes it all possible. Getting rid of sin in our lives and in the universe is possible only through Him (Acts 4:12). No wonder heaven's three-point final message to the world calls upon us all to worship Him (Revelation 14:6, 7).

14. Why do some Bible interpreters detach the last week (or seven years) of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and apply it to Antichrist's work at the end of the world's history?

Answer: This question is a good one--"Why would anyone remove the last seven years of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and place it at the end of the world's history?"

Let us review the facts:

A. There is no warrant or evidence whatever for inserting a gap anywhere between any of the years of the 490-year prophecy. It is continuous, as were the 70 years of exile for God's people mentioned in Daniel 9:2.

B. Never in Scripture does a specific number of time units (days, weeks, months, years) comprising a stretch of time mean anything but continuous or consecutive time units. The burden of proof is on those who claim that any part of any time prophecy should be detached and counted later.

C. A.D. 27 (the year of Jesus' baptism) was the starting date for the last seven years of the prophecy, which Jesus emphasized by beginning at once to preach, "The time is fulfilled." Mark 1:15.

D. At the moment of His death on the cross in the spring of A.D. 31, Jesus cried out, "It is finished." The Saviour here clearly refers to the predictions of His death made in Daniel chapter 9, such as:

1. "Messiah" would be "cut off" or crucified (verse 26).
2. He would "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" by dying for all as the true Lamb of God (verse 27; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 15:3).
3. He would "make reconciliation for iniquity" (verse 24).

There is no biblical authority or evidence for detaching the last week, or seven years, of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and applying it to the work of Antichrist near the end of the world's history. More serious, detaching the last seven years from the 490-year prophecy so distorts the true meaning of many prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation that people simply cannot correctly understand them. This is why God condemns private interpretation of prophecy, such as this seven-year gap theory. Such interpretations always lead people astray.

15. I have accepted Christ's atoning sacrifice for my life and have invited Him to cleanse me from sin and make me a new person.

Answer: