

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

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Let the postmillennial and amillennial commentators look long and steadily at this fact. This prophecy is a prophecy for Daniel's people and Daniel's city. No alchemy of Origenistic spiritualizing interpretation can change that.

—Robert Culver¹

It has been well observed by various writers that if the seventy weeks are *to end* with the death of Christ and the incoming destruction of Jerusalem, it is simply *impossible*—with all ingenuity expended in this direction by eminent men—to make out *an accurate* fulfillment of prophecy from the dates given, for the time usually adduced being either too long to fit with the crucifixion of Christ or too short to extend to the destruction of Jerusalem.

—George N.H. Peters²

One of the most important prophecy passages in the whole Bible is that of God's prophecy given to Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27. This passage constitutes one of the most amazing prophecies in all the Bible. If worked out logically, this text is both seminal and determinative in the outworking of one's understanding of Bible prophecy. Especially for those of us who believe that prophecy should be understood literally, it is essential that a right understanding of this central text be developed and cultivated. Thus, with this article, I am beginning a series that examines Daniel's prophecy for the purpose of providing a consistently literal interpretation of the passage.

ENEMIES OF LITERAL INTERPRETATION

Critics of the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy must strike down the plain meaning of Daniel's prophecy in their failed attempts to strike down the prophetic precision found in biblical prophecy. Critic, Gary DeMar declares:

While nearly all Bible scholars agree that the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy refer to the time up to Jesus' crucifixion, only

¹ Robert Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 149.

² George N.H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 3 Vols., (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1884], 1978), 2:659.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

dispensationalists [literal interpreters like myself, T.D.I.] believe that the entire seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled. Without a futurized seventieth week, the dispensationalist system falls apart. There can be no pretribulational rapture, great tribulation, or rebuilt temple without the gap. How do dispensationalists find a gap in a text that makes no mention of a gap?³

2

I agree with DeMar that much rides on Daniel's prophecy. I hope to demonstrate in this and coming articles that the only interpretation of Daniel's seventy-weeks that explains all aspects of this great prophecy is the consistently literal approach.

Should the overall approach of this prophecy be literal or allegorical? If literal, then this would mean that the numbers should be taken literally and do count. Yet some think that numbers don't count.

This facilitates the adoption of the symbolical interpretation of the numbers, which . . . we regard as the only possible one, because it does not necessitate our changing the seventy years of the exile into years of the restoration of Jerusalem, and placing the seven years, which the text presents as the first period of the seventy weeks, last.⁴

Harry Bultema observes:

The angel himself gives a literal explanation and it would be nonsensical to insist on giving a symbolical interpretation of a literal explanation. If the exegetes had always obeyed the angel's interpretation as is evident from practically every word he speaks, then this text would never have been so obscured by all kinds of human conjectures and imagined "deep" insights.⁵

REASONS FOR LITERAL NUMBERS

There are solid reasons why the numbers in Daniel's prophecy should be taken literally. First, chapter 9 opens with Daniel realizing from Jeremiah's writings that Israel's captivity would last 70 years. These were literal years. Since the prophecy delivered by Gabriel to Daniel in 9:24-27 is related to the 70-year captivity, it follows that the 70 weeks

³ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 324.

⁴ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Daniel*, 10 vols., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 9:399.

⁵ Harry Bultema, *Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 279-80.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

of years are equally literal. Second, since definite numbers are used in the prophecy (7, 62, and 1 weeks), it would be strange indeed for such odd numbers to not have literal meaning. Leon Wood asks, "Why should definite numbers be applied to periods of indefinite lengths?"⁶ Nothing in the context suggests a non-literal use of numbers in this prophecy.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

We know from the beginning of chapter 9 (verse 2) that Daniel had read about "the number of years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years." The two passages which Daniel surely studied were Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10-14. Both texts clearly speak of Israel's Babylonian captivity as limited to a 70-year period. Both passages also blend into their texts, statements that look forward to a time of ultimate fulfillment and blessing for the nation of Israel. This is why Daniel appears to think that when the nation returns to their land, then ultimate blessing (the millennial kingdom) will coincide with their return. Daniel's errant thinking about the timing of God's plan for Israel occasioned the Lord's sending of Gabriel "to give you insight with understanding" (Dan. 9:22).

God was not yet ready to bring history to its destined final climax. Thus, He told Daniel that He was going to stretch out history by seventy times seven years (i.e., 490 years). Dr. David Cooper wrote the following paraphrase that I think accurately captures the sense of the passage:

Daniel, you have been thinking that the final restoration will be accomplished and the full covenant blessings will be realized at the close of these seventy years of exile in Babylon. On this point you are mistaken. You are not now on the eve of the fulfillment of this wonderful prediction. Instead of its being brought to pass at this time, I am sent to inform you that there is decreed upon your people and the Holy City a period of "seventy sevens" of years before they can be realized. At the conclusion of this period of 490 years the nation of Israel will be reconciled and will be reinstated into the divine favor and will enter into the enjoyment of all the covenant blessings.⁷

THE MEANING OF "WEEKS"

One of the Hebrew classes I took while a student at Dallas Theological Seminary was called "Exegesis of Old Testament Problem Passages," taught by Dr. Kenneth Barker. Dr.

⁶ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 247.

⁷ David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*, (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1939), 369.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Barker thought that Daniel 9:24-27 had more problems for an interpreter to solve than any other passage in the entire Old Testament. Dr. Barker did not mean by the term “problem” that these made the text unknowable, but that an item was difficult and required great care and skill to determine the meaning. He thought that there were 14 problems that an interpreter needed to solve in order to correctly understand the passage. The first issue that needs to be dealt with was the meaning of the term “weeks,” found at the beginning of verse 24.

4

For those acquainted with Hebrew, they will notice that the same word appears twice at the beginning of verse 24. That twice used word is “*sâbu’îm*,” meaning, “seventy sevens.” This Hebrew word appears first as a plural noun, followed by the participle form, functioning as an adjective. That this Hebrew phrase should be rendered as “seventy sevens,” is unanimously agreed upon by representatives of all interpretative schools. There is also great consensus that the “seventy sevens” refers to years, since this is what Daniel was contemplating in Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-14, as evident in Daniel 9:2. Thus, our Lord has in mind seventy weeks of years, or 490 years.

The next word appearing in the Hebrew text in verse 24 is a verb translated “have been decreed.” This word appears only here in the entire Old Testament. This verb has the basic meaning of “cut,” “cut off,” and came to mean “divide,” or “determine.”⁸ It appears that Gabriel choose this unique word to emphasis that God was carefully choosing or determining the length of Israel’s history. “Just as a wise person never cuts or snips at random, the Lord as the all-wise God does so even less. All His works are determined form eternity, and the times also are only in His hands.”⁹ Wood adds, “The thought is that God had cut off these 490 years from the rest of history through which to accomplish the deliverances needed for Israel.”¹⁰ G.H. Lang declares:

Decreed means divided or severed off from the whole period of world-empire in the hands of the Gentiles, as to which Daniel was already well informed. It points to a fixed and limited period, of definite duration, forming part of a longer period the duration of which is not fixed, or at least not declared.¹¹

⁸ See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford, 1907), 367.

⁹ Bultema, *Daniel*, 282.

¹⁰ Wood, *Daniel*, 248.

¹¹ G.H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), 127.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

DANIEL'S PEOPLE AND CITY

For whom did God reveal this period of prophetic destiny? The text says that they have been decreed “for your people and your holy city.” This is such an obvious statement, yet too many interpreters attempt to shoehorn in a people not mentioned in the passage. In the sixth century BC, when Daniel wrote, who were Daniel’s people and holy city? Clearly it can only refer to Israel as Daniel’s people and Jerusalem as Daniel’s holy city. Yet many interpreters insist that it means something more, something different than what the text actually says. For instance, H.C. Leupold says, “Here, as so often in prophecy, terms like God’s “people” and God’s “holy city” broaden out to the point where they assume a breadth of meaning like that found in the New Testament (cf. Gal. 6:16).”¹² Another non-literalist, E.J. Young, says, “It is true that the primary reference is to Israel after the flesh, and the historical Jerusalem, but since this very vs. describes the Messianic work, it also refers to the true people of God, those who will benefit because of the things herein described.”¹³

5

Notice that both allegorizers appeal to reasons that are outside of the text. They just believe that it refers to individuals beyond Israel because that’s what they believe. Therefore, the text must have in mind some beyond what it actually does say. This is a clear example of reading meaning into the text from one’s own belief system, which is not what the Bible wants us to do. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 4:6, “that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written.” Gabriel goes out of his way to inform Daniel that the seventy weeks of years are decree for Israel and Jerusalem. Lang notes, “The endeavour to apply this prophecy, in general or in detail, to others than Daniel’s people, Israel, and Daniel’s city, Jerusalem, is an outrage upon exegesis, being forbidden in advance by the express terms used.”¹⁴ Gabriel says that God has specifically cut away those 490 years for Israel and Jerusalem, which would not include the addition of anyone else. Wood expands upon this idea and notes:

It should be noted that Gabriel said the 490 years will be in reference to the Jewish people and the Jewish capital city, which would seem to exclude any direct concern with Gentiles. That this concern is to be with the city, as well as the people, militates against the idea that the 490 years carry reference only to Christ’s first coming and not to His second. It is difficult to see how the physical city of Jerusalem was involved in the deliverance from sin which Christ then effected but it will be in the deliverance from the

¹² H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 411.

¹³ Edward J. Young, *A Commentary on Daniel*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1949), 197.

¹⁴ Lang, *Daniel*, 130.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

destructive oppression which the Antichrist will bring prior to Christ's second coming.¹⁵

THE SIX PROPHETIC PURPOSE CLAUSES

As we delve more deeply into the meaning of this text, let's drop back and note a few structural observations about the passage as a whole (Dan. 9:24-27). Verse 24 is the general statement from Gabriel, while the final three verses provide a particular explanation of the general point. Thus, verses 25-27 will help us understand the main statement of verse 24.

There are six infinitives that tell us when the seventy weeks that have been decreed for Israel and Jerusalem will be fulfilled in history. These six goals are 1) to finish the transgression, 2) to make an end of sin, 3) to make atonement for iniquity, 4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, 5) to seal up vision and prophecy, and 6) to anoint the most holy *place*. Usually, when a list appears in Scripture, it is important to see if the items should be grouped in subsets.

I believe that these six items are arranged in two groups of three, instead of three groups of two. The first triad has to do with sin, and interestingly these are the exact words that Daniel used in his prayer in 9:5. God is speaking to Daniel's prayer through the first three goals. The second set of three goals for the 490 year period have to do with God's righteousness. This was a matter that Daniel was also inquiring about in his earlier prayer (9:7). G.H. Lang agrees when he notes, "for the first three are concerned with the removal of sin, and the last three with the bringing in of righteousness."¹⁶ "The first three are negative in force, speaking of undesirable matters to be removed; and the last three are positive, giving desirable factors to be effected."¹⁷

Division of these six statements into two groups of threes appear to be supported by a structural observation from the Hebrew text. The first three goals are all made up of two word units in Hebrew. The second group of descriptives all use three word phrases. This structural arrangement would lend literary support to the grouping suggested above.

Before we can determine when these six items will be fulfilled, we must first ascertain their purpose. This we will now pursue as we inspect each phrase.

¹⁵ Wood, *Daniel*, 248.

¹⁶ G.H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), 131.

¹⁷ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 248.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

1) TO FINISH THE TRANSGRESSION

The verb “to finish” looks to bring something to its culmination. It has the idea of “to close, shut, restrain.” Here it has the idea of “firmly restraining” the transgression, thus the specific idea of restraint of sin. “Examination of the use of this word shows that it means the forcible cessation of an activity. It always points to a complete stop, never to a mere hindrance.”¹⁸ In this context it is “the transgression” which is being firmly restrained. As I hope to demonstrate throughout this series, I believe that “finish” looks toward the completion of the 70 weeks at the second coming of Christ to set up His millennial kingdom.

The noun “transgression” in Hebrew is derived from the verbal root with the basic meaning of “rebel, revolt, transgress.” Transgression is the idea of going beyond a specific limit or boundary. “From all the definitions given we may be certain that it emphasizes the idea of rebellion against God and disobedience to His will.”¹⁹ Gabriel has in mind, in verse 24, more than just sin in general, but a specific sin since the definite article is attached to this word—“the transgression.” “The article in Hebrew, as in Greek, is very definite and points clearly to some outstanding thing or object,” notes David Cooper. “Thus the expression ‘the transgression’ seems to indicate some specific, outstanding, national sin of the Chosen People.”²⁰ Since the emphasis in this phrase is upon the finishing of Israel’s transgression, then this leads to the conclusion that it will occur at the second coming of Jesus, Israel’s Messiah. Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out that “when speaking of the basis of the second coming of Christ that there are two facets to this basis: first, there must be the confession of Israel’s national sin (Lev. 26:40-42; Jer. 3:11-18; Hos. 5:15) . . .”²¹ The emphasis in this first goal is upon when Israel’s national sin—rejection of her Messiah—will be brought to an end. “This passage assumes, therefore,” notes Cooper, “that the whole nation repents and turns to God for mercy and forgiveness. Thus this first phrase implies the conversion of the nation. But what is assumed here is stated specifically in the third phrase.”²²

2) TO MAKE AN END OF SIN

The second goal to be completed at the end of the 70 weeks is to make an end of sin. In the Hebrew, the word “to make an end of” literally means “to shut, close, seal; to hide, to

¹⁸ Allan A. MacRae, *The Prophecies of Daniel* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1991), 181.

¹⁹ David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*, (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1939), 371.

²⁰ Cooper, *Messiah*, 371.

²¹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, [1989, 1992], 1993), 784.

²² Cooper, *Messiah*, 374.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

reveal as a secret,” and has the primary meaning of bringing a matter to a conclusion. Cooper explains:

This word was regularly used to indicate the closing of a letter or an official document. When the scribe had finished his work, the king placed his royal seal upon it, thus showing that the communication was brought to a close and at the same time giving it the official imprimatur.²³

8

The Hebrew root word for “sin” is the most commonly used word for sin in the Hebrew Old Testament. Its core meaning is “to miss the mark, to be mistaken”. This is illustrated in Judges 20:16 where it says, “Out of all these people . . . each one could sling a stone at a hair and not *miss*.” This word itself conveys the basic meaning of, “to miss, to be mistaken.” Interestingly, the only other uses of this word in Daniel occur in 9:20 (twice). Daniel speaks of “my sin and the sin of my people Israel.” Since this Hebrew word does not have the definite article as did “transgression” in the previous phrase, and since “sin” is plural, it seems to refer to the sins in general of the nation. “The sealing up of sins, consequently, signifies their restraint under safe custody.”²⁴ “Since the cause of sin must be removed before the cure can be effected, this expression assumes that at the time here foreseen the nation will have turned to the Lord, and that by His Spirit a new heart and spirit will have been given to all the people.”²⁵ Clearly the scene only after the second coming followed by the installation of the millennial reign of Jesus the Messiah.

3) TO MAKE ATONEMENT FOR INIQUITY

The third infinitive “to make atonement for iniquity” is the translation of two Hebrew words. Taking the second one—iniquity—first, we see that it is one of the most common Hebrew words for sin. It has the core idea of twisting or defacing something beyond its intended purpose. While speaking of a sinful act, this word, at the same time, looks to the fact that the reason why one commits iniquity is due to the perverted sinful nature inherited from Adam’s fall. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, “iniquity” means “the quality of being unrighteous, or (more often) unrighteous action or conduct.” Its core meaning is “uneven, unequal, wrong, wicked.”²⁶ Thus, the idea of iniquity is used here to speak of that most aggressive nuance of sin flowing from human willful disobedience. This paints a picture of the worst kind of offense before God.

²³ Cooper, *Messiah*, 374.

²⁴ Lang, *Daniel*, 131.

²⁵ Cooper, *Messiah*, 375.

²⁶ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. “Iniquity.”

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Such an offense requires a heroic response from God. Just such a provision is taught in the verb “to make atonement.” Many are familiar with the word “atone” since it takes a prominent place in Israel’s Old Testament sacrificial system. It is used in Genesis 7:14 as both a noun and a verb and carries with it the idea of covering the wood of Noah’s Ark with pitch. When applied theologically to salvation, it communicates “the act functioned to cleanse, wipe away, or purify objects contaminated by sin or uncleanness or make *kôper* on behalf of persons. This act of purgation served to propitiate Yahweh, thus enabling Him to dwell among His people to work out His purpose through them in the world.”²⁷ The significance of this third phrase is noted by Cooper who says,

doubtless is a clear reference to the time when all Israel in genuine penitence shall acknowledge her departure from God and her national sin. At the same time each individual, of course, will acknowledge his own wrongs and all will call upon God for pardon. Then that which was foreshadowed by the annual atonement will become a reality. At that time the nation will be brought back into fellowship with God and become a blessing in the earth.²⁸

SUMMARY

The first three of the six goals in Daniel 9:24 have to do with the sin of Daniel’s people, Israel. The basis for dealing with Israel’s sin was provided during the first coming of Jesus when He died on the cross and rose again from the dead to pay for the sin of the Jews and for the sins of the entire human race. However, the application of this wonderful provision for sin will not be realized for Daniel’s people until the end of the 70 weeks. This will be fulfilled by the second coming of Messiah at the end of the tribulation period, which is yet future to our day. Leon Wood has an excellent summary of the first three goals.

The first introduces the idea of riddance, saying that the coming 490-year period would see its firm restraint. In other words, God was about to do something to alleviate this basic, serious problem. The second speaks of the degree of this restraint: sin would be put to an end. The third indicates how this would be done: by atonement. Though Christ is not mentioned in the verse, the meaning is certain, especially in view of verse twenty-six, that He would be the One making this atonement, which would serve to restrain the sin by bringing it to an end. It is clear that reference in these first three

²⁷ Jerry M. Hullinger, “A Proposed Solution to the Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40—48,” (Th.D. Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1993), 53.

²⁸ Cooper, *Messiah*, 376.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

items is mainly to Christ's first coming, when sin was brought to an end in principle. The actuality of sin coming to an end for people, however, comes only when a personal appropriation of the benefit has been made. Since Gabriel was speaking primarily in reference to Jews, rather than Gentiles . . . this fact requires the interpretation to include also Christ's second coming, because only then does Israel as a nation turn to Christ (cf. Jer. 31:33, 34; Ezek. 37:23; Zech. 13:1; Rom. 11:25-27).²⁹

These clauses are prophetically important, because if they are descriptive of items that have yet to be fulfilled, then the seventy weeks of Daniel have yet to be fulfilled. This means that the final (70th week) has to be future to our day since all of the purposes must be brought to completion by the end of the prescribed time period. The first three clauses had to do with the sin issue in relation to Israel, while the second triad relate to God's righteousness. I will now examine prophetic purpose clauses four through six.

4) TO BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

The first of the three Hebrew words that compose the fourth purpose clause is the infinitive which is usually translated into English as "bring in." This is a widely used Hebrew verb that has the primary meaning of "come in, come, go in, or go."³⁰ Since this occurrence of the verb is in the causative Hebrew stem known as *hiphil*, it has the sense that "everlasting righteousness" will be caused to come in.

The righteousness to be brought in is the same word Daniel uses during his initial prayer in 9:7, where righteousness is said to belong exclusively to the Lord. David Cooper explains:

The English word, righteousness, primarily refers to the correct and proper motives and dealings of man with man. God's righteousness would, therefore, consist of His correct attitude and actions towards His creatures and His standards for them. . . . It also carries that idea.³¹

Thus, the righteousness to be brought in will not be the twisted and volatile standards of human invention. Instead, God's righteousness will be a changeless measure of God's enviable code.

²⁹ Wood, *Daniel*, 249.

³⁰ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford, 1907), 97.

³¹ David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*, (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1939), 376-77.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The Hebrew Lexicon of Brown, Driver, and Briggs (BDB) says that the Hebrew noun *holamim* has the core meaning of “long duration, antiquity, futurity,”³² The Lexicon specifically says that the use in Daniel 9:24 is a plural intensive and thus renders it with the specific sense of “everlastingness, or eternity.”³³ Cooper provides a literal translation of “righteousness of the ages,” which captures its precise English meaning and notes that it

signifies that there are rules or formulas of attitude and conduct that are right and will be reckoned as correct throughout all ages—past, present, and future. ... When, however, the 490 years are completed and the Almighty brings in His great régime of righteousness, these eternal principles of justice and equity will be in force; therefore, Gabriel said that at this future time God will bring in the righteousness of the ages.³⁴

I believe that this clause is a prophecy concerning the future time we know as the kingdom or millennial reign of Christ (see Rev. 20:1-9). This means that it is yet future to our own day. In contrast to Israel’s many failures of the past to live up to God’s righteous standards (cf. Dan. 9:3-19), this time the Lord will provide everlasting righteousness for the nation. Randall Price points out that Gabriel has

... in view a theodical “age of righteousness” (cf. Isa. 1:26; 11:2-5; 32:17; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-18) that resolves the theological scandal (note Dan. 9:15-16) of the former age characterized by “the rebellion” (i.e., Israel’s rejection of the Messiah). Therefore, this age will be vindication of God’s promise to national Israel (Ezek. 36:17-23) and a reversal of her condition and fortunes with respect to Messiah, hence a “messianic age” or the messianic kingdom.³⁵

5) TO SEAL UP VISION AND PROPHECY

This triad of Hebrew words commences with the same infinitive used above in the second clause which was “to make an end of sin.” The notion of this Hebrew word “seal up,” carries the idea of completion. In this context it is rendered “seal up” since the last thing

³² Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, 761.

³³ Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, 762.

³⁴ Cooper, *Messiah*, 377.

³⁵ J. Randall Price, “Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts,” in Wesley R. Willis, John R. Master, and Charles C. Ryrie, editors, *Issues in Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 150.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

done by a writer as he completes a letter or document is to seal up the finished product. Charles Feinberg expounds that

this refers to giving the seal of confirmation to Daniel and his vision by fulfilling his predictions. In Isaiah 8:16, this phrase meant that the prophecy was complete, and the command was given to bind it up, to roll it up like a scroll and seal it. Again, in Daniel 8:26 the thought was to seal up the prophecy and make a permanent record of it, so that when it is fulfilled the event can be compared to the prophecy to show how completely the one corresponds to the other.³⁶

12

The dual nouns, which are singular, are literally translated “vision” and “prophet.” Prophet is a concrete noun put for the abstract thing that the prophet produces, which is prophecy. Vision is a prophetic vehicle (cf. Dan. 7), while the human instrument is the prophet who produces the prophecy. Both are collective nouns for the sum total of all vision and prophecy.

Some think that this clause was completed during the first coming of Jesus. Preterist Ken Gentry advocates this view:

The fifth result . . . has to do with the ministry of Christ on earth, which is introduced at His baptism: He comes “to seal up vision and prophecy.” By this is meant that Christ fulfills (and thereby confirms) the prophecy (Luke 18:31; cf. Luke 24:44; Acts 3:18).³⁷

Gentry’s naked assertion is typical of those who advocate such a position, which is lacking any exegetical support. Allan MacRae rightly concludes that there “is no Scriptural warrant for saying that the functions of the Old Testament vision and prophecy came to an end at the time of Christ’s first advent or that these terms do not also include visions and prophecies of the New Testament.”³⁸ Harry Bultema declares,

“Prophecy” does not refer to Christ here but to prophecy in general. The “vision” this verse speaks of is not a reference to this vision nor to any of the other visions Daniel received, but together with the word “prophecy”

³⁶ Charles Lee Feinberg, *Daniel: The man and his visions* (Chappaqua, NY: Christian Herald Books, 1981), 128.

³⁷ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 316.

³⁸ Allan A. MacRae, *The Prophecies of Daniel* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1991), 188.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

refers to all predictions. A scroll was not complete until it was completely filled. Thus this sealing of a scroll became a symbol of fulfillment (Isa. 8:16).

So also here it indicates a complete fulfillment of all prophecy.³⁹

This fifth prophetic declaration, like the previous can only refer to a future time when all prophecy will be fulfilled relating to Israel. There are yet hundreds of future prophecies relating to Israel and Jerusalem that await a future fulfillment.

6) TO ANOINT THE MOST HOLY

The sixth and final prophetic clause begins with the Hebrew verb usually translated as “anoint” means to pour oil on something or someone.⁴⁰ BDB says that it is used specifically in Daniel 9:24 to “anoint or consecrate to religious service.”⁴¹

This much debated phrase usually translated in English as “most holy” is a dual use of the same Hebrew word. This is a common occurrence in Hebrew when the superlative of a noun is intended and such is the case here. The first use of the word is singular, while the second one is plural and can literally be rendered “most holy,” or “a most holy *place*.” The German commentator C.F. Keil notes that the same exact phrase is used in Ezekiel 45:3 of a future temple and concludes that “the reference is to the anointing of a new sanctuary, temple, or most holy place.”⁴² Specific reasons for this interpretation of the sixth clause is stated well by Leon Wood.

The phrase “holy of holies” (*qodesh qadashîm*) occurs, either with or without the article, thirty-nine times in the Old Testament, always in reference to the Tabernacle or Temple or to the holy articles used in them. When referring to the most holy place, where the Ark was kept, the article is regularly used (e.g., Ex. 26:33), but it is not when referring to the holy articles (e.g., Ex. 29:37) or to the whole Temple complex (e.g., Ezek. 43:12). In view of these matters, it is highly likely that the phrase refers to the Temple also here, which, in view of the context, must be a future Temple; and, since the phrase is used without the article, reference must be to a complex of that Temple, rather than its most holy place.⁴³

³⁹ Harry Bultema, *Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 283.

⁴⁰ MacRae, *Daniel*, 190.

⁴¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, 603.

⁴² C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Daniel*, 10 vols., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 9:348.

⁴³ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 250.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Without exegeting any of the details of Daniel 9:24, Ken Gentry, like many non-literal interpreters, simply declares that this clause refers to Jesus, “at His baptismal anointing that the Spirit came upon Him (Mark 1:9-11).”⁴⁴ As Leon Wood documented above, this expression is never used of a person, only of things. “So it is not a reference to the Messiah. Nor to the church, for the church is nowhere mentioned or found in the whole prophecy of Daniel,” declares Harry Bultema. “It refers to Daniel’s people Israel. . . . It refers to the state of bliss and holiness of all Israel after the Savior has come to Zion and has turned away the ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26).”⁴⁵ Thus, we see that this final prophetic purpose clause also awaits a future fulfillment.

CONCLUSION OF THE SIX CLAUSES

As we survey the lessons from all six prophetic purpose clauses, we find that none of them have yet to be fulfilled in their entirety. Therefore, we know from the goals that our Lord set for His people (Israel), and for His city (Jerusalem), that there remains a time of future fulfillment. “Therefore, this twenty-fourth verse of our chapter,” notes David Cooper, “read in the light of the various predictions of the prophets, is obviously a forecast of the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth in all its glory.”⁴⁶ G.H. Lang echoes Cooper’s thoughts when he concludes:

We have now before us an outline of the whole prophecy. And, after considering the statement of results which are to follow God disciplinary dealings, we cannot but conclude that the close of the Seventy Sevens must coincide with the end of the present order of things and the beginning of the Coming or Millennial Age.⁴⁷

Even C.F. Keil, the German scholar, cannot resist the clear implications of this prophecy when he states: “From the contents of these six statements it thus appears that the termination of the seventy weeks coincides with the end of the present course of the world.”⁴⁸

ISRAEL’S SABBATICAL YEAR

In reaching a correct understanding of Daniel 9:24-27, it is most helpful to understand the circumstances that occasioned the giving of this revelation by God to Daniel. No one

⁴⁴ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 316.

⁴⁵ Bultema, *Daniel*, 284.

⁴⁶ Cooper, *Messiah*, 379.

⁴⁷ G.H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), 133.

⁴⁸ Keil, *Daniel*, 349.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

questions that the occasion relates to Israel's Babylonian captivity for failure to observe the sabbatical year in their calendar that was given to the nation by the Lord. But how does that relate to the 70-weeks prophecy? That is what I want to examine next.

As part of the stipulations in the Mosaic Law Code, Israel was to let her land lay fallow every seventh year. Scripture says,

“Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, ‘When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. Your harvest's after growth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year. And all of you shall have the sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you’” (Lev. 25:2-6).

Leviticus 26 provides the sanctions that God would impose upon His nation for the years that Israel did not obey the specifications of a sabbatical year.

Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it (Lev. 26:34-35).

For the land shall be abandoned by them, and shall make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, shall be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes (Lev. 26:43).

The Lord provided a Divine commentary to the nation on how they were keeping or not keeping His Law in the historical book of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Thus, the Lord explains why Israel was sent away to Babylon for 70 years in the following passage:

And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath until seventy years were complete (2 Chr. 36:20-21).

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

What passage in Jeremiah was the statement in Chronicles referring to? The following two references provide the answer.

And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer. 25:11).

For thus says the Lord, "When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place" (Jer. 29:10).

It is clear from the above passages that God had a specific reason behind the deportation of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) to Babylon for 70 years. This would mean that Israel violated the sabbatical year 70 times. The Jews entered the Promised Land around 1400 BC and were deported to Babylon around 600 BC. This means that they were in the land about 800 years before the Babylonian deportation. Had they disobeyed the sabbatical year commandment every seventh year, it would mean that they should have been in captivity for about 114 years. Instead, they were held captive for 70 years, meaning that they were disobedient for only 490 of the 800 years in the land. This would mean that there were breaks or gaps in the accumulation of the 490 years, during the 800-year period, that resulted in Israel's 70-year captivity. Why is this important? Because many of the critics of the literal interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 insist that it is unreasonable to have gaps in that 490-year period. Of course, it is not since there were many gaps in the 490-year period related to the Babylonian Captivity.

CRITICS OF A FUTURE 70TH WEEK

Preterist Gary DeMar is one of the most outspoken critics of a yet future 70th week of Daniel. DeMar argues that there are never any gaps in any time periods in Scripture that he examines.⁴⁹ He declares, "If we can find no gaps in the sequence of years in these examples, then how can a single exception be made with the 'seventy weeks' in Daniel 9:24-27?"⁵⁰ Interestingly, DeMar does not examine the 490-year period that took place during the 800 years of Israel's occupation of the land as mentioned above. As I have noted, there are all kinds of gaps within this sequence. There were roughly 310 years of gaps interspersed throughout the 800-year period. This makes it directly related to the 70-weeks prophecy given to Daniel. DeMar acknowledges that Daniel's 70-weeks are related to the violation of the sabbatical year laws of Leviticus 25 and 26, and connected

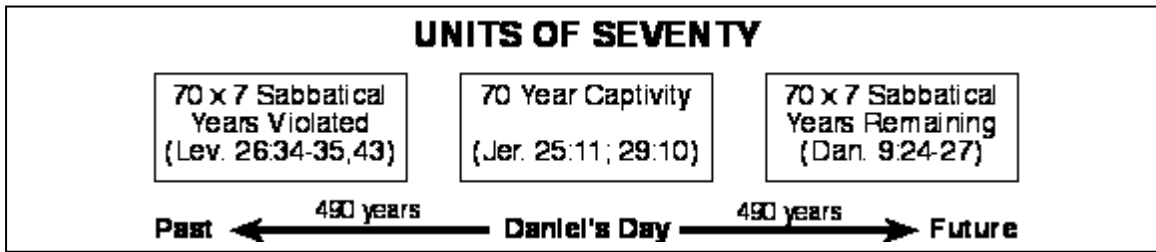
⁴⁹ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 329-31.

⁵⁰ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 331.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

to 2 Chronicles 36 and Jeremiah 25.⁵¹ But he fails to observe the fact that the 490 years of Daniel 9:24-27 are derived from the 490 years of Israel's violation of the sabbatical years prescribed by God in His covenant with the nation.

Dr. Harold Hoehner answers critics like DeMar when he notes that "The seventy-year captivity was due to the Jews having violated seventy sabbatical years over a 490-year period and Daniel now saw seventy units of sevens decreed for another 490 years into Israel's future."⁵² Hoehner has diagramed this relationship as noted in the "Units of Seventy" chart below.⁵³



We also know that Daniel himself was familiar with the reason why God had sent His people into the Babylonian captivity from the first part of Daniel 9.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans-in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes (Dan. 9:1-3).

Dr. Leon Wood explains this matter as follows:

since Daniel was here thinking in terms of the seventy-year captivity, he, as a Hebrew, could have easily moved from the idea of one week of years to seventy weeks of years. This follows because, according to 2 Chronicles 36:21, the people had been punished by this Exile so that their land might enjoy the sabbath rests which had not been observed in their prior history (cf. Lev. 26:33-35, Jer. 34:12-22). Knowing this, Daniel would have recognized that the seventy years of the Exile represented seventy sevens

⁵¹ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 330.

⁵² Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 118.

⁵³ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 118.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

of years in which these violations had transpired; and he would have understood Gabriel to be saying, simply, that another period, similar in length to that which had made the Exile necessary, was coming in the experienced of the people.⁵⁴

Even though DeMar recognizes the cause for Daniel's prayer and the subsequent revelation of the angel Gabriel to Daniel of the 70-weeks prophecy, he fails to recognize that the 70-year captivity was based upon a 490-year period that contained multiple gaps of time.⁵⁵ DeMar argues that a gap of time between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel is not justified because there are not other examples of this in Scripture.⁵⁶ This appears to justify such a gap if an example of other gaps could be found. We have not only found an example, but it is an example directly related to the 70-weeks prophecy of Daniel. Thus, using DeMar's standard, he should recognize that a gap in Daniel 9:24-27 is justifiable. I will show other reasons for a future 70th week in forthcoming installments in this series, but thought it important to make this point at this time in the development of the series.

Gary DeMar goes on to insist that it is impossible to have any kind of gap or chronological postponement of time between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel.

As has already been noted, the text says nothing about "a period between the sixty-ninth and seventieth-weeks." There can be no "period between" anytime period, whether seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, or years unless a period of time is expressly given. It is impossible to insert time between the end of one year and the beginning of another. January 1st follows December 31st at the stroke of midnight. There is no "period between" the conclusion of one year and the beginning of the next year. Culver, therefore, begs the question. He first must prove that a period of time should be placed between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks before he can maintain that there is a "period between" the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. The "simple language of the text" makes no mention of a gap.⁵⁷

I believe that there is clear evidence why the 70th week of Daniel is yet future and, thus, the necessity of a gap of time between the 69th and 70th week. Just as Gary DeMar and others who do not think that Daniel 9:24-27 can be taken literally are mistaken, I will demonstrate in future articles in this series why this is the correct way to handle this

⁵⁴ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 247.

⁵⁵ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 330.

⁵⁶ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 329-331.

⁵⁷ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 332.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

passage. Daniel 9:24-27 allows for a gap of time between the 69th and 70th week because the advancing of God's program relating to His people Israel was put on hold and will be postponed until a future time. Apparently critics like DeMar are not able to see the time gaps of the past, like the one I demonstrated in this article, so it is not surprising that they do not understand how there is one in God's future plan for His people Israel.

THE TERMINUS A QUO OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS

Daniel 9:25 provides the starting point for the chronological unfolding of the seventy weeks prophecy. But, at what point does the text tell us it was to begin? Since there are different views concerning the beginning point (sometimes known by the Latin phrase "terminus a quo"), I will provide an in-depth examination of this issue. Examination of Daniel 9:25 should start with a reading of the text to make sure that this passage is foremost in our mind.

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Gabriel tells Daniel that he is "to know and discern" the message that follows. The Hebrew word for "know" is a common word for knowledge or information. However, "discern" has the notion of "to gain insight," "comprehension," or "to reach understanding." Thus, Daniel was to learn "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem," that the seventy weeks of years would begin their countdown. Why Gabriel's exhortation to Daniel? "The history of the interpretation of these verses is confirmation of the fact that this prophecy is difficult and requires spiritual discernment."⁵⁸

A Decree to Restore and Rebuild Jerusalem

The next element of Daniel 9:25 is clear. The countdown of time will begin with "a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." The Hebrew word for decree is the common word "*dâbâr*" which means "thing," "speak," "word," or "instruction." In this context, it has the force of an urgent and assertive statement or decree.

The text is specific that the countdown will start with "a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." The decree involves the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, not the Temple. This is important since earlier edicts were issued in relation to the Temple (see 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 5:3-17; 6:3-5). There are at least three different decrees that are

⁵⁸ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 224.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

considered in an attempt to “know and discern” the beginning of the seventy weeks of Daniel.

First, there was the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5), issued in 537 BC, which I will call decree one. Second, the decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26) given in 458 BC, (decree two). Third, a second decree from Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:5-8, 17, 18) given in 444 BC, at the time of Nehemiah’s return to Jerusalem, (decree three). I want to note at the outset of the examination of these possibilities that the third decree is the only one that literally fits the exact words of Daniel 9:25, as we shall see. Leon Wood notes that the “first stressed rebuilding the Temple; the second, the establishment and practice of the proper services at the Temple; and the third, the rebuilding of the walls, when, long before, most of the city had been rebuilt.”⁵⁹

Non-literal interpreters of the 490 years of the seventy weeks of Daniel are vague and non-precise in their overall handling of the numbers. If they try to establish a terminus a quo, it is rarely, if ever, the one given to Artaxerxes in Nehemiah 2:1-8. For example, preterist Gary DeMar, is fuzzy, at best, in explaining his beginning point for the prophecy. In a lengthy quote of J. Barton Payne,⁶⁰ DeMar appears, at first, to favor our view when he says: “The beginning point would be indicated by the commandment to restore Jerusalem (v. 25), an event that was accomplished, a century after Daniel, in the reign of the Persian, Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC), under Nehemiah (444 BC).”⁶¹ He then proceeds to say that he favors the second view noted above, of Artaxerxes’ first decree (Ezra 7:11-26) which was issued in 458 BC. DeMar declares that “from 458 BC this brings one to AD 26, the very time which many would accept for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ and the commencement of His incarnate ministry.”⁶²

Like DeMar, fellow preterist Kenneth Gentry, is likewise vague, perhaps on purpose, as to the start of the 490 years. Like DeMar, Gentry also references J. Barton Payne, but without specifically stating his terminus a quo. Also, like DeMar, Gentry holds that the 483-year period comes to its end at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, “sometime around AD 26.”⁶³ Gentry’s support for his view does not come from providing biblical data to persuade. Instead, he says, “This interpretation is quite widely agreed upon by conservative scholars, being virtually ‘universal among Christian exegetes’ —excluding

⁵⁹ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 252.

⁶⁰ J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 148-49.

⁶¹ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 327.

⁶² DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 327.

⁶³ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 313.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

dispensationalists.”⁶⁴ In contrast to Gentry and DeMar, I will present reasons from the biblical text for holding that the correct starting point is the decree from Artaxerxes given in 444 BC as recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8.

Artaxerxes' Decree

It is clear to me that of all the options available, the only decree that specifically fits the statements of Daniel 9:25 is the one by Artaxerxes given in 444 BC as recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8. Why? Because decrees one and two relate to rebuilding the Temple. Only decree three speaks specifically of Jerusalem. It is clear that Nehemiah received a decree to “rebuild and restore Jerusalem” from King Artaxerxes. The passage says, “let letters be given me . . .” and “a letter to Asaph . . .” (Neh. 2:7-8). These letters were permission being given by King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah for permission and authority to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild it. Said another way, the letters are decrees and they granted Nehemiah the right to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:5). “The entire book of Nehemiah is proof that this godly governor built Jerusalem and its streets and walls,” declares Harry Bultema, “and that, as this prophecy says, in troublous times. According to qualified chronologists this also agrees with the needed chronology set forth in Daniel.”⁶⁵

Problems with Decrees One and Two

Further examination of the first two decrees provide us with even more objections to their being the one that Gabriel had in mind in Daniel 9:25. Dr. Harold Hoehner, Chairman of the New Testament Department at Dallas Theological Seminary, has produced one of the best works on the chronological aspects of the seventy weeks of Daniel in his book *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*.⁶⁶ Dr. Hoehner provides the following objections against the first decree as the one that fulfills Daniel 9:25:

First, Cyrus' edict refers to the rebuilding of the temple and not to the city.

...

Second, a distinction should be made between the rebuilding of a city and the restoration of a city to its former state. . . . The commencement of the rebuilding began with Cyrus' decree but the city's complete restoration was not at that time.

⁶⁴ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 313.

⁶⁵ Harry Bultema, *Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 285.

⁶⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 115-39.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Third, if one accepts the seventy weeks as beginning with Cyrus' decree, how does one reckon the 490 years? . . . the final week would be divided into two parts, the first half covering the life of Christ and going even until the destruction of the temple in AD 70, a period of thirty-five to seventy years (about ten to twenty years for each week), and the second half of the seventieth week would have not *terminus ad quem*. . . it seems that this system makes havoc of Gabriel's sayings, which were rather specific.⁶⁷

Dr. Hoehner demonstrates that the second decree option does not fare any better than the first. He notes the following objections:

First, and foremost, is that this decree has not a word about the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem but rather the temple in Jerusalem. . . .

Second, to have the sixty-nine weeks terminate at the commencement of Christ's ministry in AD 26 or 27 is untenable for two reasons: (1) The cutting off of the Messiah (Dan. 9:26 is a very inappropriate way to refer to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at the commencement of His ministry. (2) The date for the beginning of Jesus' ministry is not AD 26 or 27 but AD 29, as discussed previously.⁶⁸

Third, to what does Daniel refer in 9:27 when he states he is confirming a covenant? If it refers to Christ, then what covenant was it and how did He break it?

Fourth, to say that the middle of the seventieth week refers to Christ's crucifixion in AD 30 is untenable on two grounds: (1) the sacrifices did not cease at Christ's crucifixion, and (2) though the date of AD 30 is possible the AD 33 date is far more plausible.⁶⁹

Fifth, to say that the end of the seventieth week refers to Stephen's death and Paul's conversion in AD 33 is pure speculation. There is no hint of this in the texts of Daniel 9:27 and Acts 8-9 to denote the fulfillment of the

⁶⁷ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 122-24.

⁶⁸ See Hoehner, *Chronological*, 29-44.

⁶⁹ See Hoehner, *Chronological*, 95-114.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

seventieth week. Also, the dates of Paul's conversion as well as Stephen's martyrdom were more likely in AD 35.⁷⁰

In conclusion, the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra in 457 BC serving as the starting point of the seventy weeks is highly unlikely.⁷¹

The third decree is clearly the beginning point for the countdown of the seventy weeks of Daniel. Dr. Hoehner provides the following arguments in support of the final decree as the terminus a quo as recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8:

First, there is a direct reference to the restoration of the city (2:3, 5) and of the city gates and walls (2:3, 8). Second, Artaxerxes wrote a letter to Asaph to give materials to be used specifically for the walls (2:8). Third, the book of Nehemiah and Ezra 4:7-23 indicate that certainly the restoration of the walls was done in the most distressing circumstances, as predicted by Daniel (Dan. 9:25). Fourth, no later decrees were given by the Persian kings pertaining to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.⁷²

I have shown that the third decree is surely the starting point for the countdown of Daniel's seventy weeks. Next, I hope to build upon the fact that the exact date of this decree can be determined as March 5, 444 BC. This provides a solid plank in developing a literal interpretation of Gabriel's great prophecy to Daniel.

The passage now at hand reads as follows:

"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. (Dan. 9:25)

Because there is no need to reinvent the wheel, I want to approach this issue by presenting two of the best treatments on this matter. First, I will look at Sir Robert Anderson's masterful presentation in *The Coming Prince*.⁷³ Then, I will present Dr. Harold Hoehner's

⁷⁰ See Harold Hoehner, "Chronology of the Apostolic Age" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965), 200-04; George Ogg, *The Odyssey of Paul* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1968), 24-30.

⁷¹ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 125-26.

⁷² Hoehner, *Chronological*, 126.

⁷³ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1957).

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

insightful refinement of Anderson's basic position from *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*.⁷⁴

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON

Sir Robert Anderson, a British Brethren, developed a chronology that used a 360-day year, that he called a "prophetic year." Anderson bases this upon the Jewish calendar and the clear implication that the prophetic timetable of Daniel was derived from it as well (i.e., 42 months = 1260 days). Anderson began the 483-year countdown with Artaxerxes' decree that he said was March 14, 445 BC (Nisan 1, 445 BC) and it culminates in Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on April 6, AD 32 (Nisan 10, AD 32). Here is Anderson's explanation:

. . . According to the Jewish custom, our Lord went up to Jerusalem on the 8th Nisan, which, as we know, fell that year upon a Friday. And having spent the Sabbath at Bethany, He entered the Holy City the following day, as recorded in the Gospels. The Julian date of that 10th Nisan was Sunday the 6th of April, AD 32. What then was the length of the period intervening between the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and this public advent of "Messiah the Prince"—between the 14th of March, 445 BC and the 6th of April AD 32 (when He entered into Jerusalem)? THE INTERVAL WAS EXACTLY AND TO THE VERY DAY 173,880 DAYS, OR SEVEN TIMES SIXTY-NINE PROPHETIC YEARS OF 360 DAYS).

From 445 BC to AD 32 is 476 years = 173,740 days (476 x 365) + 116 days for leap years. And from 14th March to 6th April, reckoned inclusively according to Jewish practice is 24 days. But 173,740 + 116 + 24 = 173,880. And 69 x 7 x 360 = 173,880.

It must be borne in mind here that in reckoning years from BC to AD one year must always be omitted; for, of course, the interval between 1 BC and AD 1 is not two years but one year. In fact, 1 BC ought to be called 0 BC; and it is so described by astronomers, with whom 445 BC is -444. And again, as the Julian year is 11 m. 10.46 s., or about the 129th part of a day, longer than the mean solar year, the Julian calendar has three leap years too many in every four centuries. This error is corrected by the Gregorian reform, which reckons three secular years out of four as common years. For

⁷⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

instance, 1700, 1800, and 1900 were common years, and 2000 will be a leap year.⁷⁵

As valuable as Anderson's work continues to be, I believe that it does contain a few errors, even though this overall approach was a major breakthrough in understanding this part of Daniel's prophecy. The needed corrections have been provided by Dr. Harold Hoehner of Dallas Theological Seminary.

HAROLD HOEHNER

Dr. Hoehner has questioned the starting and ending times put forth by Anderson. Hoehner advocates the time of Artaxerxes' decree as 444 BC and not 445 BC Dr. Hoehner explains:

The date of this decree is given in the biblical record. Nehemiah 1:1 states that Nehemiah heard of Jerusalem's desolate conditions in the month of Chislev (November/December) in Artaxerxes' twentieth year. Then later in Artaxerxes' twentieth year in the month of Nisan (March/April) Nehemiah reports that he was granted permission to restore the city and build its walls (2:1). To have Nisan later than Chislev (in the same year) may seem strange until one realizes that Nehemiah was using a Tishri-to-Tishri (September/October) dating method rather than the Persian Nisan-to-Nisan method. Nehemiah was following what was used by the kings of Judah earlier in their history.⁷⁶ This method used by Nehemiah is confirmed by the Jews in Elephantine who also used this method during the same time period as Nehemiah.⁷⁷

Next, one needs to establish the beginning of Artaxerxes' rule. His father Xerxes died shortly after December 17, 465 BC⁷⁸ and Artaxerxes immediately succeeded him. Since the accession-year system was used⁷⁹ the first year of Artaxerxes' reign according to the Persian Nisan-to-Nisan reckoning would be Nisan 464 to Nisan 463 and according to the Jewish Tishri-to-Tishri reckoning would be Tishri 464 to Tishri 463. . . .

⁷⁵ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, 14th ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1954), 128-30, as cited in Michael Kalafian, *The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks of The Book of Daniel* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 87. I have been greatly aided by Dr. Kalafian in his outlay of the material concerning this matter.

⁷⁶ Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, 1965), 28-30, 161.

⁷⁷ S.H. Horn and L.H. Wood, "The Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XIII (January 1954), 4, 20.

⁷⁸ Horn and Wood, "Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar," 9.

⁷⁹ Horn and Wood, "Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar," 4.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

In conclusion, the report to Nehemiah (1:1) occurred in Chislev (November/December) of 445 BC and the decree of Artaxerxes (2:1) occurred in Nisan (March/April of 444 BC).⁸⁰

Therefore, Nisan 444 BC marks the *terminus ad quo* of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27.⁸¹

Dr. Hoehner further objects to Anderson's use of the solar year instead of the sabbatical year. Dr. Hoehner also corrects some of Anderson's calculations. Dr. Hoehner spells out his difference in the following:

First, in the light of new evidence since Anderson's day, the 445 BC date is not acceptable for Artaxerxes' twentieth year; instead the decree was given in Nisan, 444 BC. Second, the AD 32 date for the crucifixion is untenable. It would mean that Christ was crucified on either a Sunday or Monday.⁸² In fact, Anderson realizes the dilemma and he has to do mathematical gymnastics to arrive at a Friday crucifixion. This makes one immediately suspect. Actually there is no good evidence for an AD 32 crucifixion date.

In previous chapters in this book it was concluded that Christ's crucifixion occurred on Friday, Nisan 14, in AD 33. Reckoning His death according to the Julian calendar, Christ died on Friday, April 3, AD 33.⁸³ As discussed above, the *terminus a quo* occurred in Nisan, 444 BC. Although Nehemiah 2:1 does not specify which day of Nisan the decree to rebuild Jerusalem occurred, it cannot have occurred before Nisan 1. . . . it could have occurred on some other day in Nisan.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. — A.D. 75* (2nd ed.; Providence, 1956, 32; Herman H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons, 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1651* (Philadelphia, 1973), 47.

⁸¹ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 127-28.

⁸² J. K. Fotheringham, "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXV (April 1934), 162.

⁸³ See Goldstine, 87; Parker and Dubberstein, 46; Fotheringham, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXV, 142-62; Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. by Norman Perrin (3rd ed.; London, 1966), 38.

⁸⁴ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 137-38.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

“Using the calculating method Anderson used, Hoehner comes up with the 476 solar years. This is the difference between 444 BC and AD 33. By multiplying 476 by 365.24219879 days, comes to 173,855 days, and Hoehner states:”⁸⁵

This leaves only 25 days to be accounted for between 444 BC and AD 33. By adding the 25 days to Nisan 1 or March 5 (of 444 BC), one comes to March 30 (of AD 33) which was Nisan 10 in AD 33. This is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. . . . The *terminus ad quem* of the sixty-ninth week was on the day of Christ’s triumphal entry on March 30, AD 33.

As predicted in Zechariah 9:9, Christ presented Himself to Israel as Messiah the king for the last time and the multitude of the disciples shouted loudly by quoting from a messianic psalm: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord” (Ps. 118:26; Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38; John 12:13). This occurred on Monday, Nisan 10 (March 30) and only four days later on Friday, Nisan 14, April 3, AD 33, Jesus was cut off or crucified.

The seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. When that is accomplished, Daniel’s inquiry will be fully realized for Israel will be back in her homeland with her Messiah.⁸⁶

Dr. Hoehner has put together an airtight case for his understanding of the beginning and ending of the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel’s prophecy. Dr. John Walvoord notes, in support of Dr. Hoehner, that “the best explanation of the time when the sixty-nine sevens ended is that it occurred shortly before the death of Christ anticipated in Daniel 9:26 as following the sixty-ninth seven. Practically all expositors agree that the death of Christ occurred after the sixty-ninth seven.”⁸⁷

IMPLICATIONS

To date, no one has been able to answer the work done by Dr. Hoehner. It is fully supportive of the literal interpretation of Daniel’s prophecy and is the only approach that has been demonstrated, thus far, to make the numbers work out. This is why most all those who take this text literally have adopted Dr. Hoehner’s view. Those taking other

⁸⁵ Kalafian, *Prophecy of the Seventy*, 89.

⁸⁶ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 138-39.

⁸⁷ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 228.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

views, like preterists Gary DeMar⁸⁸ and Ken Gentry,⁸⁹ offer vague generalities when it comes to the number of the seventy weeks prophecy.

A further value of the literal approach of Dr. Hoehner is that this prophecy provides an exact time in which Israel's Messiah was predicted to show up in history. "And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. . . . because you did not recognize the time of your visitation'" (Luke 19:41-42, 44). How was Israel to have known the *time* of their visitation? From a literal understanding of Daniel's prophecy. In fact, this prophecy, along with Christ's fulfillment of every other first coming Messianic prophecy proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was Israel's Messiah.⁹⁰ Many Jews have come to faith, over the years, as a result of being challenged by this prediction about the time of Messiah's coming. It is clear that a literal interpretation of this passage is demanded by the text itself.

THE SEVEN WEEKS

As I continue our study in verse 26, it is important to note that God, through Gabriel the archangel, divides the seventy weeks into three sections: "seven weeks," "sixty-two weeks," and "one week" (Dan. 9:27). What is the significance of these divisions?

Since the first seven weeks of years (49 years) is segmented from the whole, to what does it refer to? Without belaboring this point, since it is not a point of significant debate, this first of three segments refers to time when "it [Jerusalem] will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress" (Dan. 9:25c). This modifying statement connects the first seven weeks with the distressing days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus, the first seven weeks refer to the time of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Dr. John Walvoord notes:

The best explanation seems to be that beginning with Nehemiah's decree and the building of the wall, it took a whole generation to clear out all the debris in Jerusalem and restore it as a thriving city. This might well be the fulfillment of the forty-nine years. The specific reference to streets again addresses our attention to Nehemiah's situation where the streets were

⁸⁸ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999).

⁸⁹ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992).

⁹⁰ For an explanation of the hundreds of prophecies fulfilled by Jesus at His first coming see Tim LaHaye, *Jesus: Who is He?* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 1996); and Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999).

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

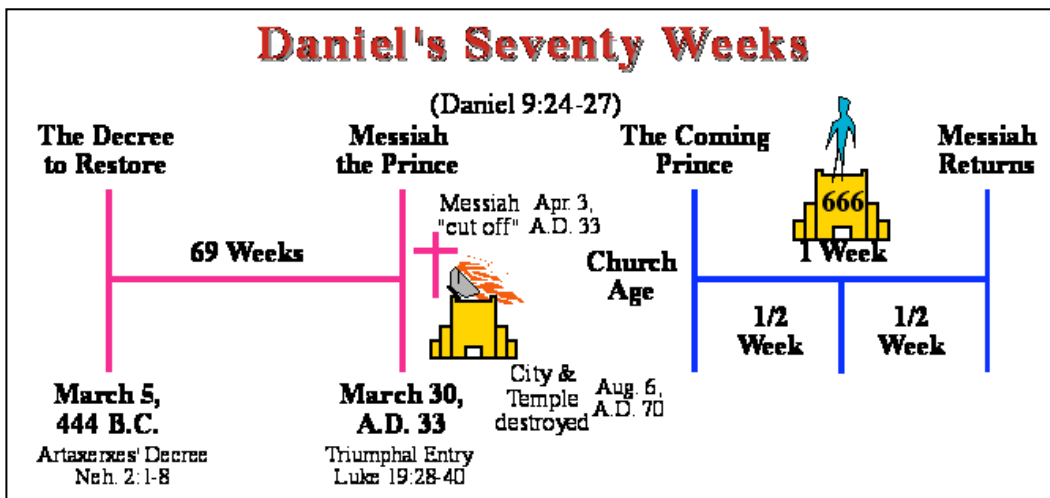
covered with debris and needed to be rebuilt. That this was accomplished in troublesome times is fully documented by the book of Nehemiah itself.⁹¹

The fact that this prophecy divides the seventy weeks of years into three sections will come into to play later when examining the single week in verse 27.

THE SIXTY-TWO WEEKS

The next segment of time is the sixty-two weeks of years that are said to follow the first seven weeks of years. The total of the two parts equal sixty-nine weeks of years or 483 years. The sixty-two weeks follow consecutively the first seven weeks because there are no textual indicators or historical events that would lead to any other conclusion. The sixty-two weeks will end with the arrival of "Messiah the Prince." Daniel 9:25 says, "until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks." Messiah the Prince can be none other than the Jewish Messiah-Jesus the Christ. As was noted in the previous article, Dr. Harold Hoehner has demonstrated that the seven and sixty-two weeks (that is sixty-nine weeks) ended on the day of Christ's triumphal entry.⁹² This is diagrammed in the chart below, which was adopted from Dr. Hoehner's book.⁹³ The fulfillment of the seven and sixty-two weeks is recorded in Luke 19 as follows:

"And when He [Jesus] approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ... because you did not recognize the time of your visitation'" (Luke 19:41-42,44).



⁹¹ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 227.

⁹² Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

⁹³ Hoehner, *Chronological*, 139.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

AFTER THE SIXTY-TWO WEEKS

We now enter the area of the greatest controversy concerning the seventy weeks prophecy. The debate is focused upon whether the seventieth week follows consecutively the first sixty-nine. I believe that the seventieth week is postponed until a future time we know as the tribulation. Defense of a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks will be the topic of most of the material that I will cover in the rest of this series.

The issue now before us can be divided into two basic views, regardless of how a specific individual may handle the details. The two views are whether all seventy weeks of years have already been fulfilled in the past, or whether the final, seventieth week is future. Note what Daniel 9:26 says:

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.

TEXTUAL REASONS FOR A POSTPONEMENT

Before I look at broader arguments for a parenthesis, I want to point out reasons from the Daniel 9 passage itself. Critics of our literal, futurist understanding of this text claim that there is no justification for a gap or postponement between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. Perhaps no one is more shrill in his criticism of a gap than preterist Gary DeMar, who says:

The “gap” that has been placed between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel’s prophecy was created because it was needed to make the dispensational hermeneutical model work. Nothing in the text of Daniel 9:24-27 implies a “gap.”⁹⁴

He later asks the following question:

Since there is no gap between the seven and sixty-two weeks, what justification is there in inserting a gap between the sixty-ninth week (seven weeks + sixty-two weeks = sixty-nine weeks) and the seventieth week?⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 325.

⁹⁵ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 331.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

I believe that there are textual reasons for a gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week! First of all, the text says, “Then after the sixty-two weeks. . . .” In other words, after the seven plus sixty-two weeks, which equals sixty-nine weeks of years (483 years). The Hebrew text uses a conjunction, combined with a preposition, usually translated “and after,” or better “then after.” “It is the only indication given regarding the chronological relation between these sixty-two weeks and the cutting off of the Anointed One. This event will occur ‘after’ their close, but nothing is said as to how long after.”⁹⁶ Robert Culver clearly states the implication of what this text says:

There can be no honest difference of opinion about that: the cutting off of *Messiah* is ‘after’ the sixty-two weeks. It is not the concluding event of the series of sixty-two weeks. Neither is it said to be the opening event of the seventieth. It is simply after the seven plus sixty-two weeks.⁹⁷

Steven Miller summarizes developments in the passage thus far as follows:

After the reconstruction of Jerusalem in the first seven sevens (forty-nine years), another “sixty-two sevens” (434 years) would pass. Then two momentous events would take place. First, the “Anointed One” would come (v. 25), then he would be “cut off.” Apparently his coming would be immediately at the end of the sixty-nine sevens, . . .”⁹⁸

There is no real debate among conservative interpreters as to who is spoken of by the phrase “the Messiah will be cut off,” as a referral to the crucifixion of Christ. Thus, it means that Jesus would be crucified after completion of the seven and sixty-second week, but before the beginning of the seventieth week. For this to happen it requires a gap of time between the two time periods. This is not the result of an *a priori* belief like dispensationalism, as claimed by some. G.H. Lang notes, “it is here that the interval in the Seventy Sevens must fall. This is not a matter of interference, but of fact.”⁹⁹

DEMAR’S DELUSION

For interpreters like Gary DeMar, who advocate a continuous fulfillment view of all seventy weeks without a break, it is they who must put both the crucifixion of Christ and

⁹⁶ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 255.

⁹⁷ Robert Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 157.

⁹⁸ Steven R. Miller, *Daniel*, Vol. 18 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 267.

⁹⁹ G.H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), 135.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

the destruction of Jerusalem, some forty years later, into the final week of years which is only seven years in length. Yet, DeMar accuses those of us who see a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week as exercising "'silly-putty' exegesis,"¹⁰⁰ of stretching out this biblical timeframe in a manner not supported by the text itself. DeMar argues that Christ's death took place in the middle of the final week, which would then draw to a conclusion in AD 33 with the conversion of Paul (an event which in no way is even remotely alluded to in Gabriel's prophecy).¹⁰¹ What DeMar fails to tell his readers is that while he rails against a gap, he is oh so silent about how to ram, cram, and jam two events separated by forty years into a seven year period. Perhaps his approach should be called "shoehorn" exegesis!

A closer look at DeMar's problem reveals a grave contradiction in his understanding of Daniel 9:24-27 and his view of Matthew 24:15 as having been fulfilled in AD 70. "The abomination of desolation is mentioned in one Old Testament book (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11),"¹⁰² declares DeMar. He then states that "[T]here was no doubt in the minds of those who read and understood Jesus' words in Matthew 24:15 that the abomination of desolation prophecy was fulfilled in events leading up to the temple's destruction in AD 70."¹⁰³ Clearly DeMar links the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation in Daniel 9:27, which will occur in the middle of the week, with the Roman destruction of the temple in AD 70, some 40 years later. Sorry Gary, but even with the flexibility of new math, the numbers don't add up. There is no way to ram, cram, and jam events that occurred at least forty years apart into seven years.

Randall Price notes that "the events in verse 26: 'the cutting off of Messiah,' and of 'the people of the prince,' are stated to occur *after* the sixty-nine weeks. If this was intended to occur *in* the seventieth week, the text would have read here 'during' or 'in the midst of' (cf. Daniel's use of *hetzi*, 'in the middle of,' verse 27). This language implies that these events precede the seventieth week, but do not immediately follow the sixty-ninth. Therefore, a temporal interval separates the two."¹⁰⁴ Only the literal, futurist understanding of the seventy weeks of Daniel can harmonize in a precise manner the interpretation of this passage.

¹⁰⁰ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 332-33.

¹⁰¹ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 327.

¹⁰² DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 101.

¹⁰³ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 101.

¹⁰⁴ Randall Price, *Prophecy of Daniel 9:27* (San Marcos, TX: World of the Bible, n.d.), 22.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

MESSIAH WILL BE CUT OFF

As I work my way through the various items to be tackled in the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, I will continue my focus on issues related to verse 26. We have seen thus far that verse 26 begins with the phrase “after the sixty-two weeks.” The text goes on to describe three things that will take place at the end of the sixty-ninth week of years (i.e., 483 years). Therefore, in this installment, I will deal with three important phrases in verse 26. They are: 1) “the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,” 2) “the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary,” and 3) “its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

33

All evangelical interpreters agree that the cutting off of Messiah certainly refers to the death of Jesus. This fits perfectly into my interpretation thus far. Since the 483 years were fulfilled to the day on March 30, AD 33—the date of Christ’s Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28-40)—and Jesus was crucified four days later on April 3, AD 33, then it was an event that took place after the 483 years, but not during the final week of years. This textual point is recognized by many, including amillennialist E.B. Pusey who says, “[N]ot *in*, but *after* those *three score and two weeks*, it said *Messiah shall be cut off*.”¹⁰⁵ “As this relates to the chronology of the prophecy,” notes Dr. John Walvoord, “it makes plain that the Messiah will be living at the end of the sixty-ninth seventh and will be cut off, or die, soon after the end of it.”¹⁰⁶ G.H. Pember further explains:

Now, His crucifixion took place four days after His appearance as the Prince—that is, four days after the close of the Four Hundred and Eighty-third Year. Nevertheless, the prophecy does not represent this great event as occurring in the Seven Years which yet remained to be fulfilled. Here, then, is the beginning of an interval, which separates the Four Hundred and Eighty-three Years from the final Seven.¹⁰⁷

The next phrase “and have nothing,” literally means “and shall have nothing.” To what does this refer? Certainly Christ gained what was intended through His atoning death on the cross as far as paying for the sins of the world. What was it that He came for but did not receive, especially in relationship to Israel and Jerusalem, which is the larger context of this overall passage? It was His Messianic Kingdom! Indeed, it will come, but not at the time in which He was cut off. Dr. Charles Feinberg declares, “it can only mean that He did not receive the Messianic kingdom at that time. When His own people

¹⁰⁵ E.B. Pusey, *Daniel The Prophet* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978 [1885]), 192.

¹⁰⁶ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 229.

¹⁰⁷ G.H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning Israel and the Gentiles*, (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1984 [1909]), 345.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

rejected him (John 1:11), He did not receive what rightly belonged to Him.”¹⁰⁸ It is because of Daniel’s people (the Jews) rejection of Jesus as their Messiah that the Kingdom could come in. The coming of the Kingdom requires acceptance of Jesus as Messiah in order for it to be established in Jerusalem. The Kingdom will arrive by the time the final week is brought to fruition. Since Israel’s kingdom has not yet arrived, this means it is future to our day. Therefore, we have just seen another reason why the final week of years is also future to our day.

THE PRINCE WHO IS TO COME

Identity of the prince who is to come is a matter of considerable debate and discussion. The full statement says, “the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Perhaps the best way to determine the identity of this prince is to first look at what he is prophesied to do at his arrival upon the stage of history. The people of this coming prince will destroy the city, clearly a reference to Jerusalem because of the overall context, and also the sanctuary. What sanctuary was there in Jerusalem? It could be nothing else other than the Jewish temple. Has the city and the temple been destroyed? Yes! Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans. This cannot be a reference to a future time, since, as Dr. Walvoord notes, “there is no complete destruction of Jerusalem at the end of the age as Zechariah 14:1-3 indicates that the city is in existence although overtaken by war at the very moment that Christ comes back in power and glory. Accordingly, it is probably better to consider all of verse 26 fulfilled historically.”¹⁰⁹

The subject of this sentence is “the people,” not “the prince who is to come.” Thus, it is the *people* of the prince who is to come that destroys the city and the sanctuary. We have already identified the people as the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 under the leadership of Titus. Yet, I believe that the prince who is to come is a reference to the yet to come Antichrist. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost explains,

The ruler who will come is that final head of the Roman Empire, the little horn of 7:8. It is significant that the *people* of the ruler, not the ruler himself, will destroy Jerusalem. Since he will be the final Roman ruler, the people of that ruler must be the Romans themselves.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Charles Lee Feinberg, *Daniel: The man and his visions* (Chappaqua, NY: Christian Herald Books, 1981), 132.

¹⁰⁹ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 231.

¹¹⁰ J. Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1364.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The coming prince cannot be a reference to Christ, since He is said to be “cut off” in the prior sentence. This prince has to be someone who comes after Christ. The only two viable possibilities are that it could either refer to a Roman prince who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 or a future Antichrist.

Why should we not see the prince who is to come as a reference to Titus who led the Roman conquest in AD 70? Because the emphasis of this verse is upon “the people,” not the subordinate clause “the prince who is to come.” This passage is apparently stated this way so that this prophecy would link the Roman destruction with the AD 70 event, but at the same time setting up the Antichrist to be linked to the final week of years to the first “he” in verse 27. He is not described as the prince coming with the people, but instead a detached and distant description, as one who is coming. This suggests that the people and the prince will not arrive in history together. Dr. Steven Miller adds, “but v. 27 makes clear that this ‘ruler’ will be the future persecutor of Israel during the seventieth seven. ‘The people of the rule’ does not mean that the people ‘belong to’ the ruler but rather that the ruler will come from these people.”¹¹¹ Interestingly, our amillennial friends agree that this is a reference to the Antichrist as noted by Robert Culver:

Neither is there any difficulty with our amillennial friends over the identity of “the coming prince,” . . . Keil and Leupold recognize him as the final Antichrist, said to be “coming” because already selected for prophecy in *direct language* in chapter 7 as “the little horn,” and in *type* in chapter 8 as “the little horn.” Young thinks otherwise but is outweighed on his own “team.”¹¹²

ITS END WILL COME WITH A FLOOD

This final sentence of verse 26 also occurs during the interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. However, the first part, “its end will come with a flood,” refers back to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, while the final phrase, “even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined,” is being fulfilled throughout the entire period (2,000 years thus far) of the interval.

“The antecedent of ‘it’ is obviously Jerusalem,” explains Leon Wood. “‘Flood’ or ‘overflowing’ can refer only to the degree of destruction meted out. History records that the destruction of Jerusalem was very extensive.”¹¹³ The war and desolations that began with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 would continue throughout the interval

¹¹¹ Steven R. Miller, *Daniel*, Vol. 18 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 268.

¹¹² Robert Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 157.

¹¹³ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 256.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

leading up to the seventieth week. In fact, this language appears to parallel that of Luke 21:24, which says, “and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Charles Feinberg agrees:

The final words of verse 26 sum up the history of Israel since AD 70: “desolations are determined.” Surely the determined wars and desolations have come upon them (cf. Luke 21:24). Such has been the lot of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, and such will be the portion, until the “time of the Gentiles” have been fulfilled.¹¹⁴

Dr. Pentecost adds the following:

But that invasion, awesome as it was, did not end the nation’s sufferings, for war, Gabriel said, would continue until the end. Even though Israel was to be set aside, she would continue to suffer until the prophecies of the 70 “sevens” were completely fulfilled. Her sufferings span the entire period from the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 to Jerusalem’s deliverance from Gentile dominion at the Second Advent of Christ.¹¹⁵

PROPHETIC POSTPONEMENT

Once again we see that a plain, straightforward reading of the text of the Bible provides a clear and convincing understanding that there is a biblical basis for halting God’s clock between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Robert Culver summarizes our findings as follows:

All attempts to place the events of verse 26 (the cutting off of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem) in either the period of the sixty-two weeks (Keil and Leupold) or in the seventieth week (Young and a host of writers in the past) stumble and fall on the simple language of the text itself. It seems that a more natural interpretation is the one that regards the events of verse 26 as belonging to a period between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, when God has sovereignly set aside His people Israel, awaiting a time of resumption of covenant relationship in the future, after Israel has been restored to the land.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Feinberg, *Daniel*, 133.

¹¹⁵ Pentecost, “Daniel,” 1364.

¹¹⁶ Culver, *Daniel*, 157-58.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Thus, with each passing item that we examine, as we plod through the text of Daniel 9:24-27, we find that critics such as Dr. Kenneth Gentry's complaints fall silent to the ground.

Only hermeneutical gymnastics, a suspension of sound reason, and an *a priori* commitment to the dispensational system allows the importing of a massive gap into Daniel's prophecy. Such ideas interrupt the otherwise chronologically exact time-frame.¹¹⁷

Sorry Dr. Gentry, but the text of Daniel itself demands a gap of time.

ANTICHRIST OR CHRIST?

Our study of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy now moves to the final verse in the passage, which also deals with the final week of years.

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. (Daniel 9:27)

In this section I will provide further reasons for a time-gap between the sixty-nine and seventieth weeks and note features from the text that support the interpretation that this seven-year period is the yet to come tribulation period.

Right off the bat, the first question that arises in verse 27 is to whom does the pronoun "he" refer to? I believe that "he" must refer to "the prince who is to come" in verse 26. However, opponents of literal interpretation disagree. Preterist, Dr. Kenneth Gentry says, "[T]he indefinite pronoun 'he' does not refer back to 'the prince who is to come' of verse 26."¹¹⁸ Fellow preterist, Gary DeMar, insists "it is Jesus who 'will make a firm covenant with the many,' not the antichrist."¹¹⁹ Yet, such an errant interpretation violates the grammar and syntax of the Hebrew text.

In Hebrew grammar, as with most languages, a pronoun would refer to the nearest antecedent, unless there was a contextual reason to think otherwise. In this instance, the

¹¹⁷ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Press, 1999), 33.

¹¹⁸ Gentry, *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil*, 32.

¹¹⁹ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 328.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

nearest antecedent in agreement with “he” is “the prince who is to come” in verse 26. This is recognized by a majority of scholars,¹²⁰ including a number of amillennialists such as Kiel¹²¹ and Leupold.¹²² Only *a priori* theological bias could lead a trained interpreter of Scripture to any other conclusion. Robert Culver explains the correct meaning of this text as follows:

The ordinary rules of grammar establish that the leading actor of this verse is the Antichrist, the great evil man of the end time. . . . If the pronoun “he” were present in the Hebrew, a case might possibly be made for the introduction of an entirely new personality into the story at this point. However, there is no pronoun; only the third masculine singular form of the verb indicates that an antecedent is to be sought, and that of necessity in the preceding context. Usually, the last preceding noun that agrees in gender and number and agrees with the sense is the antecedent. This is unquestionably . . . “the coming prince” of verse 26. He is a “coming” prince, that is, one whom the reader would already know as a prince to come, because he is the same as the “little horn” on the fourth beast of chapter 7.¹²³

Leon Wood provides a list of further reasons for taking the “he” in verse 27 as a reference to “the prince who is to come” of verse 26.

Second, as noted above, the unusual manner of mention in verse twenty-six regarding that prince calls for just such a further reference as this. There is no reason for the earlier notice unless something further is to be said regarding him, for he does nothing nor plays any part in activities there described. Third, several matters show that what is now said regarding the one in reference does not suit if that reference is to Christ. (a) This person makes a “firm covenant” with people, but Christ made no covenant. God made a Covenant of Grace with people, and Christ fulfilled requirements under it, but this is quite different from Christ’s making a covenant. (b) Even if Christ had made a covenant with people during His lifetime, the idea of mentioning it only here in the overall thought of the passage would be unusual, when the subjects of His death and even the destruction of

¹²⁰ According to Steven R. Miller, *Daniel*, Vol. 18 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 268.

¹²¹ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Daniel*, 10 vols., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. IX, 367.

¹²² H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 431.

¹²³ Robert Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 161-62.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Jerusalem have already been set forth. (c) The idea of the seventieth week, here closely associated with this one, does not fit the life or ministry of Christ, as will be shown presently. (d) The idea that this one causes “sacrifice and offering to cease” does not fit in reference to Christ in this context. The amillennial view holds that these words refer to Christ’s supreme sacrifice in death, which made all other sacrifices and offerings of no further use, thus making them to cease in principle. But, if so, what would be the reason for such a statement (true as it is) in view of the purpose of the overall prediction? One could understand a direct statement concerning Christ’s providing atonement for sin—though its placing at this point in the general thought order the passage would be strange—because that would be important to sin-bondaged Israelites. But why, if that is the basic thought, should it be expressed so indirectly, in terms of sacrificing and offering being made to cease?¹²⁴

It is safe to conclude that the immediate context of this passage and the book as a whole supports our understanding of this matter. This interpretation would also support a futurist understanding of verse 27.

THE MAKING OF A COVENANT

What is it that “he” will do? The antichrist will “make a firm covenant with the many for one week,” that is seven years. Non-literal interpreters of Daniel’s seventy-week prophecy usually attempt to make this covenant a reference to Christ’s covenant to save His people, usually known as the covenant of grace. “This, then, is a confirming of a covenant already extant, i.e., the covenant of God’s redemptive grace that Christ confirms (Rom. 15:8),”¹²⁵ claims Dr. Gentry. Dr. Gentry and those advocating a similar view, must resort to a non-textual, theological interpretation at this point since there was no seven-year covenant made by Christ with the Jewish people at the time of His first coming. They must back off from the specifics of the text in verse 27 and import in a theological interpretation, thus providing us with a classic example of spiritualization or allegorical interpretation.

If this is supposed to be a reference to the covenant of grace, then “it may be observed first that this would be a strange way to express such a thought,”¹²⁶ notes Dr. Wood. Christ’s salvation covenant is not limited to seven years rather it is an eternal covenant. Daniel 9:27 says the covenant is to be made with “the many.” This term always refers in

¹²⁴ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 257.

¹²⁵ Gentry, *Perilous Times*, 32.

¹²⁶ Wood, *Daniel*, 259.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

some way to Israel throughout the book of Daniel (Daniel 11:33, 39; 12:3). Thus it is a narrow term, used in a specific context. It is not a broad term, synonymous with the language of global salvation. Further, "it is evident that the covenant is subsequent to the cutting off of Messiah and the destruction of the City and the Sanctuary, in the twenty-sixth verse; therefore, it could not have been confirmed at the First Advent,"¹²⁷ says G.H. Pember. Such an interpretation does not fit this text and it does not account for the seven years that Gabriel says this covenant will be in place. Dr. Wood further explains:

Since the word for "covenant" . . . does not carry the article (contrary to the KJV translation), this covenant likely is made at this time for the first time (not a reaffirmation of an old one, then) and probably will concern some type of nonaggression treaty, recognizing mutual rights. Israel's interest in such a treaty is easy to understand in the light of her desire today for allies to help withstand foes such as Russia and the Arab bloc of nations.¹²⁸

Since a covenant as described in verse 27 has not yet taken place in reference to the nation of Israel, it must therefore follow that this will be a yet to occur future event. This then, demands a postponement of the seventieth week with a gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of years.

FOR ONE WEEK

This passage clearly says that the length of the covenant that "he" will make will be for one week or seven years. I suppose that this could mean either that the covenant will be predetermined to last seven years or that it does not specify a length of time when made, but as it turns out, is only in existence for seven years. Many of those who believe that the entire prophecy of the seventy weeks has already been fulfilled around the time of Christ's first coming teach that the first half of the seventieth week was fulfilled by Christ's ministry.¹²⁹ "We know Christ's three-and-one-half-year ministry," says Dr. Gentry, "was decidedly focused on the Jews in the first half of the seventieth week (Matt. 10:5b; cf. Matt. 15:24)."¹³⁰ G.H. Pember objects to such a view with the following:

if the Messiah could be the subject, and the time that of the First Advent, we should then be plunged into the greatest perplexity; for the Lord did

¹²⁷ G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning Israel and the Gentiles*, (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1984 [1909]), 351.

¹²⁸ Wood, *Daniel*, 259.

¹²⁹ See for example, DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 326-27.

¹³⁰ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 319.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

none of the things that are mentioned in the twenty-seventh verse. To fulfill that part of the prophecy, He must have made a covenant with the majority of the Jewish people for seven years, neither more nor less. But there is no hint of such a covenant in the Gospels. And, indeed, one of the prophets has intimated to us, that the Lord, just before His death, suspended all His relations with the Jews, and through them with the whole of the Twelve Tribes. This exactly corresponds to the suspension of His dealings with the Jews at the close of the Four Hundred and Eighty-third Year, and to the facts of history. Still further, the very next verse of Zechariah carries us over the interval, and brings us face to face with the Prince that shall come, the Anti-christ, who will make the seven years' covenant on pretence of being the Shepherd of Israel. Lastly, Christ did not cause sacrifice and offering to cease, when He suffered without the gate: the Temple-services were carried on for nearly forty years longer.¹³¹

Once again we have seen that the text of this passage supports a gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the seventieth week is still future to the time in which we now live. "Israel has now been reestablished as a nation (1948), suggesting that the seventieth seven may soon begin."¹³²

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK

Gabriel divides his prophecy of seventy weeks of years to Daniel into three sections: seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. The final week of years—seven years—is detailed in Daniel 9:27. I have already dealt with the first part of verse 27, "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week." Now I will be focusing upon the rest of verse 27, which says, "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." This verse tells us what will happen during the final week of years, which I believe to be a yet future seven year period often called the tribulation.

Since the week of years is a seven-year period, the middle of a week of years would be three and a half years into the seven-year period. Interestingly, Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 both refer to a three and a half year period (time, times, and half a time). The context of both passages speaks of the future time of the antichrist or the beast. This would support a futurist understanding of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27. Daniel 7:25 says, "And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and

¹³¹ Pember, *Great Prophecies . . . Concerning Israel and the Gentiles*, 351.

¹³² Miller, *Daniel*, 270.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” While this passage was given to Daniel before he received the revelation of chapter nine, it seems clear that the logic for the chronology of Daniel 7:25 is drawn from the seventy weeks prophecy of chapter nine. Daniel 12:7 reads as follows: “And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.” Both Daniel 9:27 and 12:7 speak of the antichrist’s rule coming to an end at the conclusion of the same three and a half year period. This supports the notion that they both refer to a yet future time that we often call the Great Tribulation. Dr. John Whitcomb notes,

This important prophetic statement clearly refers to the same time units as previously described in the end-time activities of the Antichrist (“little horn”) of Daniel 7, where “he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they [the saints] will be given into his hands for a time, times, and half a time” (7:25). The clarification provided here is that the three-and-one-half-year period at the beginning of which Antichrist “shall cause a covenant [with the many] to be made strong” (literal translation). Then, for some unexplained reason, “in the middle” of this final seven-year period “he will put a stop to sacrifice [*zebâh*, bloody sacrifices] and grain offering [*minhah*, non-bloody sacrifices].”¹³³

ALLEGORICAL ALCHEMY

Recently, I attended a conference in which my friend Hal Lindsey spoke. He used a phrase that I think applies to non-literal interpreters like Gary DeMar¹³⁴ and Dr. Kenneth Gentry¹³⁵ who do not provide a textual interpretation of this passage. They are rightly called “allegorical alchemist,” because they try to brew-up interpretations from out of thin air by just stating and then declaring them to be true. In Daniel 9:27 they attempt a topical approach, selecting a word or two from the passage and declaring that, “Daniel’s famous prophecy finds fulfillment in the first century of our era.”¹³⁶ DeMar is even more bizarre in his alchemy when he teaches:

¹³³ John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 133-34.

¹³⁴ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 334-35.

¹³⁵ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Press, 1999), 31-33.

¹³⁶ Gentry, *Perilous Times*, 33.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

As the result of the Jews' rejection of Jesus, they would lose their inheritance. This would not occur for another forty years (Matt. 21:33-46; 22:1-14). Similarly, Jesus pronounced the temple "desolate" when He walked out of it even though its destruction did not come for another forty year (23:38). In principle, it was a "done deal" when He turned His back on the temple. It is no wonder that Jesus described the temple as "your house" (23:38). The temple's destruction was a *consequence*, a result, of the apostate Jews' rejection of Jesus (see 2 Sam. 13:32; Job 14:15; Isa. 10:22; Lam. 2:8; Luke 22:22). . . .

. . . The sentence is determined on one day while the sentence may not be carried out until some time in the future. In similar fashion, we are told that the destruction of Jerusalem was "determined" within the seventy weeks while the sentence was not carried out until forty years later.¹³⁷

In response to Dr. Gentry's claim that Daniel 9:27 refers to Christ's salvation covenant see my previous installment of this series (Part IX). Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost further explains:

This covenant could not have been made or confirmed by Christ at His First Advent, . . . because: (a) His ministry did not last seven years, (b) His death did not stop sacrifices and offerings, (c) He did not set up "the abomination that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15). Amillenarians suggest that Christ confirmed (in the sense of fulfilling) the Abrahamic Covenant but the Gospels give no indication He did that in His First Advent.¹³⁸

What Dr. Gentry says just does not explain Daniel 9:27 in context. When one's interpretation cannot explain the details of a passage, then an allegorical alchemist, like Dr. Gentry, will take words or phrases out of context and place them into a different context so that, to some, it appears that he has explained the passage. Yet, he has done nothing of the sort and this is a clear example of his interpretative sleight of hand. The text of verse 27 is simply not explained by Dr. Gentry's statements.

In a way, DeMar's explanation is even worse than his partner in crime—Dr. Gentry. While verse 27 clearly says that the events to which it speaks will take place within the seven-year period, DeMar changes the meaning to simply mean "determine." Verse 27 says that in the middle of the seven-year period "he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain

¹³⁷ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 334-35.

¹³⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1365.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

offering.” This is the language of something that is to actually take place. This is not the language of something that someone is proposing to do later. The final part of verse 27 says, “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.” How is this just a proposal of what has been determined, when passage clearly says that this will take place within the timeframe?

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Verse 27 says that in the middle of the week (three and a half years), “on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate.” Here we have a reference to the Antichrist who will do something to desecrate the Temple. This did not happen near the time of Christ’s first coming. If it did, then what event was it? If it happened in AD 70, as some might say, then it could not have happened within the time-span of the seventy weeks of years by anyone’s calculation. Yet, Jesus said in Matthew 24:15, “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).” Here we have the interpretation of Jesus concerning the event Gabriel describes to Daniel in 9:27. The event has to be future to the time of Christ, and since nothing like it corresponds to within seven years of His prediction then we have to see this as a yet future event. Thus, another reason for a gap or postponement of time between the sixty-ninth week of years and the seventieth week. Posttribulationist Dr. Robert Gundry notes:

Moreover, to place the complete fulfillment of the seventieth week at AD 70 or before severs the obvious connection between Daniel 9, Matthew 24, and Revelation. (Compare “in the middle of the week” [Dan. 9:27], forty-two months and 1,260 days [Rev. 11:2; 12:6; 13:5], and time, times, and half a time [Dan. 12:7; 7:25; Rev. 12:14]). Under the historical view, if the relationship between Daniel and Revelation were retained, Revelation, which was written probably a quarter century after the destruction of Jerusalem, would be history instead of the prophecy it purports to be.¹³⁹

A COMPLETE DESTRUCTION

The latter part of verse 27 says, “even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” Once again, when did this happen in conjunction with Christ’s first advent. It did not! Therefore, another reason to see this as a yet future event when the Antichrist will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ, which will bring to an end the seventieth week of years.

¹³⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and The Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 191.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

In another interpretation put forth by Gary DeMar that violates the clear statements of the biblical text, he sees the abomination of desolation taking place in AD 70.

The abomination of desolation is mentioned in one Old Testament book (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). . . . There was no doubt in the minds of those who read and understood Jesus' words in Matthew 24:15 that the abomination of desolation prophecy was fulfilled in events leading up to the temple's destruction in AD 70.¹⁴⁰

45

In addition to the problem that an AD 70 fulfillment does not fit into anyone's scheme of the seventy weeks of years, none of the Romans, such as Titus, could be said to have been destroyed after performing the supposed deed. Dr. Randall Price rebuts such an approach with the following:

However, historically, no known Roman leader ever "made a covenant" with the Jewish leaders . . . for seven years, and so this awaits future fulfillment when the seventieth week commences.

. . . However, if this is applied to the Romans in their crushing the Jewish Revolt in AD 70, then how was the Roman empire punished at this point, since the fall of the empire itself was still several hundred years away?¹⁴¹

It is obvious that these events of verse 27 did not take place at or in conjunction with Christ's first coming in the first century AD. A gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week is needed because it is what the text intended to make this prophecy work out in history with the exact precision that our Lord intends. It is a shame that some let theological bias prevent them from seeing this, and many other passages, as God intended them when He revealed them to His prophets. No other approach works and when one takes the final week of years literally then this harmonizes with hundreds of other verses that speak of the tribulation period that will lead up to the defeat of Christ's enemies and the victory of our Lord. Hopefully these events are just on the horizon.

CRITICS OF A TIME GAP

Even though I have completed the textual examination of Daniel 9:24-27, there are still other issues to deal with in relation to the passage and the postponement of the seventieth week from the first sixty-nine.

¹⁴⁰ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 101.

¹⁴¹ Randall Price, *Prophecy of Daniel 9:27* (San Marcos, TX: World of the Bible, n.d.), 24-25.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Those who do not think that the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 have a literal and chronologically precise fulfillment are opposed to the postponement of the seventieth week as a yet future time of seven years. Examples of such criticism can be found by those within the Reconstructionist movement, holding to a form of preterist postmillennialism. Gary DeMar complains:

Placing a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 “must be fixed” because of the system created by dispensationalists, not because the Bible mentions anything about a gap . . . dispensationalists force the Bible to comply to an already developed system that insists that these events cannot be describing first-century events.¹⁴²

Fellow preterist, Dr. Ken Gentry echoes DeMar’s refrain in the following:

An overriding concern of the prophecy, in distinction to all other Messianic prophecies is that it is specifically designed to be a measuring time-frame. . . . If there were gaps between the units, the whole idea of measurement in the “seventy weeks” would vanish. An elastic yardstick is a worthless measure. None of the other prophecies brought forward as illustrations of a gap claim to be a *measure of time*.¹⁴³

Dr. Gentry is right about one thing, that the Daniel 9 passage is the only Messianic prophecy that specifically deals with chronology or the time element. While I believe that I have shown that the passage itself requires a chronological postponement between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of years, it is also supported by other Messianic passages which are not specifically time oriented, but clearly do refer to distinct time-periods: Christ’s first coming and his second coming.

If anyone believes in the two comings of Christ, and both DeMar and Gentry do, then they also believe in a gap of time between the first and second coming of Christ. I want to show how this fits into a clear biblical pattern that in turn lends support to the notion of a gap of time in Daniel 9:24-27.

¹⁴² Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 333.

¹⁴³ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Press, 1999), 29-30.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

THE TWO PHASES OF CHRIST'S CAREER

It is obvious from the Bible that if you view the ministry or career of Christ in its entirety, then it is composed of two parts or phases. The first phase encompasses the first coming of Jesus two thousand years ago, while the second phase will consist of His second coming some time in the future. Yet many Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah commingled their descriptions of both phases of Christ into a single passage, without distinguishing between the two comings or phases of His earthly career.

47

It is commonly understood today that the Jews of the first century did not understand that these Old Testament prophecies spoke of a single Messiah who would come twice—once in humiliation, then again in glorious exaltation. We have learned that many Jews of Christ's day thought that there would be two different Messiahs—Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. Messiah ben Joseph would be one who suffers and dies, but is immediately followed by Messiah ben David, who reigns in glory.¹⁴⁴ The reality of Scripture is that there is but one Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth—who comes twice. This means that there is a gap of time between the two comings.

Even though preterists like DeMar and Gentry belittle a gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel 9:24-27, they are driven to believe in a gap of time between the two comings. DeMar and Gentry even believe in a gap, so far, of almost 2,000 years. Yet this time-gap is not explicitly stated in Scripture. So how can DeMar and Gentry hold to something like a gap of time that not explicitly stated in Scripture? Because the only possible implication that can be deduced from the facts of Christ's two comings is that there is a time-gap between the two events. In like manner, such a time-gap must also follow from the fact that Christ has a career that is two-phased.

Why is this important to our study of the seventy weeks of Daniel? It is important, because as Gentry noted above, "An overriding concern of the prophecy, in distinction to all other Messianic prophecies is that it is specifically designed to be a measuring time-frame."¹⁴⁵ True, so true, Dr. Gentry. Yet, you believe in a gap of time between the two comings of Christ, even though it is not specifically stated in the Bible. In the same way, I would argue that all other Messianic passages that speak of the two aspects or phases of the career of Messiah also must imply that they are fulfilled at the two comings of Christ, . . . with a gap of time in between. This means that there are many similar passages that speak in a single statement of items that encompass both phases of Christ's career—the first and second advents. However, as Dr. Gentry has noted, only the Daniel 9:24-27 passage deals specifically with measuring time. This explains why the Daniel passage is

¹⁴⁴ Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), xxxii-xxxv.

¹⁴⁵ Gentry, *Perilous Times*, 29.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

the only Messianic text that deals specifically with a time frame. However, a significant number of other Messianic passages have something in common with the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. They all speak of components of Christ's career that will take place in the two phases of His two advents. Only the Daniel text speaks of time factors.

TWO-PHASED MESSIANIC PASSAGES

This means that it is legitimate to argue for a gap of time from the other Messianic passages that also include, in a single passage, the two elements of Christ's career. Dr. Randall Price makes note of the way Scripture uses time gaps and provides a list of passages that fit into this category in the following statement:

The revelation of a prophetic postponement in the fulfillment of the eschatological aspect of the messianic program is in harmony with numerous passages in the Old Testament that reveal the two advents of Christ (e.g. Gen. 49:10-12; Deut. 18:16; 2 Sam. 7:13-16; Isa. 9:1-7; 11:1-2,11; 52:13-59:21; 61:1-11, cf. Luke 4:16-19; 7:22; Joel 2:28, cf. Acts 2:17; Zeph. 2:13-3:20; Zech. 9:9-10; Mic. 5:2-15; Ps. 2:7-8, cf. Acts 13:33; Heb.1:5; 5:5; Ps. 22:1-32; 34:14, 16; Mal. 3:1-3; 4:5-6; 53:10-11).¹⁴⁶

Perhaps the most well-known example of the kind of prophecy about which I speak is found in Christ's reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 as recorded in Luke 4:16-30. The passage reads as follows:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

Tim LaHaye and I have a chart diagramming this passage in our book called *Charting the End Times*.¹⁴⁷ We say concerning this passage:

Now when Jesus read the prophecies about Himself in Isaiah 61, why did He stop at the beginning of verse 2? Because He was announcing the reasons for His first coming and because He was to "proclaim the

¹⁴⁶ J. Randall Price, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks, Dispensational Interpretation," in Mal Couch, ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996), 77.

¹⁴⁷ Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice, *Charting The End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), 28-30.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

acceptable year of Jehovah's favor" (KJV). That's a reference to the church age, often called the age of grace, a time when sinners can freely call on the name of the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:13). Jesus stopped at the words, "and the day of vengeance of our God," which speaks of the Tribulation period, mentioned by the Hebrew prophets as "the day of wrath" and "the time of Jacob's trouble," and by Jeremiah as "a day of vengeance" (46:10). That's because the purpose of His first coming was to announce the period of grace and salvation we are living in, not the time of judgment that is yet to come.¹⁴⁸

Another example of what some have called "double reference" is found in Zechariah 9:9-10. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says concerning double reference:

This rule should not be confused with another rule often called *Double Fulfillment*. This author does not accept the validity of the principle of double fulfillment. This law states that one passage may have a near and a far view; hence, in a way, it may be fulfilled twice. . . . This author, however, does not believe that there is such a thing as double fulfillment. A single passage can refer to one thing only, and if it is prophecy, it can have only one fulfillment unless the text itself states that it can have many fulfillments. The law of double reference differs from the law of double fulfillment in that the former states that while two events are blended into one picture, one part of the passage refers to one event and the other part of the passage to the second event. This is the case in Zechariah 9:9-10.¹⁴⁹

In the same context we see that verse nine refers to Christ's first coming:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Verse ten is a reference only to Christ's second coming as follows:

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations;

¹⁴⁸ LaHaye & Ice, *Charting The End Times*, 30.

¹⁴⁹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1982), 4-5.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

In the Zechariah passage, there has to be a gap of time between the fulfillment of the verse nine that relates to Messiah's first coming two thousand years ago, and His second advent, which is still a yet future event. Even though no time factor is explicitly stated in the text, because of the specific nature of the events described in the two verses, a gap of time is required to coordinate the fulfillment of this prophecy with the events of history.

The point that I am making, relating to the seventy weeks of Daniel prophecy, is that it is not unreasonable to find implied time gaps in a significant number of Messianic passages in the Old Testament. I am not saying that this proves that there is in fact a gap in Daniel 9:24-27, I believe that I have demonstrated that earlier. I think that the two-phased career of Messiah means that it is not unreasonable to expect in a Messianic passage a necessity of a time-gap between the fulfillment of all events prophesied in such a passage. This supports our literal interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

The final item that I will attempt to handle on this matter is the history of the church's interpretation of the seventy weeks of Daniel. What has the church believed about this passage down through the years? One of the main reasons for spending time on this matter is that some have said that our view that sees a gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel is a recent development in church history. Truth of the matter is that it is the oldest known view in church history. Read on and see.

Over the last few years, I have come to expect outburst against all aspects of the literal interpretation of Scripture from preterists who believe that Bible prophecy is a thing of the past. They come through in predicable fashion concerning this issue of the historical interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27.

Gary DeMar is perhaps the most strident on this issue when he says, "nearly all Bible scholars agree that the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy refer to the time up to Jesus' crucifixion, only dispensationalists believe that the entire seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled."¹⁵⁰ In a later edition of the same book, DeMar asserts concerning a non-gap view that it "has been the standard interpretation for centuries, except for minor differences in details. John Nelson Darby and others changed all this with their church-

¹⁵⁰ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Atlanta: American Vision, 1994), 228.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

parenthesis hypothesis.”¹⁵¹ After the first sentence of DeMar’s statement, he footnotes a reference to an errant source on the matter, Philip Mauro, who declares the following: “Nor, so far as we are aware, was any other meaning ever put upon them until within recent years, and then only by those belonging to a particular ‘school’ of interpretation.”¹⁵² Of course, Mauro’s recent “school” is reference to those of us who see a future seventieth week in Daniel’s prophecy. Mauro certainly was not aware of what was taught in the early church, as we shall shortly see.

Preterist, Dr. Kenneth Gentry, speaking of his non-gap interpretation insists that, “Conservative scholars widely agree on such an interpretation, which is virtually ‘universal among Christian exegetes’—excluding dispensationalists.”¹⁵³ Later, Dr. Gentry continues his inaccurate statements by saying “that the early Father held to a non-eschatological interpretation of the Seventieth Week.”¹⁵⁴ This is just not true, as shall be noted below. Now I will examine just what the early church did believe about the seventy weeks of Daniel.

EARLY CHURCH VIEWS

The main point for which I am looking into the early church view of Daniel’s seventy weeks prophecy is whether they held to a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of years. Interestingly, an article of note was done on this subject, published in a Reformed Journal, which is the general theological orbit of Gary DeMar and Dr. Kenneth Gentry. The article was written by Louis E. Knowles¹⁵⁵ and referenced errantly by Dr. Gentry when he said, “that the early Fathers held to a non-eschatological interpretation of the Seventieth Week.”¹⁵⁶ Dr. Gentry’s statement is clearly in error when compared with the writings of the early church fathers.

The earliest extant writings of the church fathers reveal just the opposite of Dr. Gentry’s claim, with the exception of *The Epistle of Barnabas* (about AD 90-100), which presents a short and incomplete treatment on the subject. Knowles divides the early church (Barnabas through Augustine) into two interpretive groups, “the eschatological and the

¹⁵¹ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 328.

¹⁵² Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Sterling, VA: Grace Abounding Ministries, 1988), 74.

¹⁵³ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Press, 1999), 18.

¹⁵⁴ Gentry, *Perilous Times*, 27, f.n. 63.

¹⁵⁵ Louis E. Knowles, “The Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel in the Early Fathers,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* (May 1945: Vol. VII), 136-60.

¹⁵⁶ Gentry, *Perilous Times*, 27, f.n. 63.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

historical."¹⁵⁷ By eschatological, Knowles refers to those who took the seventieth week of Daniel as future prophecy leading up to Christ's return. By historical, he means those who believe that Daniel's final week has already been fulfilled. Knowles concludes that *Barnabas*, "envisioned the completion of all the weeks before the development of the church."¹⁵⁸

When Knowles deals with the next major contributors—Irenaeus (130-200) and his disciple Hippolytus (170-236)—he describes their views as "undoubtedly the forerunners of the modern dispensational interpreters of the Seventy Weeks."¹⁵⁹ Knowles draws the following conclusion about Irenaeus and Hippolytus:

. . . we may say that Irenaeus presented the seed of an idea that found its full growth in the writings of Hippolytus. In the works of these fathers, we can find most of the basic concepts of the modern futuristic view of the seventieth week of Daniel ix. That they were dependent to some extent upon earlier material is no doubt true. Certainly we can see the influence of pre-Christian Jewish exegesis at times, but, by and large, we must regard them as the founders of a school of interpretation, and in this lies their significance for the history of exegesis.¹⁶⁰

Thus, it is clear "that in Irenaeus and Hippolytus we have the originators of that method of interpretation that places the seventieth week of Daniel at the time of the consummation."¹⁶¹

Although, Irenaeus does not explicitly spell out a gap in his writings, there is no other way that he could have come up with his view of a future tribulation period of at least three and a half years.¹⁶² Irenaeus speaks of how "three years and six months constitute the half-week" in his section on the prophecy of Daniel 9.¹⁶³ This is why Knowles says that in Irenaeus "we have the basic concept for a futuristic construction of the Seventy Weeks, *viz.*, the position of the last week at the end of the age."¹⁶⁴ Hippolytus, Irenaeus' pupil is even clearer.

¹⁵⁷ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 136.

¹⁵⁸ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 137.

¹⁵⁹ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 136.

¹⁶⁰ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 138-39.

¹⁶¹ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 139.

¹⁶² See the views of Irenaeus in *Against Heresies*, Book V, Chapter 25.

¹⁶³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, Chapter 25, Paragraph 4.

¹⁶⁴ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 139.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Hippolytus is the first known person in the history of the church to write a commentary on any book of the Bible, and he wrote on Daniel.¹⁶⁵ “Hippolytus give us the first attempt at detailed interpretation of the Seventy Weeks,” observes Knowles. “He is dependent, no doubt, upon Irenaeus for the foundational proposition that the last half-week of the seventy is to be connected with the Antichrist, but the detailed development is not found in Irenaeus.”¹⁶⁶ In fact, Hippolytus refers to a gap or, in his words “division,” multiple times.¹⁶⁷ Hippolytus says,

For when the threescore and two weeks are fulfilled, and Christ is come, and the Gospel is preached in every place, the times being then accomplished, there will remain only one week, the last, in which Elias will appear, and Enoch, and in the midst of it the abomination of desolation will be manifested, *viz.*, Antichrist, announcing desolation to the world.¹⁶⁸

Le Roy Froom grudgingly admits that “Hippolytus . . . arbitrarily separates by a chronological gap from the preceding sixty-nine weeks, placing it just before the end of the world.”¹⁶⁹ “Certainly Hippolytus’ interpretation does not have the refinements of the later development, but it is the direct ancestor of it,”¹⁷⁰ concludes Knowles.

OTHER VIEWS

There were a number of others in the early church, up till the time of Augustine (354-430), who spoke about the subject of the seventy weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9. Jerome (340-420) in his commentary on Daniel is reluctant to set forth his own interpretation of Daniel’s seventy weeks prophecy, “because it is unsafe to pass judgment upon the opinions of the great teachers of the Church and to set one above another.”¹⁷¹ So Jerome simply records the various views up till his time. The first view that Jerome cites is that of Africanus (160-240), who does not mention a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, but does, like early gap proponents “definitely views this passage as

¹⁶⁵ Michael Kalafian, *The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks of the Book of Daniel*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 83.

¹⁶⁶ Knowles, “Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks,” 142.

¹⁶⁷ Hippolytus, *Fragments from Commentaries, Daniel*, Paragraph 22; *Treaties on Christ and Antichrist*, Paragraphs 61-65; *Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus*, Paragraphs 21, 25, 36.

¹⁶⁸ Hippolytus, *Fragments from Commentaries, Daniel*, Paragraph 22.

¹⁶⁹ Le Roy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols, (Washington: Review and Herald, 1950), 1:277.

¹⁷⁰ Knowles, “Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks,” 141.

¹⁷¹ Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, translated by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 95.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

eschatological and decidedly Messianic."¹⁷² Thus, Africanus fits into the eschatological camp, making him closer to the futurist gap position, and not the historical.

Eusebius (270-340), the father of church history, teaches an historical view, but he places a gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Knowles explains:

In regards to the last week, we have some rather distinct views in Eusebius. We must recall that the last week does not follow immediately upon the sixty-ninth, but comes after the 'indeterminate space of time' in which the events of vs. 26 are being fulfilled. This last week, then, covers a period of seven years that extend from three and one-half years before the crucifixion to three and one-half years after it.¹⁷³

Knowles speaks of a writer named Hesychius whom Augustine refers to as an opponent of his historical fulfillment view. "Hesychius has questioned Augustine about the fulfillment of the Seventy Weeks, and seems to be an adherent of the futurist school of interpretation."¹⁷⁴ Thus, it is clear that even in the early fifth century there are still proponents of the eschatological and futurist schools of interpretation of Daniel's seventieth week. "We have seen the formation of two definite schools of interpretation. . . ." notes Knowles. "All the later developments in Christian literature will be found to fit into one of these categories."¹⁷⁵

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In one sense it does not matter what others who have come before our current generation think on an issue, since in reality a matter rises or falls upon whether it squares with God's Word. However, in another sense it does matter what others have thought down through church history, since if something is taught in the Bible then it may be legitimate to ask why others have not understood a particular teaching. While there are a number of doctrines that have gone well over a thousand years before members of Christ's church have come to realize what was there in Scripture all along, the necessary gap of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel is not one of those late teachings. Why opponents of a future seventieth week of Daniel want to make matters worse for themselves by saying that we do not have ancient historical precedent is beyond me. It is obvious that our futurist view was found early and often throughout the early church, and only became scarce when premillennialism was banded from the medieval church

¹⁷² Kalafian, *Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks*, 80.

¹⁷³ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 157.

¹⁷⁴ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 160.

¹⁷⁵ Knowles, "Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks," 160.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

as a result of the influence of Augustine and Jerome. "But the saints shall never possess an earthly kingdom," declares Jerome, "but only a heavenly. Away, then, with the fable about a millennium!"¹⁷⁶ With Jerome's banishment of early premillennialism went the literal interpretation of prophecy. History would have to wait more than a thousand years for the revival of a literal interpretation of Bible prophecy and the literal approach to the seventieth week of Daniel.

CONCLUSION

I think that sound biblical exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 must lead to an understanding that the seventieth week is separated from the first sixty-nine weeks of years because of Israel's failure to accept Jesus as their promised Messiah. Therefore, God has postponed the final week of years until the start of the seven-year tribulation. In the mean time, the New Testament teaches us that the church age will intervene during the postponement of Israel's final week of years. The church will be composed of the Jewish remnant and elect Gentiles made into a single body—the Body of Christ (Acts 15:13-16; Ephesians 2-3). Thus, the final week of years will be the yet future seven-year tribulation that will lead to the conversion of all Israel (Roman 11:26). This will lead to a full and literal fulfillment of God's entire program for His people—Israel. May it happen today! Maranatha!

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<http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-TheSeventyWeeksofDani.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 81.