# Daniel’s 70 Weeks

These are some initial thoughts on the articles by Philip Wren and Herman Goldwag.

**7 Years, 3.5 years**

Bible passages referring to various periods relating to the last days, none of which are 7 years!

* Dan 7 (3.5 years), Dan 8 (2,300 days), Dan 12 (3.5 years, 1,290 days, 1,335 days)
* Rev 11 (42 months, 1,260 days), Rev 12 (3.5 years, 1,260 days), Rev 13 (42 months).

In Revelation, 3.5 years refers to these events: Jerusalem trampled by the Gentiles, the woman (Israel) protected in the desert, the beast being granted authority, and the testimony of the two witnesses.

7-year cycles are important in the Lord’s economy. 7 is the perfect Divine number and there are Levitical laws regarding the Sabbath year respite for the land and the 7 x 7-year period leading to the Jubilee. And most importantly, Daniel’s chapter 9 prophecy concerns a period of 70 weeks. However, the point Philip makes (correctly, I believe), is that the idea of a final 7-year period may be an assumption rather than actually stated in Scripture.

Passages which could refer to a final 7-year period:

* Traditionally, Dan 9, but this is what is being challenged!
* Possibly the typology of Dan 4, Gen 41

The 7-year periods only appear in what might be regarded as types. Richard Snowdon told me that because Joseph had children during the harvest years and before the famine, this meant that Jesus consummates his relationship with the bride in heaven before the "7-year tribulation", to which I countered that the bride is preparing herself for the wedding in Revelation 19 just prior to Jesus' return to overthrow the beast. We cannot build theology on types, although I have recently speculated on the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s 7 years living as a wild beast, based on my possibly erroneous belief in a "final seven years".

**Possible typology passage referring to 3.5 years (James 5):**

Elijah prayed for no rain for 3.5 years, then he prayed for rain (we don't know how long this fell for). Cross reference with Rev 13, where the 2 witnesses testify for the same period (42 months), doing the same things as Elijah (whom Jesus says will come) and having the power to stop rain. After their death, resurrection and the earthquake, the survivors "gave glory to the God of heaven". Is this the spiritual rain? James specifically links the themes of actual rain, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Lord's return (note the harvest references to the crop). The former and latter rain is well understood as relating to Pentecost and the last days outpouring of the Spirit on Israel, which of course the relevant harvest festivals in the moedim relate to. (Interestingly, many translations call Tabernacles the "festival/feast of ingathering) - Exodus 23:16)

*"Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.....*

*Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."*

**Prophetic Year or Sabbatical Year?**

Philip’s premise that we must compare like with like makes sense. The analysis that the 490 years of Israel’s sin are mirrored by Daniel’s prophecy of 490 years leading to redemption is compelling and powerful. It makes sense. Jeremiah’s 70 years being a Sabbatical (calendar?) year makes it appropriate to use the same measure of time, rather than a 360 day “prophetic year”.

That does not necessarily mean that this concept is invalid. Revelation seems to use 42 months, 3.5 years and 1260 days interchangeably. Various people have studied Ezekiel’s prophecy regarding the successive Babylonian sieges of Jerusalem and God’s judgement on Israel and Judah using the 360- day year calculation, and apparently demonstrating that both 1948 and 1967 mark the ending of this period. One wonders what would happen if the Sabbatical year were used instead, particularly in view of Philip’s observation about 1980? (I am currently not qualified to answer that question.)

**The 70th Year Fully Historical?**

I had previously read some Preterist arguments in favour of Daniel's 70 weeks being completed already, but resisted the idea as I thought it was theologically driven. In New Frontiers they teach that Biblical prophecy was completed in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. The articles by Philip and Goldwag deal with my reservations on that score because they address the future restoration of the Jewish people.

Nevertheless, I have some questions about the entire 70th week being historical.

If Jesus crucified in middle of year, we have 3.5 years left. Two possible and reasonable end points are offered for the Lord extending an additional 3.5 year of grace to Israel, providing the opportunity for the national leadership and people to repent – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius’ family and the stoning of Stephen. In principle this may be correct, but it would be helpful to able to confirm the dates - that 3.5 years did elapse since the Lord’s death and resurrection.

There is another explanation, either as an alternative to this or as an added dimension to this dynamic.

It is generally accepted that the principle of a “gap” does exist in Daniel’s prophecies. For example, in chapter 11 there is some debate over when events shift from Antiochus to the Anti-Christ (I have also suggested a possible overlap of similar, repeating events may be worth considering as a way of reconciling differing views on this). This being so, and given Revelation's stress on the 3.5 years, is it possible that actually the last 3.5 years of Daniel 9’s 70th week are fulfilled in future, e.g., there is a gap - just not a 7-year one? Alternatively, just like Israel’s 490-year fall and corresponding 490-year redemption period, could there be a mirrored period of 3.5 years? That is to say, that the last 3.5 years of Israel collectively rejecting Messiah is mirrored in a future 3.5-year period in which Israel will receive Messiah? (Such a theory would not clash with the other additional days in Daniel. For example, the 1290, which could perhaps be the period of Jewish resistance to Anti-Christ as argued by Philip – perhaps after receiving Jesus.)

An argument in favour of this would be that although Jesus did everything necessary to put an end to sacrifice and atone for sin, the Jewish people do not enter into what He offers them until the final years of this current age. This would tie in with the symbolism of the spring and autumn moedim. Daniel 9's reference to bringing in "everlasting righteousness" specifically relates to the Jews ("your people"), reminding us of Jer 31, Zech 12-13, Rom 11 etc.

**Implications for Removing the “Final 7 Years” from Future Bible Prophecy**

Removing the 7-year period effectively takes away the starting gun sign that Christians have been waiting for. This is interesting because Jesus said that the sign will be the "abomination of desolation", NOT the signing or agreement of a covenant. Assuming a current-day interpretation for Turkey/Iran "King of the North" against an Egyptian-led "King of the South", it is the Southern Islamic nations which are making agreements with Israel, not the Northern ones, which are openly talking about destroying Israel.

What is the "abomination"? It is set up by the Anti-Christ, and the Hebrew has the sense of spiritual seduction, which agrees with Thessalonians. It seems to involve personal worship ("proclaim himself to be God"). The Abraham Accords is also a major deception, e.g., combined worship of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, but this might be the "justification" for establishing the 3rd temple. Doing this could well provoke the Lord to remove protection from Israel, leading to the Anti-Christ's invasion. (Turkey and Iran would consider such a fusion, as promoted by some gulf states, as highly offensive to Islam and would want to destroy it.) If there is no "Treaty" or 7-year marker, this puts a very different complexion on things. Right now, it is hard to imagine Iran or Turkey entering into a treaty with Israel, so removing this impediment would mean that current events apparently line up much more closely with Bible prophecy than would otherwise be the case.

By contrast, apparently some Islamic teaching asserts that their messiah figure will enter into a treaty with the Jews for 7 years and break it in the middle. However, we certainly cannot rely on Islam to interpret the Bible!

**Linguistic and Contextual Arguments**

In the article by Goldwag, I cannot verify all the Hebrew language arguments used. However, there are several points which I do understand and can confirm that they make sense and seem to be accurate. Goldwag is right - starting with a correct translation is absolutely critical! (I have worked as a professional translator and know just how challenging this can be.)

Working with the imperfect NIV, this is how we would read this passage based on these insights, substituting Jesus and the Anti-Christ at the appropriate places:

*"After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One* ***[Jesus (1)]*** *will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come* ***[Anti-Christ (2)]*** *will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He* ***[Jesus (3)]*** *will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he* ***[Jesus (4)]*** *will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he* ***[Anti-Christ (5)]*** *will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him* ***[Anti-Christ (6)]****."*

Assuming that this translation is even broadly accurate, from context alone the continuity of (1) to (4) seems logical, and from (5) to (6). However, without the benefit of fluency in Biblical Hebrew, I struggle to see the linguistic / logical trigger that causes Jesus (4) to shift to the Anti-Christ (5). What am I missing? The translation Philip quotes seems to resolve the difficulty:

*"And He will confirm a firm covenant with the many for one week, and in the middle of the week he will cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."*

This aligns with Goldwag’s version:

*“And (he) shall mightily strengthen covenant for many one week, and in the midst of this week (he) shall terminate sacrifice and offering, and abominations on wing shall cause desolation, until total extermination be decreed on desolator.”*

All of which just goes to confirm how important it is to have a proper understanding of the source language, which is something I regrettably lack.

The other concern I have is do with parallel texts which *may* refer to the same thing. For example, we understand that the little horn here refers to the Anti-Christ:

*"Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord;* ***it took away the daily sacrifice*** *from the Lord, and his sanctuary was thrown down. Because of rebellion, the Lord’s people and the* ***daily sacrifice were given over to it.*** *It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. "*(Dan 8:9-12)

In Daniel 8, the Anti-Christ who desecrates the sanctuary also takes away sacrifice, whilst the argument is made that in Daniel 9 Jesus will "will put an end to sacrifice and offering". These events could indeed refer to two different things - Jesus' death as atonement and the Anti-Christ putting an end to ritual sacrifice in a restored temple - but we need to compare both passages and check that our reasoning is valid.

As an interesting aside, I recently discovered a couple of verbs in modern Hebrew - Le'valbel and le'arbev. “L’” or “Le’” is the transcription of the English “to”. So, setting this aside “valbel” means “confuse” (no doubt the same origin as the word for Babel – some of the verb conjugations start with “b” because it often changes from a “v” depending on context - the Hebrew letter for both being the same). The word “arbev” means “mix” as in the mixture of iron and clay in the vision of the statue. I understand this word is related to “Arab”, perhaps hinting that Arabs will make up some of Anti-Christ’s fragile coalition. If a Turkish-led Anti-Christ is correct, we should note that historically there has been much enmity between Turks and Arabs, despite their shared religion. They fought each other in WWI.

**Strengthening the Covenant**

The concept of "strengthening" the covenant with regards to Jesus is worth consideration. Although He inaugurated the "New" Covenant, in doing so Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Covenant. Arguably, therefore, He strengthens it by internalising it through the new birth (Jer 31). After all, Jesus said that whoever taught others to break even the least of the Torah’s commands would be called “the least in the kingdom of heaven”.