The Prophecies of Jesus

Daniel 9:25-26a

Lesson 4

1. Hello. My name is Ken Samuel, and this is the fourth part of an eleven-part series on the prophecies of Jesus that was originally created by Stephen Katz. Today, we are going to read an amazing prophecy that predicts the exact date of the triumphal entry… hundreds of years in advance: Daniel chapter 9, verses 25-26! <click>
2. So, the portion of the prophecy that we are going to examine says, “Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing.” So how do the missionaries interpret this passage? Well, <click> both of the mentions of the Anointed One refer to Jesus Christ. Now, what does it mean when it says that Jesus Christ comes? <click> It referring to the time he came to Jerusalem, an event that’s called the triumphal entry. <click> And where it says the Anointed One was put to death, it’s referring to Jesus’ crucifixion, of course. <click> Now, the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was a decree issued by King Artaxerxes I in <click> 444 BC. <click> And the sevens are periods of seven years. <click>
3. So, the missionaries’ interpretation of Daniel 9:25-26 is as follows. <click> There are two mentions of the Anointed One, both of them referring to Jesus Christ. Christ means messiah, which means… anointed one! And the prophecy says the Anointed One comes. Comes where? <click> Only the holiest city in the world, Jerusalem. Now Jesus entered the city gates of Jerusalem more than once, but this verse is referring to the last time. It was Palm Sunday at the beginning of the Passion Week. He rode on a donkey, and people waved palm leaves shouting, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!” <click> Next, when it says Jesus was put to death, of course it’s talking about when Roman soldiers executed him on a cross, which occurred a few days after the triumphal entry. <click> So what does it mean by “the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”? Well, at the time that the angel Gabriel gave this prophecy to Daniel, the Jews were living in exile after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, killing most of the people and carrying away the rest. Then, several decades later, an alliance between Persia and the Medes came along and beat up the Babylonians, taking over their entire kingdom. Several years after that, a man named Artaxerxes I became the king of Persia, and, at the request of the prophet Nehemiah, he issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to their land to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem.” That occurred in the year 444 BC, which is important, as we will see. <click> And what’s the deal with the sevens? Well, the missionaries and the anti-missionaries agree that they are periods of seven years. And, as we’ll see, that’s the only interpretation that makes any sense. <click>
4. Okay. So, this prophecy specifies a date. The way it does that is <click> it describes a start date, <click> a time period after that, <click> another time period after that, <click> and then an event that occurs at the end of both time periods, the triumphal entry. So, let’s start at the beginning: “the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.” When did that happen? <click> Well, we find the answer to that question in the book of Nehemiah, chapter 2: “In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes... It pleased the king to send me [to Jerusalem]; so I set a time.” For brevity, I cut out most of the passage with an ellipsis, so I encourage to read the entire passage to assure yourself that this really is the time the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. So, in what year did that occur? Well historical records tell us that Artaxerxes became king in 464 BC, so his twentieth year was <click> 444 BC. So now we know the start date. Next, let’s look at that time period. <click> 7 sevens and 62 sevens makes a total of 69 sevens. <click> And, as I told you before, the word “seven” in the prophecy means seven years, so we multiply 69 and 7 to get a total of 483 years between the two events. Okay. Now comes the tricky part. Those 483 years aren’t solar years like the ones on the calendar we use today. They don’t have 365 days each. Those years are known as “prophetic years,” which are lunar years. They each have only 360 days. <click> So the number of days in 483 years is 483 times 360, which my calculator tells me is 173,880 days. Now since we want to know the year of the event at the end of the prophecy on *our* calendar, <click> we must divide that number of days by 365. (I know that I’m rounding the number of days in a year to 365, but even if you use the exact average number of days per year, you’ll still get 476 years. <click> So, finally, the start date, 444 BC, plus the time period, 476 years is 33 AD. (If you think that should be 32 AD, you must understand that our calendar, which Pope Gregory created, has no year zero. 1 BC is immediately followed by 1 AD. Hence, the final date is 33 AD.) So then, when, according to history, was the triumphal entry? Well, it was in — drum roll please — 33 AD. <click> I‘ve read that this prophecy pinpoints the exact day of the triumphal entry, though I haven’t done that calculation myself. <click>
5. Now here’s a question. With all their knowledge of the Bible, how come the Pharisees never calculated the date when the Messiah would come? Shouldn’t they have been expecting the Messiah to arrive? Shouldn’t they have been watching for somebody notable to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? <click> Well these two quotes might give us the answer. The Talmud is a set of books that Orthodox Jews believe is Holy inerrant scripture that has even higher authority than the Old Testament. So, the Talmud says, “Rabbi Samuel ben Nahmani said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end. For they would say, since the predetermined time has arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come. But [even so], wait for him, as it is written, Though he tarry, wait for him.” Isn’t that interesting. And Rambam was a famous Rabbi who said, “Daniel has elucidated to us the knowledge of the end times. However, since they are secret, the wise [rabbis] have barred the calculation of the days of Messiah’s coming so that the untutored populace will not be led astray when they see that the end times have already come but there is no sign of the Messiah.” So, it seems that the reason the Pharisees hadn’t done the calculation I just showed you is because it was forbidden. And what’s more stunning is that, apparently, the reason it was forbidden was because they knew that the calculation would show them that the Messiah had already come. <click>
6. Okay. So, the missionaries have had enough time to present their interpretation. Let’s let the anti-missionaries have a turn. How do they interpret Daniel 9:25-26? Well, first off, they call foul on the Christian translation. <click>
7. The verse doesn’t say “*the*” anointed one. It says “*an*” anointed one. It’s an indefinite article, not a definite article. The Hebrew word “the” is “ha” and “the messiah” would be “hamashiakh.” But the word “hamashiakh” cannot be found in the Hebrew of the prophecy. It just says “mashiakh,” which can only mean “a messiah.” The Christian translators created the word “the” out of thin air. And there isn’t even a definite article before the word, “ruler,” so that’s a third translator transgression. But it’s not the last one. Notice that the Christian translators capitalized the words “Anointed” and “One.” But Hebrew doesn’t have any capital or lowercase letters. It just has letters. This capitalization is nothing more than translator interpretation. And it serves to deceive you into thinking that this verse is referring to the Davidic messiah, the savior of Israel, when it could be any anointed king or priest. <click>
8. Now if that wasn’t bad enough, the translators added another word, “comes.” It’s not in the Hebrew at all. This mistranslation doesn’t affect the interpretation, but it’s just another sin to show that Christian translators don’t hesitate to create words. Okay. So now that we’ve got the correct translation, we can begin the interpretation. <click> So, the sevens are indeed seven-year periods, but they aren’t 360-day years. They’re normal 365-day years. So then, who are the two anointed ones? And yes, there are two anointed ones, because there are two time periods. <click> They were Cyrus, king of Persia, and <click> King Herod Agrippa I. <click>
9. So, the anti-missionaries point out eight translation errors in the Christian English Bible. <click> There’s no word “the” before either occurrence of “anointed one” or “ruler,” there’s no good reason to capitalize either instance of “anointed one,” and all kings and priests were anointed. “An anointed one” could be any of them. <click> Also, the word “comes” comes out of nothing, so to speak. <click> And there’s no such thing as a “prophetic year.” Earth has always taken 365 days to travel around the sun. Christians can’t change that no matter how much they want to. <click>
10. And anti-missionaries think that the missionaries’ interpretation of the passage is ludicrous. <click> Firstly, they have the wrong start date for the prophesy, because they chose the wrong decree. The right decree is reported in Ezra 1: “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: … ‘“The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.”’” <click> And that decree was issued in 539 BC. <click>
11. The anti-missionaries then note that missionaries don’t explain why there are two separate time periods and why the phrase “an anointed one” appears twice. <click> The reason for that is that there are two different anointed ones. If they both referred to the same person, then the second reference would use a definite article like “the” or “that” or “this,” and it does not. <click> And if you do the calculations, you’ll see that after 7 sevens, Cyrus II, also known as Cyrus the Great, was the king of Persia, while King Herod Agrippa I, also known as Herod the Great, was the anointed one who died after 62 more sevens. <click> And *by the way,* Jesus was never anointed. <click>
12. So what do the missionaries have to say about all that? <click> It’s true that “mashiakh” means “an anointed one,” not “the anointed one,” but all of the Biblical references to the Davidic messiah are “mashiakh.” In fact, the only occurrences of “hamashiakh” in the entire Bible are found in the book of Exodus, and they refer to the priest, Aaron, who was the only anointed person at that time. And besides, if Jesus is the anointed one, then he is also an anointed one. <click> And *by the way,* Jesus *was* anointed. Mark 14:3 says, “While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.” <click> And, as evidence for the 360-day calendar, the missionaries note that Abraham used a 360-day calendar, and so did the Egyptians during the time when the Israelites were in Egypt. And we can find evidence for the existence of a 360-day calendar in the Bible: <click>
13. Look at the time that Noah’s ark was afloat. “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down… and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.” So this time period begins on the 17th day of the 2nd month and ends on the 17th day of the 7th month. That’s 5 months on the water. And Genesis 8:3 says that the ark stopped after 150 days. <click> So if 150 days is the same as 5 months, then there are 30 days in each month. <click> And multiplying by 12, we see that there are 360 days in each year. <click>
14. Let’s look at five other Biblical passages that support the 360-days-per-year interpretation. <click> “But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” <click> “The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months.” <click> “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” <click> “He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.” <click> “The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days… The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.” <click> All of these verses are talking about the same time period, half of the tribulation. So, they are all equal. 42 months, 1,260 days, the middle of a seven, which is 7 years divided by 2, and a time, times, and half a time, which means a year plus two years plus half of a year. <click> So, since the verses say that 1,260 days = 42 months, that means there are 30 days per month, <click> and since there are 12 months in a year, there are 360 days in a year. Another way to prove that there are 360 days in a prophetic year is based on the fact that <click> 7 divided by 2 years is equivalent to 1 plus 2 plus ½ years, both of which equal 3½ years. <click> So then, 1,260 days equals 3½ years, which means that there are 360 days in a year. <click>
15. Now, does the time period begin with King Artaxerxes’ decree, as the missionaries claim, or King Cyrus’ decree, as the anti-missionaries claim? <click> Well, remember that the prophesy in Daniel 9 said that the time period begins with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. So, since King Cyrus decreed that the temple would be rebuilt, while King Artaxerxes decreed that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, <click> the latter decree is the correct one. Thus, the time period begins in 444 BC. <click>
16. The anti-missionaries asked why there are two time periods. Well, honestly, the missionaries don’t know. <click> But it has been suggested that it took 49 years to completely rebuild Jerusalem. We can see this if the passage is using a parallel style. <click> I mean that, after the two time periods are mentioned, two events are mentioned, so perhaps the first time period, 7 sevens, corresponds to Jerusalem being rebuilt with streets and a trench, and the 62 sevens corresponds to the Anointed One being put to death. <click>
17. As for one of the anointed ones being King Herod Agrippa I, a Jewish seeker, whose name I don’t know how to pronounce, wrote, “The commentators apparently had much difficulty with these verses, and only a few attempted to comment on this passage. All of them were following the lead of Rashi, of the eleventh century, who said the Hebrew word mashiakh referred to King Agrippa. Agrippa was slain shortly before the Romans destroyed the second temple. … But somehow it was incredible, even to me, that the Messiah in Daniel should refer to King Agrippa. He was an insignificant king who ruled Israel by the permission of Rome, and he was not of the House of David. Daniel was regarded as the prophet ‘par excellence’ of Messiah’s coming. Yet, when the Hebrew word mashiakh was mentioned, a revelation of God after much fasting and prayer on the part of the prophet, the reference is relegated to a selfish, opulent Edomite king. That simply could not be!” <click>
18. So, I’m not going to tell you who is right. You can decide who to believe, the missionaries or the anti-missionaries.