

Gabriel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks:

A Prophecy of the Christ!

(Daniel 9:24-27)

Presented by Murray McLellan, an unworthy sinner upon whom grace unimaginable has been poured by the kindest of Kings. I do not claim to be, nor seek to be original in the following manuscript. I seek to magnify and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Unto him belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.
Amen.

*“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.” (Dan. 9:24-27, NKJV)*

1. Introductory Remarks

For years, I approached this passage of Scripture - this prophecy given to Daniel by God himself through his messenger, the angel Gabriel – through the lens of the common *gap theory*, which pushes the fulfillment of most of this prophecy to some time in the far distant future. However, an understanding of the seventieth week as an event yet to take place is not the only interpretation of this passage. You may not accept the view that I propose, but I hope you will examine it and see that it is indeed a very

plausible interpretation. In fact, the interpretation that I will present to you fits the context of the rest of Scripture, which is centered on Jesus Christ – how he would suffer and then enter his glory (see Luke 24:25-27).

I would strongly encourage you to take the time to read the entire book of Daniel in order to study the prophecy of the seventy weeks in the context of the whole book. When you do, you will see that time and time again, God has had but one answer for Daniel's plight in the land of Babylon. For every terror, for every trial, for every impasse, God has sent word of *Messiah* to the weary prophet. From his youth, all the way to his old age, Daniel has been granted hope and assurance in the promise of a better day and a better One.

The saints of all the ages are a people of groaning, looking, and trusting in God - in the promise of a Seed. From Adam's first transgression, the promise of God has echoed among the saints of the true and living God: "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise [literally "crush"] your head, and you shall bruise His heel*" (Gen. 3:15).

Through-out the Old Testament Scriptures, God continues to open up a view of this Seed - this promised Deliverer who will come. For every wanderer, for every pilgrim, for every perplexed soul, for every grieving sinner, the answer has been the same through the ages - "Look to the promise of Jesus Christ!"

So, what should we expect as an answer from heaven, when Daniel is in the midst of great grief and prayer for his people, and cries for forgiveness and mercy, **but yet another view of our Savior!** How swift is our God to dispatch his angels (and his human messengers) to weary, weeping, praying, poor saints on earth, to speak comforting words of Jesus to them.

That's what our God does in this passage. See how the ever-faithful God hastens Gabriel to Daniel's prayer closet to give him sweet images of the Christ - so that in his sorrow, grief, and shame, he might be comforted in the promised Savior.

God has one answer for all peoples of all ages - **Jesus Christ!** In ages past, God's answer was - "Wait for the Messiah!" Now, in our age of fulfillment, it is "Look to Jesus Christ! He is Lord! He has come and is soon returning!" It should be part of our daily experience, as the expectant bride, to be musing and dreaming of our beloved Lord.

As we begin our study, may the Lord give us an encouraging glimpse of himself in all his splendor.

The book of Daniel contains a grand presentation of the sovereignty of God. From beginning to end, the sovereignty of God is displayed. As we approach this specific prophecy of the seventy weeks, given to Daniel through the messenger Gabriel, we want to establish some ground rules:

1. We do not want to accept any interpretation that rests on mere probability. We want to accept only that which is supported by direct proof from Scripture. It is far better to have no explanation at all for a difficult passage than to accept one which may turn out to be wrong. It is not easy to give up an idea when once we have committed ourselves to it, and for that reason we must be careful in what explanations we accept.

2. Any "proof" used to support any interpretation should come from the Scripture itself. Any information essential for the interpretation of every passage of Scripture is to be found somewhere in the Bible itself. We cannot take other historical writings or documents outside of the Bible and make them the foundation upon which we set the

Bible in order to interpret it. We are not to “fit” the Bible to outside sources. Rather, all other sources must be looked at and judged by the Scriptures, which is the only reliable source of truth. Jesus said in his prayer to the Father, “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth*” (John 17:17).

Therefore, we are not going to try to fit this passage into the history books and ask, “How are we going to read this in light of the record of history given to us by men?” That would make the historical writings of men the grid of truth through which we interpret the Bible. I believe it is the other way around. The Scripture is the bedrock truth. It will give us what we need to know. It will explain that which is absolutely true. Those who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit have all that is needed to interpret the seventy weeks passage, and it is found within the pages of Scripture itself.

2. The Time Frame: Seventy Weeks

Let’s look once again at our text of Scripture.

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To finish the transgression,
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To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the most holy.”*

[Within the time frame given - the seventy weeks - these things are going to happen.]

“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.” (Dan. 9:24-27, NKJV)

Note: The word “for” is set off in the above passage because there is no word “for” in the Hebrew text.

This is the prophecy of the seventy weeks. It is **NOT** the prophecy of four-hundred ninety years. There is a significant difference. God has established clearly that this is a prophecy of seventy weeks, not a prophecy of four-hundred ninety years. The grouping of the time periods is more significant than the total time period. The *weeks* mentioned here are actually *weeks of years* and not days. The Hebrew word that is translated *weeks* is simply a word that means a group of seven. Gabriel proclaims that seventy *seven year periods* have been established by God to bring about the things mentioned in verse 24. Although this seems a little odd to us, it would not have been to

the original hearers. The Jews kept track, not only of weeks of days as we do, but also weeks of years. They had not only sabbath days, but they had also sabbath years. The sabbath year came every seventh year. That was also considered as one week - one week of years. The Hebrew calendar then, had not only weeks of days, but also weeks of years (e.g. after seven weeks of years comes the year of Jubilee. See Lev. 25:1-22).

In the other places in the book of Daniel where Daniel uses the term weeks (e.g. Dan. 10:2 and 10:3), the Hebrew text specifically uses the statement “weeks **of days**.” The phrase “**of days**” is added, I believe, to clearly distinguish this as weeks of days as opposed to the weeks (of years) used in chapter 9.

Though the total extent of the seventy weeks of years is four-hundred ninety years, it does not have to be a complete four-hundred ninety years. It may be, but it does not have to be. Let me try to explain.

If I stated that something would happen in the seventieth week, does it have to occur in the four-hundred ninetieth year? As long as it happens some time within the time frame of the seventieth week, it doesn't matter whether it occurs at the very beginning of that week, the very end, or sometime in between. In the case of this prophecy, it is to be fulfilled sometime between the four-hundred eighty-third and four-hundred ninetieth years. This is the last set of seven years; the seventieth week. As long as the predicted events occurred sometime within that time frame of the final week of years, the prophecy would be fulfilled.

I hope I haven't confused anyone yet. There is a reason why this needs to be understood, but that will come up later. I'll try to illustrate this for those of you who are having difficulty dealing with the whole concept of weeks of years. If you have grasped the concept, just skip down to the next paragraph. If I say that I'll be at your house in six weeks (I'm talking our normal weeks of days!), does that mean it will be in exactly forty-two days? It could be, but it doesn't have to be. Day thirty-six begins the sixth week. Anytime within that sixth week fits the framework term “week”. If I had said that I would be at your house in forty-two days, I could arrive any time that day. I have twenty-four hours to work with. Do I have to be arriving in such a way that fills up the entire twenty-four hour period? If I arrived at 10:00 a.m., would you say, “But what about the remaining fourteen hours of the forty-second day?” No; any remaining time doesn't matter, because I did not say hours, I said **days**. That would be the limiting factor. As long as I am there sometime before midnight on the forty-second day, I have fulfilled my promise.

In our passage in Daniel 9, what is the framework? It is weeks - specifically weeks of years. Gabriel declares to Daniel:

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And to anoint the most holy.”* (Literally “a holy of holies”)

The messenger's choice of terms establishes the framework; these things must occur within that time frame - sometime within the span of the final (seventieth) week. They do

not all have to occur at the same moment, but they do all have to be completed sometime during that seventieth week. If they all occurred at the very beginning of the seventieth week, in the very first year of that week of years, would the prophecy be accurate? Yes. Whether they happen at the beginning or the middle or the end is not stated by Gabriel. God did not say four-hundred ninety years, because the *week* was his framework for this prophecy.

3. The Setting

Daniel had learned through Jeremiah that the period which God had set for the “desolations of Jerusalem” was just seventy years: *“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans - in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:1-2).*

At this point in history, the Chaldeans (Babylonians) had just been conquered by the Medes and Persians. Daniel, through reading the Prophets (see Jer. 25:11-13; Jer. 29:10-14; and 2 Chron. 36:20-21), saw clearly that Jerusalem was to be desolate for a determined seventy years. Jerusalem had been leveled and left desolate by the Babylonians (or Chaldeans). The temple had been destroyed and the walls of the city torn down. The remnant that survived this attack were taken and scattered among the Babylonian empire. Daniel, when he was but a youth, had been among those who were taken to Babylon. Now, nearly seventy years have passed, and the Babylonian empire has fallen. Daniel, through reading Jeremiah, has come to the understanding that the determined time of seventy years of desolation is nearly completed.

You can well imagine Daniel’s excitement as Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. What he read in the prophet Jeremiah was very clear:

‘And this whole land [Israel] shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations’ (Jer. 25: 11-13).

For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then they will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity (Jer. 29:10-14).

Daniel certainly exhibited the truth of the above passage, as he humbly confessed his sin and the sin of his people in his seeking prayer (Dan. 9: 2-23). Daniel is moved by the grace of God. He has been reading Jeremiah and can see plainly how Israel has transgressed against the Lord. He knows what they deserve. Yet this great God promises restoration and forgiveness. What grace! His prayer reveals his amazement that the holy God of Israel did not completely destroy them from off the face of the earth. Daniel

knows that God saved a remnant for his own name's sake, because of his great mercies. He also realizes that this restoration comes about only because God acts for his own glory. Daniel represented and interceded for his people and sought the Lord of grace with all his heart. As promised, he found him, and the Lord sent his angel, Gabriel, to deliver this message of the seventy weeks to Daniel.

Before Israel had ever fallen to Babylon, God foretold that Babylon would lay Israel desolate for seventy years. Following that time, God would lay Babylon desolate, and when Israel humbled itself and sought the Lord, God would return them to the land of Israel, where the city and its temple would be rebuilt.

“And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.” (2 Chron. 36:20-21)

The context of 2 Chronicles 36:15-19 records the historical event that Jeremiah had foretold; the fulfillment of the fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans (Babylonians). Jerusalem is leveled and left desolate for seventy years to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah. In this, God is giving the land its sabbath rest, which was not done by the disobedient Israelites. Jeremiah prophesied not only of the desolation of Jerusalem, but also of its restoration and rebuilding. This, too, is recorded for us in 2 Chronicles.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up! (2 Chron. 36:22-23)

Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian were co-rulers for two years. Now, in Cyrus' first year as sole ruler, he makes a proclamation. Where did Cyrus get the idea for this proclamation? God is the one behind this proclamation that will fulfill his promise. Unlike Pharaoh of Egypt who would not let Israel go, Cyrus commands the people of Israel to go. His command, of course, is a result of the work of God.

Ezra, chapter 1, begins with exactly the same words as the end of 2 Chronicles. There is a reason that this is repeated. This is a very important command and is central to several significant prophecies. So there would be no mistake about this prophecy, and the timing of it, God has it repeated and then has Cyrus put it in writing. He then makes sure that it is recorded in the Word of God in several places. This is definitely a key event.

This knowledge, given by Jeremiah, moved Daniel to his knees in confession and prayer. Daniel's prayer was impelled by an understanding of the revealed will of God found in the Scriptures. His prayer has to do with the city, the sanctuary, the people of God, and the desolations of the city. These are the same subjects that occupy the prophecy the angel Gabriel brings to Daniel in response to his prayer.

To be continued next issue.