

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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## Are You Ready for the Rapture? (Part 3)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

We completed last month's issue by considering the first piece of evidence for the pre-tribulation rapture. We noticed that Jeremiah 30:6-7 describes the Tribulation period and calls it "*the time of Jacob's trouble*." From those words we can see that there is an intense focus on Israel. As I stated earlier, this does not mean that only Israel will feel the wrath of God's judgment poured out. As you study the Tribulation period from Revelation 6-18, you can clearly see that the entire earth is suffering. However, there is a special and intense focus on Israel. Jeremiah 30 shows that and other verses show that same intense focus.

In Daniel 9:24-27, we find a prophecy about a period of seventy weeks. Pay attention to what these verses say. They read, "*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon*

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*the desolate.*" Many books have been written about this passage, so there is no way to do a thorough exposition of these verses in this message. However, I do want to point out a few things before we move on.

First, we must realize that the "weeks" referred to here is not a period of seven days as we normally use the term, but a period of seven years. We know that because the time period that Daniel is describing is not a period of 490 days, but it covers 490 years. The seventy weeks is divided into three sections: seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. The first two sections, seven and sixty-two, gives a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. It is not a general idea, but is an exact timing of the coming of Jesus Christ. This passage alone shows the wonder of the inspiration of Scripture. Daniel is writing over 500 years before Christ, but he prophesies, because the Holy Ghost gives him the prophecy, the exact time that He will come. No human being relying upon his own knowledge could have been so specific. But God, knowing all things, could tell Daniel when the Messiah would come.

This passage is how the wise men in Matthew 2 knew that the star that they saw was an indication that the "*King of the Jews*" was born. No doubt, the book of Daniel had been copied and passed on to believers in Babylon. Generation after generation of believers had taught their children that Daniel had prophesied the exact time that the Messiah would be born. Because they knew the exact time, they knew it would not be in their lifetime, but taught their children to believe it and pass it on to their children. Eventually the wise men that we read about were born. Their parents told them of Daniel's prophecy and said that the time was at hand. It would be in their lifetime. They were also students of God's creation and studied the stars. When one appeared that they had never seen, they knew that it must signal that the Messiah was born because the time that Daniel prophesied about was at hand. They headed for Jerusalem because that was the ancient capital of Israel and the logical place that a king would be born. They did not have Micah's prophecy as to the

location of the birth of the Messiah. When they arrived in Jerusalem, Matthew 2:2 records their question, "*Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*" How did they know about the birth of Christ, and how did they know that the star was about Him? The only way they could have known was from this prophecy in Daniel 9.

Daniel prophesies the coming of Christ and also the crucifixion of Christ. The crucifixion is described in verse 26 with the words "*shall Messiah be cut off.*" With the coming and crucifixion of Christ, 483 years of the 490 have been fulfilled, but there is one week, seven years, that has yet to be fulfilled. Notice verse 27 again: "*And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*" The one confirming the covenant is the man we commonly refer to as the "Antichrist." He is mentioned in verse 26 as "*the prince that shall come.*" This last period of seven years is the Tribulation period. At the beginning, the Antichrist will sign a peace treaty with Israel. By the middle of the seven years, he will break the covenant. Then he will command all to worship him and will set up an image of himself in the temple. The setting up of the image in the temple is the abomination of desolation described here in Daniel 9:27. The worship that the Antichrist demands, and the image that is set up is described in Revelation 13.

Again, there is much more that can be said about these verses, but that is not the purpose of this message. I have given this short explanation to help us understand to some degree what these verses are saying, but now I want to go back to the beginning of this passage and notice the people that are the focus of this passage. The angel Gabriel is sent to give this prophecy in response to Daniel's prayer. That is what Daniel 9:20-23 says. But pay special attention to the first twelve words of Daniel 9:24: "*Seventy weeks are determined upon **thy** people and upon **thy** holy city.*" I have emphasized the

personal pronouns in the verse, so they will stand out. Daniel's people are the Jews, and the holy city is Jerusalem. This is not referring to the church. Daniel is not prophesying about the church. He is prophesying what will happen to his people, the Jewish nation.

I did not mention this earlier, but there is an undetermined period of time between Daniel 9:26 and 27. That unknown length of time is the church age. As so often happens in the Old Testament, some specifics are given, but others are left out. God told Daniel about the coming of Christ, the crucifixion of Christ, and the Tribulation period, but He left out any description of the church age. Why did God do that? Because He wanted to and because the entire focus of the passage is upon Israel. The entire passage is a prophecy about Daniel's people and the coming of their Messiah. The Messiah will die, and we know from the New Testament that it was from the hands of His own people. Another prince will promise some things to the Jews, but he will break his promise and exalt himself. We know many things from other passages, but as in Jeremiah 30, the focus in Daniel 9 is upon the Jewish nation.

I will mention one other passage that shows The Intense Focus on Israel. Daniel 12:1 says, "*And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*" As in Daniel 9, the verse says "*thy people.*" It also makes reference to "*a nation.*" Who is that nation? From the verse, it can only be one nation, the nation of Israel. Daniel is not making a prophecy about the church. It is not even remotely on Daniel's mind or described at all in this verse. Daniel's people are the Jewish people, and the nation is Israel. The church is not described in this verse because as we will see later, the church is gone from this earth before the Tribulation begins. Israel will once again be the focus of God.

It is interesting that Michael is mentioned in Daniel 12:1. He is

called "*Michael the archangel*" in Jude 9, and he is mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:16 by simply his title, "*the archangel.*" We will tie these three verses together as we discuss his part in the Rapture later in the message.

There is one other word that I want to examine from these verses. It is found in both Jeremiah 30:7 and Daniel 12:1. It is the word trouble. At first glance, we may not think much about the word. We use it often and may not have something really terrible in mind. But the word, as it is used in these verses, describes something catastrophic. Synonyms for it are adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, and tribulation. It is used to describe intense inner turmoil. It is used to describe the anguish of a people besieged by an enemy. It is used to describe the pain of a woman bearing her first child. Finally, it is used to describe a land as full of distress and darkness because the people rejected God. These meanings and uses still may not mean much to us. But notice what Jeremiah says, "*So that none is like it.*" We will pick up with that thought next month.