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BRIDGING THE LAST GAP: DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS REVISITED

As we have seen in this series, each time there is a new covenant, there is a break in the year-by-year chronology. At the same time, each time the break is crossed by information provided in the text. Thus, the year-by-year chronology breaks down at the birth of Abraham, but we can figure out when Abraham was born from information contained elsewhere in the Bible. The year-by-year chronology breaks down during the Egyptian Sojourn, but Exodus 12:40-41 and Galatians 3:17 bridge the gap. The year-by-year chronology breaks down after the book of Judges, but 1 Kings 6:1 bridges the gap.

Now, the chronology also breaks down between Malachi and Matthew. The only place the Bible bridges the gap is in Daniel 9:24-27, the "seventy weeks" from Cyrus to Jesus. In the past we have taken up the question of whether the 70 Weeks should be taken as literal years or as a symbolic chronology, and we have opted in these studies to take them literally, thereby bridging the gap.

But exactly how is the gap bridged? There are three possibilities, as I see it. One is that the cutting off of the Messiah after the 69th week refers to the crucifixion, which for now we will put in A.D. 30. The second is that the cutting off takes place in A.D. 67, followed by the 70th week, in the middle of which Jerusalem is destroyed. The third possibility (and I hate to admit this) is that there is a you read that right) between the 69th and 70th weeks.

Well, let's see what we can do with this.

Daniel 9:24. Seventy sevens [weeks] have been decreed for your people [Israel] and your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy One.

This is an overall statement introducing the details to follow. The seventy sevens are taken to be seventy weeks, and weeks of years, because as we shall see, they clearly are units of years. This prophecy concerns Israel and Jerusalem most pointedly, and in my opinion indicates that all that the Bible prophesies about Israel and Jerusalem comes to pass by A.D. 70. I have defended this thesis at length in _____ and if you don't have a copy of this essay, you can obtain it by sending a donation of \$5.00 to _____ Box 1096, Niceville, FL 32588.

While the details of the rest of verse 24 are at some points unclear, clearly the coming of the Covenant in its

stage is the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit in A.D. 30. These events can be seen to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to atone for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. If anointing the Most Holy refers to Jesus' baptism, and it probably does, this was also accomplished by A.D. 30. If it refers to Pentecost, the same is true.

But sealing vision and prophet seems to point beyond that date, because what we call the New Testament still had to be written. It was not until just before A.D. 70 that the new writings had been completed. Thus, one might argue that the 70 Weeks carry down to A.D. 70. On the other hand, it can be argued that though there were visions and prophets between 30 and 70, yet the definitive fulfillment of vision and prophecy took place in Christ and was finished by A.D. 30.

Yet, "finishing the transgression and making an end of sin" has reference to Israel and Jerusalem, not to the whole world. It can be argued that Israel's transgression and sin did not reach their fullness until just before A.D. 70. At that point, the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, and Israel was eliminated from the scene of prophecy and special history.

25. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, seven sevens and sixty-two sevens: it will be built again, with streets and moat, even in times of distress.

The seven weeks of 49 years we have seen run from Cyrus's decree to the end of Nehemiah. The fact that these were literally 49 years establishes that the "sevens" or "weeks" of this passage are groups of years. The prophecies concerning Jerusalem's rebuilding were fulfilled in this period. Then there are 62 more weeks of years, the period "between the testaments" as it is usually and unfortunately called.

26 Then after the 62 sevens, the Messiah will be cut off [excommunicated the religious Israel] and have nothing [Phil. 2:7]; and the people of the Prince [Christ] Who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary [Temple]. And its end will come with a flood [like the of Deut. like locust flood even to the end there will be war A.D. desolations are determined.

A.D. 30,

be argued, however, that Jesus was cut off and had nothing around the year 66, when Paul supposedly died, if we also believe that there was a great massacre of other Christians also at this time. In that case, it is a kind of "death" of the early Church that is in view. But, and it is a big "but," the Bible says nothing about such a massacre, and does not record the death of Paul.

27a. And He [Messiah] will confirm a covenant [The Covenant] with the many during one week [the 70th week]. But in the middle of the week He will put a stop to sacrifice [peace] and tribute on the ending the sacrificial

This is the traditional view, and I am still generally happy with it. The assumption is that Christ confirms the Covenant during His 3-year ministry, and then dies in A.D. 30 in the middle of the 70th week.

But there is an alternative possibility. The fact is that peace offerings and tribute offerings did not stop with the cross. We see Paul going to the Temple and offering sacrifices to fulfill his Nazirite vow in Acts 21:26. Perhaps the confirming of the covenant with Israel is the conversion of the (symbolic) 144,000 Jews as recorded in Revelation 7, what Paul calls the "fullness of Israel coming in" in Romans 11. Perhaps the cessation of sacrifices refers to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

Still, confirming the covenant is exactly what the gospels show Jesus doing. Thus, I am happier viewing the 70th week as beginning with the baptism of Jesus. Jesus' work put a definitive and judicial "stop" to the sacrificial system, though His people were free to continue offering memorials until the Temple was actually destroyed.

27b. And on the detestable wing comes one who desolates, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who desolates.

The detestable wing is the polluted garment of the Israelite as priest, most pointedly the garments of the High Priest (Num. 15:37-41). Only Israelites could commit detestable acts, for by definition such acts are priestly. Israel's sins caused God to desolate His sanctuary and leave it for destruction at the hands of the Romans. Destruction was poured out on the desolators, on apostate Israel. The detestable act, I suggest, is the massacre of the "144,000" converts as recorded in Revelation 14-15, whose blood was poured out upon Jerusalem in Revelation 16, because Jerusalem had drunk their blood (Rev. 17).

Now, traditionally, Daniel 9:27b is seen as happening after the completion of the 70 Weeks. That is, Jesus' death in the middle of the 70th week ended the sacrificial system, in principle and that is the last thing prophesied as part of the 70 Weeks. What verse 27b predicts is not part

sonable interpretation.

But of course, it is not the only possibility. Possibly, as we have noted, the 70 Weeks go down to A.D. 70. In this case, the events described in verse 27b simply explain the method used by Messiah to put a stop to peace and tribute offerings (v. 27a).

Comments

I lean strongly toward the traditional view. Verse 26 clearly states that the Messiah is cut off after the 62nd (= 69th) week. This refers to A.D. 30. Thus, if the 70 Weeks do indeed include the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, we must put a gap of 36-37 years between the 69th and 70th weeks (30-66 A.D.). The 70th week would be the years 67-73 A.D., with the destruction of the temple in the middle of the week.

A gap is not as unreasonable as it appears, because Acts and the epistles do provide chronological information from A.D. 30 forward. Thus, the gap is filled. The chronology is not actually broken, because the 69 weeks carry us from Cyrus to Christ, Acts takes us up to just before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the first half of the 70th week takes us to A.D. 70. But, Acts does not completely cover this period, and who wants a gap if we can avoid it?

Another corroboration of the traditional view comes from the interesting fact that if we go with it, there are 1000 years between the completion of the Temple and its destruction. The Temple was completed in the year Anno Mundi 3000. The middle of the 70th week came in A.M. 3960. If this was A.D. 30, the Temple was destroyed 1000 years after it was first built. If the middle of the 70th week (A.M. 3960) was when the Temple was destroyed, then we don't have an even millennium for the Temple.

Of course, the preceding is a tenuous argument, but this whole discussion is tenuous. The only way we can arrive at a proper interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 is to try to compare the whole systems of each alternative interpretation. It is very striking that the Temple was completed in A.M. 3000, and this figure is unassailable. The fact that the traditional view puts the destruction of the Temple, and the end of the first creation, in the year 4000 A.M. is also striking, and should be considered as evidence, though perhaps not very weighty, in favor of the traditional interpretation.

Conclusion

Daniel 9:24-27 bridges the gap between Malachi and Matthew by providing a chronology of 490 years. The period begins with the decree of Cyrus in around A.M. 3474, and ends in A.M. 3964. The death of Christ happened midway through the last seven years, or in A.M. 3960. There is good reason, as we shall see, for making this the same as A.D. 30, in which case the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the year A.M. 4000.