Daniel - Commentaries by Thomas Blackburn Baines

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

The second prophecy to which allusion was made, as shedding a flood of light on this period, is the communication made by Gabriel to Daniel, in answer to the prophet's prayer and confession with respect to the guilt and ruin of his people. "Seventy weeks," he says, "are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Dan. 9:24). Now here, not only is Gabriel's message sent in answer to Daniel's prayer about his own people and his own city, but he expressly defines his communication as referring to "thy people," which is Israel, and "thy holy city," which is Jerusalem. These, therefore, are not merely comprehended in the scope of the prophecy, but are its immediate and exclusive objects. It is the transgression of Israel and Jerusalem that is to be finished, the sin of Israel and Jerusalem that is to be ended, reconciliation for Israel and Jerusalem that is to be made, everlasting righteousness for Israel and Jerusalem that is to be brought in. Who will say that this has happened? Israel is still "Lo-ammi," "not My people," and her reconciliation and restoration are still future. Until these are accomplished the prophecy remains unfulfilled. Till then, the people and the city are under the Gentile yoke. The reconciliation will take place when the Messiah comes to reign over the earth.

The Messianic kingdom is, therefore, the goal towards which the prophecy points. Seventy weeks are to be spent in dealing with Israel before this goal is reached. It is not said that these weeks were to begin at once, or were to be continuous when they did begin. As a fact, they did not begin at once, and have not been continuous, It is quite consistent with the language of the prophecy that the work should be laid aside for a while, and then resumed; and indeed we shall see that the Jews, by their own act, interposed a break in the time, and caused God to delay the completion of His promised work for an indefinite, and as yet unexhausted, period.

Gabriel proceeds — "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times [or "the strait of time"]. And after [the] threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing," as the margin correctly reads. (Dan. 9:25, 26). "The strait of time" may mean the shorter of the two periods. Evidently there is a purpose for dividing the whole space of sixty-nine weeks in this manner, and there can be little doubt that the seven weeks, or forty-nine years, was spent in rebuilding the city, and that the sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years, is the interval between the completion of this work and the Messiah. But this only accounts for sixty-nine weeks, and after this, whether immediately or not, Messiah is cut off and has nothing. Instead of taking His dominion, the point towards which the prophecy is looking, He Himself is cut off. To say that this is after the seventy weeks of the prophecy is to make the prophecy contradict itself. For it expressly says that the Messiah is cut off after "the sixty and two weeks," which makes, with the previous seven, sixty-nine in all; and what conceivable sense could there be in saying that Messiah was cut off after the sixty-nine weeks, if He was really cut off after the full period of seventy weeks had expired? There is obviously a term of one week, or seven years, remaining over, and necessary to complete the whole cycle after the Messiah's death. This fact, as well as the express language of the prophecy itself, shows that the work here spoken of, the finishing the transgression and making an end of sins, is not Christ's death upon the cross, or the redemption there accomplished, but another work altogether, the reconciliation and restoration of Israel, which, though of course resulting from Christ's death, is to take place at a later period.

Was there, then, any event that could be described as "finishing the transgression" of Israel and Jerusalem, or making an end of their sins, within seven years after Christ was cut off? Manifestly nothing of the kind. Therefore this last week does not follow immediately on the other sixty-nine, but only after an interval. Nor is it difficult to account for this. In due time the Messiah who was to fulfill all their hopes presented Himself to Daniel's people; but these, instead of hailing Him as their deliverer, refused and crucified Him. Thus, after sixty-nine weeks, He was cut off, and had nothing, while His people invoked the guilt of His blood on their own heads. What marvel that God should take them at their word, visit them with terrible judgments, and set them aside while He gathered out a people from the Gentiles? But "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and, therefore, after this grace to the Gentiles, or the church period, is over, He once more takes up His suspended work with Israel, and the last week runs its course.

The message then proceeds — "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined," [or rather "unto the end, war, desolations, are determined"] (Dan. 9:26). After the Messiah was cut off, terrible judgment fell on the Jews. The Roman army destroyed "the city and the sanctuary," with a fearful overthrow, compared to a flood, and from that time to the present wars and desolations have visited the city. These will continue to the end; that is, till the period towards which this prophecy looks forward. The Romans, who effected this destruction of Jerusalem, are described as "the people of the prince that shall come." This shows that "the prince that shall come" is not Christ, but a prince or sovereign of the Roman Empire. The prophecy goes on to speak more about this sovereign.

"And he shall confirm a covenant [not the covenant] with the many [not "many"] for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for [or "because of"] the over-spreading of abominations he shall make it desolate [or "because of the overspreading of abominations, a desolator], even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27). Now what is this week? The prophecy declares that seventy weeks are to be accomplished before the restoration and blessing of Jerusalem, and the bringing in of the Messianic kingdom. It says that after sixty-nine weeks the Messiah is cut off, not taking the kingdom. There remains, therefore, one week to be accounted for. The cutting off of the Messiah is followed by a long interval, during which the temple is destroyed, and wars and desolations visit the city. After this another week is named. What can this week be but the seventieth week, as yet unaccounted for, and now emerging, as it were, out of this long interval of ruin and desolation, to complete the unfulfilled period of prophecy? As each of the other weeks meant a term of seven years, this last week must clearly mean a term of seven years also. The period following

Christ's rejection is, therefore, to culminate in a short term of seven years, the seventieth week, of which the events are here foretold.

"And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week." During this week there is to be a covenant between some person here referred to and "the many." Who is this person? and who are "the many"? The person is the one last named, "the prince that shall come." We have already seen that this prince is the head of the Roman Empire; for he is the prince of the people that destroyed Jerusalem. But he is not Titus, or any past Roman Emperor; for certainly none of these, after the destruction of Jerusalem, formed any compact with the Jews. Besides, this prince reigns in the last week, or seven years, before the Messianic kingdom. He can therefore be none other than the little horn elsewhere named by our prophet, or the first beast of the Revelation. This last head of the Roman Empire enters into a covenant with "the many," meaning the mass or bulk of some people. As the whole subject of the prophecy is Daniel's people and Daniel's city, this must mean the Jews. The nature of the covenant confirms this; for in the middle of the week he breaks the covenant, causes "the sacrifice and oblation to cease," and sets up some abomination or idol. Now the sacrifice and oblation can only mean the Jewish ritual and worship restored, which shows that this covenant was with the Jews, and that the "prince" has power in Jerusalem.

The events of the last week are therefore as follows: The head of the Roman Empire forms a league with the bulk of the Jewish people for seven years, in virtue of which they are to observe their own religion, doubtless under his protection. But in the middle of the week, that is, three and a half years before the Messiah's reign, he breaks the covenant, causes the worship of Jehovah to cease, and sets up some idol or abomination as an object of divine homage. The next clause should read, "On account of the over-spreading (or protection) of abominations, a desolator." This means that God punishes the idolatry by sending a desolating army against Jerusalem. Hence the abomination is elsewhere spoken of by the same prophet as "the abomination that maketh desolate," and by our Lord as "the abomination of desolation." This desolator is the Assyrian, or king of the north, the "overflowing scourge" against which the unbelieving Jews seek to protect themselves by a covenant with death and an agreement with hell; or in other words, a treaty with this agent of the dragon and blasphemer of God named in the Revelation. The false Christ, their pretended prophet and king, is Satan's instrument in forming this deadly alliance, and in afterward imposing upon them that idolatrous worship of the beast and his image which brings the desolator against the city.

This lasts "until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The desolate is Jerusalem. Her deliverance and the full end of her woes come at the very moment when the desolating force is flushed with triumph, when it has taken and sacked the city, and carried off half its inhabitants. For the Lord says, "I will gather all the nations [or Gentiles] against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall Jehovah go forth, and fight against those nations [Gentiles], as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem." A mode of escape is then provided for His people, and the result is that "Jehovah shall be King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:1-9). This is "the consummation," when the determined judgment having at length been "poured upon the desolate," she is again restored to favor and blessing. "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah (My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah" (married). (Isa. 62:4).

The coincidence between this prophecy of the seventy weeks and those previously looked at is most striking. The little horn in Daniel speaks great things against the Most High, wears out His saints, and changes times and laws, for a time, and times, and the dividing of time; that is, for three and a half years. The seven-headed beast in the Revelation blasphemes God, makes war against the saints, and receives idolatrous worship for forty and two months; that is, for three and a half years. The prince that shall come breaks covenant with the Jews, abolishes the worship of Jehovah, and establishes idolatry in the temple for half a week; that is, for three and a half years.

The little horn is the last ruler arising out of the fourth beast; that is, the last prince of the Roman Empire. The seven-headed beast is the last ruler of the city of seven hills; that is, the last prince of the Roman Empire. The prince that shall come is the last ruler of the people that destroyed Jerusalem and the temple; that is, the last prince of the Roman Empire.

The little horn continues till the kingdom is given to One like unto the Son of Man; that is, he endures till the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. The seven-headed beast continues till Christ issues forth with the armies of heaven to destroy him, and set up His own dominion on the earth; that is, he endures till the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. The prince that shall come reigns during the last half-week before the deliverance of Jerusalem and the restoration of Israel; that is, he endures till the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

In every respect the coincidence is complete. The three persons severally described as the little horn, the seven-headed beast, and the prince that shall come, are all rulers over the same empire, reign at the same epoch, endure for the same time, possess the same character, perform the same deeds, and suffer the same destruction. Every date, incident, and characteristic prove them to be the same person.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, One Thousand Two Hundred and Sixty Days

The last prophecy of the seventy weeks will enable us to settle an important question as to whether the days spoken of in these prophecies mean days or, as is often assumed, years. The woman who flies into the wilderness is said (Rev. 12:14) to be nourished there "for a time, and times, and half a time," and in verse 6, to be fed for "a thousand two hundred and three score days." The words "a time, and times, and half a time" mean therefore twelve hundred and sixty days; and as these words are taken from the Greek version of Daniel, the words used by the prophet, and translated "a time, and times, and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25) have the same signification. This, according to the Jewish reckoning, in which a year contains twelve months of thirty days each, is just forty-two months, or three and a half years, or one-half of a week of seven years.

Now we have seen that the last half-week in the prophecy of the seventy weeks represents a period of three and a half years. It is during this time that the wickedness and idolatry of the beast manifest themselves. It is of this time then, and not of any more lengthened period, that the Revelation speaks. This is the time that Jerusalem is trodden under foot after it first appears as the center of God's purposes. This is the time that the witnesses prophesy. This is the time that the persecuted saints flying to the wilderness are cared for by God. This is the time that the idol is set up in Jerusalem. This is the time that the little horn flourishes. This is the time that the beast has power given him over all kindreds and nations. All falls within the last half-week, or one thousand two hundred and three score days, which closes Gentile rule, completes God's judgment of His chosen people, and ushers in the Messiah's reign.

Availing ourselves of the light which these prophecies cast upon the passage now before us from the Revelation, we see clearly the history of that period of three and a half years with which this portion of the Word is concerned. The Roman Empire will have revived, under the headship of a great and powerful prince; while a person endowed by Satan with miraculous gifts, will set himself forth as the expected Christ, and will gain ascendancy over the mass of the Jews. These will have already returned to Jerusalem, mostly in unbelief, and there rebuilt the temple, and re-established the ancient worship and sacrifices. A great power, answering to the Assyrian of old, under “the king of the north,” will then threaten the returned people. To protect themselves against this power the mass of the nation, led by the false Christ, will form a treaty for seven years with the great prince ruling the revived Roman Empire. By this treaty the Jews will be guaranteed in the exercise of their religious rites. Meanwhile, however, a new testimony to Christ will spring up among a number of Jews, who reject the claims of the false Messiah.

But in the middle of the seven years a great event happens in heaven. Satan is cast down to the earth, and, being full of malice against the Lord’s people, who have begun to testify concerning the coming Messiah, stirs up the Roman prince and the false Christ against them. The Roman prince, wielding Satan’s gigantic power, breaks his covenant with the unbelieving Jews, represses the worship of Jehovah, and forces them to embrace idolatry. In this undertaking he is aided by the false Christ, who, using all his miraculous skill, deceives his followers, and persuades them to set up and worship an image of the Roman prince. On the erection of this image the believing Jews, who are looking for the Messiah, make their escape with all haste out of the city, and seek a refuge in the wilderness, where, in spite of Satan’s efforts for their destruction, they are providentially sheltered and tended by God during the remaining three and a half years of the Roman prince’s ascendancy. Others, however, unable to flee, or detained by God as witnesses, are left behind in Jerusalem, where they are persecuted to death at the hand of the false Christ and his Roman confederate.

Meanwhile the alliance between the prince and the unbelieving Jews does not prevent the invasion of the northern army, which, on account of the revived idolatry, comes as an overflowing scourge, spreads desolation over the land, and has already captured the city, when Christ suddenly descends for the relief of His faithful people. His startling appearance changes the whole scene. The northern army is destroyed. The Roman prince and the false Christ, though at a different time, are cut off. The faithful remnant of the Jews are restored, and with the remnant of Israel, blessed under the Messianic reign. These results we gather from other scriptures. The Revelation only deals with the judgment of the Roman prince and the false Christ with their followers, which is related in a subsequent part of the book. Meanwhile other scenes open before us.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Our Lord's Prophecy

We have now seen the character of the first beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire, to whom idolatrous worship is rendered, and of the second beast, the false Christ, who deceives the Jews, enforces the worship of the first beast and his image, and joins him in persecuting to death all who refuse this blasphemous homage. Two passages of Scripture throw important light on this dreadful time. The first is a prophecy of our Lord’s, at parts of which we have already looked.

“ When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains ... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:15-27).

Now let us see under what circumstances this prophecy was uttered. Jesus had just told the Jews, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:38, 39). He then foretells to His disciples the overthrow of the temple. After this His disciples gather round Him, and as Jews inquire, “When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?” This “end of the age” was a perfectly well-understood phrase, signifying the termination of the existing age of Gentile rule, and therefore connected with the return of the Messiah, the period when the Jews would receive Him as coming “in the name of the Lord.” It is in answer to this question that our Lord’s prophecy, as reported in Matthew, was spoken. In Luke no doubt the prophecy is directed to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus; but in Matthew both the question asked and the reply are different. Our Lord’s prophecy had doubtless a double meaning; and while Luke was led by the Spirit to select those parts referring to the siege of Jerusalem which was comparatively near, Matthew was led by this same Spirit to record those portions which answered the disciple’s question about His own return and the end of the age.

The first part of the discourse is occupied with these “beginnings of sorrows” which we have already seen to correspond with the wars, famines, pestilences, and persecutions detailed under the first six seals. The second part, from which the above extract has been drawn, begins with an event of which Daniel had prophesied — “the abomination of desolation” standing in the holy place. The passage in Daniel is as follows: “From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days” (Dan. 12:11,12). Daniel is here prophesying of the time of Israel’s restoration and blessing, and is told that from the setting up of “the abomination that maketh desolate” to this period is twelve hundred and ninety, or thirteen hundred and thirty-five days. These times are just a little longer than the forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, named in the Revelation, showing that there are three stages, one three and a half years after this event, and the other two following at intervals of thirty and seventy-five days respectively, before the full work of Israel’s redemption and blessing is accomplished.

This passage in Matthew, then, teaches that there will be an abomination, which in Scripture means an idol, set up in the holy place, the temple at Jerusalem, about three and a half years before Israel’s final deliverance. It is called an “abomination of desolation,” or an “abomination that maketh desolate,” because, as we shall see from another prophecy, this return to idolatry is visited with misery and

desolation upon the city of Jerusalem.

Let us now trace the correspondence between this prophecy of our Lord’s, and the prophecies of the Revelation. In Matthew we have an idolatrous image set up in Jerusalem about three and a half years before the end of the Gentile rule. In the Revelation we have the same. In Matthew the faithful are warned, on the setting up of the image, to flee from Jerusalem to the mountains. In the Revelation they do flee. In Matthew a tribulation without parallel is described as happening during this period. In the Revelation, those who survive the judgments are said to have “come out of the great tribulation.” In Matthew the time is, for the elect’s sake, made short. In the Revelation Satan is enraged “because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” In Matthew there arise false Christs working wonders and signs which, if it were possible, should deceive the very elect. In the Revelation the false Christ “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.” In Matthew people are seeking for a Christ, not to appear from heaven, but to be found on earth. In the Revelation they are following a false Christ who is altogether of the earth. Finally, in Matthew the scene closes by “the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30). In the Revelation the scene closes by Christ coming from heaven as King of kings, and Lord of lords, arrayed in glory and majesty, and accompanied by the armies of heaven. (Rev. 19:11-16).

clickbible.org