

Did Daniel Predict the Exact Time of Christ's Coming?

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If God had chosen to do so He could easily have enabled one of His Old Testament prophets to predict, many centuries ahead of time, the exact time when Christ would come, but such a prediction of the exact time when an event would occur in the distant future would be quite unparalleled in Scripture. Yet many ancient and modern readers of the Old Testament have claimed that such a prediction is contained in the ninth chapter of Daniel.¹

Such claims face a number of problems. Most of them have started by translating dabar in verse 25 as "commandment" or "decree," though the word is used far more frequently to indicate a prophetic message.

If one is to take dabar as a human "decree" to restore and rebuild, it would be natural to consider it as referring to the decree that Cyrus proclaimed throughout his empire, allowing the Jews to return to their homeland and calling on them to rebuild the temple of the Lord. Taking Cyrus' decree as a starting point for the first segment of the 70 weeks, it immediately becomes obvious that seven weeks of years is too short to reach from 538 B.C. to the time of Christ, so many interpreters (and most of the versions) have rendered the words of Dan. 9:24-26 in such a way as to make the passage predict two segments (69 weeks and one) instead of three segments (7, 62, and one). However, even a period of 69 weeks (483 years) proves to be more than half a century short of reaching from the decree of Cyrus to the birth of Christ, and this has led those who expect to find a prediction of an exact time in the distant future to look for another decree that could be taken as a starting-point instead of that issued by Cyrus.