

(5a) THE MIDDLE-EAST AT THE CROSSROADS: Mysteries of Jerusalem's Golden Dome

Daniel saw a war between a goat representing Medo-Persia, and a ram representing Greece (Daniel 8:3-8,19-22). He noticed a little horn, which went to the south (Egypt), east (Mesopotamia), the Glorious land (Israel). He stood against the Prince of Princes (Christ), destroyed the temple, took away its sacrifices, cast down truth, and destroyed God's people (Daniel 8:9-12,23-25). This was the power of Rome which toppled the Greeks. The question was asked, "How long would this power be allowed to do all this?" (Daniel 8:13)? The answer came, "Unto 2300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14). To understand the answer we must first understand the basics of the sanctuary.

Abraham left Ur around 2000 BC. God's call to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) promised 3 things: 1. A Land - a special place - which we call Palestine today. Israel is on an important land bridge, situated on strategic trade routes in the Middle-East, which meant Israel would have global access - much like Dubai or Singapore in today's world; 2. Abraham was promised he would become a great nation, called Israel - a special people who were to reveal God's love in their life by keeping his Ten Commandments, which we saw protect our most important relationships. Surrounding nations would be attracted to them because they were a godly, prosperous and good people with God's love in their lives; 3. Abraham and his descendants were called for a reason - a special purpose, which was to bless or help the entire world. They were called to help all humanity. God has no favourites. He loves all nations and people.

But how were they to bless the world? Firstly, it was to be through them that the Messiah would come. Secondly they were given the temple, which was to show the work or ministry of the Messiah for humanity. On Mt Sinai, God gave Moses instructions for a moveable temple. The temple illustrated God's solution to human sin. There were two critical players:

1. The Sacrificial Animals (often lambs) - Solomon's Jerusalem temple was built around 950 BC. Israel now had a permanent temple to worship God. This brings us to the Dome of the Rock Mosque. What is so significant about the rock under the dome? Abraham was called by God to sacrifice his only son Isaac on a mountain God would show him. Abraham took his son Isaac, who on the way said, "Here is the wood and the fire, but where is the sacrifice?" Abraham could not bring himself to tell Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice, but instead replied, "God will provide himself a lamb."

When they arrived Isaac was told the full story, and willingly lay down on the altar to be sacrificed. Abraham was about to plunge the knife into his chest

when a voice arrested him, "Don't do it Abraham. I was just testing you. Now I know you trust me. Don't kill the boy. In the bush you will find a ram. Offer that in the place of Isaac". Abraham called this place Jehovah Jirah, which means "Jehovah will see to it" or "Jehovah provides." Moriah means "Seen by the LORD." When Jesus was on earth, he commented on this story: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). How did Abraham see the day of Jesus? Notice Genesis 22:8 - "And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'" That day Abraham saw that one day the heavenly father and his son Jesus would go together to another mountain. But this time no voice would cry out, "No, don't do it God!" The heavenly father sacrificed his son out of love for you and me. What love! The Bible says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3:16).

The rock under the dome is believed by scholars to be Mt Moriah, where Solomon set up the temple altar for sacrifices. The lambs sacrificed in these temples pointed forward to Jesus who was to be sacrificed for our sins. John the Baptist put it this way: "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

2. The High Priest - The second player in the temple was the High Priest who was a mediator. When Jesus rose from death, he went back to heaven to become our High Priest in heaven's temple: "*We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man*" (Hebrews 8:1,2).

What does that mean to us today? The Bible says: "*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus...Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*" (Hebrews 4:14,16). It means we can come boldly to God to receive mercy when we sin, and help when we are in danger of giving in to sin.

So the animal sacrifices and the High Priest pointed forward to the time when Jesus would die for all sinners and become the mediator in heaven's temple for all who accept his death. God set the temple up at the crossroads of the world so people passing through Jerusalem would hear of God's love for humanity and his plan to save us from sin.

Now let's go back to Daniel 8:14: "*Unto two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.*" Daniel knew 1 day represents 1 year in Bible prophecy, and that thus 2300 days

represent 2300 years (Ezekiel 4:6). But he couldn't understand why God would take so long to act. It made him sick at heart (Daniel 8:27).

In Daniel 9, Daniel was praying about why Jerusalem was in ruins. He prayed, "We have *SINNED and done WRONG...we have turned away from your commands and laws...Therefore...the LORD did not hesitate to bring this great DISASTER on us...*" (Daniel 9:5,11,14). Sin, which is breaking of God's commandments, brought judgment on Israel. Suddenly Gabriel appeared and told Daniel he had been sent to help him to understand the time element (Daniel 9:22,23). He said the 70 weeks was "cut off" from the 2300 years; "Seventy weeks are cut off for your people and your holy city..." (Daniel 2:24). Seventy weeks is four hundred and ninety days. Since in Bible prophecy, one day represents one year, thus 70 weeks of prophetic time or 490 prophetic days is four hundred and ninety literal years. But for what?

Seventy weeks of years (490 years) were "allotted...to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness..." (Daniel 9:24). In other words 70 weeks or 490 years was allotted Israel to make a course correction and avert further judgment. How would they be able to make a course correction during this time? Gabriel continued, "Know therefore and understand, from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah (Christ) the Prince..." (Daniel 9:25). The Messiah would help them make a course correction and avert further judgment. This prophetic time was to begin "from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem..." (Daniel 9:25). Jerusalem, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC, was lying in ruins. The command was given to restore Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, which was 457BC (Ezra 7:7,8).

The prophecy continued: "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem UNTIL MESSIAH the prince, there shall be SEVEN weeks and SIXTY TWO weeks..." (Daniel 9:25). Thus from the command to restore and build Jerusalem till Messiah arrived would be a period of 7 weeks plus 62 weeks or a total of 69 prophetic weeks. At this time the Messiah or Christ would arrive. Sixty nine prophetic weeks is 483 days or 483 years (since 1 day in prophecy represents 1 year of literal time). If we add 483 years to 457BC we arrive at the year 27AD. It looks like it should be 26AD, but because there is no zero year between 1BC and 1AD, you must add 1 when going from BC to AD time.

What happened in 27 AD? The Bible says, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar..."

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, 'You are My

beloved Son; in you I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:1,21,22). Luke in his book of Acts says, "...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost..." (Acts 10:38). Messiah is a Hebrew word, which means "the anointed one." The Greek word Christ also means "the anointed one." When was Jesus anointed? When did He become Jesus the CHRIST or Jesus the MESSIAH? At His baptism when he was "anointed." Tiberius Caesar began to reign in the year 12AD. Luke said Jesus was baptized in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius. If you add 15 to 12AD you come to 27AD, the very year Daniel predicted the Messiah or Christ would come. Which is why, immediately after His baptism, Jesus exclaimed, "The TIME is FULFILLED..." (Mark 1:15).

Remember there was a total of 70 weeks and we have covered 69 to this point, which leaves just 1 more week – 7 prophetic days or 7 literal years - From 27AD to 34 AD. "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off...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" (Daniel 9:26,27). Notice in the middle of the last week or 7 year period – 3 ½ years after 27 AD, Messiah would be cut off – and he was – 31 AD Christ died. Then just 40 days later he ascended to heaven and began His work in heaven's temple as our great High Priest.

Thus since Christ's death and His ascension into heaven's temple in 31AD, earthly temple oblations (sacrifices and priestly offerings) are no longer needed. Which is why when Christ died the temple curtain was torn in two – the old earthly temples were no longer needed (Matthew 27:51). Little wonder Sir Isaac Newton, British scientist & mathematician, who was also a student of Bible prophecy said of Daniel's 490 year prophecy: It is "The foundation stone of The Christian Religion." Why did he say that? Because it clearly reveals that Jesus is surely the Messiah or Christ. But also remember that the purpose of the 490 years was to: 1. End rebellion against God; 2. Get victory over sin; 3. Reconcile all to God; 4. Forgive & justify all. The amazing accuracy of this time prophecy is to give us faith and confidence, that these things are all true for those who accept Christ.

You can now understand why some Jewish Rabbis put a curse on this prophecy: "May the bones of the hands and the bones of the fingers decay and decompose, of him who turns the pages of the book of Daniel, to find out the time of Daniel 9:24-27, and may his memory rot from off the face of the earth forever" (Talmudic Law. p.978, Section 2, Line 28). Down through the centuries many Jews have heard this prophecy and seen that Jesus is the Christ and have become Christians. Jewish leaders, knowing of this, put a curse on the reading of the prophecy.

Christ had worked for 3 ½ years and then died for Israel so they could avert more unfavourable judgment as had occurred in Daniel's day, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city because of sin. Mercy was held out to Israel for another 3 ½ years

when God sent more messengers to Israel and Jerusalem – men like Peter, James, John and Steven. A few years after Christ's death in 31AD, Steven was stoned by the Jews for preaching Jesus. Christians then began to preach the gospel to the gentiles. Holding the coats of those who stoned Steven was a young man called Paul, who later became the apostle to the non-Jewish people. Israel rejected her Messiah and her probationary time of 490 years came to an end. Now the Christian church (Jews and Non-Jews who put their trust in Jesus) was to be God's instrument to save the world. Almost 40 years later Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, thus fulfilling completely Daniel's amazing prophecy: "...and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined" (Daniel 9:26).

Israel could have averted unfavourable judgment at the hands of the Romans had they accepted the words of John the Baptist: "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" The only way for us to make a course correction and avert unfavourable end-time judgment is to also follow John's advice to "*Watch the Lamb*" Won't you accept Him and put your life in his hands right now, no matter who you are or what you have done?