

Chapter 9: The prophet Daniel.

The last ditch

Although he never mentioned it to Professor Ho, Xiao Wang had also looked at the websites of the anti-Biblical critics, the so-called ‘skeptics.’ They didn’t seem nearly as careful and evenhanded as Professor Ho was. Many of them used some of the same invalid old arguments Professor Ho had mentioned. It was amazing in some ways; archaeologists with Ph.D.’s writing in the 21st century were still repeating the claim that camels hadn’t been domesticated yet in Abraham’s time! [See chapter 4 appendix, [Use of camels by Abraham](#)] That mistake, and many others like it, had already been decisively refuted decades ago, but they were still being blindly believed and repeated on the ‘skeptics’ websites. Apparently these guys weren’t ‘skeptical’ enough! And meanwhile, despite having so many obvious errors, the tone of the skeptics’ sites was often very sarcastic and condescending toward Christian believers. Some were downright crude.

Xiao Wang couldn’t agree with all that the so-called skeptics said. Nonetheless, at least some of the questions they raised seemed valid. He was focusing in on those now. They were, in a sense, his last ditch defense against Christianity.

Xiao Wang found himself strangely conflicted. Half of him hoped the Bible was true, wanted it to be true. The other half rebelled against the thought, felt that it was absurd—and at the same time was even a little afraid that it might be true.

Meanwhile Professor Ho had guessed most of Xiao Wang’s inner conflict, even though the latter had never told him about it. Professor Ho had gone through a similar struggle himself years before. He remembered the increasing, almost overwhelming reluctance that had taken hold of him just before he became a Christian. It was only later that he understood why. As a Christian, Professor Ho had realized that the most basic nature of a human being was opposed to acknowledging God as the ruler of one’s life, and even more opposed to the thought of facing judgment after death. A large part of him hadn’t wanted it to be true.

Professor Ho had also long ago guessed that Xiao Wang would be reading the anti-Biblical critics. At one level, he felt this didn’t matter. He knew the critics’ bald assertions didn’t hold up to a *truly* ‘critical’ examination of the evidence. But he also knew that if someone who already knew as much as Xiao Wang was determined to escape from Christianity, the unfounded objections and occasional outright lies of the ‘skeptics’ would have a persuasive attraction. It would come down to this: would Xiao Wang want the truth enough to take the available evidence to its logical conclusion? Or would he hide behind minor uncertainties and trumped up objections—and walk away from the truth he did know. For several weeks the focus of Professor Ho’s prayers for Xiao Wang had been just that, praying that Xiao Wang would be motivated to seek the truth at any cost.

He was praying that way when he heard a knock at the door at the usual time and quickly replied, “Come in, boys!” They entered with brief greetings and sat down, while Professor Ho looked both searchingly and sympathetically at Xiao Wang. Xiao Wang’s face was calm, but he dropped his eyes from Professor Ho’s gaze.

The last straw

Professor Ho didn’t let the silence continue and become awkward. “Well boys,” he started briskly, “today I want to look at the evidence which finally ‘tipped the scales’ for me from mostly doubt to mostly belief—or perhaps I should say, the last straw that finally broke an obstinate camel’s back!” He chuckled. With another look at Xiao Wang, Professor Ho added, “But seriously, I still think my researching was a reasonable thing to do, not just obstinacy. I sought the truth, and I found it.”

“Aren’t we going to do Daniel today?” Xiao Li asked. “I’ve always wondered what all those animals mean.”

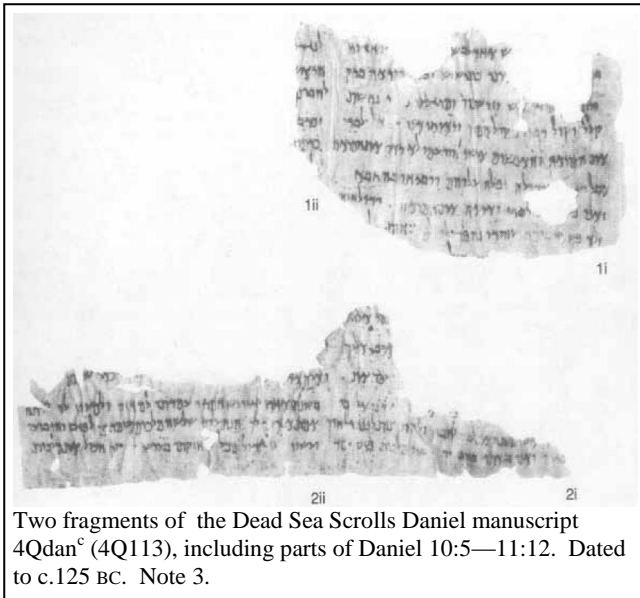
Professor Ho nodded, “Yes, I want to look at the prophecies in the book of Daniel today, at least a few of them. The book of Daniel is filled with prophecies; one commentator counted 58 different ones.¹ They cover thousands of years, including some fulfilled in Daniel’s lifetime, some in the time of Jesus, some in the 20th century, and some still waiting for the endtimes to be fulfilled. But for today, I just want to look at three of Daniel’s predictions, plus a fourth from elsewhere in the Bible:

1. The four empires controlling Israel during and after Daniel’s day [Daniel 2, 7, 8].
2. The timing of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, in 26 AD [Daniel 9:24-25].
3. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple after the Messiah was put to death [Daniel 9:26; Luke 21:5-7, 20-24].
4. The worldwide scattering of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple [Deuteronomy 28:63-68; Luke 21:24].

All of these pebbles of evidence added into my scale finally pushed me to a conclusion. The logic went like this:

1. people can’t tell the future, but
2. Daniel accurately foresaw the future; therefore,
3. Daniel must have received a revelation from the God who knows the future; furthermore,
4. the other prophets in the Bible had the same kind of revelation, so
5. the Bible must have been inspired by the real God.

I’ve lived long enough and read enough history to know that human beings consistently fail in their attempts to predict the future. But the prophets in the Bible consistently succeeded! Daniel’s predictions were my last step in confirming this fact.” Professor Ho paused. Xiao Wang was thinking to himself: “If it’s really that way, then Jehovah really is the



Two fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls Daniel manuscript 4Qdan^c (4Q113), including parts of Daniel 10:5—11:12. Dated to c.125 BC. Note 3.

one.” Again he found the thought both attractive and repellent the same time.

The prophet Daniel

“First some background,” Professor Ho continued. “Daniel was among the captives taken to Babylon in the first deportation in 605 BC. He was a youth at the time, probably less than 20 years old, and from an upper class family. Nebuchadnezzar had him enrolled in his training program which produced educated civil servants for his government bureaucracy. During the training period, God gave Daniel a revelation telling him both what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed and the interpretation of the dream [see Daniel 2]. As a result he was elevated to a prominent government position by Nebuchadnezzar. The use of foreigners in such ministerial positions was not uncommon in the ancient near east [see, for example, Jeremiah 38:7-11], since the foreigners holding the offices lacked a network of local connections were completely dependent on the king for their position, they were less likely to aid in a

conspiracy or rebellion against the king. Daniel continued to hold high position under the subsequent Medo-Persian rulers after they conquered Babylon in 539 BC. He died sometime after 537 BC, probably over 80 years old at the time.

“The book of Daniel contains two main strands: a record of prophetic revelations, mostly visions, which Daniel received from God, and selected biographical information about events during Daniel’s lifetime. As I said a moment ago, the fulfillment of the prophecies shows that God inspired them. Meanwhile, the biographical information provides a rich source of evidence for demonstrating the historical accuracy of Daniel, as well as helping to confirm it’s date of composition.”

When was the book of Daniel written?

“When was it written?” Xiao Wang immediately asked. “And how do you know?”

Professor Ho smiled broadly. “You’ve hit it, Xiao Wang! Many of Daniel’s prophecies are extremely specific, and their historical fulfillment is indisputable. We will quickly see that the only question remaining is: when were they first written? Before or after the events they describe?”

Professor Ho leaned back in his chair and spoke emphatically. “I am completely convinced, on good evidence, that the book of Daniel was completed before the year 500 BC [see appendix to this chapter]. But to avoid any possibility of argument, let’s work from the date of the oldest copy we now have.

“Portions of eight different manuscripts of the book of Daniel were found among the ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ of the Qumran community. The oldest of these is dated to about 125 BC.² The dating was done by unbelievers. In the past, some of these unbelieving scholars have claimed the manuscript could or should be dated to 100 BC. For the sake of argument, let’s use the 100 BC date as our reference point. No one can possibly make a rational claim that the book of Daniel as we have it comes from later than that. Even all of the hardcore anti-Biblical critics say Daniel was completed around 165 BC. Are there specific prophecies in Daniel fulfilled later than 165 BC or 100 BC? The answer is: yes. Today we will look at three of them.”

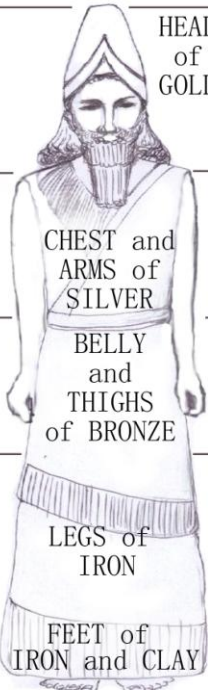
Professor Ho opened a folder he had already placed on his desktop and gave each boy two pieces of paper, a historical timeline and a chart with texts from Daniel arranged in grids. “These should help us understand the prophecies and their historical fulfillments.”

The four empires controlling Palestine

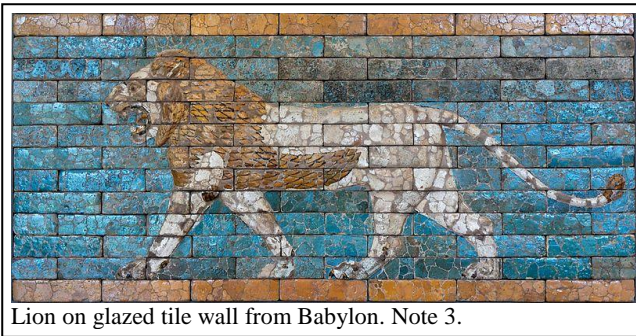
“Daniel received prophetic revelations about the empires which would rule over Palestine from his time onwards. Two of these are strictly parallel, the vision of the four-metal statue in chapter 2, received about 604 BC, and the vision of the four beasts in chapter 7, received about 553 BC. Each of them presents a series of four empires, followed by a fragmentation into ten units. These are explicitly stated to be a historical succession, using phrases such as ‘after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom’ [Daniel 2:39] and ‘out of this kingdom, ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them’ [Daniel 7:24]. The key thing to grasp is the correspondence between the two series: gold—silver—bronze—iron is strictly parallel to lion—bear—leopard—frightening, iron toothed beast.”

“How can you be sure about that correspondence?” Xiao Wang asked.

“I think that will become clear to us as we go on,” Professor Ho replied. “Let’s dig in to the prophecies!”

Identification of the Four Kingdoms				Chronology of Major Empires in Daniel	Power Controlling Palestine	
Vision in Daniel Ch. 2	Vision in Ch. 7	Vision in Ch. 8	IDENTIFICATION			
	HEAD of GOLD	LION (symbol of Babylon)		BABYLON 2:48	BABYLONIA	605-539BC Babylonians
	CHEST and ARMS of SILVER	BEAR (2 sides) (3 ribs)	RAM (2 horns) (3 directions)	MEDO PERSIA 8:20	MEDO-PERSIA	539-331BC Medo-Persians
	BELLY and THIGHS of BRONZE	LEOPARD (4 wings) (4 heads)	GOAT (w/o touching the ground) (4 horns)	GREECE 8:21	GREECE (Including Ptolemies and Seleucids) (167 B. C. Maccabees and Hasmoneans) 63 B. C.	331-143BC Greeks (143-63BC) (Israel temporarily independent; Greek empires continue.)
	LEGS of IRON	DREADFUL, TERRIFYING STRONG BEAST (iron teeth)		ROME	ROME	63BC-476AD Romans
	FEET of IRON and CLAY (implied:10 toes)	(10 horns)			A. D. 70 Fall of Jerusalem	26AD Jesus Christ the Messiah comes. 30AD Jesus is crucified and resurrected.
				ENDTIMES FEDERATION		70AD Jerusalem destroyed, most Jews scattered. 135AD Remaining Jews expelled from Israel. No Jews permitted to live in Israel for several centuries. 1948AD Independent nation of Israel re-established.

	Daniel 2 (604/603BC)	Daniel 7 (553/552BC)	Daniel 8 (551/550BC)
Four: metals / beasts / kingdoms	31 ...there was a single great statue; that statue... 32 "The head of that statue <i>was made</i> of fine gold, its chest and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.	3 And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. ... 17 These great beasts, which are four <i>in number</i> , are four kings <i>who</i> will arise from the earth. ... 23...The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms....	
Babylonians (626-539 BC) "You, O King" / lion	37 "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38 ...You are the head of gold.	4 "The first <i>was</i> like a lion and had <i>the</i> wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.	
Medo-Persians (539-331 BC) Two: nations / sides / horns Three: conquests / ribs / directions	39 "After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you...	5 "And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs <i>were</i> in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'	3 ...a ram which had two horns.... Now the two horns <i>were</i> long, but one <i>was</i> longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. 4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no <i>other</i> beasts could stand before him... 20 "The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.
Greeks (331-30 BC) Movement: wings / without touching the ground Four: wings / heads / horns / kingdoms	39...then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.	6 "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.	5 ...a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat <i>had</i> a conspicuous horn between his eyes. 6 He came up to the ram that had the two horns... 7 ...he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him... 8 Then the male goat magnified <i>himself</i> exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous <i>horns</i> toward the four winds of heaven. ... 21 The shaggy goat <i>represents</i> the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 The broken <i>horn</i> and the four <i>horns</i> that arose in its place <i>represent</i> four kingdoms <i>which</i> will arise from <i>his</i> nation, although not with his power.
Romans (c.63 BC-476 AD) iron / stronger / different	40 "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.	7 ...a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it...	
Post-Rome / Endtimes Confederation Ten: toes / horns / kings Ten kings reign at the same time: "In the days of those kings" / "will subdue three kings"	41 ...the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 <i>As</i> the toes of the feet <i>were</i> partly of iron and partly of pottery, <i>so</i> some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. 44 In the days of those kings...	7...and it had ten horns. 8 "While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great <i>boasts</i> 24 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.	
Millennium Permanent: "endure forever" / "everlasting dominion"	44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and <i>that</i> kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.	13 ...with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming... 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and <i>men of every</i> language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away...	



Lion on glazed tile wall from Babylon. Note 3.

Babylonian empire: Gold head / Lion

“The first empire, the ‘head of gold’ in the statue vision, is explicitly identified with the Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar’s time: ‘You are the head of gold’ [Daniel 2:38]. This empire was founded by Nebuchadnezzar’s father starting in 626 BC and lasted until 539 BC. Daniel received all three of the visions we are examining during the Babylonian empire period.

“Both chapter 2’s four metal statue vision and chapter 7’s four beasts vision have the same starting point, the then-current Babylonian empire. There are a specific

respondences which helps confirm this. The first beast, a lion, was a well-known symbol of Babylon. Glazed brick tures of lions were on the façade of Nebuchadnezzar’s throne room and also lined both sides of the special street for ceremonial processions in Babylon which ran from the Ishtar gate.³ A lion used to symbolize Babylon is similar to the Romans later using an eagle as their symbol, or us Chinese having for millennia used a dragon as the imperial symbol.”

“But what about the wings?” asked Xiao Wang. “And the standing up with a human mind?”

“Yes, I was just coming to that,” continued Professor Ho. “Actually, those details are the second confirmation that the lion represents Babylon. Some time during 603-562 BC, after the statue vision but before the beasts vision, Nebuchadnezzar went insane for a lengthy period of time. The details are recorded in Daniel chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar had been boasting about his achievements and failing to acknowledge that God’s sovereignty had allowed him to become a great king. God struck him with insanity so that he acted like a beast—not like a mighty lion, but like a dumb ox, eating grass.^{A,4} Apparently this was covered up by the palace, and he did not lose his throne. After a period of time his sanity was restored, and he acknowledged that it was God who had enabled him to succeed:

34 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. 35 ...He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth... 36 At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty.... [Daniel 4:34, 35, 36 NAS]

This information from chapter 4 enables us to interpret the lion image in chapter 7 more conclusively. The plucking of the lion’s wings probably represents the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar’s excessive pride by the period of insanity. Even more clearly, being enabled to stand upright on two feet and being given a human mind should represent Nebuchadnezzar’s restoration to sanity—after which he no longer acted like a pagan ‘beast’ but recognized God’s sovereignty. Those events are recorded in Daniel chapter 4 and had already happened by the time Daniel received the four beasts vision in about 553 BC, which would have made it easy for Daniel to recognize the lion as representing Babylon.

“Now, Xiao Wang, I think we can confirm that the lion corresponds to the head of gold, that is, the Babylonian empire.” Professor Ho ticked off the evidences on his fingers.

1. “The lion comes first in the sequence of four, which is parallel to the head of gold;
2. The use of a lion as the symbol for the kingdom would have been immediately recognized by the people of Daniel’s time as representing Babylon;
3. The description of what happens to the lion has obvious correspondences to the humbling and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar detailed in chapter 4.

It’s clear the writer intends us to identify the lion with Babylon. What do you think, Xiao Wang?”

“Now that I know the details,” agreed Xiao Wang, “I see the correspondence.”

Professor Ho nodded. “So that’s the first kingdom. It actually lasted the shortest of the four. A mere 23 years after his death, Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian empire was conquered by the united armies of the Medes and the Persians. This moves us to the next set of symbols in Daniel’s visions; the gold and the lion are replaced by the silver and the bear.”

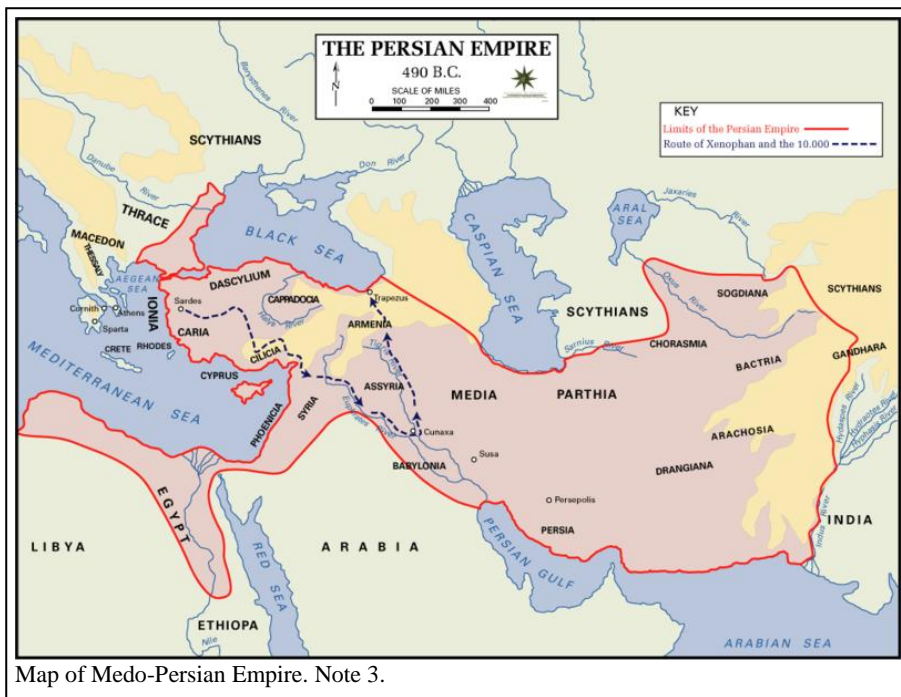
Medo-Persian empire: Silver chest and arms / Bear / Ram

“Knowing that the historical succession is Medo-Persia after Babylon, the silver chest and arms in chapter 2 obviously represent the Medes and the Persians, since the silver comes right after the gold head of Babylon. Likewise chapter 7’s bear follows the lion of Babylon, so the bear must be Medo-Persia.”

Xiao Wang interrupted. “That might make sense for the second metal in the statue, but how do you know it’s right for the second beast? How do you know it’s not just your interpretation being forced onto the beast symbols?”

Professor Ho seemed mildly surprised. “The book of Daniel obviously claims to be communicating vision about a series of future empires. When two sequences in such a book correspond point for point, it’s only logical to think the writer intended them as a parallel repetition. But I think I can prove to you the second beast, the bear, represents the

^A One Bible scholar personally observed a similar case of such “boanthropy” in 1946 in a British mental hospital. The patient thought he was a cow and regularly plucked and ate grass. See Note 4.



Medes and the Persians.

“More historical background might help here. The Medes are known from Assyrian records dated to as early as 836 BC.⁵ Later, around 700 BC, the ancestors of the Persians migrated into Persia, south of the Medes along the Persian Gulf.⁶ The Medes established their own, comparatively small empire during 614-549 BC. This included their domination over the Persians in a kind of feudalistic subordinate relationship. Then the Persians turned the tables by defeating the Medes in 549 BC. What emerged was roughly a confederate alliance between the Medes and the Persians, but this time with the Persians in the dominant position. Together, the Medes and the Persians made three major conquests in rapid

succession: Asia Minor far to the west was taken in 546 BC, Babylonia to the northwest was conquered in 539 BC, and finally, turning southward from the already held territories, Egypt to the south was subdued in 525 BC.

“Knowing what happened, we can readily understand Daniel’s detailed predictions. In chapter 7, the ‘bear’ is raised up on one side—that is, it has two sides, with one higher than the other. In chapter 8, the ‘ram’ has two horns, with the longer one coming up second—two horns, one longer, that is, more dominant, than the other, with the longer one sprouting later. These are obviously references to three of the historical facts noted above.” Professor Ho counted off on his fingers again:

1. “Two sides, two horns: that two nations, the Medes and the Persians, were allied together in the empire;
2. one side higher, one horn longer: that the Persians were dominant;
3. longer horn came up later: that the dominant power, the Persians, came to prominence later than the Medes.^B

“Similarly, chapter 7’s bear has ‘three ribs’ in its mouth, representing the three major conquests of the Medes and Persians. Chapter 8’s ram is likewise butting in three directions, ‘westward, northward, and southward.’ These compass points correspond roughly to the three major conquests of the Medo-Persian empire, Asia Minor far to the west, Babylon to the northwest, and Egypt south of the rest.

“Taking all these points together, it’s perfectly clear that chapter 8’s ram—which is explicitly identified as the Medes and Persians—corresponds to chapter 7’s bear. Thus the bear in the sequence of four beasts represents the Medo-Persian empire.”

Professor Ho paused and looked up at the boys. He detected some doubt in Xiao Wang’s eyes. “But perhaps you are not convinced?”

“Of course I agree the ram represents Medo-Persia,” Xiao Wang began slowly. “It specifically says so. And so I can see how the horns and directions are meant to correspond to Medo-Persian history. And yes, the bear does have three potential correspondences with the ram...” Xiao Wang hesitated. “But maybe those are just by chance...”

Professor Ho nodded “I see your point, but I think I can show it’s not just chance or our own forced interpretations. You see, the same kind of point to point correspondence exists for the next pair, the leopard and the goat.”

Greek empire: Bronze belly and thighs / Leopard / Goat

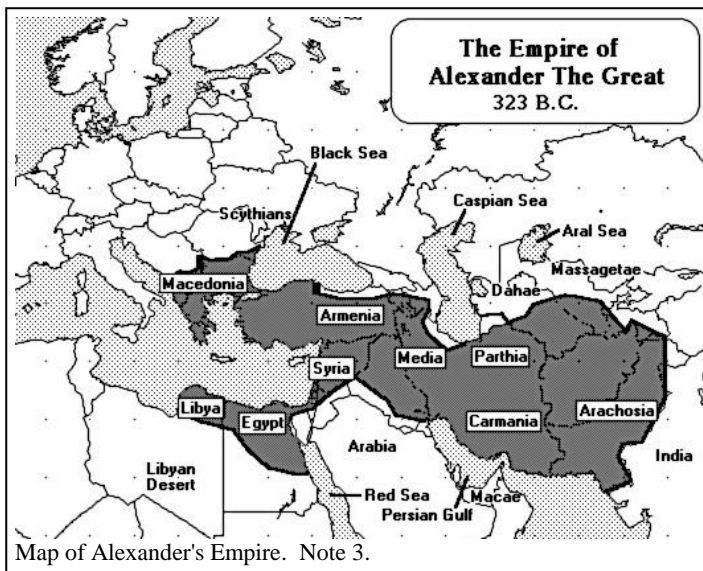
“The goat of chapter 8 is specifically said to be Greece, and the symbols aren’t hard to interpret.

“In 334 BC, the Greeks under Alexander the Great invaded the Medo-Persian empire. Less than four years later, he had completely defeated the Persians, having marched his armies through thousands of kilometers of territory. After completing additional conquests in the east, in 323 BC he returned to Babylon, which he planned to rebuild as his capital. However, a few months later Alexander suddenly died. Shortly afterwards, his vast empire was broken up into four kingdoms controlled by four of his generals known as the ‘Diadochi’ or ‘Successors.’^C The Greek kingdoms endured for various lengths of time up to 300 years. The last of them, the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt, did not end completely until 30 BC.

“Knowing the history makes it easy to interpret the symbolism of the goat. Obviously Alexander the Great is the ‘conspicuous horn,’ the first king of the Grecian empire. The advance of the Greek armies from the west was so rapid

^B Unlike the ram, the bear apparently does not illustrate the fact that Persians would come to prominence later than the Medes, but only the other two aspects.

^C Eventually (some decades later) these were reduced to only three major Greek kingdoms.



that it is pictured as if they moved ‘without touching the ground.’ The sudden breaking off of the large horn and its replacement by ‘four conspicuous horns’ obviously symbolizes Alexander’s untimely death and the subsequent division of his empire into four parts ruled by four of his former generals.

“The symbolism of the goat in chapter 8 clearly corresponds to that of the leopard in chapter 7. Most obviously, the leopard has four heads, corresponding to the four horns of the goat. The most natural conclusion of the meaning of four ‘heads’ is four different, simultaneous rulers, further corresponding to the four horns. In addition, the leopard is a swift animal to begin with, the fastest of all the animals mentioned in these visions, and to further emphasize his speed, he is given wings, enabling him to fly. This corresponds to the speedy goat, who is described as moving ‘without touching the ground.’ The number of wings is specified as four, further

reinforcing the correspondence to the four horns on the goat.

“Note here how the numbers are carefully arranged to allow the reader to match up the 4 heads of the leopard with the 4 horns of goat, while the 2 sides and 3 ribs of the bear match the 2 horns and 3 directions of the ram. Clearly the reader is intended to notice these correspondences. What do you think, Xiao Wang? Do you think the writer didn’t expect his readers to make these connections?”

Xiao Wang looked thoughtful. “I have to admit,” he said at last, “I didn’t think carefully about all the details. It certainly looks like we’re supposed to identify the bear with the ram and the leopard with the goat.”

“I think it’s indisputable. And I can give you a little more evidence. In addition to the perfect fit within the ram/bear pair and the goat/leopard pair, there is also a lack of fit with the other two animals. There is nothing in the lion corresponding to three directions, or four horns. Furthermore, the lion was well known as a symbol of Babylon, and it was the first in the sequence. Similarly, the fourth beast, ‘dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong,’ is explicitly said to have ten horns, which corresponds to nothing in either the ram or the goat, and there is no mention of the numbers three or four.”

Xiao Li spoke up. “Professor Ho, what about the rest of chapter 8? There’s a ‘small horn’ and something about ‘2,300 evenings and mornings’ [Daniel 8:9-14, 23-26]. I’ve never been able to understand all that.”

Professor Ho was sympathetic. “I’m not surprised you had trouble! I think Daniel himself probably didn’t understand it very clearly. You have to know the historical fulfillment to really understand what is going on. The ‘small horn’ is one of the kings of the Greek empires, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who reigned from 175-163 BC. He controlled Palestine and cruelly oppressed the Jews, trying to force them to worship Greek idols. It’s a fascinating story and an important fulfillment of prophecy, but we don’t have time to go into it today.”^{D, 7}

Roman empire: Legs of iron / Dreadful, terrifying, strong beast with iron teeth

“The fourth kingdom in both the four metals vision and the four beasts vision exists in two distinct forms, one following the other. The later form is a divided version of the earlier form. It should be clear by now that the four metals and the four beasts represent the same sequence of kingdoms. But if any doubt was left in our minds, a comparison of the fourth kingdom should clear it up. In both visions, the fourth in the sequence:

1. is made partly of iron [compare Daniel 2:40 and 7:7];
2. is emphatically described as especially ‘strong’ [compare Daniel 2:40 and 7:7];
3. is specifically said to destroy everything remaining from the other kingdoms [compare Daniel 2:40 and 7:7, 19];
4. has the number ten either clearly implied—‘toes’—or specifically stated—‘ten horns’ [compare Daniel 2:41-42 and 7:24];
5. exists in an earlier and later version—in chapter 2, pure iron legs give way to a divided mixture of iron and clay; in chapter 7, a single kingdom is split into ten separate, simultaneous kingdoms [compare Daniel 2:41-43 and 7:24];
6. and the latter version of the kingdom is immediately followed by the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom [compare Daniel 2:44 and 7:14, 27].

“Having identified Daniel’s third kingdom beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt as the Greek empires, it becomes easy to identify the fourth kingdom. It is the Roman empire.”

“Why doesn’t Daniel just say it’s Rome, like he does for the other three empires?” Xiao Li wondered.

“A good question, Xiao Li! The answer is because in 553 BC, no one in Babylon had ever heard of Rome! At that time, Rome was a small settlement on some hills near the Tiber, ruled by the neighboring Etruscans. It would not be-

^D Interested readers may consult Note 1 or Note 7, or most study Bibles and commentaries.

come known to the Jews until centuries later. The only term Daniel had in his day to refer to them is ‘Kittim,’ [see Daniel 11:30], an ancient, vague term used by the Jews to refer to the islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean. To strengthen this point, we can compare the non-biblical historical book of 1 Maccabees which was written by a Jew in Israel sometime before 100 BC.⁸ Thus it was originally composed around the same time as our oldest manuscript of Daniel was copied. The book of 1 Maccabees frequently uses the word ‘Romans’; they were well known in Palestine by that time. In contrast, Daniel, who lived several centuries earlier, had never heard of them.”

“Then how can you be sure Daniel’s talking about Rome?” Xiao Wang doubted.

“Obviously because of it’s place in the sequence. But also because of the details of the prophecy. As Daniel predicted, the Roman empire was unquestionably very different from all that preceded it among the conquerors of Palestine. It’s population was much greater. It endured far longer—over 500 years if we count only the time from it’s conquest of Palestine to the fall of the city of Rome, longer if we consider the Byzantine empire. It was a far more organized and integrated empire—only the Persians came close, and their control was loose and almost feudal compared to the Romans’ provincial system and eventual granting of citizenship to all free persons. And above all it was far more powerful. The Romans had larger standing armies and exercised a tighter control across a wider range of geographical boundaries (although a slightly smaller total land area) and greater number of different ethnicities than any of the empires which preceded them in the Mediterranean or the ancient near east. These unique features have been universally acknowledged, both at the time of the empire and by all historians since then.

“For a comparison, in about the same time period, our Han dynasty had about the same population and was a well integrated empire, truly one of the most glorious and seminal periods in China’s long history. However, the cultural and geographical unity of China made it much easier to attain stability than it was for the scattered Roman empire, and furthermore the Han dynasty did not exert anything like the scope of imperial control outside it’s own homeland which Rome did.

“All of that is well known history. But it was not known to Daniel! He didn’t even have a word for ‘Roman’! How could he have known?

“Daniel actually received the vision in 553 BC. But even if we hypothesize Daniel wasn’t written until around 165 BC, as the unbelieving critics claim, it would still be miraculous. At that time, Rome had barely begun to make an impact on world of the Jews. Rome had not yet even taken full control of Greece, and further east she had only barely begun to exercise influence, with a client kingdom in Asia Minor and a protectorate over Egypt, but no actual territory or troops. Who in 165 BC could have foreseen with confidence that Rome would establish an unprecedented empire? And remember, for all of Daniel’s predictions, the center point is Israel; it’s whoever holds Palestine that matters. Rome did not take Palestine until 63 BC, over 100 years after the critics’ imaginary date for Daniel, and 65 or more years after our oldest manuscript was copied. The conclusion of one Christian scholar is valid:

...the Romans still had not advanced beyond the limits of Europe by 165 [BC], except to establish a vassal kingdom in Asia Minor and a protectorate over Egypt. But certainly, as things stood in 165 BC, no human being could have predicted with an assurance that the Hellenic monarchies of the Near East would be engulfed by the new power which had arisen in the West. No man then living could have foreseen that this Italian republic would have exerted a sway more ruthless and widespread than any empire that had ever preceded it.⁹

Additional proof of this is provided by the late 2nd century BC book of 1 Maccabees I mentioned a moment ago, a book written by a Jew. 1 Maccabees talks extensively about the Romans, their wars, their victories, the territory they controlled, and their alliance with Israel. But it never gives any indication that the writer expected the Romans to destroy the remaining Greek empires or take over all their territory—much less control Israel itself. Instead, 1 Maccabees records Israel’s treaty of mutual defense made with the Roman senate.^E It’s clear that prior to 100 BC, when 1 Maccabees was written, the Jews were not anticipating Rome’s empire.

“Daniel was actually written before 500 BC, but what he predicted about the Roman empire was unknowable in 165 BC. What came after Rome was even more impossible to have foreseen.”

Professor Ho leaned back in his chair and mused aloud for a moment. “Daniel wrote during the height of the Babylonian empire. History has proven that he was correct. His highly specific predictions about the empires which would rule over Israel—Babylon, then Persia, then Greece, then Rome—these prophecies have been fulfilled in detail. The sequence of these empires is ancient history to us, but it was unknowable future in Daniel’s day. It was as if someone in the year 1400 AD had described the rise of the Spanish Empire, the British Empire, the United States, and the Soviet Union across the next 600 years. But no human being predicted those things in the year 1400. Or it would be as if someone could tell you today who the successive superpowers will be from now until the year 2600. But no human being knows with certainty what will happen next year, much less next century.

“Daniel was able to accurately predict the future because he received a revelation from God. And the God who can predict the future must be the God who controls the future. He’s the real God.”

The three were silent for a moment; Xiao Wang was thinking and wondering.

Then Xiao Li spoke up, “What about what happens after Rome?”

^E Interested readers may consult 1 Maccabees, especially chapters 8, 12, 14, and 15. Note that 1 Maccabees is not part of the Bible, and it is not necessarily accurate in all it’s historical details. It does, however, reflect how the Jews viewed Rome during the late 2nd century BC.

After Rome: The endtimes confederation

“To understand what comes next,” Professor said, “we need to remember that God’s work in history turns on two axes: the physical nation of Israel, and the spiritual kingdom of the Church. Daniel’s prophecy ignored, for example, the Han dynasty, as well as every other empire in the world that did not rule over the territory of Israel.

“In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. In 135 AD, they expelled the remaining Jews from Judea. No Jew was permitted to live in Judea for the next several hundred years. The Jews were scattered across the face of the earth. In essence, there was no nation of Israel from 70 AD until the modern state of Israel was re-established in 1948. Because of that, Daniel’s prediction skips over the empires which ruled Palestine in the Medieval and early Modern eras.

“By the time Israel would be re-established, Daniel predicted that what had been the Roman Empire would be fragmented into a group of independent nation-states separated along ethnic lines. This is clearly indicated by the texts:

41 ...the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom... 43 And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. [Daniel 2:41, 43 NAS]

24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise... [Daniel 7:24 NAS]

Fragmentation into separate nations is, of course, exactly what the situation was in Europe in 1948. Furthermore it was one of these former parts of the Roman empire, namely Great Britain, which was largely responsible for allowing the Jews to return to Palestine and re-establish the modern state of Israel. Even more fascinating is the prediction that the final form of the fourth beast will be a multi-ethnic confederation entered into voluntarily—not an empire established by conquest: ‘they will combine with one another in the seed of men.’ Furthermore, the confederation will not evolve into a unified nation: ‘but they will not adhere to one another.’

“Over a century ago, long before Israel was re-established and when the countries of Europe were ruthlessly competitive in their nationalism, many Bible interpreters were already predicting that the nations of Europe would organize themselves into such a confederation in fulfillment of this prophecy. Then in 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed, establishing the European Common Market. At the time it was just a very limited free trade zone, but way back then, in 1957, many Christian believers were predicting that the Common Market would evolve into the fulfillment of the ten toes and ten horns of Daniel’s vision. Now it has developed all the way into the increasingly confederated European Union.”

“But there are more than ten nations in the European Union,” objected Xiao Wang.

“Yes, indeed—I’ve counted!” Professor Ho replied with a bemused smile. “And the end has not yet come! Some suggest the ten is a round number, not a precise count. But I incline toward taking it literally. Is it difficult to imagine, Xiao Wang, that the number of sovereign nations in the European Union could be reduced to ten?”

“It’s possible,” admitted Xiao Wang.

“I think it’s more than possible,” Professor Ho replied; “it’s obviously quite likely! Daniel’s description of the confederation gives us a hint why it is so. The European nations have such diverse ethnicities, languages and interests, and have warred among themselves so often throughout history that it would be a miracle if they stuck together in the long run. In fact, God words in Daniel are a perfect description of the E.U.: ‘they will combine with one another in the seed of men,’ that is, different ethnicities, ‘but they will not adhere to one another.’ There in a nutshell is the E.U.: a voluntary confederation of various nationalities, not an enforced empire like all those that preceded it in Daniel’s vision, but a confederation in which each nation still remains separate. They don’t unite into one metal of a single empire, but remain separate like bits of iron held together with clay. The resulting mixture is brittle and can easily break apart along national and ethnic lines. Thus it’s easy to think that someday many nations might leave the E.U., leaving behind ten members.”

“So you think the European Union is the fulfillment of the ten toes?” Xiao Li asked.

“Not necessarily,” admitted Professor Ho, “but it’s a an excellent candidate to develop into it in the future. Obviously, not all of the ten toes / ten horns part of Daniel’s prophecy has been fulfilled yet. For example, we have not yet seen a leader arise from within the confederation and gain control over three members. But when we see now is very, very probably the preparation for and the rundown to the final fulfillment.”

Xiao Li was looking at the chart Professor Ho had given them. “What comes after that?”

“After that is the second coming of Jesus Christ.”

After the endtimes confederation: The Millennium

Professor Ho flipped open the old Bible which was always on his desktop and read from Daniel’s four beasts vision:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.
[Daniel 7:13-14 NAS]

Professor Ho looked up from his reading. “The ‘One like a Son of Man’ refers to Jesus Christ when He comes back to the earth in glory to reign. It’s a fascinating topic that we can take up another time [see chapter 15]. For today, the next thing I want to look at is Daniel’s prophecy about the first coming of Jesus. Daniel specifically predicted the year when

Jesus would be publicly proclaimed as the Christ and begin His ministry in Israel.”

Xiao Wang sat up straight in his chair. “I’d like to see that one!”

Timing of the coming of Messiah

Professor Ho smiled. “I thought you would! It’s one of the Bible’s most specifically detailed prophecies, a mathematically precise prediction that came true at exactly the prophesied time. It’s in Daniel chapter 9. [Here please read Daniel 9.]

1 In the first year [539/538 BC] of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans -- 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed as* the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet [see Jeremiah 29:10] for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years. 3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him by* prayer... [Daniel 9:1-3 NAS]

The Darius mentioned here was a Mede, apparently a general under the Persian emperor Cyrus. It seems in 539/538 BC he was put in charge of Mesopotamia, here called ‘the kingdom of the Chaldeans.’ Darius the Mede had the title of ‘king,’ that is, a subordinate ruler under the high king Cyrus.¹⁰ At that time, Daniel had been exiled in Babylon for over 65 years, since 605 BC. Jerusalem was still an uninhabited ruin as part of God’s ongoing punishment for the idolatry and other sins of the Jews.

“As we discussed last week, Daniel had been reading Jeremiah 29:10, which predicted a restoration after 70 years [see chapter 8]. Realizing the time was getting close, Daniel begins to pray that God would not only return the Jews to Israel, but also restore His chosen city, Jerusalem:

16 "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *have become* a reproach to all those around us. [Daniel 9:16 NAS]

The return of substantial numbers of Jews began at the prophesied time, a year or so after Daniel’s prayer. But Jeremiah hadn’t said exactly when Jerusalem would be rebuilt. In answer to Daniel’s prayer, an angel was sent to tell him God’s plan for the future of the Jews and Jerusalem after the return of the Jews to Israel. The answer the angel brought to Daniel not only talked about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but also specified when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come:

24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. 25 "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. [Daniel 9:24-26 NAS]

Who is coming?

“I don’t see Jesus Christ mentioned here,” objected Xiao Wang.

“To understand this passage,” Professor Ho explained, “we need to know a little bit of the linguistic background. The one who is predicted to come is called ‘Messiah the Prince.’ ‘Messiah’ is the English transliteration for the Hebrew word ‘mashiach.’ ‘Mashiach’ means ‘anointed one.’ The New Testament was written in Greek. In Greek, the equivalent word is ‘christos,’ which is transliterated into English as ‘Christ.’ So the equation is:

anointed One = Messiah = Christ

All three of these words mean the same thing and refer to the same person.”

“Why is Christ called the ‘anointed One’?” Xiao Li asked.

“A good question, Xiao Li! In Israel, when someone was inaugurated into a position of special service, they were anointed on the head with oil. Three types of people are recorded to have been anointed this way: prophets, kings and priests [see, for example: 1 Kings 19:16; 1 Kings 1:34-39; Exodus 29:7]. Jesus, the Messiah, was going to have all three of those positions. As a prophet, He would bring the word of God to people; His words are recorded in the New Testament. As a king, He would rule over Israel and over the entire world; that will happen in the endtimes, when He comes the second time and destroys the ten toes / ten horns kingdom we discussed a moment ago. As a priest, Jesus would offer a sacrifice to atone for sins—the sacrifice of His own body and blood. Daniel’s prediction here in chapter 9 focuses on what Jesus the Messiah would do as priest.”

What will the Messiah do?

“Verse 24 talks about six things which will happen during the 70 ‘sevens.’ The most important one for us to consider today is ‘make atonement for iniquity.’ The same Hebrew word used here is also used in the phrase ‘Day of Atonement.’ Once a year on the Day of Atonement the Jewish High Priest would make special offerings for the sins of the entire nation of Israel [see Leviticus chapter 16]. Every year that was the only day he would enter the Most Holy Place

[often called the Holy of Holies] in the innermost part of the temple and ‘anoint’ the Ark of the Covenant by sprinkling blood on it. Here Daniel is predicting that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would act as a priest, offering a sacrifice of atonement for sins and taking the blood of the sacrifice into the Most Holy Place. When the ordinary High Priests did that year after year, it was only a symbol, using animals’ blood. But Jesus was going to achieve the reality of offering a sacrifice which would make a permanent, eternal atonement—as the verse says, He would ‘bring in everlasting righteousness.’ He wouldn’t use animals’ blood, but His very own lifeblood, and He wouldn’t sprinkle it on a golden Ark, but in heaven before God the Father:

But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. [Hebrews 9:11-12 NAS]

Daniel probably wasn’t able to understand all of it, but he did know that the Messiah would be ‘cut off’ [Daniel 9:26], put to death. That refers to Jesus’s crucifixion.

“What makes the prophecy particularly useful for our purposes of confirming the inspiration of the Bible is that the angel told Daniel when these things would happen.”

When will the Messiah come?

“The angel told Daniel there were seventy ‘sevens’ left on God’s prophetic timetable during which the major outstanding events in the history of the Jews would be completed. It is universally agreed that each one of these ‘sevens’ represents seven years. The seven year periods are divided into three groups:

7 sevens: 49 years
 + 62 sevens: 434 years
 [Subtotal] 69 sevens: 483 years

 + 1 seven: 7 years
 [Total] 70 sevens: 490 years

In Daniel 9:25 the time of the coming of the Messiah is predicted to be ‘seven weeks and sixty-two weeks,’ that is, 483 years, after ‘the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.’ When Daniel received the prophecy, Jerusalem was still in ruins, as it had been for half a century. The 483 year countdown to the Messiah would start as soon as a command to rebuild the city was given.”

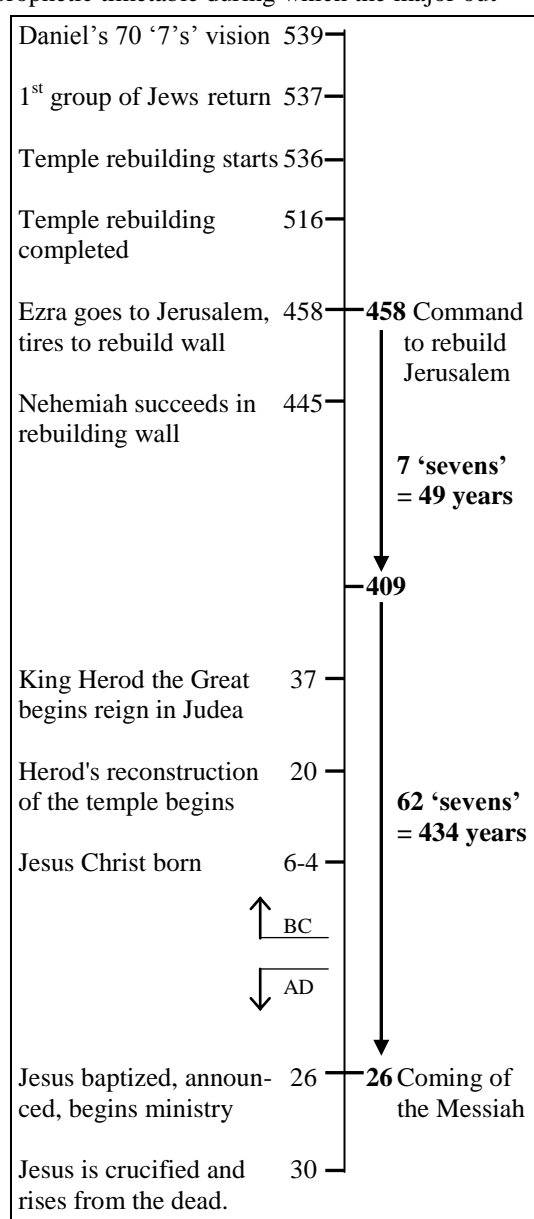
“Do we know when that was?” Xiao Wang asked.^F

“Yes,” Professor Ho affirmed. “It’s recorded in the one of the historical books of the Bible, the book of Ezra.

“As we discussed last week, the Jews began to return to Israel in 537 BC. It was a tough struggle just to make a living in the devastated land, much of which had reverted to wilderness. It took them until 516 BC, over 20 years, just to complete the very modest temple which they built on the site where Solomon’s magnificent edifice had been. But they did *not* rebuild the city of Jerusalem itself. In the ancient world, the most important thing which defined a city was the city wall which provided protection from attacking enemies. No one made a move to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall until a Jewish priest living in Babylon named Ezra returned to Israel:

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon... 7 ...to Jerusalem in the seventh year [458/457 BC] of King Artaxerxes. 8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 ...on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem... [Ezra 7:6-9 NAS]

The king referred to here is the Persian king Artaxerxes I. Based on historical sources from outside the Bible, we can calculate that Artaxerxes I’s seventh year began in mid-March 458 BC and ended in 457 BC, so the first of the fifth month was in August 458 BC. Ezra had extensive authority from king Artaxerxes I [see Ezra 7:11-26] and



^F Readers may have seen a calculation of Daniel’s 70 ‘sevens’ starting from the return of Nehemiah to Jerusalem in 445 or 444 BC. Although this calculation is frequently seen, it is almost certainly incorrect; see Appendix 9-2: What is the starting date for calculating Daniel’s 70 ‘sevens’?

he made an attempt to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. The enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to king Artaxerxes reporting on their wall building and accusing them of plotting a revolt:

11 this is the copy of the letter which they sent to him: "To King Artaxerxes: Your servants, the men in the region beyond the River, and now 12 let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem; they are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. 13 "Now let it be known to the king, that if that city is rebuilt and the walls are finished, they will not pay tribute, custom or toll, and it will damage the revenue of the kings. ... 16 "We inform the king that if that city is rebuilt and the walls finished, as a result you will have no possession in *the province* beyond the River." [Ezra 4:11-13, 16 NAS]

This accusation was baseless, but it might have seemed plausible because the province of Egypt was in open revolt against the Persians at that time. In any case, king Artaxerxes ordered the building to stop [see Ezra 4:17-23].^G Ezra's attempt to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem enables us to fix the starting point of Daniel's seventy 'sevens.' "

"But you said Ezra had to stop," objected Xiao Wang.

"Yes, he did not succeed in rebuilding the wall. That waited for the leadership of a man named Nehemiah over a decade later. But the text in Daniel doesn't say the 'sevens' are counted from the time of rebuilding but 'from the issuing of a decree to rebuild.' Ezra issued the decree and started building, even though he did not succeed in completing it."

Professor Ho became more animated. "Now comes the exciting part. Let's count forward 483 years from Ezra's attempt to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem in the year 458/457 BC. When we remember that there is no year '0,' it's easy to calculate that the year of the Messiah's coming works out to 26/27 AD. And, according to our best historical calculations, 26/27 AD is exactly the year that Jesus Christ was proclaimed to be the Messiah and began His public ministry."

"How do you know?" Xiao Wang queried.

"From history!" Professor Ho exclaimed with a smile.

When did Jesus begin His ministry?

"The Bible is a book of history; by now I'm sure you both understand that. It's events are rooted in the actual history of the real world. They don't happen off in some mythical land. As you've seen before with the Old Testament, we can use history from outside the Bible to confirm the Bible's accounts and date it's events. The beginning of Jesus's ministry is no exception. The New Testament pinpoints it quite clearly." Professor Ho flipped open his Bible and quickly found two passages.

"Right before Jesus began his ministry, John the Baptist warned people that the Christ, the Messiah, was finally about to come:

John [the Baptist] answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. [Luke 3:16 NAS]

27 John [the Baptist]...said... 28 "You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' " [John 3:27-28 NAS]

Rulers mentioned in Luke 3:1-2 (all dates AD unless otherwise noted)

Tiberius Caesar:

Co-regency over Roman provinces: c.11—14
Sole reign after death of Augustus: 14—37
15th year of co-regency: c.26

Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea: 26—36

Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee: 4BC—39AD

Herod Philip I, tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis: 4BC—34AD

Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene: (dates uncertain but rule attested by archaeology)

Annas:

functioned as high priest, recognized by Romans: 6—15
acknowledged by Jews: 6—30 or later

Caiaphas functioned as high priest: 18—36

Then after John baptized Jesus, he told people that Jesus was the one:

29 ...[John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' 31 ... so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." [John 1:29-31 NAS]

When did all these events happen? The gospel of Luke uses the standard dating methods of the first century to tell us:

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John [the Baptist], the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 And

^G Note that chapter 4 of Ezra is not in chronological order but arranged topically. The timing of the events is: verses 1-4: 536 BC; verse 5: 536-519 BC; verse 6: c.485 BC; verses 7-23: 458 BC or slightly later; verse 24: 536-519 BC.

he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; [Luke 3:1-3 NAS]

Each one of the rulers listed above is known to history.” Professor Ho opened the folder on his desk again and pulled out another chart.

Beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry: 15th year of Tiberius Caesar’s co-regency

“Here are the generally accepted dates for these rulers, based on ancient texts and archaeological findings. By correlating all the dates, we limit the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry to the range of 26–34 AD. The key question is the ‘fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.’ Roman historians tell us that the famous emperor Augustus adopted Tiberius as his son and heir to the throne in 4 AD. In about 11 AD, Tiberius was made co-regent along with Augustus in the Roman provinces, but not in Rome itself.¹¹ Since the events of the gospel of Luke happen in the provinces, it is not unreasonable to think Luke was using the co-regency dating; hence the fifteenth year of Tiberius probably refers to 26 AD.”

“How can you be sure it’s Luke’s using the co-regency dating?” Xiao Wang immediately queried.

“An excellent—and vexing—question!” Professor Ho replied. “Fortunately, we have a cross check available in another book of the Bible.”

Beginning of Jesus’s ministry: 46 years after Herod the Great started rebuilding the temple

“The gospel of John records an event which occurred at the Passover season after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist [see John 2:13-23]. Passover happened on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan. In our modern dating system, that would be sometime during March 25–April 24. Jesus was in Jerusalem then and He drove the greedy merchants out of the temple courtyard. Bystanders questioned Jesus’s right to do this; in the midst of the discussion, Jesus’s accusers noted:

18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. [John 2:18-22 NAS]

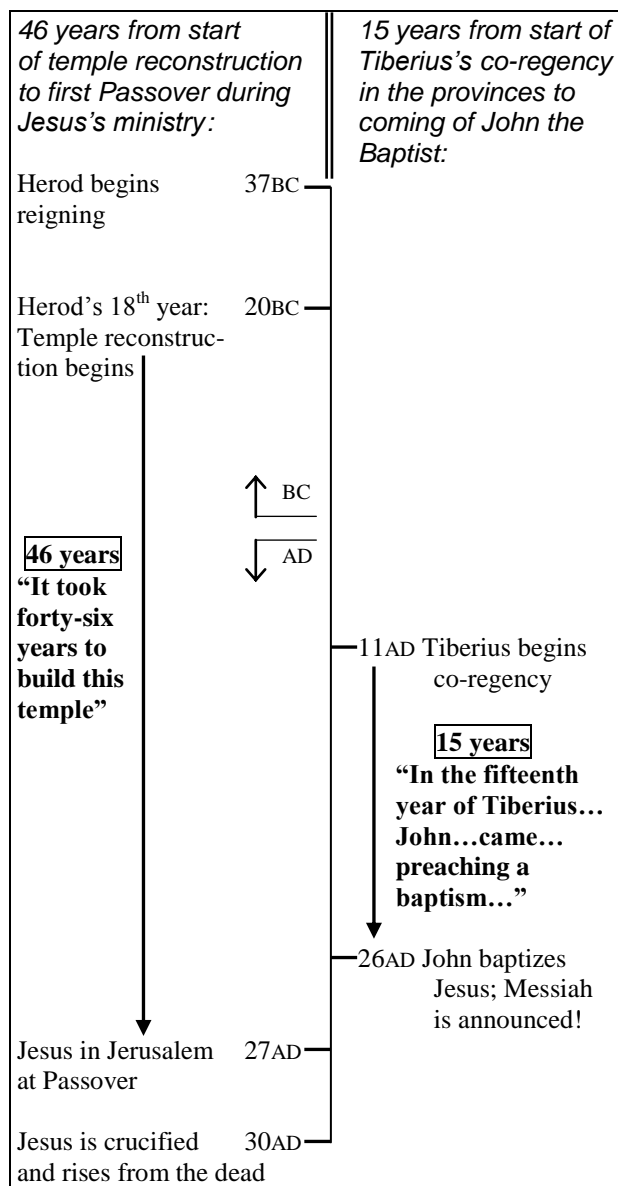
Jesus’s words about ‘destroy this temple,’ i.e. His body, ‘and I will raise it up in three days’ was a prediction about His own death and resurrection. But the Jews thought He was talking about the temple building. Note their mocking response: this temple has taken 46 years to build—how could you raise it again in just three days?^H

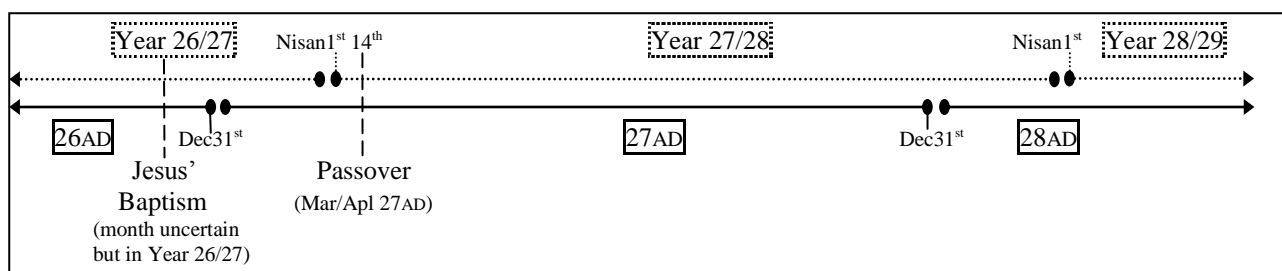
“To understand the reference to 46 years, we need to realize that work on the temple complex was still going on in Jesus’s day and would continue for several decades longer. Thus Jesus’s accusers are indicating that temple construction had started 46 years before that Passover.

“Of course the Jews had rebuilt their temple hundreds of years earlier when they returned from the Babylonian exile. But Herod the Great, the king ruling Judea when Jesus was born, had completely reconstructed the modest old temple and replaced it with the huge, beautiful structure in existence in Jesus’s day. Our friend Josephus records that the rebuilding project was started in the in the eighteenth year of the reign of Herod the Great and at least the major part of the construction of the main temple building was finished a year and a half later.¹² Construction on the complex continued thereafter, however, almost until the temple was finally destroyed in 70 AD. Thus work was still being done on it—at the very least on the outer buildings—when Jesus began His ministry.

“So when was Herod the Great’s eighteenth year? As with everything else in history, there’s always some amount

^H Chinese readers should compare the major English versions, which translate John 2:20 in ways similar to the 和合本. The Chinese 新译本 and 中文标准译本 are misleading here. If the Jews had said ‘this temple has stood for 46 years already,’ it would have had nothing to do with whether or not it could be raised in three days. A pile of rocks built in an hour can stand for 46 years!





of controversy, but it's generally agreed that Herod's reign began in 37 BC, and thus the temple began to be built in 20 BC. From this date it is easy to calculate that forty-six years later would be the year 27 AD.¹

"As I mentioned, the Passover was always on the 14th of Nisan, and Nisan was the first month of the year for the Jews. Jesus's baptism by John happened at least two months before that Passover.^J That would put the baptism in the *previous* year according to Jewish reckoning, the year beginning in March or April of 26 AD and ending in March or April of 27 AD, or, in simpler terms, the year 26/27 AD. It seems clear that John had already been preaching for at least several months when Jesus came to him. Thus John the Baptist's ministry would have already been in process in 26 AD."

What's the point?

Xiao Li interrupted at this point. "Professor Ho, I'm a little confused by all these dates. What's your point?"

Professor Ho smiled self-deprecatingly. "Sorry Xiao Li! I'm a historian by trade, and maybe I got lost in my profession just now! The conclusion is this. We have two independent ways of calculating the date of Jesus's baptism. One is based on the reign of a Roman emperor; the other on a building project of a king of Judea. Both of these point to the same year: 26/27 AD. A third independent historical calculation gives us 458/457 BC as the seventh year of a Persian king. Those dates are calculated based on huge amounts of data from ordinary historical records and archaeological findings, sources completely independent of the Bible.^K

The Biblical records that correlate with these dates come from three different books—Ezra, Luke and John—written by three different authors. Finally, the prophecy about the Messiah is from yet another book, Daniel, and the prophecy needs all of these different dates and events to fit together perfectly before the prediction can be true. And they do fit together! The bottom line is: Jesus the Messiah showed up 483 years after a command was given to rebuild the city of Jerusalem—just like Daniel predicted He would."

But how do you know for sure?

At this point Xiao Wang spoke up. "Is there any record of John the Baptist outside the Bible?" There was obvious skepticism in his voice.

"Yes," Professor Ho replied, "the first century AD historian Josephus, who was not a Christian, records his baptizing ministry and his death."¹³

"Does Josephus give a date for him?"

"Not specifically, but he places John's activities during the reign of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, just as the gospel of Luke does."

"I see," said Xiao Wang quietly.

Professor Ho looked at him with a questioning gaze. "Xiao Wang, you seem to be a little bit like the unbelieving critics, thinking no history in the Bible should be accepted unless it's explicitly confirmed by history outside the Bible."

Xiao Wang looked back at him earnestly. "It's not that. It's just that there's so much at stake..." his voice trailed off into silence and he looked troubled.

Professor Ho looked at him sympathetically and nodded. "You're right. Absolutely *everything* is at stake: ultimate truth, the meaning of life, how we should live now—and heaven and hell later! That's why God has provided so much evidence for us, so that anyone who really wants to can know the truth and make the right choice. Not just one fulfilled prophecy—many. Not just one accurate historical date—many."

"Do all historians agree about the dates you discussed?" Xiao Wang asked further.

Professor Ho sat back in his chair and heaved a sigh. "Unfortunately, almost no date in ancient history is universally agreed on by scholars. Some say Tiberius's co-regency didn't start until 12 AD. Some claim we shouldn't use the co-regency dating at all, but count from Tiberius's sole regency in 14 AD. Some argue that Herod's reign should be moved a year or two earlier—and some say later! Some think Ezra's wall building attempt should be dated to 457 BC instead of 458 BC.¹⁴ And it goes on. But after sifting through all the data, I am convinced that Jesus really did come 483 years after Ezra made a start at rebuilding Jerusalem."

"But how can you have any certainty?" Xiao Wang asked earnestly.

¹ Readers must remember that there is no year '0.'

^J See the time required by the events of Mark 1:12-13, followed by John 1:29—2:12. All of that had to happen after Jesus's baptism but before the Passover of John 2:13-25.

^K Interested readers may consult Notes 5, 7, and 9, and especially Jack Finegan's work referenced in Note 14. Note that Finegan favors a year of 29 AD for the baptism of Jesus and 30 AD for first Passover of John 2:13; obviously, this writer disagrees!

“We can be rationally confident that everything fits with Daniel’s prediction to at least within a year or two. That’s as much accuracy as ancient history can ever give us. And for sure it’s far, far too close to write off to chance. Perfect, incontrovertible evidence? No. You never get that in life. But there’s enough evidence that believing is the only rational, honest choice. It’s like the old saying: ‘It’s light enough for those who want to be able to see, and dark enough for those who don’t want to say they can’t.’”^L

The three were silent for awhile. Xiao Wang’s head was bent and his brow was furrowed in thought.

Did Jesus try to fulfill the prophecy on purpose?

Suddenly Xiao Wang snapped his head back up and asked: “You said the Jews had Daniel’s prophecy long before Jesus’s time, right?”

“Certainly,” Professor Ho replied. “It was written centuries before Jesus came, and we even have a manuscript copied around 125 BC.”

“So then Jesus had read the book of Daniel?”

“Yes. The gospels record Him quoting from it a number of times.”^L

“Well then, how do we know Jesus didn’t fulfill the prophecy on purpose? Maybe He figured out that the predicted year was about to come up and timed the start of His ministry to fit it.”

Professor Ho smiled. “An excellent question! And it has a surprising answer. The prophecy about the time of the coming of the Messiah in Daniel 9 is never mentioned in the New Testament.^M In some ways that’s really quite amazing. Shortly after Jesus’s resurrection, His disciples began preaching the gospel to their fellow Jews. The New Testament record of their preaching shows that they constantly quoted Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah which Jesus had fulfilled. [See chapters 11-14.] But the coming of the Messiah after 69 ‘sevens’ is never mentioned!”

“Why not?” asked Xiao Li.

“Yes,” Professor Ho agreed, “why not? I don’t know for sure, but my own guess is that they could not calculate the starting point accurately enough.^N If they could have, they surely would have used this example of fulfilled prophecy.”

“But if they couldn’t figure it out, what good was it?” Xiao Wang asked.

“To them, perhaps no good at all. But to us it’s very useful! Especially after the past 200 years of advances in archaeology, we are now able to confidently calculate that the starting point of the 69 ‘sevens,’ the seventh year of the Persian king Artaxerxes, was 458/457 BC. In a sense, the prophecy was given to help us, not them—we who live in this extremely skeptical age! The Jews in Jesus’s day could see His miracles and watch prophecy being fulfilled before their eyes. In our day, we can use detailed historical calculations to see that prophecy was fulfilled.

“In any case, there are many, many other prophecies which Jesus fulfilled that provide adequate evidence that He really was the predicted Messiah. If you come another time, we can look at some of them. [See chapters 11-14.] But for today, I just want to look at one more: the death of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.”

After the 69 ‘sevens’: The Messiah is “cut off” (30 AD) and Jerusalem and its temple are destroyed (70 AD)

“Daniel chapter 9 not only predicts the time when the Messiah will come. It also specifies that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, will be ‘cut off,’ that is, put to death, and talks about what would happen to the Jews after that.” Professor Ho flipped the pages of his Bible back to Daniel and read:

“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. [Daniel 9:26 NAS]

“Note three things Daniel predicts here:

1. The Messiah will be ‘cut off,’ that is, killed;
2. a people group belonging to a yet future prince will attack Jerusalem;
3. Jerusalem and its temple will be destroyed.

Daniel says these events will happen after the 62 ‘sevens,’ that is, after 26 AD, but he doesn’t specify how long after.

^L For example, Matthew 24:30 and 26:64 quote Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:15 quotes Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and/or 12:11.

^M Jesus’s mention of the “abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 is a prediction about a still future event. He never mentions the 70 ‘sevens.’

^N For one example, consider the first century AD Jewish historian Josephus. His work shows acquaintance with a large number of different historical sources, and he was careful to record and calculate dates wherever possible. However, when Josephus speaks of the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah, he confused two different Persian kings, Xerxes I (485-464 BC) and his son Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC), reversing the order of their reigns [see *Antiquities of the Jews* 11:5:1, 6 (11:120-130, 184-194)]. This mistake would have made it impossible for him to correctly calculate the starting point of Daniel’s 70 ‘sevens.’

Despite his careful efforts, Josephus could not accurately calculate the year in which events five hundred years before him had happened. He correctly records the restoration of the Jewish temple after its desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. That restoration happened in 165 BC. But Josephus then states that Daniel’s prophecy about it was given “408 years before” the restoration, which works out to 573 BC. Daniel’s two prophecies about Antiochus’s desecration and the Jews’ restoration of the temple are given in Daniel chapter 8, dated to 551 BC, and Daniel chapters 10-12, dated to 536 BC. Josephus is off by at least 22 years here in his calculations about the time when Daniel received his prophetic revelations [see Josephus’s *Antiquities of the Jews* 12:7:6 (12:321-322) and Daniel 8:1, 10:1].

The key point here is that the Messiah would *not* be triumphant when He came in 26 AD, but rather would be killed, and subsequently the Jews would suffer severely at the hands of a Gentile army.

“The Jews of Jesus’s day tended to think that everything would be wonderful after the Messiah came; their wishful thinking ignored many of the Old Testament prophecies! Not only here, but many other places predicted that the Messiah would be rejected by the majority of the Jews, suffer and die.^O [See chapter 13.] Jesus Himself repeatedly predicted that He would be killed.”^P

“Where does that fit into the 70 ‘sevens’?” Xiao Li wondered.

“A good question! Daniel doesn’t specify when the Messiah would be ‘cut off,’ but from careful comparisons of the gospel records we conclude Jesus was crucified in 30 AD. Apparently, at that point the prophetic clock of Daniel’s 70 ‘sevens’ stopped ticking, because the Messiah was gone, and it won’t restart until Jesus the Messiah comes back again to rapture His church in the endtimes. [See chapter 15.] Some interpreters think the 3½ years of Jesus ministry from 26–30 AD covered the first half of Daniel’s 70th ‘seven,’ so only 3½ are left for the endtimes. Most interpreters, however, feel that the entire seven year period of the 70th ‘seven’ is still outstanding and will occur during the endtimes.

“What we do know for sure is that after the 69th ‘seven’ the Messiah was cut off, as predicted, and that subsequently a Gentile army destroyed Jerusalem. Daniel doesn’t explain much about the destruction, but Jesus did. Shortly before He was ‘cut off’ by crucifixion in 30 AD, Jesus made a detailed prediction about the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the temple:

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He [Jesus] said, 6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." 7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?" 8 And He said... 20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. [Luke 21:5-8, 20-24 NAS]

About forty years later, events unfolded exactly as Jesus predicted.

“In 66 AD, the Jews revolted against the Roman Empire. The Romans immediately sent in troops, quelled the uprising in most areas, and surrounded Jerusalem. At that point the Roman commander made a major miscalculation. Feeling inadequate for a siege, he withdrew from Jerusalem. The historian Josephus was in Israel during these events; he criticized the Roman general’s withdrawal as ‘without any reason in the world.’¹⁶ The result was a slaughter of the retreating Roman legionnaires by the rebels and a great strengthening of the rebellion. During 67–68, the Romans had to retake the cities of Israel one by one. Finally Jerusalem was taken in 70 AD after a five month siege.

“I don’t know whether the Roman general in 66 AD was right or wrong to withdraw after surrounding Jerusalem, but I do know he was busy fulfilling prophecy without knowing it. Jesus had predicted: ‘when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near’ and told people ‘then... those who are in the midst of the city must leave.’ But how can you leave a city after it’s already surrounded? And why would Jesus need to warn people not to ‘enter the city;’ how could you enter a city which was surrounded and besieged? When the Roman general first surrounded Jerusalem and then withdrew, he gave the Christians who knew Jesus’s prophecy a chance to escape from the city. Subsequently lots of Jews did enter Jerusalem, either purposely to join the rebellion or just to observe religious festivals.¹⁷ But the Christians who knew Jesus’s prophecy would know better than to enter the city again.

“The final outcome was the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews, maybe even a million or more, and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Many of the surviving Jews were sold as slaves. This was the beginning of the great Diaspora of the Jews. Afterwards, the Romans rebuilt Jerusalem as a non-Jewish city, including erecting an idol temple on the site of the temple. A few decades later, there was another revolt, from 132-135 AD. In 135 AD all of the remaining Jews in Palestine were exiled. For several centuries thereafter, no Jews were allowed to live in Palestine. Jesus’s prediction that the Jews would be scattered among ‘all the nations’ was thus fulfilled.

“So was His prediction that ‘Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.’ Ever since 70 AD, Jerusalem has been controlled by Gentiles, that is, non-Jews. Since 686 AD, the site of the ancient Jewish temple has been occupied by a Muslim mosque known as the Dome of the Rock or the Mosque of Omar. Even to this day, Jews cannot enter that area, despite regaining nominal control of Jerusalem in 1967. The ‘times of the Gentiles’ which Jesus predicted, the time when ‘Jerusalem is trampled underfoot by the Gentiles’ is still going on today.”

Xiao Li was puzzled. “But aren’t the Jews God’s chosen people? Why does He treat them that way?”

Professor Ho’s mouth lengthened into a sad frown. He shook his head slightly and sighed. “I’m certainly not anti-Semitic. No one has the right to persecute the Jews—or anyone else for that matter! But the fact is, God warned them

^O See for example Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

^P See for example Matthew 16:21, 17:22, 20:18, 26:2.

<u>Threatened punishments in Deuteronomy 28</u>	
v.15-19	General summary
v.20-22	Disease
v.22-24	Agricultural failure
v.25-26	Defeat in war
v.27, 35	Skin diseases
v.28, 34	Insanity
v.29-33	Oppression by foreigners
v.36	Exile along with their king to a specific foreign land.
v.38-40, 42	Agricultural failure
v.41, 43-44	Oppression by foreigners
v.48	Oppression, enslavement by foreigners
v.49-57	Invasion by enemies from a distant land: occupation, siege, starvation.
v.58-62	Disease, depopulation (due to siege and famine?)
v.63-68	Worldwide Diaspora; “back to Egypt in ships”; “for sale...as slaves, but...no buyers.”

that they would suffer like this if they, as a corporate group, disobeyed Him. God had said it long before, through Moses.”

The prediction of the Jewish Diaspora in Deuteronomy 28

“You remember that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible around 1400 BC. In the fifth book, Deuteronomy, God carefully explained the blessings which would come on the Jews if they were obedient, and the punishments which would result if they chose to disobey Him. The Jews were not like other people groups. God had uniquely established them by calling Abraham out of Ur and delivering the Israelites out of Egypt. They knew very clearly who God was and what they were supposed to do—and what would happen to them if they disobeyed.

[Here please read Deuteronomy 28.]

“In Deuteronomy chapter 28 the various corporate blessings and punishments which would come on them are summarized. Some of them are repeatable or general, such as disease and military defeat. Others are more explicit and were fulfilled at specific points in the Jews’ history. For example, the threatened judgment:

“The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. [Deuteronomy 28:36 NAS]

is very specific. It requires both the king and the people going

into exile in a specific place. That only occurred at two specific points in the Jews’ history, first to the northern kingdom of Israel in the Assyrian captivity in 721 BC, and then much later to the southern kingdom of Judah in the Babylonian captivity of 586 BC.

“What does it mean in verse 64 that they will ‘serve other gods?’” Xiao Wang asked. “Did the Jews in Babylon continue worshipping idols?”

“No,” Professor Ho replied, “it just means that as slaves, the work they did would help support their masters’ idolatry.”

“The final threatened judgment is even more specific. It requires a worldwide Diaspora, not just exile to a specific location. It was never fulfilled before 70 AD.

63 "It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. 64 "Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. 65 "Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. 66 "So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. 67 "In the morning you shall say, 'Would that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Would that it were morning!' because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see. 68 "The LORD will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I spoke to you, 'You will never see it again!' And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer." [Deuteronomy 28:63-68 NAS]

Professor Ho looked up solemnly from his reading. “Here you have in a nutshell the past 2,000 years of Jewish history. After 70 AD, they were scattered all across the globe, ‘from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth’; there was even a colony of Jews in China for hundreds of years, centered in Kaifeng. Meanwhile, no matter where they were, no matter how many generations they had been there, the Jews could never be sure they were safe. After hundreds of years in Germany, suddenly the Nazis led the German people in turning against them and killed almost every Jew in the country during World War II. Or take another example. Jews had lived in various places throughout the Middle East for over 2,000 years, since the time of the Babylonian captivity. But in the period 1948-1957, most of the Jews in the Arab-Muslim countries—over half a million people—were suddenly unwelcome in lands where their ancestors had lived for centuries. They had to flee to the newly reestablished state of Israel.



Kaifeng Jews. Note 3.

Similar examples of sudden, mass persecutions and deportations of Jews abound throughout the Medieval and Modern periods.”

“You would think the Jews would want to give up their ethnicity,” Xiao Wang mused aloud.

“Some of them have tried to. You know, often you can’t tell a Jew by his or her physical appearance. Some of the Jews who died in Hitler’s concentration camps had pale skin, blue eyes and average European noses. Some of them were nominal Christians, and some were genuine believers in Jesus. But they couldn’t escape their ancestry.

“I once met a Jewish graduate student from a tiny country in South America.^Q He was an atheist, a rather combative fellow, and very offended and irritated if I tried to talk to him about what he called ‘religious things.’ But when I mentioned how the Jews were always persecuted, he immediately and loudly said, ‘That’s right! No matter who else they persecute, the Jews are always persecuted!’ It was ironic—and sad. There he was, an atheist. He didn’t believe the Bible. He didn’t believe God had called Abraham and established Israel. But at the same time he didn’t seem to be ing or able to try to repudiate his Jewishness, even though he knew it made him a target for persecution. In short, he was a living fulfillment of prophecy—whether he wanted to be one or not!”

Xiao Li was looking carefully at the scripture passage. “Professor Ho, what does it mean in verse 68 about ‘back to Egypt in ships’ and ‘offer yourselves for sale’?”

“I was just going to get to that” Professor Ho replied enthusiastically. “That part of the prediction was explicitly fulfilled in 70 AD. The historian Josephus was present at the final siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. He records that the Romans sent tens of thousands of Jewish survivors as slaves to the mines in Egypt. Besides those sent to the mines, he also records that many were sold as slaves. By late in the siege, so many were being sold that the market was glutted and prices fell.”¹⁸

“Does he mention ships? Or Jews offering themselves for sale as slaves?” Xiao Wang wanted to know.

“Not specifically,” admitted Professor Ho, “but I have no reason to expect him to confirm every detail of the prophecy. Obviously they had to get to Egypt somehow, and maritime trade was very well developed in the Mediterranean in the first century. Marching them south along the coast for the entire 300-400 kilometers would have been much more difficult and expensive. As for selling themselves, it is easy to picture starving survivors offering themselves for sale as slaves to save their lives, and Josephus’s information lets us know why there would have been no buyers. This prophecy has received as complete a confirmation of fulfillment as we could ever reasonably expect to get! Furthermore, we have no record on anything like it happening at any other time in their history.

“But most of all, consider the 2,000 years of fulfillment of the predicted scattering. They were, and still mostly are, scattered; they have been repeatedly persecuted, often to an amazing and inexplicable degree; and yet, they still continue to exist as a distinct people group.”

“There’s something that’s always bothered me,” Xiao Li began. “The Jews in Jesus’s day weren’t worshipping idols or burning their children as sacrifices or anything like that. What sin did they commit that was so bad that God scattered them for so long? Their punishment seems worse than even the Babylonian captivity.”

Professor Ho’s face became very grave again. “Yes, what brought such severe and lasting punishment on them? What could be worse than the flagrant idolatry of the Jews of Jeremiah’s generation? Their great sin was that, as a group, they rejected the Messiah, which is a much as to say that they rejected God Himself, God come to earth as a human being. Jesus knew it, and knew how much it would cost them.” Professor Ho quickly flipped to two passages in the gospels and read.

41 When He [Jesus] approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." [Luke 19:41-44 NAS]

36 "Truly I [Jesus] say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! [Matthew 23:36-38 NAS]

“Jesus knew that the Jews as a group would reject Him, and that as a result the curses in Deuteronomy 28 and elsewhere would fall on them. He wept over that; He really loved them! And we should weep over it, and love them too. Certainly we should not be persecutors of the Jews! But the fact remains: rejecting Jesus means rejecting God. For God’s physical chosen people, the Jews, that means physical punishment: scattering, and God allowing them to be persecuted. For we who are not Jews, we who are not God’s physical chosen people, rejecting Jesus will result in spiritual punishment, punishment for our sins in hell after we die.”

Xiao Wang felt the same two conflicting inclinations in his heart, a desire to accept that Jesus was true and an equally strong desire to write it all off as nonsense. Between the two he grasped at a straw of skepticism—or maybe it was just a careful desire for certainty, for truth—or maybe something of both. “Professor Ho, how do we know when Deuteronomy was written?” he asked, his voice sounding harsher than he had intended.

^Q This is based on the author’s actual experience.

***PICTURE: Deuteronomy from the Dead Sea Scrolls preferably, 4QDeut^a

“I’ve looked into that,” Professor Ho replied calmly. “There is much in the structure and contents of Deuteronomy that indicate it was written before 1000 BC,^{R, 19} but for our purposes today, the manuscripts are enough. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts found at Qumran were portions of various manuscripts of the book of Deuteronomy. One of them, referred to as 4QDeut^a, is dated to about 175-150BC.²⁰ Even the most unreasonable of the anti-Biblical scholars will admit that Deuteronomy 28 as we have it was written hundreds of years before 70 AD.”

But aren’t there fulfilled prophecies in other religions?

“I see,” Xiao Wang said quietly. He looked down at the desk and paused for a long time. Suddenly he remembered another question which had bothered him. “Now I remember what I wanted to ask! What about other religions? Don’t their sacred books have prophecies, too? And what about other people who’ve foretold the future? It’s not just the Bible.”

“A fair question,” Professor Ho agreed. “I asked it myself and found that the Bible was, in fact, unique among religious books in really having a large body of fulfilled prophecies—and no known failed ones!

“It turns out that the Bible actually has remarkably little competition in even *claiming* fulfilled prophecy. Consider the three largest other religions in the world: Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Islam’s Quran (Koran): No long term prophecies which could demonstrate inspiration

“Islam’s sacred scriptures, the Quran [Koran], is said to have been given mostly orally by Muhammad, who lived c.570-632AD. If we accept the early Islamic traditions, it was subsequently written down and reached its present form before 656AD.”

“How old are our earliest manuscripts?” Xiao Li asked.

Professor Ho shook his head in uncertainty. “There’s disagreement about that among scholars. Some Muslim scholars claim we have a text from about 656AD, though this seems unlikely. Other scholars state the oldest complete extant manuscript was copied sometime in the late 7th century, while others say even later. But it turns out to be unimportant for our purposes, because the Quran contains no significant long term prophecies.

“Islamic apologists who want to show fulfilled prophecy in the Quran generally point to four examples:^S

1. Predicting the outcome of the Byzantine-Sassanid War of 602-628AD;
2. Predicting victory in battle, political power, and religious expansion for the Muslims;
3. Predicting the Quran will remain uncorrupted forever;
4. Predicting a certain couple will go to hell.

“First let’s consider the strongest candidate.” Professor Ho pulled two books from his bookshelves and opened one. On one page was Arabic lettering, while the facing page had a translation in Chinese. “In the Quran, Muhammad is recorded to have made this prophecy:

The Romans [i.e. Byzantine Empire] have been overcome in a near land, and they, after being overcome, will overcome in a few years [Arabic apparently indicates: three to nine years]. To Allah belongs the decision, in the past and in the future. And on that day the believers will rejoice in the help [or: victory] of Allah. He helps whom He pleases, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful. The promise of Allah! Allah will not fail in His promise, but most people know not. [Quran Sura 30 Ar-Rum (The Romans), verses 2-6. Translation composite.]

Muslims claim that here Muhammad predicts the victory of the Byzantine Empire, which he refers to as the Romans, over the Sassanid Persian Empire in the early 7th century AD. And he may very well have done so! But it’s not too impressive.

“The historical background is well established. The Sassanid Persian Empire had fought for centuries with the Byzantine Empire, also known as the Eastern Roman Empire. The conflict erupted again in 602AD. At first, the Byzantines were repeatedly defeated, losing Mesopotamia, much of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine by 614AD. Jerusalem fell to the Sassanids in 614AD.

^R Archaeologists have discovered that the structure of the book of Deuteronomy, both the contents and their order, follows a format widely used in the Ancient Near East at that time. This special ‘covenant format’ was used to write up the treaty between a king and a vassal people group under his control. The specific format used in Deuteronomy was employed during the 2nd millennium BC, but not found after about 1200 BC. It is further evidence for the antiquity of Deuteronomy. See Note 19, pages 283-306 for an extended discussion.

^S Less careful apologists for Islam make extravagant claims that the Quran predicted things such as electric light bulbs, genetic engineering, astronauts’ trips to the moon, and even the modern women’s rights movement. Such ridiculous claims are not refuted here, but only the more sober, serious arguments.

Byzantine-Sassanid War of 602-628AD

602	Sassanids begin attacks
605	Battle of Dura in Mesopotamia: Sassanids defeat Byzantines
611	Sassanids take Antioch
613	Sassanids take Damascus
614	Sassanids take Jerusalem
615	Claimed date of Mohammed's prophecy in Quran 30:2-4
617	Sassanids take Chalcedon, directly across from Constantinople
618	Sassanids take Alexandria in Egypt
621	Sassanids control all of Egypt
622	Battle of Issus in Asia Minor: Byzantines defeat Sassanids
625	Battle of Sarus River in Mesopotamia: probably a draw
626	Sassanids besiege Constantinople but fail to take it and withdraw
627	(December) Battle of Nineveh: Byzantines defeat Sassanids
628	Byzantines take and plunder Sassanid imperial palace at Dastagrid. Hostilities cease.
629	Final peace treaty concluded.

“According to the traditional Muslim understanding of the chronology of the Quran, Muhammad’s prediction was made in 615AD. Muslim interpreters generally assert Muhammad’s statement ‘The Romans have been overcome in a near land’ was referring to the Byzantine defeats in Syria and Palestine in 614AD, and perhaps especially to the fall of Jerusalem.

“Subsequently, the Sassanids continued to be victorious over the Byzantines until at least 622AD, conquering most of the rest of Asia Minor and all of Egypt. Then the tide began to turn with the first Byzantine victory at the battle of Issus in 622AD.^T That was by no means the end, however, and the Sassanids were still powerful enough to besiege the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 626AD. Fighting continued until the end of 627AD, when the Byzantines won a decisive victory in December at the Battle of Nineveh. Both

sides were exhausted and made peace, returning to the pre-war territorial boundaries.”

“So what about Muhammad’s prophecy?” Xiao Wang asked. “Was it fulfilled or not?”

“A good question! Islamic scholars state that Muhammad’s prediction that the Romans ‘will gain victory in a few years’ means ‘in three to nine years.’ I don’t know medieval Arabic, so I can’t judge the validity of that. Assuming ‘three to nine years’ is accurate, we have what could be regarded as a ‘fulfillment’ at the Battle of Issus in 622AD, which was seven years later. But the war was far from over, and in 626AD the Sassanids were besieging the Byzantine capital, albeit unsuccessfully. That was already 11 years after Muhammad’s statement. Real victory wasn’t gained until late 627AD or early 628AD, 11-12 years after the claimed date of Muhammad’s prediction.

“In summary, then, I find this so-called ‘fulfilled prophecy’ unimpressive for several reasons.” Professor Ho began to count off on his fingers:

1. “At it’s best, the prophecy is very short term. There is absolutely no way to prove it was uttered before the events occurred. The Quran itself was not even compiled until after Muhammad’s death in 632AD, and our oldest copies are much later than that.
2. The war was still in progress when the prediction is said to have been made, and the contestants had fought back and forth for centuries already. It was certainly still humanly possible for the Byzantines to win some kind of victory. Obviously they thought they could, since they kept on fighting! Predicting a Byzantine victory of some sort in the subsequent course of the war was within the range of ordinary human foresight or just plain good luck.
3. The final battle in the war which gained the victory for the Byzantines was actually fought 12 years after the prophecy, not ‘within a few [three to nine] years’
4. The prophecy is rather vague; it does not even specifically state who defeated the Romans, nor where the ‘near land’ is.

Taking all these aspects together, while Muhammad may have made the correct prediction about the outcome of the war, it would hardly convince me he was divinely inspired!”

“Professor Ho, you said you would start with the best example in the Quran,” Xiao Wang objected. “But this ‘prophecy’ about the Byzantines beating the Persians is too short term and humanly predictable to be of any use in proving divine inspiration. Are you possibly biased in your choice of examples?”

Professor Ho raised his eyebrows and nodded. “I can see why you would say that, Xiao Wang! But I’ve actually started with the *best* example, the only one that is even remotely comparable to the Bible’s demonstration of inspiration by historically fulfilled predictions. Let’s see what you think of the rest of the Quranic examples. A second example frequently cited by Muslims is Muhammad’s predictions that his followers will be victorious over their enemies. There are between five and ten of these^U scattered throughout the Quran; the Quran’s language tends to be vague and elliptical, so it’s sometimes hard to tell for sure. Here are three of the most explicit:

24:55 Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (to authority) upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them (therein) their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely

^T Not to be confused with the much earlier Battle of Issus in 333BC where Alexander the Great defeated the much earlier Medo-Persian Empire.

^U Possibly including Quran 2:10; 8:7; 9:14; 24:55; 48:16-21, 27-28; 54:44-45; 110:1-2.

substitute for them, after their fear, security, (for) they worship Me, not associating anything with Me [in worship, i.e. idols or other gods]. But whoever disbelieves after that - then those are the defiantly disobedient. [Quran Sura 24 An-Nur (The Light), verse 55. Sahih International Translation.]

54:44 Or do they [enemies of the Muslims] say, "We are an assembly supporting (each other)"? 45 (Their) assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs (in retreat). [Quran Sura 54 Al-Qamar (The Moon), verses 44-45. Sahih International Translation.]

110:1 When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest, 2 And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes, 3 Then exalt (Him) with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance. [Quran Sura 110 An-Nasr (The Divine Support), verses 1-3. Sahih International Translation.]

In simple terms, what is claimed here is the Muslims will be victorious in warfare over their enemies and gain power, and that subsequently many people will join their religion.

“The problem with these prophecies is they are too vague to show divine inspiration, and furthermore our manuscripts come from long after the purported fulfillments:

1. Every general tells his troops that they will be victorious, and every leader of a religious movement predicts that it will spread;
2. No *specific* predictions of a Muslim victory in a certain place at a certain time are actually given in the Quran itself;
3. Our earliest manuscripts date from after the establishment of the Muslim empire, so there is no way to prove that even these vague prophecies were given before the fulfillments. In fact, the Quran wasn't even compiled until sometime during the Rashidun Caliphate (632-661AD), after the Muslims had already conquered most of the Middle East.

There's nothing here which could be used to demonstrate inspiration. Military victory does not prove God is on your side!

“The third commonly cited prophecy is Muhammad's claim that the Quran would be preserved uncorrupted for all time:

15:9 Indeed, it is We [Allah] who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian. [Quran Sura 15 Al-Hijr (The Rocky Tracts), verse 9. Sahih International Translation.]

The text actually isn't explicit, but Muslims claim it indicates the Quran will be preserved word for word from all possible errors or changes. Of course, it's impossible to demonstrate this claim, since we do not have a copy of the original! In the beginning, according to the Muslims' own records, the Quran was transmitted at least partially, perhaps primarily, by oral recitation and memorization. Various disciples wrote down compilations after Muhammad's death. Some time subsequent to that, perhaps around 650AD, the Muslim government produced an 'official' version, and the Muslim ruler Uthman enforced the destruction of any copies which deviated from this 'official' version. Nevertheless, variant versions continued to exist for several hundred years, and variant readings of some texts exist today.²¹ In addition, early Islamic books generally regarded as authoritative by Muslims state that some verses were 'cancelled' and removed from the Quran.^v Thus the prediction about the perfect preservation of the Quran is either impossible to verify, or has already been disproven.

“The fourth and final prophecy which Islamic apologists frequently bring up concerns the damnation of Muhammad's unbelieving uncle and aunt:

111:1 May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he. 2 His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. 3 He will (enter to) burn in a Fire of (blazing) flame 4 And his wife (as well) - the carrier of firewood. 5 Around her neck is a rope of (twisted) fiber. [Quran Sura 111 Al-Masad (The Palm Fiber, Flame), verses 1-5. Sahih International Translation.]

Muslims claim that Muhammad's uncle never came to believe in Islam—thereby fulfilling the prophecy. Of course, it would be more convincing to skeptics if we could actually verify that Abu Lahab is in hell!

“Those are all the predictions normally cited by believers in the Quran. There's nothing like the Daniel's succession empires, or the exact timing of the coming of the Messiah, or the scraping of Tyre—prophecies clearly made long before the events happened and clearly fulfilled in verifiable history. In fact, prophecies of any sort are very rare in the Quran; what we've just looked at covers almost all of them! Muhammad and his followers validated his so-called 'revelation' by winning battles against the tottering Sassanids and the exhausted Byzantines.”

Xiao Wang raised a hand in concession. “OK, if that's really the situation with the Quran, I admit it can't compare to the Bible. But what about other religions?”

Buddhism and Hinduism: No real claim to fulfilled prophecy

Professor Ho continued. “Islam's case for fulfilled prophecy is very poor. But the other major religions besides

^v For examples see the Hadiths Sahih Bukhari 4:52:57, 69, 299 and Sahih Muslim 17:4194.

Christianity which claim inspiration do even worse. As far as I know, the early Buddhist sutras make no testable prophecies which specifically refer to identifiable places, events, or times. The only ones I've seen suggested is the vague predictions about 'three ages,' the third of which consists of 'five declines.' None of these prophecies have enough specificity to be used as a test of fulfillment and inspiration.

"There are also predictions of the coming of a golden age with very low oceans, no sickness or crime, lifespans in the hundreds of years, and the appearance of a new Buddha equal to or surpassing Siddhartha. Other texts predict the destruction of the world as we know it in a firestorm. None of these have been fulfilled so far.

"Buddhists often interpret these prophecies as having a symbolic or spiritual meaning, and that may be reasonable. In any case, they are nothing like the testable predictions of the Bible.

"Hinduism is about the same. There are various predictions about moral decline, 'ages,' and an end to the present world cycle. I'm certainly not an expert, but there is nothing in the Vedas which I have heard of which could even theoretically be used to demonstrate fulfilled prophecy and inspiration."

Would-be prophets: Nostradamus

"But prophecies don't necessarily need divine inspiration," Xiao Wang countered. "What about Nostradamus? I've heard he made a lot of predictions that have come true."

Professor Ho smiled. "I heard so too! So I went and checked out the details. Nostradamus was a 17th century French apothecary and astrologist. He stitched together hundreds of brief poems in French, with words in other languages thrown in, and claimed they were predictions. Historical scholars have shown that he often copied or adapted pre-existing works for his 'predictions.' There are almost no specific dates in the predictions, and the two which actually specify the year both failed to happen when predicted. As Nostradamus admitted himself, his writing is vague and purposely enigmatic. This allows ample room for people to reinterpret the poems *after* an event occurs and claim that Nostradamus 'predicted' it.

"Perhaps you'd like to see a few examples." Professor Ho turned once again to his well stocked bookshelves and pulled down a volume and started flipping through it. "Since the mid-20th century, this one has been a popular example for promoters of Nostradamus:

Ferocious hungry beasts swim across rivers,
The greater part of the region will be against Hister [Danube].
The great one will be dragged in an iron cage,
When the German child observes nothing. [Prophecies Century 2 Quatrain 24]

In the place very near, and not far from Venus
The two greatest ones of Asia and Africa,
Shall be said to come from the Rhine and Hister [Danube],
Crying and tears shall be at Malta and Ligurian side [Italian shore]. [Prophecies Century 4 Quatrain 68]

In these poems Nostradamus refers to the Danube river by its well known Latin name, 'Hister.' Like the Rhine, part of its course flows through Germany. On this basis, some have claimed Nostradamus predicted the rise of Adolf Hitler. But obviously 'Hister' and 'Hitler' are not spelled the same,^w and beyond question Nostradamus was referring to the Danube river. In addition, the other contents of the poems have no clear relationship to Hitler or World War II. Either poem could be given a forced interpretation to fit certain events of the war, but neither one clearly predicts anything."

Professor Ho flipped through the book again. "Consider another example which only became popular in this century. What do you make of this:

Earthshaking fire from the center of the earth,
will cause tremors around the New City:
Two great rocks will war for a long time,
then Arethusa will redden a new river. [Prophecies Century 1 Quatrain 87]

Well boys, what comes to mind?" Professor Ho paused for a moment.

"What's 'Arethusa' mean?" Xiao Li asked.

"No one knows!" Professor Ho promptly replied.

"It sound like it might be an earthquake," Xiao Wang suggested cautiously.

"That's as good a guess as any," Professor Ho agreed. "But after the 9/11 attacks in New York City, Nostradamus promoters said it was predicting the destruction of the World Trade Center towers. Sound convincing?"

"Not very!" Xiao Wang replied with a smile.

"But I've saved my favorite for last." Professor Ho turned the pages to the back of the book. "Nostradamus rarely specifies a date, but here he does—wisely setting it long after his own time:^x

The year 1999, seventh month,
From the sky will come a great King of Terror:

^w The French spellings of the words are 'Hister' and 'Hitler,' just like English.

^x The only other date specified is 1727, over a hundred years after Nostradamus's time. That prediction (Century 3 Quatrain 77) also fell through.

To bring back to life the great King of the Mongols,

Before and after, Mars [god of war] to reign by good fortune [or: happily]. [Prophecies Century 10 Quatrain 72]

Well boys, I was there in July 1999, and no King of Terror came in the sky, and neither Genghis Khan nor any other King of the Mongols came back to life. Of course, there were wars in the world, before, during and after 1999.”

Would-be prophets: Modern astrologers

“But don’t some of the predictions people make come true?” asked Xiao Wang.

“Of course,” affirmed Professor Ho. “Even today there are astrologists who make their living claiming to predict the future and even get published in magazines and tabloid newspapers in print and online. They make hundreds of predictions every year. A small percentage of them—one study estimated it at less than 10%²²—actually come true. The rest fail. But there’s a tendency to ignore great number of failures and focus on the few predictions that come true. In psychology this is called the ‘Jeane Dixon’ effect.

“Jeane Dixon was a famous American astrologist. In 1956 she predicted that the 1960 American presidential election would be won by a candidate from the Democratic party who would then be assassinated or die of natural causes while in office. That wasn’t as impressive as it might sound; when she made the prediction, three out of ten American presidents in the 20th century had died in office. Subsequently, John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, was elected in 1960. However, Dixon apparently forgot her 1956 prediction, because in 1960 she explicitly predicted that Kennedy, would *not* win the election!

Then President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. As a result, Dixon’s election prediction error was forgotten and she became famous as a true prophet! She went on to predict that Kennedy’s widow, Jacqueline Kennedy, would not marry Aristotle Onassis—announcing this the day before Jacqueline *did* marry him. She also mis-predicted the 1964 and 1968 American presidential election candidates, and on May 7, 1966 assured Americans that the Vietnam War would end in 90 days—she was off by about 2,365 days.²³ She also predicted that the Soviet Union would beat the Americans to the moon, and that there would be worldwide peace by the year 2000.”

Xiao Li was perplexed. “But then why do so many people believe in these prophecies?”

“I’ve often asked myself that question,” replied Professor Ho. “Certainly many people just believe what they hear, whether it’s Muslims growing up in Islamic countries, atheists accepting the evolution they read in their textbooks, or web surfers sending emails to their friends quoting Nostradamus. But God has given us the ability to think rationally and expects us to seek the truth. That’s why He left us an unbroken record of hundreds of fulfilled prophecies in the Bible.

“You see boys, just getting a few short term predictions right doesn’t make someone a prophet as the Bible defines it. You have to get *everything* right before it counts. If divine inspiration is the source of your prophecies, there won’t be *any* mistakes.” Professor Ho placed his Bible on top of the piled up books in front of him and flipped through it’s faded pages to find a familiar passage.

“22 “When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. [Deuteronomy 18:22 NAS]

This verse might sound simplistic, but it’s meant to be taken at it’s face value. Just *one* failure on the part of a prophet disqualifies him from being inspired. The text says, ‘you shall not be afraid of him’; that is, you should ignore everything he says, even if he threatens you with hellfire like Muhammad, or says the King of Terrors is coming, like Nostradamus, or promises world peace like Jeane Dixon.

“This sets a high standard for the Bible’s prophecies—100% accuracy to demonstrate inspiration. And the Bible meets the standard! I’ve studied it for twenty years now and I know all the accusations leveled by the critics. None of them stand. What the Bible says will happen, happens.”

“Then why don’t more people believe?” challenged Xiao Wang.

“Most never look for the truth,” Professor Ho replied calmly and sadly.

“What about all those skeptics who *have* examined the Bible?” Again Xiao Wang’s inner turmoil made his tone harsh.

Professor Ho looked directly into Xiao Wang’s eyes, guessing more than half of the struggle in his heart. “The skeptics who examine and reject the Bible,” he replied evenly, “flee to their last tower of refuge: Chance!”

The final fortress: Chance

“Chance!” Professor Ho repeated. “When even the hardcore anti-Biblical so-called ‘scholars’ have to admit that Bible prophecies were made before the fulfillments, they run away and hide in the fortress of ‘it was all just lucky guesses.’ But the walls of that fortress are made of paper-mache.

“No matter how much evidence, no matter how many examples of fulfilled prophecy God has provided, one can always try to write them off to ‘chance!’ Jeremiah says glorious, ancient Babylon will be a wasteland forever. Centuries later it happens—while hundreds of other contemporary cities continue down to our day. Chance! Ezekiel tells you Tyre will be scraped and thrown into the sea, an event unique in history; 250 years later an idol worshipper who never heard of Ezekiel fulfills his prophecy. Chance! Ezekiel proclaims Egypt, after two millennia of glory, will never again be a dominant power—but will continue to exist. And that’s exactly what has happened for 25 centuries since the

prophecy was uttered. Daniel tells you exactly when the Messiah will arrive, and He comes right on time. Moses warns the Jews they'll be scattered all over the world for disobedience, be a despised minority persecuted everywhere but never stop existing, and eventually return to Israel. Thousands of years later his predictions are fulfilled down to the smallest details.

"And in the face of all that, and hundreds of other examples, all the unbelieving critics can say is, the predictions came true by 'good luck' or 'chance!'"

"Chance! The 'god' of the atheist! The 'god' who, by chance, created life out of a few elements which he randomly picked up and formed into DNA. Then this 'god,' starting from bacteria, by chance gradually succeeded in creating humans, with their self-consciousness and free will. What a great 'god' this 'Chance' is, who can blindly and completely without purpose achieve marvelous things! For years I bowed down to this idol, 'Chance,' as my creator. But then by the grace of God, by His leading me, I actually examined the facts. I found out my little idol god 'Chance' couldn't have produced the real world I lived in. When I went on to examine the Biblical predictions, I reached the same conclusion: the prophets didn't get the future right by 'chance.' It's simply not logical to think that way!"

Professor Ho stopped, breathing a little hard. He suddenly realized how heatedly he'd been speaking. He sat back in his chair, silent for a moment, regaining his composure. Then he leaned forward again and looked thoughtfully at Xiao Wang. "Well Xiao Wang, what do you think?"

Xiao Wang looked down and hesitated a long time before answering. Finally he looked back up at Professor Ho. "I would like to know," he said slowly, "who Jesus was and what His message was."

Professor Ho nodded and a smile spread across his face. "Come back next week, and we'll look at the evidence for the New Testament history!"

Appendix 9-1: More details demonstrating the time of composition and historical accuracy of Daniel

Introduction

Probably no book in the entire Bible has such a severe attack by unbelieving critics as the book of Daniel. The reason is clear: Daniel is filled with minutely detailed prophecies about events which subsequently occurred. The unbelieving critics assume supernatural prophetic inspiration does not and cannot exist; this is their blindly held presupposition, the presupposition of atheism and philosophical materialism. Therefore, when faced with Daniel's fulfilled prophecies, the critics' first line of defense is to claim that Daniel was completed after the events occurred.

The prophecies covered in this chapter for the most part were fulfilled after 125 BC, which is the date of our oldest copy of Daniel, so there's no denying that Daniel was completed before the events occurred. The unbelieving critics try to deny the fulfillment of those prophecies by attributing them to 'good luck' or by fanciful reinterpretations of the meanings of the prophecies which would push the supposed 'fulfillments' earlier in history. These arguments are very unconvincing, but it's the best they can do.

However, many of the prophecies in Daniel which are *not* discussed in this chapter had detailed historical fulfillments in the period 539-165 BC. Here the critics face a more difficult problem: the fulfillments are too specific to deny or write off to chance, so they have to assume Daniel was completed after the events occurred. In practical terms, this means claiming that the book of Daniel as we have it was completed after 165 BC. This absurd conclusion is forced on the unbelieving critics due to their anti-supernatural bias.

Entire books have been written demonstrating and defending the fact that the book of Daniel is an early (c.539 BC) composition. What follows is the barest outline of the evidence. Interested readers should consult the references for more details.²⁴ Except where otherwise referenced, the following discussion is based on the sources in Note 24.

Manuscripts of Daniel

As noted in the text above [see the section titled When was the book of Daniel written?], the oldest manuscript of Daniel presently known comes from the Qumran community 'Dead Sea Scrolls' collection. The book of Daniel was very popular with the Qumran group. Many copies of Daniel were found there; the oldest is designated by scholars as 4QDan^c or 4Q114. It has been dated (by unbelieving scholars) to about 125 BC, and apparently there is scholarly consensus that it could not possibly have been copied later than 100 BC. In fact, even all of the hardcore anti-Biblical critics say Daniel was completed around 165 BC. But actually, the c.125 BC date for the manuscript forces us to conclude the original was written much earlier than the critics claim.

The c.125 BC manuscript is just a copy, a copy of earlier manuscripts. And that copy was found in the library of an ultra-conservative, reclusive sect zealously devoted to observing, studying and copying the Jewish scriptures. Are we to believe that they casually accepted a trumped up version of Daniel which had appeared only 40 years earlier, within the lifetime of some of the members of their community? That they swallowed it down almost as soon as it appeared on the scene? That they would not have compared it to other copies they and their ancestors had known? How long would it have taken a 'new' version of the book of Daniel to gain acceptance among the Jews, and to be transmitted to a reclusive, semi-monastic community in a remote corner of the Judean wilderness? In reality, this manuscript alone strongly indicates that the book of Daniel was completed before the Maccabean period which began in 165 BC.

The unbelieving critics understand the force of this argument. Before the finding of the Dead Sea Scroll, these critics had claimed some of the Psalms in the Bible had been written in the Maccabean period, perhaps during 165-150 BC. Then early manuscripts of those Psalms were found at Qumran. It wasn't reasonable to think those Psalms could have

gotten into wide circulation a few decades after they were written, so the critics decided they must have been written a century or two earlier than the Maccabean period (actually, of course, they are much older than that). Copies of Chronicles and Ecclesiastes were also found at Qumran. The unbelieving critics admitted that finding these copies indicated that Chronicles and Ecclesiastes were composed in the 3rd or even the 4th century BC, certainly sometime *before* 200 BC at the latest.

But when the same thing happened with the book of Daniel found at Qumran—a copy from before 100 BC was found—the unbelieving critics refused to acknowledge the obvious. To be logically consistent, the critics should have acknowledged that Daniel must have been completed and in circulation in the pre-Maccabean period, that is, before 165 BC. But that would mean admitting there was predictive prophecy! So the critics ignored their own logic, the logic they applied to Chronicles, Ecclesiastes, and several Psalms, and continued to unreasonably insist Daniel as we have it wasn't written until 165 BC. Scholars not blinded by atheistic presuppositions do acknowledge that just the manuscript evidence alone strongly indicates an early date for Daniel.

References in other books

The book of Daniel, the prophet Daniel himself, other characters in the book (e.g. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego), and some of the events recorded in Daniel (e.g. the lions' den) are referred to in other ancient writings.

The book of Ezekiel was completed before 500 BC [see chapter 8] but mentions Daniel as a well known personage. In a passage dated c. 592, Ezekiel warns of the coming judgment on Israel:

14 even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD. ... 20 even *though* Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* son or *their* daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness." [Ezekiel 14:14, 20 NAS]

Already at that time, Daniel was an acknowledged paragon of piety. Slightly later, in c. 587 BC, Ezekiel sarcastically parody's the arrogance of the king of Tyre:

3 Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you. [Ezekiel 28:3 NAS]

This passage not only shows early knowledge of Daniel, but also implicitly acknowledges his actions in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams via God's revelation [see Daniel 2].

The book of 1 Maccabees is a Jewish historical work describing the revolt against the Greeks led by the Maccabee clan. It was probably completed before 100 BC. It refers to people and events recorded in Daniel chapters 3 and 6:

Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael [i.e. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego] believed and were saved from the flame. Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions. [1 Maccabees 2:59-60 NRS]

The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in c.93AD, asserts that the book of Daniel already existed in 332 BC when Alexander the Great invaded Palestine. In his Antiquities of the Jews Book 11, Chapter 8, Section 5 (11:337), Josephus asserts the Jewish high priest showed the book of Daniel to Alexander:

...the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians...²⁵

This is clearly a reference to the prophecies of Daniel 8. While we do not know if the event of showing the book to Alexander the Great actually occurred, clearly the Josephus had access to historical sources which indicated the book of Daniel was already in existence and regarded as canonical in 332 BC.

Historical accuracy

In the past, the critics' favorite so-called 'historical error' in Daniel was its record of the name of the last king of Babylon. Extra-Biblical history very clearly states that the name of the last king of the Babylonian empire was Nabonidus, but Daniel says the last king was named "Belshazzar":

Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. [Daniel 5:29 NAS]

Why does Daniel call the last king of Babylon "Belshazzar"? And why does it say this king made Daniel "the third ruler" instead of the 'second ruler' as the reader would expect? Later, archaeologists discovered that the last king, Nabonidus, was often absent from Babylon, living in the city of Teman in the Arabian desert. Nabonidus appointed his son Belshazzar as regent, and therefore Belshazzar was also considered king. Archaeologists found a Babylonian contract dating from that period which demonstrates Belshazzar's status. The oath given by the two parties to ratify the contact was taken in the names of both Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Babylonian contracts were normally ratified with an oath taken in the name of the reigning king. Therefore, not only is the book of Daniel not mistaken in saying Belshazzar was the Babylonian empire's last "king," but the detail about his making Daniel "the third ruler in the kingdom" is also completely correct. This is strong evidence for the early date of composition of Daniel, as one scholar notes:

Incidentally, Daniel 5 is a better historical source on the fall of Babylon to Cyrus the Great in 539 BC than is either Herodotus (fifth century BC) or Xenophon (early fourth century BC). Daniel knew the name of the last

king ruling in Babylon, Belshazzar, and he also knew that a co-regency existed between Belshazzar and his father Nabonidus. Both of these facts are missing from Herodotus and Xenophon. Herodotus even incorrectly states in his Histories that the Babylonian king killed by Cyrus was named “Labonidas” [a misspelling of Nabonidus]. Belshazzar’s father Nabonidus, in fact, survived the fall of Babylon and eventually died of old age. How is it that, centuries after the fall of Babylon in 539 BC, the author of Daniel [supposedly] writing in 165 BC had better historical information than the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon?²⁶

If the author of Daniel had been writing in 165 BC in Palestine, how could he have gotten facts straight that Greek historians who lived 300 to 400 years closer to the events and travelled extensively did *not* record correctly? The answer is, Daniel was writing in Babylon in the 6th century BC and recorded events he had lived through himself.

Another detail confirming the accuracy of the book of Daniel is chapter four’s record of Nebuchadnezzar’s boast:

The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' [Daniel 4:30 NAS]

Modern archaeologists have discovered that Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt many of Babylon’s buildings and added a new section on the west side of the Euphrates river, connecting the two with a bridge. Concerning this point, the famous unbelieving critic Pfeiffer has very unconvincingly written “presumably we shall never know how the writer of Daniel knew”²⁷ that Babylon was built and rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar. Because Pfeiffer believed that the book of Daniel was written after 170 BC in Palestine, he could not understand its historical accuracy!

There are many other details showing the book of Daniel was written in the Babylonian and Persian periods. For example, scholars have pointed out Daniel accurately records the change in the details of the death penalty. This changed from burning alive under the Babylonians to the lion’s den under the Persians. From historical research we now know that the Persians did not use burning for execution because in ancient Persian religion fire was a sacred symbol.

Geographical terms

Daniel’s use of geographical terms reflects the knowledge and usage available to a 6th century BC writer. He refers to Greece by the ancient term ‘Javan,’ (used in Daniel 8:21, 10:20, and 11:2).

Even more significantly, when Daniel prophecies about Rome, he can only use the very vague term ‘Kittim’ (used in Daniel 11:30). The word appears Old Testament books dating from the 15th to 5th centuries BC in reference to the islands and distant coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea. Rome was unknown to the Near Eastern world in Daniel’s day, so he could only refer to it by a vague term designating a location in on the coast of the Mediterranean somewhere west of Israel. This usage contrasts with Jewish documents actually dating from the Maccabean period, such as 1 Maccabees, which covers the history of the period 175-134 BC and was written around 100 BC. In 1 Maccabees, the name, ethnicity, and geographical location of the Romans is clearly understood and repeatedly mentioned.

Language

The language used in the book of Daniel gives us another very convincing proof that it was written *before* 300 BC. The main languages used in the book of Daniel are Hebrew and Aramaic. We have other documents in Hebrew and Aramaic spanning the period from 800 BC to 100 AD. The Hebrew of Daniel is different from that found in the book Ecclesiasticus (also called Sirach), written in the 2nd century BC, and also different from the Hebrew of the 1st century BC documents produced by the Qumran sect which copied the Dead Sea Scrolls. Daniel’s Hebrew is similar to that in other late Biblical Hebrew writings, such as Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. Meanwhile, the Aramaic used in Daniel is not like late Aramaic documents, such as the 1st century BC Genesis Apocryphon. In contrast, Daniel’s Aramaic is more similar to the Aramaic found in documents dating from the 7th to 4th centuries BC.

Daniel has about fifteen Persian language terms, mostly governmental terms. Their presence argues for a relatively early date for in Daniel, certainly before 300 BC. In 332 BC, Alexander the Great led the Greeks in conquest of Palestine and the entire Persian empire. Persian language governmental technical terms quickly became obsolete. The result was that, by the time the Jews translated the Old Testament of the Bible into Greek (c. 250-150 BC), four of the fifteen Persian technical terms in the book of Daniel had been forgotten, and the translators could only guess at some of their meanings—often getting them wrong. Through modern archaeology, we are now able to understand the correct meanings of these terms. They come from the period of the Persian empire, which began during Daniel’s life but had ended by 331 BC.

After 331 BC the Jews used an increasing number of words borrowed from Greek. But in the book of Daniel there are only two or at most three Greek loanwords. They are all special terms for musical instruments (Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15). Trade and other contacts between Mesopotamia and the Aegean region (including Greece) were extensive long before Daniel’s time. The Assyrian king Sennacherib records that he carried off Greek captives to Nineveh in c. 700 BC. Other historical sources testify that Nebuchadnezzar made use of Greek mercenaries and workmen. Furthermore, it is known that Nebuchadnezzar employed musicians from the Philistine seaport city of Ashkelon, a place which would have had extensive trade contacts with Greece. Thus it is not surprising that in Daniel’s time there were two or three Greek technical terms for musical instruments in use in Babylon; the presence of those terms is not a problem for an early date of Daniel.

The ‘problem’ with the Greek in Daniel is: why is there so little? If the book of Daniel was actually completed

around 165 BC, where are all the Greek words? By 165 BC, Greek-speaking government had been in control of Palestine for 160 years and had deeply influenced the culture and language of the region. An Aramaic or Hebrew document actually dating from 165 BC should have had a large number of Greek words, including administrative and governmental terms. Daniel has far too few Greek words to have been composed so late as 165 BC.

To help the reader understand this phenomenon, please compare English loanwords in Mandarin Chinese. Books written in 1850 during the Qing dynasty might perhaps have one or two loanwords from English, used to describe people, foreign nations, or items used by foreigners. But by the year 2000 there are very, very many English loanwords widely used in Mandarin, such as sofa (沙发), coffee (咖啡), card (卡片), gene (基因), blog (博客), etc., and even direct usages like the words 'sorry' and 'OK.' We can use the proportion of foreign loanwords to distinguish Chinese books written in 1850 and 2000. In the same way, the lack of Greek words in the book of Daniel demonstrates that it was written before 300 BC.

Appendix 9-2: What is the starting date for calculating Daniel's 70 'sevens'?

Readers may encounter a 'traditional' interpretation of how to calculate the timing of the coming of the Messiah based on Daniel's 70 'sevens' as covering the years 444 BC to 33 AD.

The 'traditional' calculation of the count

1. Start from Nehemiah in 444 BC.

The traditional viewpoint begins the countdown from Nehemiah's rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I, king of the Medo-Persian empire:

1 And it came about in the month Nisan [March/April], in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes [445 or 444 BC], that wine *was* before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. [Nehemiah 2:1 NAS]

Nehemiah subsequently succeeding in rebuilding the wall, finishing it later in that same year:

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of *the month* Elul [October 2], in fifty-two days. [Nehemiah 6:15 NAS]

2. Use 360 day years.

This viewpoint then uses what are sometimes termed 'prophetic years' consisting of 360 days each, based on twelve 30 day months comprising a year. The rationale includes the fact that the Jewish calendar normally had twelve months, each with 30 days, and also that that in the book of Revelation 12:14 the phrase "a time, times and half a time," which seems to indicate three and a half years, is apparently equivalent to Revelation 12:6's "one thousand two hundred and sixty days." Daniel says the Messiah will come after $62 + 7 = 69$ 'sevens.' Each "seven" is seven years, for a total of $69 \times 7 = 483$ years. Then the equation becomes:

$$360 \text{ days} \times 483 \text{ years} = 173,880 \text{ days}$$

$$173,880 \text{ days} \div \sim 365.24 \text{ days/year} = 476 \text{ years and } 25 \text{ days}$$

3. Arrive at Palm Sunday, 33 AD.

Beginning from the year 444 BC, counting forward 476 years yields the year 33 AD, which was traditionally thought to be the year in which Jesus was crucified. Some proponents of this view refine it further, claiming that it was precise to the day of Palm Sunday when Jesus publically offered Himself as Messiah to the Jewish nation. They begin their count with Nisan 1 (said to be equivalent to March 5) in 444 BC and end it exactly 173,880 days later on Nisan 10 in 33 AD, said to be the Sunday before Passover.

While this 'traditional' view continues to be popular in sincere evangelical circles, it does not seem to be correct.

A more natural and accurate calculation of the count

1. Start from Ezra in 458/457 BC.

Clearly Ezra began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem some years before Nehemiah arrived. Ezra arrived in around 458 BC:

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon... 7 ...to Jerusalem in the seventh year [458/457 BC] of King Artaxerxes.
8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 ...on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem... [Ezra 7:6-9 NAS]

He then began rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, resulting in a slanderous attack against him by officials from the surrounding people groups:

11 this is the copy of the letter which they [enemies of the Jews] sent to him [the king]: "To King Artaxerxes: Your servants, the men in the region beyond the River, and now 12 let it be known to the king that the Jews

who came up from you [Ezra and his company] have come to us at Jerusalem; they are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. 13 "Now let it be known to the king, that if that city is rebuilt and the walls are finished, they will not pay tribute, custom or toll, and it will damage the revenue of the kings. . . . 16 "We inform the king that if that city is rebuilt and the walls finished, as a result you will have no possession in *the province* beyond the River." [Ezra 4:11-13, 16 NAS]

King Artaxerxes responded by ordering the building to stop:

17 *Then* the king sent an answer to Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and in the rest of *the provinces* beyond the River: "Peace. And now 18 the document which you sent to us has been translated and read before me. 19 "A decree has been issued by me, and a search has been made and it has been discovered that that city has risen up against the kings in past days, that rebellion and revolt have been perpetrated in it, 20 that mighty kings have ruled over Jerusalem, governing all *the provinces* beyond the River, and that tribute, custom and toll were paid to them. 21 "So, now issue a decree to make these men stop *work*, that this city may not be rebuilt until a decree is issued by me. 22 "Beware of being negligent in carrying out this *matter*; why should damage increase to the detriment of the kings?" [Ezra 4:17-22 NAS]

The anti-Jewish officials were more than happy to carry out this command, and did so with violence:

23 Then as soon as the copy of King Artaxerxes' document was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their colleagues, they went in haste to Jerusalem to the Jews and stopped them by force of arms. [Ezra 4:23 NAS]

It is clear from the above texts that Ezra attempted to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. It is extremely unlikely that he would have tried to do so without royal authorization—refortifying without permission would be tantamount to open rebellion, and that at a time when Egypt was actively rebelling against Persian control. What apparently happened is that that king changed his mind about allowing the refortification of Jerusalem—just as he would do again 13 years later, when he decided to allow the rebuilding under Jeremiah.

Thus it seems clear that Ezra's attempt to rebuild the wall was the starting point for Daniel's 70 'sevens.' The prophecy said the count would start "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." The Hebrew literally says 'from the going forth of the word.' It does not require the immediate success of the enterprise, only the start of the undertaking.

This background makes it easier for us to understand Nehemiah's distress over a decade later when he gets news of the conditions back in Jerusalem while he himself is serving in the Persian palace:

1:1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev [November/December], in the twentieth year [of Artaxerxes, 446 or 445 BC], while I was in Susa the capitol, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped *and* had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire." 4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

...

2:1 And it came about in the month Nisan [March/April], in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes [445 or 444 BC]... . . . 3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?" [Nehemiah 1:1-4, 2:1, 3 NAS]

Nehemiah's reaction to the news about Jerusalem presupposes an attempt to rebuild the walls a short time earlier. It would be extremely strange for Nehemiah to suddenly be shocked with grief over that news that the walls of Jerusalem were torn down as they had been for over 140 years already, since the beginning of the Babylonian captivity! Implicit in the report and his reaction is that the enemies of the Jews had not only stopped Ezra's rebuilding activities, but torn down the walls he had already completed and burned the city gates which had already been hung.

The starting point for counting the 70 'sevens' should be 458/457 BC.

2. Use normal, solar years.

The use of 360 day 'prophetic years' is very contrived. The Jews, like other ancient people, knew perfectly well that a year was longer than 360 days. To adjust for the discrepancy, they periodically inserted a 'leap month' called Second Adar at the end of the year. The natural reading of the text of Daniel for them (and for us) is to take it as referring to 483 ordinary solar years – not a contrived calculation of days.

Furthermore, contrary to the claims of 'to the day accuracy,' no day of the month is given in Nehemiah 2:1, so counting from the first day of Nisan is presumptive.

3. Arrive at the start of Jesus's ministry in 26/27 AD.

The 'traditional' date for the crucifixion of Jesus was 33 AD. While that remains possible, it is more likely that Jesus was crucified in 30 AD, which would invalidate a calculation arriving at 33 AD for the coming of the Messiah.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether Artaxerxes's 20th year should be dated to 445/444 BC, as the traditional interpretation does, or 446/445 BC,^Y the date used in the discussion of Daniel's 70 'sevens' above. If the earlier date (446/445 BC) is correct, the traditional view would be off by at least a year even if Jesus had been crucified in 33 AD.

Considering all of the evidence together, it seems far more reasonable to take the natural, straightforward reading of the text—483 ordinary, solar years—and recognize that Ezra clearly was the first who spoke 'forth the word' to rebuild Jerusalem's wall.

For a discussion of this issue, see Note 9, Gleason L. Archer's [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), pages 445-446. Archer favors the view presented here.

¹ Payne, J. Barton. [Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy](#). Baker Books, 1973.

² Venderkam, James and Peter Flint. [The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls](#). HarperOne, 2004.

³ Pictures from:

Daniel manuscript: biblearchaeology.org/post/2012/07/31/New-Light-on-the-Book-of-Daniel-from-the-Dead-Sea-Scrolls.aspx

Lions from Babylon: PUB DOM en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Passing_lion_Babylon_AO21118.jpg

Map of Medo-Persian Empire: PUB DOM en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Persian_Empire,_490_BC

Map of Alexander the Great's Empire: PUB DOM

wpclipart.com/world_history/warfare/maps/Alexander_the_Great_Empire_323_BC.jpg

Kaifeng Jews: PUB DOM zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jews_of_Kai-Fung-Foo,_China.jpg

⁴ Harrison, R.K. [Introduction to the Old Testament](#). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969. Pg.1116-1117.

⁵ Unger, Merrill F., R.K. Harrison, Howard F. Vos and Cyril J. Barber. [The New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#), Revised and updated edition. Moody Press, 1988. Pg. 829.

⁶ Note 5, Pg.987.

⁷ Barker, Kenneth L. and John R. Kohlenberger III, Eds. [Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary, Volume 1](#). Zondervan, 1994. See section on the book of Daniel.

⁸ Note 4, Pg.1260.

⁹ Archer, Gleason L. [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#). Updated and Revised Edition. Moody Press, 1994. Pg.443-444.

¹⁰ See note 5, page 279.

¹¹ Barker, Kenneth, General Ed. [The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition](#). Zondervan, 1995. Study note at John 3:1.

¹² See Josephus's [Antiquities of the Jews](#), Book 15, Chapter 11, Sections 1 and 6 (= Book 15:380-387 and 421-423).

¹³ See Josephus's [Antiquities of the Jews](#), Book 18, Chapter 5, Section 2 (= Book 18:116-119).

¹⁴ For a summary of the historical evidence, see Finegan, Jack. [Handbook of Biblical Chronology](#), Revised Edition, Hendrickson Publishers, 1998. It should be noted that Finegan himself favors a year of 29 AD for the baptism of Jesus and 30 AD for first Passover of John 2:13.

¹⁵ Paraphrased from Blaise Pascal's [Pensees](#).

¹⁶ Josephus. [Wars of the Jews](#), Book 2, Chapter 19, Section 7 (= Book 2:540).

¹⁷ See Note 16, Book 2 Chapter 20 (= Book 2:556-584) and following.

¹⁸ See Josephus. [Wars of the Jews](#), Book 6, Chapter 8, Section 2 (= Book 6:383-386) and Book 6, Chapter 9, Section 2-3 (= Book 6:418, 420).

¹⁹ Kitchen, Kenneth A. [On the Reliability of the Old Testament](#), Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003. Pg. 283-306.

²⁰ Crawford, Sidnie White, "THREE DEUTERONOMY MANUSCRIPTS FROM CAVE 4, QUMRAN" (1993). *Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department*. Paper 14. Available online at: digitalcommons.unl.edu/classicsfacpub/14

²¹ For a discussion see: wikiislam.net/wiki/Islamic_Prophesies:_Preservation_of_the_Quran ; answering-islam.org/Green/uthman.htm ; gotquestions.org/errors-Quran.html

²² Barfield, Kenny. [The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of the Biblical Prophets](#). Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, TN, 1995. Pg.209.

²³ Note 22, Pg.201-211.

²⁴ Sources for Appendix 9-1: More details demonstrating the time of composition and historical accuracy of Daniel:

Archer, Gleason L. [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#). Updated and Revised Edition. Moody Press, 1994. Pg.421-448.

Barfield, Kenny. [The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of the Biblical Prophets](#). Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, TN, 1995. Pg.263-280.

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Harrison, R.K. [Introduction to the Old Testament](#). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969. Pg.1105-1134.

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Unger, Merrill F., R.K. Harrison, Howard F. Vos and Cyril J. Barber. [The New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#), Revised and updated edition. Moody Press, 1988. Passim.

²⁵ Josephus. [Antiquities of the Jews](#), Book 11, Chapter 8, Section 5 (= Book 11:337)

²⁶ Billington, Clyde E. "The Curious History of the 'Editor' in Biblical Criticism" *Bible & Spade* 22.4 (2009) Pg. 109-120. Available online at: biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/07/01/The-Curious-History-of-the-e2809cEditore2809d-in-Biblical-Criticism.aspx#Article

²⁷ Quoted in Free, Joseph R. and Howard F. Vos. [Archaeology and Bible History](#), Revised Edition. Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. Pg.196

^Y See, for example, Note 14 page 268 (section 458).