

Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy & the Seven Year Tribulation

INTRODUCTION

Daniel's seventy "weeks" prophecy is one of the most precise Messianic prophecies of the entire Old Testament (Dan. 9:24-27). It not only predicts Christ's first advent, but describes the most prominent features of His ministry in stunning detail. It tells us that Jesus would, 1) end sin's tyranny and reconcile us back to God by becoming an atoning sacrifice, 2) introduce everlasting righteousness, 3) bring to a close the Old Testament period, 4) enter the most holy once and for all as our High Priest and mediator, 5) confirm the New Covenant with His Elect, and 6) make a complete end of the sacrificial system. Remarkably, this prophecy also predicts the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D by the Roman General Titus who's actions are a prototype for the final antichrist of Bible prophecy (Mat. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:3-4).

Unfortunately, the futurist interpretation of prophecy harmfully undermines points 5-6 by attributing them to the antichrist. It also claims that this important prophecy proves the existence of a future seven year tribulation. Therefore the purpose of this writing is to restore the older and more reliable historicist interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy and to demonstrate the ease with which historicism harmonizes with the rest of New Testament eschatology.

COUNTERING FUTURISM AND THE SEVEN YEAR TRIBULATION

Try as you may, you will not find a seven year tribulation mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. So where did it come from? Good question. The seven year tribulation was a teaching penned by John Nelson Darby right around 1830. However, it prominently figured in the writings and eschatology of Roman Catholic Jesuits centuries earlier. Darby extracted one "week" from Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy (Daniel 9) and placed it far off in the distant future. And this is how the seven year tribulation came to exist. But Darby had his own unique reasons for constructing this view which we will examine shortly.

Now before proceeding further, we must become familiar with a crucial aspect of this prophecy. It is important to realize that the 70 "weeks" do not constitute a literal period of weeks and this is understood by all Bible scholars. The seventy weeks represent **seventy heptads** or seventy sevens of years. In other words, every week equals seven years. The reason for this is because the Hebrew word "week" simply denotes a basic unit of seven.

So now that we've clarified this, let's proceed to examine the passages in Daniel 9 that describe the 70 weeks prophecy to see what we can extract from them:

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy (v.24). Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times (v.25). And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined (v.26). Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate (Dan. 9:24-27 NKJV).

Daniel is told that a full **490 years** (70x7) remain until the end of the Jewish Age or Old Testament period—no more and no less. I hope we understand this. Now within these remaining 490 years several very important events must transpire and we realize that only Jesus Christ could have fulfilled them. Notice:

1. “Finish the transgression....make an end of sins, and...make reconciliation for iniquity” (atone for sin).

Did Jesus end sin's tyranny and make provision for eternal reconciliation when hanging on the cross? Yes, He did! As Jesus was dying, he cried: "It is FINISHED." At Calvary, Jesus finished transgression by becoming sin for us. No future sacrifice can ever finish transgression. It was finished at Calvary (Heb. 9:15). Isaiah tells us, "He was wounded for our TRANSGRESSIONS..." (Isaiah 53:5).

To summarize it, Jesus defeated sin by making atonement and now provides every Believer with the power to conquer sin in their own lives (Jn 1:29; Rom. 5:21; 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Per. 1:18-19; 1 Jn. 2:2; Heb. 7:27; 10:17-18).

2. “Bring in everlasting righteousness”

Christ's atoning work introduced everlasting righteousness into a sin stained world and brought humanity the hope of eternal salvation (Heb. 9:12).

3. “Seal up the vision and prophecy”

The Old Testament prophets looked forward to the arrival of Israel's Messiah and the global impact it represented. Jesus said that the Law and prophets were until John, meaning that John the Baptist was the last in a long line of OT prophets and therefore his ministry would mark the end of the Jewish Age or OT period (Lk. 16:16). From thence forward, God's dealings would be with all people everywhere.

4. “Anoint the most Holy”

Bible commentators have looked at this text in two ways. Some believe the anointing of the most Holy refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ like a dove (Mat. 3:16), while others believe it refers to Christ's priestly role in which He entered the most holy and sprinkled (anointed) the mercy seat with His own blood as described in Hebrews 9:12; 21. But either case fulfills the meaning here.

The Timing

According to Gabriel, the prophetic clock would start at the time that a decree was issued to rebuild Jerusalem. From the date of that decree to the time of the Messiah would be 483 years (69x7). We know from history that the command to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was given by King Cyrus of Persia sometime around 457 B.C. (see Ezr. 1:1-3; 6:14; Is. 44:28).

The first unit of 49 years (seven “sevens”) covers the time that it took to rebuild Jerusalem, “with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble” (Daniel 9:25). This rebuilding is chronicled in the book of Nehemiah.

Because Jewish lunar years are anywhere between 354-385 days in length (taking into account Jewish leap years), careful calculations must be made when adding up the years pertaining to this prophecy. So by adding 483 years to 457 B.C., we arrive at A.D. 26, the very year of our Lord's baptism. Amazingly, God saw to it that special mention was made of the fact that Jesus was then 30 years of age (Luk. 3:23). Therefore the exact time of His anointing could be pinpointed. The prophecy in Daniel 9 specifies that **after** 483 years were marked, “the **Anointed One** will be cut off” (verse 26). This was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified at the end of His 3.5 year ministry, and during the middle of the 70th week (the final 7 years).

Note: The above estimates are according to the calculations of Phillip Mauro. To read further on the chronological timing and history of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy, I recommend you read, *The Wonders of Bible Prophecy* by Phillip Mauro. Proof that Christ's ministry lasted a full 3.5 years can be found in the helpful article provided [here](#).

Daniel 9:26 continues with a prediction that after the Messiah is killed, “the people of the prince that shall come **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.**” This was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The “prince” here is a direct reference to the Roman General Titus (son of Emperor Vespasian), who later succeeded his father as Rome's emperor. And the people of this prince were the Romans, who did in fact destroy Jerusalem and its temple in 70 A.D. "The end thereof shall be with a flood" is a reference to the overwhelming force of Rome's invading armies, which is likened to a "flood". The flood metaphor is used repeatedly throughout the Old Testament (see Jer. 47:1-2; Is. 8:7-8).

The end of verse 26 informs us that the Jewish Roman war of A.D. 70 would result in desolations (*and unto the end of the war desolations are determined*). And this is indeed what happened as Israel lay desolate and uninhabited for nearly two thousand years.

But verse 27 is where all the controversy begins:

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate (Dan. 9:27).

Up until 1830, the Church was unanimous in its view that the "he" in this passage referred to Jesus Christ, **not** the antichrist. Yet John Nelson Darby chose to break with the traditional view and felt that there was a hidden gap between the 69th and 70th week. He also believed that this gap is a parentheses representing the Church Age. As a result, those who follow Darby's eschatology (dispensationalists) believe that when the Church Age is completed, the prophetic time clock will resume once again and the antichrist will usher in the final seven years of Daniel's 70 weeks. However, the only problem with Darby's theory is the fact that none of the passages in Daniel 9 hint even slightly at a 2,000 year gap. So perhaps we should consider the historicist way of viewing verse 27 and see if it makes better sense. Historicists have always believed that the "he" in verse 27 is a direct reference to Jesus. Here is what Jesus did according to verse 27:

Note: the following points are borrowed from an online source (in [blue](#)).

1. “He shall confirm the COVENANT with many for one week”

When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper in commemoration of His atonement, He said:

*This is my blood of the **new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Mt. 26:28). Our Lord Jesus is the one who confirmed the **covenant** through his redemptive sacrifice at Calvary as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34).

As a result, Jesus is called the "mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 8:6; 9:14,15), the "messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1), and his shed blood is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 12:24).

Since this prophesy applies to the seventy weeks determined for Daniel's people, the Jews (v. 24). The New Covenant had to be confirmed with the Jewish people before the seventy weeks ran out, after which God's focus would shift away from the Jews and unto the Gentiles. This is why we are told that the Messiah would confirm the "covenant" with many during the final 7 years of this prophecy. This does not denote a temporal covenant lasting only 7 years, but rather it speaks of God making an everlasting covenant with the Jewish Remnant within the remaining 7 years of the 490 years allotted for His Jewish nation. Now notice that the word "many" is a clue to what this Covenant would entail:

"My righteous servant shall justify **many**" (Is. 53:11).

"This child is set for the fall and rising again of **many** in Israel" (Luk. 2:34).

In each of these verses, the word **many** is applied to those who receive by faith the benefits of the New Covenant ratified in Christ's blood.

It is interesting to note that according to the careful estimates of Bible scholars, the apostle Paul was commissioned to take the Gospel to the gentiles at the very time in which the final seven years of Daniel's prophecy ran out. Thus God's exclusive dealings with the Jews had come to an end.

2. "He shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease"

This too was fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were repeatedly made. Each of these was but a mere type looking forward to the time when the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, would be offered. Once this was accomplished, God would no longer require or accept any further sacrifice.

The perfect sacrifice was Jesus Christ. The old system of repeated sacrifices (types) could only end at Calvary when Christ became the perfect, eternal, and final sacrifice (see Heb. 9 and 10). Nothing further can be added to Calvary's sacrifice, **"there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:18, 26).**

For a few more years, the Jews continued their sacrifices, but these were not recognized by God. Such cannot be termed sacrifices in the true scriptural sense of the word, for the death of Christ provided the perfect, and therefore, the final sacrifice for sins forever.

3. "And on the wing (at the end) of abominations shall be one who makes desolate even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate" This latter portion of verse 27 pertains to events well beyond the 490 years dedicated to the 6 points outlined in verses 24-27a. It also contains parallel or dualistic fulfillment. In other words, while describing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and its subsequent desolation, it may just as easily apply to the future desecration of the third Jewish temple by the antichrist. Mathew 24:15 seems to support this premise because it is a direct parallel to Daniel 9:27. Jesus warned His disciples to flee when they would see the "abomination of desolation standing where it ought not to as spoken by Daniel the prophet" (Mat. 24:15). Yet Christ's warning and Daniel's prophecy may also apply to the Christian Jews living in the modern state of Israel at the time of the third temple. So while Christ's atonement marked the end of the sacrificial system, the Jews may still attempt to restore temple sacrifice. And in this way their rebellious actions will serve to fulfill prophecy. After all, Jesus warned the Jews that because they rejected Him as their Messiah, they would end up accepting the antichrist: *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive* (Jn. 5:43). It seems appropriate that the Jews would come to embrace the antichrist once he makes provision for a third Jewish temple. It's an easy guess that he would then proceed to desecrate it and initiate the complete destruction of Israel.

CONCLUSION

It is clear to me that every one of the 6 points described in Daniel 9:24-27 pertain directly to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Daniel provides a fixed 490 year period in which Christ was to arrive and carry out His ministry before being "cut off" on behalf of His people. There is no hint of a 2,000 year gap (and counting) between the 69th and 70th week which would call for a future seven year tribulation. Thus this would agree with the testimony of Daniel 7:25, 12:7, and Revelation 11:2, 12:6, 12:14, and 13:5, which restrict the tribulation period to a mere 3.5 years.

