

Daniel and the Times of the Gentiles

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While reading the Gospels, we can encounter passages which puzzle us. One such passage concerns a statement made by Jesus in response to questions on the part of his disciples concerning the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the end of the age (Luke 21:5-7).

For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And **Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** (Luke 21:22-24)

While it is beyond the scope of our present treatment to examine how Luke's presentation here contrasts with those of Matthew (24) and Mark (13), most understand Jesus' words in Luke as predicting the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. at the hands of Rome.

As part of his answer, Jesus' mentions the phrase, "the times of the Gentiles," in association with the idea of the trampling of Jerusalem and the dispersion of Jews into all nations. Many questions spring to the reader's mind: *What makes these times particularly Gentile in nature? What does it mean for Jerusalem to be trampled? Does this time period begin at the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome as the passage seems to imply? If the times are to be fulfilled, what brings about the fulfillment? Why doesn't Jesus elaborate further about what He meant?*

It is my view that the last of the above questions: *Why doesn't Jesus elaborate further about what He meant?*, holds the key to unlocking the meaning of the passage. One reason that Jesus doesn't provide additional explanation is simply this: **much of what Jesus says in the Gospels is anchored by revelation previously given in the Old Testament.** Where Jesus is teaching concepts which find their origin in the Old Testament, He expects His listeners to be familiar with the basis of His teachings (Mtt. 21:24; 22:29; Mark 12:24; Luke 24:27; John 5:39). And so it is with this passage and its parallel passages in Matthew and Mark. In fact, both Matthew and Mark make mention of additional information provided by Jesus in the context of this same teaching which establish part of the Old Testament context for understanding all three passages in the synoptics:

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Mtt. 24:15-16 cf. Mark 13:14)

¹ This article is drawn from preliminary material from a commentary on the book of Daniel presently under development. [<http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/dancl.htm>]

It is not our design to launch into a consideration of the details of the above statement other than to note one very important point: *Jesus is underscoring the importance of Old Testament revelation given in relation to the book of Daniel for understanding much of what He has to say in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.* Thus, it is reasonable for us to expect we might gain a greater understanding of the mysterious phrase “times of the Gentiles” by considering the events of the book of Daniel—and especially the situation which led to Daniel’s captivity in Babylon and the fall of Israel to Nebuchadnezzar during the dominion of the Neo-Babylonian empire.

When we do this, we find that the key to understanding the times of the Gentiles is found in promises and expectations which God established for the Davidic throne which was to rule righteously on earth in the midst of the nations. This mysterious time, which Jesus mentions in Luke, relates to a period of judgment concerning occupation of the Davidic throne which began in the days of Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Nebuchadnezzar hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

The Significance of the Fall of Judah to the Davidic Throne

The final king to reign over Jerusalem prior to its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was Zedekiah, who reigned for 11 years as a vassal king subject to Babylon. Like all the kings following Josiah’s reign, he was evil. When a new Egyptian Pharaoh (Hophra) came to the throne in 588 B.C., Zedekiah took the occasion to rebel against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar responded by the siege which led to the final downfall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the city and temple, and the deportation of the majority who were left. The siege began in the 9th year, 10th month, and 10th day of Zedekiah’s reign and lasted 18 months. The wall of Jerusalem being penetrated in the 11th year on the 4th month, on the 9th day of the month.² In fulfillment

² Concerning the significance of the 9th of Ab: “As to the month and day, the Jewish sources claim a striking identity between the destruction of the Second Temple and of the First Temple. 2 Kings 25:8 states that the First Temple was burned by Nebuzaradan on the seventh day of the fifth month, while Jer. 52:12 gives the tenth day of the fifth month. The rabbis reconciled these data by explaining that the Babylonians entered the temple on the seventh day of Ab (which is the fifth month), ate and did damage to it on that day and the eighth, and on the ninth day toward dusk set fire to it; it then continued to burn through the whole of that day which is presumably extended through the tenth. As to the recurrence of disaster at the identical time, they said, ‘The same thing too happened in the Second Temple.’ For a single day, the ninth of Ab was taken as the exact date: ‘On the ninth of Ab . . . the Temple was destroyed the first and the second time.’ . . . The date of the burning [of the Second Temple] is stated explicitly by Josephus: ‘the tenth of the month Loos the day on which of old it had been burnt by the king of Babylon’ (6.250). In the later correlation of the Macedonian calendar as it was used in Palestine . . . Loos was parallel to Ab, the fifth month. Therefore Josephus’s date of Loos = Ab 10 is identical with Jeremiah’s (52:12) date of the tenth day of the fifth month for the first destruction, and just one day later than the ninth day of Ab taken as the official date by the rabbis. . . . Along with Josephus’s eyewitness account of the destruction of the temple by the Romans, there is also an account by Rabbi Yose ben Halafta in *Seder ’Olam Rabbah* (30.86-97) . . . the passage reads: *Rabbi Yose used to say: “Propitiousness is assigned to a propitious day and calamity to a calamitous day. As it is found said: When the temple was destroyed, the first time, that day was immediately after the Sabbath, it was immediately after the Sabbatical year, it was (during the service of) the priestly division of Jehoiarib, and it was the ninth day of Ab, and so the second time (the temple was destroyed).”* . . . it is also of interest to note how the Mishna associates yet other untoward events with the same date of the ninth day of Ab: *On*

of Ezekiel's prophecies that Zedekiah would be taken to Babylon but never see it, his sons were killed before him, his eyes were put out, and he was taken to Babylon where he died (Jer. 39:6-7; 52:9-11; 2K. 25:6-7 cf. Eze. 12:13; 17:16). After capturing Jerusalem, the Babylonians burned the leader's houses and the temple and broke down the city walls.

It is an *immensely significant event* whenever the temple is destroyed because the temple is "God's house" where the manifestation of his glory resides. It would be impossible to destroy the temple if it were not for the fact that God was "not home." Because of Israel's idolatry, Ezekiel records that God's glory had previously vacated the temple.³ To the Gentile enemies of Israel, the destruction of the city and temple would make it appear as if the God of Israel were impotent in the face of the superior Gods of the Gentiles, "When they leveled Yahweh's temple to the ground and burned its ruins, the Babylonian troops served notice to all the world that their gods were mightier than Yahweh, no matter what titles the Hebrews gave him."⁴ Thus, one of the Themes of the Book of Daniel is to show that Israel's God is sovereignly in control over all history, be it Jewish or Gentile. He only allowed this shocking event to occur because of the serious and persistent sin of Israel.⁵

From the perspective of the Jews, the unthinkable had happened, "Some, in a sense of superstition, and others, in a sense of belief in the providence of God, had held that such a calamity as the overthrow of God's city and God's Temple could never take place. Now the unexpected had happened."⁶ In the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, it seemed as if the kingdom of Israel had come to a close. After beginning with the struggles of Saul and David and reaching its apex under David's son Solomon, the divided kingdom had initiated a protracted period of decline culminating in the fall of both the northern kingdom of Israel (after 200 years) and the southern kingdom of Judah (after over 300 years). Most significantly,

the ninth day of Ab it was decreed against our fathers that they should not enter into the land (of Israel), [For this date see Seder 'Olam Rabbah 8.45-47, Milikowsky, Seder 'Olam, 473.] and the temple was destroyed the first and second time (by Nebuchadnezzar and by Titus), and Beth-Tor [or Bethar, modern Bettir southwest of Jerusalem, the scene of Bar Kokhba's final defeat in A.D. 135] was captured, and the City (Jerusalem) was ploughed up (by Hadrian) [Taanich 4:6; Danby 200]." — Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1964, 1998), 106,110.

³ There is an intentional parallel between the departure of God's glory from the first temple to the Mt. of Olives in Ezekiel's day (Eze. 10:18; 11:22-23) leading to the destruction of the temple by Babylon and Jesus' departure from the second temple to the Mt. of Olives (Mt 23:38; Mt 24:1-3) leading to its destruction by Rome.

⁴ Gleason L. Archer, *Daniel* in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 7 - Daniel and the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), s.v. "Purpose of Daniel."

⁵ "Indeed, it was essential for him to prove by his miraculous acts that he had allowed his people to go into captivity in 587 B.C., not through weakness, but rather to maintain his integrity as a holy God, who carries out his covenant promises both for good and for ill according to the response of his people." — *Ibid.*

⁶ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1949, 1969), 15.

no longer could anyone point to a throne in Jerusalem from which a Davidic king ruled. Jeremiah's words to Jehoiachin had come to pass, "Say to the king and to the queen mother, 'Humble yourselves; Sit down, For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory.' " (Jeremiah 13:18).⁷

Davidic Rule Judged

God was duty bound by His own Word to Solomon to discipline any Davidic son who's rule abused the throne (2Chr. 7:17-22). An important passage in the prophet Ezekiel predicted God's judgment against the ruling scepter of David (Eze. 21:10-27) from which several key verses appear below:⁸

Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD!' Say: 'A sword, a sword is sharpened And also polished! Sharpened to make a dreadful slaughter, Polished to flash like lightning! Should we then make mirth? It despises the scepter (שֵׁבֶט [šēḇeṭ]) of My son, As it *does* all wood. (Ezekiel 21:9-10)

'Because *it is* a testing, And what if *the sword* despises even the scepter? *The scepter* shall be no *more*,' says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 21:13)

Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity *shall* end, 'thus says the Lord GOD: "Remove the turban, and take off the crown; Nothing *shall remain* the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no *longer*, Until He comes whose right it is, And I will give it to Him.'" (Ezekiel 21:25-27)

The passage concerns God's sword of judgment which is poised to strike. This sword of judgment *despises the scepter of My son*. The passage calls the ruler of Israel at that time, Zedekiah, profane and wicked and teaches that the Davidic rule, whose righteous scepter he was supposed to uphold (Jer. 22:3), would be terminated, "It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him." This is a clear reference to the promised ruler in the line of Judah:

⁷ Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983),1:1146.

⁸ Unfortunately, a number of popular translations muddy this passage by translating שֵׁבֶט [šēḇeṭ] as "rod" rather than "scepter" giving the possible impression that the rod is *meting out discipline* when in fact it is the scepter which is the *object of discipline* (KJV, ESV, NASB). Interestingly, the same translations render the term as "scepter" in Genesis 49:10 which is closely related to Ezekiel 21:27. Although "rod" or "scepter" are both valid translations of the underlying Hebrew term, "scepter" is more naturally understood as referring to kingly ruling authority by many readers.

The scepter (שֵׁבֶט [šēḇeṭ]) shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people. (Genesis 49:10)

Rabbinic interpretation associated the title “Shiloh” with the Messiah: a Midrash takes “Shiloh” to refer to “King Messiah” (Genesis R. 98.13), the Babylonian Talmud lists “Shi’loh” as one of the names of the Messiah (Sanhedrin 98b), and Medieval Jewish Biblical expositor Rashi makes the following comment: “Shiloh - i.e. King Messiah whose is the Kingdom.” The term “Shiloh” denotes, “to whom it belongs/pertains.”⁹

Ezekiel is telling us that in the judgment of the Davidic throne,¹⁰ Zedekiah¹¹ will be the *last ruler to sit on the Davidic throne until it is occupied by Messiah*.¹² This same message

⁹ “THE SCEPTRE SHALL NOT DEPART FORM JUDAH (XLIX, 10): this refers to the throne of kingship . . . Rather than transliterating into English ‘Shilo’ as though it were a proper name, the Rabbis translated the exact meaning of ‘Shilo’ as ‘to whom it belongs/pertains.’” — Tom Huckel, *The Rabbinic Messiah* (Philadelphia, PA: Hananeel House, 1998), s.v. “Midrash Rabbah, Genesis XCIX, 8-9”. “The transmission of dominion shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor the scribe from his children’s children, forever, until the Messiah comes. to whom the kingdom belongs, and whom nations shall obey.” — Ibid., Targum Onkelos, Gen. 49:10. “Kings and rulers shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor scribes who teach the Torah from his seed, until the time when the King Messiah shall come, the youngest of his sons, and because of him nations shall melt away.” — Ibid., Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Gen. 49:10. See [Ibid.] for many more Rabbinical comments concerning the identity of Shiloh as Messiah with the meaning of “He whose right it is” to hold the scepter.

¹⁰ “But when not only the people, but the king anointed of Jehovah, blotted out His very Name from the land; when His glory was given to another in His own temple, all was over for the present, and ‘Lo-Ammi’ was the sentence of God. They had become now the most bitter in their idolatry, being apostates from the living God, and, if maintained, would have been the active champions of heathen abominations. By God’s judgment, therefore, the people and the king at length passed into captivity.” — Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel* (3rd. ed.), 20.

¹¹ “With v. 25 the address turns to the chief sinner, the godless King Zedekiah, who was bringing the judgment of destruction upon the kingdom by his faithless breach of oath.” — Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), Eze. 21:25.

¹² “The profane and wicked prince of Israel was King Zedekiah. . . . This prophecy recalls Genesis 49:10, which speaks of ‘the scepter’ in the line of Judah. The line of David would not be restored till the righteous, God-appointed King would come. There were no valid claims till Christ rode into Jerusalem to claim His rightful rule (cf. Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1-11; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:4). Christ will fulfill Ezekiel’s prophecy; He will be the King of Israel.” — Charles H. Dyer, *Ezekiel* in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), Eze. 21:24. “It is true the tribal ‘scepter’ continued with Judah ‘till Shiloh came’ (Gen. 49:10); but there was no kingly scepter till Messiah came, as the spiritual King then (John 18:36, 37); this spiritual kingdom being about to pass into **the literal, personal kingdom over Israel at His second coming, when, and not before, this prophecy shall have its exhaustive fulfilment** (Luke 1:32, 33; Jer. 3:17; 10:7; ‘To thee doth it appertain’).” [emphasis added] — A. R. Fausset, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, 1877), Eze. 21:27. Although the throne lasted until the overthrow of Zedekiah’s reign by Babylon, it had already lost its independence when previous rulers were made subject to Egypt and Babylon (Jer. 22:30; 36:30).

concerning judgment of the ruling scepter occurs in another of Ezekiel's warnings given to Zedekiah¹³ (Eze. 19:4-14), which concludes:

'Your mother was like a vine in your bloodline, Planted by the waters, Fruitful and full of branches Because of many waters. She had strong branches for **scepters of rulers**. She towered in stature above the thick branches, And was seen in her height amid the dense foliage. But she was plucked up in fury, She was cast down to the ground, And the east wind dried her fruit. Her strong branches were broken and withered; The fire consumed them. And now she is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land. Fire has come out from a rod of her branches And devoured her fruit, So that she has no strong branch-a **scepter for ruling**.' This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation. (Ezekiel 19:10-14) [emphasis added]

Judgment of the Davidic throne is also the subject in Psalm 89 where very strong promises to uphold the throne are followed by a passage speaking of the throne being cast to the ground (Ps. 89:44ff).

This is a most important point to understand when considering the implications of the prophetic dreams and visions which are the subject of the book of Daniel because the sequence of Gentile kingdoms which are predicted therein begin with *Babylon* (Dan. 2:32, 38; 7:4) and continue until the reign of *Messiah* (Dan. 2:44-45; Dan. 7:14, 22, 27). From the fall of Zedekiah to the enthronement of Messiah is a time which is characterized by *Gentile dominion* and especially by the lack of a Davidic ruler in Israel seated on the throne of David. This is the period which Jesus referred to as the "Times of the Gentiles" which will not come to an end until the second coming of Christ: "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (Luke 21:24)¹⁴ During this period when the throne of David is unoccupied, the glory of God is also absent from His "house," the temple.¹⁵

¹³ "These verses seem to be addressed to the present king, Zedekiah, as a reminder that in her past Israel was fruitful and full of branches. However, her doom is so certain that it is pictured as completed: she was plucked up in fury (v. 12). The statement that she hath no strong rod is a reference to the fact that Zedekiah was the last king of the nation. Not until the millennial reign of Jesus Christ will Israel have another king." — *King James Version Study Bible, electronic ed.* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Eze. 19:14.

¹⁴ Some interpreters object to the notion that Jesus was referring to the continuation of a time period which began hundreds of years prior to His statement. "This is probably one of the most misinterpreted prophecies in the Bible. The term [*sic.*] *times of the Gentiles* has been taken out of its context and given a meaning not found anywhere in the Bible. . . . Jesus is merely saying that Jerusalem will be trodden down by Gentiles until their time is up—not from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, who is not in view here at all, but from the time of the beginning of Antichrist's invasion. Jesus was not talking about some long period of time, beginning supposedly with Nebuchadnezzar and ending when the Jews are all back in Palestine and Jerusalem is an all-Jewish city. Jerusalem will be an all-Jewish city long before the invasion of Antichrist. The four world empires of prophecy, which began with Nebuchadnezzar and which will continue until the saints possess the kingdom, are nowhere in Scripture called the

The “Times of the Gentiles” do not come to an end whenever Israel enjoys a period of relative autonomy and self-rule.¹⁶ The key factor which determines the period of this time is that the **throne of David remains unoccupied by a legitimate ruler in the line of David**. Thus, the nation may be reconstituted and the city or temple restored (as in the return from the Babylonian Captivity), but this would not end the “Times of the Gentiles” because no legitimate Davidic monarch seated on the Davidic throne has ruled since the Babylonian overthrow of Judah. During the return from Babylonian captivity, although Zerubbabel was of Davidic descent, Scripture never describes him as occupying the throne of David as a true king. This is not a mere accident of history, but is a direct result of Ezekiel’s prophecy which

times of the Gentiles. In this part of the Olivet discourse, Jesus is certainly not talking about the four world empires of Daniel. He is talking about the siege of Jerusalem by Antichrist and says that Jerusalem will be trodden down by Gentiles until their time is fulfilled. Revelation 11:2 states that the length of this time is 42 months or 3 1/2 years . . . The times of the Gentiles, then, is the last 3 1/2 years before the return of Christ, the last half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week, or the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7).” — Arthur E. Bloomfield, *A Survey of Bible Prophecy* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1971), 162. But such an interpretation fails to recognize the significance of the emphasis given to the sequence of Gentile kingdoms in the book of Daniel along with the book’s historical context concerning the Babylonian captivity which resulted in the termination of the last vestige of Davidic rule—a rule which has never been reestablished down to our own times—which even this same author admits: “the return after the Babylonian Captivity was only a partial return, for many of the Jews remained in Babylon. Palestine never again became independent until this century. Throughout the years it was always a captive country so that the **Jews never again had a reigning king**. Successively, Palestine was dominated by Persia, Greece, Syria, and Rome. Finally the Jews were scattered once more among all countries, where they have remained until this day.” [emphasis added] — Ibid., 175. This lack of a reigning king *began* with Zedekiah was deposed by Nebuchadnezzar and continues down to our own day: “I believe that these times of ours (as also all the times of the four monarchies [Dan 2]) are the times of the Gentiles; and that Jerusalem and Israel shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” — Horacio Bonar, “The Jew” in “*The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*”, 211, cited in — Barry E Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 10.

¹⁵ And the physical temple may not even exist, as is the case in our age. “In the great dream in the second chapter the period of time is revealed which in Scripture is called ‘The Times of the Gentiles.’ These extend from the time God withdrew from Jerusalem, where His Glory dwelt, until His Throne is once more established upon the earth.” — Arno Clemens Gaebelin, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel* (New York, NY: F. E. Fitch, 1911), 8.

¹⁶ “The times of the Gentiles can best be defined as that long period of time from the Babylonian Empire to the Second Coming of the Messiah, during which time the Gentiles will have dominance over the City of Jerusalem. This does not rule out temporary Jewish control of the city, but all such Jewish control will be temporary until the Second Coming of the Messiah. Such temporary control was exercised during the Maccabean period (164–63 b.c.), the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (a.d. 66–70), the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome, also known as the Bar Cochba Revolt (a.d. 132–135), and since 1967 as a result of the Six-Day War. This, too, is temporary, as Gentiles will yet tread down Jerusalem for at least another 3½ years (Rev. 11:1–2). Any Jewish takeover of the City of Jerusalem before the Second Coming of the Messiah must, therefore, be viewed as a temporary one and does not mean that the Times of the Gentiles have ended. The Times of the Gentiles can only end when the Gentiles can no longer tread down the City of Jerusalem.” — Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Bible Study Collection* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983), 29:4.

specified that the Davidic scepter would not be restored until “He comes Whose right it is” (Eze. 21:27)—that is, King Messiah.¹⁷

¹⁷ Scott is convinced that Zerubbabel fulfilled the predictions to restore Davidic rulership and attributes the lack of Scriptural clarity on this point to political motives. “A number of the prophets had predicted the restoration and future blessing would include the return of rule by the house of David (Isa. 9:7; 16:5; Jer. 17:25; 23:5; 30:0; 33:15, 17, 20-22; Eze. 34:23-24; 27:24-25; Hos. 3:5; Amos 9:11). Moreover, the promise to David and his descendants led to the expectation that the Messiah (the leader/king par excellence) would arise from that family. As would be expected, then, the immediate postexilic hopes for the reestablishment of the Hebrew kingship centered on the Davidic family. Two individuals are mentioned in Ezra as political leaders: Sheshbazzar the prince and governor, and Zerubbabel the rebuild of the temple. The book of Ezra gives no lineage for Sheshbazzar, and Zerubbabel is called simply ‘son of Shealtiel’ (Eze. 3:2; 5:2; Ne. 12:1). First Chronicles 3:16-17 makes clear that Shealtiel was the son of King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin/Coniah) (see also Mtt. 1:12; Luke 3:27). Hence Zerubbabel, who was himself later appointed governor in his own right (Hag. 2:21) was of Davidic descent. To this silence of Ezra about Zerubbabel’s royal heritage we must add Haggia’s assurance that Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest would be protected in the midst of dangerous times (Eze. 2:4-5). . . . The silence in Ezra about Zerubbabel’s Davidic descent, coupled with the LORD’s reassurance to him, may indicate that some of his contemporaries viewed him as the messianic king. . . . **The reason for the silence was that talk of his being a king could have placed Zerubbabel at risk in the Persian Empire.** . . . The restoration of the monarchy did not come during the time of Ezra, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and their contemporaries. Nor in fact did it come through the Davidic family, but through the priestly Hasmonean line. Although Aristobulus I was the first of the Maccabees actually to claim the title of king, several of his predecessors held the office in all ways save the name. In them we see the joining of the offices of priest and king.” [emphasis added] — J. Julius Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995,2007), 162-164. As Scott observes, during the times of the Maccabees, some Hasmonean rulers claimed the title of “king.” Yet none of these had the necessary Davidic lineage to be recognized as a legitimate continuation of David’s rule. “Hyrcanus [134-104] did not claim the title of king, but acted as if he occupied that position. . . . Unlike his predecessors, Aristobulus [104-103] openly claimed the title of king. . . . Aristobulus’s widow, Salome Alexandra, released his brothers from prison and offered herself in marriage to one of them, Alexander Jannaeus [103-76]. This enabled him to become both king and high priest. . . . Antigonus, the last Maccabean ruler, was locked in a bitter struggle for control with Herod and his brother Phasael until the invasion of the Parthians in 40 B.C. In response to promises by Antigonus, the Parthians captured Phasael and Hyrcanus II. They then enthroned Antigonus as king and high priest of the Jews. Herod, however, gained Roman assistance and was given authority in the land of Israel. A return of the Parthians in 38 briefly restored the rule to Antigonus. By 37 Herod emerged the victor, theoretically an independent monarch, but in fact a puppet of Rome. It is he whom history labeled King Herod (Mtt. 2:1) and Herod the Great. The execution of Antigonus ended the Hasmonean Dynasty.” — Ibid., 86-87 MacArthur understands Zerubbabel’s rulership as reestablishing the Davidic line of kings, “The pre-Exilic signet of Jehoiachin was removed by God (Jer. 22:24) and renewed here in his grandson, Zerubbabel, who reestablished the Davidic line of kings.” — John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997), Hag. 2:23. However, MacArthur recognizes that the continuation of the Davidic line did not in any sense include an active reign upon the throne of David: “He reestablished the Davidic throne, even though it will not again be occupied until the time of Messiah (cf. Ps. 2).” — Ibid., Hag. 1:1. The divine perspective on whether the Davidic line extending from Zerubbabel following the restoration from the Babylonian Captivity can be considered as having ruled as “kings” is reflected in Matthew’s genealogy of Christ (Mtt. 1:1-16). This genealogy is crafted in such a way as to highlight the break in the kingly line at the time when the scepter was judged, “Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.” (Mtt. 1:11-12). All the men mentioned in the genealogy from David (Mtt. 1:6) through Jeconiah and his brothers (Mtt. 1:11) are mentioned in the OT as *kings*. However, from Zerubbabel to Joseph, the husband of Mary, none of the Davidic descendants is ever referred to in the inspired record as a *king*. Whoever heard of “king Abiud” (Mtt. 1:13), “king Matthan” or “king Jacob” (Mtt. 1:15)? Although Zerubbabel qualifies as the Davidic leader on the return from Babylon, he is only referred to within Scripture as “governor” (Ezra 5:14; Hag. 1:1, 14;

2.9.3.4.6.2 - Davidic Throne is on Earth

The continuation of the Times of the Gentiles provides additional proof that Jesus does not presently occupy the throne of David. Showers explains some of the many distinctions between the presently unoccupied throne of David on earth and God's throne in heaven which Jesus is presently seated to the right hand of:

Several factors indicate that David's throne is separate and distinct from God's throne in heaven. *First*, several descendants of David have sat on his throne, but only one of his descendants ever sits on the right hand of God's throne in heaven. That descendant is Jesus Christ (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 8:1; 12:2). *Second*, David's throne was not established before his lifetime (2S. 7:16-17). By contrast, since God has always ruled over His creation, His throne in heaven was established long before David's throne (Ps. 93:1-2). *Third*, since God's throne in heaven was established long before David's throne and since God's throne was established forever (Lam. 5:19), then it was not necessary for God to promise to establish David's throne forever (2S. 7:16) if they are the same throne. *Fourth*, David's throne was on the earth, not in heaven. David and his descendants who sat on his throne exercised an earthly, ruling authority. They never exercised ruling authority in or from heaven. By contrast, as noted earlier, the Bible indicates that God's throne is in heaven. *Fifth*, the Bible's consistent description of David's throne indicates that it belongs to David. When God talked to David about his throne, God referred to it as "thy throne" (2S. 7:16; Ps. 89:4; 132:12). When God mentioned David's throne to others, He referred to it as "his throne" (Ps. 89:29; Jer. 33:21), "David's throne" (Jer. 13:13), and "the throne of David" (Jer. 17:25; 22:2, 4; 22:30). By contrast, the Scriptures' consistent description of the throne in heaven indicates that it belongs to God the Father.¹⁸

Lacking an understanding of the difference between the Davidic throne based in Jerusalem ruling over Israel¹⁹ and the throne of the Father in heaven, we cannot make full sense of the Gospel record where Jesus arranges His fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 by riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey (Luke 19:30-31), presenting Himself as the promised Davidic king. This was "Shiloh" (He Whose right it was to rule) arriving to take up His rule as Zechariah had predicted:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt,

2:2) and "prince" (Ezra 1:8-9) but never "king." Clearly, the Davidic throne remained unoccupied after the scepter was judged in the reign of Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Renald Showers, *Israel My Glory*, January/February 2001, 30.

¹⁹ The eventual Davidic rule of Jesus will span the entire globe and include dominion over all nations (Isa. 9:6; Zec. 14:9-16; Rev. 11:15).

the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion *shall be* 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'
(Zechariah 9:9-10)

Zechariah indicates that the coming of this Ruler to His throne will usher in a time of worldwide peace due to His righteous global rule. But, as prophesied by many passages in the OT (including Dan. 9:26), instead of being crowned with a royal crown, Messiah was given a crown of thorns and “cut off.” In the context of Jesus’ presentation to Israel as the promised Davidic king, the response of the chief priests to Pilate are of particular significance: **We have no king but Caesar!** (John 19:15)

With these very words, the religious leaders chose a Gentile king over their promised Davidic king and ensured the continuation of the Times of the Gentiles. Thus our age is not characterized by global peace and the throne of David remains unoccupied until Jesus returns to take up His throne and rule from Jerusalem (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32-33; Mtt. 25:31-32).²⁰

Gentile Influence over Jerusalem

In the meantime, the Times of the Gentiles must be viewed as a temporary situation during which the ruling authority which was to be invested in the midst of Israel has been transferred into Gentile hands. This can be seen in the predicted termination of Gentile rule at the initiation of God’s kingdom at the end of the age.²¹

Moreover, the question, “What became of the promise concerning the Davidic throne?” is answered in the restoration of the throne yet future:

²⁰ We disagree with Keil who makes the deportation to Babylon the end of the Davidic rule for all time. “Accordingly the exile forms a great turning-point in the development of the kingdom of God which He had founded in Israel. With that event the form of the theocracy established at Sinai comes to an end, and then begins the period of the transition to a new form, which was to be established by Christ, and has been actually established by Him. The form according to which the people of God constituted an earthly kingdom, taking its place beside the other kingdoms of the nations, was not again restored after the termination of the seventy years of the desolations of Jerusalem and Judah, which had been prophesied by Jeremiah, because the Old Testament theocracy had served its end.” — Carl Friedrich Keil, *Daniel* in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 9:489.

²¹ “Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image, and Daniel’s vision in interpretation of that dream, were a Divine revelation that the forfeited sceptre of the house of David had passed to Gentile hands, to remain with them until the day when “the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” — Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1957), 31. “The ‘Times of the Gentiles’ began when God transferred earthly rule from the Kings of Israel to the Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar, and they will continue until Israel again becomes the ‘Head of the Nations.’” — Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel* (Glenside, PA: Clarence Larkin Estate, 1929), s.v. “The Gentile Nations.”

Daniel and the Times of the Gentiles

This is a promise that the Davidic covenant has not been annulled. The kingship that was taken away from Jehoiachin (Jer. 22:24-30) will be restored “in that day” (Hag. 2:23), i.e., at the return of Christ when the times of the Gentiles are brought to a close (cf. Ps. 2:7-9; 89:19-29; Luke 1:32-33).²²

the times of the Gentiles begins when the Davidic throne was empty, which would begin in 586 B.C. . . . [and] goes all the way up until the throne of David is reoccupied by a Davidic descendant, which would be the Second Advent, not the rapture. So the times of the Gentiles began in 586 B.C. when the throne was empty, we’re still in the times of the Gentiles, [to be] continued after the rapture, [and through] the tribulation period, because there is no . . . Davidic descendant on the throne in the tribulation period, not until the Second Advent will the times of the Gentiles end.²³

Hosea’s prophecy, found in the third chapter of his remarkable book, has had its fulfilment. Israel still abides without a king, without a prince, without a priest, and so shall it abide until Messiah Himself appears the second time to take His great power and reign.²⁴

During this period, God continues to set up, depose, and turn the hearts of kings—as He always has. But the period is characterized by no direct or immediate government by God upon the earth.²⁵ This temporary shift in God’s concerns away from the theocracy and Davidic throne toward Gentile rule can be seen in the fact that the first and most comprehensive prophecy in the book of Daniel is neither given to Israel nor concerns Israel, but reveals matters of Gentile concerns to a Gentile king.²⁶

This is much like the Day of Pentecost when God used the tongues of foreign nations to proclaim His glory while purposefully avoiding the native tongue of the Jews of Jerusalem

²² W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, eds., *The Holy Bible: Baptist Study Edition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), Hag. 2:21-23.

²³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Class Notes on Daniel, Dallas Theological Seminary* (Spokane, WA: Ellen Kelso, transcriber, 2006), 2-9.

²⁴ H. A. Ironside, *Ezekiel: An Expository Commentary* (New York, NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1949), Eze. 21:24-27.

²⁵ “Looking then at the moral character of Daniel’s prophecy, the key to the ways of God at the time it was given lies in this, that God no longer exercised a direct or immediate government upon the earth.” — Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel* (3rd. ed.), 16.

²⁶ “In Daniel all is changed. There is no message to Israel at all; and the first and very comprehensive prophecy contained in the book was not at first given to the prophet himself, but rather a dream of the heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, through Daniel, was the only one who could recall it, or furnish the interpretation. The later visions were seen by Daniel only, and to him all the interpretations were given. What is the great lesson to be drawn from this? God was acting on the momentous fact that His people had forfeited their place—at least for the present.” — *Ibid.*, 12.

(Acts 2:5-13).²⁷ The unthinkable had happened: the Holy One *of Israel* was shifting His emphasis away from Israel and toward Gentile concerns. This could only be cause for great alarm among any Jew who understood the subtleties of what was transpiring.²⁸ Moreover, the dispersion of Israel into the Babylonian Captivity was essentially the reverse of the Exodus. Israel had been birthed out of captivity in Egypt to serve God in the wilderness. Now, she was being given up, back into bondage in captivity at the hand of the new regional superpower, Babylon.²⁹

after the Exodus all the nations in that part of the world were terrified at the name of the God of Israel, because they had seen what God did to deliver His people from Egypt, and they had seen what Israel's God had done to the gods of Egypt and the armies of Egypt, so that Israel's conduct was a testimony to the power of their God. Now what's happened? Israel has so discredited their God that their God is no longer feared by the nations that border on the land of Israel . . .³⁰

It is in the midst of these momentous developments that God chose to speak through Daniel providing the overview of the Times of the Gentiles (Dan. 2; 7; 10-11) and the related judgment and restoration of Israel (Dan. 9; 12).



²⁷ It was the Jews of the dispersion, from foreign lands, who understood the Spirit-filled proclamations. The “other” Jews—those native to Jerusalem—heard nothing in their native tongue. To them it was as drunken babbling.

²⁸ “The monarchy also held both a national and religious significance. Although God was recognized as the only true king of Israel, rulers from the house of David were his representatives. God promised David that his descendants would rule over Israel forever (2S. 7:12-16). The overthrow of the kingly line caused many in Israel to question the nation’s relation to God and the dependability of his promise. Their shock is reflected in Psalm 89:38-45 . . .”
— Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, 109.

²⁹ There is an interesting typological relationship to consider between the *dispersion of the Jews into all Gentile nations* (especially following 70 A.D., Luke 21) and the subsequent *gathering of all Gentiles to Jerusalem* in the Millennium to come.

³⁰ Pentecost, Class Notes on Daniel, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2-11.