

I. Introduction and review.

A. The historical context.

1. Judah is conquered by Babylon and sent into exile in about 605 BC.
 - a. Daniel, along with the other exiles, is taken to Babylon.
 - b. Jeremiah prophesies that the desolation and captivity will end after 70 years.
Jer. 25:8-11 29:10-14 II Chron. 36:21 Lev. 26:34-35
2. Babylon falls to the Medes and Persians in about 538 BC.
3. Daniel, in light of Jeremiah's prophecy, prays for the restoration of Israel. v. 1-19
Lev. 26:40-45 I Ki. 8:46ff II Chr. 7:13ff

B. The LORD immediately sends Gabriel with the answer to Daniel's prayer. v. 20-23

C. The answer will come in a period of seventy sevens. v. 24-27

1. There will be an immediate literal fulfillment for Daniel's people who will be restored to Jerusalem. v. 25
2. The ultimate fulfillment will occur through the coming of the Messiah. v. 26-27

II. The dispensational interpretation.

A. The period of the 70 sevens relate exclusively to God's purposes for ethnic Israel and will be literally fulfilled at the end of the age. v. 24

B. The seventy sevens are sevens of literal calendar years. v. 24-27

1. The 490 years begin with the decree of Artaxerxes in about 445 BC. Neh. 2:1-8
2. The first 69 sevens (483 years) are completed on exactly the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (33 AD?). v. 25 Mt. 21:1ff Zech. 9:9
3. After 483 years (sixty-nine sevens) the prophetic clock stops for an indefinite period of time (the church age -- or the times of the Gentiles). v. 26
 - a. The Messiah will be cut off (Jesus crucified).
 - b. The city and temple will be destroyed (Titus in 70 AD).
 - c. The church age will take place.
4. The seventieth seven will occur at the end of the age (the great tribulation) when the Lord resumes His dealings with Israel. v. 27
 - a. The gentile church will be raptured out so that the Lord can deal with Israel.
 - b. There will be a rebuilt temple and a re-institution of the sacrificial system.
 - c. The antichrist (a ruler of a revived Roman empire) will make a covenant with Israel which he will then break in the middle of the 'week'.
 - d. After the 7 year tribulation Christ will return to reign for 1000 years.
5. After the seventieth seven, Israel's apostasy will cease and Christ will reign in righteousness in the millennial kingdom, literally fulfilling God's promises. v. 24

C. Some problems with the dispensational interpretation.

1. This interpretation leaves out the two most crucial events of the 70 weeks.
2. The decree of Cyrus for the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild the temple occurs in about 538 BC -- which is almost a century before their starting point.
3. The death and resurrection of the Messiah takes place while their prophetic clock is stopped (between the 69th and 70th weeks). v. 26
4. There is no indication in the text of a gap of many centuries between the 69th and 70th weeks. (or a rapture at the beginning of the 70th week).

III. The Messianic interpretation.

- A. The period of seventy sevens predicts both the literal fulfillment for the people of Israel in Daniel's day and the ultimate fulfillment for all of God's people in Christ.
- B. The seventy sevens are symbolic periods of time. Mt. 18:22
1. Sevens have theological significance: sabbath and jubilee. Lev. 25:2ff
 2. The word *years* is not stated. v. 2,24-27
 3. The elaborate calculations proposed to make the prophecy fit literal years fail to make sense of the text.
- C. During the first seven sevens, the people will return to the land to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple -- the first jubilee period. v. 25
1. King Cyrus' decree in about 538 BC begins the seventy sevens.
 - a. King Cyrus is the Lord's anointed restorer. Isa. 44:28-45:3,13
 - b. Cyrus' decree signals the long-awaited events including the rebuilding of Jerusalem. v. 24a,25a,23 II Chron. 36:22-23 Ezr. 1:1-4 4:12 Isa. 44:28 45:13
 2. Cyrus' decree literally fulfills the immediate object of Daniel's prayer -- restoring the Jews to the land and rebuilding the temple. v. 2,17-18 Jer. 29:10,14
 3. This rebuilding began in about 538 BC and continued through the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, during which time there was distress. v. 25 Neh. 4:1ff 9:36ff
 4. Summary: the first seven sevens (jubilee period) is set aside to answer Daniel's prayer through the literal (temporary) restoration of Jerusalem and the temple.
 5. This restoration is not the ultimate home of God's people. Jer. 31:31ff 33:13ff
- D. The next sixty-two sevens represent the long period between the first jubilee period (the typical restoration) and the tenth jubilee. v. 26a
1. These will be difficult times for Israel as they are oppressed by foreign powers.
 2. Many of the prophecies and visions in Daniel describe these years in detail -- which would serve to prepare God's people for hard times. Dan. 2,7-8,10-12
- E. The seventieth seven is the tenth and ultimate jubilee in which the Messiah will come bringing the ultimate restoration of God's people and temple. v. 26b-27
1. Jesus is the true Anointed One who brings the ultimate jubilee. v. 24, 26b Isa. 61:1-3 Luke 4:16-21 Acts 10:38
 2. The Messiah comes *during* the seventieth week (tenth jubilee). v. 26a
 3. He is *cut off* and abandoned by God and men. v. 26b Isa. 53:8,3-4 55:3 Jo. 1:11
 4. His death is covenantal. Gen. 15:18 Heb. 12:24 13:20 I Co. 11:25 Mt. 26:28
 5. Judicial devastation will be poured out upon the apostate Jews, their city and their temple (Titus in 70 AD). v. 26c Mt. 21:43 22:17 23:37 24:2,15ff,39
 6. Who is the Prince who is to come? v. 26c,25 Mt. 21:38-44 22:7 23:37-24:2 Lu. 19:27
- F. Verse 27 is a parallel description of the events of the 70th week.
1. The same two events are described in verses 26-27.
 - a. The Messiah establishes the New Covenant order.
 - b. Desolation is decreed, ending the Old Covenant order.
 2. Jesus (not antichrist) is the One who confirms the covenant with His people during the 70th week. v. 27a Mt. 26:27-29 I Co. 11:25 Jer. 31:31-33 Is. 53:11-12
 3. The defiled temple is destroyed, symbolizing the end of the Old Covenant order.
 4. The Old Covenant temple and sacrifices have been forever rendered obsolete by Jesus' perfect and final sacrifice. He. 7:27 8:13 9:25-28 10:8-9 Mt. 27:51 Mk. 15:38
 5. Jesus fulfills all that the temple represented. v. 24 John 2:19-22 Mt. 12:6 Heb. 9:11-14,23-24,26 10:1-2,10,14 Rev. 21:10,22

G. Questions:

- 1. Is it possible to hold the Messianic interpretation and believe in a literal 1000 year millennium? Rev. 20:1ff Yes. Historic pre-mill. All believers J/G reign w/ Christ**
- 2. Is it possible to accept the Messianic interpretation and believe in a significant future for the Jews? Rom. 11:1ff v. 23ff**

IV. Concluding applications: What are we to take away from all of this?

Discussion questions

- 1. How do dispensationalists interpret the seventy sevens of Daniel?**
- 2. What are some problems with their interpretation?**
- 3. What is the theological and symbolic significance of the seventy sevens?**
- 4. What occurs during the first seven?**
- 5. What occurs during the final seven?**
- 6. How does this passage point to the work of Christ?**
- 7. How does this passage relate to Daniel's prayer?**
- 8. How does this passage help us to endure in times like these?**
- 9. Is there any promise in the Bible that we will be able to escape suffering?**
- 10. On what points of prophecy do all Bible-believing Christians agree?**

LAST THINGS (GBC Statement of Faith)

We believe that God has appointed a day when Jesus Christ will visibly return in glory to judge the world in righteousness. His justice will be displayed in the resurrection to eternal punishment of all unbelievers, who will be cast into Hell to experience separation from God forever. His mercy will be displayed by the gathering of all believers in resurrected and glorified bodies to everlasting life and fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord (Matthew 24:36; John 5:28,29; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 21:3; Mark 13:26,27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 21:8).

The Seventy “Sevens” in Daniel

