

WHY A GAP IN DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

It has been well observed by various writers that if the seventy weeks are to end with the death of Christ and the incoming destruction of Jerusalem, it is simply impossible—with all ingenuity expended in this direction by eminent men—to make out an accurate fulfillment of prophecy from the dates given, for the time usually adduced being either too long to fit with the crucifixion of Christ or too short to extend to the destruction of Jerusalem.

—George N. H. Peters¹

One of the most important prophecy passages in the whole Bible is that of God's prophecy given to Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27. This passage constitutes one of the most amazing prophecies in the entire Bible. If worked out logically, this text is both seminal and determinative in the outworking of one's understanding of Bible prophecy. Especially for those of us who believe that prophecy should be understood literally, it is essential that a right understanding of this central text be developed and cultivated. Central to this passage is whether or not the 70th week of years is postponed or continuous. I believe this prophecy intends a gap of time between the 69th and 70th week and I want to summarize in a single article reasons for a future 70th week.

ENEMIES OF LITERAL INTERPRETATION

Critics of the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy must strike down the plain meaning of Daniel's prophecy in their failed attempts to strike down the prophetic precision found in biblical prophecy. Perhaps no one is more shrill in his criticism of a gap than preterist Gary DeMar, who says:

The "gap" that has been placed between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel's prophecy was created because it was needed to make the dispensational hermeneutical model work. Nothing in the text of Daniel 9:24-27 implies a "gap."²

He later asked the following question:

Since there is no gap between the seven and sixty-two weeks, what justification is there in inserting a gap between the sixty-ninth week (seven weeks + sixty-two weeks = sixty-nine weeks) and the seventieth week?³

TEXTUAL REASONS FOR A GAP

Here are some textual reasons for a gap of time between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel! First of all, the text says, "Then after the sixty-two weeks . . ." In other words, after the seven plus 62 weeks, which equals a total of 69 weeks of years (483 years total). The Hebrew text uses a conjunction combined with a preposition, usually translated "and after," or better, "then after" (NASB) "It is the only indication given regarding the chronological relation between these sixty-two weeks and the cutting off of the Anointed One. This event will occur 'after' their close, but nothing is said as to how long after."⁴

Robert Culver clearly states the implication of what this text says:

There can be no honest difference of opinion about that: the cutting off of Messiah is 'after' the sixty-two weeks. It is not the concluding event of the series of sixty-two weeks. Neither is it said to be the opening event of the seventieth. It is simply after the seven plus sixty-two weeks.⁵

Steven Miller in his Daniel commentary summarizes developments in the passage thus far as follows:

After the reconstruction of Jerusalem in the first seven sevens (forty-nine years), another "sixty-two sevens" (434 years) would pass. Then two momentous events would take place. First, the "Anointed One" would come (v. 25), then he would be "cut off." Apparently his coming would be immediately at the end of the sixty-nine sevens, . . ."⁶

There is no real debate among conservative interpreters as to who is spoken of by the phrase "the Messiah will be cut off," as a referral to the crucifixion of Christ, which occurred four days later. Thus, it means that Jesus would be crucified after completion of the seven and 62nd week, but before the beginning of the 70th week mentioned in the next verse (9:27). For this to take place it requires a gap of time between the two time periods. This is not the result of an *a priori* belief like dispensationalism, as claimed by some. G. H. Lang notes, "it is here that the interval in the Seventy Sevens must fall. This is not a matter of interference, but of fact."⁷ There is no other way to put together this material into a chronological sequence than seeing a postponement in time of the 70th week.

The passage also tells us that after the death of Christ, He will "have nothing." To what does this phrase refer? It has to refer to something already mentioned in the passage. I think it has to refer to the six purpose clauses in v. 24, which is said to be the goal of the prophecy for Daniel's people and city. Therefore, if these items are to be fulfilled for Israel and Jerusalem in the same way the earlier parts of the passage were fulfilled, since they obviously did not occur in the past, they must take place at a time future even to our own day.

Then verse 26 goes on to describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which took place in A.D. 70. No matter how anyone figures it, these events cannot fit into the remaining seven years of verse 27. There were at least 37 years between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. How does that fit? Well, it does not fit. However, our literal postponement view allows things to fit very nicely since both Christ's death and the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem occur after the end of the 483-year period. Randall Price, when speaking of the events in verse 26 notes the following:

"the cutting off of Messiah," and of "the people of the prince," are stated to occur after the sixty-nine weeks. If this was intended to occur in the seventieth week, the text would have read here 'during' or 'in the midst of' (cf. Daniel's use of *hetzi*, 'in the middle of,' verse 27). This language implies that these events precede the seventieth week, but do not immediately follow the sixty-ninth. Therefore, a temporal interval separates the two."⁸

Only the literal, futurist understanding of the seventy weeks of Daniel can harmonize in a precise manner the interpretation of this passage.

A further problem with the continuous fulfillment view is that they have to ram, cram and jam the events of verse 26 and 27 into the single week of years, or a seven-year period. However, verse 27 speaks specifically about what will occur during the 70th week of years and it does not include anything from verse 26. This is another textual basis for a postponement of the 70th week into the future.

Reasons why verse 27 supports a gap between the 69th week and 70th week is that none of the events specifically said to occur during the 70th week have taken place. Continuous fulfillment advocates must make the seven-year covenant mentioned in verse 27 between Christ and the church, while in reality it will be made between Antichrist and the nation of Israel. Since this covenant is broken in the middle of the week (i. e., after three and a half years) their view means that Christ made a covenant that He then breaks. Not only is there no covenant mentioned that Christ made at His first coming; what biblically thinking Christian could conceive of a covenant that Jesus broke at any time? The language of verse 27 just does not fit what we know of Christ's first coming as clearly recorded in the Gospels.

Since the week of years is a seven-year period, the middle of a week of years would be three and a half years into the seven-year period. Interestingly, Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 both refer to a three and a half year period (time, times, and half a time). The context of both Daniel passages speak of the future time of the beast or the antichrist. This would support a futurist understanding of the seventieth week. Daniel 7:25 says, "And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." While this passage was given to Daniel before he received the revelation of chapter nine, it seems clear that the logic for the chronology of Daniel 7:25 is drawn from the seventy weeks prophecy of chapter nine. Daniel 12:7 reads as follows: "And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed." Both Daniel 9:27 and 12:7 speak of the antichrist's rule coming to an end at the conclusion of the same three and a half year period. This supports the notion that they both refer to a yet future time that we often call the Great Tribulation.

CONCLUSION

I think that sound biblical exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 must lead to an understanding that the seventieth week is separated from the first sixty-nine weeks of years because of Israel failure to accept Jesus as their promised Messiah. Therefore, God has postponed the final week of years until the start of the seven-year tribulation. In the mean time, the New Testament teaches us that the church age will intervene during the postponement of Israel's final week of years. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 3 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1884], 1978), Vol. II, p. 659.

² Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), p. 325.

³ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, p. 331.

⁴ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 255.

⁵ Robert Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 157.

⁶ Steven R. Miller, *Daniel*, Vol. 18 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), p. 267.

⁷ G. H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel* (Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), p. 135.

⁸ Randall Price, *Prophecy of Daniel 9:27* (San Marcos, TX: World of the Bible, n.d.), p. 22.