

## The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks – 13

Some have rejected the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. While questioning what right anyone has to make the “weeks” represent longer periods of time, they cannot claim fulfilment in the literal seventy weeks. Against the 490 years some have referred to the minor variations in dates of events among historians. These include the birth of Jesus, which in turn affects the date of the crucifixion, where a majority are agreed. But is it rational to reject Jesus because of minor differences in dates, while accepting the histories of other men whose relevant dates are similarly not yet settled?

- The records show, as we have seen, that the Jews were convinced that “*Messiah the Prince*” of **Daniel 9**, called “*The Prophet*” in **Deuteronomy 18**, was due to appear. So persuaded were they, that they asked John the baptist whether he was the Promised One. And after John had referred the people to Jesus, and they saw his works and heard his teaching, said “*this is the Christ*”, although “*there was a division among the people because of him*” - **John 7:40-43**.

Among those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah were the Zealots, who were still, 40 years after the coming of Jesus, utterly convinced that Messiah would soon appear. So much so, that great numbers of the Zealots and their followers stood up against the armies of the Roman Empire, confidently expecting the Messiah to suddenly appear and crush the power of their enemy. These men were not concerned with pinpointing the exact day, rather, for them this was the season for Messiah’s appearing.

- But with the advantage of hindsight we can compare the New Testament record of the work of Jesus of Nazareth with the Seventy Weeks prophecy. This shows how exactly the promised time span was fulfilled. But even more significant is the correspondence of his work with what was prophesied of him, not only in **Daniel 9** but in the other parts of those “*oracles of God*” which God entrusted to the Jews - **Romans 3:2**. Tragically, since they could not accept the “*cutting off*” of Messiah, with all that involved, they refused to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

This is particularly tragic, since one of their own people, Flavius Josephus, testified to the career of Jesus of Nazareth. Josephus, a favourite of Roman emperors, while he had by no means abandoned his Judaism, was loathed by the Jews as a turncoat and traitor. This was after Josephus refused to give his support to the Zealots during their rebellion against Rome. And their hostility was increased after the publication of his *History of the Jewish War*, in which he laid the blame for their calamities entirely on themselves.

- Afterwards, Josephus produced *The Antiquities of the Jews*, which traces the history of the Jews from creation to just before the outbreak of the revolt of AD 66–70. It was an attempt to present Judaism to the Hellenistic world in a favourable light. By stressing the rationality of Judaic laws and institutions, and other means, he presented Judaism in a way to make it appealing to the cultivated and reasonable man - a reliable indication that the author had not abandoned his faith in the word of God.

*The Antiquities* contains two famous references to Jesus Christ: the one in Book XX calls him the “so called Christ.” An article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* concludes that “the implication in the passage in Book XVIII of Christ’s divinity could not have come from Josephus and undoubtedly represents the tampering (if not invention) of a later Christian copyist”. But more next time, God willing.