

Daniel's Seventieth Week

Daniel 9:27 ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

Say the number 666, and most Christians will be interested. In fact, most unbelievers will be interested. Today, like in history, people are very interested to know who or what the Beast of Revelation is, and what his number of 666 means. Over the years, we've seen everyone from Henry Kissinger to Bill Gates to the Pope identified as the Antichrist.

As I said earlier in this series, often that sensationalism distracts us from the powerful message of Daniel. Because the book of Daniel does describe an end-time false Christ, and some of his activities. And we see some of what he does right here in Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

I believe, along with many other Bible students, that there seems to be a gap of time between the events of verses 24 to 26 and verse 27. Verse 27 describes the last week of Daniel's prophecy, the seventieth week. You might remember that we compared Daniel's prophecy to a race, and said that when the gun goes off, there are seventy laps. We discovered what started the race was a decree to rebuild the city wall in 445 B.C. We discovered that each lap is actually a set of seven years. After 69 laps, each taking seven years, we found that we came to exactly the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Messiah, riding on a donkey.

But once 69 laps is over, does the last lap take place immediately after that? In other words, do the last seven years of the prophecy occur right after Messiah's death? I do not think so. I think after 69 laps, it is as if the race is paused; the timer is paused for an unspecified time. After that time, the timer begins again, and the last week of seven years runs its course. I believe that the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy remains unfulfilled, 2000 years after Christ's death and resurrection. And because I believe the Bible to be infallible, I believe this final week of Daniel's prophecy is a prophecy about the future, a prophecy that will be fulfilled in our lifetimes or beyond us.

Now that takes some defending. Why not simply hold that the prophecy runs its course? Why insert gaps? Why seek a complicated solution? Well, I'm all in favour of seeking the simplest solution. If the simplest solution (simply letting the prophecy occur in one unbroken string of time) actually worked then I would hold to it. However, it doesn't work. So what I want to do is firstly give you seven reasons why the last week of this prophecy is separated from the first sixty-nine. Then I want to examine what happens in that final week.

I. Why a Gap Exists Before the Seventieth Week

1) Because Jesus included gaps in prophecies.

In Luke 4, Jesus is preaching in a synagogue in Nazareth.

Luke 4:16-21 ¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." ²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

When Jesus read from Isaiah, He was reading chapter 61:1-2. Listen to the prophecy in Isaiah, and see where Jesus left a gap:

Isaiah 61:1-2 *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn.*

Jesus stopped in the middle of verse 2, because he had not come to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. When is God's day of vengeance? Well, it is yet future, the time of God's judgement upon the earth. The point is, Isaiah saw it all in one verse, but Jesus, as the Son of God knew that this prophecy would be fulfilled at different times. He knew there was a gap of time, of at least two thousand years between one part of the prophecy and the next.

2) *Because other prophecies demand a gap*

Isaiah 9:6-7 *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

Notice what happens here: Messiah is born in verse 6. But then Messiah is the Ruler, and His kingdom is one of everlasting peace. One of the objections of the Jewish people to Jesus is that they say, if Jesus is the Messiah, why didn't He bring peace? Answer: because He brings everlasting peace at His Second Coming, not at the first. But once again, you have a gap of time in the same prophecy, even though it seems to be one prophecy.

3) *Because we have already seen gaps in other prophecies in Daniel.*

In chapter 2, we saw a stone cut out without hands, striking the feet of iron and clay, and completely destroying human self-rule. We saw that there must be a gap of time between Rome as pure iron, and Rome as iron and clay. We saw in Daniel 7 that the final beast had 10 horns, and an eleventh one, which came up, supplanting three, and did blasphemous and terrible things, before being destroyed when the Son of Man came. Once again, we saw there must be a gap between original Rome, and when Rome is destroyed and Messiah's kingdom is set up.

4) *Because the events described at the end of verse 26 demand a gap.*

Look at what happens at the end of verse 26.

Daniel 9:26 ⁶ *"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.*

Look at what Gabriel said would occur after that 69th week. The people of the prince to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple? The Romans. When did they do that? In 70 A.D. The Temple was not destroyed within seven years of the 69th week. It was not as if the clock kept running, and all this happened within another seven years. 40 years intervene between the cutting off of Messiah and the destruction of the Temple. This is a natural wedge between the 69th and seventieth weeks. So no matter how you look at it, there is some gap here.

- 5) *Because the events of verse 27, the seventieth week, are treated separately from the first sixty nine.*

There's a clear break here. Even in the Hebrew, the first word is marked off with what's called a vav consecutive, which means these things follow after what has gone before. The writer could have treated all that happens in the seventieth week in one unbroken sentence, but he instead chose to show that this was a separate thought. He has split the seventy weeks into three groups: seven, sixty-two and one. The final one week is given a whole verse of its own.

- 6) *Because the fulfilled events of the whole prophecy did not occur in 39 AD.*

Remember the six things we saw must happen when the whole vision is complete?

- 1) To finish the transgression: to bring Israel's apostasy to a climax and judge it once and for all.
- 2) To make an end of sins: with a final conclusionary judgement
- 3) To make reconciliation for iniquity: to make atonement and apply it to the nation of Israel
- 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness: to bring in the righteousness of the kingdom described by the prophets.
- 5) To seal up vision and prophecy – to bring finality and fulfillment to all prior prophecy and revelation
- 6) To anoint the Most Holy – to consecrate the great Temple described in Ezekiel 40-48.

Well, if you want this seventieth week to follow right after the sixty ninth, then that means the 69th week occurs in 32 A.D., and the seventieth week finishes in 39 A.D. Did anything significant happen in 39 A.D.? No, nothing like the events of verse 27.

Certainly throughout the book of Acts, prophecy continued, everlasting righteousness did not come in, the rebellion of the nation did not end. The events of verse 27 did not take place in the seven years after Christ's death. So there seems to be a gap.

- 7) *Because Jesus placed the events of verse 27 right before His return.*

In Matthew 24, Jesus is answering two questions: when will the Temple be destroyed, and what will be the sign of your coming?

Jesus references Daniel's seventieth week here:

Matthew 24:15-16 ¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Notice some of the things Jesus say will follow seeing the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27

Matthew 24:21-27 ¹ "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. ²³ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. ²⁴ "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ "See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. ²⁷ "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. ²⁹ "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the

clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Notice, according to Jesus, when you see what Daniel spoke about, flee, because the greatest tribulation the world has ever seen is about to take place, followed by the personal return of Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus is saying that the seventieth week of Daniel occurs right before His Second Coming. This seems to be the strongest confirmation that the seventieth week of this prophecy is separated from the other 69 by a gap of time. Jesus places it just before His Second Coming, the events of verse 27 didn't take place immediately after 32 A.D, they are placed separately from the others.

So it seems this seventieth week of Daniel is yet future. Like we have seen with Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, there seems to be a break, and the complete fulfilment of this prophecy is still future. In fact, as we'll see, most of the book of Revelation describes this seventieth week of Daniel. In many ways, in this seventieth week of Daniel are some of the most significant years in human history. These seven years are the years in which the greatest tribulation the world has ever seen takes place. They are the years in which religious apostasy comes to a climax. They are the years in which religious persecution comes to a climax. They are the years in which human conflict and war reaches its worst points. And they are the years in which God's wrath on unbelieving mankind is poured out upon the world.

Because of its enormous similarity to Jesus' descriptions in Matthew 24, to Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 2, and to the book of Revelation, we see this seventieth week of Daniel as the seven-year period known as the Tribulation. What happens in this Tribulation period?

II. What Happens in the Seventieth Week

²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

- 1) 'He' confirms (forces) a covenant with many for the week.
- 2) He brings an end to sacrifice and offering.
- 3) A desolator comes, until his declared end comes upon him.

So there are several questions we have to ask and answer here. Who is the *he* in verse 27? Are there two he's? (The NKJV capitalises one of them, which is interpretive). What is the covenant? Who is it made with? What does it mean that sacrifice and offering are brought to an end? Who is the desolator and what happens to him?

Let's begin with that first event: *He confirms a covenant with many for one week*. Now, we have already established that the word *week* in the vision refers to a set of seven. Each lap in that race lasted seven years. Sixty-nine laps of seven years each brought us to Messiah the Prince, so how long is this seventieth week? It is one more lap of seven years.

Someone makes a covenant with a group of people for seven years. We don't yet know what the covenant is, but we know it is a seven-year covenant.

Who is the 'many' that the covenant is made with? We don't have any direct evidence, except to look back at the context. Who is this prophecy about? Gabriel said that this is about Daniel's people and

Daniel's city: The Jewish people and Jerusalem. "The many" may include a lot more people, but it seems safe to say that it at least includes the Jewish people. A seven-year covenant is made with many people, which at minimum includes Israel.

Who is the 'he' that makes this seven-year covenant? We really only have two choices here. There are two individuals mentioned in verse 26. Messiah the Prince, and the prince that will come. Now notice that prince is referenced to identify the people-group that will destroy the Temple. Which people destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D.? The Romans. So if they are the people of the prince to come, then the prince to come is a Roman prince, a Roman ruler. So those are our two choices. Either Messiah makes a seven-year covenant with the many, or a Roman prince makes a covenant with the many. Let's examine those two options.

Messiah the Prince?

Did the Lord Jesus make a covenant with Israel for seven years? Messiah made no covenant for seven years with Israel. His covenant with Israel is eternal, not for seven years. The New Covenant that He made with all believers is not a seven-year covenant.

Did the Lord Jesus cause offerings to cease within seven years of His death? No. Although His death meant that Jewish offerings were now redundant, those offerings continued to be offered for another 40 years. If the *he* of verse 27 refers to Messiah, then it connects with the end of verse 26, meaning that Messiah destroyed the city and its Temple. But we know He did not do that. For those reasons, it seems unlikely that the 'he' of verse 27 is the Lord Jesus.

A Roman prince?

The 'he' of verse 27 is nearer to the words of verse 26: "*And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.*"

The prince of verse 26 is said to be a Roman, which agrees with chapter 7's little horn, who speaks great blasphemies, and makes war against the saints. The words 'prince to come' indicates he has been mentioned before again verifying that this is probably the same person mentioned in chapter 7. The rest of the verse fits the activities of Antichrist described in other portions of Scripture.

So I think what we have here is that the coming Roman prince will sign a seven-year covenant with the many, probably with Israel, and maybe with her neighbours. It's significant that the Hebrew word for 'confirm' can actually mean 'force'. He uses strength and military power to insist that the many sign this covenant.

What is the second thing he does?

But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

Since we are dealing with weeks of years, and one week equals seven years, what would the middle of seven years be? Three and a half years, or 42 months.

Revelation 13:1-7 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" ⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking

great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

It seems that this Roman prince signs the covenant with the many for seven years. But in the middle of these seven years, he seems to break the covenant. He is revealed as a horrific persecutor for the last 3 ½ years, persecuting and destroying.

What is it that he does?

2 Thessalonians 2:3-8 ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

It seems that at some point, the Jewish Temple is rebuilt, and sacrifices resume. Perhaps that forms part of this covenant. However, at the mid-point, he breaks the covenant. He performs some kind of abomination which is climactic. This corresponds to the third sentence in verse 27. He is the desolator who makes desolate. What is this abomination? He goes into the Temple, just like people like Antiochus had done, and stops the offerings. Instead, he presents himself as God, and as the one to be worshipped.

Daniel 12:11 ¹¹ "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

For those last 3 ½ years, the Temple and Jerusalem are under his control. Terrible persecutions break out, wars are fought, alongside all the judgements God pours out on the earth.

Revelation 11:1-3 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. ³ "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Some of the wars that this Roman prince fights are predicted in chapter 11. But the comforting news is that he, like Antiochus Epiphanes will meet his end. The Hebrew of the last part of verse 27 is difficult, and comes out quite differently in various translations, but the basic idea is this: As a climax to all the abominations, the abominable one will perform an act of great abomination until his decreed end is poured out on him.

He performs his act of ultimate blasphemy in the Temple, but he meets his end a few years later. Like Daniel 7 says, the court sits, and the beast is caught and slain when the Lord returns.

Paul says that in 2 Thessalonians 3:

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

Revelation shows the same events:

Revelation 19:19-20 ⁹ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And what happens immediately after that? Assuming that this Roman prince is caught and executed at the end of the seventieth week, what happens then?

III. What Happens After the Seventieth Week

Revelation 20:1-6 **Revelation 20:1** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. ⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

At the end of the seventieth week, Christ returns, slays the Antichrist. Like we saw in Daniel 2 and in Daniel 7 – the stone hits the image, the council sits and the Beast is killed, and the Son of Man takes up the kingdom. And now, as this kingdom is set up, we see the complete fulfillment of the things mentioned in verse 24:

Daniel 9:24 To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

It is in Christ's kingdom that Israel's apostasy comes to an end; that the whole nation is saved; that everlasting righteousness is brought in; that vision and prophecy is completed, and the Temple described in Ezekiel 40-48 is consecrated. It is when the seventieth week is finished that these things take place, and they take place at the start of Christ's millennial kingdom.

So just like chapter 2's dream, and like chapter 7's vision, chapter 9's vision goes from the time of the rebuilding of the Second Temple, all the way to Messiah, the destruction of that Temple, and into the final seven-year tribulation, where Antichrist has his way until he is destroyed. The Tribulation ends with Christ's return, and the setting up of His kingdom, which fulfils the whole prophecy of the seventy weeks.

Now consider how this would have affected Daniel's worship of God, and how it should affect ours. First, Daniel would have seen that God keeps His promises to Israel. God had said in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:35-37 ³⁵ Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): ³⁶ "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever." ³⁷ Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the LORD.

Here Daniel sees the truth of that. God will persist with Israel, even through Messiah's death, even through another destruction of the Temple, even through a final persecutor – God will keep His promises to Israel, and bring them to a place of everlasting righteousness. He will see this prophecy through to its glorious happy, ending. That gives us hope. If God did not keep his promises to Israel, how would we know if he would keep his promises to us. If Jehovah divorced Israel for unfaithfulness, might Christ not divorce the church for unfaithfulness? The answer is that He has not divorced Israel, and He will not cast us aside. Though we wander, yet He abides faithful.

Second, Daniel would have seen the great power of God and His Son over the most satanic man the world will ever see. No matter how intimidating he may seem, how much military might he has, no matter what weapons he has, he will be consumed by the returning Christ. Daniel was reminded of those two great themes: God is powerful enough to rule over the world, and powerful enough to protect His faithful ones during times of trial.

Whenever people see natural disasters, wars, or other calamities, there is a tendency for end-time fever to arise. People get jittery, and even nervous. But the point of the book of Daniel is to say, you needn't worry and be anxious, regardless of which tyrants, rulers, dictators or persecutors arise. God appoints them for a time, and then removes them. Our eyes are not to be looking for Antichrist, but Christ. Our hope is in Prince Jesus. Antichrist has seven years. Christ has an eternal kingdom, that will not be removed.

I'm looking for Christ, not Antichrist. I pray 'Thy kingdom come'. I look with great anticipation for the day Messiah the Prince returns, not on a donkey riding into Jerusalem to be the sacrificial Lamb, but on a white horse, returning on the clouds, to rule as the Lion of Judah.