

Insights In Prophecy

Unlock The Ancient Mysteries Of Daniel & Revelation

BIBLE DISCOVERY SERIES

3 LESSON

Lesson 3

BIBLICAL FESTIVALS—THE APPOINTED TIMES & SEASONS

Read Leviticus 23

- Discover Why God Established His Festivals Over 3,000 Years Ago
- Probe How The “Appointed Times & Seasons” Foretell Final Events

In this lesson we will discover God's great plan of redemption foreshadowed long ago in the appointed times and seasons. Gentile Christians have little appreciation of the Holy Days (also known as *Festivals* and *Feast Days*) established by God at Mount Sinai. It's sad their meaning and purpose has been lost to New Covenant thinking. The Scriptures boldly declare the Festivals foreshadow events to come at the end of time. When this lesson guide is completed, hopefully you will have a new or renewed perspective on God's Festivals, which Messiah Himself established for His divine purposes.

We are not to judge one another in respect to their commemoration. In the strictest sense, the Festivals cannot be observed without a Jerusalem Temple and without animal and grain sacrifices. Therefore, many



today celebrate with activities, meals, Scripture readings, prayer, fasting, repentance, gatherings and giving, while others simply acknowledge and rejoice in their predictive relevance to the end of this age. One is not saved by their keeping, nor lost by their disregard. Nonetheless, we must be clear that Paul did not bring God's appointed times under derision, as is often taught, when he attempted to dismiss "manmade regulations" of observance that were being forced upon the converts to Messiah (Colossians 2:16-17). The Festivals themselves were not under scrutiny, but their imposed mode of observance. Paul later wrote, "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?" These are all destined to perish with use,

because they are *based on human commands and teachings*. Such *regulations* indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence," Colossians 2:21-23.

God's Festivals can be a wonderful source of encouragement, offering insight into our frailties and fostering spiritual renewal through their annual return each spring and fall season. They remind us that our sacrificed Redeemer lives (Passover), to humbly ask for God's forgiveness and His presence in the power of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), to consider our need for repentance because of the approaching judgment of God (Feast of Trumpets) and the promised Day of the LORD (Day of Atonement); and finally, that we are but strangers on earth in need of God's protective care (Feast of Tabernacles). May we never discourage anyone from celebrating God's appointed times, as they see fit. This is especially true for Gentiles who, without hesitation, celebrate pagan days with zeal and fanfare, and who give very little consideration, if any, to the spiritual times God established long ago. The same holds true in reverse; let no one demand Festival celebrations of others, stating that God's approval only comes with their strict observance; let everyone be persuaded in their own minds (Romans 14:5).

With this, we are going to learn how God marvelously designed the "end of time" counting periods and events to follow His pattern of annual Festivals instituted over 3,000 years ago at Mount Sinai, and through significant historical events of His people Israel. The focus of prophecy is Jerusalem (the old one in Israel, and the New Jerusalem in Heaven), and the Scriptures were written by Hebrew prophets. So,

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Unlock The Ancient Mysteries Of Daniel & Revelation

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let's step into the mind of God through His chosen Hebrew writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit to offer insight into our Savior and His salvation plan.

1. When the disciples asked Jesus about the kingdom to be set up in Acts 1:6-7, what did He relate to the closing periods? _____

The generation of Christ's day was not to know the "times or dates." The KJV reads, "times or the seasons."

2. How does Paul reaffirm the Day of the LORD is connected to "times and dates," or "times [and] the seasons," (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)? _____

3. The Day of the LORD should not surprise God's people. What are the believers to be doing (1 Thessalonians 5:4-6)? _____

4. Daniel 8:19 also indicates at a set time in the future the end will come. What does he call this scheduled time? _____

The Bible defines the "appointed time" or "times and seasons." The first reference is found in Leviticus 23. At Mount Sinai God instituted this series of seasonal observances, called in Hebrew "moedim", which would unite His people in celebrations throughout the generations until the great Messianic age.

5. When are the Festivals to be observed, or "proclaimed," according to Leviticus 23:4? _____

Leviticus 23 describes the Feasts, the "appointed times," based on a solar (sun) and lunar (moon) calendar. These Feasts are seasonal, celebrated in the spring and fall of each year as follows.

The Appointed Times & Seasons: God's Festival Days Found in Leviticus 23

Spring Holy Days

Passover (Pesach)—23:5-14

Feast of Unleavened Bread

Feast of First Fruits

Pentecost (Shavuot)—23:15-21

Fall Holy Days

Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)—23:23-25

Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)—23:26-32

Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)—23:33-43

In addition to the Feast Days of Leviticus 23, three other annually celebrated events are found in the Scriptures—*Purim*, the celebration of the Jews' victory over their Persian (Iranian) oppressors—recorded in the Book of Esther. The Scriptures also reference a particularly sad historical day called in Israel *Tisha B'Av*, based on Zechariah 8:19—"fast of the fifth" month—an annual day of fasting commemorating the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple that occurred on this day in both 586 B.C. and again in 70 A.D., and

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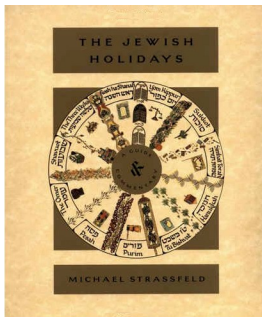
other tragic events in Jewish history. *Hanukkah*, also called the Festival of Lights and Feast of Dedication, is found in John 10:22-23, "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade," (NIV). As a Jew, Jesus would have participated in the annual Feast of Dedication.

The Kingdom Calendar incorporates the Purim celebration and Tisha B'Av fast, while the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah also holds prophetic significance. Festivals play a vital role in setting a pattern for the unfolding of end-time events. It is written, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come," 1 Corinthians 10:11. To this we learn the annual observances "are a shadow of things to come" at the end of time, Colossian 2:16-17.

6. The Scriptures indicate the Festivals are connected to the final days. How does the following two verses connect the "appointed times" to the end of the age (Daniel 11:27, 35)? _____

The end will occur at a very specific time, centered on the autumn Biblical Festivals—the appointed times and dates.

Books written by Jewish scholars hold a wealth of information concerning the Holy Days, as well as calendar dates when the Festivals will be observed in the coming years. Judaism anticipates Messianic end-time events on and during the Festivals, which the Word of God confirms as well. For example, Passover celebrates the great exodus from Egypt of God's people, and the central theme is *redemption*. Observers set an extra cup of wine at the special table in celebration of Passover called the Seder (meal), because it has been taught for centuries that Elijah will arrive to announce the final redemption of God's people at the end of the Passover meal. It is noteworthy that *The Kingdom Calendar* shows the patterned arrival of Elijah at Passover, just as Jews expect, as the end-time counting periods and events begin to unfold.



One prominent rabbi in the American Jewish community wrote, "God promises: 'And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, And you shall know that I, the LORD, am your God who freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians' (Exod. 6:7). This covenantal relationship lies at the heart of the celebration of Passover. We rejoice for the past liberation from Egypt and for other redemptions by God since then. And because of the fulfillment of past promises, we anticipate at Passover the future final redemption. We create a special role for the prophet *Elijah* at the seder [the family meal and home ritual for Passover] as the symbol of our faith in the redemption soon to come." *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide & Commentary, 1985, by Michael Strassfeld, p 7.*

Another Jewish writer adds, "After the blessing the wine is drunk. Before anyone drinks, however, some is spilled into a plate or tray. This gesture symbolizes sadness and loss; as *Shabbat* ends, so ends it glimpse of redemption, of a world made whole. Havdalah expresses a longing for a never-ending *Shabbat*, which for Jews is expressed in the image of the Messiah and, because according to Talmudic legend *Elijah will come* after havdalah [a recited blessing at the end of the celebration], it is traditional to sing "Eliyahu Hanavi" [which words are—*Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah from Gilad, Come to us soon in our days with Messiah child of David.*]" *Living A Jewish Life, 1991, by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper, p 63.*

Insights In Prophecy

Unlock The Ancient Mysteries Of Daniel & Revelation

BIBLE DISCOVERY SERIES

7. Upon what Biblical statements do Jews and Christians alike expect the prophet Elijah's arrival during the final days (Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:5)? _____

8. How long a period does the prophet John appoint to the two witnesses who will testify during the last days (Revelation 11:3)? _____

9. The prophet John—writer of Revelation revealed that two witnesses (Elijah and one other) would "prophesy" for exactly 1,260 days. In addition to the 1,260 days they speak for God, how many days will the two witnesses lie in the streets of Jerusalem after being martyred (Revelation 11:9, 11)? _____

When you add 3 ½ days onto the 1,260 days of Elijah's ministry, this equals 1,263 ½ days (1,260 days + 3 1/2 days = 1,263 1/2 days). During most Jewish calendar cycles there are exactly 1,264 days between Passover and the Day of Atonement. *Coincidental, or a divine pattern?*

10. Malachi 3:1-2 declares the LORD will arrive just after Elijah has prepared the way for Him. Where does Messiah first visit upon His arrival to Planet Earth? _____

Messiah will suddenly come to His Temple in Jerusalem to clear out the abomination. Yeshua has done this before: "Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers," Matthew 21:12.

11. Immediately after Elijah's ministry and martyrdom, Christ will suddenly return to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. What does Messiah warn the believers in Israel to do (Matthew 24:15-21 and Luke 21:20-22)? _____ Why? _____

Jesus warned that those in Israel must run for their lives into the mountains because the "great tribulation" is at the door, and Jerusalem's final demise is forthcoming.

12. Revelation 11 reveals that when the Seventh "Malak"—the Archangel sounds His trumpet; the kingdom of this world is turned over to whom (v. 15)? _____

13. Once the kingdom is given to Messiah, then God's wrath will be unleashed upon whom (vs. 16-18)? _____

The nations of unrepentant are to be judged, who are angry at God; and Jesus our Messiah will destroy those who destroy the earth. Elijah and his witnessing partner will be resurrected at His trumpet blast as well, along with other martyred overcomers. We know "because You [Messiah] have taken Your great power and reigned. And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets [two witnesses] and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great." The dead will be judged—who will live and reign with Christ, and reward will be given to God's servants the prophets—Elijah and his witnessing partner.

Revelation 20:4-5 focuses directly on the tribulation overcomers, who did not accept the mark of the beast, when it says, "and I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded [martyrs] for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on

Insights In Prophecy

Unlock The Ancient Mysteries Of Daniel & Revelation

BIBLE DISCOVERY SERIES

their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead [all others who have died; whether good or bad] did not live again until the thousand years were finished."

More About The Biblical Festivals

From the beginning of creation God instituted the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly cycles that separate the four Festival seasons of the earth (Genesis 1:14-16). This was accomplished through the continual movement of the moon around Planet Earth, and the movement of the planet around the sun.

This cycle of time that divides spring, summer, autumn and winter also unites the seasons in a beautiful orchestrated production of God's creative marvel. From the new life of spring's budding plants and the beautiful blooms of summer to the palette of autumn colors which paint the landscape and the chill of winter with her glistening blanket, all these periods reveal a Divine epoch blueprint. The four repetitive seasons build within mankind a sense of stability as the globe rotates in precision and each season gives way to the next, right on schedule.

Our Maker has united the earth and sea with atoms and organisms into one well-balanced cycle of life, which sustains countless living creatures in an incredibly complex arrangement—all dependent upon one another. For this reason, the unseen God can be clearly witnessed in the marvelous revelation of nature's evidence, so that each of us are without excuse for having ignored and disobeyed Him (Romans 1:20). Added to the physical evidence, the same Designer has fashioned a spiritual and prophetic pattern of counting periods connected to His *appointed cycles of time—His Festivals*, which also prove that He is indeed the Supreme God whose knowledge surpasses all human understanding.

Egyptian Slaves Free To Rest

When the Holy One of Israel delivered the Israelites from their Egyptian slavery at the great Exodus nearly 3,500 years ago, God guided them to the foot of Mount Sinai. There the Messenger of the Covenant (Angel of the LORD—Acts 7:30-38; Deuteronomy 33:2) revealed to Moses and the people of Israel the Everlasting Covenant, which He had promised to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17:7). Deuteronomy 4:13 says, "He [the Messenger] declared to you His Covenant, the Ten Commandments, which He commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets," as found in Exodus 20:1-17.

Also revealed through Moses were God's laws concerning conduct, worship and community. God's chosen people and their descendants, along with the Gentile converts who joined them, were introduced to a whole new way of living as described in Leviticus 23. In verse 3 the Israelites were reminded of the seventh-day Sabbath, which Messiah our Creator had given to all mankind as a day of rest the first week of creation (Genesis 2:2-3); for it was Jesus Himself who created all things (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:2; Col. 1:15-16), and why He clarified His intent and claimed for Himself ownership of the Sabbath during His earthly ministry (Mark 2:27-28). Now that they were freed from slavery, the re-introduction to the seventh-day was freely offered as a gift of rest and repose to the great multitude of Israelites. No longer would they be forced as slaves to work seven days a week—freedom from slavery was God's miracle to redeem His chosen people.

The reason earth's population lives on a seven-day week is because our Creator—the Word (John 11:3) instituted the seventh day and a seven-day week at creation. A seven-day week does not correlate to the movements of the planets, or a prophetic month of 30 days. Five weeks of six work days (30 days) would have better fit the original monthly cycle; however, Messiah saw man's need of rest, and therefore freely

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Unlock The Ancient Mysteries Of Daniel & Revelation

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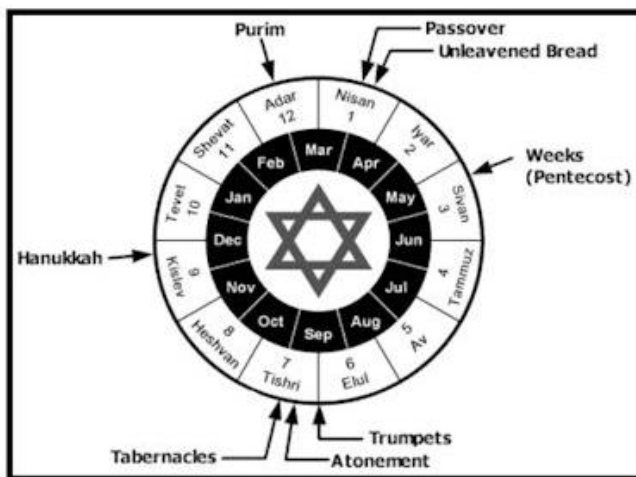
offered one additional day per week—the seventh day—as a gift to anyone who would “remember” to take Him up on His divine arrangement.

God Set the Appointed Festivals In Motion For His Divine Purposes

Leviticus 23:4 begins the introduction to the "appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times"; or as the King James Version reads, "ye shall proclaim in their [spring and autumn] seasons." Today, calendars establish uniform segments of time to help mankind know when to work, play, worship and to celebrate anniversaries, birthdays and national holidays. However, before the invention of printed calendars, the world's population used the rotation of earth and moon in relation to the sun to mark off time; the first sliver of the new moon heralded the new month. According to God's design, each day begins with the evening at sunset and ends the following day at sunset (Genesis 1:5); therefore, to this day many who observe the seventh-day Sabbath do so from Friday "evening... until the following Saturday evening," Leviticus 23:32.

Leviticus 23:4-22 introduces the first set of Festivals. We are told the Biblical religious year begins in the spring (around March/April—Nisan 1; for instance, the evening of March 16, 2018, and the next year on the evening of April 5, 2019). The first Festival two weeks later is Passover (Israel's *Pesach*) with its evening meal called the Seder, prepared before sunset on the fourteenth day of the first month. As the sun drops in the west the fifteen day begins, and God commanded that the Feast of Unleavened Bread be observed as a full day of rest with no eating of bread made with yeast as part of the celebration. Passover is a seven-day holiday with the first and last days observed as legal holidays, involving abstention from work, special prayer services, and holiday meals. The Seder evening meal of Passover at the beginning of the Day of Unleavened Bread is followed next by the Day of Firstfruits, when the Israelites were to assemble at the Temple and bring in the first grains of the harvest as an offering of thanksgiving to

Yahweh. This day begins the counting of seven weeks of seven days (49 days), that leads to Pentecost (*Shavuot*), or Feast of Weeks. On day fifty, another day of rest is observed. Pentecost arrives in late May or early June each calendar year.



The fall observances later in the year described in Leviticus 23:23-44 are identified as the Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Ha-Shanah*)—a day of rest and assembly with judgment as the theme, which falls on the first day of the seventh month (around September/ October); followed ten days later by the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*)—a solemn day of rest and

repentance with the theme of a closing gate and end of the opportunity to repent or be cut off; therefore, each person is to examine himself/herself as to their relationship with God—are they living for Him, or against Him. Five days later the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*)—or Booths arrives, when celebrants are to build leafy booths (*sukkah*) and reside in them for several days of celebration. Although these Festivals were once centered on Temple rites and ceremonies, many in Israel today—along with Messianic Jews and some Gentiles, gather and observe the annual Holy Days in homes, churches and in local synagogues around the world.

Insights In Prophecy

Unlock The Ancient Mysteries Of Daniel & Revelation

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As mentioned earlier, in addition to the spring and autumn Festival Days, the prophet Zechariah (8:19) introduces four fasts of mourning. Jewry anticipates future calamities could occur on some of these fast days. Of greatest concern is the most solemn period called the *Three Weeks*, which begins annually on the seventh day of Tammuz (fast of the fourth month; around June/July) and ends on the ninth day of Av (fast of the fifth month), on a critical July or August fast called *Tisha B' Av*.

Why Should Gentiles Care?

Gentile believers can gain insight into God's final plan by understanding God's Festivals, which He established long ago. The Sacred books were written by men chosen of God, and through these *Hebrew prophets* Yahweh first announced the future "Day of the LORD" to mankind. Only when Christians understand that all prophetic truths are built upon this Biblical historical foundation of faith will Heaven's end-time plan, which leads up to the Day of the LORD, be fully grasped; it is our heritage.

Christians have often misapplied the prophecies for our own sense of purpose. For example, some suggest their denomination should be identified as the "remnant" in Revelation, and that Gentiles make up the 144,000 elect, even though this group is *clearly identified* as from the *twelve tribes of Israel*. The only way for such Gentile teachings to flourish is that the simple language of prophecy is interpreted in a "spiritual" sense without regard for the Hebrew and Greek words inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that God has discarded His people—the Jews. This is known as "Replacement Theology", and nothing could be further from the truth.

The apostle Paul eloquently wrote, "I ask then, Did God reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew," Romans 11:1-2. In fact, Paul wrote to the Gentile church at Rome, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel [of all twelve tribes] will be saved," Romans 11:25-26.

The Festivals have a direct fulfillment in the last days, when type (form) will meet antitype (reality). Looking for the establishment of the kingdom in their day, Christ's disciples asked the probing question, "LORD, at this time are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them: It is not for you to know the [appointed] times and dates ["times or the seasons"—KJV] the Father has set by His own authority," Acts 1:6-7. In other words, it was not for that generation to know the annual Festival Days and holy dates when the final events will transpire. However, the last generation of overcomers is promised an unsealing of how and when final events will occur, on divine dates of end-time disaster and deliverance (Daniel 12:4, 9). This pattern is established by *The Kingdom Calendar*, bracketed by God's Festivals. And, on Purim or whatever day of the year "daily" worship is taken away at the devastation of Jerusalem, the Western Wall and Temple Mount, we can begin the counting days according to the Festival pattern.

Paul also connected the annual Festivals to the Day of the LORD. He wrote, "Now brothers, about the times and dates [spring and fall observances] we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the Day of the LORD will come like a thief in the night [to sinners]. While people are saying, Peace and safety, destruction will come on them, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape... *but you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.* You are all sons of the light and sons of the day... let us be alert" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6) to the teachings of God's prophetic Word.

Insights In Prophecy

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In other words, the events that lead up to the Day of the LORD are connected to and will occur based on the Biblical Festival pattern; and, God's people should not be surprised, because we will have the opportunity to understand the prophetic roadmap that will guide us through overwhelming demonic miracles, signs and wonders.

A Shadow of Things to Come

Paul's insight is this: the annual Festivals are "a shadow" of events "to come" at the end of time. Paul understood precisely the connection between the Feast days and the end, which he derived at least in part from the book of Daniel. God has an unalterable set time, an "appointed time," in which events of the final days will be played out in minute detail. Four times the Word associates the *appointed times*—the Festivals to *the end of time*:

- "I am going to tell you what will happen later in *the time of wrath*, because the vision concerns the *appointed time* of the *end*," Daniel 8:19.
- "The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an *end* will still come at the *appointed time*," Daniel 11:27.
- "Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the *end*, for it will still come at the *appointed time*," Daniel 11:35.
- "For the revelation awaits an *appointed time*; it speaks of the *end* and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay," Habakkuk 2:3.

The annual Festivals marked important events during Messiah's ministry. For instance, He may have been born on the Feast of Tabernacles, of which "water" plays a significant role, and ceremonies involving processions of water were common on this Festival. During His ministry, "on the last and greatest day of the Feast [of Tabernacles], Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him," John 7:37-38.

Six months later the Lamb of God was crucified at Passover; then, 50 days later His fiery Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. No less than *forty* such events in Israel's history have occurred on the annual Holy Days, according to some researchers. We find Yeshua personally involved for He first introduced their celebration many centuries ago at Mount Sinai; then, He celebrated them during His lifetime. He will someday bring the Festivals to a complete fulfillment during the end of days. No doubt with this divine plan, we can expect end-time prophecies to be fulfilled either on the Festivals or based on the pattern of the Festivals during the "appointed time", which leads up to Messiah's autumn visitation and visible return, when He shakes the earth and changes the calendar—the times and seasons (Daniel 2:21-22).

To summarize, we know from the Scriptures that Elijah will prepare the way for the returning King for 1,260 days; then the prophet will be killed. After three and one-half (3½) days, Messiah will "suddenly come to His Temple" at Jerusalem in the darkness of storm and earthquake (Amos 8:8-10; Isaiah 13:13; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:31; Micah 3:6; Zephaniah 1:15). There He will deal severely with the Man of Sin who "opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, and even sets himself up in God's Temple, proclaiming himself to be God," 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The prophet Malachi asks the poignant question, "Who may abide the Day of His coming?"