

TSIYON NEWS

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From Eliyahu

Daniel 9 Interpreters Through History

Great Minds Have Wrestled With This Prophecy for Nearly 2,000 Years.

Gabriel gave Daniel a prophecy involving seventy sevens, beginning with a word concerning the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem and extending forward to an anointed ruler, the cutting off of an anointed one, the destruction of the city and sanctuary, and a covenant and a period of desolation.

Those few verses have generated centuries of study. Some of the greatest historians, theologians, rabbis, chronologists, philosophers, and even scientists have attempted to determine exactly what Gabriel meant. They agreed about some things and disagreed sharply about others. They argued over where the count begins, what sort of years are being counted, who the anointed one is, and where the seventy sevens end. Those arguments began a long time ago.

JOSEPHUS - DANIEL AS A PROPHET OF HISTORY - c. AD 37-100

Our story will start in the first century with the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Josephus came from a priestly family, lived through the Jewish war with Rome, and witnessed the period in which Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. He did not leave us a detailed calculation of Daniel 9, so we should not attribute one to him.

Josephus regarded Daniel as an authentic prophet who had accurately foretold events centuries before they occurred. He connected Daniel's prophecies with Antiochus Epiphanes and also stated that Daniel had written about Roman rule and the future desolation of the Jewish country. He emphasized that Daniel not only foretold events but also indicated the time of their accomplishment.

Within the first century, Daniel was being read by a highly educated Jewish historian as genuine predictive prophecy involving identifiable events in history. The battle over the chronology would come later.

JULIUS AFRICANUS - WHAT WAS AUTHORIZED? - c. AD 160-240

One of the most important early attempts to calculate the seventy sevens came from Sextus Julius Africanus. Africanus was no lightweight. He was an early Christian historian and chronologist whose work influenced later historians, including Eusebius.

He understood the seventy weeks as 490 years and believed they led to Messiah. But his most interesting contribution concerns the beginning point. Africanus looked carefully at the Persian decrees and rejected Cyrus as the decree intended in Daniel 9:25.

Why? Because Cyrus authorized the return of the exiles and the restoration associated with the Temple. Yet Jerusalem itself remained largely ruined and undefended. Africanus instead pointed to the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when Nehemiah asked the king for authority to return to Jerusalem and rebuild it. He wrote that the command occurred in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when Nehemiah received permission for Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

His numerical method is another matter. He attempted to reconcile the chronology by converting between lunar and solar years, and his computation presents obvious difficulties when compared with what we now know of Persian chronology.

HIPPOLYTUS - THE FINAL WEEK AND THE END - c. AD 170-235

At roughly the same time, another influential Christian scholar was reading Daniel very differently. Hippolytus of Rome wrote one of the earliest surviving Christian commentaries on Daniel. He believed the prophecy concerned Messiah, but he also did something that will sound very familiar to anyone acquainted with modern prophecy teaching. He separated Daniel's final week from the preceding weeks.

Hippolytus placed that last week at the end of the age. He believed its first half would involve the ministry of Enoch and Elijah and its latter half the rule of Antichrist.

The idea of separating the seventieth week and placing it in the future did **not** originate with nineteenth or twentieth-century dispensationalism. A form of that

interpretation existed by the early third century. Already, interpreters were wrestling with whether all seventy weeks must run continuously.

PORPHYRY - WAS DANIEL WRITTEN AFTER THE EVENTS? - c. AD 234-305

Then came a completely different challenge. Porphyry was one of the great Neoplatonic philosophers of the ancient world. He was highly educated, intellectually formidable, and hostile to Christianity. Instead of trying to make Daniels prophecy fit Messiah, Porphyry attacked the foundation beneath the entire discussion.

He argued that Daniel had not really written the book in the sixth century BC. According to Porphyry, an unknown Jewish writer living during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC wrote the book under the name of Daniel. He said what appeared to be prophecy was therefore simply history written after the events. Porphyry had discovered a way to answer Daniels astonishing historical accuracy without accepting divine prophecy.

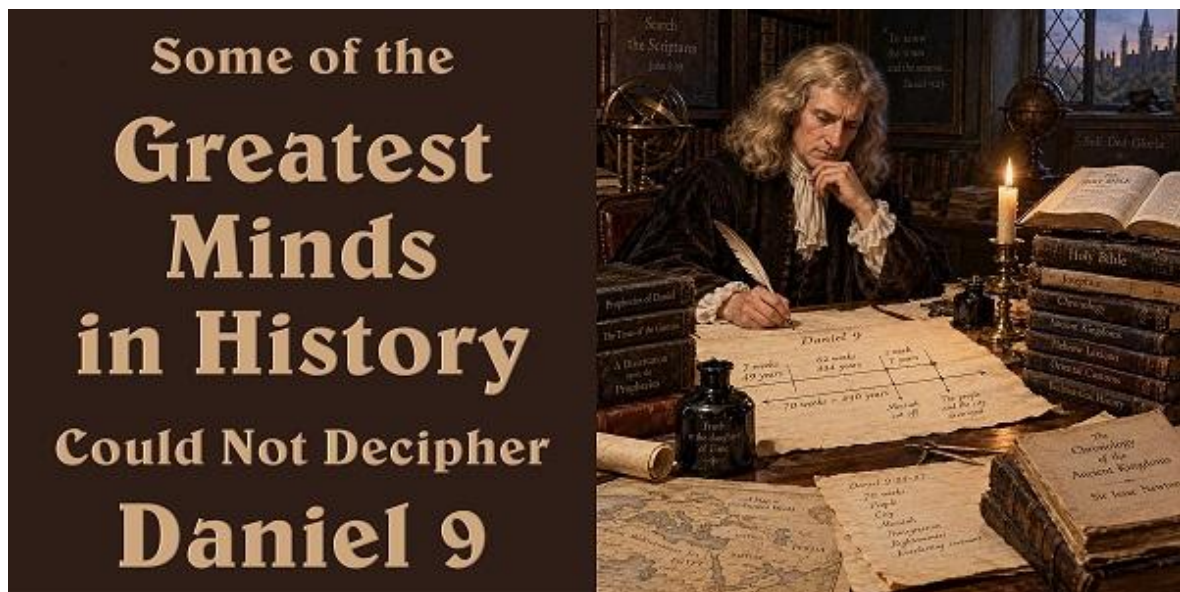
Today we know this argument does not hold up because Daniel is intimately tied in with the language, culture, times and events of Daniels life, so could not have been written by a later writer. Also, this argument was largely thwarted in the 20th century with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. The Scrolls are from centuries before Messiah, and already include the book of Daniel.

JEROME - BY AD 400 THE ARGUMENT WAS OLD - AD 347-420

Jerome is especially valuable because he became a historian of the Daniel 9 debate itself. One of the most accomplished biblical scholars of the early Catholic Church, Jerome knew Hebrew and Greek, produced the Latin Vulgate, and had access to writings from earlier interpreters that are now partly or entirely lost.

When he came to the seventy weeks, he did not pretend that Christians had reached one universally accepted solution. Instead, he preserved a remarkable range of opinions. Africanus had one calculation. Clement had another. Tertullian another. Eusebius tried several approaches. Hippolytus placed the final week in the future. Porphyry moved the prophecy into the time of Antiochus.

That observation was telling: the passage had been argued in different ways by exceptionally learned men. By about AD 400, therefore, the essential questions were already on the table. Jeromes commentary demonstrates something we should keep in mind today: There never was an early unanimous interpretation of Daniel 9. There was serious debate almost from the beginning.



IBN EZRA - A JEWISH SCHOLAR AND NEHEMIAH - AD 1089-1167

We move forward several centuries to one of the greatest Jewish biblical scholars of the Middle Ages, Abraham ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra was much more than a rabbi. He was a grammarian, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, and careful student of the Hebrew text. He also acknowledged the difficulty of the seventy weeks. His interpretation did not identify Yeshua as the Messiah of Daniel 9. Like other medieval Jewish interpretations, his chronology ultimately moved toward the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

What makes Ibn Ezra especially interesting for our purposes is that Nehemiah appears prominently in his interpretation. He understood the first seven weeks as extending through the Persian period to the coming of Nehemiah. He then associated the sixty-two weeks with the continued existence of the Second Temple and connected the later destruction with Roman power under Vespasian and his son.

His chronology followed the traditional compressed Jewish chronology of the Persian period, which creates major historical difficulties when compared with the established chronology of Persia. Nevertheless, once again Nehemiah appears. Different interpreters reached very different conclusions, but the text kept drawing serious readers back to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

JOHN CALVIN - MESSIAH CLEAR, CALENDAR IFFY - AD 1509-1564

The Protestant Reformation brought a renewed effort to read Daniel from the biblical text itself. John Calvin, one of the most influential scholars of the Reformation, was convinced that Daniel 9 pointed to Messiah.

But he was also unusually candid about the chronological problem. Calvin rejected some of the calculations that had come before him and admitted the difficulty of making the historical years fit neatly. He believed the weeks should begin with the restoration associated with Persian rule and ultimately lead to the public appearance of Messiah. He especially associated their conclusion with the baptism of Yeshua and the beginning of His ministry.

What I find useful about Calvin is his willingness to distinguish between what he believed the prophecy clearly meant and what he could not demonstrate with equal certainty. Messiah was clear to him. The arithmetic - not so much.

That same tension has followed Daniel 9 throughout history.

ISAAC NEWTON ♦ A GREAT MIND ON DANIEL - AD 1642-1727

Eventually the problem attracted one of the most remarkable minds in human history. Sir Isaac Newton is remembered for gravity, optics, mathematics, and the laws of motion. What many people do not know is that Newton devoted an enormous amount of his life to Scripture, biblical chronology, prophecy, and the history of the ancient world. Daniel particularly fascinated him.

Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John, published after the death of Newton, contains an entire chapter on the seventy weeks. For the overall period of seventy weeks, Newton gave special importance to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. At the same time, Newton also gave a distinct place to Nehemiah and the twentieth year of Artaxerxes in his treatment of the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Newton did not merely inherit an interpretation. He went back into Persian chronology, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jewish years, sabbatical cycles, and the wording of Daniel itself and tried to reconstruct the entire problem. He also believed portions of the prophecy reached beyond the first coming of Messiah to His future return. Notably, Newton recognized the final generation was then still future and only then would the prophecy be understood by a remnant of believers outside the religious system.

For Newton, Daniel was not an intellectual curiosity. It was a problem worthy of one of the greatest analytical minds who ever lived.

WHAT DOES THIS HISTORY TELL US?

After nearly two thousand years of interpretation, one fact stands out:

Famous names do not solve Daniel 9 for us.

Since Gabriel gave Daniel an actual period of time, beginning with an identifiable event and leading to identifiable events, then somewhere in history there must be a solution that satisfies both the **text** and the **chronology**.

That is where our own investigation started and where it will end. Not with what a particular tradition tells us Daniel should mean. Not with a chronology constructed to produce a desired answer. But with the words Gabriel actually gave Daniel, the historical records of what actually happened, and the calendar itself. After almost two thousand years of debate, the seventy sevens prophecy of Daniel still challenges us to see the truth it has been holding for the end time remnant. And the words of the angel still ring true - Only the wise will understand.

Tsiyon Partners, you are invited tonight: September 10, 2026 at 7:45 PM Central, we will be bringing you your exclusive *Remnant RoundUp* Tsiyon Partner presentation. This will be the third episode in our ***Daniels Mystery of the Ages*** series.

Our opening musical program starts at 7:45 PM Central at Tsiyon.Net, with the main program beginning at 8:00 PM Central. Tsiyon Partners, to see this live stream, from the home page look for the big red button that says "VIEW LIVE STREAM" and click or tap it. Now you're in!

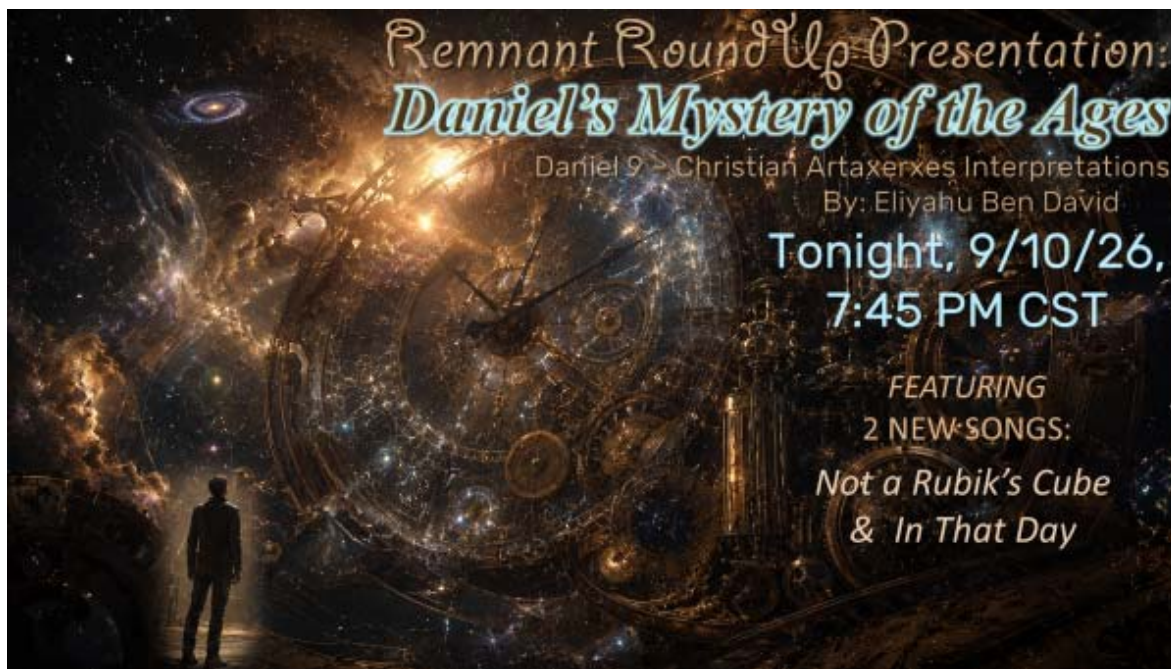
Tonight we continue our examination of Christian interpretations of the time prophecy of Daniel 9. There are only two possible starting points for the prophecy left, and we will be applying the measuring rod of Scripture and verified specific dates in world history to test interpretations of these last two possibilities. You will need this groundwork to understand the prophecy as we unfold it in this groundbreaking series: ***Daniel's Mystery of the Ages***.

In His Name, Eliyahu

PS - The upcoming Torah Seventh Month will begin with *Yom Teruah* (Day of Trumpets) at sundown of the next New Moon sighting. That will occur on either September 12 or September 13, we don't know which in advance because that day is called *The Day Nobody Knows*. On one of those days just 2 or 3 days from now we will begin the 7th month program we have prepared for all of you! Check in at Tsiyon.Net at 8 PM EST on September 12 to enjoy the program and/or to be informed of the dates for all of our special programs throughout this very special month.

Contact: <https://tsiyon.org> - <https://eliyahubendavid.substack.com/>

Do Not Miss This!

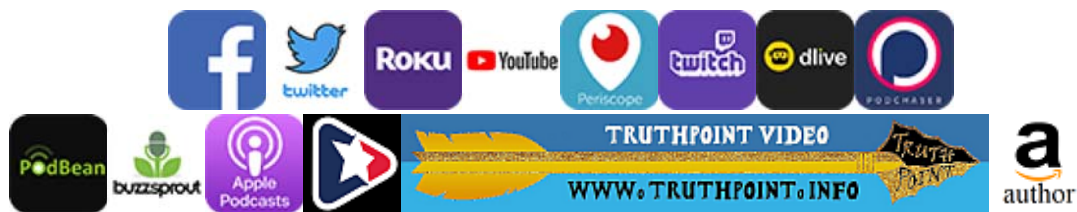


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Audio:





***"The nations shall know that I am YHWH,
when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." Eze 36:23***

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