

What Saith the Scripture?

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**1998: Year of the Apocalypse (Part 1)**  
**Or, A Firmly Held Opinion of One Who Is Incurably Watching**

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man"

(Luke 21:36).

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**Preface**

The word "apocalypse" means to reveal or disclose. What 1998 reveals, depends on what or to whom you are looking. If you hold to the beliefs of the dawning of a New Age, then you look for a Maitreya deliverer who will vanish traditional Christianity's Jesus into a larger Christ consciousness. If you are simply hanging on to what is left of your vanishing world, then you may be looking for economic, political, social, and ecological tragedies of apocalyptic proportions. If you are troubled about the Church's lack of preparation, then you may be one of many Christians who are mentally preparing to survive the Holocaust of the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

If you are as I am, then you are not looking for something, but Someone. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). This, I believe, is a Pre-Tribulational Rapture event that I affectionately call the First "Come Up Hither" (Revelation 4:1). What follows in this article-- and the others in this series-- is an attempt to assemble Biblical prophecies, concepts, and dates that support the premise that 1998 is truly the year that the apocalypse begins. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Of what significance is the fact that Daniel helped the Wise Men find the Messiah? **If the LORD would make time oriented prophecies available to these ancient Magi, why would He not also make such time oriented prophecies available to ourselves-- "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11)?**

**Daniel Helped the Wise Men Find the Messiah**

The Hebrew word "mashiyach" is translated in the King James Version as "anointed" or "Messiah". The only times the word "Messiah" appears in the Old Testament is in Daniel 9:25-26. "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."

It should come as no shock that Daniel's prophecies would give time oriented evidence to direct someone to the birth of the LORD Jesus Christ. The Wise Men of the Christmas story were Magi. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 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" (Matthew 2:1-2). These Magi were the soothsayers of ancient Persia-- the land where Daniel was a legend.

With familiarity to the prophecies of Daniel, such as the prophecy concerning the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:24-27), these Wise Men could interpret the ancient prophecies with the other Scripture of the Jews, i.e. the Old Testament. Using a passage such as Numbers 24:17, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel", they knew to look for a star. Isaiah 9:6 told them that this Messiah would be God in human flesh: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace". [Thanks to John Zachary's "Mysterious Numbers of the Sealed Revelation" for those previous thoughts!]

As understanding as they were of the prophecies, they-- like ourselves-- naively asked questions. Their naivety was apparent when the Magi appeared before Herod the Great, King of the Jews, asking directions to find the One that is "born King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2). It is interesting to see how appropriately Herod's religious counselors directed the Wise Men when they cited Micah 5:2. "And when he [Herod] had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he [Herod] demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel" (Matthew 2:4-6).

With the providence typical of the Almighty, He preserved the Wise Men by warning them of Herod's devious scheme to kill the Messiah-- and probably themselves as well. "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way" (Matthew 2:12).

How could Daniel help to foretell the Messiah's birth? Clues such as the timing of the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem were known to the Magi. March 14, 445 BC (Julian) was the time that Artaxerxes decreed "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25). They understood that "seven weeks, and three score and two weeks" (9:25)-- 69 weeks-- would be accomplished, and "shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself" (9:26). If the 69 weeks were actually weeks of years, then  $69 \text{ (weeks)} \times 7 \text{ (of years)} \times 360 \text{ (days in a prophetic year)} = 173,880$  days.

Artaxerxes' decree is described by Nehemiah. "And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my

countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of Heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (Nehemiah 2:1-8).

The 173,880 days from Artaxerxes' decree would terminate upon April 6, 32 AD (Julian)-- Nisan 10 on the Jewish calendar. If the Magi understood that the 173,880 days (date) was the approximate time of death of "Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25), then they would have to look for Him before He was "cut off"-- "but not for Himself" (9:26), i.e. His atoning sacrifice on the cross. Messiah was "cut off" (9:26), when He was crucified on a Roman cross, on April 10, 32 AD (Julian)-- on a Nisan 14, Thursday, Passover observance of the Jews. This would have brought the Wise Men to the LORD Jesus before the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.

How much earlier? That is where the star gave them more pointed directions. The Wise Men asked Herod: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east" (Matthew 2:2). "Bethlehem of Judaea" (2:5) was the reply. The Creator used the star to give the final directions. "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (2:9-10).

If the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9) could guide the Magi to the First Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ, why won't He show us the time of His Second Advent? After all, we are living during the generation that Jesus said was the Terminal Generation. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:32).