

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY AND MILLENNIALISM

Key Bible Reading

Dan 9:24-27

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, 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.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

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.

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.”

To Whom Was the Prophecy Addressed?

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city”

The prophecy was addressed to “*your* (or Daniel’s) *people*,” and “*your* (or Daniel’s) *holy city*.” i.e. Jerusalem. It was not addressed to mankind in general, and neither does it encompass the whole world. It is addressed specifically to the Jews, and their holy city, Jerusalem. The central figure in the prophecy is “*Messiah the Prince*.”

Prophetic Time

“Seventy weeks are determined” (‘decreed or marked off’). The word “*week*” is a peculiar Hebrew idiomatic expression meaning, ‘seven.’ So literally this would read, ‘*Seventy sevens are decreed*.’

Most expositors agree that from an Old Testament prophetic standpoint, the weeks referred to are “weeks of years.” And so in Daniel’s prophecy, 70 weeks is really 70 weeks of years, or 490 years.

Starting Date of the Prophecy

The prophecy commences with “*the going forth of the command* (by Cyrus in BC 457) *to restore and build Jerusalem*.”

Works of Christ to be completed During the Seventy Weeks

The overall duration of the prophecy is seventy weeks, or 490 years. *“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, 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.”*

In this prophecy, 490 years have been set aside by God to accomplish His final dealings with Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. During this period, in which Jesus the Messiah is the central figure, six works are listed to occur

They are:

- **“to finish the transgression”** To those who believed, Jesus put an end of the transgressions of the Jewish nation. ***“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant (of grace), by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant (of the law and sacrificial offerings), that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”*** [Heb 9:15]
- **“to make an end of sins”** Jesus brought to an end the power of sins, not just ours, but those of the whole world. ***“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”*** [1 Jn 2:2]
- **“to make reconciliation for iniquity”** The thought is of bringing sinful man into fellowship with God. ***“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ...”*** [2 Cor 5:18]
- **“to bring in everlasting righteousness”** We have been made eternally righteous, or right with God by faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice. ***“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*** [2 Cor 5:21]
- **“to seal up vision and prophecy”** To set a seal on all prophecy concerning Israel as a nation. Their fate was sealed when they totally rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and declared before Pilate, ***“His blood be on us and on our children.”*** [Matt 27:25]. The fate of the Jewish nation was finalised in AD 70 when the Romans sacked Jerusalem, its inhabitants were killed or exiled to foreign nations, and the Jewish nation ceased to exist.
- **“to anoint the Most Holy”** Jesus Christ is the ***“Most Holy.”*** ***“Messiah”*** means *‘the anointed One,’* reflecting His divinity. It was confirmed that He was “the anointed One” at His baptism, when He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, God bearing witness to His divinity by saying, ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*** [Matt 3:17]

All of these works of God, point to Jesus the Messiah. They had their fulfilment in the seventieth week, when He was crucified for the sins of mankind.

Division of the Prophetic Period

After declaring the works of Christ that were to occur in the course of the prophecy, the 490 years is divided into three periods. The first two are,

- ***“seven weeks,”*** The first period is for seven weeks, or 49 years, in which the temple and walls of Jerusalem were to be restored. This is described in Nehemiah and Ezra.

- **“and sixty-two weeks,”** The second period is sixty two weeks, or 434 years, during which time the city of Jerusalem was to be restored. By the time of Christ’s ministry in Palestine, the physical city of Jerusalem had been re-established as the religious centre of Israel.
- These two periods of time, 7 weeks and 62 weeks, add up to 69 weeks. This then takes us up to the seventieth, or last week, of Daniel’s prophecy.

Messiah Cut Off

Daniel’s prophecy continues, **“And after the sixty-two weeks** (that followed the 7 weeks - taking us up to the end of the 69th week) ***Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself...*”**

The reading does not say at the end of the 62nd week, but **“after.”** Messiah was to be **“cut off”** sometime after the 69th week - or sometime during the 70th, or the last week of Daniel’s prophecy.

The words **“cut off”** in the Hebrew language always refers to death by judgment or violence. E.g. **“Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth.”** [Exod 9:15] It is an appropriate expression to use in describing the crucifixion of the Lord.

He was crucified, **“not for Himself,”** i.e. not for His own sins, or to make Himself righteous, but for mankind.

The Destruction of Jerusalem - an Interpolation

An interpolation is an inserted body of literature that introduces a new subject differing from the general train of thought of the main passage. This is not uncommon in biblical literature. In this case we are taken from what is happening to Messiah in the seventieth week, to a description of what is going to happen to Jerusalem.

“and the people of the prince (‘a commander - civil, military, or religious’) ***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.*”**

This prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70, when the Roman army, under the headship of Titus, **“the prince who is to come,”** laid siege to Jerusalem. The siege ended with a flood of Roman soldiers, who desolated the city and the temple. It is estimated that about one and a half million Jews were killed, mostly killed by their fellow countrymen during the siege. The rest were taken captive and exiled as slaves to all parts of their known world. From that point the Jews lost their identity as the nation through whom God was manifesting His purposes for mankind.

Returning to the Messiah

After the interpolation, the passage returns to where it left off - with the Messiah in the seventieth week.

To this point the whole prophecy has been focused on the Messiah. The first six thoughts describe what he will accomplish by His substitutionary death - He will finish transgression; make an end of sins; reconcile man to God, establish righteousness, seal prophecy and vision, and be anointed by the Spirit. Then we are told that He will be cut off, or crucified. If we are to be consistent in our interpretation, then we must conclude that after the interpolation, the prophecy resumes its focus on Messiah. ***“And he (Messiah) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...”*** (KJV)

“...he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week...”

All covenants between God and man have their fulfilment in Jesus. Isaiah says that Jesus was to be given to mankind as a covenantal promise of God’s grace and blessing to both the Jews and the Gentiles - and therefore to the whole world.

“I, the LORD, have called You (Jesus the Messiah) in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.” [Isa. 42:6-7]

Jesus did confirm God’s covenant of grace to mankind in His 3½ year earthly ministry, when He opened blind eyes, and released prisoners from demonic oppression. He continued to confirm the covenant of grace through His apostles after His death and resurrection. ***“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”*** [Mark 16:20]

The covenant of God’s grace was manifested to the Jews for a period of about three and a half years after Christ’s death. But then when Stephen declared the full gospel message to the Jews it was totally rejected, and they stoned him to death.

From that point Christians were harshly persecuted, and as a result, were dispersed throughout Asia. But for the Jews, their time of grace had run out, and they experienced the continual desolation and strife prophesied by Daniel: ***“and till the end of the war desolations are determined.”***

Then we are told that ***“...in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...”***

In the midst of the week is 3½ years after Jesus commenced His ministry. This was the time of His crucifixion, which brought to an end the need for sacrifices and oblations. Old Testament sacrifices and ordinances were but a shadow of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Himself.

As Paul explained in Hebrews, ***“It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation (when things are made right). But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”*** [Heb 9:9-12]

By His perfect sacrifice on the cross, Jesus put an end to the need for continual animal sacrifices and oblations. He *“cause(d) the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...”*

MILLENNIAL INTERPRETATIONS

Daniel’s Seventy Week Prophecy became controversial because of the different methods of its interpretation, and their effect on our discernment of millennialism. (Understanding of this study will be enhanced by reading the booklet, “Millennialism,” that can be viewed or downloaded on this web site.)

Amillennial Viewpoint

Amillennialists - do not hold to a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on earth before His second coming. The 1000 year period is figurative, symbolising completeness. It is the Church age, when Christ reigns with His saints on earth, bringing the gospel to all nations.

Amillennialists interpret Daniel’s prophecy as continuous, starting from the call to rebuild Jerusalem, and ending with its destruction in 70 AD.

Dispensational Premillennialists

Premillennialists believe in a predominantly literal interpretation of the Bible, including biblical prophecies that appear to portray Israel restored, the temple rebuilt, and sacrifices reinstated.

Dispensational Premillennialists believe in a literal 1000 year earthly reign of Christ before His second coming. They believe that the last seven years of Daniel’s prophecy will be fulfilled in the future, and the restoration of the temple will be commenced at this time. Below is a prophecy that when viewed literally, would seem to support their view.

“Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

“David [Christ] My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” [Ezek 37:21-28]

Looking at this passage from a literal point of view it is easy to see how premillennialists think that it refers to Israel returning to their homeland, and their temple being restored. But looking at it from a spiritual point of view another picture emerges, and the following facts are important and relevant.

- The kingdom that Christ is establishing on earth is a spiritual kingdom, not a political kingdom. Jesus said, ***"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."*** [John 18:36]
- The future 'promised land' of the Jews was always intended to be the Church, but this did not eventuate when they rejected Jesus as their Saviour.
- Preceding these verses, Ezekiel sees a vision of a valley of dry bones. He is told that it represented the nation of Israel - spiritually lifeless and without hope, exiled away from its homeland to foreign nations. Ezekiel is shown that God would breathe new life into them, and restore them to their own land, where one shepherd, Jesus Christ would reign over them.
- Zechariah prophesied that at the end of the age, when ***"the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,"*** God would pour out His Spirit on the Jews, turning their hearts to contrition and repentance. ***"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."*** [Zech 12:10-14]
- In the Tenth Chapter of Romans, Paul prophesied that the Redeemer will come forth from Zion to bring salvation to the Jews. Here the Redeemer is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and Zion is the true Church. Paul predicts that the Jews will be grafted back into their true 'land,' which is the Church. ***"...blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:***

***"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins."*** [Rom 11:25-33]

"And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you [the gentiles] were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" [Rom 11:23-24]

- The tabernacle that was to be created on earth is the Church, in which the Spirit of the Lord dwells, and by whom He is manifested to us. Jesus now represents us in heaven, being our High Priest and Mediator. Of the tabernacle on earth, Peter wrote, “ *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” [1 Peter 2:5]
- It should be understood that the return of the Jews to Israel in 1948 was the result of a politically motivated Zionist movement, and that the present nation of Israel is a political nation, and not the spiritual kingdom promised by the Lord.

Relating Premillennialism to Daniel’s Prophecy

- Premillennialists believe that God has a dispensational dealing with the Jews separate from the Church.
- That it was God’s plan for the Jews to accept Jesus as Messiah, and when this did not happen, He decided to fulfil His purposes through the Church;
- That when the Jews rejected Jesus, God’s dealings with them were postponed, and their prophetic clock stopped - that it will remain stopped until the end of the age, when the Jews will be made repentant through the tribulation.
- Because of the stopped prophetic clock, Dispensational Premillennialists have inserted a huge prophetic gap in Daniel’s prophecy. The first part of their prophetic interpretation ends with the restoring of Jerusalem. This is followed by a prophetic gap until the end of the church age, when they believe that the saints will be secretly raptured to avoid the coming tribulation.
The last week of Daniel’s prophecy is then inserted, when it is said that God will resume His dispensational plan for the Jews to establish His kingdom on earth.

The Seventh Week according to Premillennialists

- There will be seven literal years of tribulation.
- The saints will be raptured before the tribulation.
- The “prince who is to come” is said to be Antichrist, in the form of a prominent world figure who has gained control of the world.
- Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews that will allow them to restore the temple.
- After 3 ½ years Antichrist will break the covenant, and there will be a further 3 ½ of severe tribulation.
- At the end of the seven years Christ will return with His saints, and establish a millennial reign on earth.

CONCLUSION

God’s prophetic clock did not stop. Daniel’s Seventy Week Prophecy is a continuous prophecy, dating from the command of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem, until the consummation of God’s judgment of the Jewish nation in AD. 70. It has three main themes:

- (i) The rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- (ii) The redemptive work of Jesus the Messiah.
- (iii) The consummation of God's judgment on the Jews for rejecting their Messiah.

Daniel's Prophecy has no Relationship to Premillennialism.

There is no valid reason for imposing a time gap of 2000 years that points to a literal seven years of tribulation at the end of the age. There will be a period of tribulation at the end of the age - a time of spiritual darkness and apostasy, when the Church will be engulfed by spiritual foes. But its length will not be a literal seven years, and it has no direct connection to Daniel's prophecy, which has already been fulfilled.