

The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks – 6

Last time we saw how “*the sign of the prophet Jonah*” - **Matthew 12:39** - a short-term prediction given by Jesus, was fulfilled by his resurrection. Fulfilment of his longer-term forecast further verified that he was the Prophet sent from God - **Deuteronomy 18:18**.

- This concerned the “*abomination of desolation*” - **Matthew 24:15** - in which Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed as a result of the Jewish revolt against the Roman empire - “*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation - Daniel 9:26-27 - is near. 21 Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her (Jerusalem) depart...*” - **Luke 21:20**.

This sign from “*the Prophet*” (Jesus) began to be fulfilled when, in the spring of AD 67 the emperor Nero sent Vespasian to lead the Roman armies in a siege of Jerusalem. Two years before, an organized rebellion had broken out against the Romans, and a civil war in which the Zealots, gaining the upper hand, seized control of the city and temple.

- The Zealots kept up the Messianic expectations of the people who had rejected Jesus of Nazareth. Sightings of comets, meteors, and other awe-inspiring events were interpreted as signs of the coming of the Messiah.

While Jesus had refused to be made king by the people - **John 6:15**, the Zealots were confident that the Messiah they were expecting would soon cast off the Roman yoke, and they anticipated Messiah’s early ascent to the throne of David over a triumphant Israel.

- Contemporary Jewish writings - e.g., Josephus - demonstrate the public mind-set concerning Messiah. These summarize the Old Testament prophecies concerning the restoration of the Kingdom of God under David’s promised descendant, the Messiah, reigning as emperor over all nations.

Unfortunately, while that concept is in accordance with the divinely inspired Scriptures, the Zealots, and those who fought with them, refused to accept the clear terms of **Daniel 9** and other prophecies concerning Messiah’s work at that time of “*making reconciliation for iniquity*” by his being “*cut off*” - **Daniel 9:24-26; Isaiah 53:8**.

- The rapid progress of Vespasian in subduing the revolt was cut short by the death of Nero, and the Roman armies were suddenly pulled back from their siege of Jerusalem. The Christians now took heed to Jesus’ warning, given more than 30 years before -

The church historian Eusebius records how “the whole body of the church at Jerusalem removed from the city and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella” - Eusebius, 2, 23, 20. This town was “in the Decapolis ... in the north of Peraea, where Herod Agrippa II, before whom Paul once stood, opened to them a safe asylum” - Schaff, *History* vol. 1, p. 402. But the Zealots, seeing the ensuing chaos in the empire, took encouragement from the feats of the Maccabees against the Greek empire - **Daniel 11:34**. They pressed on with their revolt, expecting Messiah to appear and carry them to victory.

- More next time, God willing.