

PREMILLENNIALISM IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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Among six passages in Daniel that pertain to a promised future kingdom, three are most relevant to premillennialism: 2:31-45; 7:1-27; 9:24-27. By means of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream-vision of a statue, 2:31-45 prophesies about five kingdoms that will appear in sequence, the last of which comes in the form of a Messianic stone that will crush the ones before it and fill the whole earth. Daniel 7:1-27 covers the same ground from a different perspective. Here Daniel receives a two-part vision, the former part including four beasts that represent kingdoms and the latter, the Ancient of Days and the Messianic Son of Man. Subsequent interpretation details the Son of Man's subjugation of these kingdoms to Himself after a period of tribulation. The prophecy of the seventy "weeks" in 9:24-27 supplies additional data regarding a premillennial return of the Messianic ruler to set up an earthly kingdom. These data include such things

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as the time-frame of the Messianic ruler's first and second advents and the purposes of the two advents. All three passages correlate most easily with what is taught throughout Scripture about a premillennial return of Christ.

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THEME, SCOPE, AND HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

This article is an overview of evidence for premillennialism in the Book of Daniel, a key verse of which is Dan 2:44: "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."² The article could just as appropriately have been entitled "The Most High God Is Sovereign," for the Lord rules "over the kingdom of men" (Dan 5:21; cf. 4:17, 25, 32). Indeed, "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev 11:15; cf. Ps 2:2) is the central focus of biblical theology.³

Relating this theological theme to the presentation of a case for premillennialism in the Book of Daniel would require a thorough exegesis of at least Dan 2:31-45; 7:1-27; 8:15-26; 9:24-27; 11:36-45; 12:1-13. Realistically, that is impossible in this essay, so the following discussion will present a summary synthesis of the data from the three passages most relevant to the article's purpose: 2:31-45; 7:1-27; 9:24-27.

Any approach, including the present one, falls under the influence of a particular system of hermeneutics. Interpreters will continue to reach different conclusions regarding such passages until they can fully agree on a presupposed hermeneutic. For example, because of this writer's (hopefully) consistent adherence to the grammatical-literary-historical-theological method of exegesis,⁴ he reads the text more literally while allowing for figurative language than his amillennial friends who follow a more allegorical, symbolical, or "spiritual" understanding of Scripture.

DANIEL 2:31-45`THE MESSIANIC STONE

Walvoord introduces his comments on Daniel 2 with these words: "Nowhere else in Scripture, except in Daniel 7, is a more comprehensive picture given of world history as it stretched from the time of Daniel, 600 years before Christ, to the consummation at the second advent of Christ."⁵

In 2:31-45, in order to show His sovereign control of history,⁶ God provides through Daniel (see vv. 26-28) an interpretation of the large stone that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about in the earlier part of the chapter. The stone represents four temporal human kingdoms and the divine kingdom, making a total of five kingdoms alluded to in Daniel 2. The divinely inspired interpretation shows indirectly that history is the story of God's rule and that He will have the last word.

Most evangelical scholars as well as numerous early church fathers representing all eschatological schools of thought, agree that the four human kingdoms were Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece (and its divisions after

²All Scripture quotations in this article, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the *Holy Bible, International Version* (North American Edition), copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

³See Barker, "Scope and Center" 305-18.

⁴For this terminology, see Kenneth L. Barker, "Zechariah," in *EBC* (Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed.; Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) 7:600.

⁵John F. Walvoord, *Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 44.

⁶John E. Goldingay, "Daniel," in *WBC* (David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, gen. eds.; Dallas: Word, 1989) 30:56. Unfortunately, Goldingay adopts the late i.e., Maccabean date for Daniel. Another study from this perspective is J. J. Collins, "The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *JBL* (1975):218-34.

death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., with special emphasis on Egypt under the Ptolemies and on Syria under the Seleucids (see 8:22), and Rome.⁷ These identifications become virtually certain in light of a correlation of the data in chapter 2 with those of chapters 7 and 8, notwithstanding Goldingay and others to the contrary.⁸

It is impossible to question the identity of the head of gold (corresponding to the lion of 7:4), because the text explicitly equates it with Nebuchadnezzar's 'head of the Neo-Babylonian empire' (vv. 37-38). The chest and arms of silver (corresponding to the bear of 7:5) correlate with the two-horned ram of chapter 8, where the ram represents the kings of Media and Persia (v. 20).⁹ The belly and thighs of bronze (corresponding to the leopard of 7:6) correspond to the she-goat of chapter 8, where the goat is specifically the king of Greece (v. 21) and the large horn is the first king, i.e., Alexander the Great. Finally, subsequent history reveals that the legs of iron (corresponding to the nondescript, composite beast of 7:7, 19) represent the Roman Empire.¹⁰

Scholars agree less on the identification of the feet and their ten toes of mixed iron and clay, as well as on the fulfillment of this phase of the prophecy of the kingdoms. Fortunately, in Dan 7:19-27 Daniel inquired about the ten horns of the fourth beast, most likely the same as the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. Daniel 7:24 plainly states that the ten horns (= the ten toes of Daniel 2) represent ten kings who will come from the fourth, or Roman, kingdom. According to the generally accepted hermeneutical principle of the analogy of faith, including the guideline that Scripture often interprets itself¹¹ and leading to a harmonious interpretation of the Bible as a whole¹² it is logical and natural to correlate the ten toes of Daniel 2 and the ten horns of Daniel 7 with the ten horns of the beast in Revelation 17:12-18. Many interpreters agree that the beast, described in various passages scattered throughout Revelation 13-20, is the still-future (and thus, still-coming) Antichrist.¹³ Since Rev 19:19-20 indicates that the beast will meet his doom at Christ's return to earth, a reasonable conclusion is that the ten toes (= ten horns = ten kings = ten states over which the beast will rule) belong to that same general period of time, the time of the end.

Nonetheless, since the ten kings come from the fourth kingdom (i.e., Roman Empire, Dan 7:24), some interpreters have sought the fulfillment of the ten toes (and horns) in the historic Roman Empire. This is an exercise in futility, because the details of Daniel's prophecy do not match what actually occurred in history.

⁷C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 245-83; Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977 reprint of 1923 edition) 13-34.

⁸See below, pp. 30-31. Goldingay, "Daniel" 50-51; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1979 reprint) 59-63, 185-92.

⁹Persia under Cyrus the Great quickly became superior to Media, see 7:5; 8:3.

¹⁰See Appendix V, in Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 27.

¹¹See this writer's discussion in "A Response to Historical Grammatical Problems," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus, eds.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 40.

¹²Cf. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956) 125-28.

¹³See, e.g., the discussions by George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 13-14, 155-57, 176-87, 220-34, 256-48; Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *The Revelation of John* (Frank E. Gaebelien, gen. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 12:505-6, 520-36, 563-64, though Johnson appears to vacillate between the personal Antichrist view and the theological heresy view.

¹⁴Walvoord, *Daniel* 71-76; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974); Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody, 1954) 105-24. Culver's entire book

Consequently others have related the fulfillment to a reconstituted confederation of states in the future within the territory occupied by the Roman Empire—a position supported by Dan 7:23-27;¹⁵ Rev 16:14; 17:12-28; 19:11-21. This position has further support in that it is the feet and the ten-toes stage of the statue at which the Messianic stone or rock smashes it, thereby putting an end to human government. The stone then grows into a huge mountain (= the Messianic kingdom), filling the whole earth, interpreted in Dan 2:44 as the "kingdom that will never be destroyed." All this happens "in the time/days of those/these kings." In context the natural antecedent of "those/these kings" is the ten toes just mentioned (Dan 2:43).

Significantly, when Christ returns to the earth, He will "strike down the kingdoms" (Rev 19:15). The Lord's own eternal and universal kingdom then follows (Revelation 20:22). Thus the same general sequence of events delineated in Dan 2:2; 7:2; 11:2; and 12:2 is found also in Revelation.¹⁶ For an expanded discussion of the position that the millennial reign of the Messiah is the initial stage of the kingdom that endures forever, see Culver's discussion.¹⁷

Since Christ will first return to the earth, then put down all human government as the crushing stone, then fully establish on earth His own "kingdom that will never be destroyed," Dan 2:31-45 argues for premillennialism.

well worth reading.

¹⁵See below, 30-33.

¹⁶The same sequence occurs also in Jeremiah 30:31; Zechariah 12:14; Matthew 24.

¹⁷Culver, *Daniel* 35-44, 177-90.

DANIEL 7:1-27 THE MESSIANIC SON OF MAN

Daniel 7 details the first of four dream-visions or revelations God gave Daniel.¹⁸ It is a dream-vision of four beasts, the Ancient of Days, and the Son of Man and His kingdom. The vision's description is in vv. 1-14, followed by its interpretation in vv. 15-27. The following overview of the chapter's subdivisions will *help understand* its important contribution.

Vision of four beasts (7:1-8). In the vision Daniel saw what looked like four great beasts: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a nondescript composite beast (cf. 13:1-2). The above discussion has already noted the correspondence of these animals, as well as those in Daniel 8, with the various parts of the magnificent human statue of chapter 2.¹⁹ Nevertheless, this is no mere repetition. The perspective is different in that what was perceived as beautiful in Daniel 2 appears as bestial in nature.²⁰ Furthermore, some new features are added here: the little horn, the Ancient of Days and one like a son of man, and the special involvement of the saints in the titanic struggle between divine and Satanic forces and in the triumph of the kingdom of God and light over the kingdom of Satan and darkness.

The fact that the bear was raised up on one of its sides (v. 5; cf. 8:3, 20) serves to indicate that one part (Persia) would become dominant over the other (Media). The three ribs in its mouth apparently anticipate Persia's conquests of Lydia (609 B.C.), Babylonia (539), and Egypt (525). In v. 6 the leopard's four heads evidently represent the four major divisions of Alexander's empire after his death in 323 B.C. (cf. the goat's four horns in 8:8, 22). Verse 8 probably depicts the final (yet future) reconstituted form of the fourth world empire. The little horn that becomes dominant over the ten is probably the Antichrist, though Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria (175-164 B.C.), may be in the background in a typological fashion as he apparently is in 8:23-25.²¹ His speaking boastfully (cf. 7:11, 20, 25) may be compared with the description of the Antichrist in 11:36-37; Matt 24:15; 2 Thes 2:1-4; Rev 13:5-6.²²

Vision of the Ancient of Days and the Messianic Son of Man (7:9-14). Since the Messianic Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days (v. 13), the identification of the latter is God the Father. The epithet "Ancient of Days" (v. 9) is appropriate for Him, because He is eternal (cf. also His white hair). His white clothing speaks of His purity or holiness, while the fire represents His glory and judgment (cf. Ezek 1:13-28; Rev 1:14-15). The judgment referred to in v. 10 is apparently that of the nations or Gentiles (Matt 25:31-46), because Matthew re-

¹⁸Recent studies of Daniel 7 from a variety of theological perspectives include C. H. W. Brekelmans, "The Saints of the Most High and Their Kingdom," *OTS* 14 (1965):305-29; G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Interpretation of Daniel 7," *CBQ* 45 (1983):44-58; Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Identification of 'The Saints of the Most High' in Daniel 7," *Bib* 56 (1975):173-92; V. S. Poythress, "The Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel 7," *VT* 26 (1976):208-13; William H. Shea, "The Neo-Babylonian Historical Setting for Daniel 7," *VT* 36 (1986):31-36.

¹⁹See above, 27-29, and also the chart in *The NIV Study Bible* (Kenneth Barker, gen. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) 1311.

²⁰It is instructive that the insignia or symbols of most Gentile nations, including that of the United States, are beasts or birds of prey.

²¹Cf. also the type-antitype relationship between Antiochus in 11:21-35 and the Antichrist in 11:36-44.

²²The little horns of Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 are not the same. See Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," in *The New Testament Introduction* (Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) 7:99 (Excursus); Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 398. Archer argues persuasively against such an equa-

the judgment of the nations to the appearance or return of the Messianic Son of Man (Matt 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31-32), just as Daniel does here (vv. 13, 26-27).

For the destruction of the fourth beast (kingdom), as represented by its king (the little horn of v. 8) mentioned in v. 11, see 9:27; 11:45; Rev 13:3, 12; 17:10; 18:20:10.

In view of passages like Pss 2:2, 6-12; 110:1; Matthew 24:25 (see above); 23:2-5-11; 10:12-13; Rev 1:13; 5:1-14; 14:14, the $v \ r \ eq \ O(a, b) \ eq \ O(\Gamma, \kappa) \ O(+, e) \ bar \ @ \ eq \ O(+, e) \ n \ eq \ O(\sim, a) \ eq \ O(+, s)$, "one like a son of man," v. 13) be Israel's Mes-siah.²³ As the Son`actually not only Son of Man, but also Son of God and Great Son of David`He is an heir. As His inheritance, He is given universal and "everlasting dominion," a kingdom "that will never be destroyed" (v. 14). He, not the Antichrist, will be the last world ruler.

Daniel's reaction to the vision (7:15-16). Daniel, troubled by what he had seen and heard, inquired about the meaning of it all.

Summary of the meaning of the vision (7:17-18). A summary of the interpretation comes first, and then in the following section, the particulars of the interpretation. A previous part of this article has a discussion of the four beasts (v. 17).²⁴ In this context, the "saints" who "receive the kingdom" (v. 18) certainly include believing Jews (the faithful remnant), in anticipation of Israel's restoration and the final and complete fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The designation must incorporate church saints of the New Testament too, though the fact of their inclusion did not become clear until a time much later than Daniel's. By God's sovereign grace He grafted this later group into Israel's olive tree (Rom 11:17-29) not to replace Israel, but to share in Israel's covenant blessings (Eph 3:6). Thus they too are heirs (cf. Rom 8:14-17) and will reign with the Son (Rev 20:6).

Details of the vision's meaning (7:19-27). In v. 21 the little horn of the fourth beast, previously identified as the Antichrist,²⁵ wages war against the saints and destroys them, most likely anticipating passages like Rev 11:7; 13:7. This state of affairs continues until divine intervention (v. 22).

Earlier discussion has identified the ten horns of the fourth beast with ten kings from the fourth kingdom, that is, from the area of the old Roman Empire (v. 20; cf. Rev 13:1; 17:12).²⁶ After they are in place, another king`the little horn of v. 21`arises and subdues three kings and the states they govern (presumably the ones that do not acquiesce). Then he pursues three tasks: (1) he speaks against the Most High (v. 20; cf. vv. 8, 11, 20; 11:36-37; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:5-6); (2) he oppresses the saints (again cf. Rev 11:7; 13:7 as well as Zech 13:8-9; 14:1-2; Matt 24:21-22); and (3) he tries to change the set times and the laws (possibly a very general and comprehensive way of referring to an attempt to disrupt the divinely established order, a valid example of which would be the Antichrist's breaking of the sabbath).

²³For a synopsis of the multiplicity of views concerning this humanlike person, see C. Colpe, "Yahweh's Son," *TDNT* (Gerhard Friedrich, ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 8:400-77; Goldingay, "Daniel," *TDNT* 169-72, 192-93; O. Michel, "Son of man," in *NIDNTT* (Colin Brown, ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 3:613-34; Montgomery, *Daniel* 317-24. For a view closer to the one in this essay, see Joyce G. Baker, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978) 148-54; R. G. Brant, "Son of Man," in *EDT* (Walter A. Elwell, ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 1034-36.

²⁴See above, 30-31.

²⁵See above, 30-31.

²⁶See above, 28-29.

year covenant of 9:27²⁷). Furthermore, he is allowed to overpower the saints "for a time, times and half a time" (= three and a half years). For the time reference see also 12:7; Rev 11:2-3 (42 months or 1,260 days); 12:6 (1,260 days), 14; and 13:10 (12 months). The passages in Revelation point toward the likelihood that these are 360-day months and 360-day ("prophetic") years. The persecution here is the same as described in Rev 12:6, 12-17. The whole period corresponds to what Jesus called the "great distress" or "great tribulation" (KJV), "unequaled from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equaled again" (Matt 24:21; cf. Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Rev 3:10; 7:14).

Fortunately, this period of unparalleled tribulation does not last long (3½ years, the worst part of it being the last three and a half years). At its end the power of Antichrist is permanently broken (v. 26). Then follows the fulfillment of the expression of the covenanted, Davidic, theocratic kingdom on the earth within time-space history (v. 27; cf. Revelation 19-22; 1 Cor 15:20-28). Even though the kingdom is "handed over to the saints" in the sense that they reign with the Son of Man (cf. Luke 22:28-30; Rev 20:6) and it is for their benefit,²⁸ it is still "the kingdom," and "all rulers will worship and obey *him*." This will finally completely fulfill Gen 49:10; Pss 2:8-9; 110:1-2; Isa 2:1-5; 9:1-7; 11:1-11; 35:1-10; 65:17-25; Zech 14:1-21; Matt 24:1`25:46, as well as the remaining unfulfilled promises in Israel's important unconditional covenants (i.e., the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New).²⁹

So this passage contains an eschatological depiction of "one like a son of man" who will come in glory with the clouds of heaven to judge all nations and to rule the world (cf. Rev 1:7). The gospels present precisely the same portrait, though they perhaps influenced by the suffering servant passages of Isaiah (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13`53:12) fill out the picture by speaking also of the sufferings and death of the Son of Man as well as of His resurrection, ascension, exaltation, present glory, and future return to the earth in great glory. This is not surprising in light of such passages as Psalm 22; Dan 9:26; Luke 24:25-27; 1 Peter 1:11.

Since the tribulation period is here followed by the return of the Messiah, the Son of Man (Christ) and then the full establishment of His universal and enduring kingdom on earth, Daniel 7 makes an important contribution to the cumulative evidence for premillennialism. Finally, it is noteworthy that Ladd, who also argues the case for premillennialism, draws some convincing parallels between Daniel 7 and Revelation 20.³⁰

DANIEL 9:24-27`THE MESSIANIC RULER

The outline of Israel's history after the Babylonian exile is traced in the prophecy of the 70 "weeks."³¹ This prophecy demonstrates the distinct plan

²⁷See below, 35, 41.

²⁸"To the saints" represents a construction similar to the Greek dative of advantage. Brekelmans has convincingly demonstrated that "holy ones" (lit. Heb.) must be rendered "saints," not "angels" ("Saints of the Most High" 325-26); similarly Poythress ("Holy Ones of the Most High" 213) and Hasel ("Identification of the 'Holy Ones'" 192).

²⁹See chart in *The NIV Study Bible*, 19.

³⁰Ladd, *Revelation* 267.

³¹Recent studies relating to Dan 9:24-27 include William H. Shea, "Poetic Relations of the Time Period of Daniel 9:25," *AUSS* 18 (1980):59-63; J. Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study," *AUSS* 17 (1979):1-22; Thomas Edward McComiskey, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel against the Background of Ancient Near Eastern Literature," *WTJ* 47 (1985):18-45; Robert C. Newman, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the Old Testament Sabbath-Year Cycle," *JETS* 16 (1973):229-34; Roger T. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the

Israel in God's purposes, delineating her relationship to Gentile powers and cutting off of her Messiah. God's present purpose in calling out a people every nation to form the church is not specifically in view. Instead, the church must fit between the sixty-ninth and seventieth "weeks." It may well be that "history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks is the Dismal Swamp of O. T. criticism" but the most natural exegesis of Dan 9:24-27 provides an indispensable key to a correct understanding of much of NT prophecy (e.g., Matt 24:15-22; Mark 13:14; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

It is helpful to use topical headings to expand on the seventy-week prophecy.³³

Principal ingredients of the prophecy. Major emphases in Dan 9:24-27 are in number: (1) The entire prophecy relates to Daniel's people and Daniel's city, the covenant nation Israel and the city of Jerusalem (v. 24). (2) Two rulers mentioned are not to be confused: the Anointed One or the Messiah (v. 25) and the ruler who will come (v. 26). (3) The period involved is 70 "weeks" (v. 24), which is divided into three parts: 7 "weeks," 62 "weeks," and 1 "week" (vv. 25, 27). (4) The reckoning of time begins with "the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (v. 25). (5) The appearance of the Anointed One as ruler of Israel marks the end of the first 69 "weeks" (v. 25).

(6) After the 69 "weeks," the Messianic ruler will be cut off, Jerusalem will again be destroyed by the people of another ruler who is yet to come, and wars and desolations will continue until the decreed end (v. 26). (7) The establishment of a firm covenant or treaty between the coming ruler and Israel for one "week" signifies the beginning of the seventieth "week" (v. 27).

(8) In the middle of this seventieth "week," the coming ruler will break the covenant with Israel, will forcibly put an end to Jewish sacrifice, and will inflict against the Jews a time of unprecedented persecution and desolation that will continue to the end of the "week" (v. 27). (9) This coming ruler will be summarily disposed of (v. 27).

(10) After the completion of the entire period of the 70 "weeks," a time of unparalleled blessing will begin for the people of Israel (v. 24). The first three of the list of six purpose-blessings in v. 24 pertain primarily to Christ's first advent: His sacrificial death and the redemption provided thereby and the three to His second advent: His crown, His sovereignty, and His reign.³⁴ The absolute certainty about the meaning of the six phrases is not possible. The following general interpretations are reasonable and probable: (a) To finish the transgression: generally to finish Israel's rebellion against the Lord's rule

of Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation," *Revelation* (1981):521-42.

³²Montgomery, *Daniel* 400.

³³The following synopsis, in large part, derives from Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940); J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Findlay, OH: Duetz, 1958) 240-50. For a survey of various interpretations of the passage, see Paul D. Feinberg, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24-27," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, eds.; Chicago: Moody, 1982) 189-220; Montgomery, *Daniel* 39-40; Baldwin, *Daniel* 172-78; Young, *Daniel* 191-95; O. Zckler, "Daniel," in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 205-13.

³⁴Pentecost is perhaps more precise in affirming that the "first three have to do with sin, and the second three with the kingdom. The basis for the first three was provided in the work of Christ on the cross, but all three will be realized by Israel at the Second Advent of Christ" (J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* [John F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck, eds.; Wheaton: Victor, 1985] 1:1361).

one must understand Daniel's use of the Hebrew word שָׁבָע (shab'ay), trans. "weeks" (KJV). The Hebrew is literally "sevens" (cf. NIV), and that is a preferable rendering. So then, Dan 9:24 simply asserts that "seventy 'sevens' are decreed" and what the "sevens" are must be determined from the context and from elsewhere, as well as from the passage's historical fulfillment. Theoretically, sevens could have referred to days, weeks, months, or years.

Several reasons lead to the conclusion that the 70 sevens of this prophecy involve the well-known seven of years. First, Daniel knew that God had set the length of the Babylonian exile on the basis of the Israelites' violation of God's command of the sabbath year of rest for the land (Lev 25:1-7). Since according to 2 Chr 36:1-7 the Jews had been removed from the land so that it might rest for 70 years, it is evident that the regulation governing the sabbath year had been violated for 70 years altogether. This calculates to a total of 70 years owed the land. It is appropriate it is, then, that at the end of the exile, which was the judgment on those violations,³⁹ the angel Gabriel was sent to reveal the initiation of a new cycle of God's dealings with Israel to cover the same number of years, namely, a cycle of 490 years or 70 sevens of years (cf. v. 24).

Moreover, the context demands that the 70 sevens be calculated as 70 sevens of years, or a total of 490 years. To construe them as sevens of days would limit the period to a mere 490 days. This short period did not witness the rebuilding and destruction of the city to say nothing of the tremendous events of Dan 9:24 making it clear that this interpretation is altogether unthinkable, untenable, and impossible. If, on the other hand, the sevens represent years, the prophecy dovetails perfectly. The first 69 sevens or 483 years have been literally and remarkably, historically fulfilled. So a final period of seven years must still be in the future.

The beginning of the 70 sevens. "The issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (v. 25) signals the beginning of the calculation. In this view of judgment, it is most natural to identify this decree as that of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, in 445/444 B.C. (see Neh 2:1-17). Other conservative scholars prefer the decree of King Artaxerxes in 458/457 B.C. (see Ezra 7:6-28);⁴⁰ a few prefer Cyrus in 538/537 (see Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5), but they must take the numbers symbolically rather than literally.⁴¹

The fulfillment of the first 69 sevens. The first division of the 69 sevens (70 sevens = 49 years) to the rebuilding and full restoration of Jerusalem with its streets and a trench (v. 25).⁴² Then, 62 more sevens (= 434 years, bringing the

³⁹Sabbath year violations were not the only reason for the exile (see, e.g., Lev 25:1-7; 26:27-35; 27:18-24), but they were a prominent one.

⁴⁰Archer, "Daniel" 113-16; Wood, *Daniel* 252-54, who also interacts well with opposing views. Incidentally, either system will work in the calculations: those who start in 458/457 use solar years and arrive at Christ's baptism in A.D. 27, marking the beginning of His public ministry; those who start in 445/444 use lunar (prophetic) years and arrive at Palm Sunday in either A.D. 33 (with greater precision) or 30 (with less precision), marking Christ's so-called triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:42). See also Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) 115-39. A significant point is that all these calculations lead to the time of the Messiah. Although some have attempted to construe the 70 sevens as indicative of something other than 490 years, no truly convincing or compelling reason to abandon the general approach of Hoehner (ibid.) and others has surfaced.

⁴¹See, e.g., Young, *Daniel* 202-6.

⁴²Apparently it took that long "to clear out all the debris in Jerusalem and restore it as a thriving city" (Walvoord, *Daniel* 227).

to 483 years) comprised the second division. This division extended to the coming of the Messianic ruler (v. 25) precisely what happened. The accuracy of Daniel's prophecy finds further confirmation in the statement, "after the 62 [more] sevens the Anointed One will be cut off" (v. 26; cf. Isa 53:8). Here Young's assessment is correct: "The old evangelical interpretation is that which alone satisfies the requirements of the case. The 'anointed one' is Jesus Christ, who is cut off by death upon the Cross of Calvary."⁴³

The gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens. Five good reasons support the position that a gap exists before the fulfillment of the seventieth seven. (1) The seventieth seven could not have been fulfilled because the results of the Messiah's work outlined in v. 24 have not yet been realized. There must therefore be an interlude between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens. The church age, which is a mystery—that is, something not specifically foreseen in the OT, but fully revealed in the NT (see Matthew 13; Eph 3:2-9)—fills that gap. Theologically significant part of this mystery is "that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:6; cf. the doctrine of the incorporation of the church in Romans 11).

(2) All the remaining unfulfilled prophecies become unintelligible unless the present church age is regarded as a distinct period of time of unknown duration in God's prophetic program (e.g., Israel's great unconditional covenants; Matthew 24:25; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 6:20; etc.).

(3) The events of v. 26 require a gap. At least three events occur after the sixty-ninth seven and before the seventieth: (a) the cutting off of the Messiah (v. 26; cf. Matt 24:30 or 33); (b) the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem (A.D. 70); (c) the tribulation and desolation until the decreed end (cf. Matt 24:6-30; Revelation 6:20).⁴⁴

(4) In dealing with the prophecy the Lord Jesus anticipated a gap (see Matthew 24:15, 21, 29-30). He placed the seventieth seven, with its reference to "the abomination that causes desolation," at the end of the age just before His second advent to earth and identified it as the final tribulation period.

(5) The most natural and probable interpretation of v. 27 is that the seventieth seven is yet unfulfilled and so future, as will be shown in the section that follows.

The beginning of the seventieth seven (v. 27). The nearest grammatical antecedent of "He," the first word of v. 27, is not the Messianic ruler of v. 25 or the coming ruler of v. 26. This personage is also to be identified with the little horn of Daniel 7, the willful king of Dan 11:36, the man of lawlessness or sin in 2 Thessalonians 2, and the beast of Rev 13:1-10. The seven-year period described in Dan 9:27 begins, then, with the making of a covenant or treaty between Israel and the future Antichrist, who will be the leader of a confederation of states within the territory of the Roman Empire. With that general interpretation Leupold, who is not a premillennialist, agrees.⁴⁵

The program and fulfillment of the seventieth seven. Six lines of thought amplify the program and fulfillment:

(1) The seventieth seven is a period of seven years that, according to

⁴³Young, *Daniel* 207.

⁴⁴The three events were to take place between the last two sevens, because they are named before the account of the seventieth seven in the next verse. The third event is actually a series that continues intensifies during the last seven-year period.

⁴⁵Herbert Carl Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1949) 431.

writer's opinion, lies between Christ's future return for the church (i.e., the rapture) and His glorious revelation at His second coming to earth. Premillennialists hold to either a midtribulation or a posttribulation rapture will disagree on that point, but a defense of the pretribulation rapture of the church is beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to observe that the seventieth seven pertains to Israel and Jerusalem (v. 24), that the church is not mentioned in Revelation 6¹⁸, and several other passages point to a pretribulation rapture (e.g., 1 Thess 4:13⁵; 1 Thess 2:1-12; Rev 3:10⁴⁶).

(2) The seventieth seven also provides the chronological framework for the great events of Revelation 6¹⁸, a section describing the tribulation period.⁴⁷

(3) As previously indicated,⁴⁸ the seventieth seven commences with the effecting of a firm covenant or treaty between the coming ruler of v. 26 (i.e., the Antichrist) and the Jewish people (the "many" of v. 27).

(4) In the middle of the seventieth seven, the Antichrist will reverse his friendly policy toward Israel, will break the treaty, and will "put an end to sacrifice and offering," presumably in a rebuilt Jewish temple. For the typological background in history, see 8:13 and 11:31; for the still future aspect, see 12:11; 12:15-16, 21; 2 Thess 2:3-12; Rev 13:4-7. Young's historical Messianic interpretation of this event has been adequately refuted by both premillennial and nonpremillennial scholars.⁴⁹

(5) The breaking of the firm covenant between Israel and the Antichrist will unleash a period of unprecedented desolations, persecutions, and great distress for the Jewish people (cf. 12:1; Jer 30:7; Matt 24:15-24; Rev 3:10; 7:14; and much of Revelation 6¹⁸). For time references to the second half of the seventieth seven, see Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5. It is instructive that Christ ministered on earth about three and a half years and that the Antichrist will spend the worst part of his Satanic ministry for the same period of time. Thus there will be a holy Trinity at work (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) and an evil trinity at work (Satan, the Antichrist or beast, and the false prophet).

(6) The end of the final seven-year period will bring to completion the series of the 70 sevens, will mark the termination of the period of human government, will see the destruction of the desolator, and will usher in the resurrection of the great blessings promised to Israel in 9:24. For the destruction of the desolator (the Antichrist or beast), see also 11:45; Rev 19:20.

Once again, it is clear that the most natural understanding of Dan 9:24-27 leads to the conclusion that the seventieth seven (= the tribulation period) is in the future; that it will be terminated by Christ's return to the earth; and that it will be followed by the millennial aspect of the Messiah's reign, which will include the kingdom of "everlasting righteousness," thus strengthening the case for premillennialism. That kingdom then merges into the eternal kingdom. Thus, how it can last forever and thus be "the kingdom that will never be destroyed" (Dan 2:44).

⁴⁶For a careful and thorough study of the last passage, see John A. Sproule, *In Defense of Pretribulationism* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1980) 24-30, 54. Gordon R. Lewis argues that the preferred view is the one that explains the greatest amount of relevant evidence with the fewest difficulties and that this criterion applies to pretribulationism better than to any other position ("Biblical Evidence for Pretribulationism," *BSac* 125 [September 1968]:226). For a more recent discussion, see also Robert L. Thomas's fine treatment of Revelation in his commentary, *Revelation 1-7* 283-90.

⁴⁷The period ends with Christ's return in Revelation 19, which in turn is followed by His thousand-year reign in Revelation 20.

⁴⁸See above, 40.

⁴⁹E.g., Leupold, *Daniel* 431-40; Walvoord, *Daniel* 233-37; Wood, *Daniel* 257-63.

CONFIRMATION FROM THE REST OF SCRIPTURE

The interpretation of Daniel 2, 7, and 9, as outlined above, leads to a premillennial view of eschatology. Such a position is consistent with the teaching of Scripture elsewhere, in *both* Testaments.⁵⁰ Peters is persuasive in his concurrence with this conclusion:

The Bible emphatically teaches, in its Millennial descriptions, a Kingdom here on earth over man in the flesh, which shall exhibit in a striking administration the principles, laws, results, etc., of a government *beyond all others, and adapted in every respect* to meet all the requisites to secure stability, happiness, etc. (comp. e.g. Isa. 60, 54, 61, etc.). Simply admit that the oath-confirmed covenant will be verified just as it grammatically reads, and then notice that the Son of Man, as constituted, with this King, that associated with Him are His chosen brethren as associated rulers. The Millennial portrayals describe this reign as still future, and it will be seen how *perfect government can, and will be, realized*. On the other hand, reject these things and confine the Kingdom to the Church, limit the reign of the Son of Man to Heaven, and you have not, and cannot receive, such a visible, outward universal Kingdom of dominion, in all respects perfectly adapted to the civil as well as the religious welfare of humanity, as the Word of God tells us if we take its plain grammatical sense and anticipate.⁵¹

Herein lies the true discontinuity between the Testaments. New Testament historical fulfillment falls dramatically short of OT eschatological expectations. Therefore, only a future earthly kingdom could fulfill that of which the prophets wrote.

With regard to the millennial reign of Christ, "the teaching of Scripture is decisive of such a time and rule coming, and it is equally decisive in giving no time and rule between the First and Sec. Advents. It follows, therefore, that in accord with primitive teaching and the scriptural statements, it must follow the Sec. Advent."⁵²

"Your kingdom come."
(Matt 6:10)

⁵⁰See Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Chicago: Moody, 1968); John F. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959); George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 137-94; George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988) (1884 edition). The last of these is a classic work.

⁵¹Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom* 3:548.

⁵²*Ibid.* For additional evidence, see the argumentation in Barker, "Evidence from Daniel" 135-46, with a more technical treatment that emphasizes word studies of the Hebrew and Aramaic terms for "kingdom." Barker also elaborates further on certain aspects of Dan 9:24.

By means of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream-vision of a statue, 2:31-45 prophesies about five kingdoms that will appear in sequence, the last of which comes in the form of a Messianic stone that will crush the ones before it and fill the whole earth. Daniel 7:1-27 covers the same ground from a different perspective. Relating this theological theme to the presentation of a case premillennialism in the Book of Daniel would require a thorough exegesis least Dan 2:31-45; 7:1-27; 8:15-26; 9:24-27; 11:36-45; 12:1-13. Realistically, th impossible in this essay, so the following discussion will present a summary synthesis of the data from the three passages most relevant to the article's s purpose: 2:31-45; 7:1-27; 9:24-27. Premillennialism is rather a system of theology based on many Scriptures and with a distinctive theological context. The prophetic vision of Daniel, however couched in symbols and dreams, has had the most concrete fulfillment down to the present hour in the history of Gentile nations. Hundreds if not thousands of prophecies have had literal fulfillment. A method that has worked with such success in the past is certainly worthy of projection into the future. The Book of Revelation, while admittedly difficult to interpret, has its symbols drawn from other portions of Scripture, and many questions of interpretation can be answered with the larger context of the entire Bible. The problem of the time element in prophecy.