

If it were simply rendered "word" it would leave the question open.

At this point in our investigation we should not make a hasty decision between two possibilities: (1) that *dabar* is used here to represent a command by a human ruler, such as the command given by Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem; (2) that it represents a divine message or a prophetic declaration.

The second point in verse 25 where we should recognize that an important phrase can properly be interpreted in more than one way concerns the words that the KJV renders as "Messiah the prince" and the NIV translates "the Anointed One, the ruler." Although the English word "Messiah" does not occur in the KJV Old Testament except in this prophecy (vv. 25 and 26), the Hebrew word that it transliterates occurs 39 times in the Old Testament. In the other 37 occurrences both the NIV and the KJV translate it "anointed one," or "an anointed one." In some of these passages special research would be necessary to decide to whom the word refers but in 18 of them it obviously designates a king. Thus it is applied to Saul in 1 Samuel 12:3, 5; 24:6 (twice), 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23 and in 2 Samuel 1:14, and 16. There are only four places where it obviously designates a priest: Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16, and 6:15 (v. 22 in English versions).

Although the word "Messiah" eventually came to be used specifically for the promised future leader of God's people there are very few occurrences in the Old Testament where it has even been suggested that such a usage is involved. It cannot, therefore, be taken for granted that each of the two occurrences in Daniel 9:24-27 involves a prediction of Christ. This is a possible interpretation, but other possibilities also deserve consideration.

In the Old Testament the commonest use of *masiah* is in reference to a king, and all such usages except one refer to Israelite kings. That one is of special interest. More than a century in advance Isaiah predicted the coming of a Persian king who would cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt. Isaiah even gave that king's name twice as Cyrus (in Isa. 44:28 and 45:1) and quoted God as calling him "my anointed" (Isa. 45:1).