

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

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Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Hello, everyone, and welcome to our first session on the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

You will remember that, at Easter this year, we distributed two books. The first was *The Blessing of Abraham in Families*, and the second, *The Seventy Weeks Prophecy*. It is this second book that I will focus on in this series.

It will be helpful to begin from 'square one', so as to catch everyone up into the fellowship of this word. Then, in the coming weeks, we will take our time, so that we can focus on the highpoints of the prophecy; and will illustrate, also, the breadth and the depth of this great prophecy, because it has far-reaching implications for us.

The prophetic key to understanding the Seventy Weeks prophecy lost

Interestingly, the Seventy Weeks prophecy is only four verses long – it is not a long passage of Scripture. However, there have been huge volumes of material written on this prophecy; and it has been the subject of much debate and discussion. It is not an obscure prophecy, but its interpretation has remained largely in darkness.

I would like to begin by reading to you an interesting quote from *The Pulpit Commentary*¹ concerning this prophecy. It reads, 'Many treatises have been written on the seventy weeks of Daniel, and none of them have entirely cleared up the difficulties [They are saying, 'There are problems with all of them.']. And, indeed, it may be doubted whether, altogether, they have illuminated the subject very much.'

That is a very diplomatic and polite way of saying it! This is not a surprising observation because, when the early church turned their back on the ministry of the apostle Paul, and the gospel that he proclaimed; and when they turned aside from illumination to Greek philosophy; and when they turned aside from the *agape* meal to the sacraments, the prophetic key to understanding the Seventy Weeks prophecy was lost.

The key to illumination – understanding our participation in Christ's offering

This will be our first key point. The illumination of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is completely dependent upon our *understanding our participation* in the fellowship of *Christ's offering*.

The *central feature* of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is the *crucifixion of Jesus Christ*. The main point of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is that all of the outcomes that are listed in the prophecy – and we will consider all of those outcomes in some detail in the weeks ahead – have been achieved. They are *fully accomplished* in the *one offering* of Christ.

Then, as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Jesus Christ is now ministering to us – He forever lives to minister to us – our participation in His finished offering. Heb 5:9-10. Heb 7:25.

Daniel's illumination in Jeremiah's writings

As we begin, we will read from Daniel Chapter 9 to pick up the *context* of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. We find that the context of the prophecy is the Lord's answer, or *response*, to the *prayer of Daniel*.

'In the first year of his reign [referring to the reign of Darius the Mede] I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.' Dan 9:2.

Daniel was studying the writings of Jeremiah. Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be desolate, and that the kingdom of Babylon would rule over the nations of the world for a period of seventy years. Jer 25:11-12.

The timing of this prophecy was shortly before the first group of exiles were taken to Babylon. Significantly, Daniel was among that first group of exiles. He was taken to Babylon as a young man, so it is quite possible that Daniel heard Jeremiah preach, firsthand.

We do not know whether or not that is the case. What we do know is that Jeremiah then wrote to

1. H D M Spence-Jones and J S Exell (eds), *The Pulpit Commentary*, Funk and Wagnalls, New York.

the exiles in Babylon. He wrote a letter to them about eight years later – that is, after the second group of exiles were taken to Babylon. Jer 29. At a minimum, we know that Daniel would have received a copy of this letter.

We read, ‘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”.’ Jer 29:10-11.

This is the context of that passage: ‘Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.’ Jer 29:12.

Daniel’s response to the word of Jeremiah – repentance and intercession

Daniel read this, and responded to the word of Jeremiah. He prayed in *obedience* to the word of Jeremiah. This was a very unique prayer. It was a prayer of *repentance* – and Daniel expressed his *own* repentance.

He also prayed a prayer of *intercession* on behalf of the *whole Jewish nation*. ‘Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.’ Dan 9:3.

To pick up some of the content of this prayer, we read, ‘Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary.’ Dan 9:17.

That is a very significant statement! ‘Cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see.’ Dan 9:17-18.

We need to consider *when* the Lord answered this prayer by meeting the people, face to face, and eye to eye, with eyes like a flame of fire.

‘Open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.’ Dan 9:18-19.

Gabriel spoke with Daniel – the Seventy Weeks prophecy

While Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. ‘And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out [This was the commandment of the God of Israel.], and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision”.’ Dan 9:22-23.

Gabriel then proceeded to give Daniel the Seventy Weeks prophecy, and Daniel wrote it in the Scriptures, so that we are also able to ‘consider it and understand the vision’.

We are able to understand

There is no reason why this prophecy should be shrouded in darkness! The Lord does want us to *consider* it! He does want us to *understand* it. And we understand it by *illumination*.

The apostle John, when he began to write the book of Revelation, spoke about the *blessing of illumination* when he said, ‘Blessed is he who reads and he who hears the words of this prophecy.’ Rev 1:3.

In exactly the same way, we can *consider* the Seventy Weeks prophecy as we read it. And we can then *understand* it as we hear it proclaimed. Then, we *apply our hearts* to understanding by discussing its implications for us, *with one another*.

In this session, we will consider the four verses of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, firstly from the perspective of a brief *overview*. Then, in the coming weeks, we will expand this content.

We will ‘take our light plane up’, and ‘look out the window’; and we will identify a few of the ‘major landmarks’. We will say, ‘There’s a tree; there’s a house; there’s a bubbling brook.’ We will not stop and describe the ‘tree’ or the ‘house’, but we will do a quick ‘flyover’ to identify the major waypoints.

Seventy weeks of years – four hundred and ninety years

‘Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.’ Dan 9:24.

The prophecy begins with the statement, ‘Seventy weeks are determined’. This is why it is called ‘the Seventy Weeks prophecy’. The ‘seventy weeks’ have been determined by the commandment of the God of Israel.

It does not refer to weeks *of days*. If it were seventy weeks of days, given that there are fifty-two weeks in a year, this whole prophecy would be completed in just over one year. So, we know that it is not that!

The literal translation of 'seventy weeks' in this verse is 'seventy sevens', and we will find that it refers to seventy weeks *of years*.

This is consistent with the prophetic 'day for a year' principle that we see many times throughout the Scripture, and particularly in the book of Daniel. We will consider this in the coming sessions.

The 'seventy weeks' are, then, four hundred and ninety years. As we continue to read, we will find that this four-hundred-and-ninety-year period is broken up into four sub-periods.

The first is a seven-week period, which comprises forty-nine years; the second is a sixty-two-week period – four hundred and thirty-four years.

Then, there is the first half of the seventieth week, a three-and-a-half-year period; and, finally, the second half of the seventieth week, which also comprises three and a half years.

If we add those periods up, it should equal four hundred and ninety years! So, I might ask all of the Sonseekers to check my maths; and you may need to also assist your parents with that! Hopefully, forty-nine years, four hundred and thirty-four years, three and a half years, and three and a half years equals four hundred and ninety years in total.

The period of delay

Significantly, there is 'a *period of delay*' between the *first half* of the seventieth week, which finishes with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the *second half* of the seventieth week, which finishes with the physical second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of all believers.

That period of delay is an absolutely essential part of the prophecy itself. And, in the same way that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sake, the period of delay is also *for our sake*, because it is *granting us a participation* in the finished work of Christ.

Fulfilment of the prophecy - all six outcomes already accomplished by Christ's offering

'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city [these are the outcomes:], 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.' Dan 9:24.

The key point is that all six of these outcomes have *already* been accomplished by *the one offering of Christ*, when He was lifted up on the cross.

This is a major clarification, in terms of how we approach this prophecy.

In previous years, it has been suggested that only one of these six outcomes has been fully accomplished; namely, that Christ has 'made reconciliation for iniquity'. All of the other outcomes were assigned to a fulfilment in the future.

This was because we still see transgression in the world; we still see sin in the world; so, there is not yet a 'finish' for transgression – that was the reasoning.

On this basis, the fulfilment of these promises has often been assigned to the physical second coming of Christ and the commencement of the millennial rest for the people of God.

In more recent times, the fulfilment of these promises has also been assigned to a future fulfilment of the Day of Atonement – and many of us will be very familiar with this.

We need to make this point very clearly: Jesus Christ has *already* fulfilled *every* element of the Day of Atonement. We are not waiting for a future fulfilment of this great day.

In reality, we have been considering this point for many years now in great detail.

The Lord has been illuminating us concerning the offering journey of Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We have been considering the seven wounding events that Christ experienced on that journey. Every wounding event caused His blood to be shed on His physical body, as the Mercy Seat in the true tabernacle.

So, the events of the Day of Atonement, and the ministry of the Day of Atonement, are *finished*.

Our participation in His finished work – outcomes of the Seventy Weeks prophecy fulfilled in us

At the end of His offering journey, Christ then took His seat in the Father's throne, which is the throne

of grace. As our great High Priest seated in the Father's throne, He is now ministering to us a daily participation in His finished offering.

The apostle Paul declared that 'He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified' by a participation in this offering. Heb 10:14.

The significant implication of this point, in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy, is this: Christ has granted us our participation in His finished work, so that we witness the fulfilment of all these promises, *in us*. Heb 13:20-21.

For example, we can be assured that, because Christ has *finished the transgression*, we can be recovered and restored to first love.

And, because Christ has *made an end of sin*, we can reckon ourselves 'dead to sin' and 'alive to God', in Christ Jesus. Rom 6:11.

Further, because Christ has *made reconciliation for iniquity*, the power of the other law can be broken in our heart, as we turn to look upon Him whom we have pierced, and begin to mourn. Then the other law is circumcised from our heart, as we embrace our *unique participation* in His offering and sufferings.

Because Christ has already *brought in everlasting righteousness*, we can be assured, when we wake up every morning, that there is *grace for today* to do the work that the Father has planned for us *today*.

Because Christ has *sealed up vision and prophecy*, we can be assured that every day of our life is numbered. The day of our death is fixed, and we cannot die one minute before our time, if we continue to walk with Him. These are wonderful promises.

Because Christ has *anointed the Most Holy*, we have received the Holy Spirit as an anointing. And the Holy Spirit is teaching us *how to abide* in the fellowship of Christ's body, and the fellowship of His offering.

This is why we are able to be changed *to be* the bread and the wine *for one another* in the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

These are the major implications of understanding this point.

The four commands to restore and build Jerusalem

'Know therefore and understand [so, we can *know* this, and we can *understand*], that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince.' Dan 9:25.

Let's pause there. In terms of 'the going forth of the command', there are *four commands* that we will need to look at.

The *first* is the *commandment of the God of Israel*. The commandment of the God of Israel gave Gabriel the mandate to come and to speak to Daniel. The commandment of the God of Israel also determined the seventy weeks. Remember that Gabriel said, 'Seventy weeks are determined.' This is by the commandment of God. Dan 9:23-24. The commandment of the God of Israel also *ordained the timing* of the commands by the various Persian kings who followed.

The next command was *the command of Cyrus*, the king of Persia, which enabled the first group of exiles to return from Babylon to the land of Judea. 2Ch 36:22-23. Ezr 1:1-3.

The next was *the command of Darius*, and that enabled the temple to be completed. Ezr 6:6-12.

The fourth command was by Artaxerxes, in the seventh year of his reign, and that command enabled Ezra to return. Ezr 7.

We will look at the ministry of Ezra in quite some detail, but that *command of Artaxerxes* was the *beginning* of the seventy weeks.

'Sub-periods' within the seventy weeks

'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* [We are beginning to look at this break-up of time now.]; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even it troublesome times.' Dan 9:25.

The seven-week period

So, there were seven weeks – forty-nine years – of restoration, which began with *the return of Ezra*.

During this time, *the street*, which is the open square on the eastern side of the temple, was restored by Ezra to be the meeting place between the Lord's messengers and the head of every household.

In this period, also, *the walls* were rebuilt by Nehemiah.

This period of restoration ran all the way up to the ministry of the prophet Malachi.

The sixty-two-week period

There were then a further sixty-two weeks – four hundred and thirty-four years – when there was no prophetic ministry until the coming of John the Baptist.

The highpoint of the ministry of John the Baptist was, as you would expect, the baptism of Jesus. When Jesus was baptised, He was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh by the Holy Spirit. This was the coming of *the Messiah*. Remember that ‘the Messiah’ means ‘the Anointed One’.

So, in summary, when we consider verse twenty-five, there are sixty-nine weeks in total – seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks – four hundred and eighty-three years, from *the going forth of the command*, to the *baptism of Jesus*.

‘Messiah shall be cut off’ – Christ’s crucifixion

‘And after [not immediately on, but *after*] the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.’ Dan 9:26.

Cumulatively, this is now sixty-nine weeks – seven weeks, then sixty-two weeks. After *this* period of time, ‘Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself’.

This is the highpoint! This is the *central feature* of the Seventy Weeks prophecy!

When the Scripture declares, ‘Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself’, it refers to the *crucifixion of Jesus Christ*. Jesus Christ was ‘cut off, but not for Himself’ when He was *lifted up on the cross* and was *cursed* for our sake.

This was the foundation of the apostle Paul’s testimony, when he said, ‘I have been crucified [co-cursed] with Christ; [so] it is no longer I who live, but Christ [who] lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’ Gal 2:20.

This expressed His being ‘cut off, but not for Himself’.

‘The prince who is to come’ – Prince Titus

‘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.’ Dan 9:26.

‘The people of the prince who is to come’ refers to the Roman army under the leadership of Prince Titus. They destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and the temple, in AD70.

The seventieth week – confirming the Everlasting Covenant

‘Then [probably better translated as ‘And’] He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.’ Dan 9:27. This ‘one week’ refers to the *seventieth week* of the prophecy.

This verse begins again with the coming of the Messiah. ‘Then He’ declares to us the Messiah – Christ. The ‘one week’ is the seventieth week of the prophecy; it is *Christ* who *confirms a covenant* with many for one week.

This Scripture, verse 27, does not refer to Titus, and certainly does not refer to a future antichrist.

The covenant that is confirmed by Christ is the Everlasting Covenant that God made with Abraham, that ‘in your Seed [Christ] all the nations of the earth will be blessed’. Gen 22:18.

The ‘many’ in this verse refers to both Jew and Gentile, in the one body of Christ. Dan 9:27. It refers to the true descendants of Abraham.

The Old Covenant ended

‘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.’ Dan 9:27.

The week is seven years long. ‘In the middle of the week’ is after three and a half years. We know that the earthly ministry of Christ lasted for three and a half years – from His baptism to His crucifixion. After three and a half years, He was crucified as the suffering Messiah. The crucifixion of Jesus put a stop to all sacrifice and offering, according to the Law.

And this is also a very significant point in terms of the way in which we interpret this prophecy. The one offering of Jesus *abolished the Old Covenant*, and inaugurated the New Covenant. This is a major theme in the book of Hebrews.

‘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.' Dan 9:27.

When the spear pierced the side of Christ, revealing the blood, the water, and the spirit of grace and supplication that flowed from Christ's wounded heart, the veil in the physical temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Mat 27:50-51.

This signified that a 'new and living way' was now open so that we can be joined, by the Spirit, to the offering of Christ.

It also signified that those physical buildings, as the context for priestly ministry and sacrifice, were now *redundant*.

On the wing of abominations

However, history tells us that the Jews sewed up the veil in the temple, and continued to make animal sacrifice after the offering of Christ.

Every animal sacrifice after Christ's offering, which was once and for all, for all eternity, was an *abomination* to the Lord. So, the abominations began there, and they have continued.

Even when animal sacrifice ceased, when Titus destroyed the temple, *another* form of abomination was already 'up and running' in the early church, in the form of all the *sacraments*. And they have continued for the whole church age!

'On the wing' means 'on the extremity'. It is on the extremity because the abominations *continue* for the whole period of delay.

The Old King James version refers to this as an 'overspreading of abominations'. It will continue until the judgement of the administration of Babylon in the end of the age.

One who makes desolate

In the end of the age, the final instrument of the Lord's judgement upon Babylon will be antichrist. Antichrist is the 'one who makes desolate', or 'the desolator'.

The reign of antichrist will be three and a half years, and this is variously described in the book of Revelation. This is the final half of the seventieth week.

We note also that this is the same three and a half years in which the church, as the bride of Christ,

will be protected and nourished by Christ in the wilderness.

The consummation

'And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate [the antichrist], even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.' Dan 9:27.

'The consummation' means 'a complete destruction'. The fullness of the wrath of God, contained in seven vials, will be poured out upon antichrist and upon all those who have received the mark of the number of his name, in the first hour of his reign.

So, as soon as he comes to power, his kingdom will already be judged and going to perdition. Significantly, the three-and-a-half-year reign of antichrist will conclude with the physical second coming of Christ, and the day of resurrection for all believers.

That completes our very brief 'flyover', or overview, of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. Hopefully, we have begun to identify the major landmarks, and we look forward to considering the detail of this prophecy in the coming weeks.