

Those preferring the *kethibh* take the verb from *hatam* "to seal." This Hebrew verb, like English "seal," has more than one meaning.

In ancient times every person of importance had his own seal which he affixed to documents to authenticate them and this meaning still occurs in legal documents.

A second meaning developed very early. Since the seal generally was placed at the end of a document and might be used to close it up so that it would not be seen by anyone who was not authorized to break the seal, the verb developed the meaning of closing something, and this usage still occurs in modern speech.

It is obvious that the first meaning of "seal" could have no relevance here. God would not decree 70 weeks in order to "authenticate sin." If the *kethibh* is followed the second meaning of "seal" must be taken, and a number of interpreters do so, but there is no unanimity among them as to what the phrase would indicate. The commonest interpretation of those who follow the *kethibh* is that it means to place sins under seal so as to reserve them for judgment. Thus Leupold says: "In our passage this is to be done with the sin of the wicked: it is to be securely kept, locked up as it were, and not permitted to roam about at random and do its nefarious work.^4 At least two commentaries^5 refer to Revelation 20:3 in this connection. If sin were to be personalized, (taking the abstract as a representative for the concrete, i.e., the devil) it might be taken as a reference to the event predicted in that verse.

Some commentators assert that all six purposes are to be fulfilled by the end of the first century A.D. It is hard to see how this could be true of these first two statements. If "seal" were to be taken for the translation of the second it would be strange to think of it as referring only to the sins that had been committed up to that time, or to restrict it to sins committed by Israelites.

All in all it seems best to assume that there has been a simple copyist's error perpetuated in the manuscripts that carry the *kethibh*, and that this purpose, like the first, looks