

The clearest and least debatable of the purposes listed is the third: "to atone for wickedness." The Hebrew verb *kapar* occurs dozens of times in the Old Testament in connection with the sacrificial system. Its presence here leaves no doubt that a major purpose of the 70 weeks is to fulfill the objective of the entire sacrificial system through the atonement of Christ by His death at Calvary.

The KJV renders the third purpose as "to make reconciliation for iniquity." Perhaps 300 years ago the term "make reconciliation" had the same meaning as is now carried by "atone," the usual rendering of *kapar*. The KJV translates this Hebrew word as "make atonement" 70 times and as "make reconciliation" or "reconcile" only 7 times. In the general usage of today a human being may try to reconcile another man to God by telling him of God's offer of pardon for sin through the sacrifice of Christ, but only God can make atonement, and this He did at Calvary in the person of His Son.

As rendered in the NIV and also in the KJV, three of the first four statements of purpose strongly suggest that the prophecy of the 70 weeks involves the complete end of the reign of sin and wickedness and the establishment of universal righteousness. This would seem to parallel the predictions in Daniel 2, 7 and 11-12. If so understood these purposes strongly suggest that the prophecy of the 70 weeks runs to the very end of the present age and I incline to think that anyone who approaches the passage without presuppositions will think this to be its obvious interpretation. Yet we must not immediately accept this conclusion as certain, for there are consecrated and highly trained Christian scholars who believe that these statements have been completely fulfilled by the removal of sin through what Christ did on the cross and by the establishment of the Christian church as an organism composed of people in whose hearts sin would no longer reign. Careful methodology requires us to avoid adopting any premature assumption, either that the present passage parallels the entire course of events described in chapters 2, 7, and 11-12, or that it does not. Before reaching a conclusion either way,