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**C0947 – December 16, 2009 – Chronological Relationship Of
Three Septet Judgments**

**The Chronological Relationship of the Three Septet Judgments of
the Tribulation
To Daniel's Seventy Weeks¹**

By Robert Dean, Jr.

Among pre-tribulation, dispensationalists, several different understandings of the chronology within Daniel's seventieth week occur. When a student of prophecy begins to work through commentaries and eschatological studies it becomes apparent that different schemes are set forth. How one understands the flow of events will necessarily impact the exposition. As I began to work through the text of Revelation some five years ago to begin a teaching series at my church I soon realized that to make sense of some passages, an understanding of the chronological structure was necessary. I began to search for solid material on this and soon realized that little was written specifically on this topic, most of the material was embedded within the commentaries and much would need to be read to find the few scattered sentences which illuminated the writer's understanding of the flow. And unfortunately, many commentaries simply assert a chronology without presenting arguments for it.

As one reads the commentaries, three basic chronologies emerge. The first is that presented by Dr. John Walvoord, arguably one of the most well-known and prolific scholars of prophetic literature in the twentieth century. In his view all three septet judgments occur in the last half of the Tribulation.

¹ This paper is a draft of a paper which will be updated on the www.pre-trib.org website as well as the www.deanbible.org website.

Most expositors assume that the events beginning in Revelation 6 cover the whole seven-year period. The Book of Revelation, however, never uses a seven-year figure but frequently refers to three and one-half years or 42 months (11:2; 13:5). Because the events of chapter 6 and afterward seem to coincide with the Great Tribulation rather than with the time of peace in the first half of the seven years (1 Thess. 5:3), there are good reasons for concluding that these great events are compacted in the last three and one-half years before Christ's return to the earth. Certainly at least by the fourth seal (Rev. 6:7-8), the events described anticipate a time of unprecedented trouble.²

The second view places the first six seal judgments in the first half of the tribulation, and the trumpet and bowl judgments in the second half. The third view, also quite prevalent, places the seal and trumpet judgments in the first half and then only the bowl judgments in the second half. With the exception of Walvoord, the issue can be succinctly stated, do the trumpet judgments come before or after the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of the Daniel's seventieth week.

To arrive at these conclusions several other interpretive decisions must be made. Some of the key questions that must be answered are: When do the seal judgments take place, first half or second half? When are the 144,000 of Rev 7:1-8 sealed: during the period of the seals or between the sixth and seventh seal? Who are the martyred multitude of Rev 7:9-17: the martyred of the fifth seal judgment, or the martyred of the entire seven years? Further important questions which must be addressed: Are the two witnesses prophesying in the first or second half? Though the abomination of desolation is not specifically mentioned in Revelation, are there clues which allow us to connect this event with an event described in the Apocalypse?

These observations are set forth in the spirit of academic investigation and to help further our understanding of the details revealed within the scope of the Apocalypse. Many of those present have published opinions on these topics which may be cited or called into question. I do not intend any disrespect or personal challenge. We have all benefitted from each other's studies and modified some of our views as a result. As we challenge each other with the

²John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:947.

results of our studies, we are then able to refine our understanding of the text.

The purpose of this paper is not to defend the sequential or telescopic interpretation of the three septet judgments of Revelation, others have ably done this.³ Here the purpose is to investigate the arguments for the three different chronological schemes set forth by dispensationalists, to determine their strengths and weaknesses, and to evaluate these claims in an attempt to resolve the differences and come to some clear conclusions.

The Chronological Framework of Daniel's Seventieth Week

In *ca.* 539 B.C. the angel Gabriel, having been dispatched from heaven, revealed to Daniel the broad chronology of God's future plan for God's chosen people, Israel. In four verses, one of the most remarkable prophecies of Scripture outlined a four hundred ninety-year schema for Israel's future. For our purposes only the final seven year period need be discussed.

Dan. 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 *terminus a quo* as well as the mid point and conclusion of this seven year period have defining events. The period begins when a covenant is imposed “with many” for one week.⁴ The end point of the seventieth week is a “complete destruction” which will occur when our Lord returns to defeat the Antichrist, False Prophet, and Dragon.

Dr. Fruchtenbaum comments:

Furthermore, it states that the covenant is made *with many*; not with all, but *with many*. The Hebrew text uses a definite article meaning *the* many. This is the leadership of Israel that will be empowered to sign covenants of this nature. The covenant is made for one seven. On one hand, it begins the seven

³ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), “Excursus 3: The Structure of the Apocalypse: Recapitulation or Progression?” 525-543; John A McLean, “The Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *Michigan Theological Journal* 3:1 (Spring, 1992), 5-40.

⁴Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 9:736.

years of the Tribulation, but on the other hand, it is also signed for the specific purpose of being in effect for seven years.⁵

The next chronological indicator states, “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 this midpoint event occurs, the “abomination of desolation,” our Lord commanded those in Judea to flee to the mountains.

From these statements we see that the seventieth week is divided into two equal halves of three and a half years or forty-two months or 1,260 days each. These time designations are used several times in either Daniel or Revelation (1,260 days [Rev 12:6], “a time, and times and half time” [Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14], forty-two months [Rev 11:3; 13:5-7])

Again, Fruchtenbaum summarizes the chronological framework revealed here:

This last seven is a total of seven years and is the same seven years as the Great Tribulation. These seven years, the seventieth seven, are subdivided in this verse into two equal halves of 3.5 years each. Elsewhere in Daniel and in Revelation, they are given different descriptive terms. Each half is referred to in three different ways: sometimes as *1,260 days* (Rev. 12:6); sometimes as *forty-two months* (Rev. 11:2–3; 13:5); and sometimes as *a time, times and half a time* (Dan. 7:25). In all three cases, they are equal to two 3.5-year periods comprising this seven-year period.⁶

The Seal Judgments: First or Second Half?

It was the view of Dr. Walvoord that all three series of judgments took place in the second half of Daniel’s seventieth week. Those who favor either of the other two views see a significant parallel between the events described by Jesus in the upper room discourse and the seal judgments. In Matt. 24 Jesus warned of: 1. false christs, (24:5, 11), 2. wars, (24:6, 7), 3. famines, (24:7), 4. earthquakes, (24:7), and 5. persecution and martyrdom, (24:9, 10). These parallel the first 5 seal judgments as noted by numerous commentators. Our Lord said of these they there were “not the end” (24:6), but they were the “beginning of birth pangs” (24:8). Labor pain imagery was often used to

⁵Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah : A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, Rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 196.

⁶Ibid., 196.

convey the suffering related to the approach of the Day of the Lord and distinguishes these events from similar trends preceding Daniel's seventieth week (cf., Isa. 13:8 1 Thess. 5:3). Since Jesus is answering a specific question in Matt 24:3 regarding the sign of His coming and the end of the age, it seems unlikely that he would refer to general historical trends of famine, disease, and war as specific signs of his coming unless the famines, diseases, and wars he is describing are significant intensification beyond what has been normative in human history. How else would these be signs, if there were not something unique about them?

Only after describing these signs does Jesus then speak of the desecration of the holy place (24:15) and the subsequent flight of the Jews into the wilderness. The flow of Matt 24 indicates one set of judgments in the first half, the abomination of desolation in the middle, and the flight of the remnant in the second half. This seems to be an insurmountable problem for Dr. Walvoord's view for at the very least it places the events of seal judgments in the first half of the Tribulation period.

The Events of Revelation 7: When are the 144,000 sealed?

One important question is the relationship of the events of chapter seven to the chronological flow of the events of chapter six. It is clear that the seal judgments are sequential, the use of the ordinal numbers makes this clear. But between the sixth and seventh seal judgment there is a scene shift. One view places the sealing of the 144,000 at the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week. A second view places them after the seal judgments but before the trumpet judgments, which would place their sealing in the second half of Daniel's seventieth week.

The view that places the Trumpet judgments in the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, places the abomination of desolation between the sixth and seventh seal. In this view, the sealing of the 144,000 is subsequent to the sixth seal, but before the seventh seal is opened. To support this view, Rev 7:1-3 is seen to indicate that the events of chapter 7 come only after the events of chapter 6. The four angels holding back the four winds are commanded to not release the winds so that neither the earth or the sea or any tree be harmed. Since the land, seas, and tress are not harmed until the first three trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:7-11) a pause occurs between the sixth

and seventh seal to allow for the sealing of the 144,000 during that period.⁷ If this is also close to the end of the first 3.5 years then this sealing would also necessarily occur near the beginning of the time of the two witnesses and would probably precede that of the two witnesses (in the view that the two witnesses are in the second half). In the view that the two witnesses minister in the first half, then this might indicate that 144,000 are sealed as a result of the ministry of the two witnesses. In either case, the sealing of the 144,000 comes very close to the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week, very close to the abomination of desolation.

This argument seems substantial. The seal judgments appear to be summarized in Matt 24:4-14 and nothing is mentioned in those verses that is unique to the trumpet judgments. Only these events are placed before the mid point of the Trib. Further, the events associated with the holding back of the winds in 7:1 seem to fit, not the previous seal judgments but the next series of Trumpet judgments. This would mean that chapters 6, 7 and 8 are chronological and the events of the 144,000 comes between the seal and the trumpet judgments.

In contrast to that view, many other scholars place the sealing of the 144,000 near the beginning of the period of the seal judgments.

This passage describes the third of the five events happening throughout the first half of the Tribulation. This ministry of the 144,000 is something that occurs throughout the entire first half and not merely after the sixth seal judgment. In fact, it is going on during the Seal Judgments, and it is the means by which the fifth seal saints come to the Messiah. The passage begins with *After this*, which is not chronological, but merely the next vision John sees.⁸

Fruchtenbaum then explains that the "after this" in 6:9-10 also indicates the next vision John sees, but its placement after the sealing of the 144,000 is to show that the multitude of Gentile martyrs identified here are those who are saved directly or indirectly through the evangelistic ministry of the 144,000. These martyrs are then connected back to those martyred under the fifth seal. Since all believers are raptured at the end of the church age, no believers are left alive on the earth. To have a vast number of martyrs as

⁷ McLean identifies this as a "Narrative Preview." John A. McLean, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation, part 2" *Michigan Theological Journal* 3:1 (Spring 1992), 6.

⁸ Fruchtenbaum, 219.

indicated by the fifth seal indicates that much evangelism would have necessarily taken place. This can only be attributed to the ministry of the 144,000.

In light of what will be covered in the summary later, it will be shown that John's style is to first give an overview of the judgments, listing them one through six, and then to recapitulate by focusing on some of the specific details in the subsequent chapter(s). His pattern indicates that the events of chapter 7 would take place during the time of the 6 seal judgments. This is also supported by two key lines of evidence.

First, the 144,000 are designated "firstfruits" in Rev. 12:1. If they are the first fruits of Jewish believers within the Tribulation, then it is unlikely that their salvation and sealing would not come until after the six seal judgments are complete, especially if that is equivalent to the middle of the Tribulation. How can they be the first Jewish believers saved when at least 3 years of Daniel's seventieth week has already gone past? Second, the final statement of chapter 6, spoken by the kings of the earth, is the question: Who is able to stand? The description of the sixth seal ends by asking the question who is able to survive. Chapter 7 appears to answer this.

The interlude that follows immediately answers the question of a panic-stricken world, "Who will be able to stand?" (6:17). Revelation 7:1-8 answers in essence, "The 144,000 servants of God will be able to stand. It pulls back for a moment and visualizes a group of saints on earth who are on God's side and consequently have God's seal of protection from the wrath yet to come."⁹ Thomas, who holds that chapter 7 follows the sixth seal, also argues that chapter 7 answers the question posed in 6:17. However, it also seem that this raises another question, how can the 144,000 be the answer to the question unless they are sealed at least prior to the sixth seal?

Though it appears to be a strong argument in favor of the sealing of the 144,000 after the sixth seal, this leaves a number of questions unanswered. Further, understanding the intercalations to focus on more details of the previous overview, rather than as previews, fits Semitic style as well as the pattern of the book more consistently (see discussion below).

The Argument from Luke 21:20-24

⁹ Thomas, 2:537.

The most detailed attempt at presenting a rationale for the relationship of the three septad judgments to the abomination of desolation is that of McLean, whose work has been extremely helpful, though I may disagree at places. His argument for locating the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week between the sixth and seventh seal judgment is based almost exclusively on the way he connects Jesus statement in Luke 21:20-24 to Luke 23:27-29. Luke 23:27-29 is clearly a reference to events in Daniel's seventieth week.¹⁰ However, Luke 21:20-24 answers the disciples question regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, and this was fulfilled in AD 70.

The section of prophecy in [Luke 21:20–24](#) should be distinguished from the other prophecies dealing with signs of the end because [Luke 21:24](#) has already been literally fulfilled while the other aspects of its signs, as in [Matthew 24](#) and [Mark 13](#), are yet to see complete fulfillment.¹¹

McLean agrees that Luke 21:20-24 has the 70 A.D. destruction in view. He also states that “Luke has the time frame of the destruction of Jerusalem in mind when he records this declaration (Luke 23:29, cf., 21:23). However, he then takes the reactions of those who call on the mountains to “Fall on us,” and to the hills, “cover us” to be connected to the reactions of the kings of the earth in Rev. 6:15-17. He then argues that “An integration of these correspondences [Rev 6:15-17] with the synoptics would suggest the sixth seal is an expansion of the synoptic eschatological discourses, and in particular the Gospel of Luke.”¹² To drive this home he uses a mathematical formula to illustrate, “if A = B, and B = C, and C = D, then A = D.

¹⁰ Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, includes Indexes. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1990), 386. Not all commentators agree that Luke 23:27-29 addresses the end times. The following commentaries take 23:27-29 to refer to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem: Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Stein, *New American Commentary: Luke*, Constable's notes suggest the passage could refer to both; several commentaries, including *BKC*, make no observation.

¹¹ Walvoord, *Ibid.*, 386. Many other commentators recognize that Luke is not dealing with the end times events in 21:20-24, but only the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Other commentators that understand Luke 21:20-24 include: Darrel Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Robert H. Stein, *New American Commentary: Luke*, vol. 24; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke*; I Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, and numerous others.

¹² McLean, 22.

He writes

Logic teaches that if A=B, and B=C, and C=D, and D=E; then A=E. The argument is that each of these passages (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-19 and Mark 13:14-17; Luke 21:20-24; Luke 23:29-31; and Rev. 6:12-17) relates to the same timeframe which is the midpoint of the Tribulation. Applying this formula to the events of these texts: if the time sequence of A: the abomination of desolation is the midpoint of the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27); equals B: the abomination of desolation is the midpoint of the tribulation of the synoptics (Matt. 24:15-19; Mark 13:14-17); and B equals C: At this time the people flee to the mountains, and women are warned about impending dangers,(Luke 21:20-24); and the timeframe of C equals D (the people cry out for the mountains to fall on them, (Luke 23:29-31); and reference D equals E (the sixth seal of Revelation when the wrath of God and the Lamb initiate the great day of their wrath, and people cry for the mountains to fall on them, Rev. 6:12-17), then A (the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of Daniels seventieth week), equals or occurs at the same timeframe as E (the time of the sixth seal of the Apocalypse).¹³

The question is: do each of these passages relate to the same time frame, the midpoint of the Tribulation? For his argument to work, he must demonstrate that B: the abomination of desolation is the midpoint of the tribulation (Matt 24:15-19; Mark 13:14-17) equals C: that Luke 21:20-24 and Luke 23:29-31 are speaking of the midpoint of the Tribulation. Even if we grant that Luke 23:29-31 is speaking of the midpoint, which is not at all certain, it is doubtful if any would agree that Luke 21:20-24 address the midpoint of the Tribulation.

Thomas, in his work on *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, makes it clear that a text can have only one meaning. He cites Milton Terry:

A fundamental principle in grammatico-historical exposition is that the words and sentences can have but one significance in one and the same connection. The moment we neglect this principle we drift out upon a sea of uncertainty and conjecture.”¹⁴

¹³ McLean, Unpub. Paper from 2009 Pre-Trib.

¹⁴ Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, Chapter 3 “The Principle of Single Meaning.” 141. Thomas goes on to cite Bernard Ramm as well as Summit II of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy: “We affirm that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed. We deny that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.”

Under the guidance of this foundational principle of hermeneutics, Luke 21:20-24 must address either the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem or the yet future crisis at the sixth seal judgment, but cannot be both.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the chain of logic fails to hold and it does not seem that McLean's "structural benchmark" is established. Without this, his argument to identify the sixth seal with the time of the abomination of desolation does not seem to work.

The Measuring of the Temple, Forty-Two Months, and the Two Witnesses

Rev 11 might be the most important chapter in the Apocalypse for determining chronology. This vignette begins with a command to the apostle John to measure the *naos*, the inner Temple or Holy Place, and to not measure the outer courtyard or the city of Jerusalem.

In Rev 11:1-3 the question is: When do these events transpire? Do the Gentiles trample down the outer courts during the first or second half of Daniel's seventieth week? Do the two witnesses prophecy during the former or latter half?

The Two Witnesses: First or Second Half?

From my perusal of available commentaries it seems that the vast majority which take the forty-two months as the second half, also understand this to be the time for the ministry of the two witnesses. In this scenario, the abomination of desolation occurs at the midpoint of the tribulation, which, according to a lunar calendar, would leave exactly 1,260 days or forty-two months until the end and the second coming of Christ. The last few months of Daniel's seventieth week are the time period of the bowl judgments, a time when all of the salt seas are destroyed, all of the fresh water springs destroyed,

In 2007, Dr. Whitcomb presented a cogent argument for the witnesses having their ministry in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. This argument is based on several reasons, the most significant of which I will summarize here. First, our Lord commanded those who witness the abomination of desolation in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week should immediately flee to the mountains. Whitcomb raises the "obvious question": Would the two Jewish witnesses remain in Jerusalem during the latter half of the

¹⁵ Thomas, who follows McLean and cites frequently from his article, clearly takes Luke 21:20-24 to refer to the AD 70 judgment of Jerusalem. *Revelation*, 2:86.

Antichrist's reign of terror since the Lord commanded them to flee to the mountains? Second, if the 1,260 days occur in the last half of the week, then the world would engage in the three and a half day celebration of their death *after* the return of Christ and the consignment of the two beasts and the dragon to their respective punishments. Third, he correctly recognizes that the Scripture presents the Beasts' reign of terror as being unopposed, "how can he (the first beast) bring fire from heaven upon their enemies (Rev. 13:13) when the two witnesses are bringing fire from heaven upon theirs (Rev. 11:5)? The only other option would to make the terms "1,260 days" describe a free-floating three and a half-year period which began at sometime in the middle of the first half and end sometime in the second half. Such a use has no precedent or support in the Scripture. In the absence of other usage, it should refer to either the first or second half. Those who support the second half option, have no answer to these weighty observations. Along with this they also seem to miss a frequently overlooked clue embedded in the first three verses.

Measuring the Temple

In these opening verses John is commanded to measure the Temple. It is important to note that the word for Temple here is the *naos*, the inner sanctum, the Holy Place, not the entire Temple precinct. Explaining the significance of the term *naos* to describe the Temple, Garland writes, The term probably refers to the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, where only the priests were allowed access. The inner sanctuary, where the divine being resided, is where Jesus predicted the "abomination of desolation" would one day stand in the holy place (τόπω ἁγίῳ [*topō hagiō*] , Matt. 24:15). The man of sin, the son of perdition, will also sit in "the temple of God τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ [*ton naon tou theou*]" (2Th. 2:4). This refers to a rebuilt Temple yet future to our time, often called the Tribulation Temple. ¹⁶

Commentators disagree as to the exact significance for the measuring. For Walvoord, the measuring of the Temple signifies making an evaluation, a statement of Divine ownership and judgment on those worshipping there unworthily. Garland, citing a commentary by Monty Mills, suggests that the measuring "indicates a separation between a portion which God recognizes

¹⁶Anthony C. Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Galaxie Software, 2006; 2006), Re 11:1.

(the Temple, altar, and worshipers) versus a portion he rejects (the outer court, see below).¹⁷ Others suggest the significance is in protection.

Whatever the meaning of the measuring might be, one thing is clear: a distinction is made between the *naos* and the outer courtyard along with the holy city, Jerusalem. The nature of this distinction is that outer courtyard and city are under Gentile dominion while the *naos* is not. Whatever else is involved in the measuring, a separation between these two areas is set forth.

The Unmeasured Outer Courtyard

John is specifically ordered to not measure the outer courtyard. The wording of the Greek original emphasizes God's total rejection of the outer courtyard.¹⁸ However the measuring is understood, the point of the activity is to draw a distinction between the *naos* on the one hand, and the city and the outer courtyard on the other. The outer courtyard and the city are trampled under (*pateo*) by the Gentiles. This is the same word that Jesus used in Luke 21:24 to describe the Gentile control over Jerusalem from the conquest of Jerusalem in AD 70 "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Though some commentators have sought to make this a word which focuses on a military occupation or domination, that has not always been the case in history. The core meaning of *pateo* is simply to walk or to tread¹⁹ Context adds ideas such as crushing, domination, military defeat. The idea of trampling certainly fits the immediate context of Luke 21:24 in reference to the military defeat of AD 70, but our Lord states that this is the normative pattern for the times of the Gentiles. Since much of the past two millennia did not involve military occupation, but did involve Gentile control, "walking on" the Temple mount, this is a better understanding. In this light Rev. 11:2 is not adding anything to Jesus original statement. Thus *pateo* does not indicate a change from the normative Gentile control since AD 70 to a more intensified form.

¹⁷Garland, op cit. Re 11:1.

¹⁸Garland: Rev 11:1.

¹⁹William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, "Based on Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Frhchristlichen* [Sic] *Literatur*, Sixth Edition, Ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, With Viktor Reichmann and on Previous English Editions by W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker.", 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 786.

In fact, careful observation of the text indicates that one change has taken place, now the inner Temple is free from Gentile dominion, while the outer courtyard is still dominated by Gentiles. When this is compared with 2 Thess 2:4, where the abomination of desolation is described as the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, taking his seat in the *naos* of God and displays himself as God, it seems clear that up through the 42 months, Gentiles only have partial control of the Temple mount. After that they have complete control. G. H. Lange clearly recognized this when writing about the outer court:

This [the outer court] was not to be included in the survey, because it was given to the nations. There is here a notable exactness, showing the precise point of time in view so far. The point of time is while the outer court is overrun by Gentiles, but the sanctuary and the altar are as yet unprofaned. But older prophecies make clear that, before the end of things, (1) the abomination that maketh desolate (presumably an image of the Beast) is to “stand in a holy place” (Mt. 24:15)... (2) that the Beast himself will proceed much further than this in aggression against God, for he will make all sacrifice to God to cease, so that thus the altar also will be profaned; and (3) that he will thrust himself forward into the sanctuary itself, which was in the inner court, and sit there proclaiming himself as the only object of worship (2 Thess 2:3,4); and (4) finally, he will cast down the sanctuary itself (Dan 8:9-14).²⁰

Some have suggested that the aorist of *didomi* along with the future of *pateo*, indicates that this giving over to the nations was in the first half so the trampling under foot would be in the future, in the second half. It is more likely that the aorist recognizes that Jerusalem came under Gentile dominion in AD 70 (Luke 21:20-24). The future of *pateo* most likely paraphrases Luke 21:24 where Jesus used a future indicative of *eimi* with the periphrastic present participle of *pateo* to describe the times of the Gentiles when Jerusalem would be under Gentile control until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The trampling of the outer courtyard indicates a continuous control, dominance, and occupation by Gentiles up through this forty-two month period. However, the occupation of the holy city Jerusalem up to the outer courtyard, does not including the inner sanctum, for this forty two month

²⁰ G. H. Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Selected Studies* (Schoettle Publishing: Hayesville, NC, 2006), 183.

period. This indicates a less than complete occupation, unlike the later period of the Tribulation when there is a complete and total occupation of the Temple as indicated by the first Beast sitting in the *naos* (2 Thess 2:4) and having his image there.

Common to almost all commentaries is a discourse on the times of the Gentiles emphasizing that this continues until the return of our Lord. However, the distinction between the partial control of the Temple depicted here, and the total control suggested in 2 Thess 2:4 and elsewhere is not discussed. It seems to this writer that the best solution is to put the measuring and partial control of the Temple in the first half of the Tribulation with the total control beginning after the abomination of desolation. This adds another argument to Dr. Whitcomb's list.

This would fit with a scenario that sees the greatest intensity of anti-Semitism in the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week, the time when Jesus has warned Jews to flee to the mountains immediately when they see this sign transpire.

When do the two witnesses appear?

This also has implications for determining the time period when the two witnesses appear. Among those who place the appearance of the two witnesses in the later half are Walvoord, Garland,²¹

Garland recognizes the options and implications from assigning the 42 months to either the first half or second half. He offers an insightful explanation, but in this writer's view fails to identify the distinction between the incomplete and complete Gentile oppression.

The treading of the holy city is said to last forty-two months. This corresponds to half of the final week of the 70 weeks of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27).

But which half? John is told not to measure the outer court because it "has been given" (aorist tense, typically an event occurring prior to the time of the writer) to the Gentiles. Then John is told "They will tread" (future tense) the holy city for *forty-two months*. If the treading of the holy city by the Gentiles is taken to be simultaneous with their authority over the outer court, then it occurs while the Jews are allowed to worship in the temple and sacrifice on the altar. This would be the *first half* of the final week—before sacrifices are

²¹. Garland, Re 11:2.

brought to an end (Dan. 9:27) and the two witnesses are overcome by the beast (Rev. 11:3). If the treading is taken to follow the possession of the outer court by the Gentiles, then the *forty-two months* could denote the *last half* of the week: after the Antichrist has violated his covenant (Dan. 9:27), the Abomination of Desolation occurs (Mtt. 24:15 cf. Dan. 11:31; Dan. 12:11), the Antichrist exerts his global authority (Dan. 7:25; 12:7, 11-12; Rev. 13:5-8+), and the Jews flee to the wilderness where they are protected by God (Mtt. 24:16-20; Rev. 12:6, 14). See Events of the 70th Week of Daniel. The last half of the week is probably in view so that the termination of the *forty-two months* corresponds to the end of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) with the arrival of Christ and the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom. [emphasis added]²²

It seems that Garland takes the aorist of *didomi* to indicate the past time of the first half of the Tribulation while the future tense, “will tread” is applied to the second half. It appears that he assumes this means that the verb tenses address John as standing in the mid point of Daniel’s seventieth week with the past tense describing the first half and the future, the second. However, the simple aorist could refer to God’s permissive decree in an unspecified time period and the future tense describes that which is yet future to John’s time of writing in the first century. In any case, Garland’s conclusion is not supported with anything other than “probably in view” without stating specifics.

The “beast who comes up from the abyss” (Rev. 11:7-10)

Another important chronological clue is the identification of the one who will “make war with them and overcome them and kill them.” (Rev. 11:7). The identification of the “beast who comes up from the abyss” is usually taken to be the Antichrist.²³ Support for this is taken from Rev. 17:8. In 17:1-8 a woman is described who rides a seven-headed, ten-horned beast. This beast is identified as the closely connected end-time kingdom as well as the first Beast (Rev. 13:1-3). There is such a close connection between the Antichrist and his kingdom that the beast identification shifts between the two.²⁴

²² Garland, Re 11:2.

²³ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge*

Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:956.

²⁴ Thomas suggests that the “masculine participle *gemonto* understands the neuter noun *therion* to represent a person, an agreement according to sense rather than a grammatical one. However, we

A hermeneutical question should be raised here: can Rev 17:8 be used to interpret 11:7? That seems to be what many commentators suggest. Is the beast of 11:7 a personification of the kingdom of the antichrist, a reference to the antichrist, or a reference to Abaddon? Others take Rev 13:1-10 to be the hermeneutical key to identification of the “beast from the abyss.”²⁵ A reader of the apocalypse would have only the reference of the one previous mention of the abyss in Rev. 9:11. So it might be argued that the “beast from the abyss” in 11:7 is related to Abaddon. This is possible, and would mark the event as being subsequent to the fifth trumpet, which is also the first woe.

Revelation 8:13 presents a break in the series of Trumpet judgments. An eagle flies through the mid-heavens “crying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.” So the fifth trumpet is the first woe, and the sixth trumpet is the second woe. If the “beast from the abyss” is related to Abaddon, then he comes after the fifth woe. However, if it is hermeneutically feasible, then the identification of the “beast from the abyss” with the beast “about to come up out of the abyss” in 11:8, then we may have an even stronger indication that the death of the two witnesses comes near the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week. Before investigating that, we must first look at the important chronological notation of Rev. 11:10.

Following the execution of the two witnesses (11:7), their bodies are laid out for public display for three and a half days (11:9). After the three and a half days are complete, God restores life to them with “the breath of life” and then calls them to heaven (11:12) so all their enemies could watch. Within a short time another great earthquake smashes Jerusalem, but killing only seven thousand people (more to be said later). After this the second woe finishes (11:14).

This firmly places the death of the two witnesses in the time frame of the sixth Trumpet (9:13ff). The sixth Trumpet began with the release of four angels who had been bound at the Euphrates River, the eastern border of the land God promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18). These four angels then cause the deaths of a third of the human race (9:15) through the release of a 200

should note that the adjective *Kokkinos* is also neuter, and the adjectival participles in 17:7-8 describing *therion* there are also neuter. It seems Thomas has misidentified the participle here which is actually a neuter singular. Thomas, 2:286

²⁵ Ed Hindson, *Revelation: Unlocking the Future*, 121.

million demon army. It is in conjunction with, probably following upon this initial event that the death of the two witnesses occurs.

Under the first scenario, where the trumpet judgments and the two witnesses are in the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, then the events of the 6 trumpet judgments must span a lengthy period of time. As previously observed, their conclusion is marked by the ascension of the two witnesses and the subsequent earthquake. This, then would have to be 1,260 days after the AD, and would leave no time for the undisclosed seven peals of thunder (Rev 10:3-4).

It seems from the chronological structure that the disclosure of the strong angel (Rev. 10:1), follows that of the sixth seal. Thus, the seven thunders, the prophesy of John against many peoples, nations, tongues and kings (10:11) as well as the seven vial judgments, must all take place almost instantly or the chronology of the 1,260 days collapses.

In the identification of the "beast from the abyss" who kills the two witnesses, confirmation that this is the First Beast, the antichrist, is usually found in Rev. 17:8. This verse provides a rather cryptic description of the beast the woman was riding as:

Rev. 17:7 ¶ But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

Rev. 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel ... when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Rev. 17:11 The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

Few passages of Scripture seem as confusing. As is the case with the seven-headed, ten-horned beast of Rev 12:3 and Rev 13:1-3, there is such a close connection between the dragon who empowers the first and second Beast (Rev 13:2, 4; 11-12), the kingdom, and the individual, that often the distinctions between them blur, i.e., the beast ridden by the woman appears to be the various manifestations of the kingdom of man (the seven heads/kings) but then by verse 11 the beast is described more as an individual than a kingdom. Thomas helps with this confusion:

The beast is the empire, or more particularly, the ruler who perfectly embodies the spirit of the empire.²⁶

In each of his appearances in this book, the beast is either an empire or the ruler of that empire. Each head of the beast is a partial incarnation of satanic power that rules for a given period, so the beast can exist on earth without interruption in the form of seven consecutive kingdoms, but he can also be nonexistent at a given moment in the form of one of an empire's kings. The nonexistent beast in v. 8 must therefore be a temporarily absent king over the empire that will exist in the future.²⁷

This clearly helps us to work our way through the details. Though at first blush it seems that the fatal wound to one of the heads, is a wound to a kingdom. This might lead one to conclude that the resuscitation is a resuscitation of a kingdom, however, the terminology of the healing in 13:12-15 indicates an individual is in view rather than a kingdom. The same is true in chapter 17. Initially, the beast the woman rides appears to be a kingdom or the different manifestation of the kingdom of man through the ages, but the description of the beast who was and is not, and is about to come out of the abyss, relates more to an individual than a kingdom.

Again, Thomas draws the important connection between the "is, is not" state and the fatal wound of the beast in Rev. 13:3, 12, 14.²⁸

The words "is not" refer to the beast's death, and his ascent from the abyss means he will come to life again (cf., 13:14). This is the same as his reappearance as an eighth king in 17:11...

This is his career midpoint, i.e., a time at the very beginning of chapter 13 when he comes up out of the sea (Bullinger, Smith, Ladd). This is most probably a point at the very middle of the seventieth week between the beast's human and superhuman careers (Walvoord). (emphasis added)

Note that Thomas, who places the trumpet judgments in the latter half, makes the clear connection between his miraculous resurrection from his

²⁶ Thomas, 2:286.

²⁷ Thomas, 2:292.

²⁸ Ibid.

head wound, his coming up out of the sea, and places this in the middle of the seventieth week. To this Thomas adds:

When he does [ascend from the abyss], he will come back in a demonic rather than a purely human form to establish his world domination (Beckwith). This explains why the abyss, the abode of demons (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11) is his origin.²⁹

Once this connection is made it then becomes clear that if the “beast from the abyss” (Rev 11:7) kills the two witnesses, then his identification of “from the abyss” must indicate that he has already, or more likely, just prior to this, been miraculously healed. At this juncture he is at his most emboldened, he executes the two witnesses, the second beast performs various signs and lying wonders, the first beast enters into the Holy Place and sits down, declaring himself to be God. Perhaps this occurs during the three and a half-day celebrations surrounding the death of the witnesses. But with their resurrection and ascension, along with the earthquake, the power of the living God is overwhelming. Tens of thousands of the residents of Jerusalem give glory to the God of heaven, a sign of their belief in the true God and acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah. They heed the command of Jesus to flee to the wilderness. The Beast in all his fury over being upstaged, pursues them with all of his anger and power. Thus bringing us to the opening scenes of the second half of the Tribulation.

The Overall Time Sequence of Rev 6-19

The structure of Revelation 6-19 seems to follow a general sequence of events. The narrative begins with the Lamb opening the seven seals of the scroll in Rev. 6:1 which are then opened sequentially from one through six. The seventh is then opened revealing seven trumpets, which in turn are opened sequentially, until the seventh trumpet. The sounding of the seventh trumpet then revealed seven vial judgments in which the mystery of God is brought to completion (Rev 10:7). The final vial judgment includes the destruction of Babylon and the Armageddon campaign. The clear chronological events are the seals (ch. 6), the trumpets (ch. 8-9), the vials (ch. 14-16).³⁰ Then we must determine how the interlude events described between these chapters relate chronologically to the chapters preceding them. Do the events of chapter 7,

²⁹ Thomas, 2:294.

³⁰ I have included ch. 14 in this because it seems that 14 is a summary overview of the vial judgments, ch 15 describes the prelude to the vials and ch. 16 the vial judgments themselves.

the sealing of the 144,000 and the cries of the martyrs in heaven occur during the time of the six seal judgments or after them? Do the events of chapters 10-13 occur after the six trumpet judgments or in conjunction with them? Does the destruction of Babylon described in chapters 17-19:10 occur after the seventh vial or during the period described in chapter 16?

In the charts below, these two options are depicted. Figure 1 shows the interludes chronologically following the judgments sequences. This is most consistent with the view that the Trumpet judgments are in the second half. Figure 2 shows the interludes as depicting other events within the period covered by the preceding judgments.

[Click Here to See Figures 1 & 2](#)

As will be discussed in the next section, there seem to be convincing arguments to take the events of chapter 7 to be subsequent to the sixth seal judgment. However, these are not without their problems. When we examine the events at the conclusion of the Daniel's seventieth week in Rev. 16-19, it seems that the description of the destruction of Babylon in chapters 17-18 provide the details first summarized under the seventh vial (16:19-20). This literary pattern fits with the Semitic literary pattern of first giving a narrative summary or overview of an event, as in the 7 days of creation in Gen. 1, followed by a detailed look at one aspect within the summary, as in the description of the creation of man on the sixth day of creation in Gen. 2.

In this view, chapter six gives an overview of the six seal judgments on the earth. Chapter 7 then depicts God's work of redemption within the same period of time. This would also fit with the description of the 144,000 as the first fruits. Chapters eight through nine then describe the six trumpet judgment that end in the middle of the tribulation. The interlude of chapters ten-thirteen looks at three other events which have been taking place during the first half and brings us up to date with them. In this view, the great earthquake in Jerusalem comes just after the abomination of desolation, resulting in a large number saved who would then be among those fleeing into the wilderness. Chapter twelve would then give background on the spiritual war between Satan and God, and its focus on Israel and brings us up to the mid point of the Tribulation when the dragon pursues the woman into the wilderness. Nothing described in chapters eleven or twelve advances the reader much beyond the scenario at the beginning of the second half

when the remnant is fleeing into the wilderness. Chapter twelve ends with the note that the dragon was enraged with the woman and goes off to make war with the rest of her children.

Chapter thirteen then describes the two beasts, their rise and their power during the second half of the Tribulation. The description of the second beast takes the reader to the point of the abomination of desolation and the economic tactic used to make war against those who do not take the number of the beast.

Each of these interlude chapters reach back into the past and bring the reader forward to a time that is roughly equivalent to the beginning of the second half of the Tribulation. A time marked by the rise of the beast to power (including his miraculous recovery from a fatal head wound), his execution of the two witnesses, the ejection of Satan and his demons from heaven and his pursuit of the woman into the wilderness, his war on the saints.

It is generally recognized by most commentators that these interlude events of chapters eleven through thirteen do relate to the abomination of desolation and events in the middle of the Tribulation. It seems that for those who place the midpoint of the Tribulation between the sixth and seventh seal judgment (between chapter six and chapter eight) this location would have been preferred for the events of chapters ten-thirteen rather than waiting until after the trumpet judgments are described to reveal events that occur before the trumpets. However, if the events that do relate to the second half—e.g., the persecution of Israel, the casting of the dragon and his angels from heaven, the complete tyranny of the Beast—are revealed after the description of the trumpet judgments, then this suggests that the trumpet judgments should come before the mid-point of the Tribulation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to evaluate evidence set forth by those who place the trumpet judgments in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week and those who place the trumpet judgments in the second half. Though no definitive passage has been found, it has been argued that the chronological crux is found in Rev. 11 which indicates the great difficulty of having both the two witnesses and the trumpet judgments in the second half. Since the second woe ends with the ascension of the two witnesses, and since the two witnesses serve for 1,260 days, it is not possible for this to take place in the second half of the Tribulation. Therefore, the view with the least problems

places the two witnesses and the trumpet judgments in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week.

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