

Four Interpretations of the “70 weeks” in Daniel 9:24-27

(M. Koerber, June 2013)

<u>View</u>	<u>What are the 70 weeks? (v24)</u>	<u>What is the anointed “holy place?” (24)</u>	<u>Who is the anointed prince? (v25)</u>	<u>What happens at the end of 69 weeks? (v26)</u>	<u>What is the relationship between v26 & v27</u>	<u>What is the “strong covenant”? (vs 27)</u>	<u>What is the destruction of “city and sanctuary”</u>	<u>What is the second ½ of the final week?</u>	<u>What is the ending point of the prophecy?</u>	<u>What is the main point of the prophecy?</u>
Critical Scholarship (Rules out predictive prophecy)	490 years	Temple	Post-exilic Jewish leader, 450 BC	High Priest Onias murdered 171 BC	Uncertain, depict events, the author hoped would happen, but was wrong.	?	Antiochus Epiphanes (Greek Emp) desecrates temple 167 BC	?	A “hoped for” new kingdom after the defeat of the Greeks.	Antiochus Epiphanes desecrates the temple in 167 BC.
Historical Messianic (Traditional)	490 years, some say it begins in 458 BC, others that it’s not exact.	Christ	Christ	Jesus born	Parallel, Jesus is cut off (v26) and makes a covenant (v27), both during the final week.	Jesus institutes the new covenant during the “first ½ of the final week”	Titus (Roman Emp) destroys temple in 70 AD	70 - 135 AD, or the weeks end in 37 AD.	Hadrian (Roman Emp) conquers Jer. 135 AD, or counting of weeks end with Christ.	Christ inaugurates Kingdom and New Covenant
Symbolic Messianic (Contemporary Evangelical)	Symbolic periods, Cyrus to Christ, with a view to the 2 nd coming.	Christ	Christ	Jesus baptized	(same)	(same)	Titus 70 AD, but looks forward to final judgment	Church Age	Christ returns and defeats Antichrist/Satan	Christ consummates Kingdom and New Covenant
Dispensational (Future fulfillment)	490 years + a gap for the church age	Temple	Christ	(gap) Jews reject the messiah and church age occurs in parenthesis	Sequential, they depict events that happen in the future.	Anti-Christ makes a covenant at some point in the future	70 AD and/or a future destruction of a rebuilt Jerusalem. (?)	Part of the final 7 yr, great tribulation that precedes Christ’s return	After the gap of the church age and 7 year tribulation -the return of Christ.	Fate of the Jewish People

Timeline of Events

605 BC - First captives (including Daniel) taken to Babylon
 586 BC – Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
 539 BC - Medes and Persians Conquer Babylon
 538 BC – Cyrus decrees that the exiles return
 516 BC – Temple rebuilt under ministry of Haggai
 445 BC – Ministry of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls.
 167 BC – Antiochus Epiphanes (Seleucids) desecrates the temple

(Maccabean Wars)
 ca. 0 – Jesus born
 ca. 30 – Jesus baptized
 ca. /33 AD - Jesus crucified/resurrected (New Cov. established)
 70 AD – Jerusalem and temple destroyed by Romans under Titus
 135 AD - Rebuilt Jerusalem again destroyed under Hadrian

Textual Note: The text contains at several phrases that are difficult to translation in the Hebrew. Probably the one with the significance is in verse 25. The Hebrew phrase reads literally – seven weeks and sixty and two weeks. Scholars debate whether the phrase is intended to be show a single period made up of two periods (7 and 62) or whether it is intended to show two separate periods. In other words, is the “anointed one, a prince” expected to come after seven weeks, followed by sixty two weeks of building? Or, is the entire period of seven and sixty two weeks characterized by building the city “with squares and a moat?” The ESV translates the passage in a way that indicates a separation between the two numbers, while the NIV, NASB and the KJV translate this in a way that shows it to be one period. Scholars who hold a Messianic view or a dispensationalist view almost always lean towards this interpretation. Otherwise, the anointed one who is a prince (vs 25) would seem to be a different person from the anointed one who is cut off (vs 26.) I believe that it is best to regard this as one period broken into two parts, with the anointed prince coming at the end of this 69 week period of rebuilding the temple. It is likely that the numbers seven and sixty two are meant to show that the rebuilding of the temple occurred in stages (which in fact it did.)

**“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city,
to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity,
to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet,
and to anoint a most holy place.**

²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, [there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it] shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

**²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.
And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war.
Desolations are decreed.**

**²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week,
and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate,
until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."**

^{KJV} Daniel 9:25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

^{NAU} Daniel 9:25 "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

^{NIV} Daniel 9:25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

Analysis of Views Regarding the 70 Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27

- 1.) The view of critical scholarship emerged during the period of “higher criticism” of the later 19th and early 20th century. Modern skepticism of miracles and prophecy were applied to the Biblical text as scholars attempted to discern the “true authors” behind the Biblical text. Most proponents of this view do not believe that the Bible is God’s authoritative and reliable revelation and instead focus on the human origins. Critical scholars believe that the book of Daniel was written during the mid-2nd century BC by an unnamed Jew who was seeking to provide a theological explanation of their current conflict with the Seleucids (Greek Empire) in general and the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (167 BC) in particular. This is not the view that Jesus had of the prophet Daniel (Mt 24:15-16), nor any orthodox Christians throughout history. Furthermore, this view fails to deal with the internal unity of the book of Daniel and assumes that the author had limited knowledge of the historical period he was attempting to narrate. For example, the book is unified thematically, and while there are prophecies that deal specifically with the desecration of the temple under the Seleucids, the book does much more than this. Critical scholars fail to appreciate the concern that the entire book of Daniel has for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Against this backdrop, the desecration of the temple in 167 BC is one event, but it is not the larger theme. Also, the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede found in chapters 1-6 are far too positive to be intended as models for resisting Antiochus Epiphanes (described in the prophetic section as the “abomination that makes desolate.”) Finally, further archeological research has vindicated Daniel on some points. For example, critical scholars once claimed that the references to Belshazzar (chapter 5) were mistaken, since Nabonidus was listed as the king of Babylon prior to its fall to the Medes and Persians. However, research has shown that Nabonidus did not reside in Babylon and had turned over the rule of that city to another. In light of that evidence, Belshazzar’s claim to make Daniel “3rd in the kingdom” (5:16) seems to make more sense – implying that Belshazzar himself was only the second in command. In regard to this particular passage, the view of critical scholarship would take the prophecy as referring to Antiochus Epiphanes. When asked why the dates don’t line up, or why the actual event did not bring the six purposes listed in vs. 24, the critical scholar simply answers, “The author was wrong.”
- 2.) The view described as the historical messianic view was affirmed by many throughout church history. While not all of the details are worked out the same way (they seldom are in Daniel), Calvin, Luther, and many others including contemporary scholar E. J. Young held a form of this view. Proponents affirm the inspiration and reliability of the Book of Daniel. The view takes the seventy weeks of Daniel to refer to seventy sets of seven years. The reason for this assumption is that the sequence of prayer and prophecy was initiated by a reflection (Dan 9:1) on the seventy years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:10-14, etc.) This view understands the prophecy to be primarily about the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. The time period covered by the prophecy is understood to conclude with either the destruction of the temple in 70 AD (Roman Empire under Titus), or the final destruction of Jerusalem (Roman Empire under the general Hadrian) in 135 AD. There are various start dates that either begin with the command to rebuild the temple/city by Cyrus in 538 BC or some command associated with the work of Nehemiah in 445 BC. The strength of this view is that it properly grasps the centrality of Christ in this prophecy and his work of establishing a new covenant. However, by taking the 490 years at literal years, the proponents of this view struggle to make the years coincide with the actual historical events.
- 3.) The view described as the symbolic messianic view has become popular among a wide range of contemporary Evangelical scholars. (For example: Ian Duguid- Presbyterian, Sam Storms – Baptist, and Andrew Steinman – Lutheran.) Like the historical messianic view, this view believes that Daniel is divinely inspired and reliable. This view also places the focus on the redemptive work of Christ. Unlike the

historical messianic view, this view does not understand the 70 weeks to be 490 literal years, but rather it is a symbolic use of numbers to describe periods of time in redemptive history. The following details are roughly similar between the two messianic views. The explicit purposes of the prophecy listed in Daniel 9:24 (“*to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.*”), are understood to be fulfilled in Christ. The two final verses (26 and 27) are understood to be parallel so that there are two descriptions of the events happening during the last week. When the anointed one is “cut off” (v26), it refers to the crucifixion of Christ. The “strong covenant” made with many for one week refers to the New Covenant which Jesus institutes with his death and resurrection. There is not a sharp distinction between Israel and the church, and these promises are understood to be fulfilled in the church. (See Mt 24.) Unlike the historical messianic view, the symbolic messianic view looks beyond the destruction of Jerusalem and sees in the second half of verse 27 a reference to the ongoing conflict between the people of God and the enemies of God which mark the church age. Jesus is understood to be the prince to whom the destruction of the city and the sanctuary is attributed. This is because the arrival of the Christ puts the end to the necessity of temple sacrifice and because the rejection of Christ is associated with the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. To some degree, the three final views all recognize the “one who makes desolate” (v27) to be an ultimate “anti-Christ” figure who leads war against the church. Both messianic views regard Antiochus Epiphanes to be a type of the abomination that makes desolate. The same is true for Titus at the head of the Roman army in 70 AD. For both messianic views it is particularly important to understand Jesus’ interpretation of Daniel 9:27 in the Olivet discourse (Mt 24, etc.) as a reference to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. In summary, both messianic views understand this prophecy to focus primarily on the coming of Christ, the establishing of a New Covenant and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. At the same time there are ways in which Antiochus Epiphanes becomes an earlier type of the “anti-Christ” when he desecrates the temple in 167 BC. The symbolic messianic view extends the perspective to also capture the expectation of a great final conflict and the final destruction of evil, found in the last words, “until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

- 4.) The view described as the dispensational view became popular during the late 19th and through the mid 20th century. Dispensationalists are committed to the inspiration and the reliability of the book of Daniel. In the dispensational system, Daniel 9:24-27 took a critical place in forming a prophetic understanding of the future. In this system, there is understood to be a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. Rather than seeing the church as a fulfillment of the OT promises and prophecies, the church is understood to be a “parenthesis” which occurs after Jesus is rejected by the nation of Israel during the last week of his ministry. Dispensationalists believe that an extended “gap” occurs in the timeline of the 70 weeks during which time gentiles are brought into the church. At the close of this period the church will be raptured away, and the final week of this prophecy will resume. This final week will be a great tribulation and will last for 7 years during which time the anti-christ will make a strong covenant with the Jewish people. A full description of the dispensational view of Daniel 9:24-27 from the Scofield Study Bible can be found online, (See “Appendix #2 - www.biblestudytools.com.)
- 5.) Conclusion. This is a very complex and challenging view, and that we should hold to our views with humility and charity. However, I believe that the best approach to this passage is to take the Messianic Symbolic view (listed #3 on the chart.) The approach of critical scholarship does not do justice to the text as the word of God and misses the biblical context of nearly all the major themes. The historical messianic view has much to commend it, but tends to get bogged down trying to match the dates of the 70 weeks to historic events. I believe that the dispensationalist view misses the primary emphasis of the passage. By drawing a sharp boundary between Israel and the church, the true fulfillment of OT prophecy is often missed. This prophecy is not primarily concerned with the fate of Israel as a nation state and the idea of a gap for the church is foreign to the text. Rather than focusing primarily on the future destruction of a rebuilt (again)

temple, this passage focuses primarily on the establishing of the New Covenant under the ministry of Jesus Christ which initiates (“inaugurates”) the kingdom of God and looks forward to the consummation of the kingdom when all of the enemies of God are destroyed. Because Jesus is the new “most holy place” (v24) the temple is no longer necessary and the people of God will no longer inhabit a particular city, but will be part of the world wide church. The Symbolic Messianic view properly links the prophecy of Daniel with main themes in the book, such as the sovereign rule of God, the fate of the temple and the establishment of the kingdom of God. (See “Appendix #1”)

Appendix #1: **Major Themes in the Book of Daniel**

(A.) Throughout the Book of Daniel, the major theme is the sovereign rule of God in human history

God gives Jerusalem into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. (1:2) Neb.’s vision points to the authority of God over all human kingdoms. (chapter 2) God saves Shad./Mesh./Abed. in the furnace and Neb proclaims, “No other God is able to rescue in this way.” (3:29) After his humiliation and restoration, Neb. proclaims the absolute sovereign power of God, “He does according to his will.” (4:34-35) God pronounces judgment on Babylon and Belshazzar. (Chapter 5) Daniel saved from the lions and Darius proclaims, “His kingdom shall never be destroyed.” (6:26-27) Daniel’s vision of the 4 beasts parallels Neb.’s dream of the 4 part statue. Both are destroyed by the sovereign power of God. God is portrayed as the Ancient of Days with all power and authority. (Chap 7) God rules over the affairs of the nations and is able to predict and direct their course of events. (Chapters 8, 10-12)

(B.) This God is present with his people, in the temple and during the exile after the destruction of the temple.

A focus on the temple is introduced in the beginning when “vessels of the house of God” are taken to Babylon. (1:2) These same vessels appear and are desecrated at the climactic moment of judgment for Babylon. (5:2) In between God shows his presence with the exiles even after the temple was destroyed. He is able to make the youths wise (1:17), to reveal mysteries (2:22), he is present in the fiery furnace via the angel of the Lord (3:24-25), he humbles Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 4), he writes on the wall (chapter 5) and he sends an angel to close the mouth of the lions (6:23.) God also reveals himself personally to Daniel in a series of visions (chapters 7-12). He is present with his people throughout via angels (8:16, 9:20, 10:5, 12:1.) Continued concern is shown for the state of the temple. Daniel prays for God to restore the temple, “make your face shine upon his sanctuary which is desolate.” (9:17) Continued concern is shown for rebuilding of Jerusalem (9:25) and its future desolations under Antiochus Epiphanies in 167 BC (8:13,11:31) and by the Romans, after Christ in 70 AD (9:26).

Against this backdrop, the reference to the anointing of the “most holy place” (9:24) is groundbreaking. It shows that the future of the temple lies not in a building or a city, but in a person. The building and the city will be unnecessary and eventually destroyed, but through the “anointed one” God will make his presence known to his people.

(C.) The reign of God is made manifest in the Kingdom of God.

Chapters 2-7 form an important sub-unit to the book. They are written in Aramaic, while the rest of the book is written in Hebrew. Some scholars theorize that they were written this way because Aramaic was the common language of the realm and these chapters included a vision of the world wide Kingdom of God which was intended to be delivered for all people. By contrast, chapters 1,8-12 focus more specifically on the fate of the Jewish people as they move through upcoming transition from the Media/Persian Empire to the Greek/Seleucid Empire and the eventual Maccabean Wars with the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanies in 167 AD. The unit of chapters 2-7 begins and ends with a vision of 4 kingdoms supplanted by the kingdom of God. In the initial dream, the kingdoms are destroyed by a stone “not cut by human hands”, and stone becomes the Kingdom of God which grows to fill the whole earth. (2:36-35) In the second vision, the kingdoms are beasts which vie for power and are displaced by the Kingdom of God. In this vision, the Kingdom of God centers on “one like a son of man” who receives power and authority from God to rule over all “people, nations and languages.” (7:13-14) In the New Testament, Jesus identifies himself as “the son of man” (Mt 26:64) and begins his preaching with the statement that the kingdom of God is “at hand.” (Mt 4:17, etc.)

Against this backdrop, the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 merges all three of these themes. The sovereign God reveals his plans in history in a message relayed by the angel Gabriel (9:20-27.) This message gives an answer to Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the city and the sanctuary. (9:1-2, 17-18) The answer shows that the city will be rebuilt (9:24-25), and a "most holy place" will be anointed (9:24.) The anointing is associated with a prince who will be cut off ("an anointed one, a prince") and shall have nothing (9:25.) The people of this prince shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, which are no longer necessary, because an iniquity has been atoned for (9:24.) (This destruction was carried out by the Roman armies under Titus, but it was initiated by the rebellion of the Jewish people after their rejection of Jesus. In this sense, the people of the prince can be said to have destroyed the city and sanctuary.) In summary, the sovereign rule of God is expressed on earth through the growing kingdom of God as revealed in Daniel 2 (the mountain the fills the earth.) The kingdom of God is ruled over by "one like a son of Man" (7:13-14), who will also bring about the end of the temple as the means by which God dwells with his people. Through being "cut off" (9:26) he will bring initiate the New Covenant in which the declared purpose of Daniel 9:24-27 is accomplished. That is, he will "finish transgression, put an end to sin, and atone for iniquity (9:24.) As a result, all who trust in him will receive "everlasting righteousness." This work of redemption will be brought to completion at the end of history when the enemies of God are destroyed (Rev 19-20) and heaven and earth is renewed (Rev 21-22.) The concluding reference to the "decreed end" of "the one who makes desolate" probably looks forward to this decisive event.

Appendix #2: Discussion of the "Seventy Weeks" from the Scofield Study Bible.

These are "weeks" or more accurately, sevens of years; seventy weeks of seven years each. Within these "weeks" the national chastisement must be ended and the nation re-established in everlasting righteousness ([Daniel 9:24](#)). The seventy weeks are divided into seven == 49 years; sixty-two = 434 years; one = 7 years (vs. 25-27). In the seven weeks == 49 years, Jerusalem was to be rebuilt in "troubulous times." This was fulfilled, as Ezra and Nehemiah record. Sixty-two weeks == 434 years, thereafter Messiah was to come ([Daniel 9:25](#)). This was fulfilled in the birth and manifestation of Christ. [Daniel 9:26](#) 26 is obviously an indeterminate period. The date of the crucifixion is not fixed. It is only said to be "after" the threescore and two weeks. It is the first event in [Daniel 9:26](#) . The second event is the destruction of the city, fulfilled A.D. 70. Then, "unto the end," a period not fixed, but which has already lasted nearly 2000 years. To Daniel was revealed only that wars and desolations should continue (cf. [Matthew 24:6-14](#) .) The N.T. reveals, that which was hidden from the O.T. prophets ; [Matthew 13:11-17](#) ; [Ephesians 3:1-10](#) that during this period should be accomplished the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven [Matthew 13:1-50](#) and the out-calling of the Church ; [Matthew 16:18](#) ; [Romans 11:25](#) . When the Church- age will end, and the seventieth week begin, is nowhere revealed. Its duration can be but seven years. To make it more violates the principle of interpretation already confirmed by fulfilment. [Daniel 9:27](#) deals with the last week. The "he" of [Daniel 9:27](#) is the "prince that shall come" of [Daniel 9:26](#), whose people (Rome) destroyed the temple, A.D. 70. He is the same with the "little horn" of chapter 7. He will covenant with the Jews to restore their temple sacrifices for one week (seven years), but in the middle of that time he will break the covenant and fulfill ; [Daniel 12:11](#) ; [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#) [2 Thessalonians 2:4](#) . Between the sixty-ninth week, after which Messiah was cut off, and the seventieth week, within which the "little horn" of Dan. 7. will run his awful course, intervenes this entire Church-age. [Daniel 9:27](#) deals with the last three and a half years of the seven, which are identical with the "great tribulation." [Matthew 24:15-28](#) "time of trouble" [Daniel 12:1](#) hour of temptation" [Revelation 3:10](#) . (see "Tribulation," ; [Psalms 2:5](#) ; [Revelation 7:14](#)). (See Scofield "Psalms 2:5"). (<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/scofield-reference-notes/daniel/daniel-9.html>.)

Bibliography: Ian Duguid, "Daniel" (REC); Andrew Steinmann; "Daniel" (Concordia Comm); Joyce Baldwin, "Daniel" (Tyndale OTC); Sam Storms, "Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative"; E. J. Young, "The Prophecy of Daniel"; Tremper Longman III, "Daniel" (NIV AC)