



“The Seventy Weeks of Daniel”

Part II

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In our last time together, we looked at Daniel’s well-known prophecy of *seventy weeks*. Daniel received this vision from the angel Gabriel as he was lamenting and praying over the condition of the city of Jerusalem, which was at this time in ruins while he and the people were captives in Babylon. He wondered what the future of the nation and its beloved city of Jerusalem was, so God answered his prayer by dispatching Gabriel down to Daniel to share with him this prophecy of seventy weeks.

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.”

Last week, we talked about the first 69 weeks of this prophecy and how their fulfillment brought Jesus into this world and presented Him as the Redeemer of Israel and of the world. But there is a remaining week in this prophetic period and great controversy exists over its fulfillment. Has that week already occurred, or is it yet to be fulfilled? Is the preterist or futurist view correct? Well, the many varied viewpoints and attempted interpretations that are offered really boil down to that choice of past or

future fulfillment for Daniel's 70th week. We are going to consider that in the second part of our study today.

This prophecy is a timeline of the future of Israel from the time of the Babylonian captivity in about the 6th century BC until the 1st century AD when Christ came and fulfilled His earthly mission. It spans almost 500 years and the angel outlined several things to Daniel that would come to pass within a period of what he calls *seventy weeks*. As we pointed out last week, the Hebrew word translated in this passage as *weeks* actually means *sevens*, meaning the angel was referring to *seventy periods of sevens* and not necessarily 7-day weeks as we think of them. In other Old Testament references, it is shown that this could be a symbolic period or symbolic number because in other places it is shown that a day in prophecy can represent a year. So, if we apply that formula, then the period Daniel is shown is not seventy literal weeks which would be 490 days. Rather, it means 490 years, or 70 periods of 7 years. Some contend that these numbers just represent symbolic periods of time, but if indeed the day-for-a-year formula is applied here, it results in an incredible timeline that brings us exactly to the time when the things prophesied came to pass.

Daniel is anxious to know the future of Israel and the destroyed city of Jerusalem. He knows that Jeremiah had prophesied that their present captivity in Babylon would last 70 years and they are near the end of that time. He is praying, asking God about the future and Gabriel is sent to Daniel to explain what the future would hold for his people. He says that within this 70 week period, several things would happen pertaining to the redemption of the nation from their sins and he lists those things in **verse 24** as follows: the nation's sins would reach their height, God would bring about redemption from sin or *make an end of sin*, that He would reconcile sinful people to Himself, He would thus usher in a state of righteousness, and He would seal up or fulfill the vision and prophecy of the Old Testament. All these things obviously find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and in the cross. But how does that fit the time period of *seventy weeks* of which the Bible speaks?

To briefly review from last week, the 70 weeks represents the 490 years beginning from the time the Jews were released to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild. There was an order that went forth from Artaxerxes allowing Ezra to lead the people back to start rebuilding the walls of the city, the temple, and so forth. The 490 years that follow that point are broken down in this prophecy by the angel into three periods of time starting with the order to return and rebuild. There would be a 7-week period followed by a 62-week period, then a final week. That would add up to 70 weeks or 70 periods of 7s, for a total of 490 years.

Artaxerxes issues that order to Ezra in 457 BC, so that's when the 490-year countdown begins. The first 7 weeks refers to the 49 years that it would take to return and rebuild. That is evidently the first phase of this prophecy, which would be followed by a long period of Israelite history of 62 weeks or 434 years. That period would end in 26 AD. At that time, Gabriel says that *Messiah the Prince* would come. If we account for a supposed four-year error in the calendar, that would lead us to the exact time when Jesus was baptized of John, was presented as the Messiah, and when He began His personal ministry. The word *Messiah* means *anointed*, and that actually occurred when Jesus was baptized. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him and He bore God's seal of approval there before John and all the people, thus beginning His Messianic ministry. The first 30 years of His life, Jesus lived as any man would live, just without sin. He wasn't performing miracles or going about preaching the kingdom or forgiving sins, but He grew up and worked as an ordinary man as an ordinary carpenter. But at 30 years of age, His Messianic mission and his work began. Now, He was the Son of God all along, but His work as the Messiah sent unto the Jews was really put on display beginning at 30 years old. If a day stands for a year,

and the Messiah was to appear 69 weeks, that would be 463 years after the Jews were allowed to go back and build Jerusalem, and that is the very time that Jesus was sent forth as the Jew's Messiah. Now, the Bible says there is a final week in this 70-week period. 69 weeks have brought us to the arrival of Christ as the Messiah, as we went into great detail to show last week. But what of this last week or 7 years? How are we to account for it? Look back at our text.

Daniel 9:27 "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week (or 3 ½ years) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease..."

There are two major different schools of thought, and they are as different as daylight and dark. Perhaps the most popular approach is that after the 69 weeks passed, God paused the clock, delaying the unfolding of the 70th and final week until a yet future time that we are still waiting for. The notion of an earthly 1,000-year kingdom with the Jews here on earth, known as *dispensational premillennialism*, requires that sort of interpretation of this prophecy if the doctrine is to fit the timeline. Of course, the doctrine of premillennialism says that the kingdom Christ on earth is delayed until after a pre-tribulation rapture of the church and then 7 years of darkness or tribulation on earth, after which Christ will supposedly come back and reign on earth for a millennium. This system of doctrine contends that those 7 years are pictured here by the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, and that it refers to a time of the anti-Christ who will make a covenant with the Jews which will allow them to rebuild their temple and offer sacrifices for 7 years. But that after only 3 ½ years, he will break the covenant with them and make the sacrifices to cease. Bear in mind that the idea that the Jews will once again rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and resume animal sacrifices after the death of Christ is a key and necessary component to the pre-tribulation rapture of the 1,000-year reign theory.

For a multitude of reasons which we don't have the time to go into today though we have in the past, that doctrine is not true. It may be popular, but it's not correct. It may be widely believed with hundreds of best-selling books written about it, and famous preachers espousing it, but that within itself does not make it sound doctrine.

There is another explanation, and I believe a better one, of what this final week refers to. If the end of the 69th week brings us to the beginning of Christ's work as the Messiah, that leaves us 7 years or 1 prophetic week to account for. Keep in mind that halfway through that 7 years or after 3 ½ years, *He* (the one who confirms the covenant) *will cause sacrifice and offering or oblation to cease*. Remember that Jesus' personal ministry lasted 3 ½ years. Is that a coincidence? No, I don't believe it is, because Jesus was very specific about the timing of His death on the cross. The Bible makes it clear that there was a definite time in the plan of God when Jesus would be put to death.

John 7:30 "Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."

John 2:4 "Jesus saith unto her...mine hour is not yet come."

John 7:6 "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready."

But then, just before his betrayal and His being sentenced to death, He says:

Matthew 26:18 "...My time is at hand..."

As He prayed His great intercessory or high priestly prayer before His crucifixion, He began that prayer with these words:

John 17:1 “...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:”

So, Jesus was very specific; not only about the fact that He would die, but about the time of His death. There was an appointed hour. Jesus came to fulfill Old Testament scripture and there is only one prophecy that I am aware of that specifies a time when Christ would die and that is here in **Daniel 9** in the prophecy of 70 weeks. It seems clear to me that the events of the final or 70th week pertain not to some future anti-Christ in some future time for the Jewish nation, but that they pertain to the 7 years surrounding Christ’s death and His dealings with the Jewish nation then. Notice what the prophet is told in **verse 27**: that *in the midst of the week he will bring an end to sacrifice and offering*. Well, isn’t that what Jesus did when He died on the cross? The moment that Calvary’s Lamb who, once and for all, took away the sins of the world by His sacrifice, did not a great earthquake rent the veil in the temple from top to bottom? Miraculously, in other words? Was that not at 3:00 in the afternoon, when a priest would’ve been standing in the temple and offering the sacrifice at that time, to see that curtain come tearing from the ceiling down and opening up the way into the most holy?

You see, Jesus fulfilled all of the Old Testament sacrifices, and since the moment of His death, not one drop of animal blood has availed a single thing in the eyes of God. Now, animal sacrifices served a purpose in God’s economy before Christ’s death, but when Christ died, that purpose was fulfilled. Those sacrifices going forward lost any and all of their power or significance. He never received another animal sacrifice. God never accepted another animal sacrifice after the death of Jesus.

So, 3 ½ years after His ministry began and by His death on the cross, Jesus brought an end to sacrifice with His once for all perfect sacrifice of Himself upon Calvary’s altar. When did He do that? 3 ½ years after He appeared as the Messiah; halfway through this 70th week, in other words, of Daniel’s prophecy. What about the remaining 3 ½ years? How do we account for the rest? Remember, the Bible says that *he will confirm a covenant with many for one week* or this period of 7 years. This vision of 70 weeks pertains to the future of the Jewish nation and not Jews individually; to that religious economy—the priesthood, the temple, their service, their theocracy, the nation as a whole. The 3 ½ years before the death of Christ were spent doing what? Preaching and ministering. But to whom? To the Jews. You see, Christ’s earthly ministry was directed in a special way and focused upon Daniel’s people: the nation of Israel.

Matthew 15:24 “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Jesus’ ministry was the first half of God’s plan to appeal to the nation of Israel to repent of its sins and His remedial plan. But what did they do? They rejected and crucified Jesus, who was God’s plan. But even when they had done this, time had not completely run out for them because then, Christ sent His apostles to them to testify of His death and resurrection. They not only had the evidence of Christ’s work on earth during His ministry, but they also had the powerful and credible testimony of the apostles and the Holy Spirit that Jesus was indeed their Messiah. That’s what the beginning efforts of the apostles, as recorded in the book of **Acts**, are all about.

The book of **Acts** is a history of the preaching of the apostles and the spread of the gospel, beginning after the resurrection of Christ on the Day of Pentecost. But notice closely the beginning in **Acts 2** and

reading all the way until **Acts 8**. For the first 3+ years of the church's existence and the apostle's preaching, notice where their efforts were located and to whom they were directed. Wasn't it to the religious people in Jerusalem? Peter preached to the Jews at the temple on the Day of Pentecost. In **Acts 3**, Peter and John were at the temple. Their first evangelistic effort was to their own countrymen right there in Jerusalem, and consequently, some of the priests individually were converted and became obedient to the faith, we're told. But as a nation, as an institution, as an entity, the Jewish leaders rejected and persecuted the apostles, just as they had Jesus.

So, for 7 years, Jesus' outreach through Himself and then through His apostles extended to the Jews. But He was rebuffed, rejected, and even violently opposed by the religious leaders of that time, and it reached a fever pitch in **Acts 7** when Stephen became the first martyr of Christ's believers. A persecution was unleashed by the leaders of ancient Israel against the Jerusalem church at the close of this final week of Daniel's prophecy. What was the result of that? You have all of this preaching in and around Jerusalem, surrounding the temple, pointing at the leaders of that time, but look at what **Acts 8** tells us.

Acts 8:4 "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

When persecution arose, the church became scattered. From that time on, the focus of the gospel mission leaves Jerusalem and it goes to Samaria, Caesarea, Antioch, and ultimately throughout the whole Roman Empire to the Gentile world. With that rejection, Jerusalem and its institution were marked for destruction, and that's what Daniel was told; that after the 70 weeks passes for the Jewish people, their beloved city would ultimately and finally be destroyed. That is, its religious institutions. The city itself lay in ruins, of course, but its religious institutions were toppled with it. The temple is no more. They can't sacrifice. They can't have a Levitical priesthood because all of that was destroyed 2,000 years ago. It all goes hand in hand with Jesus' sad prediction of Jerusalem's fate and ultimate destruction in **Matthew 24**. There, Jesus says that the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD 70 when Titus Flavius Vespasianus led his 10th Roman legion into Jerusalem and laid it waste, is a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.

This wonderful prophecy has been fulfilled. We're not waiting for it. It has all been fulfilled and it points to Christ and the rejection of the Jewish leaders of His day. It powerfully shows us that Jesus IS the Christ, and He arrived right on time; as Paul said, *in the fulness of time* (**Galatians 4:4**). There is no doubt that Jesus is the One promised by the Old Testament prophets. This prophecy shows us why God destroyed Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago: because as a nation, they rejected His Son. A Jew then and a Jew today can be saved. God loves them and wants to save every one of them, but only by faith in Christ just like the Gentiles. Today, there is no difference in the eyes of God. The church is His temple. Are you in His church? Are you a member of His church? Have you obeyed the Christ, being baptized for the remission of your sins?

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