



“The Seventy Weeks of Daniel”

Part 1

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A substantial part of the Old Testament is prophecy. The prophets pointed their inspired telescopes toward Christ, the bright and morning star, and they predicted His coming and His divine mission. Many of those prophecies point to the life and ministry of Christ, and others point to His church, which is the kingdom of Christ or reign of Christ here upon the earth. The prophet Daniel wrote about the reign of Christ and the future of Jerusalem specifically. Recently, we studied together Jesus’ statement to the first-century Jews of His day when He said, **“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38)**. We saw how and why God abandoned the temple and how it was ultimately destroyed by the Romans, which was the final stroke of God’s judgment upon the Jewish religious leaders, and how that marked the end of the literal Levitical priesthood and its many temple sacrifices.

Today, we’re going to look at an incredible prophecy in the book of **Daniel** that shows how God was at work in all of this nearly two thousand years ago as it transpired and backing up several hundred years before that when the prophecy was initially uttered. Read with me from **Daniel 9**.

Daniel 9:24-27 “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of

abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Now, much is made of this prophecy concerning supposed future events. In fact, some suggest that much of it was fulfilled in the ancient past and that we are still awaiting the fulfillment of the last segment of it. But this prophecy—all of it—was actually fulfilled almost two thousand years ago and it, like all of the other prophecies of the Old Testament, show that Jesus was who He claimed to be: the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God sent by God. In this particular prophecy, Daniel paints the entire panorama of ancient Jewish history and its culmination in the coming of Christ and in the revelation of God’s redemptive plan—the offer of the gospel and God’s final appeal to Israel. We’re going to look closely at Daniel’s prophecy: what it was pointing to and what it means.

When Daniel wrote his prophecy, Jerusalem was in ruins. The city had been destroyed and the people had been carried off a good time before into captivity as punishment for their sins. You might say Daniel had been studying the word of God that day and he remembered that Jeremiah had prophesied that there would be seventy years of this punishment. Daniel begins to wonder about that, and he begins to pray. He confesses his sins and the sins of the people. Of course, the sins of the people are what had brought them to this point, and he prays for the city of Jerusalem and its future. He wonders when God would rebuild His holy city and when God would rebuild and indwell His temple. But before Daniel could even finish his prayer, God dispatched the angel Gabriel to come down and answer him and show him what the future held for the city. Thus, contained in the verses that we read is God’s answer to Daniel. He said that an order would go out to allow the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and that from that day, there was going to be a prophetic period of seventy weeks in which several incredibly important events would come to pass. He lists them in **verse 24**.

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

First of all, he says that *the transgression would be finished*. This means that the Jewish nation would finally reach the height of its rebellion and wickedness by ultimately rejecting its promised Messiah. They would not sink to a deeper level than when, in the very face of all of the messianic proof that was before them, they would reject and crucify the Christ and spurn the gospel that He brought. So, as bad as their sins had been as a nation, they would not see the worst for another several hundred years. Second, he says that God would *make an end of sins*. That doesn’t mean that sin would vanish from the face of the earth and cease to exist in the world. Rather, that God would triumph over man’s rebellion by finally giving His people freedom from their sins.

Thirdly, he says that God would *make reconciliation for iniquity*, meaning that His people who had been estranged from Him because of their sins could finally and ultimately be reconciled to Him through the forgiveness that Christ would bring.

Fourthly, He would *bring in everlasting righteousness*. That is, the unrighteous could finally be made righteous and righteousness would reign among God’s people at last.

Then fifthly, He would *seal up the vision and prophecy*, which simply means that all Old Testament prophecy—which of course in its entirety points forward to Christ and His coming to earth and the establishment of His church or His kingdom—that all of that prophecy would find its final fulfillment. Lastly, He would *anoint the most holy*. The Hebrew there could be rendered *holy of holies* or *holiest One*. It could be a reference to the temple or the symbolism of the most holy place. I take it to mean that a priest would finally be appointed who would be able to restrain iniquity and fully atone for sin, which would of course refer to Christ who is our great High Priest, as no other priest was able to do as Christ does.

Now, all of those things obviously point to Christ, and Gabriel the angel said that all of those things would take place within the framework of this prophetic 70 weeks. The answer to Daniel's prayerful question would take what Gabriel calls 70 weeks for God's determinate plan for the future of the nation to fully unfold. But what is this 70 weeks? Are we to take it as 70 literal 7-day weeks? If we did, that would be 490 days. But that wouldn't hold any significance historically or biblically. It wouldn't correspond to the events that God said would take place in any way, shape, or form. But also, when you deal with prophetic language, you're dealing in figurative language. The Jews understood this. They were aware of this kind of language and they more readily understood this type of language and those kinds of symbols and figures that were used by the prophets at various times. Today, many people go way off course trying to interpret prophetic numbers and symbols as literal values or objects. The numbers that the prophets used generally represented something. In this case, the Hebrew word translated *weeks* actually means *sevens*. In other words, we can paraphrase what we read in our English version as *seventy weeks* into *seventy sevens* or *seventy groups of seven*. So far as the original text is concerned, they mean the same thing.

If you go back to Ezekiel's prophecy, he shows that a *day* in prophecy stands for a *year* (**Ezekiel 4:6**). Whereas to us a week means 7 days, in figurative prophetic language such as Daniel uses, a *week* actually means a period of 7 years. So, if there were to be 70 weeks according to Daniel's vision, what the angel is referring to is not 490 days, but a span of 490 years. That interpretation is commonly accepted by scholars, and as we will see it fits God's timeline perfectly. In fact, it's amazing how well it fits His timeline and the unfolding of historical events concerning Christ and our redemption.

So, we're dealing with a period of 490 years for the sins of the ancient Jewish nation to reach their height, for God to make an end to sin, to reconcile sinners to Himself, to bring in a state of righteousness, and to provide the ultimate high priest for His people. And it is astounding to see how true and accurate God's word really is. Daniel goes on to say in **verse 25** that this period of 490 years would commence with the order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Well, that order came in the year 457 BC when Artaxerxes allowed Ezra to lead the people back to Jerusalem and re-establish the commonwealth, the nation of Israel. They had been captives, but now they could re-establish the nation and rebuild the city. Watch carefully, because God breaks this entire period of 70 prophetic weeks or 70 sevens (490 years altogether) into three periods that total the 490 years: the first 7 weeks, then a period of 62 weeks, then finally some things that would occur in the final 1 week period. So, remember that a week here means 7 years. So, we have the first period of 49 years (7 weeks), followed by a period of 434 years (62 weeks), and finally a period of 7 years at the end, totaling 490 years (seventy weeks).

The first period of 49 years from the time Artaxerxes gave the order essentially covers the time it took for them to return and re-establish the commonwealth of Israel and rebuild the city. That is speaking of the time that the city and the temple were being rebuilt. Then we enter into that long period of 434 years. Look again at **verse 25**.

Daniel 9:25 “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

He says there would be two periods: one *7 weeks* (or 49 years) and the other *62 weeks* (or 434 years) and together they would span from the time the order went out in 457 BC to the time the Messiah or the Anointed One appeared. Now, if you start at 457 BC when the order was given and go forward 49 years through the restoration of the city by the people and the resumption of the sacrificial system and so forth, and you fast forward another 434 years, that would bring you to the year 26 AD. That’s the 1st century. You might be thinking, *That doesn’t ring a bell because that’s more than twenty years after Jesus was born.* Yes, but you see, Daniel’s prophecy isn’t pointing to the birth of Jesus; it’s pointing forward to when Jesus appeared as the Messiah. The word *Messiah* means *Anointed One*. Jesus didn’t begin His Messianic ministry and work until near the end of His life. Specifically, His ministry began when He was thirty years old.

Luke 3:23 “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph...”

That ministry specifically began when He was baptized of John in the Jordan River. You recall that when Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and God spoke from heaven giving His approval. Jesus was their anointed as the Messiah at that moment. The first thirty years of Jesus’ life, He lived as a man—without sin, but yet He lived as a man. He wasn’t working miracles or going about preaching the kingdom. But at the end of that thirty years, He was anointed as the Messiah and He began His Messianic work, you might say.

Considering that there is an alleged error in the calendar by some four years, many if not most scholars date the baptism of Jesus at what year? 26 AD. 483 years after the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and restore it. 69 weeks after Daniel said this prophetic period would begin. Friends, divine prophecy was not some lucky hunch or some general, vague pointer to the future. It is stunningly accurate, and it proves beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus is the Son of God and that the Bible is His word.

But we’re not finished. That’s only 69 of Daniel’s weeks. We’re still missing a week or a period of 7 years. Here is where great controversy erupts. What is Daniel’s 70th week? Those who believe in and teach a futuristic view of prophecy and the notion of a literal thousand year millennial reign of Christ on earth believe that there has been a pause in God’s plan and that the 70th week is yet to come and will be fulfilled in future events pertaining to that supposed time. The millennialists reason that God put these things that pertain to Israel that will take place in the 70th week on hold after Christ came the first time and was rejected. They reason that God will resume them when Christ comes again. They say it’s like a ticking clock that God stopped at the end of the 69th week and will resume when the world stage is set for the events of the 70th week, and that the present age is somewhat of a parentheses or stop-gap measure in God’s plan. They say that while God presently extends His grace to the Gentiles, His plan for the Jews is suspended and when His time for the Gentiles is up, God will resume the clock and the 70th week will commence. But, friend, there is not one single word of such in this text. Not one indication that there would be a 2,000-year or more gap of time between the first 463 years and the last 7 years. Just as the 62 weeks began as soon as the first 7 weeks ended, so the last week began as soon as the others were complete.

You see, we're dealing with a total of 490 years from the time the Jews were allowed by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BC. So, what about this last week beginning in 26 AD? What about this last week or this last 7 years? What are we to make of it? Look at **verses 26 and 27**.

Daniel 9:26-27 " And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week (that is, the 70th week or 1-year period) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Notice carefully that he says *after* the 62 weeks that ended in 26 AD—*after*, not at-- that Messiah would be *cut off*, which is simply a reference to Jesus' death on the cross. And that ultimately, the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed by an army of people to come. All of that would happen *after* 26 AD, so 26 AD marked the end of the second period and the beginning of the third, which Daniel said will consist of 1 week or 7 years. What is generally stated in **verse 26** is then specifically prophesied in **verse 27**: that God would *confirm the covenant with many for one week*.

Jesus began His ministry and foretold the end of the old covenant and the beginning of a new one. He heralded His kingdom at the beginning of His ministry and He heralded His kingdom reign which would commence on the Day of Pentecost just after His ascension back to heaven. He spent His ministry talking about the new covenant that He would establish, fulfilling the old covenant. In fact, hours before He died, He met with His disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper, and as He participated in an institution that went back to the old covenant, he initiated an institution that pointed forward to the new one. When He took a cup containing fruit of the vine, He said, **"This cup is the new testament in my blood..."** Just hours later, He died on the cross, fulfilling the old and ratifying the new.

Daniel had said that *he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (seven years) and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*. Now, this 7 years began at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in 26 AD. The midst or middle of the week would be 3 ½ years later, which is when Jesus died on the cross. His ministry lasted just over three years. Do you recall what happened the moment that Jesus died? An earthquake violently shook the city and the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom. That had great significance. It marked the official end of the sacrificial system.

Now, I realize that the priests still offered sacrifices for a few years after that until the destruction of the temple in AD 70, but those sacrifices didn't do anything. Those sacrifices had no spiritual significance whatsoever from the moment that Jesus died on the cross forward. They were never able to take away sin; it took the death of Jesus to do that, but they served a purpose in God's remedial scheme. God demanded those sacrifices UNTIL Jesus died on the cross. And when Jesus, the Lamb of God, died on Calvary, he fulfilled every single one of those types, shadows, sacrifices, and services of the temple. He nailed all of that to the cross, doing away with it, because He fulfilled it. He brought an end halfway through the 7th week of sacrifice and offering.

Next week, Lord willing, we will talk about the remaining 3 ½ years and what Daniel could be referring to. I hope you'll make plans to join me for that.

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