The Last Half of Daniel’s 70th Week

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The time period of three and a half appears in various forms in both Daniel and Revelation. This is a reference to the last half of Daniel’s 70th week. It represents a time of trial for physical Israel as well as God’s new covenant people right before the coming of God and the full establishment of His kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:21-22, 25). It consists of the following variations:

- The last half (3 ½) of Daniel’s seventieth week: Daniel 9:27.
- A time (and) times and half a time: Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:14.
- Forty-two months (three and a half years): Revelation 11:2; 13:5.
- 1260 days (forty-two months of 30-day months): Revelation 11:3; 12:6.
- Three and a half days: Revelation 11:9, 11.

What these scriptures all have in common is that they refer to a time period of three and a half that was to be a time of trial and testing for God’s people just prior to the full establishment of God’s kingdom. While a single chronological sequence of all these references is not possible (and will not be attempted), these scriptures for the most part do fit into two related time periods, one literal, the other more symbolic. All of the references to the period of three and a half end with the full establishment of God’s kingdom at the Second Coming in AD 70.

The Literal Use of the Time of Three and a Half

The first way the time period of three and a half is used is in a literal sense, as the period of three and a half years or forty two months (March/April of AD 67- August/September of AD 70) that Titus waged war against the Jews. This was the time of the great tribulation and is the most common way that the period of three and a half is used. It is used this way in Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7 and Revelation 11:2 and 13:5.

He [the little eleventh horn] shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

Daniel 7:25-27
Then he [the Messiah of v. 26] 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 [in the last half of the 70th week] on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate. Daniel 9:27

At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation...And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. Daniel 12:1, 6-7

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. Revelation 11:1-2

So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Revelation 13:4-5

The literal period of three and a half was the three and a half years that the little eleventh horn/individual beast made war against God’s people. It refers to the coming of the prince who would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple (Dan. 9:26; cf. Rev. 11:2). Titus’ three and a half year campaign against Israel would be the last half of Daniel’s 70th week and would end with the desolation and destruction of the Jewish nation (Dan. 9:27; 12:7).

THE SYMBOLIC USE OF THE TIME OF THREE AND A HALF

The second way the time period of three and a half is used is in a symbolic sense. It is used this way in Revelation 12, where it is symbolic of the time between the cross (AD 30) and the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70).

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Revelation 12:6

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. Rev. 12:13-14; cf. Dan. 12:7
The symbolic use of the period of three and a half refers to the forty year period between the cutting off of Messiah in AD 30 and the desolation of Israel in AD 70. This is shown in Revelation 12 where the new, or heavenly, Jerusalem is pictured in the form of a mother (see Is. 66:7-13). She is the new covenant mother of all believers (cf. Gal 4:21-31). Jesus is shown as the first born of this mother (Rev. 12:5); He was the first born of many brethren (Rev. 12:17; cf. Rom. 8:29). The “birth” of the male Child is not talking about Jesus physical birth but His spiritual birth as the first born from the dead (cf. Rev. 1:5; Col. 1:18). Thus the male Child after being born immediately ascends to the throne of God, the AD 30 ascension.

Revelation 12 shows Satan being cast out of heaven at the ascension of Jesus (Rev. 12:1-10; cf. John 12:31-32). The kingdom of God was established in heaven at this time but not yet on earth (Rev. 12:10-12). The new covenant mother and her children (Rev. 12:17) would need protection from Satan until the end of “a time and times and half a time” (Rev. 12:14). This would be until the AD 70 shattering of the Jewish nation (cf. Dan. 12:7). This was the time of the full establishment of the kingdom of God and was analogous to the children of Israel entering the Promised Land. Thus the period of three and a half in Revelation 12:6, 14 is symbolic of the spiritual exodus that believers were participating in in the time between AD 30 and AD 70 (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 3:7-4:11). Notice that, like the literal use of three and a half, the symbolic use of this time period also brings one to the AD 70 full establishment of God’s kingdom.

**Daniel’s Seventy Weeks**

The primary source for the meaning of the time of trial of three and a half is the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27. The context of the seventy weeks (or seventy sevens) has to do with the Jews and Jerusalem (“seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city” Dan 9:24). The time period of three and a half would be the last half of the seventieth week. While this tribulation period would come upon the whole world, it would focus on the Jews, those who dwelled on the Land (cf. Rev. 3:10). In Daniel 9:26-27 Daniel’s seventieth week is given as the time during which God would establish and confirm His covenant; it is divided into two parts (3½ and 3½) in verse 27.

26. 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.

27. 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, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

Daniel 9:26 and 27 parallel each other; that is, they each address the same two topics. The first part of each verse contains a reference to the killing of Messiah and the resulting end of the legitimacy of the sacrificial system.
26. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off,…

27. ...in the middle of the week He shall bring and end to sacrifice and offering…

The death of Jesus brought an end to the legitimacy of the sacrificial system (cf. Matt. 27:50-51; Heb. 10:11-18; it happened after seven and sixty-two weeks, Dan. 9:25 (i.e. it happened during the seventieth week). The ultimate sacrifice of Messiah happened during the seventieth week/seven, at the end of its first half.

The second part of verses 26 and 27 contain a reference to the coming of the one who would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple; this would be the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week/seven. It was the time of the coming of the one who would make the Jewish nation desolate:

26. …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.  
27....And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

It is this last half of Daniel’s seventieth week that the time period of three and a half is referencing.

Daniel 9:27 makes the division of v. 26 explicit, dividing the two events of v. 26 (the death of the Messiah and then the coming of the destroyer of the Temple) into two halves of a week or more literally a “seven.” Here is Edward J. Young’s translation of Daniel 9:27.

And he [i.e. Messiah] shall cause to prevail a covenant for the many one seven, and in the midst of the seven he shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease, and upon the wing of abominations (is) one making desolate, and until end and that determined shall pour upon the desolate. brackets in original (1)

During the 70th week (in the middle of it) the Messiah would cause the covenant (the new covenant, which was for many, cf. Matt 26:28), to prevail. At this time, after the first half of the seventieth week, God would bring an end to the legitimacy of sacrifice. This happened in AD 30 when, after the three and a half year ministry of Jesus, God put an end to the legitimacy of the sacrificial system by the sacrifice of His Son. The Jews would offer sacrifices for another 40 years but after the sacrifice of the Lamb of God the sacrificial system of the Temple would be invalid in God’s eyes. (2) In the second half of Daniel’s 70th week would come the one who would make Israel desolate. This would confirm the new covenant, as the old covenant Temple system would totally disappear.
Was there to be a Seven Year Covenant Made by the Antichrist?

It should be noted that the idea promoted by dispensationalists that the Antichrist makes a seven year covenant with Israel has no scriptural support. This teaching is based on a mistaken understanding of Daniel 9:27:

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, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

The “he” in v. 27 is the Messiah (of v. 26). He would be confirming the covenant during a seven year period. This is not referring to the Antichrist establishing a seven year covenant with Israel. All subsequent scriptural references to the Antichrist that mention a time period do so in the context of a period of three and a half years, never seven (e.g. Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5). Other than a mistaken interpretation of Daniel 9:27, there is absolutely no scriptural support for the Antichrist making a seven year covenant with Israel.

The covenant that would be confirmed (or would prevail) during the 70th week was the new covenant. The new covenant was established in the first half of the seventieth week with Jesus’ three and a half year ministry; this culminated with His once and for all sacrifice. The kingdom of God prevailed in heaven at this time but not yet on earth (cf. Rev. 12:5-12).

The new covenant was confirmed in the second half of the seventieth week with Titus’ three and a half year “ministry;” this culminated with the destruction of the Temple. This made the observance of the old covenant impossible. The kingdom of God prevailed on earth at this time (cf. Dan. 7:19-27; Luke 19:11-27). This is an important point: The kingdom of God was fully established in heaven at the AD 30 ascension of Jesus. It was fully established on earth at his AD 70 Parousia. It was at this time that God’s kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to God’s new covenant people at AD 70 (Mat 21:33-43).

Is there a Gap in the Seventy Weeks?

Notice that with the literal use of the time of three and a half there is a gap between the first half and second half of the seventieth week; this gap is some 37 years (AD 30-67). While a gap does exist, it is not the thousands of years (between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week) that dispensationalists claim. Some preterists, in reaction to the huge gap proposed by dispensationalists, argue that there is no indication in the text of a gap between the first half and second half of Daniel’s week. With the aid of historical hindsight and the rest of Scripture, however, it seems clear that the first half of the seventieth week ended when Jesus was cut off in AD 30 and the second half ended when Titus made the Jewish nation desolate in AD 70. God was establishing and confirming the new covenant during this time. During the first half of the seventieth week He
established the new covenant through the death of Jesus; during the second half He confirmed the new covenant by abolishing the old covenant Temple system.

What is essentially the same unseen gap between the first and second half of Daniel’s 70th week occurs in Isaiah 61:2.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord [fulfilled in Jesus’ ministry], and the day of vengeance of our God [fulfilled in Titus’ ministry]. Is. 61:1-2 brackets mine

On the surface there is no gap in Isaiah 61:1-2; looking at Jesus’ teaching, however, He alludes to a gap here. In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus quotes this section of Isaiah up to the last half of vs. 2. He stopped His reading at that point and left out the part that referred to “the day of vengeance of our God.”

The first half of Isaiah 61:2, “the acceptable year of the Lord” was being fulfilled in Jesus’ ministry. The last half, “the day of vengeance” would be fulfilled some forty years later in Titus’ AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews into the nations. Luke wrote the following on this: “For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled…and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations.” (Luke 21:22, 24). Daniel 9:27 and Isaiah 61:2 are referring to the same two time periods, the acceptable year of the Lord (the three and a half year ministry of the Christ) and the day of vengeance (the three and a half year “ministry” of the Antichrist).

That the second half of Daniel’s seventieth week is separated from the first half is also shown by the fact that the last half of the seventieth week keeps showing up in Scripture as the time period of three and a half right before the AD 70 Second Coming (cf. Dan. 7:21-25). This would be the time of the great tribulation; it would end with the resurrection at the time of the destruction of the Jewish nation (Dan. 12:1-7). This hardly fits AD 33, which would be the end of the seventy weeks if there was no gap between Messiah being cut off and the coming of the one who would make the Jewish nation desolate.

In addition to the above points, the purpose of the seventy weeks was related to the Jews and Jerusalem; “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.” It was AD 70 (not AD 33) that accomplished the destruction of Jerusalem and the shattering of the power of Daniel’s people (Dan. 12:7). Furthermore, the events that the seventy weeks were to complete (“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) were fulfilled at the Second Coming in AD 70 not in AD 33. In short, there is a small gap here; deal with it!
The time period of three and a half that is found in Daniel and Revelation is derived from the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week. It describes the time when, after the Christ had been cut off, that the one who would make Israel desolate would come (Dan. 9:26-27). This time period was to be a time of trial just prior to the full establishment of God’s kingdom in AD 70; it would come upon the whole world but would focus on the Jews (cf. Rev. 3:10). This is made clear in the introduction to Daniel’s seventy weeks: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city…” Dan. 9:24. That the Jews would be the focus of the seventy weeks is also seen in the fact that this time period would end with the shattering of the Jewish nation (Dan. 12:1-7).

There are two ways one can view the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week. The first way is more literal, as a three and a half year bookend (of March/April of AD 67 to August/September of A.D. 70) at the end of the seventieth week. The initial bookend of Daniel’s 70th week was Jesus’ three and a half year ministry (c. AD 27-30) which came at the beginning. This makes the two halves of the seventieth week into two bookends, AD 27-30 and AD 67-70, with a gap in between. This more literal use of the time of three and a half is found in Daniel 7:25 (“a time and times and half a time”); 12:7 (“a time, times and half a time”); Revelation 11:2 (“forty-two months”); and 13:5 (“forty-two months”).

The other way the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week can be seen is more symbolic, as the 40 year time period from when Messiah was cut off in AD 30 to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Dan. 9:26). Notice that in this symbolic use there is no gap; the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week is the time between the crucifixion and the desolation of Israel (Dan. 9:27). This symbolic use of the time of three and a half is found in Revelation 12:6 (“one thousand two hundred and sixty days”) and 12:14 (“a time and times and half a time”); this wilderness time (v. 14) symbolizes the spiritual exodus of believers in the transition period of AD 30-70 (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 3:7-4:11). Again, both the literal and symbolic uses of the time period of three and a half bring one to the same point in time, the full establishment of God’s kingdom at AD 70.


2. After the sacrifice of Jesus, the Jewish Temple was left desolate (Matt. 23:37-38; 27:50-51). Jesus “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26); after that there was “no longer an offering for sin” (see Heb. 10:5-18). Every year on the Day of Atonement a scapegoat (which symbolically carried Israel’s sin) would be driven into the wilderness. When the scapegoat had reached the wilderness (indicating that Israel’s sin was forgiven) a crimson wool thread tied to the temple would turn white. According to Jewish sources this thread never turned white during this last forty years of the second Temple. Zev Vilnay, *Legends of Jerusalem, The sacred Land: vol. 1* (Philadelphia: The Jewish publication Society of America, 1973), 115-116. This story supports the idea that from the time of the death of Jesus in AD 30 to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 Israel’s sin ceased to be atoned for by the sacrifices and offerings of the Temple.