In Luke 24, Jesus Christ emphatically declares that all of the Old Testament writings point to Him: “All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me [Jesus]” (verse 44). Jesus is not only the Author of all Scripture,1 He is also the subject of all Scripture. According to biblical scholars, there are over 300 Old Testament prophecies which reach their fulfillment with the coming of Christ and the New Testament age.2 In Daniel 9:24-27 we have one of the most significant of them. In his Commentary, Matthew Henry wrote that in Daniel 9 we have “the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel grace that is extant in all the Old Testament.”3

To properly analyze Daniel 9:24-27 we need to look at three relevant factors: 1) the historical context; 2) the mission of Christ; and 3) the prophetic chronology.4

The Historical Context

In Daniel 9:24-27 we have the answer to the prophet’s prayer in the first part of the chapter (9:3-19). Daniel is in Babylon, having been taken captive in 605 BC. He remained there for over 70 years. Jeremiah has earlier prophesied that the Jews would be held captive in Babylon for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10), which we are told, was due to their violation of the sabbatical year commandment (2 Chronicles 36:21; Leviticus 26:34-43). Every seventh year the Israelites were to let the ground lie fallow; and God promised to provide enough in the sixth year to take them through the eighth year (Leviticus 25:1-7, 20-22). As taught in 2 Chronicles 36 and Leviticus 26, Israel had apparently disobeyed this commandment for a period of 490 years (i.e., 70 times 7 sabbatical years). The Israelites were to remain in captivity one year for every sabbath year violation. At the end of Daniel 9 we will see that just as Israel had broken God’s command regarding the sabbatical years over a period of 490 years, so God would now give them a prophecy involving another 490 years, a period in which He will faithfully keep His covenant promises.

When we come to the ninth chapter of Daniel, we read that this is the first year of Darius the Mede (c. 538 BC). As a student of the Word of God, Daniel is reading Jeremiah and sees that the 70 year period of Babylonian captivity is nearing its end (9:1-2). Understanding that God, in His sovereignty, declares the means as well as the ends for fulfilled prophecy, the prophet turns to God in prayer (9:3).5 Daniel begins his prayer by speaking of the greatness of God (His attributes), and then only then does he begin his supplications.6 And

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1 The Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 24) says that “Christ executes the office of a Prophet, in revealing to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.” All references to the Westminster Standards are from the Westminster Confession of Faith (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994).
5 As taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith (3:1, 6; 5:1-3), God, as the eternal and sovereign First Cause, decrees all things that will ever come to pass, and then providentially carries out His decrees. At the same time, however, God purposes to carry out His decreive will by means of second causes, such as prayer. There is nothing incompatible between the two doctrines of God’s absolute sovereignty and man’s responsibility. More will be said on this below.
6 Daniel’s prayer is structured in a manner similar to the Lord’s prayer, the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-5). See Joseph C. Morecraft, III, The Lord’s Prayer (Cumming, Georgia: Chalcedon Presbyterian Church, 2005).
he prays that God would turn away His wrath from Israel and permit the Temple to be rebuilt (9:16-19). In response, God sends the angel Gabriel to give the prophet an understanding of God’s plan (9:20-23). God first promises that the Temple will be rebuilt, but He then goes on to say (among other things) that He will send His Son, Jesus Christ, who will accomplish redemption for His people. Further, due to Christ’s redemptive cross work, the Temple will no longer be necessary; therefore, it will be destroyed (9:24-27).

**The Mission of Christ**

In 9:24 there are six infinitival phrases, which serve as the major emphasis of the prophecy, leading to the explanation of what follows in 9:25-27. These all have to do with Christ’s mission. First, when Christ comes He will deal with sin: He came “to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, [and] to bring in everlasting righteousness.” This is what took place in the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. In chapter 8 (“Christ the Mediator”) of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (8:5) we read: “The Lord Jesus Christ, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father.” The *Confession*, citing Daniel 9:24 as a proof text, then goes on to teach that in His redemptive cross work Christ “purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him.” Moreover, in Hebrews 7:27; 9:26-28; 1 Peter 3:18, and Romans 6:10, we are told of the “once for all” (*hapax*) sacrifice of Jesus Christ to take away sin.

Second, in 9:24 we are told that Christ comes “to seal up vision and prophecy,” that is, to fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies regarding Himself (Luke 24:25-27; 1 Peter 1:10-12). But this verse also teaches that with the coming of Christ and the New Testament age special revelation will be completed – the canon will be closed (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Hebrews 1:1-3). This means, as we will see below (as taught by implication in 9:26-27), that the canon of Scripture was closed prior to AD 70.

Third, 9:24 says that during the seventy weeks “the Most Holy One” will be anointed. Whereas Dispensational premillennialists interpret this anointing as a reference to the rebuilding of the Temple during the millennial reign of Christ on earth, the most likely interpretation is that it refers to the anointing of Jesus Christ – the One which the physical Temple pre-figured (John 1:14; 2:19). As taught in Matthew 3:16-17, this occurred at the beginning of Christ’s ministry. At this time He was baptized, and anointed by the Holy Spirit to carry out His Messianic task as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Fourth, in 9:27 we read that “He [Christ] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week” (as we will see below, this is one week of years; i.e., seven years). This refers to the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-34), and corroborated in Hebrews 8:8-12. The New Covenant was instituted by Christ in the Upper Room (Luke 22:14-22), and sealed by His vicarious atonement (John 19:30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Fifth, 9:26-27 teach us that the “Messiah will be cut off, but not for Himself…in the middle of the [seventieth] week.” And “He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” This is an obvious reference to the crucifixion of Christ (Isaiah 53:8). As the book of Hebrews tells us over and over again, with the coming of Christ and His finished redemptive work, the Old Covenant sacrifices pass away (Hebrews 7-10). Hebrews 10:9 states: “He [Christ] takes away the first [covenant] that He may establish the second [covenant].” The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (19:3) says it this way:

> God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several

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10 Calvin, *Commentary* on Daniel 9:27.

11 That Christ was “cut off” in the seventieth week, see Young, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 206-207.
typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.

And sixth, in 9:26-27 we are told that after Messiah is “cut off,” the abomination of desolation will take place, and “the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city [of Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [the Temple].” A comparison of Matthew 24:15 (“therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place”) with Luke 21:20-24 reveals that the abomination of desolation refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman legions under Titus. This occurred in AD 70, when the city was burned (in accordance with Matthew 22:7), left desolate (as per Matthew 23:38), and not one stone was left upon another (as taught in Matthew 24:2). Regarding Daniel’s prophecy of the “profanation of the Temple,” Calvin wrote, “without the slightest doubt, this prophecy was fulfilled when the city [of Jerusalem] was captured and overthrown, and the Temple utterly destroyed by Titus the son of [emperor] Vespasian.” Interestingly, the Jewish historian Josephus applied Daniel 9:27 to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem in his writings.

The Prophetic Chronology

When we study the chronology of this prophecy, we notice that there is a *terminus a quo* (a starting point) and a *terminus ad quem* (a terminal point). And in between there is a duration period of “seventy weeks” (literally, “seven sevens”). If these were “weeks of days” then we would have 490 days, but as biblical scholars (for the most part) agree, these are “weeks of years.” This being the case, the seventy weeks represent 490 years, the same number of years that Israel violated the sabbatical year commandment that we studied earlier.

The arrangement of the prophecy is important. In 9:25 we see that the passage is divided into three segments, totaling 490 years: 1) seven weeks, or 49 years; 2) sixty-two weeks, or 434 years; and 3) one week, or 7 years. Even though the three segments are divided, they are to be seen as consecutive. The starting point of the prophecy is “the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem” (9:25), and the terminal point is the seventieth week in the middle of which “Messiah shall be cut off” (9:26-27).

As for the beginning point, there are four possibilities for when this command was issued: 1) Cyrus’s decree in 538 BC (Ezra 1:1-4); 2) the renewal of Cyrus’s decree by Darius in 520 BC (Ezra 6:6-12); 3) Artaxerxes’s decree concerning Ezra in 458/457 BC (Ezra 7:11-26); and 4) Artaxerxes’s decree to Nehemiah in 445/444 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8). The most probable of these is the third one: in 458/457 BC, when Ezra took a company of Jews back from Babylon to Jerusalem. If we begin with the date of 457 BC, and move forward to “the middle of the [seventieth] week” (Daniel 9:27), which amounts to 486 ½ years, we arrive at the date of AD 30, the year of Christ’s crucifixion – or in Daniel’s words, when “Messiah shall be cut off” (9:26).

We need to ask, however, what is the purpose of the seventy weeks being divided into three segments? The first division of “seven weeks” (49 years) covers the period of time in which the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem took place (as per 9:25), after the Jews had returned to Palestine. This is what Daniel had prayed for in 9:16-19. This would take us down to approximately 408 BC, (perhaps) during the time of Malachi the prophet. The second division of sixty-two weeks (434 years), when added to the 49 earlier years, gives us a total of 483 years. And 483 years after the year of the return (457 BC) brings us to AD 26. It is very probable that Jesus Christ’s public ministry began in the latter part of this year. Then

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12 Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel* 9:27.
15 Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel* 9:25.
16 Barrett, *God’s Unfailing Purpose*, 127.
in the “midst of the [seventieth] week” Christ was crucified.\(^\text{18}\) The balance of the seventieth week takes us to AD 33 or 34, (most likely) the year in which Stephen was stoned and Paul was converted (Acts 7-9).

Finally, it is important to state again that in the duration of the seventy weeks of years, “desolations are determined” for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (9:26-27), due to Christ’s sacrifice. This being so, we see the great significance of the AD 70 overthrow of the Old Testament era and the establishment of the New Testament era. We also see, as noted above, that because “vision and prophecy” would be sealed up during this time, that the canon of Scripture was closed prior to AD 70. Therefore, as taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1:1-2), there is no more need for the miraculous word gifts (e.g., tongues, prophecy); “those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.” Divine special revelation is restricted to the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, “all of which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.” And as the Confession (1:6) goes on to say (and this can hardly be overstressed):

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.\(^\text{19}\)

**Differing Views**

Dispensational premillennialists\(^\text{20}\) (and some historical premillennialists\(^\text{21}\)) separate the seventieth week from the sixty-ninth week with an indeterminate interval, which at this date is nearly 2000 years later than the sixty-ninth week. According to (at least some of) these thinkers, because the seventieth week is not mentioned until 9:27, following 9:26 where the destruction of the Temple is prophesied, the seventieth week is to be separated from the balance of the weeks. Further, in 9:26-27, the one who makes a covenant with the many (according to Dispensationalists, “the many” are the Jews) is the Antichrist. But he will break the covenant in the middle of the week Allegedly, this seventieth week is the great tribulation period. Dispensational teachers maintain that this seven year period will occur after the church has been raptured (this is the pre-tribulational rapture view). Others (post-tribulational rapture thinkers) believe that the church will go through the seven year period. At the end of this seven year tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to establish His 1000 year millennial reign on earth.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the seventy weeks should be viewed as consecutive. In 9:26 we are told that “Messiah shall be cut off” “after the sixty-two weeks,” which were preceded by seven weeks (9:25). Hence, after the sixty-two weeks would also be after the first sixty-nine weeks. And after sixty-nine weeks comes the seventieth week. And, as we have seen, Daniel tells us that it is during this seventieth week that Christ will be crucified.

The problem here, at least with the Dispensationalists, is that they are using a more difficult text to erect an eschatological plan that needs this separation to allow their theological plans to work. It is important to understand that if it can be shown that Daniel’s seventieth week is consecutive with the other weeks, then the system of Dispensational thought is altogether vitiates. Dispensationalists believe that God has two distinct programs in history, with two distinct peoples: Jews and Gentiles. This distinction is essential to Dispensationalism.\(^\text{22}\) The Jews are the primary people of God. The church, which must be seen (at least to

\(^{18}\) Jackson, “Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks,” 5.

\(^{19}\) For more on the doctrine of sola Scriptura, see W. Gary Cramp- ton, By Scripture Alone (Unicoi, Tennessee: Trinity Foundation, 2002).


\(^{21}\) Barrett, God’s Unfailing Purpose, 125-128; Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing

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House, 1994), 1133.

Daniel’s Seventy Weeks

some degree) as secondary in God’s overall plan for history, is the body of Christ. The church does not include believers from the Old Testament, and it does not fulfill any of the promises which God gave to Israel in the Old Testament. It is a separate body of believers altogether. In Dispensationalism, it is during the interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week that God has established the “church age” (which is “parenthetical” and unforeseen in the Old Testament), in which He is now dealing (primarily) with the Gentiles rather than the Jews. The church age, which began as Pentecost, will conclude at the pre-tribulational rapture of the church. God will then begin to deal with the Jews again. So, as noted, if it can be exegetically established that there is no separation of the seventieth week from the other weeks, Dispensationalism as a system of thought is rendered vacuous. There is a very real sense, then, in which the entirety of Dispensational thought stands or falls with Daniel’s seventieth week. If this week is separated from the other weeks, the Dispensational seven year tribulation period is done away with, the parenthetical church age theory is destroyed, the pre-tribulation rapture theory is vanquished, and the whole eschatological system of Dispensational thought goes down with it.

Unlike the hermeneutic utilized by Dispensational thought, a proper “biblical” hermeneutic does not interpret the more clear passages in light of the more difficult passages, but vice-versa. As explained in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1:9): “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” Such a hermeneutical principle will eliminate the need for a separation of Daniel’s seventieth week from the balance of the weeks.

Applications

First, Daniel’s prophecy is precisely fulfilled in Christ’s earthly ministry and His sacrificial death. God’s Word is trustworthy; it cannot fail (2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2). God is faithful and will never break His Word. Paul writes “let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

Second, God answers prayer. The Bible is replete with passages that teach us that the triune God of Scripture is a prayer-answering God (see Psalm 4:3; Proverbs 15:8; 1 Peter 3:12, passim). Daniel 9 is just one more example of this teaching. Therefore, the importance of prayer is stressed. But the importance of Bible study is also stressed, because God answers prayer which is according to His Word (1 John 5:14-15). In His upper room discourse, Jesus taught His disciples this very thing: “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). The Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 3) maintains that “the Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.” We cannot know who God is or what He requires of us apart from a knowledge of His Word. If we are going to have our prayers answered, we must be praying biblically. The Shorter Catechism (Q. 98-99) confirms this when it teaches us that “prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His [revealed] will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies,” and that “the whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer.”

Daniel understood these truths, and this is how he prayed. He prayed biblically. In Daniel 9 we see a man who was familiar with the law of Moses (9:13) and the prophet Jeremiah (9:2). He knew the Bible. Daniel was a man of “the Book.” We also see in Daniel a man of prayer. He prayed earnestly, thanking God for His mercies, confessing his and Israel’s sins, and asking God to fulfill His prophetic Word. Daniel’s prayerful lifestyle is further evident in 6:10, where we read that even after the decree had been given that no one was permitted to pray to anyone other than King Darius, under penalty of death, Daniel went up into his room, opened the windows, and prayed, “as was his custom,” to the God of Scripture. The prophet Daniel was devoted to the study of God’s Word and prayer. According to Scripture, a non-Bible reading, non-praying Christian is a contradiction in terms.

Third, as seen, the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man go hand in hand together. God
had given certain promises in His Word, but Daniel acted on them. He understood the fact that the Bible teaches us that God’s sovereignty as the First Cause of all things, does not in any sense undermine the importance and necessity of second causes. As taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith (5:2): “Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decrees of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly: yet, by the same providence, He orders them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

Fourth, as already noted, Jesus Christ is central to all of Scripture (Luke 24:25-27, 44; John 5:39). In 2 Corinthians 1:20 we are taught that in Christ all of the promises of God are Amen. He is both the Author and the subject of all Scripture. Therefore, the consequences of rejecting Christ are very severe. The Bible teaches that God destroyed the Temple and rejected the unbelieving Jews because they rejected Christ (Matthew 21:33-46; 22:1-7; 24:1-34). To reject Christ is to reject God (John 15:23; 1 John 2:23) and any hope of salvation. In the words of Christ: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). And Peter said: there “is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). In Matthew 16:15, Jesus put the question this way: “Who do you say that I am?” This is a question that everyone must answer. It is the most important question that anyone will ever have to answer. In accordance with God’s foreordained plan, how one responds to this question will have to do with where he will spend an everlasting state, either in heaven or in hell. May we truthfully answer as Peter answered his Lord: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Soli Deo Gloria