

How Long Do The Beast And The False Prophet War Against The Faithful Witnesses Of Christ? (#4)

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Daniel 9:26-27

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A theological system that takes God's people (whether a portion or the whole of God's people) back to a temple, an altar, a priesthood, and sacrifices of the Old Covenant is a system which detracts from the perfection, completion, and sufficiency of Christ's atonement for His people.

Thus, I ask, are we to expect a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, where God's people will worship the Lord with God's approval? Futurists declare this to be the case, based (in part) upon their interpretation of Daniel 9:24. This is also one reason why Futurists do not believe that the 70th week of Daniel has been fulfilled (because the temple has not yet been rebuilt and anointed with God's blessing).

One other place in prophetic Scripture to which Futurists will turn in order to make this claim of a rebuilt temple is Ezekiel 40-48. Thus, I want to respond very briefly to the literal interpretation of a rebuilt temple which futurists allege from Ezekiel 40-48. Why then does Ezekiel 40-48 not refer to a literal rebuilt temple (that is anointed and approved by God)?

1. The Book of Ezekiel is filled with prophetic visions that consist of many symbols (such as four living creatures, a wheel within a wheel, a book that is eaten, symbolic years, marks upon the forehead, a valley of dry bones that are joined together, a man with a measuring reed, a river of life that proceeds from the temple, trees of life along the river whose

fruit can never be fully consumed, just to name a few of the symbols). As we have noted in previous sermons, we must pay close attention to highly symbolic books of prophetic vision and allow Scripture to interpret for us the meaning of prophetic visions that are filled with symbols. Thus, at the outset, we should be prepared to read of various symbols in the visions God gives to Ezekiel.

2. A second reason why Ezekiel 40-48 does not prophesy a rebuilt temple is because of the close parallels between Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 21-22. In both of these visions which the Prophet Ezekiel and the Apostle John receive, they are taken to a high mountain upon which the city in Ezekiel is built (Ezekiel 40:2) and upon which the city in Revelation is built (Revelation 21:10).

a. Carefully note the symbols that are used in Revelation 21-22 (the city, New Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven, which has 12 gates with the 12 tribes of Israel upon them, and has 12 foundations with the names of the 12 apostles upon them; an angel with a reed measures the length, breadth, and height of the city as 12,000 furlongs i.e. 1,500 miles; a river of life proceeds from the throne of God and on both sides of this river are trees whose leaves and fruit bring healing). Dear ones, we are not to interpret this city, the New Jerusalem, as a literal city (not because God is not able to create such a place, but because God did not intend these symbols to be interpreted literally). For clearly the Holy Spirit states that the New Jerusalem is not a literal city, but rather symbolizes the glorified Church of Jesus Christ (Revelation 21:9-10). Thus, all that is prophesied in Revelation 21-22 is not to be interpreted literally, but rather figuratively, as representing various truths that relate to Christ's glorified Church. So likewise, we are not to interpret the city in Ezekiel 40-48 (or the temple in it) literally (this too is figurative language that describes scriptural realities concerning the Church of Jesus Christ).

b. Just as Old Covenant worship is used symbolically in Revelation to speak of New Covenant truths and realities (e.g. there is a temple in Revelation 7:15 and Revelation 11:1, an altar in Revelation 8:3 and Revelation 11:1, and the ark of the covenant in Revelation 11:19), so there is a temple, altar, and Old Covenant worship used in Ezekiel 40-48 to represent New Covenant truths and realities.

c. Just as there is a river of life that flows from the throne of God with trees that bring healing along the sides of this river in Revelation 22:1-2, so there is a river of life that flows from the temple of God and trees that bring healing along the sides of this river in Ezekiel 47:1-12. And we could go on with many other similarities between the symbols used concerning the city in Revelation 21-22 and concerning the city in Ezekiel 40-48. But just as various symbols are used in Revelation 21-22 to represent the Church of Christ, so the same and similar symbols are used in Ezekiel 40-48 to represent the Church of Christ.

d. Although there are similarities between the holy city and temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 40-48) and the holy city in John's vision (Revelation 21-22), in that both visions represent by symbols the Church of Jesus Christ using Old Covenant language, there are also important differences.

(1) For note that the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 is forever rid of all effects of the curse of sin (Revelation 21:4 and Revelation 22:3), whereas the city and temple of Ezekiel 40-48 yet suffers under the curse of sin, as is demonstrated by the fact that a sin offering and trespass offering are offered in Ezekiel's temple (Ezekiel 46:20) and by the fact that the priests will teach God's people the difference between what is holy and profane and between what is clean and unclean (Ezekiel 44:23).

(2) Also there is a temple in the city of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 40-48), whereas there is no temple in Revelation 21-22 (Revelation 21:22).

(3) Thus, in both Ezekiel's vision and in John's vision there is presented in figurative language the beauty and glory of the Church of Jesus Christ, which Christ has purchased unto Himself. However, the vision in Ezekiel is that of Christ's Church in the millennium where there is yet sin, whereas the vision in Revelation is that of Christ's Church in the eternal state (after the final judgment).

e. Thus, the same and similar figurative language that is used in Revelation 21-22 of Christ's Church in the eternal state also helps us to interpret the figurative language that is used in Ezekiel 40-48 of Christ's Church in the millennium.

3. But the most important reason why a literal rebuilt temple (of which God approves) cannot be what is depicted in Ezekiel 40-48 is because it would contradict what is revealed in the New Testament.

a. There is to be no rebuilt temple because the New Covenant Church of Christ is God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:9-11,16-17; Ephesians 2:21).

b. There is to be no reinstated Levitical priesthood because Christ is our undying High Priest (Hebrew 4:14-15), and He has given to His New Covenant Church a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5).

c. There is to be no reinstated sacrifice for sin and trespasses because Christ's sacrifice is final and once and for all (Hebrews 7:27) and because the only acceptable sacrifices that we can offer now in this age to the Lord are our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) and our pure worship in spirit and in truth (Hebrew 13:15).

d. There is to be no reinstated division between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 2:28-29; Ephesians 2:14-16).

e. As the Book of Hebrews points out, Christ in the New Covenant has put away the Old Covenant and all its outward administrations (of the temple, priesthood, and sacrifices). Thus, Ezekiel's city and temple must be symbolic and must point us to the spiritual realities and to the beauty

and glory with which the millennial Church of Christ (composed of both the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations of the world) will be adorned by the Lord.

Let us now turn our attention back to Daniel's 70th week, where we continue to demonstrate how it is that there is no gap in time between the 69th week (the first 483 years) and the 70th week (the last 7 years), so that we are not awaiting the fulfillment of the 70th week (or last 7 years) of Daniel's prophecy, because the 70th week has already been fulfilled in the ministry of Christ and His apostles. The main points in the sermon this Lord's Day are the following two questions: (1) When Will Christ Be Cut Off (Daniel 9:26)? (2) Who Will Confirm The Covenant With Many For One Week (Daniel 9:27)?

I. When Will Christ Be Cut Off (Daniel 9:26)?

A. Futurism teaches that the time periods in the Book of Revelation (1,260 days, 42 months, a time, times, and half a time or 3 ½ years) are literal (rather than being interpreted according to the Day-Year Principle as 1,260 years). Futurists allege this to be true from an erroneous interpretation of the 70th week of Daniel. As we observed in the previous sermon, Futurists claim that the six prophesied events of Daniel 9:24 that will be fulfilled within 70 prophetic weeks (or 490 years) are NOT to be fulfilled in the ministry of Christ at His first coming, but rather are to be fulfilled just before Christ's second coming. Thus, futurism alleges that the 70th week of Daniel does not immediately follow the 69 weeks, but is yet future (and that a huge gap of time intervenes between the 69 weeks (483 years) and the 70th week (last 7 years)).

B. Now look with me at Daniel 9:25. There the 69 weeks (or 483 calendar years) are broken down into two parts: 7 weeks (or 49 years) +

62 weeks (or 434 years) = 69 weeks (or 483 years).

1. In an earlier sermon, we observed that the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was issued by Artaxerxes (in 458 b.c.). Although the decree of Artaxerxes does not specifically mention the building of Jerusalem, such building in Jerusalem is implied and actually did occur during this second return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity under Ezra (Ezra 4:12-13; Ezra 9:9; Ezra 7:18,25-26). Counting from this commandment of Artaxerxes (in 458 b.c.) 483 years (i.e. 69 weeks of years), one comes to the baptism of Messiah the Prince (in 26 a.d.).

2. But within the 69 weeks (or 483 years), what is the distinction between the 7 weeks (or 49 years) and the 62 weeks (or 434 years)? To what do these periods of time refer?

a. The 7 weeks (or 49 years) refer to the period of time in which Jerusalem was being restored (“the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times” Daniel 9:25). In other words, from the point in which Artaxerxes issued the commandment for the Jews to return with Ezra to Jerusalem (in 458 b.c.), there would be 7 weeks (or 49 years) in which the Jews would be restoring and building Jerusalem, but it would not be an easy task as they would face various adversaries (which was indeed the case under Ezra in Ezra 4:7-22 and under Nehemiah in Nehemiah 4-6). Thus, the 7 weeks (or 49 years) bring one to the year 409 b.c.

b. Then immediately following these 7 weeks (or 49 years) come the 62 weeks (or 434 years), which then take one to the baptism of Messiah the Prince by John the Baptist (in 26 a.d.).

C. What I want you to see at this point is that there are no gaps of time between these two stated divisions within the Daniel’s 70 weeks: the 7 weeks (or 49 years) continue one after another from the commandment of Artaxerses (in 458 b.c.) to the end of this period of restoring Jerusalem (in 409 b.c.); and then the 62 weeks (or 434 years)

follow immediately after the completion of the 7 weeks (or 49 years) without any gap or parenthesis. So the question is: Shouldn't we expect that the 70th week likewise follows immediately after the completion of the 69th week at Christ's baptism (without any gap of time)? And this is precisely what does occur as we shall see in Daniel 9:26-27.

D. So let us now answer the question, When will Christ be cut off (Daniel 9:26)?

1. Daniel 9:26 specifically states that after the 62 weeks, Messiah, i.e. Christ will be cut off. In other words, since the 62 weeks immediately follow the 7 weeks, it is after the 62 weeks that Christ will be crucified (7 weeks + 62 weeks = 69 weeks).

2. Because the text does not explicitly state that Christ is cut off in 70th week (but only that Christ is cut off "after" the 62 weeks), the Futurist claims that Christ was not cut off in the 70th week. But why should we not suppose that the 70th week immediately follows the 62 weeks (without a gap), just as the 62 weeks immediately followed the 7 weeks (without a gap)? The 70 weeks of Daniel are intended by the Holy Spirit to be a cohesive unit as indicated: (1) by the fact that they correspond to the 70 years of Babylonian captivity (Daniel 9:2), wherein there was not gap of indefinite time between the 69th year and the 70th year; and (2) by the fact that the plural subject of 70 weeks takes a singular verb (in Daniel 9:24). There is no other example in all of Scripture given by Futurists that would warrant an indeterminate gap of time occurring with a stated number of days, weeks, months, or years. The position of the Futurist is without precedent in all of Scripture.

3. The Futurist rebuts that there are prophetic Scriptures that give prophetic events one after the other, but require many years between the events (as in 1 Corinthians 15:23). However, this is quite different from the case that we find in Daniel 9:24-27 (where an

indefinite gap of time is placed between stated days, weeks, months, or years). This is unprecedented in all of Scripture.

4. It should be noted that the destruction of Jerusalem is prophesied at the end of Daniel 9:26. However, it is not within the 70 weeks of Daniel that the destruction of Jerusalem occurs—the 70 weeks have already long expired by the time Jerusalem is destroyed by the Romans in 70 a.d.

b. What does fall within the 70th week is the sealing up or closing up of the prophecy concerning the sin of Israel because the fulfillment is yet a number of years in the future (Daniel 9:24: “to make an end of sins”, and “to seal up the vision and the prophecy”). These prophecies concerning Israel’s judgment are sealed up in the 70th week, but the actual judgment upon Israel fell 40 years later (in 70 a.d.), which is not a part of the 70th week.

5. So when is Christ cut off? He is cut off in the 70th week, which immediately follows without any gap after the 62 weeks, which immediately follows without any gap after the 7 weeks.

II. Who Will Confirm The Covenant With Many For One Week (Daniel 9:27)?

A. The Futurist out of seemingly nowhere introduces the antichrist in Daniel 9:27. There is absolutely no mention of antichrist previously in Daniel 9:24-26, and therefore, there can be no contextual or grammatical connection to antichrist in the text. The only two personages mentioned in the previous context are (1) Christ, who is called “Messiah the Prince” (in Daniel 9:25) and who is called “Messiah” (in Daniel 9:26); and (2) Titus, the Roman prince who shall come (in Daniel 9:26). Thus, the pronoun “he” in Daniel 9:27 must grammatically refer to either Christ or Titus. Since Titus did not make a covenant with Jews or Christians and then break it, the prophecy must be fulfilled by Christ.

B. How was the prophecy in Daniel 9:27 fulfilled?

1. Here in Daniel 9:27 is specifically introduced the 70th week of Daniel's 70 weeks ("for one week"). We saw that the 70th week is implied in Daniel 9:26 ("And AFTER threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off"), but here in Daniel 9:27 the 70th week (or 7 last years) of the 70 weeks is specifically identified ("And he shall confirm the covenant with many FOR ONE WEEK").

2. Christ ratified the New Covenant by His blood with many in one week (i.e. the 70th week). It should be noted that the word "for" does not appear in the Hebrew text. I propose that what is prophesied here is that Christ would make firm and ratify the New Covenant with many by the shedding of His own blood in the 70th week (which parallels Daniel 9:26). Consider the following texts that demonstrate Christ ratified the New Covenant (or New Testament) in His blood for many: Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 12:24; Isaiah 53:4-12. Furthermore, by means of Christ's death, the Lord Jesus legally took away and caused the sacrifice and oblation of the Old Covenant to cease (Hebrews 10:8-9).

3. Note how wonderfully the 70th week is fulfilled. Christ ratified the New Covenant by the shedding of His blood for many (His elect people), and in His death He legally took away the sacrifices and oblations of the Old Covenant. This occurred in the midst of the 70th week (i.e. the first 3 ½ years after His baptism). The remainder of the 70th week (i.e. the last 3 ½ years after Christ's death) were fulfilled in the gracious proclamation of the New Covenant to those in Jerusalem and in Judea (Acts 2-8), until the persecution brought against the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and Judea caused them to take the gospel to the Samaritans (in Acts 8) and to the Gentiles (in Acts 10). And again at the end of Daniel 9:27, we see the consequences of Israel's rejection and crucifixion in the 70th Week: God brings desolation upon Israel by means of the Romans in 70 a.d.

4. Thus, there is Hebrew parallelism in Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27. Daniel 9:26 states that the death of Christ occurs AFTER the 69 weeks (7 weeks + 62 weeks), and Christ's death is not for Himself (if not for Himself than it is for the many of His people for whom He died). But their sin in rejecting Christ and their sin in joining with the Romans to cut off Christ leads to the desolation of the city and temple. Then Daniel 9:27 parallels what was just said in Daniel 9:26 by stating that Christ would confirm the New Covenant with many and in the middle of the 70th week and would legally cause the sacrifices and oblations of the Old Covenant to pass away. But once again judgment would befall Israel for their rejection of Christ and the New Covenant.

C. Thus, dear ones, I submit that futurism fails to prove that the time periods in which the **Beast** and the False Prophet war against the faithful witnesses of Christ in the Book of Revelation are a literal 1,260 days, a literal 42 months, and a literal time, times, and half a time (i.e. a literal 3 ½ years), because futurism fails to prove that there is a gap of indeterminate time between the 69 weeks (483 years) and the 70th week of Daniel (the last 7 years), fails to prove that the 70th week of Daniel (the last 7 years) is yet future, fails to prove that antichrist will make a covenant of peace with Israel for 7 years, fails to prove that antichrist will break that covenant of peace with Israel and will forbid sacrifices to be offered in a rebuilt temple in the midst of the 7 years, and fails to prove that antichrist will then war against Israel and Christians for the latter half of the 7 years (i.e. for a literal 3 ½ years). Thus, when we consider the time periods in the Book of Revelation in which the Beast and the False Prophet war against and persecute the faithful witnesses of Christ (whether 1,260 days, or 42 months, or a time, times, and half a time, i.e. 3 ½ years), we ought to interpret them by the Day-Year Principle, just as the Holy Spirit did in interpreting the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 (as being 490 years).

Dear ones, I began this sermon by pointing out the serious consequences of any theological system that takes us back to the outward administration of the Old Covenant. For example, when the Roman Catholic Church speaks of their building as a sanctuary, and of their ministry as a priesthood, and of the table in front upon which the bread and wine are placed as an altar, and of their perversion of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, is it not clear that one is being taken back to the outward administration of the Old Covenant, and is it not also clear that in so doing the glory of Christ's finished work in the New Covenant is blurred and compromised? For a priest is ordained to offer sacrifices (Hebrews 8:3) in a worldly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:1) upon an altar (Hebrews 7:13). And where such an outward administration is still standing and is still practiced, the worshippers act as though Christ (as the High Priest of the New Covenant) has not shed His blood upon the cross as an atonement once for all on behalf of the sins of His people (Hebrews 10:1-3).

So likewise, dear ones, futurism would take a portion of God's people (Israel) back to a rebuilt temple and altar, a re-established priesthood, and reinstated sacrifices for sin in the future (and not only for Jews in the future, but for Gentiles as well, according to Zechariah 14:16-19). Futurism (like Roman Catholicism) blurs and compromises the finished work of Christ (as High Priest) for all of His people by re-introducing a temple, an altar, a priesthood, and sacrifices. This too, dear ones, is a perversion of biblical Christianity, for it takes the eye of faith off of Christ and His finished work, and places God's people once again under the outward administration of the Old Covenant. This, my beloved, is not the freedom which Christ purchased for us in the New Covenant, but is rather a bondage with which the devil would seek to enslave us (Galatians 5:1).

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