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This time we seek to look ahead in the light of God’s Word.

For a start, we can see that the present state of the world does not come as a great surprise, for we have many prophetic passages in both Testaments speaking of numerous troubles in “the last times”. We tread carefully when seeking to relate particular prophecies to particular situations of our day, while avoiding the tendency to ignore them completely on the grounds of them being too confusing.

So we come to a key question: do we have good grounds for believing that we may well now be in “the last times”? In Daniel 9.24-27, concerning the “70 weeks”, the Lord has given us one of the most remarkable prophecies of all within His Word, whose significance was revealed to Sir Edward Denny 200 years ago. Limited space here means we will keep only to the main points.

We read in verse 25 that 7 weeks plus 62 weeks shall elapse, from the restore-and-build commandment concerning Jerusalem, “unto Messiah the Prince”; we know that that commandment was given in 458 BC. The word translated here as “weeks” literally means “sevens”, and such sevens in biblical chronological terms can refer to days, weeks or years; here they are years. These 69 x 7 years, 483 years in total, bring us from 458 BC to AD 26, (allowing for no “Year 0” between BC and AD), which is the year when John the Baptist’s Messianic ministry began.

Then, in Daniel 9.26, “And after (the) threescore and two weeks (period) shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself”. We know with hindsight that this “cutting off” – the rejection of Christ by Jew and Gentile - occurred at the end of the 70th week, that is, in AD 33, which was 490 years (10 Jubilee cycles) since the Jerusalem restoration commandment, and the 80th Jubilee since creation; (behold God’s perfect timing, based on the Jubilee cycles and Years of Redemption).

So the Lord then scattered the Jews, and introduced, as a complete surprise to everyone apart from Himself, the “Church Age” (eg., Ephesians 3.1-12), which comes, unmentioned, halfway through Daniel 9.26. This Church Age is of limited duration (see the two “untils” of Luke 21.24 and Romans 11.25) and ends with the believing Church being seized away (I Corinthians 15.51-52 / I Thessalonians 1.10; 4.13-18). The second half of verse 26 jumps over to after the close of the Church Age, to what is yet to come, when “the people of the prince that shall

come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary". We know that such biblical prophecies often tend to have various fulfilments, initially small, and then becoming much greater, and sure enough, a violent coming by the Romans duly happened in 70 AD - horrific, but only a first, "small" fulfilment, with nothing about a covenant.

This is to be followed, (9.26b-27end), by "the prince (the main antichrist figure) confirming the covenant with many (that is, in Israel, 9.24a, "thy people ... thy holy city") for one week" (another seven, here meaning 7 years). Crucially, this antichrist-Israel covenant is yet to happen, and is likely somehow to involve the promised or actual rebuilding of the temple on the Temple Mount, (see Ezekiel Chapters 40-44), where two Islamic mosques are situated today

This great jump in verse 26, from the past, over the unmentioned Church Age, to the as-yet future, shows that the Lord God views Daniel 9.24-27 as one unbroken chronological period, being solely about the Jews, and not at all about the Church. He has duly "cancelled" that first "70th week" of AD 26 – AD 33, when His Son was rejected, and will re-run it as a period of judgment on the Jews and Gentile nations for their sinful rejection of His Son (egs., Matthew 24 / Luke 21.7-36 / Revelation Chapters 4-19). We see that these Gospel passages concern only the Jews, and that these Revelation chapters make no mention of the believing Church because it will be no longer on the scene; (though they contain much about the apostate church, and about saints coming to faith in Christ during the Tribulation, many facing martyrdom).

So, are these "the last times"? The answer is – very likely. The state of the world is threatening enough when we stop to think about it, but above all, the Jews are now back in their land, including Jerusalem, after 2000 years of wandering. The fact that the state of Israel even exists, and still survives in the face of repeated attempts by its Islamic neighbours to destroy it and its people, (Iran is now close to getting its nuclear bomb and global anti-semitism is rapidly on the rise), is testimony in itself that the Lord still has unfinished business with His original covenant people, first in judgment, and then in mercy (egs., Zechariah 12.8-9 / Matthew 24.29-31 / Romans 11.25-36).

In our Christian response: we watch, especially Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount; we pray, for our Queen, for our political leaders, and for "the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122.6-9); and we serve, faithfully abiding in Christ (John 15.1-8) - in whom, praise God, all shall be well.

I Thessalonians 5.9-11.

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