

## Daniel's 70th Week Reconsidered?

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The earliest Christian writer who quite directly addressed the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks was Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies* (ca. A.D. 180). In 5.25.2 Irenaeus quotes Matthew 24:15 and states that this will be fulfilled with the Antichrist literally enters the Jewish temple for the purpose of presenting himself as Christ. In Book 5.25.4 Irenaeus discusses the Antichrist, and links him to Daniel 9:27 stating:

“And then he [Daniel] points out the time that his [Antichrist's] tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God: ‘And in the midst of the week,’ he says, ‘the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and the abomination of desolation [shall be brought] into the temple: even unto the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete.’ Now three years and six months constitute the half-week.”

Roughly 20 years later, Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus, wrote about Daniel's 70 weeks, and argued for the full final week to be at the end of the age just before the return of Jesus.

At about the same time, Clement of Alexandria, the head of the school in Alexandria that sought to intermingle Greek Philosophy with the Bible, argued against the view of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and other early Premillennialists. Concerning Daniel's 70 weeks, Clement argued that the 70 weeks should be interpreted as non-literal. He also argued that entirety of the 70 weeks were fulfilled by 70 AD.

Later Origen, an interpreter infamous for his exceedingly imaginative allegorical interpretations of Scripture, succeeded Clement as the head of the school in Alexandria. Origen built upon Clement's non-literal foundation, arguing for the complete fulfillment of the 70 weeks historically in Christ.

Thus began a long history of conflict within the Christian Church over this essential Old Testament prophecy. Following in the general categories established by these four writers, those who would embrace a spiritualized view of the Millennial Kingdom of God and most often a spiritualized view of the people of Israel (ie. replacement theology), followed Clement and Origen. On the other hand, those who held to a literal understanding of the Millennium, followed Irenaeus and Hippolytus' views. While many sub-categories under these two general headings developed throughout the centuries, for the most part, these two positions have come to define the debate.

In recent years however, a newer hybrid view expressed by several students of prophecy, seems to be developing. This view, while Premillennialist in its orientation, embraces a somewhat mixed selection of arguments traditionally employed by

Amillennialists, Post-Millennialists and Preterists. This view, as I have observed it, most often expresses the following distinctives:

(1) The 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 are divided up into two segments: 486.5 years and then at the end of the age, just before the return of Jesus, one final 3.5 year period.

(2) The first 3.5 years refer to Jesus' earthly ministry, with the last 3.5 referring to the "Great Tribulation."

(3) There will be no "peace treaty," "security pact," "covenant," or any other such agreement made with, or by the Antichrist that will mark the final seven year period before the return of Jesus.

(4) The reference to the Antichrist entering, abominating, desecrating, or trampling the Temple referred to in Daniel 8:11-14, 9:27, 11:31, 12:11, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, and Revelation 11 are not literal, but should be understood as spiritual.

(5) The beginning of the final 3.5 period or Tribulation will come suddenly with no significant signs preceding it.

(6) The one who causes offering to cease in Daniel 9:27 is Jesus and not Antichrist. Thus because Jesus caused offering to cease, there will not be any future Temple to continue literal offerings.

If I understand those who espouse this view correctly, then I believe they are most often motivated by the following:

(1) A rejection of what is traditionally considered (though wrongly so) a distinctly Dispensationalist doctrine.

(2) A concern that if there is not the expected sign of some form of "peace treaty" then many Christians will be deceived and receive the Antichrist, or at the very least will be unprepared.

(3) A desire to interpret Daniel's prophecy in a way that exalts the atonement and the centrality of finished work of the cross of Christ to the Biblical narrative.

Having said this, I want to very soberly qualify what I am about to argue for by saying that with regard to the end times, because the Scriptures speak of deception as such a primary feature of those days, and because by definition, pride is blindness, we all must remain humble, understanding the views of other brothers and sisters, while remaining alert and well aware that no one is immune from misunderstanding or misinterpreting a passage and being wrong, even when we are adamantly confident that we are right. As someone who has accepted the call on my life to be a teacher, I place myself at the very top of this list. As a teacher, I've accepted the fact that I will be judged more harshly than others, when what I need more than anything is a much more merciful judgment.

That said, I personally believe that the Scriptures teach the traditional view of Daniel's 70 weeks, with the full final week yet to come. I believe this is one of the more important and emphasized concepts taught in the Scriptures concerning the last days. For this reason, I submit the following to you all as Bereans to faithfully and prayerfully consider. The following are some of what I see as significant weaknesses with the newer developing view. I'm sure there are other points that I could add at another time, but for now, I think the following points roughly encapsulate the most significant problems or weaknesses with this view.

**(1)** This view argues that the references to the Temple mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Rev. 11 and four times in Daniel (8:11-14, 9:27, 11:31 12:11) all be taken as spiritual and not literal. This position argues this despite the fact that there is no basis within these actual passages to understand them in a non-literal sense. Those who espouse this view look to various examples in the NT where the Temple is used in a metaphorical sense as their basis to retroactively reinterpret passages in the OT that speak of the literal Temple in a spiritual sense. The argument is that because the Temple is used in a spiritual sense in some passages, we may now reinterpret passages whose original meaning was literal and see them as spiritual. But this is the precisely the hermeneutic of replacement theology. Those who espouse Replacement Theology look to the few examples in the NT where Israel or the Jews are spoken of in a spiritual sense and use this as the basis to go back to OT verses that reference a future blessing for literal Israel and Jews, and reinterpret these passages spiritually to refer to the Church. This form of interpretation, in my opinion, is not only wrong, it is extremely spiritually dangerous. I might also add that it finds its origins in syncretistic school of Alexandria that deliberately sought to merge together the Biblical worldview with the pagan Greek philosophical worldview. If the various references in Daniel, 2 Thess 2:4, and Rev 11 to the Temple are literal however, then it also stands to reason that the Temple must be built before the Antichrist can desecrate it, thus giving us some fair warning. But because one of the primary purposes of this view is to argue that the end times events will happen suddenly without any clearly preceding signs, it seeks to argue that the Temple should be understood non-literally. It also stands to reason that if there is a future literal Temple in Israel, there will also likely be some form of agreement with the surrounding Muslim nations to allow this, thus a "covenant" of some sort as we see in Daniel 9:27.

**(2)** This view requires that Jesus' ministry last exactly 3.5 years in order to fulfill the first 3.5 years of the final 70th week. The problem however is that very few scholars today believe that Jesus' ministry lasted more than 3 years. One can surf the web and find all sorts of characters offering their views, but among those scholars familiar with all of the relevant data, one will find meager support for the idea that Jesus' ministry lasted 3.5 years. Briefly, Jesus was crucified on Passover, and there are only three total Passovers mentioned in the Gospel of John. This limits Jesus ministry to roughly two years, certainly less than three years. Yet if Jesus' ministry was not precisely 3.5 years, then the idea that the first half of Daniel's week correlates to Jesus' ministry has no basis whatsoever. Consequently, we are not surprised to learn that the very notion that Jesus ministry was 3.5 years originated with Origen (who was later declared a heretic) and Eusebius (a Roman apologist with a very strong anti-Semitic supercessionist theology) who specifically developed this view in order to justify their pagan, anti-Semitic, and supercessionist understanding of Daniel 9:27. I believe we would do well to note this fact.

**(3)** This view requires that we interpret "the covenant" of Daniel 9:27 as taking place "during" rather than "for" one week. If the "covenant" is "for one week" then it cannot be applied to Jesus, as the covenant which Jesus made is eternal, and not merely a seven year covenant. The problem with this of course is that there not a single Bible version that translates it as "during" one week. Instead, virtually every translation one will find consistently translate it as "for" one week. This view must stake its case on the idea that the KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, RSV, ASV, NIV, NLT, DBY, WEB, HNV, and several others all got it wrong.

**(4)** This view divides the final week in half and inserts a 2000 year gap into the middle of the week. Needless to say, this would be a very unusual way to organize the timing of the prophecy, particularly without stating that this was the meaning. We must note that the division of the 70 weeks within the prophecy is broken up into 7 weeks + 62 weeks + 1 week. Notice that it is not broken up into 7 + 62.5 + 3.5.

**(5)** This view requires that the 69th week concludes at Jesus' baptism, leaving 3.5 years for His ministry. Yet of the four "decrees" which are considered by scholars as candidates to fulfill Daniel's decree, none that I am aware of align with 483 years from Jesus' baptism. It is for this reason that Amillennialists and Preterists who also take the view (that the 69th week ends with Jesus baptism) all must use a non-literal, very fluid accounting of the years mentioned. In other words, because they cannot make the numbers work, they just say the numbers are not literal and fudge them to make them fit. This view simply does not work with the chronology. Yet the entire passage is about chronology!

**(6)** This view must reject any reference to the historical-prophetic security alliances referred to in either Isaiah 10 or 28 as having any eschatological-prophetic application.

**(7)** This view must deny that “the flood” spoken of in both Isaiah 28 and Daniel 9 are referring to the same prophetic events. This view must deny any connection between these two floods, as that would also validate a connection between the two covenants mentioned in both passages, which of course would show that the two passages are prophetically referring to the same eschatological event.

**(8)** This view must see the Antichrist as responsible for the Abomination of Desolations and the ceasing of offerings in 3 passages in Daniel (8:11-14, 11:31, 12:11) and Christ in the fourth (9:27). This view fails to acknowledge the clear connection between these four passages. It interprets 9:27 in an inconsistent manner from the other references to the Abomination that Causes Desolations and the ceasing of offerings. Consider the following chart:

Verse (NIV)	Abomination or Horror	Ceasing of offerings	Responsible Party
Daniel 8:9-14	“transgression causes horror”	“removed the regular sacrifice”	Antiochus / Antichrist
Daniel 9:27	“the overspreading of abominations”	“put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering”	Antichrist
Daniel 11:31	“the abomination of desolation”	“do away with the regular sacrifice”	Antiochus / Antichrist
Daniel 12:11	“the abominations of desolation”	“the regular sacrifice is abolished”	Antichrist

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**(9)** This view must reject Jesus’ words according to their normal meaning in Matthew 24:8 as being a reference to “birth pangs”. If Jesus used the language of “the beginning of birth pangs” (A well known motif from Isaiah 26:17-19 referring to the pains that precede the resurrection) to refer to the signs that come before the Abomination of

Desolations, then He is clearly dividing up the signs that precede his coming into two distinct periods (the beginning of birth pangs, and the actual birth pangs) divided by the Abomination that Causes Desolation. Because this view rejects the notion that there is a distinct or marked period before the Abomination that Causes Desolations, they must argue that Jesus was not using the language of birth pangs here. Yet any lexicon will make it quite clear that this is the meaning of the words that Jesus used.

**(10)** This view must interpret the "Two Witnesses" of Revelation 12 in a non-literal, spiritualized manner. A careful examination of the ministry of the two witnesses shows that they do not "prophesy" in Jerusalem only during the final 3.5 years, but are in fact slain sometime prior to the end of the final 3.5 years. But because their ministry is 3.5 years, this would mean that their ministries begin sometime before the Abomination of Desolations. As such, this would be yet another identifiable sign that would precede the Abomination that Causes Desolation. The newer view rejects the idea that there will be any identifiable signs before that point, and so the two witnesses must be understood in a more vague, spiritual sense, often referring to Messianic and Gentile believers. Consequently, the fact that they prophesy in "Jerusalem" specifically is also often spiritualized to mean something much broader than just literal Jerusalem.

**(11)** This view must understand the passage in a way that violates the normal rules of grammar. The subject of a pronoun normally follows its immediate antecedent. This is true in both English and Greek. But consider the thoroughly inconsistent manner in which this view criss-crosses the subjects and pronouns versus the traditional premillennialist interpretation:

After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the **Anointed One (Christ)** will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of **the ruler who will come (Antichrist)** will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. **He (Christ)** will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' **he (Christ)** will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple **he (Antichrist)** will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on **him (Antichrist).**"

Once again, here is how this new view interprets the various subjects and pronouns:

1. The Anointed One (Christ)
2. The ruler who will come (Antichrist)
3. He (Christ)
4. he (Christ)
5. he (Antichrist)
6. him (Antichrist)

Now here is how the traditional Premillennial view interprets the subjects and pronouns:

After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the **Anointed One (Christ)** will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of **the ruler who will come (Antichrist)** will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. **He (Antichrist)** will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' **he (Antichrist)** will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple **he (Antichrist)** will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on **him (Antichrist).**"

And simplified:

1. The Anointed One (Christ)
2. The ruler who will come (Antichrist)
3. He (Antichrist)
4. he (Antichrist)
5. he (Antichrist)
6. him (Antichrist)

Needless to say, the traditional Premillennialist view is consistent and follows the proper rules of grammar here, while this newer view is neither consistent nor does it follow the proper or normal rules of grammar. This newer view must see an anomaly here in order to support its claims.

I will leave it at that for now. I hope that this list and accompanying thoughts have been helpful and edifying as we all seek together to be faithful students of His Word.

Many Blessings,  
Joel