

## The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks – 15

Another notable individual who lived in the time of Jesus was Gamaliel the Elder, a leading authority in the supreme Jewish council. The book of the Acts of the Apostles reports how the Sanhedrin had forbidden the apostles to promulgate belief in Jesus as the Messiah. When they refused, the members of the court -

- *“were furious and took counsel to kill them”. 34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named **Gamaliel**, a teacher of the law **held in respect by all the people** ... 35 And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men ... 38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but **if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it** - lest you even be found to fight against God. 40 And they agreed with him ...” - **Acts 5:33-40**.*

Clearly, as events show, the highest court in Israel could not overthrow the apostles' work, which did not fizzle out and *“come to nothing”*. It was of God, and those who opposed it were fighting against God. To those who reject the messiahship of Jesus today we appeal to consider the wise words of Gamaliel the Elder. This man is acknowledged to have held a senior position in the highest court in Jerusalem. Gamaliel holds a reputation in the Mishnah (the oldest collection and codification of Jewish oral laws) for being one of the greatest teachers in all the annals of Judaism. In view of this man's pronouncement concerning Jesus, it would surely be unwise to reject him out of hand.

- Jesus is not only established as an historic figure, shown to be serving in conditions authentic to the times. He is also established as the true prophet of God, first by his Sign of the prophet Jonah, but afterwards of his prophetic warning for believers to leave Jerusalem when they saw *“Jerusalem surrounded by armies”* - **Luke 21:20**. Those who recognized the Messiahship of Jesus forty years later, heeded his warning and fled. They survived to continue their lives, where a kindly disposed Roman official provided them with a safe haven. But those who rejected Jesus paid no attention to his word and suffered the terrible consequences.

Mankind today are also faced with a choice - whether to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, God's *“righteous Servant”* who was to *“justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities”* - **Isaiah 53:11**, or to reject him. How thankful we should be that God *“is longsuffering toward us,”* pending the promised return of Jesus, and until then, *“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* - **2 Peter 3:9** - for everlasting life in the Kingdom of God.

- There have been numerous claims by men over the centuries to be the Messiah, but history reports a cluster of such claims in the first century AD. Only one of these can qualify as the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

Only one claimant has left on record his oft-repeated expectation to be *“cut off”* - **Daniel 9:26; Matthew 16:21; Mark 9:31; 10:33-34**. To be *“cut off”* is to be killed judicially - **Exodus 31:14**. Paul explained why the authorities wanted to kill Jesus - *“they did not know Him”* = did not recognize who he was, *“nor even the voices of the Prophets”* - they had no receptive ear for what the Scriptures declared concerning their own need for redemption, which would be accomplished in Messiah's *“cutting off”* - **Acts 13:27**. Daniel had predicted a suffering Messiah at the time when Jesus came. The authorities in Jerusalem made him suffer death, as planned by God, at the exact time predicted in **Daniel 9**. More next time, God willing.