

Charts: Daniel's Seventy Weeks

PREFACE

In our study of the foundational Daniel 9 passage we have thus far examined vv24-25, covering the first sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years (sixty-nine “sevens” of years). Let’s begin with a quick review:

- The seventy weeks begin with the decree given to Ezra the priest and scribe by the Persian king Artaxerxes in 457 BC.
- The end of the first seven weeks (49 years) is marked by the completion of the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem—not just the walls, not just the temple, but the city as a whole as a working civic entity—in 408 BC.
- The end of the next sixty-two weeks, and the *terminus ad quem* (or end point) of the sixty-nine weeks is 434 years later, marked by the presentation and “anointing” of Christ by His Father at His baptism. This took place in c. AD 27.

We are now ready to proceed with v26.

Read Daniel 9:24-27.

v26

Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

This prophecy given to Daniel by Gabriel says nothing about the period between the seventh and sixty-ninth week. Once it describes the conditions under which Jerusalem will be rebuilt and restored, it switches, in v26, to events “after” the sixty-nine (literally, “sixty-two”) weeks. It gives us the time span, but mentions no episodic mile-markers (e.g., as with the completion of Jerusalem at the end of seven weeks).

Some ancient and modern commentators have made the mistake of interpreting the end point of the sixty-nine weeks as the point where “the Messiah will be cut off”—i.e., Christ’s crucifixion. But that’s not what it says; “the Messiah will be cut off” *after* the sixty-two weeks—that is, *after* AD 27.

Messiah will be cut off and have nothing

There is a variant reading, as seen in the KJVs: “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” (You wouldn’t believe all the many different interpretations of both of these variants.) Perhaps, as usual, the Bible itself is our best interpreter.

Read Isaiah 53:7-8.

Isaiah illumines the second variant: Christ did not die for anything *He* had done, but “for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.” And as to the majority rendering, He left this earth having nothing to call His own, save, perhaps those who had believed on His name. A commentator writes, “Born in another man’s stable, cradled in another man’s manger with nowhere to lay his head during his life on earth, and buried in another man’s tomb after dying on a cursed cross, the Christ of God and the Friend of the friendless was indeed cut off and had nothing” (Heslop).

and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

The Hebrew text does not have the definite article (the) in front of the word translated “prince” or “ruler” (as in v25, the Hebrew *nagid*). Gleason Archer suggests a better translation would be, “The people of a prince who shall come will destroy both the city and the sanctuary.”

There are some, mostly older, commentators (e.g., Matthew Poole, Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes; but contra K & D), who claim that “the P/prince” refers to Christ Jesus throughout vv25-26, along with the “he” of v27. That is, they do not recognize a different entity once “Messiah [is] cut off,” that the Messiah will return and do all that is described in vv26-27, and refers to His interactions with the Jews. Frankly I don’t see it; their rationale is tortured in the extreme—especially when they try to fit this prophecy into His earthly ministry. Although some questions remain (which we will courageously address), the dispensational position is far more logical, as well as befitting the original text.

To wit, *a ruler, a leader* will come after the sixty-second/ninth week who will wipe out the city of Jerusalem, including its temple. Pretty much without exception most take this as a prophecy of General Titus Flavius Vespasianus, at the time the older son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, sent by his father the emperor to put down the Jewish revolt against Rome. He succeeded most thoroughly: the city and its temple were utterly destroyed.

(Upon his father's death in 79, Titus became emperor, but ruled for only two years, dying of fever.) This destruction took place in AD 70—forty years after Christ's crucifixion, and forty-three years after the end of the sixty-ninth "week."

And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

Gabriel's use of "flood" here is a metaphor for armies sweeping down onto Judah as a "flood." We see the same imagery in Isaiah. [Please turn to Isaiah 8](#). Note how in v7 he speaks of "strong and abundant waters of the river Euphrates," but immediately connects that to "the king of Assyria and all his glory."

Read Isaiah 8:7-8.

Jesus spoke of this as well in His Olivet Discourse, as recorded in Matthew's gospel.

Read Matthew 24:6-8.

And don't miss that last clause: "desolations are determined," which could be translated, "a strict determination of desolations," or "the determined amount of desolations" (Archer). It is all planned out, written down (as we will see later), *necessary*, as determined by the Godhead in eternity past.

Note that in the Daniel prophecy everything in v26 occurs *after* the sixty-two weeks (or sixty-nine), but *before* the seventieth week—which would make it difficult to imagine that the final, seventieth week were meant to immediately follow the sixty-ninth. The "gap," or interlude of the intervening centuries would seem to be a necessary component to work out all that God intends as preamble to the final chapter of the Last Things.

v27

Here, in v27, is a compressed outline for the seven years of the Tribulation. This verse has also revealed that there is a certain level of freedom in interpreting a passage for which there is no consensus. One expects a variety of opinions from those not in the dispensational camp, but what I discovered is an unbounded number of positions even from supposedly pretrib, premill, dispensational interpreters. Understand: This is not license to subscribe to just any fanciful notion one might make up, but it does mean the freedom to hold to an interpretation that *some* scholars assert, even if many other scholars do not—for it can be just as valid as the next.

Something else is revealed, however, by the study of this passage—and many other passages that have been and will be part of this class. To wit, Every one of us is free to hold certain positions—even contradictory positions—regarding prophecy in God’s word. That is the believer’s privilege. But a deep study of, for a good example, v27 in this passage, reveals that not one of us has the right to be dogmatic about his or her interpretation. If brilliant, highly respected scholars hold to opposing positions, who are *we* to declare, “This is the way it is. End of discussion.” Verse 27 should stand as a warning to all of us to put away that righteous gleam in our eyes and to be respectful of differing interpretations by fellow Christians.

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

Before we dig into the specifics, let me outline the big chunks of this verse:

- During his rise to power, Antichrist will make an agreement with the Jews to permit or even encourage their faith and practices.
- At the midpoint of the Tribulation he will renege on that agreement and halt their sacrifices—both bloody and unbloody.
- Thus begins, as Jesus said, “a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will” (Matthew 24:21).
- At the end of which Antichrist (“the one who makes desolate”) will be “completely destroyed” (i.e., along with the false prophet, cast into the eternal lake of fire).

The Nazi regime desired “a complete extirpation [extinction] of Christianity,” as the U.S. government concluded after combing through Nazi records, but “considerations of expediency made it impossible” to do so in one fell swoop. So Hitler employed a policy of gradualism: lying to church leaders about the Nazi program and then lying about church leaders to the German people, abrogating laws protecting religious independence, seizing control of church institutions, shuttering religious schools and seminaries, declaring certain denominations illegal, fomenting violence against church leaders, sending anti-Nazi church leaders to concentration camps and murdering others. (Alan W. Dowd, in *American Legion Magazine*, January 19, 2016)

Our interpretation of v27 is that the “he” is not Antiochus Epiphanes, not Titus Flavius, not Christ Jesus, but Antichrist; this is the branch we will follow—though there will be a second branching point coming up.

The “he” spoken of in this verse points back to “the [a] prince who is to come”—i.e., Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70—whom we see as *foreshadowing* the Antichrist, who will become a world-wide dictator during the seventieth week.

Thus in v27 we are now beyond “types” and now talking about the real thing. Like Adolf Hitler and countless other leaders and rulers throughout history, the Antichrist will be an inveterate liar, doing everything and anything he can to further his intended goals.

he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week,

The Antichrist—this new leader on the world stage, this charismatic, winsome politician and general—will make an agreement, a covenant chiseled, as it were, in granite with “the many” (only in the NASB). The form of the Hebrew vowel translated “many” (**larabbim**) “clearly indicates ‘the many,’ rather than ‘many’—which would have been **lerabbim**” (Archer). And here is the second branching point I mentioned. I normally try to avoid doing this, but here I believe it to be circumspect to present two possibilities.

First, Gleason Archer takes one branch when says that this refers to Messianic Jews newly in Christ (since the rapture). Just as Hitler signed a non-aggression pact with Stalin in 1939, then subsequently reneged on the agreement and *viciously* invaded the USSR, the Beast will make a covenant with these Messianic Jews to permit their continuation of the temple practices (there will be at this time a temple in Jerusalem), then after three-and-a-half years (the “middle of the week”) he will abruptly, and blasphemously, break this agreement.

but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering;

You might wonder, as I did, *If they (Messianic Jews) are now followers of Christ, what are they doing making “sacrifice[s] and grain offering[s]” in the temple?*

Archer: Since these Jewish believers trust in Jesus as their Messiah, it may well be that the sacrifices will be conducted as memorial services like the Lord’s Supper, rather than for atonement purposes as in OT times. This will certainly be the case during the Millennium—if indeed Ezekiel 43 pertains to that age.

Perhaps. I suppose it is possible that this might be the case, but it doesn’t quite track for me. Since this agreement between the Jews and Antichrist will be established during the earlier period of the Tribulation, these may just as well be Jews clinging to their ancient traditions, celebrating the reestablishment of the temple as God’s sanction of a revival of the Mosaic Law and its sacrifices.

Either one *could* be the preferred interpretation, but I think the latter tracks better—as agrees the late, esteemed Dr. John F. Walvoord, long-time president of Dallas Theological Seminary—so that is the one I think we should follow. And we will develop this further later, as we begin working our way through the Tribulation period as recorded in the Revelation. Now, what might be the Beast’s reason for stopping all Jewish religious practices? From the next portion of the verse we get a clue.

and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate,

The Hebrew text in the second half of this verse is challenging, and about as opaque as it can get. (Something that gives this away is the variety of renderings in our common translations.) The two NIV versions add words that are simply not there in the Hebrew (e.g., “temple,” “set”). Here is a more literal translation offered by Archer: “And on the wing of abominations [he is going to] commit abominations, and towards the end [or, up until] the predetermined [judgment] will be poured out upon him.” The NIVs take the noun “wing” (*kenap*, ke-naph) to mean something like a wing of the temple, but, like “flood” in v26, here “wing” is probably used metaphorically, describing “the vulture-like role of Antichrist as he swoops down on his victims” (Archer). We benefit in our understanding of “makes desolate” by the words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 24, as He describes this moment.

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.” (vv15-21)

Antichrist is all about taking and holding power. Satan, the author of all this depravity, will know the truth, that all this is fleeting, because Christ’s return is imminent. But Satan is a better liar than his servant, and he has been stringing along Antichrist all the time, using him as a pliant tool to meet *his* purpose—Satan’s purpose: to destroy as much of this world before it is taken away from him.

even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

This world dictator, Antichrist, will hold sway until he himself is made “desolate” (*somem*, sha-mom; uninhabited), which means until the wrath of God is poured out in His fury—if not before, at least at the climactic Armageddon.

An Aside (in preparation for upcoming Session 11)

Let me offer some perspective regarding the person Scripture refers to as the “little horn,” the “son of perdition” and “man of lawlessness,” “the beast”—that is, Antichrist. I have mentioned in class that we might think of Satan, Antichrist, and the false prophet as a perverse, Satanic, reverse-image of the Holy Trinity: Satan for God the Father, Antichrist for the Son of God, and the false prophet for the Holy Spirit.

Frankly, we cannot say much about the man who will later become Antichrist. We might make an educated guess that he will be a man of ambition and drive, a man with a talent for winning the hearts and minds of the masses, a persuasive, charismatic man. However, just as Judas Iscariot was indwelt by Satan ([John 13:27](#)) and made to sell out Jesus and betray Him to the chief priests, so this person will be, for this period on earth, Satan incarnate ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#)). Interestingly, the late M. R. De Haan goes so far as to state that the Antichrist will literally *be Judas incarnated*, thus indwelt by Satan for a second time—but I do not subscribe to that.

For *His* time on earth, Jesus was Immanuel: God with us, God incarnate (in flesh). His darker opposite, Antichrist, will be *Satan* in flesh. We might safely assume that since Jesus was righteous and holy *before* He became God incarnate, the man who will become Antichrist will be evil—or at least having a proclivity toward evil (certainly *not* a believer)—before he is taken over by Satan.

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:10-13)

We know God the Father because of the words and works of Jesus. God was at work on earth *through* Him. Just so, those alive on earth at the time will be able to know Satan because of the words and works of Antichrist, who will be at work *through* him. As we go deeper into this future history we need to keep in mind that the work of Antichrist is really the work of Satan—and above and beyond that, Father God and the *true* Christ are ultimately running the whole show.



Next session: May 1
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Supplementary Notes for those Struggling with the Math of the Seventy Weeks

(from Gleason Archer on Daniel 9:25-26, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, page 115)

Robert Anderson (pp. 67-75) calculated what he called "prophetic years" as consisting of 360 days each. The 360-day year was known, to be sure, in Egypt, Greece, Assyria, and Babylon, all of which made some use of a system of twelve months having 30 days each. All of them, however, used some sort of intercalary month in order to make an approximation to the 365 days of the solar year—whether 5 days added after the twelfth month or an additional month every six or seven years. In other words, they all used various devices to mark the phases of the moon (29½ days from one new moon to the next) and yet reconcile these twelve lunar units with the solar year of 365¼ days. The Assyrians usually alternated between 29-day months and 30-day months (which therefore totaled 354 days) and the needed 11 extra days were supplied by varying methods, depending on the decision of the local or national priests. The same was true with the Babylonians and Sumerians (cf. P. Van Der Meer, *Chronology of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt* [Leiden: Brill, 1963], p. 1).

As for Egypt, the 365-day year was followed—but without the insertion of an extra day every fourth year ("leap year") as was later done with the Julian calendar. The unhappy result for the Egyptians was that over a cycle of 1,460 years, their three seasons would gradually work their way around the calendar, till "winter" (p-r-t.) would occur during the summer, and so on. But even at that, the Egyptians never used a 360-day year, as Anderson supposed; they simply used the fraction 1/360 as a rough estimate for daily quotas (cf. A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1957], pp. 203-5). It remains completely unsubstantiated that any of Israel's ancient neighbors ever used 360-day years in complete disregard for the solar cycle. Nor did they ever use long series of 360-day years without some form of intercalation. If, then, the Hebrews did this, they would be the only nation in world history ever to do so.

Anderson finds support for the 360-day year in the reference to 1,260 days in Revelation 12:6 as the period of persecution during the Great Tribulation; in 12:14 this interval is referred to as "a time, times and half a time or 3½ years. While it is perfectly true that 3½ times 12 times 30 comes out to 1,260, it seems most unlikely that the figure of 3½ years was intended in that context to be any more than approximate. Twelve hundred and sixty days is only 16 or 17 days short of 3½ solar years, and even in modern usage we would have no hesitation whatever in speaking of 1,260 days as "about three and a half years." This evidence from Revelation 12 therefore furnishes very slender support for the supposition that the Hebrews of the first millennium B.C. differed from all others in the ancient (or modern) world and used 360-day years rather than solar years in reckoning prophetic time. Certainly in their numerous chronological statements in Kings and Chronicles, the OT authors used nothing but true solar years. This consideration alone ought to be decisive against Anderson's theory.