

Triennial Torah Study – 3rd Year 01/09/2012



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Num 17		Daniel 7-9	Romans 8
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Aaron's Rod Buds (Numbers 17)

In the rebellion of Korah, the heresy that just any Israelite could serve in God's priesthood had spread throughout the camp. And even though the instigators of this idea had been removed, the idea itself persisted among the people. Indeed, it was evident from the people's response following God's execution of the rebels—blaming Moses and Aaron—that they did not really understand why God had done this. So He would make it very clear to them that only Aaron and His descendants were to serve as the priests of His physical nation—and that any violation of this rule would merit death, as they had already witnessed.

God asked Moses for each family tribe to get a staff, a rod, and whittle the name of the family's leader onto the stick. Aaron's name was to be on the rod of the family of the Levites. If the name "Levi" had been on the rod of the Levites, all the Levites would have an equal claim to the priesthood. But as we know, that was not the case (remember, even Korah and his family were Levites). Moses was then to lay these 12 rods side by side before God in the tabernacle. God would settle the matter, hopefully once and for all, by miraculously causing the rod of the one He had chosen to blossom (verse 5). That would put a stop to any and all claims that the priesthood belonged to others. Moses did as God had instructed, and the next day Aaron's rod had buds, blossoms and almonds that had already ripened! Every tribe got their lifeless stick back, while Aaron's blossoming rod was laid up in the Most Holy Place to serve as a sign against any future attempts to usurp the priesthood (Hebrews 9:3-4).

Finally, the congregation seems to get the picture that God is more serious about preserving the sanctity of His holy things than about physical life and death. However, considering the context, it appears that Numbers 17 ends with the Israelites falling into despair over the concern that they could be annihilated due to some random mistake or oversight at the tabernacle (see verses 12-13)—in which case, God basically answers their concern in the next chapter.

Four Beasts From the Sea (Daniel 7)

The first six chapters of Daniel's book concern events and episodes in his and his companions' lives. The last six relate a series of visions the prophet experienced—all of which came late in his life. For the sake of chronological flow, we are skipping over the events of chapters 5 and 6 and reading chapter 7, which contains the first of these visions.

The date is “the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon” (verse 1). Evil Merodach, who assumed the Babylonian throne upon his father Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 B.C. and then released the Jewish king Jeconiah from prison, reigned only a very short time. “In 560 he was assassinated by Neriglissar, his sister's husband.... His tenure was [also] brief however (560-556). [Then] his young son Labaʿi-Marduk, who succeeded him...reigned only one month [before] he was beaten to death” (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 1987, p. 476).

“This revolt placed its leader Nabonidus...on the throne. He does not seem to have been related to the royal house by blood but [as we will later see] apparently married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar...[possibly using this fact] to legitimize his seizure of the throne. He may have been a member of the wealthy merchant class, therefore being cordially supported by the commercial leaders” (Expositor's Bible Commentary, note on Daniel 5:1-4).

In any case, as the neighboring Median Empire grew in strength, Nabonidus was beset with political confrontation at home over religious disputes with the Babylonian religious hierarchy. He may also have suffered from health problems and seems to have become more interested in scholarly pursuits than in administration. Whatever the reason, “the situation became so uncomfortable for Nabonidus that in his sixth year (550) he went into a ten-year self-imposed exile at Tema, the great oasis of the Syro-Arabian desert east of the Red Sea. Nabonidus did not abdicate by any means, however, but left the everyday affairs of government in the hands of his son Bel-ʿar-usur (= Belshazzar)” (Merrill, p. 477).

The Nelson Study Bible notes: “The date of Belshazzar's first year cannot be stated precisely. However, since Nabonidus appears to have spent at least ten years in Arabia and since Belshazzar reigned for Nabonidus in Babylon during that time, a date of 550 B.C. for Belshazzar's first year cannot be far off. This date coincides with the inauguration of the Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus [when the Persians took over from the Medes], an occasion that may have prompted Daniel's vision” (note on verse 1)—that is, this signal event may have been the reason God gave Daniel the vision at this particular time.

Daniel had been taken captive 55 years before, so he was now in his early 70s. When the prophet received the interpretation of his current vision from one of God's angels, he must have recalled the explanation he gave to Nebuchadnezzar of his vision in Daniel 2 more than half a century earlier. Remember from that passage that the king had dreamt of a giant human image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze and legs of iron. A great

stone fell from heaven, struck the image on its feet and toes, causing the entire image to disintegrate, and then grew to fill the whole earth.

The four parts of the image represented a succession of four great imperial kingdoms: 1) the Neo-Babylonian Chaldean Empire of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors; 2) the Medo-Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great and his successors; 3) the Hellenistic Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great and his successors; and 4) the Roman Empire. The stone from heaven is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who takes over and sets up a world-ruling fifth kingdom, the Kingdom of God. The 10 toes of the legs of the image, extensions of the Roman Empire, are described as rulers who exist at the time of Christ's coming in power and glory—showing that the Roman Empire continues on in some form until the end time (as the Roman imperial system has been revived numerous times, the final revival to appear on the scene shortly before Christ's return).

Just the same, the four beasts of Daniel's vision represent four kings (7:17) or the kingdoms they represent (see verse 23). And like that of Daniel 2, this vision culminates with the time when "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom, even forever and ever" (7:18). Clearly the same succession of kingdoms is meant, and a more detailed look makes this even more obvious.

The beasts of Daniel 7 arise from the churning sea. Isaiah 57:20 states, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Basically that would signify humanity in general. An even more direct parallel can be found in Revelation 13, where a "beast" comprising elements of those in Daniel 7 is described in vision as arising from the sea. And in another prophecy of the beast in Revelation 17, the waters of the sea represent "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" (verse 15). So it would appear that each of these beasts arises from a conglomerate of various nations and peoples. Again, a succession of great gentile empires is intended.

Regarding the first beast Daniel sees, corresponding to the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, The Expositor's Bible Commentary states: "The first of these beasts is a winged lion, whose eagle-like pinions are soon plucked, so that instead of flying it stands on the ground. A human heart...is given to it. In the light of Nebuchadnezzar's career, it is clear that the plucking of the lion's wings symbolizes reduction of his pride and power at the time of his insanity (ch. 4). The lion symbol was characteristic of Babylon, especially in Nebuchadnezzar's time, when the Ishtar Gate entrance was adorned on either side with a long procession of yellow lions on blue-glazed brick, fashioned in high relief.... The final detail—'the heart of a man was given to it'—may refer to the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar's sanity after his seven-year dementia. In any event, the correspondence between the winged lion and the Babylonian Empire is acknowledged by biblical critics of every persuasion" (note on 7:4).

The second beast, corresponding to the chest and arms of silver in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is a hulking bear. Note that it is raised up on one side—so that one side is higher than the other. "The bear is...described in a way that very clearly suggests that it is to involve the alliance of two

powers, one of which will dominate the other.... The symbolic action was altogether appropriate for the federated Medo-Persian Empire, in which the Persian element dominated the Median” (note on verse 5). Recall from the Bible Reading Program comments on Isaiah 44-45 that the Persian ruler Cyrus overthrew his Median grandfather Astyages, who supposedly had tried to have him killed as an infant. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, Daniel 8, the imagery of one side of a beast being higher than the other is specifically used of Medo-Persia. “Daniel saw [the bear] devouring three ribs from some other animal it had killed. Indeed, it was divinely encouraged to feast on the ribs. This corresponds perfectly to the three major conquests the Medes and Persians made under the leadership of King Cyrus and his son Cambyses: [namely] the Lydian kingdom in Asia Minor (which fell to Cyrus in 546), the [Babylonian] Chaldean Empire (which he annexed in 539), and the kingdom of Egypt (which Cambyses acquired in 525)” (note on verse 5).

The third beast, corresponding to the bronze belly and thighs of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, is a four-winged, four-headed leopard—powerful and swift. “This beast portrays the division of Alexander’s swiftly won empire into four separate parts within a few years after his death in 323 B.C. The initial arrangement involved the area of Greece and Macedon (under Antipater and then Cassander), Thrace and Asia Minor (under Lysimachus), all of Asia except Asia Minor and Palestine (under Seleucus), and Egypt-Palestine (under Ptolemy). Even after the breakdown of Lysimachus’s kingdom, a separate realm was maintained by Eumenes of Pergamum and others, so that the quadripartite character of the Greek Empire was maintained, despite the most determined efforts of the more aggressive Seleucids and Ptolemids to annex each other into a single realm. Very clearly, then, the four heads and four wings represent the Macedonian conquest and its subsequent divisions” (note on verse 6). We’ll see further substantiation of this in Daniel 8, where the kingdom of Greece is specifically identified as dividing into four parts (see 8:21-22).

The fourth beast is a fierce creature unlike any known animal. Paralleling the iron legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, this beast has iron teeth. Daniel 2 had stated: “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (verse 40). Compare that with Daniel 7: “The fourth beast...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 [of the previous empires] with its feet.... The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth [i.e., all the land, the known world], trample it and break it in pieces” (verses 19, 23). Obviously, the same power is being described. Over time, Rome took over each of the four political divisions of Alexander’s kingdom (though not the full territory of the former empire).

The fifth and final kingdom is that of the Messiah, referred to in this chapter as “One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven” (verse 13). “Son of man” means a human being. God used this as a title for Ezekiel, the prophet-watchman being representative of his people. Jesus used the title as applying to Himself. Jesus is the ultimate representative man, who died in

sacrifice for everyone and to whose life everyone's must be conformed through His living again within them. Yet, strictly speaking, He is here said to be "like" the son of man. While in the flesh 2,000 years ago, Jesus was human. But when He returns in glory, He will not come as a mere man, but as the Almighty God who had lived a life in the flesh as a human being. Interestingly, this chapter gives us one of the few Old Testament revelations of God the Father. "Ancient of Days" could refer to either the Father or Jesus Christ, but the fact that Jesus is clearly described here as the "One like the Son of Man" who comes to the Ancient of Days, the Ancient of Days must refer to the Father in this context.

The 10 Horns and the Little Horn (Daniel 7)

The Roman Empire fell in ancient times. Yet the empire was to continue until the end-time glorious coming of Christ, whose everlasting Kingdom would take over from it. How could this be? As already noted, the Roman Empire has experienced a number of revivals. This is where the "ten horns" of the fourth beast come in—symbolic of 10 kings or kingdoms. Notice the expression "three of the first horns" in verse 8. If some horns are "first," then others come later. This would seem to imply that the 10 horns of this vision are consecutive—unlike the 10 simultaneous kings represented by the 10 toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The phrase in verse 8 could even be rendered "the first three horns." This seems to indicate that there would be 10 revivals of the Roman Empire, the first three of which are uprooted or subdued by an additional "little horn" and the last of which would itself comprise 10 distinct powers.

Consider what has actually transpired in history. Late in the fourth century, the east-west division of the Roman Empire became permanent, with one emperor reigning from Rome over the Western Roman Empire and another emperor reigning from Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey) over the Eastern Roman Empire. The Western Roman Empire fell during the next century but the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire continued until 1453. It is the Western Empire, centered at Rome, that has experienced a number of revivals. As the Western Empire collapsed in the fifth century, three groups of barbarian invaders sought to succeed the Roman emperors. Indeed, these groups—the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths successively—each sought and received official recognition from the Eastern Roman emperor as a legitimate continuation of Roman rule in the West. Yet there was a problem with these invaders from the perspective of the Western religious leader, the bishop of Rome or pope. These barbarians were not orthodox Catholic Trinitarians, having adopted a form of Christianity known as Arianism. At the pope's urging, the Vandals were eventually overthrown by the Eastern Roman emperor. The Heruli were also overthrown at papal urging—the Eastern emperor sending the Ostrogoths as his agents to carry this out. Then the Ostrogoths themselves were later overthrown by Eastern Roman forces—yet again at papal behest.

Following this, the Eastern Roman emperor, Justinian, reclaimed a lot of the western imperial territory and placed it under the management of the Roman Catholic provincial bishops. This is often referred to as the "Imperial Restoration." Yet it was not to last, the Eastern Empire eventually abandoning what it had recovered. A later revival of the Western Empire came under

the Frankish king Charlemagne, who was crowned by the pope in the ninth century. Following the disintegration of his empire, another Holy Roman Empire was established the next century at the request of the pope by the German king Otto the Great. It continued for nearly 300 years until, rent by rival factions, 19 years went by without an emperor. This was followed by the election of the Hapsburg family to the imperial throne—a revival that reached its apex under Emperor Charles V in the 16th century. Eventually, this empire also diminished, the title “Holy Roman Emperor” becoming an increasingly empty distinction. In 1806, Francis II of Austria rejected the title in the face of the growing power of Napoleon Bonaparte, who had himself received the imperial crown from the pope two years earlier.

After the fall of Napoleon, another revival of Rome was still to follow. Benito Mussolini sought to restore the Roman Empire. In 1929, he signed the Lateran Treaty with the papacy, establishing papal sovereignty over Vatican City, Roman Catholicism as the Italian state religion and papal recognition of Mussolini’s government. In partnership with Mussolini was Adolf Hitler, who sought restoration of the imperial Roman tradition in Germany. The Vatican signed a concordat with Hitler in 1933, protecting the rights of the Church in Nazi Germany and giving Hitler’s regime an outward semblance of legitimacy.

That gives us nine revivals in all. The first three—1) the Vandals; 2) the Heruli and 3) the Ostrogoths—were, as appears to have been prophesied, uprooted at the behest of a “little horn,” a smaller power emerging from Rome, which would, according to the same premise, certainly seem to be the Roman Church and its leader. Appearing to strengthen the identification is the fact that the last six revivals were all, by contrast, sanctioned by the papacy: 4) Justinian’s Imperial Restoration; 5) Charlemagne’s Carolingian Empire; 6) Otto the Great’s Roman Empire of the German Nation; 7) the Holy Roman Empire under the Hapsburg Dynasty; 8) Napoleon’s French Empire; and 9) the Hitler-Mussolini Axis. This listing shows that just one imperial revival yet remains to come on the scene—the final one, which will exist at the time of Christ’s return.

The little horn is guilty of great blasphemy and wickedness. Observe what Adam Clarke’s Commentary states in its note on verse 25, with phrases in the verse set in italics: “He shall speak great words against the most High [could be rendered] ‘He shall speak as if he were God’.... To none can this apply so well or so fully as to the popes of Rome. They have assumed infallibility, which belongs only to God. They profess to forgive sins, which belongs only to God. They profess to open and shut heaven, which belongs only to God. They profess to be higher than the kings of all the earth, which belongs only to God. And they go beyond God in pretending to lose whole nations from their oath of allegiance to their kings, when such kings do not please them! And shall wear out the saints. By wars, crusades, massacres, inquisitions, and persecutions of all kinds. What in this way have they not done against all those who have protested against their innovations, and refused to submit to their idolatrous worship? Witness the exterminating crusades published against the Waldenses and Albigenses.... And think to change times and laws. Appointing fasts and feasts; canonizing persons whom he chooses to call saints; granting pardons and indulgences for sins; instituting new modes of worship utterly

unknown to the Christian Church; new articles of faith; new rules of practice; and reversing, with pleasure, the laws both of God and man.”

Verse 25 concludes with this statement: “Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.” This expression occurs again in the book of Revelation 12 as the time during which a portion of God’s Church is protected just prior to Christ’s return. Some argue that the expression does not refer to a specific period of time, but such particular language would be a rather odd way to express something indefinite. Much more likely is that a “time” denotes a year. “Times,” in the plural, would need to mean the smallest plural—two—for this to be at all comprehensible. This yields a total of three and a half years—a figure consistent with the 1,260-day work of the end-time two witnesses in Revelation 11:3 and the 42 months of Revelation 11:2 and 13:5. What the statement in Daniel is telling us is that all the awful blasphemy and evil of the false Christian system during the Middle Ages was only a forerunner of what is going to happen in the last three and a half years before Christ’s return.

The dominion of the little horn is consumed and destroyed when the Kingdom of God is set up (verses 26-27). Indeed, the beast and presumably this horn emerging from it are both destroyed in burning flame at that time (verse 11), just as Revelation 19:20 explains that the final Beast and False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire.

Finally, “the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom” (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27). This wording emphasizes the great honor God will shower on His saints. Though the Kingdom of God will always belong to God and Jesus Christ, this sums up the generous love of God in sharing the blessings of the Kingdom with the saints.

Yet dark days would precede that time. Daniel was deeply troubled about what was coming. His “face paled (...literally...’my facial hue was changing on me’) because of his inward concern about the severe trials and afflictions awaiting his people” (Expositor’s, note on verse 28). Nevertheless, he continued to mull it over.

The Ram and the He-Goat (Daniel 8)

After writing in Aramaic since 2:4, Daniel now returns to writing in Hebrew. While he will write two more historical accounts in Aramaic, chapters 5 and 6, those will be included in the early part of his book. Everything that follows 8:1 in arrangement order is in Hebrew, presumably because the intended audience was Jewish.

It is now about 548 B.C. Two years have passed since Daniel’s previous vision of the four beasts (see 7:1; 8:1). While Daniel is in a deep sleep with his face to the ground (verse 18), he is transported in vision to the River Ulai, an artificial canal near the Elamite capital of Shushan or Susa (verse 2). This city, which was about 230 miles east of Babylon, would become one of the imperial capitals of the Medo-Persian Empire. Thus it was a fitting place to see the ram representing that empire.

The ram's two horns represented the Median and Persian elements of the kingdom. Indeed, as with the symbol of the tilted bear in chapter 7, we see that one horn of the ram was higher than the other, in both cases representing the dominance of Persia over Media (see 8:20). "Ancient records declare that the king of Persia, when at the head of his army, bore in the place of a crown the head of a ram. The same figure is frequently found on Persian seals" (qtd. in Expositor's Bible Commentary, footnote on verse 3).

The male goat coming from the west to cast down and trample the Persian ram, so swiftly that it is as if he flies above the ground, is the kingdom of Greece—its large horn being its first king (verse 21), that is, the first Greek king to succeed the Persian Empire after overcoming it. This could only refer to Alexander the Great of Macedonia, who carved out his vast Hellenistic Empire in short order. Launching his attack against Persia in 334 B.C., he had essentially subdued it by 332.

According to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, this prophecy in Daniel factored into Alexander's positive treatment of the Jews—along with other miraculous intervention.

The account states that when Alexander laid siege to Tyre, he sent a letter to the Jewish high priest Jaddua asking that he switch allegiance from the Persian emperor Darius to him and provide him with military support. "But the high priest answered the messengers, that he had given his oath to Darius not to bear arms against him; and he said that he would not transgress this while Darius was in the land of the living. Upon hearing this answer, Alexander was very angry; and though he determined not to leave Tyre, which was just ready to be taken, yet, as soon as he had taken it, he threatened that he would make an expedition against the Jewish high priest, and through him teach all men to whom they must keep their oaths" (Antiquities of the Jews, Book 11, chap. 8, sec. 3).

Alexander later moved down to take the city of Gaza. "When the seven months of the siege of Tyre were over, and the two months of the siege of Gaza.... Alexander...made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join with him in offering sacrifices to God, whom he sought to protect that nation, and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them; whereupon God warned him in a dream...that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest should appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the [garments] proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced; and declared to all the warning he had received from God. According to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of the king" (sec. 4).

What is reported as happening upon Alexander's arrival is stunning. "And when the

Phoenicians and the Chaldeans that followed him, thought they should have liberty to plunder the city, and torment the high priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, the very reverse of it happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest.... whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind. However, [his general] Parmenio alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass that, when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, 'I did not adore him, but that God who hath honoured him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very [garment], when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that [garment], and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind.

“And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city; and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favours they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired; and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired” (sec. 5).

These events transpired about 216 years after Daniel received his vision!

Four Notable Horns and Another Little Horn (Daniel 8)

Continuing in Daniel 8, Alexander was prophesied to be broken when he became strong (verse 8)—and in fact the Hellenistic emperor died at the height of his career, before he was 33 years old.

Four notable horns would replace the broken great horn. This corresponds to the four-winged, four-headed leopard representing the Greek Empire in chapter 7. As was noted in the Bible Reading Program comments, Alexander's kingdom became divided among his generals into four parts, which then continued as distinct kingdoms.

In its note on verse 9, The Nelson Study Bible states: “The little horn here is not the same as the little horn of ch[apter] 7. The former horn comes out of the fourth beast, Rome, whereas this one comes out of Greece. The little horn here refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, the eighth king of the Syrian dynasty [descended from Alexander’s general Seleucus] who reigned from 175 to 164 B.C. Thus, this prophecy skips from 301 B.C., the time of the division of Alexander’s empire, to 175 B.C., when Antiochus became king.” The identification with Antiochus Epiphanes, an evil ruler who persecuted the Jews and sought to corrupt them into idolatry, certainly makes sense. Indeed, a detailed prophecy of the succession of Greek Syrian rulers, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, is given in Daniel 11.

However, there is evidently much more to this prophecy. At least some measure of duality is intended since Gabriel (an angel mentioned for this first time in this chapter) explains that “the vision refers to the time of the end” (verse 17; see also verses 19, 23, 26). First of all, it should be recognized that since the Roman Empire took over from the Greek Syrian kingdom, Rome and powers emerging from it could, in a sense, be said to derive from Alexander’s empire— just as Greece and Persia emerged, to some degree, from Babylon. Indeed, the final resurrection of the Roman Empire in Revelation 17-18 is also clearly a resurrection of the Babylonian Empire. The beast of Revelation 13 is a conglomeration of the four beasts of Daniel’s image, as the Roman Empire had swallowed up the earlier kingdoms. Therefore, the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 could be synonymous on some level—or at least parallel (although, while the horn of Daniel 8 could signify Antiochus as well as the Roman civil or religious leader through the ages and at the end time, the little horn of Daniel 7, springing from Rome, could not represent Antiochus except as a precursor to the actual fulfillment).

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary offers the “plausible explanation...that the little horn arising from the third kingdom serves as a prototype of the little horn of the fourth kingdom. The crisis destined to confront God’s people in the time of the earlier little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes, will bear a strong similarity to the crisis that will befall them in the eschatological or final phase of the fourth kingdom in the last days.... In each case a determined effort will be made by a ruthless dictator to suppress completely the biblical faith and the worship of the one true God” (note on verses 9-10).

“Continuing on with the predicted career of Antiochus (v. 10), we encounter the remarkable statement that he will grow up to ‘the host of heaven’ and will throw ‘some of the starry host down to the earth,’ where he will ‘trample on them.’ The ‘host’...is a term most often used of the armies of angels in the service of God (esp[ecially] in the frequent title... Yahweh of hosts’), or else of the stars in heaven (cf. Jer 33:22). But it is also used of the people of God, who are to become as the stars in number (Gen 12:3; 15:5) and in Exodus 12:41 are spoken of as ‘the hosts of Yahweh’...who went out of the land of Egypt.... Now since the Greek tyrant can hardly affect either the angels of heaven or the literal stars in the sky, it is quite evident that the phrase ‘the host of the heavens’ must refer to those Jewish believers that will join the Maccabees in defending their faith and liberty. It is then implied here that Antiochus will cut down and destroy many of the Jews during the time of tribulation he will bring on them, when he will have ‘trampled

on them” (same note). Of course, God’s people at the end time—both physical and spiritual Israel, the Church—is probably also intended. And there is likely an additional meaning.

In verse 11, this little horn exalts itself as high as the “Prince of the host”—the “Prince of princes” (verse 25)—God. Besides the megalomania of Antiochus, this verse also appears parallel to the prophecy of the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the end-time religious leader “who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” And in all this, the exaltation as well as the assault on heaven’s hosts, we are probably also seeing, in type, a description of the spiritual power behind these human figures—Satan the Devil, who assaulted heaven in an attempt to replace the Almighty and even corrupted and brought to ruin others of God’s angels (see Revelation 12:4).

Like Satan, the little horn casts truth—God’s word and law (John 17:17; Psalm 119:142; 160) — to the ground. He causes the daily evening and morning sacrifices to cease and brings about the “transgression of desolation” to God’s sanctuary (verses 11-13). To what does this refer? On the spiritual level, Satan strives to end the prayers of God’s people and bring them to ultimate ruin—and he succeeds in this with some. Yet, on the physical level, the “transgression of desolation” is obviously parallel with the “abomination of desolation” set up by Antiochus Epiphanes as foretold in Daniel 11:31—an idolatrous desecration of the temple in conjunction with the ending of the literal sacrifices. We will see more about this in our reading of Daniel 11. Despite the past fulfillment of this prophecy, Jesus Christ made it clear that Daniel’s prophecy of the abomination of desolation was also to be fulfilled in an end-time context as the signal event preceding the Great Tribulation (see Matthew 24:15ff.).

Verse 14 of Daniel 8 states that the sanctuary would be cleansed after 2,300 “evening-mornings,” as the word “days” is literally rendered (NKJV margin, compare verse 26). Expositor’s notes: “This apparently precise period of time has been understood by interpreters in two different ways, either as 2,300 twenty-four-hour days (understanding *ereb boqer*, ‘evening morning,’ as indicating an entire day from sunset to sunset, like the similar expression in Gen[esis] 1), or else as 1,150 days composed of 1,150 evenings and 1,150 mornings [for a total of 2,300]. In other words, the interval would either be 6 years and 111 days, or else half of that time: 3 years and 55 days. Both views have persuasive advocates, but the preponderance of evidence seems to favor the latter interpretation. The context speaks of the suspension of the *tamid* (‘sacrifice’), a reference to the *olat tamid* (‘continual burnt offering’) that was offered regularly each morning and evening (or, as the Hebrews would reckon it, each evening, when the new day began, and each morning). Surely there could have been no other reason for the compound expression *ereb boqer* than the reference to the two sacrifices that marked each day in temple worship” (noted on verses 13-14).

There were three years from the temple desecration by Antiochus in 168 B.C. until its cleansing and rededication by the Maccabees in 165 (see 1 Maccabees 1:54; 4:52-53)—an event now celebrated by the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. Yet since the prophecy is primarily for the end-

time, it also seems that there must be a last-days application, either of 1,150 days or perhaps 2,300. Indeed, some have postulated a 2,300-year fulfillment, stretching from ancient times to the future, based on the prophetic day-for-a-year principle, although it is not clear how this could fit (and this appears unlikely with the particular expression evening morning, which if denoting a day would seem specific to a 24-hour day)

In verse 25, Gabriel told Daniel that the little horn would be broken “without human hand” (see margin). According to the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees, Antiochus died of painful diseases. And in the end time, the Beast and False Prophet will be destroyed by the divine Jesus Christ.

Daniel was utterly shocked by the vision, finding it far more traumatizing than his previous one as he considered the terrible plight his people would experience in the future. Whereas Gabriel had awakened him from sleep to explain the vision’s imagery (verse 18), the prophet now fainted and was sick for days (verse 27). He was able afterward to resume his state duties but remained stunned for some time.

Daniel Prays for His People (Daniel 9)

It is the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede over Babylonia (539-538 B.C.). The rule of the Chaldean Empire was now over. Yet what did this mean for the captives of Judah in Babylon? Daniel at this point considers what Scripture has to say. It is not clear if he turned to Jeremiah’s prophecy at this time or if he was simply recalling what he already knew from it.

The prophecy explained that God “would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (verse 2). As explained in the Bible Reading Program’s comments on Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years had two aspects to it. It denoted the 70 years of Babylonian imperial rule—from 609 to 539 B.C. Yet it also meant that Judah and Jerusalem would suffer 70 years of desolation following the invasion of Babylonian forces. This most obviously fits the time from the great destruction of 586 until the rebuilding of the temple in 516. (In fact, Zechariah 7:5 later made it clear that the 70 years began after the commencement of the fast of the fifth month, which was instituted following the temple’s destruction in 586.)

Yet it should be remembered that there were three waves of Babylonian invasion and captivity in Judah—and Daniel did not have the hindsight of the temple’s reconstruction in 516. Perhaps he was trying to determine the starting and ending points of the 70 years—or even considering the possibility of multiple fulfillments. Daniel himself had been carried away captive in 605 B.C., when Babylon first invaded Jerusalem and robbed its temple. That was 67 years ago. Counting 70 years from that point, the end would be just a few years away. No doubt Daniel also had in mind Isaiah’s prophecy, given some 150 years prior, wherein God had said, “Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’” (Isaiah 44:28).

Perhaps Daniel felt that even if the ultimate fulfillment of the 70 years was more than two decades away, there could yet be an opportunity for early waves of return, as conditions seemed to merit that possibility.

Yet as Daniel gives further consideration to Scripture, particularly the terms of the covenant as written down by Moses, he understands that there will be no redemption or return at all without national repentance. And sad to say, as he surveys the spiritual condition of his people, he realizes all too well that they have not as yet, despite all that they have experienced, humbled themselves in repentant prayer and seeking God's truth (Daniel 9:13).

So Daniel resolves to intercede for the nation, imploring God through prayer and fasting that He act without delay for the sake of His holy name to restore His sanctuary, His city and His people. Notice that Daniel, despite his own sterling record of following God, does not take the high-and-mighty approach of saying throughout, "Look at what they have done." Rather he includes himself as one of the guilty. And indeed no human being is without sin (Romans 3:23). Yet Daniel, through regular repentance, was already considered righteous before God. He certainly didn't stand guilty in the way the rest of the nation did. So Daniel was, in a sense, taking the sins of the people on himself—and in this way he serves as a type and forerunner of the ultimate intercessor and sin-bearer, Jesus Christ.

Remarkably, before Daniel even finishes his prayer, the angel Gabriel appears, having been sent by God as soon as Daniel started speaking. Gabriel is the angel who had appeared to Daniel nearly a decade earlier to explain the vision of the ram and he-goat in chapter 8. Since it is specified that he arrives at the time of the evening sacrifice, it appears that Daniel had chosen this particular time to pray. "Because the temple was in ruins, regular daily sacrifices were impossible. Nevertheless, Daniel observed the ritual of worship by praying at the hour of the evening sacrifice. Daniel's prayer was his evening offering" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 9:20-21). While not a direct command from God as to when we should now pray, it is nonetheless a good example to us of regular, daily prayer. Indeed we will later read that Daniel's custom was to pray three times a day (6:10), just as Israel's King David did (Psalm 55:17). And in more critical circumstances, to draw even closer to God, Daniel sought Him through fasting and even more prayer—as we must also do.

The 70-Weeks Prophecy (Daniel 9)

Daniel received a rather surprising answer to his prayer. He had asked about the 70 specified years of desolation (verse 3), but God tells him of 70 "sevens," as the word translated "weeks" is literally rendered (verse 24, NKJV margin)—70 seven-year periods, seven times as long as Daniel was thinking about.

Just how are we to understand this prophecy? Gleason Archer, author of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gives a thorough explanation in his *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*:

“The prophecy of the Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 is one of the most remarkable long-range predictions in the entire Bible. It is by all odds one of the most widely discussed by students and scholars of every persuasion within the spectrum of the Christian church. And yet when it is carefully examined in light of all the relevant data of history and the information available from other parts of Scripture, it is quite clearly an accurate prediction of the time of Christ’s coming advent and a preview of the thrilling final act of the drama of human history before that advent.

“Daniel 9:24 reads: ‘Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and your holy city {i.e., for the nation Israel and for Jerusalem}.’ The word for ‘week’...is derived from...the word for ‘seven’.... It is strongly suggestive of the idea ‘heptad’ (a series or combination of seven), rather than a ‘week’ in the sense of a series of seven days. There is no doubt that in this case we are presented with seventy sevens of years rather than of days. This leads to a total of 490 years.

“At the completion of these 490 years, according to v.24b, there will be six results: (1) ‘to finish or bring transgression {or ‘the sin of rebellion’} to an end’; (2) ‘to finish {or “seal up”} sins’; (3) ‘to make atonement for iniquity’; (4) ‘to bring in everlasting righteousness’; (5) ‘to seal up vision and prophecy’; and (6) ‘to anoint the holy of holies.’ By the end of the full 490 years, then, the present sin-cursed world order will come to an end (1 and 2), the price of redemption for sinners will have been paid (3); the kingdom of God will be established on earth, and all the earth will be permanently filled with righteousness, as the waters cover the sea (4); and the Most Holy One (Christ?), or the Most Holy Sanctuary (which seems more probable, since Christ was already anointed by the Holy Spirit at His first advent), will be solemnly anointed and inaugurated for worship in Jerusalem, the religious and political capital of the world during the Millennium (5 and 6)” (1982, p. 289).

Thus, God had a detailed, comprehensive plan leading all the way from Daniel’s day to the time of the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom!

“Daniel 9:25 reads: ‘And you are to know and understand, from the going forth of the command {or ‘decree’; lit[erally] ‘word’...} to restore and {re}build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince... will be...seven heptads and sixty-two heptads.’ This gives us two installments, 49 years and 434 years, for a total of 483 years. Significantly, the seventieth heptad is held in abeyance until v.27. Therefore we are left with a total of 483 years between the issuance of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah.

“As we examine each of the three decrees issued in regard to Jerusalem by kings subsequent to the time Daniel had this vision (538 B.C, judging from Daniel 9:1), we find that the first was that of Cyrus in 2 Chronicles 36:23: ‘The LORD, the God of heaven,...has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah’ (NASB). This decree, issued in 538 or 537, pertains only to the rebuilding of the temple, not the city of Jerusalem. The third decree is to be inferred from the granting of Nehemiah’s request by Artaxerxes I in 446 B.C., as recorded in Nehemiah 2:5-8. His request was ‘Send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.’

Then we read, 'So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time {for my return to his palace}' (NASB). The king also granted him a requisition of timber for the gates and walls of the city.

"It should be noted that when Nehemiah first heard from his brother Hanani that the walls of Jerusalem had not already been rebuilt, he was bitterly disappointed and depressed—as if he had previously supposed that they had been rebuilt (Neh. 1:1-4). This strongly suggests that there had already been a previous decree authorizing the rebuilding of those city walls. Such an earlier decree is found in connection with Ezra's group that returned to Jerusalem in 457, the seventh year of Artaxerxes I. Ezra 7:6 tells us: 'This Ezra went up from Babylon,...and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him' (NASB; notice the resemblance to Neh. 2:8, the last sentence). According to the following verse, Ezra was accompanied by a good-sized group of followers, including temple singers, gatekeepers, temple servants, and a company of laymen.... After arriving at Jerusalem, he busied himself first with the moral and spiritual rebuilding of his people (Ezra 7:10). But he had permission from the king to employ any unused balance of the offering funds for whatever purpose he saw fit (v.18); and he was given authority to appoint magistrates and judges and to enforce the established laws of Israel with confiscation, banishment, or death (v.26). Thus he would appear to have had the authority to set about rebuilding the city walls, for the protection of the temple mount and the religious rights of the Jewish community.

"In Ezra 9:9 Ezra makes reference to this authority in his public, penitential prayer: 'For we are slaves; yet in our bondage, our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem' (NASB; italics [author's]). While this 'wall' may have been partly a metaphor for 'protection,' it seems to have included the possibility of restoring the mural defenses of Jerusalem itself. Unfortunately, we are given no details as to the years that intervened before 446; but it may be that an abortive attempt was made under Ezra's leadership to replace the outer wall of the city, only to meet with frustration —perhaps from a lack of self-sacrificing zeal on the part of the Jewish returnees themselves or because of violent opposition from Judah's heathen neighbors. This would account for Nehemiah's keen disappointment (as mentioned above) when he heard that 'the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire' (Neh. 1:3, NASB).

"If, then, the decree of 457 granted to Ezra himself is taken as...the commencement of the 69 heptads, or 483 years, we come out to the precise year of the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah (or Christ): 483 minus 457 comes out to A.D. 26. But since a year is gained in passing from 1 B.C. to A.D. 1 (there being no such year as zero), it actually comes out to A.D. 27. It is generally agreed that Christ was crucified in [or around] A.D. 30, after a ministry of a little more than three years [or, more accurately, in the spring of A.D. 31 after a three-and-a-half-year ministry]. This means His baptism and initial ministry must have taken place in [the autumn of] A.D. 27—a most remarkable exactitude in the fulfillment of such an ancient prophecy. Only

God could have predicted the coming of His Son with such amazing precision; it defies all rationalistic explanation” (pp. 289-291).

Just before Jesus began His ministry, the Jewish people “were in expectation” of the Messiah (Luke 3:15). And well they should have been—as it had been so clearly foretold in Daniel.

Archer continues in his encyclopedia: “Daniel 9:25 goes on to say, ‘It [the city] will again be built with the street and moat, even when times are difficult.’ It is fair to deduce from this that the actual completion of the reconstruction of the city, both walls and interior appointments of the city, would take up to about seven heptads, or forty-nine years [that is, within the first seven seven-year periods]. Soon after 400 B.C., then, the walls, the defensive moat, and all the streets and buildings behind those walls had been completely restored

“Daniel 9:26 goes on to foretell the tragic death of the Messiah: ‘And subsequent to the sixty-two heptads {ensuing upon the early installment of forty-nine}, the Messiah will be cut off and shall have no one {or “nothing”}.’ This suggests that the Messiah would be violently put to death, without any faithful followers to protect Him. He would die alone!” (p. 291). However this follows the New International Version translation. Instead of “and shall have no one,” the NKJV renders the phrase “but not for Himself”—which may refer to the fact that Jesus Christ died not because of Himself or anything that He had done, but as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

It should be noted that the Messiah would die “after the sixty-two weeks” (verse 26)—that is, not necessarily right at the end of them but sometime after they were over. “At all events, the earlier statement ‘until Messiah the Prince’ in v.25 refers to His first appearance to Israel as the baptized and anointed Redeemer of Israel; it does not refer to the year of His death, since His ‘cutting off’ is not mentioned until v.26.

“Daniel 9:26b then foretells what will happen by way of retribution to the ‘holy city’ that has rejected Jesus and voted to have Him ‘cut off’: ‘And the people of the prince who shall come {i.e., Titus, the victorious commander of the Roman troops in A.D. 70} will destroy the holy city, and its end will come with a flood {of disaster}, and war is determined down to the {very} end, with devastation.’ These vivid terms point to the total destruction that overtook Jerusalem in that fateful year” (p. 291).

We have seen that the time from the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. to the beginning of Christ’s ministry in A.D. 27 was 69 heptads—483 years. Then we see mention of the Messiah’s death, which took place three and a half years beyond the end of the 69 heptads, and Jerusalem’s destruction, which took place nearly 40 years after that. What, then of the last heptad, the 70th “week” of years? Where do these last seven years fit? There are two main Christian interpretations of the latter part of this prophecy.

We find the 70th week in verse 27: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” Who is the “he” in this verse? That is the critical question. There are two individuals mentioned in the previous

verse: 1) the Messiah and 2) the prince who is to come. The most natural antecedent for “he” in verse 27 might seem to be the last person mentioned—the prince who is to come. Yet it is possible that it refers back to the previously mentioned person, the Messiah.

Halley’s Bible Handbook, Adam Clarke’s Commentary and some other study aids prefer the Messiah as the “he” who confirms a covenant for one week. The idea is that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, launched a seven-year proclamation of the New Covenant, which He confirmed with His disciples, but was “cut off” “in the middle of the week”—that is, three and a half years into His ministry. However, it should be observed that the passage does not explicitly state that the Messiah would be cut off in the middle of the week. His being cut off was mentioned at the beginning of verse 26. The mention of the middle of the week is a separate reference in verse 27. Nevertheless, His being cut off in verse 26 is equated in this view with what is actually stated in verse 27 as having happened in the middle of the week—His bringing an end to sacrifice and offering. This refers, it is understood in this perspective, to the fact that Jesus Christ offered Himself as “one sacrifice for sins forever” (Hebrews 10:12), thus ending any need for blood sacrifices to provide atonement. (The “middle of the week” is dually understood by some to mean the middle of an actual week, Wednesday, which is indeed the day of the week on which Jesus was crucified.)

The end of Daniel 9:27 mentions the abomination of desolation referred to in Daniel 8 and 11. Christ explained that this would have an end-time fulfillment preceding the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15ff.). It would last “until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate”—or, rather, as it should be understood, on the “desolator” (NRSV). Thus in this understanding, the 70th week is divided, with the first half (the first three and a half years) being the length of Christ’s human ministry and the last half (the last three and a half years) waiting until the end time—to be fulfilled either through Christ teaching His Church while they await His return in a place of refuge for the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord or, alternatively, Christ teaching people for three and a half years after His return.

This would not seem to allow for a linear progression of events in verses 26-27 of Daniel 9. For notice that, by this interpretation, the description of events in the two verses would be: 1) Messiah dies; 2) first-century Roman destruction; 3) Messiah’s ministry; 4) Messiah dies; 5) End-time abomination and destruction. Yet it is possible that this is a Hebrew poetic arrangement—thematically A, B, A, B—where the first halves of verses 26 and 27 go together, and the latter halves of verses 26 and 27 go together. Some have pointed out as a possible weakness in this interpretation the fact that when Jesus died, this did not truly bring an end to blood sacrifices—as they continued for nearly 40 more years. Even Jesus’ disciples continued to bring sacrifices to the temple during these years. And there will be a reinstatement of temple sacrifices, as God explains through Ezekiel, during the millennial reign of Christ. Nevertheless, the once-for-all offering of Christ did end the need for the physical sacrificial system in obtaining justification with God.

The other major Christian interpretation of this section, maintained by Archer and many other commentators today, is that the “he” who confirms a covenant with many for one week in verse 27 is the one referred to immediately before in verse 26—the prince who destroys Jerusalem, the Roman leader. Yet this “he” is in this perspective a much later Roman ruler, just as we will later see in Daniel 11 that the distinctions of “king of the North” and “king of the South” denote successive rulers occupying the same offices as the prophecy progresses. Moreover, the ancient Roman destruction was a forerunner of the end-time destruction.

As mentioned in the Bible Reading Program comments on Daniel 8, and as will be more clearly seen in Daniel 11, the Greek Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes was a type of the final dictator of the end-time Roman Empire. Notice what we are told of him: “With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant [the Jewish high priest]. And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully” (11:22-23). The Jewish nation had entered into a league or treaty agreement with Antiochus but he violated it. Such a league or agreement can alternatively be called a pact, compact or covenant. As part of his violation, Antiochus cut off the temple sacrifices and set up an abominable image over the temple altar—the abomination of desolation—as a type of what will transpire in the last days (see 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11).

With all this as basis, the prince confirming a covenant with many for one week in Daniel 9:27 is seen in this alternative view as the end-time Roman leader confirming a treaty with the people of Judah (and perhaps all Israel) for what would be the final seven years of the prophecy but then revoking the agreement after three and a half years with the ending of sacrifices and the setting up of the final abomination of desolation. The condition of destruction and defilement would exist for the final three and a half years of the prophecy—until the determined consummation is poured out on this desolator.

By this interpretation, verses 26-27 do follow a linear progression: 1) Messiah dies; 2) first century Roman destruction; 3) End-time Roman treaty with the Jews; 4) End-time breaking of treaty with ending of sacrifices; 5) End-time abomination and destruction. However, this perspective has been criticized as well. One difficulty is the fact that the Hebrew term for covenant is not used elsewhere in Daniel to denote a treaty or league.

Either way, the ending of the 70-weeks prophecy is the same—the defeat of the enemy and the triumph of God and His people. Yet, again, it was far beyond the time frame Daniel had in view. What impact this newfound understanding had on the prophet, he does not say. Yet for us, it should provide wonderful encouragement, as we see in hindsight how powerfully God has worked in history to fulfill what He has foretold—and know that the remainder yet to be fulfilled is just as certain to come.

Romans Chapter 8

This chapter continues from the previous two chapters, and clearly emphasizes what takes place at rebirth: Those who have only been born of the flesh are fleshly, while those who have been born of the Spirit are new creatures (2 Cor 5:17), Messiah now live in them (Gal 2:20), they no longer sin, wish to sin (1John 3:4-10), they delight in the law of Elohim which is Spiritual (Romans 7:22 and 7:14).

People who are constantly thinking about the flesh and the needs of the flesh, are walking in the flesh and the mind is of death. People who think and walk in the spirit, are mindful and think on life and peace. The flesh is unable to obey or subject itself to the instructions of Elohim. There is no amount of human "will" that can overcome fleshly desires to obey the letter of the law. The Torah is spiritual, the desire comes out of love.

And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, this one is not His. And if Messiah is in you, the body is truly dead on account of sin, but the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. If we live by the Spirit of Elohim, we are the sons of Elohim. All of creation longs to see us also – the sons of Elohim. The creation was also held accountable for the transgression of Adam and Eve and longs for restoration. Salvation and adoption remain an expectation – for now they are unseen – it is a matter of faith.

Just as Elohim ordained beforehand that Messiah would come and redeem all, die, and raise again – so also are we appointed by Elohim beforehand for His purpose. And this purpose is known and we have been declared right before Him. Because of this, there is nothing whatsoever that can separate us from Him. When the Creator and Elohim of the Universe is for us – what then can come against us to separate us from Him? There is nothing.

We have left this teaching from United Church of God so that you can now compare it to the 70 Shabua of what this 70 weeks actually means. We are pressed for time as we travel to Missouri this weekend. My apologies for not being more thorough.

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