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Daniel: Historical & Chronological Comments (X)

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18. The **Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks**

Daniel 9:24. A block of seventy weeks has been decreed for your people and your holy city, ¹to finish the transgression, ²to seal up sins, ³to make atonement for iniquity, ⁴to bring in everlasting righteousness, ⁵to seal vision and prophet, and ⁶to anoint the Most Holy One.

This is an overall statement introducing the details to follow. 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 AD 70.

The purpose of the decree is laid out in six statements:

1. Finish or perfect the transgression. The word for transgression has to do with rebellion. Transgressions, in Daniel, are the sacrilegious sins that cause God to desolate His people and Temple; Daniel 8:12, 13, & 23.

2. Seal up sins. The word for sin has to do with specific sins, particularly **those** that can be considered sins of being **led** astray, or can be converted to that category, and are covered by the sin or purification offering. Daniel has just confessed such sins in Daniel 9:5,8,11,15,16,20. If such sins are not confessed and dealt with, then they are sealed and the person, hardened in sin, must be broken.

Judgment came upon the Canaanites when their iniquity had filled up (Genesis 15: 16). Jesus said that the guilt of all the righteous blood spilled from Abel to **Zechariah** would be placed upon Jerusalem (Matthew 23:25; Revelation 14:20; 16: 1,3,4,6; 17:6). Here, however, the decree concerns Israel and Jerusalem. As shown in Daniel 8, the transgression that caused desolation took place just before God sent Antiochus Epiphanes upon the Jews, and the Jews never fully repented of it. They continued to “perfect” that transgression until the time of Jesus.

Similarly, sins continued to pile up, and this is indicated by something very specific: In the system of sacrifices for sin laid out in Leviticus, the sin offerings take the sins from the people, place them on the sacrifices,

atoning the high priest atones for all the sins of the **nation**. **After Antiochus Epiphanes was** defeated, the Jews did not restore the Zadokite priesthood, which means that there was never a legitimate high priest after the **desolating** sacrilege was committed. There were **other** priests, and other **sacrifices** could be **offered, but** God never accepted any Day of Atonement after Jason was replaced by **Menelaus**. Therefore, the alert Jew could **see** that the sins were simply rolling up year after year.

The death of Jesus was the **final** and great Day of Atonement, performed by a proper feast. At that **point**, those who accepted His work had their sins **removed**, but those who rejected **His** work had their sins sealed. All the sins **that** had been accumulating on the people, therefore, were sealed to them when they rejected Jesus. Before that time, the sins were on them, but not yet **sealed**, officially, as with a signet ring. Now they were sealed.

3. Atonement for iniquity. The second pair shows God dealing with sin. Jesus made atonement for the sins of humanity, and:

4. He brought in everlasting righteousness.

5. Seal up vision and prophet. Here again, the idea of sealing is to confirm and apply. This **does** not mean that there were no more visions and prophecies after the work of Jesus was **finished**, because the New Testament *was* yet to be written, and there were prophets in the earliest church. Rather, the idea is that Jesus **fulfilled** all that vision and prophet had ever said. There is nothing in the Old Testament that is not prophetic, one way or another, of Jesus, and which Jesus did not **fulfill**. Sealing, as with a signet ring, makes it official. The life and death of Jesus was the seal on **all** God’s revelation. Before that time, the revelation had been made, but now it was sealed, officially, as with a signet.

6. Anoint the most holy. Some refer this to Jesus’ baptism, and Jesus’ baptism did make Him an anointed (messianic) priest. At His ascension, however, He was anointed as messianic king. I would say that Jesus’ first anointing was what made Him “most holy,” and thus to anoint the “most holy” would refer to this second, climactic anointing.

There is, thus, a progression in these six items: the transgression would be brought to perfection and the sins rolled together and sealed upon Jesus, who would then atone for them. This would bring everlasting righteousness as a result, which would seal all of God's promises when Christ at His ascension became the anointed king.

The structure of these six items is **chiastic**:

1. Perfect transgression, which is sacrilege against the *Most Holy*.
2. **Seal up** sins.
3. Atone for *iniquity*, the great transition to:
4. Establish *righteousness*.
5. **Seal the** promises.
6. Glorify the *Most Holy*.

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

The seven weeks of 49 years run from Cyrus's decree to the end of Nehemiah. The fact that these were literally 49 years establishes that the "weeks" of this passage are groups of years. The prophecies concerning Jerusalem's rebuilding were fulfilled in this period, with plenty of distress, as recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah. Then there are 62 more weeks of years, the period "between the testaments" as it is usually called. The history of the 62 weeks is laid out in the last vision of Daniel, in Daniel 11.

26. Then after the block of 62 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.

"After the 62 weeks" must mean during the 70th. The cutting off of the Messiah refers to the events of AD 30, Jesus' excommunication and crucifixion. Notice that the coming of Christ's vengeance army, the Romans, is not said to happen in the 70th week, but only in a time after the block of 62 weeks.

"Cut off" refers not to the death penalty but to excommunication, which Jesus was when the Jewish court condemned Him. Perhaps more to the point, however, Jesus as the Incarnate Temple of God took upon Himself the desolation of the Temple: God desolated Him, forsook Him, cut Him off.

"Have nothing" means that Jesus was dispossessed. After the desolating sacrilege is committed, God deserts the Temple, and then brings in an invading army to dispossess His people of all His previously-given benefits. **Thus**, being desolated by God, Jesus lost everything else as well, for all deserted Him.

"Prince to come." This is the anointed Prince of verse 25. and must be a reference to Jesus. This word for "prince" is used by God in Daniel only one other time, for the high priest, in Daniel 11:22. It means "the announced leader."

The "people of the Prince" might be the saints, but since physical Jerusalem is in view, that being the city rebuilt in the preceding verse, a physical destruction would seem to be in view also. The Assyrian and Babylonian armies were God's armies to bring judgment upon Israel in previous times, so it is not unusual for the Roman army to be called the people of the Messiah as they come to destroy Jerusalem.

"**Destroy**," as used here, takes up from the three times it is used in Daniel 8:24-25, where Antiochus is said to destroy. Here is it the people of the Messiah who are the destroyers. The perspective is the same: Antiochus was sent by God on a mission of destruction because of the transgressions of the Jews; now the Romans are sent on the same mission for the same reason.

"Flood," is used by God several times in Daniel 11 for an overflowing army sweeping into a land: Daniel 11:10,22,26,40. Here the "flood" is parallel to "war":

and its end - like a flood

and unto end - war

"Desolations are determined" means that God has determined that the desolations take place. God determines the desolations as His judgment upon the transgressions, and His desolation of the Temple and city results in their being laid waste by the army He sends to do the job. The placement of this phrase here also explains why the city and sanctuary have to be destroyed. Daniel has just prayed (9: 18) that God would take note of the desolation of Jerusalem, and return to her. The prophecy says that God will return, and that Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Then Daniel is told that the Messiah will be cut off, but he is not told who is responsible for this. Then he is told that the rebuilt city will be destroyed. The reason is that desolations are determined as a result of aggravated transgressions.

27a. And He will cause to prevail a covenant with the many during one week. And in the middle of the week He will put a stop to sacrifice [*peace-offerings*] and tribute [*grain offerings*].

The events here happen in the middle of the 70th week of years.

The covenant is caused to prevail, the only time in the Bible that a covenant is said to "prevail." This is a covenant with the "many." I don't think this is a reference to the particularity of the atonement. The "many" are Jews, because this whole prophecy has to do with "your people" (v. 24). Thus, the covenant would be the covenant with Israel, probably the **Abrahamic** covenant. The "many" are those who sleep but are brought to life during the ministry of Jesus (Daniel 12:2). They are led toward

righteousness by those who have insight (12:3). They travel **to and fro** and teach the word of God (12:4). They are purged and refined (12: 10).

It seems to me that the idea here is this: The covenant God made with Abraham after the Tower of Babel, to the effect that the Hebrews would be His special servants until the coming of the Messiah, had repeatedly been violated by transgression. Jesus in His ministry put the covenant into full force; as He said in Matthew 5:17-20. He came to fill up fully the meaning of the “law” until the passing away of heaven and earth with the coming of the New Covenant. Thus, Jesus causes the covenant to prevail with the many. the Jews, by preaching to them, healing them and cleansing them. thereby fitting them for service, etc. As we shall see when we get to Daniel 12, Jesus’ ministry was a kind of resurrection for Israel. for the many.

This leads us to the middle of the week, which was the spring of AD 30. The death of Jesus was the last sacrifice, which meant that there was no longer any need for animal sacrifices. Animal sacrifices never took away sin, nor were they designed to do so. They were “**memorials**” offered up before God’s throne to show Him that the people trusted in Him, and that they deserved to die but were gratefully accepting His offer of a substitute death. Once the Son had died, however, for a man to continue to offer animals could mean that he did not rest in the finality of Christ’s atoning work.

Now 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, and this was not wrong. At the same time, Paul was merely going through the motions to satisfy the Jews.

God accepted worship through animal sacrifices for the time being until Jesus came. after which all worship has to be offered in union with Him and thus through Him.

If the meaning of Daniel 9:27 was that Jesus’ death was the last sacrifice for sin, then it would say that he put a stop to sin offerings and trespass offerings. What are mentioned. however, are peace offerings and tribute offerings, both of which have worship rather than atonement as their primary focus. The sin and trespass offering focus on the death of the animal and the display of its blood. The peace and tribute offerings focus on the ascent of the believer to God with **tribute**, and our reception by Him at His table for a meal with Him.

Putting a stop to these two sacrifices in particular means that God would no longer accept tribute offered through animal sacrifices and would not longer fellowship at a meal built upon an animal sacrifice. Now tribute has to be brought to God in union with Christ, who brings us as His tribute. Now the fellowship meal, the peace offer-

ing, consists of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, based on His finished sacrifice.

The focus is on these two fellowship-oriented sacrifices because the theme of this passage, and of so much of Daniel, is God’s desolation and judgment of His house. Sacrificial fellowship between God and the Jews was definitively cut off at the cross. From that time on, there would be no fellowship with God through sacrifice; only through Christ. Thus, any Jew continuing to seek fellowship with God through animal sacrifices was engaged in futility. When the veil of the Temple was rent the Temple was **finally** desolated for the last time. The Temple is now where Jesus is, in heaven.

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; it is the corruption of the “holy wing” (**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 Remans. 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). Notice that this event is not said to take place during the 70th week. (For more on the desolating sacrilege, see chapter 22 below.)

Note that the interpretation commonly found among traditional conservative commentators does not fit. They maintain that Titus and the Roman committed the desolating sacrilege by destroying the Temple and putting idolatrous images there. Then, they say, the Remans were eventually destroyed. The “wing of desecrations,” they say, refers to the Roman army, perhaps **specifically to the** Roman eagle ensign. The sacrilege, however, is never **committed by** gentiles. In fact, since gentiles do not have any position in the Temple, which symbolized Israel as the priestly people, it is impossible for gentiles to desecrate the Temple. They can **march** through it all day long, put up as many idols as they wish, and sacrifice as many pigs as they please, and it does not count. They are “neutral” in the system God established. What counts as desecration is idolatry and sacrilege on the part of the priests.

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Are there events that take place during the last 3% years? We have seen that Paul was converted in AD 30, obviously several months after the crucifixion. That would leave about 3 years remaining. Paul tells us in **Galatians** 1:18 that after three years he went to Jerusalem and reported to Peter and James. If the 70 weeks of **years** are

literal years **beginning** with the decree of Cyrus, and if that decree is a Jubilee, then the year Paul visited Jerusalem would have been a Jubilee, the first year after the completion of the 490 years.

We read of desecrations of God's true Temple in the early chapters of Acts. when the high priests and chief priests of Israel laid hands on the vessels of the Temple, to wit. the saints. The priests arrested Peter and John in Acts 4:1-3. Acts 4:6 stresses that a group of high priests. active and inactive, threatened Peter and John (v. 21). In Acts 5:17 the high priest threw the apostles into jail, but God let them out. They were arrested again and questioned by the high priest, and then they were flogged (5:27, 40). The climax of these desecrations comes in Acts 7, when the high priest puts Stephen on trial and under his supervision Stephen is put to death.

For these transgressions, we anticipate that God will bring judgment upon Jerusalem in but a few years, perhaps by the end of the 70 weeks, in AD 33. Stephen, however, prays for forgiveness, and **I** believe that this has the effect of suspending judgment. Paul goes forth to destroy the Church. but is converted, and after three years, begins his ministry. It is only when these desecrations are repeated, in the **mid-60s**, that they bring about the **final** desolation and destruction of Jerusalem.

Now **I** should like to "tie this in with a possible reading of Revelation 12. Revelation 12:6 says that after the woman, probably true Israel, gave birth to Jesus and He ascended into heaven. she fled into the wilderness for 1260 days, which is a round number possibly meaning 3 ½ years. If my guess is right, this refers to the last half of the 70th week. from AD 30 to AD 33. Revelation 12:7-12 says that when Jesus ascended to heaven. Satan was cast down and would visit wrath upon the land and the sea, upon the Jewish and gentile worlds. Verse 13 says that the dragon immediately began to oppress the woman, which would correspond to what we have just surveyed in Acts 4-8. The woman flees to the "wilderness" on eagle's wings, representing God's help (Exodus 19:4), and this would correspond to the scattering of the saints in Acts 8:1. There she was protected for "a time and times and half a time," a phrase that might also mean 3% years but

more probably refers to a **longer** period, the time down to the **mid-60s**. (We shall discuss this when we get to Daniel 12.) The serpent poured out false doctrine from his mouth, which probably refers to the heresies of the **Judaizers**, and thus indicates that the period of time does carry down to the **mid-60s**. The true Church, under the leadership of Paul especially. resisted these false doctrines, while the land (the Jews) drank it up. Therefore. the dragon was enraged and went off to make war on the gentile church. This leads us to the appearance of the persecuting Roman beast in Revelation 13.

To summarize: After Jesus' ascension, the **dragon**-inspired high priests began active persecution of the Church. She was scattered out of Jerusalem (to the "wilderness") for 3% years. Meanwhile, Paul was converted. After three years, Paul came to Jerusalem and spent time with the disciples, though **only** Paul and James the brother of Jesus were there at the time (Acts 9: 19-30; **Galatians** 1: 17-19). Then we read that, in the Jubilee year, "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and **Samaria** enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, she continued to increase. " Thus, there was some kind of preliminary victory or at least relief from persecution at this point.

Failing to destroy the church by persecution. the dragon turned to serpent and tried to destroy her by false doctrine. This enterprise continued for time, times, and a half, which probably refers to the apostolic age from AD 34 to the **mid-60s**.

The use of half-week symbolism in other parts of Revelation (42 months, 1260 days) almost certainly is picked up from Daniel's 70 weeks. Daniel is told in Daniel 12 to seal up the book because nothing more is going to be told him. The revelation in Daniel carries us, in detail, down to the time of the completion of Christ's work. When the book is reopened in Revelation. the purpose seems to be to finish what Daniel's visions started. We have looked at the literal, chronological completion of the 70th week. This period would then be **typologically** related to the events leading down to the destruction of Jerusalem.