

The Backbone of Biblical Prophecy: Daniel's 70 "Weeks"

Daniel 9:24-27

Introduction:

1. The importance of this passage (and the Book of Daniel) to understanding Biblical prophecy

"Daniel 9:24-27 with its "seventy weeks" prophecy is one of the most important prophetic passages in the Bible.... A proper understanding of Bible prophecy hinges on rightly interpreting this text." (John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 892)

"The Book of Revelation cannot be properly interpreted without a general knowledge of the Book of Daniel. Material from every chapter of Daniel is either quoted or alluded to in Revelation, and only two chapters in Revelation do not have some background in Daniel." (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*)

"In the concluding four verses of Daniel 9, one of the most important prophecies of the Old Testament is contained." (John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Understanding Prophetic Revelation*, p. 216)

"Apart from an understanding of the details of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel, all attempts to interpret New Testament prophecy must fail in large measure." (Alva J. McClain, "Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks," p. 7)

Jesus, Paul, and John all refer to this text in key New Testament prophetic passages.

Matthew 24:15-16 When ye therefore shall see the **abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) (16) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Mark 13:14 But when ye shall see the **abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that **man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition**; (4) Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he **as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

Revelation 11-13 (describes in much greater detail how horrible this time will be for Jews and believing Gentiles)

2. The historical and contextual background of this passage

- Daniel has been taken captive to Babylon (605 B.C.), the Jews have been scattered throughout the world, and Jerusalem and the Temple have been destroyed (586 B.C.)
- in the first year of Darius (538 B.C.), Daniel reads the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the destruction, dispersion, and deliverance of his people

Daniel 9:1-2

Jeremiah 25:11-12 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**. (12) And it shall come to pass, when **seventy years are accomplished**, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

Jeremiah 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, That **after seventy years be accomplished** at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

- Daniel realizes that the 70 years are nearly over and calls out to God in prayer for forgiveness and mercy (9:3-19)
- It's important to note, Daniel interpreted Jeremiah's prophesy literally and sought literal fulfillment
- God sends the angel Gabriel to answer Daniel's prayer and give this amazing prophecy (9:20-23)
- The prophecy deals specifically with the nation of Israel and with the city of Jerusalem (9:24)

I. The 70 “weeks” of Daniel are weeks of years

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.

- The Hebrew word in this text for “weeks” actually means “seven” so the Hebrew literally reads “Seventy Sevens”
- So it is 70 sevens (or 490) but of what? Days? Months? Years?
- Most scholars agree that the context demands 70 “sevens” of years is to be understood – but **Why?**
 1. Daniel is already thinking in terms of years from Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years of captivity (9:2)
 2. Failure to keep the Sabbath Year (in which the Israelites were to allow the land to rest on the 7th year) was the basis for the 70 year captivity (10 x 7)

2 Chronicles 36:20-21 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: (21) To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, **until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.**

3. The children of Israel were as familiar with thinking in terms of 7 year periods as in 7 day periods – “weeks” of years was common in Jewish thought
4. 490 days or even months would be insufficient time to fulfill these prophecies
5. Daniel specifically distinguishes a week of days in the very next chapter

Daniel 10:2 In those days I Daniel was mourning **three full weeks.** (in Hebrew: “three sevens of days”)

6. The last “week” (7th) must also be interpreted consistently as a literal 7 year time period

II. The 70 “weeks” of Daniel are divided into three parts

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.

	7 sevens (49 years): vs. 25	62 sevens (434): vs. 25	One seven (7 years): vs. 27
Begins	decree to rebuild Jerusalem 445 B.C. by Artaxerxes? Nehemiah 2:1-10	Continuation of troubling times for Israel and silence until Messiah the Prince	7 yr. covenant of peace with Antichrist and Israel - Broken midway through
Ends	Completion of Jerusalem	Coming of Messiah	Consummation/judgment
Fulfillment	Already past	Already past	Still future

III. The 70 “weeks” of Daniel are complete except for the last “week”

Daniel 9:27 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.

There has never been a seven-year covenant between a foreign leader and Israel in history.

IV. The 70 “weeks” of Daniel include a gap between the 69th “week” and 70th “week”

Daniel 9:26 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.

A Gap of time is between the final two weeks is plausible and even necessary for the following reasons:

1. Gaps of time often exist in prophetic passages

- A gap exists between Jesus' first coming and His second coming:

Zechariah 9:9-10 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, **thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.** (10) And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and **his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.**

- Even Jesus recognized this when He stopped reading in the middle of the sentence of Isaiah's prophecy:

Isaiah 61:1-2 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; (2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

Luke 4:18-20 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, (19) To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (20) **And he closed the book,** and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

2. In the text, the fact that the Messiah will be cut off (rejection and crucifixion) **AFTER** the 69 weeks but before the 70th week requires a gap of time
3. Also, the destruction of the rebuilt city and temple takes place decades **AFTER** the conclusion of the 69th week
4. The six prophecies concerning Israel found in 9:24 have not yet been fulfilled and, therefore, must be yet future requiring a gap prior to the 70th week as God has "set them aside" for now

Matthew 23:37-39 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (38) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (39) For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

5. What is described for the 70th week in 9:27 has not yet been fulfilled

- There has been no seven-year covenant
- There has been no violation of that covenant after 3 ½ years
- No Antichrist figure has committed abominations in the temple or been destroyed after doing so

6. Jesus Himself refers to the abomination of desolation as being yet future

Matthew 24:15 When ye therefore **shall see** the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

7. Decades later, Paul spoke of this event as being yet future

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day **shall not come, except there come** a falling away first, and that **man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;** (4) Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

8. John, writing toward the end of the first century, makes multiple references to a similar 3 ½ period yet future

Revelation 11:2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot **forty and two months.**

Revelation 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a **thousand two hundred and threescore days.**

Revelation 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for **a time, and times, and half a time,** from the face of the serpent.

Revelation 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue **forty and two months**.

V. The 70 “weeks” of Daniel will be completed by the 7 years of Tribulation

We know this because:

- This 70th week is a period of seven years between the rapture and Christ’s 2nd coming
- This 70th week provides the exact framework for all the events found in Revelation 6-19
- This 70th week concerns God’s chosen nation of Israel and their coming King – it is suspiciously silent regarding the church
- This 70th week will begin with a covenant between a prince and Israel promising to restore them to their land in false fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and deceiving many into thinking he is God
- This prince will break his covenant after 3 ½ years (in contrast to God Who keeps His covenants) and “cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease”
- The breaking of this covenant marks the beginning of unparalleled “desolation” and persecution for the Jewish people
- The end of this final seven-year period will conclude the entire series of 70 weeks and usher in the great blessings promised to Israel in Daniel 9:24

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.

