

DANIEL’S PROPHECY OF THE “SEVENTY WEEKS”

by

Wayne Jackson, M.A.

Copyright © Apologetics Press

All rights reserved. This document may be printed or stored on computer media, on the condition that it will not be republished in print, on-line (including reposting on any personal Web sites, corporate Web sites, organizational Web sites, electronic bulletin boards, etc.), or on computer media, and will not be used for any commercial purposes. Further, it must be copied with source statements (publisher, author, title, bibliographic references, etc.), and must include this paragraph granting limited rights for copying and reproduction, along with the name and address of the publisher and owner of these rights, as listed below. Except for those exclusions mentioned above, and brief quotations in articles or critical reviews, or distribution for educational purposes (including students in classes), no part of this document may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher.

Apologetics Press, Inc.
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117 U.S.A.
334/272-8558
800/234-8558



www.ApologeticsPress.org

DANIEL’S PROPHECY OF THE “SEVENTY WEEKS”

by

Wayne Jackson, M.A.

Jesus Christ emphatically declared that the Old Testament Scriptures contained prophecies He would fulfill (Luke 24:27,44). Biblical scholars have catalogued more than 300 amazing prophecies that find precise fulfillment in the life and labor of the Son of God. One of these predictive declarations is found in Daniel 9:24-27, commonly referred to as the prophecy of “Daniel’s 70 weeks.”

A proper analysis of Daniel 9:24ff. involves several factors. First, one should reflect upon the historical background out of which the prophetic utterance arose. Second, consideration should be given to the theological aspects of the Messiah’s work that are set forth in this passage. Third, the chronology of the prophecy must be noted carefully; it represents a prime example of the precision of divine prediction. Finally, one should contemplate the sobering judgment that was to be visited upon the Jewish nation in the wake of its rejection of Christ. Let us give some attention to each of these issues.

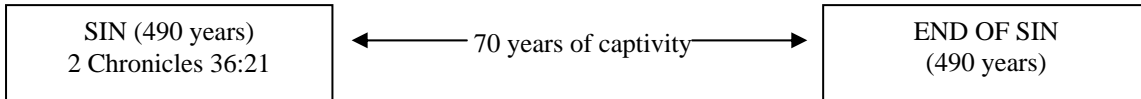
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Because of Israel’s apostasy, the prophet Jeremiah had foretold that the Jews would be delivered as captives to Babylon. In that foreign land they would be confined for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12; 29: 10). Sure enough, the prophet’s warnings proved accurate. The general period of the Babylonian confinement was 70 years (Daniel 9:2; 2 Chronicles 36:21; Zechariah 1:12; 7:5). But why was a **70-year** captivity decreed? Why not 60, or 80? There was a reason for this exact time frame.

The law of Moses had commanded the Israelites to acknowledge every seventh year as a sabbatical year. The ground was to lie at rest (Leviticus 25:1-7). Apparently, across the centuries Israel had ignored that divinely imposed regulation. In their pre-captivity history, there seems to be no example of their ever having honored the sabbath-year law. Thus, according to the testimony of one biblical writer, the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity was assigned “until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths” (2 Chronicles 36:21).

If each of the 70 captivity-years represented a violation of the sabbatical-year requirement (i.e., every seventh year) as 2 Chronicles 36:21 appears to suggest, this would indicate that Israel had neglected the

divine injunction for approximately 490 years. The captivity era therefore looked **backward** upon almost five centuries of sinful neglect. At the same time, Daniel’s prophecy telescoped **forward** to a time—some 490 years into the future—when the “Anointed One” would “make an end of sins” (9:24). Daniel’s prophecy seems to mark a sort of “mid-way” point in the historical scheme of things. Observe the following diagram over 70 years of captivity:



In the first year of Darius, who had been appointed king over the realm of the Chaldeans (c. 538 B.C.), Daniel, reflecting upon the time span suggested by Jeremiah’s prophecies, calculated that the captivity period almost was over (9:1-2). He thus approached Jehovah in prayer. The prophet confessed his own sins, as well as those of the nation. He petitioned Jehovah to turn away His wrath from Jerusalem and permit the temple to be rebuilt (9:16-17). The Lord responded to Daniel’s prayer in a message delivered by the angel Gabriel (9:24-27). The house of God would be rebuilt. A more significant blessing would come, however, in the person of the Anointed One (Christ), Who is greater than the temple (cf. Matthew 12:6). This prophecy was a delightful message of consolation to the despondent Hebrews in captivity.

CAPTIVITY CHRONOLOGY

In order to appreciate the chronological computation that will ensue, the following data concerning the captivity, deportations, and returns need to be introduced:

DEPORTATIONS	RETURNS
606-5 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1; Daniel 1:1-6)	536 B.C. (Ezra 2:2—Zerubbabel)
597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:10; Ezekiel 1:2)	457 B.C. (Ezra 7:6-7—Ezra)
586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:8)	444 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:1,11—Nehemiah)

PROPHETICAL TIME FRAME

At this point, read Daniel 9:24-27 again. Observe that the prophecy involves a time frame of 70 weeks. These are not literal weeks; rather they are prophetic weeks (cf. Payne, 1973, p. 383). The 70 weeks of 7 days each would compute to 490 days or, in prophetic language, 490 years (cf. Ezekiel 4:6; see Barnes, 1972, pp. xi ff.). This view is accepted by virtually all conservative Bible scholars.

DESIGN OF THE PROPHECY

The following outline sketches the general function of the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks:

1. The Messiah's earthly advent and its purpose (24).
2. The beginning point of the prophetic 70 weeks (25a).
3. The initial phase of the prophecy—the rebuilding of Jerusalem (25b).
4. The Messiah's death (26a).
5. Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed because of the Jewish rejection of the Messiah (26 b).
6. The Messiah's covenant replaces the former covenant (27a).
7. The full end of the Jewish system (27b).

THE MESSIAH'S MISSION

This exciting context sets forth the primary purpose of Christ's mission to Earth. First, the Messiah would come to deal with the problem of human sin. He would "finish transgression," make an "end of sins," and effect "reconciliation for iniquity." That theme is developed gloriously throughout the New Testament (see Matthew 1:21; 20:28; 26:28; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 1:5—passages that are but a fractional sampling of the New Testament references to this exalted topic).

The advent of Christ did not put an "end" to sin in the sense that wickedness was eradicated from the Earth. Rather, the work of the Savior was to introduce a **system** that could provide effectively and permanently a solution to the human sin predicament. This is one of the themes of the book of Hebrews. Jesus' death was a "once-for-all" event (see Hebrews 9:26). The Lord never will have to return to the Earth to repeat the Calvary experience.

It is interesting to note that Daniel emphasized that the Anointed One would address the problems of “transgression,” “sin,” and “iniquity”—as if to suggest that the Lord is capable of dealing with evil in all of its hideous forms. Similarly, the prophet Isaiah, in the 53rd chapter of his narrative, revealed that the Messiah would sacrifice Himself for “transgression” (5,8,12), “sin” (10,12), and “iniquity” (5,6,11). It also is worthy of mention at this point that Isaiah 53 frequently is quoted in the New Testament in conjunction with the Lord’s atoning work at the time of His **first** coming. Since Daniel 9:24ff. quite obviously has an identical thrust, it, too, must focus upon the Savior’s work at the cross and not upon Jesus’ **second** coming—as is alleged by premillennialists.

Second, in addition to His redemptive work in connection with sin, Daniel showed that the Messiah would usher in an era of “everlasting righteousness.” This obviously is a reference to the Gospel dispensation. In the pages of the New Testament, Paul forcefully argued that Heaven’s plan for accounting man as “righteous” was made known “at this present season” (Roman 3:21-26) through the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17).

Third, the angel’s message suggested that as a result of the Messiah’s work, “vision and prophecy” would be **sealed** up. The Hebrew term denotes that which is brought to a “conclusion” or is finished (Gesenius, 1979, p. 315). It should be emphasized that the major purpose of the Old Testament was to proclaim the coming of God’s Son. Peter declared that the prophets of ancient times heralded the “sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them.” He affirmed that this message now had been announced in the Gospel (1 Peter 1:10-12). Here is a crucial point. With the coming of the Savior to effect human redemption, and with the completion of the New Testament that sets forth that message, **the need for “vision and prophecy” became obsolete.** As a result, “prophecy” (and other revelatory gifts) “ceased” (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:11-16). There are no supernatural “visions” and “prophecies” being given by God in this age. [For further study, see Judisch (1978, Chapter 5) and Jackson (1990, pp. 114-124).]

Fourth, Daniel stated that the “most holy” would be anointed. What is the meaning of this expression? Dispensational premillennialists interpret this as a reference to the rebuilding of the Jewish temple during the so-called “millennium.” But the premillennial concept is not supported by the biblical facts.

Any view that one adopts regarding this phraseology must be consistent with other scriptural data. The expression “most holy” probably is an allusion to Christ Himself, and the “anointing” is a reference to the Lord’s endowment with the Holy Spirit at the commencement of His ministry (Matthew 3:16; Acts 10:38). Consider the following factors. (1) While it is possible that the grammar can reflect a “most holy” thing or place (i.e., in a neuter form), it also can yield a masculine sense—“Most Holy One.” The immediate context tips the scales toward the masculine since the “anointed one, the prince” is mentioned in verse 25. (2) The “anointing” obviously belongs to the same time frame as the events mentioned previously, hence is associated with the Lord’s **first** coming, not His **second**. (3) Thompson has observed that the act of anointing never was associated with the temple’s “most holy” place in the Old Testament (1950, p. 268). (4) Anointing was practiced in the Old Testament period as a rite of inauguration and consecration to the offices of prophet (1 Kings 19:16), priest (Exodus 28:41), and king (1 Samuel 10:1). Significantly, Christ functions in each of these roles (see Acts 3:20-23; Hebrews 3:1; Matthew 21:5). (5) The anointing of Jesus was foretold elsewhere in the Old Testament (Isaiah 61:1) and, in fact, the very title, “Christ,” means anointed.

Fifth, the Anointed One was to “make a firm covenant with many” (Daniel 9:27a, ASV). A better rendition would be: “Make a covenant firm....” The meaning seems to be that the Messiah’s covenant will remain firm, i.e., it will **prevail**, even though He would be killed. The “covenant,” as E.J. Young observed, “is the covenant of grace wherein the Messiah, by His life and death, obtains salvation for His people” (1954, p. 679).

Sixth, as a result of Christ’s death, “the sacrifice and the oblation” would cease (9:27a). This is an allusion to the cessation of the Jewish sacrifices as a consequence of Jesus’ ultimate sacrificial offering at Golgotha. When the Lord died, the Mosaic law was “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). That “middle wall of partition” was abolished (Ephesians 2:13-17), and the “first covenant” was replaced by the “sec-

ond” (Hebrews 10:9-10). This was the “new covenant” of Jeremiah’s famous prophecy (Jeremiah 31:31-34; cf. Hebrews 8:7ff.) and was ratified by the blood of Jesus Himself (Matthew 26:28). This context is a rich depository of truth concerning the accomplishments of Christ by means of His redemptive work.

THE PROPHETIC CHRONOLOGY

The time element of this famous prophecy enabled the studious Hebrew to know when the promised Messiah would die for the sins of humanity. The chronology of this prophetic context involves three things: (1) a commencement point; (2) a duration period; and (3) a concluding event.

The **beginning** point was to coincide with a command to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem.” The time span between the starting point and the concluding event was specified as “seventy weeks.” This would be 70 weeks of 7 days each—a total of 490 days. Each day was to represent a year in prophetic history. Most conservative scholars hold that the symbolism denotes a period of approximately 490 years (Payne, 1973, p. 383; Archer, 1964, p. 387; cf. RSV). Finally, the **terminal** event would be the “cutting off” (i.e., the death) of the Anointed One (9:26). Actually, the chronology is divided into three segments, the total of which represents 486½ years.*

If one were able to determine the date of the commencement point of this prophecy, it then would become a relatively simple matter to add to that the time duration specified in the text, thereby obtaining the precise time when the Lord was to be slain. Let us therefore narrow our focus regarding this matter.

There are but three possible dates for the commencement of the 70-week calendar. First, Zerubbabel led a group of Hebrews out of captivity in 536 B.C. This seems to be an unlikely beginning point, however, because 486 years from 536 B.C. would end at 50 B.C., which was eighty years **prior** to Jesus’ death. Second, the charge given in Ezekiel 1:2-3 was primarily to rebuild the temple. Moreover, some see Nehemiah’s charge (444 B.C.) as the beginning time of the prophecy, especially since Nehemiah definitely was commissioned to rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:3,5). However, 486 years after 444 B.C. would end at A.D. 42—a dozen years **after** the death of Christ. It has been suggested, that so few

* This would be the span between the command to restore Jerusalem and the Messiah’s death.

years really are insignificant compared with the fact that the prophecy spans nearly five centuries. While this may be a possibility, I do not favor this position in view of the precision of Old Testament prophecy concerning the time of the coming of Jesus and the accomplishment of His work. Note the following time indicators concerning Christ's first coming.

(a) Christ, the branch, would not come until the kingly lineage of Jesse became a stem (or stock—ASV; Isaiah 11:1). “Stem” is “the trunk of a felled tree” (Gesenius, 1979, p. 116). The last political king of that family was Jeconiah (Jeremiah 22:24-30).

(b) The Messiah and His Kingdom would come in the days of the Romans kings (Daniel 2:44), between about 63 B.C. and A.D. 476.

(c) Shiloh would come before Judah lost her right of self-government (Genesis 49:10). That privilege of political independence was severed in A.D. 6 when Archalaus, son of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:22), was deposed (cf. Dana, 1937, pp. 97-98).

(d) As the anti-type of the Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), Christ was slain at the time of the Passover (John 13:1); in fact, as the Passover lamb was killed “between the two evenings” (Exodus 12:6, ASV footnote; i.e.: between the ninth and eleventh hours—cf. Josephus, *Wars*, VI.IX.3), so Jesus died at the ninth hour (Mark 15:34,37).

(e) The Lord repeatedly spoke of His approaching “hour,” as though such were a fulfillment of a scheduled program of death (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

(f) In view of the precision of these prophetic indications, therefore, it seems unlikely that the prediction of Daniel 9 was so general as to miss the time of the Messiah's death by a dozen years or so.

However, in 457 B.C. Ezra took a company from Babylon back to Jerusalem. Does this date work mathematically? Indeed it does. If one starts at 457 B.C. and works forward 486½ years, the resulting date is A.D. 30—the very year of Christ's crucifixion! This is the most commonly held view (Scott, 1975, 5:364).

The strongest objection to this argument is the claim that Ezra issued no charge to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and therefore the starting point of the prophecy could not date from the time of his return. Noted scholar Gleason Archer has responded to this allegation by affirming that Ezra's commission:

...apparently included authority to restore and build the city of Jerusalem (as we may deduce from Ezra 7:6,7, and also 9:9, which states, "God...hath extended loving kindness unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a **wall in Judea and in Jerusalem,**" ASV). Even though Ezra did not actually succeed in accomplishing the rebuilding of the walls till Nehemiah arrived thirteen years later, it is logical to understand 457 B.C. as the *terminus a quo* for the decree predicted in Daniel 9:25 (1964, p. 387, emp. in orig.).

In "the midst" of the seventieth week, i.e., after the fulfillment of the 486½ years, the Anointed One was to be "cut off"—a reference to the death of Jesus. Isaiah similarly foretold that Christ would be "cut off out of the land of the living" (53:8).

CHRONOLOGICAL BREAKDOWN

But why are the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy divided into three segments—7 weeks, 62 weeks, and the "midst" of one week? There was purpose in this breakdown. (1) The first division of 7 weeks (literally, 49 years) covers that period of time during which the actual rebuilding of Jerusalem would be underway following the Hebrews' return to Palestine (9:25b). This was the answer to Daniel's prayer (9:16). That reconstruction era was to be one of "troubled times." The Jews' enemies had harassed them in earlier days (see Ezra 4:1-6) and continued to do so in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Whitcomb has described this period as follows.

One of the by-products of the revival under Ezra seems to have been an effort on the part of the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This in turn provoked the wrath of Rehum and Shimshai, who wrote an accusation against them to Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7-16). The king commanded the work to cease until a further decree should be issued (Ezra 4:21). Rehum and Shimshai, upon receiving this decree from the king, hurried to Jerusalem and "made them to cease by force and power," presumably breaking down the wall that had been started and burning the gates (Ezra 4:23; Nehemiah 1:3). It was the news of this fresh disaster that shocked Nehemiah and brought him to his knees before God (1962, p. 435).

(2) The second segment of 62 weeks (434 years), when added to the previous 49, yields a total of 483 years. When this figure is computed from 457 B.C., it terminates at A.D. 26. This was the year of Jesus' baptism and the beginning of His public ministry. Starting from 457 B.C., and counting forward 483 years (49 plus 434) would bring one to 26 A.D., the approximate time of the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:13ff.).

(3) The third division of Daniel's chronology is "the midst" of the 70th week (i.e., approximately 3½ years beyond the end of the 69th week). This was wonderfully fulfilled in the 3½ years of the personal ministry of Christ. That the Lord's ministry spanned this approximate time frame may be observed by noting that this period encompassed four Passovers (John 2:13,23; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1), in addition to the weeks that preceded the first one in John 2:13. This segment of the prophecy concluded in A.D. 30—the year of the Savior's death.

The dispensational theory contends that the 69th week of Daniel's prophecy culminates in the death of Christ. It further alleges that there is a vast gap between the 69th and 70th weeks, known as the "church age," which was completely unknown to the Old Testament prophets. According to the dispensational scheme, therefore, the 70th week is the so-called "tribulation period" (of 7 years), which is supposed to precede the battle of Armageddon and the thousand-year earthly reign of Christ. The utter falsity of this view is revealed by the fact that the passage does not suggest that the Messiah's death terminates the 69th week. Rather, the text is very clear that the anointed one is cut off at some point **after** the 69th week (26a).

There is absolutely no justification for assuming that there is a gap of hundreds of years between the 69th and 70th weeks of this prophecy. The truth is that 278 weeks already have passed since the death of the Lord. How, then, can we still be waiting for the 70th? Is it not reasonable to conclude that if there was historical continuity between the first 7 weeks and the following 62 weeks, there also was continuity between the 69th and 70th weeks? How tragic it is that some religionists will butcher the text of the Bible in order to justify their pet theories.

A main item of emphasis in the great prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks is the death of the anointed prince. The English translation of the Septuagint speaks of the coming of "Christ the prince" (25a). The term "prince" is used in the sense of "royal dignity" (Gesenius, 1979, p. 531) and frequently is applied in the Old Testament to a king (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 13:14). Christ was that king (Matthew 2:2; 21:5).

It was foretold that the Messiah would be "cut off" (26a). The Hebrew term suggests the punishment of death in general, without any definition of manner (Gesenius, 1979, p. 417; cf. Genesis 9:11; cf. also Exodus 31:14 with Numbers 15:32). The Syriac version renders the phrase as "the Messiah shall be

slain.” Though a different term is used, notice the similar expression in Isaiah 52:8—“he was cut off out of the land of the living.”

The KJV rendition that the Messiah shall be cut off “but not for himself” is not justified by the original. Better is the ASV (text and margin) that the Anointed One would “have nothing” or “there shall be none belonging to him.” The meaning may be that, with the death of Christ, from the viewpoint of His generation, it appeared that He had nothing; His movement was finished! [See Luke 24:21 where the expectation is expressed (in the ASV footnote) that as Israel rejected Him by killing Him, so He would renounce physical Israel and they would belong to Him no longer—a hint of their impending doom.]

The prophecy also stated: “And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cease the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (27a). As was noted earlier, the midst of the week (i.e., 3½ years) denotes the Lord’s personal ministry, which was climaxed by His death. As a result, the law of Moses with its sacrifices and oblations was terminated. The law was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14); as a “middle wall of partition,” the law was abolished by the death of Christ (Ephesian 2:13-17). Christ made a new covenant (foretold by Jeremiah—31:31-34; cf. Hebrews 8:6ff.) that was inaugurated by the shedding of His own blood (Matthew 26:28).

But this question naturally arises: If Christ was cut off in “the midst” of that final week, why does the text state that the Lord would make a covenant with many for “one week”? In other words, what is the significance of the full 70 weeks? Possibly the termination of that full final week extends to the time of the conversion of Paul, at which point the Gospel accelerated predominately among the Gentiles. Paul’s conversion generally is dated 3-4 years after the death of Christ (see Scott, 1975, 1: 822).

Finally, a word about the premillennial view of the covenant is needed. Dispensationalists hold that “the covenant” is an agreement between the “Antichrist” and Israel during that so-called “Tribulation” period to precede the millennium. These errorists further maintain that the cessation of sacrifices is a reference to the termination of a restored Judaism (with all its bloody offerings) in the early phase of the Tribulation period. In other words, it is alleged that due to a covenant made with the Antichrist, the Old

Testament system will be restored during the first 3½ years of the Tribulation period. But the Antichrist will break that covenant, hence, the sacrifices will cease at the midway point of that final week.

Two things need to be noted. (1) First, this contradicts all the biblical passages that affirm the permanency of the abrogation of the Law of Moses. In Colossians 2:14, Paul said that the law “hath been taken away.” The Greek verb is a perfect tense; i.e., it stresses the permanency of the abrogation of the Mosaical covenant (cf. Robertson, 1930, 4:494). The Old Testament law served its function (Galatians 3:24-25) and thus never will be restored. (2) Second, to take a biblical prophecy that has to do with Christ and His covenant, and then apply it to some Antichrist and a covenant he is supposed to make, is the very epitome of Scripture perversion and smacks of an infidelic spirit (see my tracts: *Premillennialism: A System of Infidelity* and *The Battle of Armageddon*).

The book of Daniel records the prophecy of the Roman invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. It was written that “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (26b). It further was announced that desolation and war had been determined and that such would come like an overwhelming flood. The historical facts of the situation are these. During the procuratorship of Florus (A.D. 66), the Jews revolted against the Roman government (see Dana, 1937, pp. 103-105). This plunged the Jews into several years of bloody, horrible war with the Romans. The “prince” who led the Roman forces was Titus, son and successor of the renowned Vespasian. [NOTE: the “prince” of verse 26a is not the same prince as the Anointed One, Christ, of verse 25. The prince of verse 26 comes after the Anointed one has been cut off.]

During this terrible holocaust, the city of Jerusalem was burned (Matthew 22:7) and the sanctuary (the temple) was demolished. Jesus told the Jews of His day that the temple would be left desolate (Matthew 24:2). Significantly, only one stone from that temple, and parts of another, have been positively identified by archeologists (Frank, 1972, p. 249). J.N. Geldenhuys, summing up the horrible scene, said that Titus:

...overran the city with his army, destroyed and plundered the temple, and slew the Jews—men, women and children—by tens of thousands. When their lust for blood had been sated, the Romans carried off into captivity all the able-bodied remnant of the Jews (for they had done away with all the weaklings and the

aged), so that not a single Jew was left alive in the city or its vicinity. Only on one day in the year—the day of remembrance of the destruction of the temple—were they allowed to mourn over the city from the neighboring hill-tops (1960, 3:141).

It is of interest that apparently the Jews recognized that the destruction of the city and temple was a fulfillment of Daniel's record. Josephus declared that "Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them" (1957, X.XI.7). In connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, Daniel said "upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate" (27b). Gesenius identified the wing as "the highest summit of the temple" (1957, p. 406). "Abominations" frequently is used of idols in the Old Testament (1 Kings 11:5; 2 Kings 23:13; Daniel 11:31; 12:11). Within this context it doubtless refers to the idolatrous ensigns of the Roman armies. Josephus observed that when the Romans burned the temple they "brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there they did offer sacrifices to them" (1957, VI.VI.1). Thus, the Roman armies, with their abominable idolatries, desolated the holy city and the holy place—just as Christ had foretold (Matthew 24:14; Luke 21:20).

One may wonder how the destruction of Jerusalem can be a part of the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks, especially since that event occurred 40 years after the death of Christ. It must be noted, however, that Daniel did not affirm that the **actual desolation** of the city would occur within the 70 weeks. Rather, the text suggests that Jerusalem's **fate** would be determined within that span (26b; 27b). When the Jews reached the epitome of their rebellion and crucified their own Messiah, the decree was made that they be destroyed. By killing Christ, they had filled up the measure of wickedness characteristic of their rebellious ancestors (cf. Matthew 23:32). Jesus Himself predicted that that cumulative rebellion would be required of "this generation" (Luke 11:50-51). And so, this marked the "full end" of Judaism—both religiously and politically—from Heaven's vantage point.

Finally, a brief comment concerning the premillennial view of all of this is necessary. The dispensational theory alleges that the "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place (Matthew 24:15) is a prophecy of a powerful dictator yet to arise—the Antichrist. It is claimed that he will desecrate the restored temple in that so-called tribulation period, which is supposed to precede the millennium. There are

several things wrong with this. First, the participles *rhethen* (“which was spoken”) and *hestos* (“standing”) in Matthew 24:15 are neuter gender and thus do not refer to a man (cf. Lenski, 1961, p. 938; 1964, p. 574). Second, there is no specific, solitary character in the Bible isolated as the Antichrist. The apostle John, the only biblical writer to employ the term, declared of his own day: “Even now have there arisen many antichrists” (1 John 2:18). Third, nowhere does the Bible hint of a seven-year tribulation period. And fourth, there is not the slightest indication that the holy place (i.e. the temple) ever will be restored. Jesus said to the Jews: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). This prophecy certainly included the temple. Significantly, the verb “is left” is a prophetic present tense so that the word literally denotes: “to abandon, to leave destitute of God’s help” (Thayer, 1958, p. 89).

CONCLUSION

Daniel’s inspired record regarding the “seventy weeks” is a profound demonstration of the validity of scriptural prophecy. It not only foretells the coming of the Messiah, but details His benevolent work. The prophecy also pinpoints the very time of Jesus’ crucifixion. Finally, it reveals the disastrous consequences of rejecting the Son of God. How thankful we should be to Jehovah for providing this rich testimony.

REFERENCES

- Archer, Gleason L. (1964), *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Barnes, Albert (1972), *Barnes’ Notes, Commentary on Revelation*, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Dana, H.E. (1937), *The New Testament World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman).
- Frank, Harry Thomas (1972), *An Archaeological Companion to the Bible* (London: SCM Press).
- Geldenhuys, J. Norval (1960), “Luke,” *The Biblical Expositor*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Philadelphia, PA: Holman).
- Gesenius, William (1979 reprint), *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Jackson, Wayne (1990), “Miracles,” *Giving a Reason for Our Hope*, ed. Winford Claiborne (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman University).
- Josephus, Flavius (1957 edition), *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whitson (Philadelphia, PA: John C. Winston).
- Judisch, Douglas (1978), *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Lenski, R.C.H. (1961), *St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg).
- Lenski, R.C.H. (1964), *St. Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg).
- Payne, J. Barton (1973), *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper & Row).

Robertson, A.T. (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).

Scott, J.B. (1975), "Seventy Weeks," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).

Thayer, J.H. (1958), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark).

Thompson, J.E.H. (1950 reprint), "Daniel," *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).

Whitcomb, John C., Jr. (1962), "Nehemiah," *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody).

Young, Edward J. (1954), "Daniel," *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Davidson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).