

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

As evening closes in, Daniel continues to pray. Dressed in a crudely fashioned garment made of sackcloth, his skin covered in ashes, he has been pouring his heart out in contrition and repentance for the sins of his people, pleading with God to turn His anger from Israel and restore them to the Land.

Then, all at once, he feels himself surrounded by a presence: ethereal, emanating light and warmth but at the same time great power and authority.

Daniel is frightened, but nonetheless lifts his head to find what appears to be a man standing before him. This man, though, has a countenance unlike that of any ordinary man. He touches Daniel, so as to console, and then begins to speak to him with an assuredness and serenity that is not of this world, but could only come from one of God's holy angels:

“Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding...”

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Book of Daniel contains some of the most amazing passages that we find in the Bible. In chapter 9, verses 24 through 27, for instance, we find the central components of God’s plan of redemption revealed. Here, in a brief, compact, and elegant manner, the Lord delivers through His angel Gabriel a sweeping prophetic message containing details—even *time-specific* details—concerning the future of the Jews, their holy city (Jerusalem), and the coming of Messiah.

Throughout the centuries, many volumes have been written about verses 24 through 27, also known as Daniel’s “prophecy of seventy weeks,” and, for various reasons, this passage is still among the most contentiously debated in prophecy circles. Much of this debate centers on the question of which elements of the prophecy have already been fulfilled and which elements await fulfillment at the end of the age.

By far the most popular teaching today is the latter (futurist) view, which holds that key parts of Daniel’s prophecy are yet to be fulfilled. However, even among futurists, there is still much room for disagreement, namely concerning *which* events await fulfillment, *how* they will be fulfilled, and which, if any, might be fulfilled *twice*.

DUAL FULFILLMENTS IN THE BIBLE

Among students of the Bible, it is common knowledge that some prophecies are destined for dual fulfillment. This is known as “the law of double reference;” it refers to the fact that a partial fulfillment of a given prophecy may have been realized in the past, while the *complete* fulfillment is yet to be in the future. Thus, there is a significant gap of time between the preliminary and the *ultimate* fulfillment. An excellent example of this is found in the Old Testament prediction made by Joel concerning the Lord’s pouring out of the Holy Spirit:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered...

—Joel 2:28-32

In the New Testament (Acts 2:14-21), God inspired the Apostle Peter to quote from the above passage to describe the events on the Day of Pentecost, which was, of course, the day the Lord fulfilled His promise to send the “Holy Spirit” to dwell in the hearts of the first believers. As those present would attest to, supernatural manifestations of God’s power did indeed occur on that day (see verses 1 through 15). Also, as a result of being filled with God’s Spirit, the “sons” and “daughters,” would begin to “prophesy,” thereby saving those who would “call on the name of the LORD.” But these manifestations would represent only a *partial* fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Obviously, the great “wonders in the heavens,” such as the Sun being “turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood,” did not transpire then but were destined for future fulfillment at the “great and terrible day of the Lord.” Therefore, part of Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled in the first century AD, while the complete fulfillment will not be realized until the days just prior to Christ’s return.

A SNEAK PREVIEW?

Another aspect of dual fulfillment is that, often times, the partial,

or historical, fulfillment can also serve as a prophetic picture of what the fullness of fulfillment will look like at the end of the age. For example, most scholars today agree that Matthew 24 speaks primarily of the great “tribulation” slated to occur just prior to the Second Coming. But in verse 2, Jesus, in referencing the manner of destruction wrought by the Romans, is obviously speaking of the siege of Jerusalem that would take place in 70 AD:

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

—Matthew 24:2

And so here we have not only a perfect description of what happened in 70 AD, but a foreshadowing of the *future* siege of Jerusalem that will take place just before the Second Coming.

Both of the above examples, then, illustrate how a single prophecy may apply to multiple events: one already fulfilled in the distant past and one that will be fulfilled in the future.¹

NEWTON: A SCHOLAR AMONG SCHOLARS

One well-known proponent of the dual nature of prophecy was a man named Sir Isaac Newton. Newton (1642-1727) is perhaps the most famed scientific mind the world has ever known. He is called the “father of modern science” and the “father of the industrial revolution.” He also made revolutionary advances in mathematics, optics, physics, and astronomy.

Possessing unequaled mental ability throughout his entire adult life, until his death at age eighty five, Newton’s powers are legendary. It is often told, for example, how later in his life a problem in mathematical physics posed by the great mathematician, Bernoulli, was forwarded to the Royal Society, of which Newton was President.

The problem, which involved *determining the curve of minimum time for a heavy particle to move downward between two given points*, had baffled the famous eighteenth century mathematicians of Europe for over six months. Receiving the problem in the afternoon, Newton solved it before going to bed!²

In addition to his scientific work (Newton would have said as a “part” of his scientific work) he was also an ardent student of the Bible. In fact, it is noted that only twelve percent of his vast library contained books related to the various disciplines on which his fame rests, the majority of them being on the subject of theology.

Newton believed that the Bible, which he was known to study and translate from the original Hebrew, was literally true in every respect. He thus viewed his own scientific work as merely a means by which to validate his belief in the infallibility of Scripture. In the course his efforts, Newton continually tested biblical claims against the physical truths of experimental and theoretical science. He never observed a contradiction.³

It is no surprise, then, that in Newton's view the prophecies found in the Bible literally contained “histories of things to come”; these histories, however—set out in symbolic and metaphorical language—demanded exacting interpretative skills. This was the challenge that Newton took up with unflagging enthusiasm for the last fifty-five years of his life.

Today, in spite of all of Newton's scientific accomplishments, some would say that his keen insight into certain aspects of the prophecies may be one of the greatest contributions he ever made, and it is likely that Newton, if he could weigh in on the matter, would agree.

NEWTON AND DANIEL

Newton was particularly drawn to the Books of Daniel and Revelation and wrote extensively on them. In 1733, six years after his death, J. Darby and T. Browne published his writings in a commen-

tary entitled *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John*.^{*} In his writings, Newton contended that based on Scripture, namely the angel Gabriel's statement that Daniel's book was to be "sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9), that the prophecies contained therein would not be fully understood until at or very near the end of the age. He writes:

"The prophecies of Daniel and John should not be understood till the time of the end: but that some should prophesy out of it in an afflicted and mournful state for a long time, and that but darkly, so as to convert but few. But in the very end, the Prophecy should be so far interpreted so as to convince many."⁴

Here, Newton alludes to the fact that unfulfilled prophecy is always viewed as "through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). This, of course, would hold even truer in the case of Daniel's book, being "sealed" as it were. Nonetheless, he did feel that his understanding of a crucial aspect of a certain prophecy—the prophecy of seventy weeks—would prove a worthy contribution to the effort of deciphering Daniel.

Indeed, among the common interpretations of the so-called prophecy of seventy weeks, Newton's take, particularly in regard to one key verse, is fundamentally unique and in the eyes of a growing number makes absolute sense of an aspect that many have struggled with throughout the years. In fact, it is Newton's unique interpretation that makes the prophecy of seventy weeks so relevant to our central topic, which is, of course, the timing of Christ's return. For this reason, the bulk of this chapter will be devoted exclusively to exploring this mysterious passage through Newton's eyes. What is revealed,

^{*} Interestingly, it was only twenty years ago in 1991 that Newton's writings on Daniel were "rediscovered" at the Library of Congress and reprinted by Arthur B. Robinson of Cave Junction, Oregon.

I believe the reader will agree, is of vast implication for the current generation.

Before we get to that, however, in order to establish some context and thus maximize our understanding of the prophecy, it will be helpful to orient ourselves with a little background on Daniel, including the times and circumstances under which this Prophet lived and which, in turn, led to the amazing passage we are about to study.

SETTING THE SCENE

It is the year 539 BC and the Jewish people, including a now aged Prophet named Daniel, have been held captive in the city of Babylon for nearly seventy years. This captivity was, in all actuality, a punishment from God. The Jews had failed to observe the Lord's statutes, which included honoring the Sabbaticals and Jubilees, thereby depriving the Land of its allotted time of rest (Ezekiel 20:10-13). Though God repeatedly sent Prophets to warn that they would be removed from the Land if they persisted in their ways, they continued to rebel. Finally, as there was no other remedy than to dispense justice, God allowed the Jews to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians. In the process, Jerusalem was burned and ruined, the Holy Temple was destroyed, and countless numbers of Daniel's people were massacred.

The Jews had neglected the Sabbaticals and Jubilees for 430 years (Ezekiel 4:1-6). During this time, the Land had missed a total of seventy (year-long) Sabbaths. So, to make restitution, the Land was to be allowed to lay desolate for seventy years, enjoying its allotted time of rest, while Daniel's people would be held captive in Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:15-21).

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

Throughout all of his decades spent in Babylon, Daniel remained

a faithful servant and a follower of God's Word. At some point, through his study of the Book of Jeremiah, presumably the two verses below, Daniel came to understand the length of Israel's sentence in Babylon and thus the fact that their time of captivity was almost over:

And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon *seventy years*.

—Jeremiah 25:11

For thus saith the LORD, That after *seventy years* be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

—Jeremiah 29:10

Because the Lord did not wish to leave the Jews in a state of perpetual uncertainty, He had revealed in Jeremiah the exact length of their term, giving them an “expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). Daniel, of course, knowing the year in which their captivity had begun, must have simply done the math to determine that freedom was at hand!

Reading beyond verse 10, as Daniel surely must have done, Jeremiah describes how the Israelites would seek guidance from the Lord and how He would show mercy by bringing them back into the Land:

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you,

saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

—Jeremiah 29:12-14

Realizing that a return to the Promised Land was imminent, and perhaps taking a queue from the above passage, Daniel submits himself in prayer and fasting as he petitions the Lord to end the desolation of Jerusalem:

...We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you...O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill...hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary [in Jerusalem] Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name...

—Daniel 9:5, 11, 16-18

God, of course, hears Daniel's prayer and sends the angel Gabriel with a message. He is about to go one better on His promise to give His people an expected end by revealing what the future holds for Israel—not only in the short term but right up to the end of the age:

...Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:

—Daniel 9:22, 23

Gabriel then proceeds to deliver what is one of the most widely

studied and debated Bible passages of all time, Daniel’s “prophecy of seventy weeks”:

²⁴Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. ²⁵Know 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. ²⁶After the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come 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. ²⁷He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of a seven, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

—Daniel 9:24-27

Needless to say, for those unacquainted with this passage, Gabriel’s message may seem rather cryptic, but with some help from Isaac Newton, we will begin to shed some light on what has just been revealed to Daniel, or, perhaps more accurately, what has been revealed to us.

BREAKING IT DOWN

Firstly, we should reemphasize that this message from Gabriel is in essence a response to Daniel’s prayerful request that God show

mercy and restore His people to the Land (specifically the Holy Sanctuary) so that they may serve Him and thus be heir to His promises regarding Israel. Therefore, this prophecy deals specifically with the two elements that lie at the center of God's promises to Israel and which, in turn, form the basis of the Jewish faith: the coming of Messiah and the state of the Holy Sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Now, in order to understand the finer elements of the prophecy, we must, rather than try and take it in as a whole as we just have, break it down into smaller and therefore much easier to digest pieces.

Let us begin to do so, then, by taking a look at just the first part of Gabriel's message—verse 24:*

Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

—Daniel 9:24

In Newton's own words, Daniel 9:24-27, like all of the rest of Daniel, consists of two parts, "an introductory prophecy and an explanation thereof" (Newton, 52). Verse 24, above, is our introduction; it speaks in overall terms of a set period of time, "seventy sevens," that is decreed upon Daniel's "people" (the Jews) and their "holy city" (Jerusalem) to complete the ministry that God has appointed them, all of this being part and parcel of God's redemptive plan which, again, centers on Jerusalem and the coming Messiah.

Per Newton, as well as virtually all other scholars, in accordance with the "day for a year" theme as established in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, the "seventy sevens" mentioned here are to be interpreted as seventy "weeks" of years, or seventy *sabbatical cycles*. Therefore, the

* Since Newton held a primarily *historicist* view of this prophecy we will, for the sake of added perspective, be acknowledging a couple of alternative (futurist) interpretations along the way. Yet, for the sake of clarity and continuity, the scope of our examination here is constrained primarily to Newton's viewpoints.

“seventy sevens” actually refer to a period of time totaling 490 years ($70 \times 7 = 490$) (52, 53). This 490-year span is the time allotted by God for the key components of His redemptive plan to be fulfilled, namely to: “finish transgression,” to “put an end to sin,” to “atone for wickedness,” to “bring in everlasting righteousness,” to “seal up” or complete the “vision and prophecy,” and to “anoint the most holy.”

Newton’s interpretation holds that all of these things were accomplished by Christ at His death on the cross, at which time He atoned for the transgressions and sins of man, thereby sealing up the vision and prophecy by bringing everlasting life to those who believe in His name (53). Thus, according to Newton, the crucifixion of Christ marks the end point of the “seventy sevens” or 490-year span of time.

But what about the start point? Something significant must have happened 490 years prior to the crucifixion to set the “prophetic clock” ticking. To find out what it was, we must jump ahead for a moment to verse 25. Here we find that the 490-year clock was set in motion by the “issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild” Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25). The fulfillment of this specific event, as per Newton, is found in Chapter 7 of the Book of Ezra: History records that in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, a group of Jews led by Ezra returned from Babylonian captivity, revived the Jewish temple worship, and established judges to govern the Jewish people under God’s laws. While the various historical calendars may be confusing, it has been determined by historians that Ezra and the Babylonian exiles returned to Jerusalem around 457-458 BC.

Thus, verse 24 finds its fulfillment in the 490-year span between

* Though the Jews (led by Zerubbabal) were freed to return to Jerusalem in Daniel’s time (539 BC), Newton notes that this does not qualify as the time marker because “they only had commission to build the Temple,” whereas during the time of the later return led by Ezra, the Jews actually “became a polity or city by a government of their own” and “revived the Jewish worship; and by the King’s commission created magistrates in all the land, to judge and govern the people according to the laws of God and the King” (53).

the time the dispersed Jews were reincorporated into a people and a holy city in Jerusalem in 457-458 BC, and Christ's crucifixion in 32-34 AD. In other words, this verse, verified to have been written centuries before the birth of Jesus, predicts the precise year of His death on the cross!

Incidentally, the liberal scholars and critics who have tried to "late date" the entire Book of Daniel in an effort to negate the supernatural quality of its predictions do not even attempt to deny the fact that this prophecy was, by all accounts, recorded well before the time of Christ. But even if one chooses to ignore this fact and allow for the possibility that the prophecy was written or manipulated *after* Christ's crucifixion, there is no getting around the fact that in order to do so one would need to have a thorough understanding of this highly enigmatic prophecy and the specific historical events that it references, which no one did at the time!

And with that, we are prepared to move on to our primary area of focus, the first part of verse 25, which, if Newton was correct, may hold some critical if not earthshaking information for those seeking the timing of Christ's return.

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...

—Daniel 9:25

The first thing we note in verse 25 is the mention of the time marker that was just discussed in regard to verse 24, which is the "decree to restore and rebuild" Jerusalem. This decree to restore Jerusalem also comes into play here in verse 25, albeit, as we will see, in a slightly different sense.

The second thing to note is the fact that we are no longer speaking of the period of "seventy sevens," or 490 years, mentioned in verse 24, but of a much shorter period of "seven sevens." Gabriel tells Daniel to "Know and understand" what this timespan of "seven sev-

ens” signifies.

We also notice that the focus of this period of seven sevens is on an “Anointed One” who comes as a “ruler.” According to Gabriel, this ruler will come “seven sevens” or forty-nine years (the span of one Jubilee) after a “decree” is issued to “restore and rebuild” Jerusalem.

Obviously, the “Anointed One,” or “ruler,” mentioned here is a reference to Christ. So, in essence, Gabriel is telling Daniel that Jesus will come forty-nine years after this particular decree to restore Jerusalem. But which restoration? Clearly it cannot be the same call to return and rebuild the city in 457-458 BC that started the aforementioned 490 year “clock” ticking, nor could it have been the later call to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem recorded in Nehemiah chapter 2, as both of these occurred *centuries* before Christ’s arrival, far out of range of this span of only forty-nine years. Faced with this, Newton reasoned, quite logically, that the forty-nine years must refer to the prophesied future, or *end-times*, restoration of Jerusalem and therefore the *Second Coming* of Christ.

As we learned earlier, the dual nature of Bible prophecy was a concept not lost on Newton. In fact, He recognized that virtually every prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the First Advent of Christ, in some way or another, also related to the Second Advent. Yet Newton had even further justification for pinning this verse to the Second Coming: In his writings, he notes that there is an obvious distinction drawn between the Jesus we find here in verse 25, who is referred to as a “ruler,” and the Jesus who is described elsewhere in the passage simply as the “Anointed One,” or, as Newton puts it, a “Prophet.” In Newton’s own words:

“The former part of the prophecy related to the first coming of Christ, being dated to his coming as a Prophet; this being dated to his coming to be a Prince or King, seems to relate to his second coming. There the Prophet was consummate, and the most holy anointed: here he that was anointed

comes to be Prince [ruler] and to reign" (53).

Here, Newton keys in on an aspect of verse 25 often overlooked and concludes that the period of "seven sevens," or forty-nine years, *must* relate to the Second Coming because it refers specifically to Jesus appearing as a "ruler." Obviously, at Christ's first appearance He came not to rule but to willfully lay his life down as the "sacrificial lamb." Thus, Jesus would not assume His role as "ruler" until His return at the end of the age.

To sum up, then, based on the fact that Jesus is here referred to as a "ruler" and also the fact that the span of forty-nine years does not fit the timeline of the First Coming, Newton concluded that this part of verse 25 must refer to the Second Coming. This event, he maintains, will take place exactly forty-nine years after a *future* return to "restore and rebuild" Jerusalem.*

Of course, the fact that this period of "seven sevens," or forty-nine years, is equivalent to the span of a jubilee cycle was not lost on Newton either. Here, he notes that this particular cycle would likely begin and end with actions that comport to the "highest nature" of jubilee:

"As the seventy and the sixty-two weeks were Jewish weeks, ending with sabbatical years; so the seven weeks are the

* Most interpreters do not seize on the idea that this "seven sevens" refers to a *future* restoration of Jerusalem but instead simply add this forty-nine year period to the period of sixty-two sevens, or 434 years, mentioned later in verse 25. This results in an entirely different interpretation that is based on a period of *sixty-nine* weeks, thereby limiting the scope of this passage in predicting the arrival of Messiah to His first coming only. Newton held that since the prophesied final restoration of Jerusalem was such a principal expectation on the part of the Jews, it would make no sense for the timing of said restoration, and thus the Second Coming of Christ, to be excluded from Daniel's prophecy. In affirming the rationale behind his interpretation, Newton further notes that for one to create one number (sixty-nine weeks) by adding the sixty-two weeks and seven weeks, "as interpreters usually do," does "violence" to the language of Daniel (Newton, 55).

compass of a jubilee, and begin and end with actions proper for a jubilee and of the highest nature for which a jubilee can be kept” (54).

Again, Newton’s insight is astounding. Roughly three hundred years ago, when the idea that Israel might someday be reborn as a sovereign Nation was thought preposterous, he predicted—based on verse 25—that immediately following a *future* Jewish return to and restoration of Jerusalem, God’s prophetic clock would begin ticking off a forty-nine year jubilee cycle that would culminate in the long-awaited return of Jesus Christ!

Needless to say, Newton must have been thrilled to have been allowed this insight. Moreover, considering his desire to unlock the secrets of the prophecies, he would have likely given anything to see the missing piece of the puzzle fall into place, which was, of course, the *date* that this final restoration of Jerusalem would take place. Thus, the current generation, had Newton been capable of seeing into the future, would have been the focus of his envy. The reason, for those not familiar with modern Jewish history, is a historical event that took place a little more than four decades ago at the conclusion of the 1967 Six day War: the Jewish recapture and restoration of the Holy City of Jerusalem!⁵ Indeed, history records that on June 7, 1967 the Jews recaptured East Jerusalem, liberating it from the Jordanians and reuniting the Holy City under Jewish rule for the first time in roughly two thousand years. Soon after, on June 28, Israel’s parliament (The Knesset) promulgated and adopted a law that stated:

“The Government is empowered by a decree to apply the law, the jurisdiction and administration of the State to any part of Eretz Israel (Land of Israel-Palestine), as stated in that decree.”⁶

On the basis of this law, the government of Israel decreed in July of 1967 that Jerusalem is one city indivisible, the capital of the State

of Israel.

Might this 1967 restoration and “decree” of sovereign Jewish rule over Jerusalem have been *the* latter-day decree that verse 25 of Daniel was referring to? Could this event therefore have marked the starting point of the “seven sevens” of Daniel, and thus the commencement of the very jubilee cycle (ending in 2015-16) that will herald the return of Christ?^{7, 8}

Though the answers to these two questions are ultimately only known to God, it would be difficult, in light of Newton's thesis, for one to interpret the events of 1967 in any other way.

As for Newton, had he been alive to witness it, he would have most likely agreed that this twentieth century liberation and restoration of Jerusalem qualifies as being “of the highest nature for which a Jubilee can be kept.” In fact, if Isaac Newton were alive to see all of this come together as it seems to be, he might be found on his front lawn doing cartwheels and back flips!

Nonetheless, even as we continue to ponder the enormity of this revelation, we move on to the remainder of verse 25 and part of verse 26, where we find some perhaps less timely but no less astounding predictions:

...and sixty-two sevens. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing...

—Daniel 9:25, 26

Here we notice yet another group of sevens, “sixty-two sevens.” Once more, this period of time relates to the Messiah, but there is a subtle difference. Note that in reference to the “sixty-two sevens,” or 434 years, Jesus is referred to as the “Anointed One,” *not* a “ruler,” as He had been previously in regard to the “seven sevens.” This, combined with the fact that there is reference to Him being “cut off,” or killed, tells us that the sixty-two sevens relate to Christ's *first* coming.

Secondly, we note that, similar to the case of the seven sevens,

the sixty-two sevens are said to be counted from the beginning of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. However, in this case it is specified that Jerusalem “will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.” According to Newton, this refers to the aforementioned *ancient* rebuilding of the wall around the city as detailed in Nehemia chapter 6: History records that the wall around Jerusalem was successfully completed in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, or the 4,278th year of the Julian Period. From this point, counting in Hebrew years from the month of September, exactly sixty-two sevens, or 434 years, would elapse until September of the year 4712. Per Newton, this year was acknowledged by numerous ancient historians, including Clemens Alexandrinus, Irenaeus, Eusebius, and others as the birth year of Jesus (54). Therefore, this prophesied period of sixty-two sevens finds its fulfillment in the span of time between the completion of Jerusalem’s wall by Nehemia (4,278th year of the Julian Period) and the birth of Jesus Christ, or the First Coming.

Reading on, the next line predicts the subsequent death of Jesus by stating that “the Anointed One will be cut off.” Once again, as proposed by Newton, despite His virgin birth and the many miracles that accompanied His ministry, the “Anointed One” was rejected by the Jewish leadership and “cut off,” or killed.

Thus, we find in the compass of these few lines an accurate prediction of the timing of Christ’s birth—to the year—and also a prediction that He will be killed, or “cut off.” The actual year of His death, as we recall, was revealed earlier in the prophecy as taking place 490 years after the 457-458 BC return to Jerusalem.

Again, in light of Newton’s interpretation so far, it is amazing to consider that the exact years of both Jesus’ first and, quite possibly, His *second* entrance into the world are revealed in the span of only a few lines. Perhaps this passage, then, is the perfect example of “the law of double reference” as it speaks to both the First and the Second Advent of Christ.*

* Yet this timing is contingent upon Jerusalem’s restorations, and thereby hidden or “sealed” until the time that these restorations occur.

Moving on, let us take a look at the second half of verse 26:

...The people of the ruler who will come 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.

—Daniel 9:26

According to Newton, the “ruler who will come” refers to Prince Titus, the son of Roman Caesar Vespasian, whose “people,” or forces, would destroy the Jewish Temple in 70 AD. This battle, which is likened to a “flood,” resulted in a massive loss of Jewish life via starvation, crucifixion, and the sword. Subsequently, both Jews and Christians were forbidden by the Romans to re-enter Jerusalem, which was later plowed under with salt.

Then, around 130 AD, the emperor Hadrian built a new Roman colony in Jerusalem and erected a temple to the god “Jupiter Capitolinus” on the Holy Hill, or “Temple Mount.” As prophesied, Israel was broken up and the remaining Jews were dispersed into the Roman Empire, causing the “desolation” of the land. Per Newton, strife and “war” over Jerusalem and the Holy Land would then “continue until the end” when the twelve tribes of the Nation of Israel returned to the Land for the final time (55). Newton, therefore, believed that this part of the prophecy was fulfilled long before his own lifetime.

Incidentally, many interpreters today believe that this verse is yet another destined for dual fulfillment. This popular teaching holds that verse 26, in addition to describing the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, also foreshadows the end-times invasion of the Holy City by the Antichrist and his forces.⁷

He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven...

—Daniel 9:27

Newton proposes a simple interpretation for this line: Seven

years after the death and resurrection of Christ, the calling and conversion of Cornelius occurred, at which time a covenant was established between the “Anointed One” (Christ) and “many” peoples, referring to the Gentiles (55).

As in the case of verse 26, many prophecy teachers today ascribe an end-times fulfillment to this part of the prophecy. According to this teaching, the “He” in this verse does not refer to Jesus, but to the “Antichrist,” who will confirm some type of covenant with the Jews. Therefore, the “seven” mentioned here is not considered to be a reference to Christ’s first century timeframe but to a future “week,” or period of seven years, most likely a sabbatical cycle, which will culminate in the end of the age.

While this author tends toward the latter theory of an end-times fulfillment, it is interesting, in the spirit of keeping an open mind, to consider the possibility of Newton being one hundred percent correct in his interpretation that this verse is already completely fulfilled. Today, millions await the signing of a “seven year peace treaty” as the definitive event in confirming the identity of the Antichrist. Once the Antichrist is revealed, it is believed that the return of Christ is but a few years in the offing. This precise scenario has been detailed in countless books that presumably map out the events of the last days as the majority expects them to unfold. In light of this, it is further interesting to play devil’s advocate for a moment and pose the following: What if this “treaty” were not to materialize in the manner or at the time expected? Might this, for those who have dogmatically staked everything on a particular interpretation of one or two lines, hamper their ability to discern other possibilities and perhaps the larger unfolding of end-times events? The simple point to be made is the same one alluded to earlier by Newton: Until at or very near the time of fulfillment, we continue to look at these prophecies—perhaps some more than others—as through a dark piece of glass. So while some of the larger, more general, aspects may indeed be understood before the fact, it is likely that the end-times will hold many surprises for all.

...In the middle of a seven, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

—Daniel 9:27

Again, Newton proposes a historical fulfillment: in speaking to the “middle of a seven,” he notes that the Jewish war against the Romans lasted three and a half years, from 66 AD until 70 AD, when, contrary to the direct orders of Prince Titus, the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by fire, thus ending the daily “sacrifice and offering” (55).

In addressing the “abomination that causes desolation,” which is rendered in the King James Version simply as “the overspreading of abominations,” Newton proposes that after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Holy City and surrounding lands were over-spread by a successive army of false idols, gods, and religious abominations, resulting in the fulfillment of this verse (55).*

Other interpreters propose that the “Dome of the Rock,” a Muslim temple built circa 688 AD on the Temple Mount, fulfills this prophecy.

Still others reason that since this is a continuance of the first line of verse 27, which refers to a “covenant with many,” these actions should also be attributed to the Antichrist who will break said cove-

* Newton summarized the whole of Daniel's seventy weeks as follows: “Thus have we in this short Prophecy, a prediction of all the main periods relating to the coming of the Messiah; the time of his birth, that of his death, that of the rejection of the Jews, the duration of the Jewish war whereby he caused the city and the sanctuary to be destroyed, *and the time of his second coming*: and so the interpretation here is given more full and complete and adequate to the design, than if we should restrain it to his first coming only, as interpreters usually do. We avoid also the doing violence to the language of Daniel, by taking the seven weeks and sixty-two weeks for one number. Had that been Daniel's meaning, we would have said sixty and nine weeks, and not seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, a way of numbering using by no nation” (55).

nant with the Jews at mid-point, “in the middle of a seven,” and place some type of “abomination” on a “wing” of a newly rebuilt Jewish Temple. This end-times interpretation is, again, predominant today.

Considering verse 27 in its entirety, this author, once more, tends to lean toward an end-times fulfillment but would stop far short of being dogmatic in this view. Already completely fulfilled? A possible future or dual fulfillment? As Newton once wrote, “Let time be the interpreter.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As we wrap up our look at Daniel’s “prophecy of seventy weeks” we note that while questions remain regarding past or future fulfillment of certain portions of the prophecy, some key events can be convincingly shown to have been fulfilled. In fact, the accuracy of the prediction of the First Coming and also the death of the Messiah—both foretold to the very year—provide irrefutable evidence that the Bible could only have been inspired by God, who alone knows the future. Indeed, Newton went so far as to say that one could stake the truth of Christianity on these predictions alone.

Of course, considering the wide range of events covered in verses 24-27, not to mention the fact that Daniel’s Book has been “sealed till the time of the end,” it seems unlikely that anyone, even a genius of Newton’s caliber, has flawlessly interpreted this passage. Nonetheless, differing viewpoints aside, perhaps all can agree that if Newton was correct in only one aspect of his interpretation (that relating to verse 25 and the Second Coming) that the current generation, as incredible as it may seem, is destined to witness what will no doubt be the most awesome event in all of human history: the return of Jesus Christ in Glory and the establishment of His millennial kingdom on Earth!

Did the final countdown of Daniel’s “seven sevens” begin in

1967 with the Jewish recapture of Jerusalem? Has God accordingly marked the year 2015-16 (Hebrew year 5776) in His prophetic appointment book as the final Jubilee and thus the year of Christ's return?

As we ponder the notion of predetermined times, we are afforded perhaps the ideal segue into our next chapter, wherein the topic of "divine appointments" will be discussed in regard to some very special observances—observances that are most definitely marked on God's calendar.