

God's Revelation of the Future

Community Baptist Church
Lesson 2

Adult Bible Fellowship
Spring, 2024

With this lesson we begin considering a period commonly known as "the Tribulation." The Tribulation is a future period during which God will prepare his people, Israel, for Christ's return and bring severe judgments on the Gentile nations while at the same time bringing many people to himself.

This lesson considers two "background" passages related to this period. As such, they help us understand what we find in the book of Revelation.

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

The Seventy Weeks prophecy is recorded in Daniel 9:24-27 in response to a prayer of Daniel (Daniel 9:16-23).

- God's response demonstrates the precision God has used at times when revealing the future.
- God's response provides a framework for understanding the tribulation period (the 70th week).

Duration/Purposes for the 70 Weeks (Daniel 9:24)

- The 70 weeks are literally "seventy sevens" understood to be 490 years. (Cf. Leviticus 25:8; Genesis 29:27)
- The years are 360 days in length and are sometimes designated "prophetic" (vs. "calendar") years. (Cf. Genesis 7:11, 24; 8:4)
- Six purposes are given by God regarding the 70-week period "decreed" about Daniel's people, Jerusalem, and the Temple.

Weeks 1 to 69 (Daniel 9:25)

- The period begins with "the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem and ends 69 (7+62) weeks later.
- This uninterrupted period of 483 years begins with the decree of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1-8) believed to have been issued in 445 BC.
- The end of the period is marked by "the coming of an anointed one, a prince."

- This "anointed one" is a reference to Jesus. This "coming" is a reference to the day of his entry into Jerusalem just before his crucifixion. (Cp. Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:5)
- According to Robert Anderson (in *The Coming Prince*) this 69-week period ended exactly on that day.

Period between Weeks 69 and 70 (Daniel 9:26)

- After the 69 (7+62) weeks are completed (but before the 70th week begins), two events take place. This introduces a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks of unknown duration.
- First, "an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing." This is a reference to the death of Christ which happened a few days after his entry into Jerusalem.
- Second, "the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." This is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans under Titus in 70 AD.
 - Note that the "prince who is to come" is not Titus, but a yet future prince. (Cf. Daniel 9:27)

Week 70 (9:27)

- The yet future "prince who is to come" will make a 7-year covenant with Israel. It is this covenant period that delimits the future 70th week.
 - The Rapture of the Church does not define the start.
 - The Return of Christ does not define the end.
- In the middle this period, this prince will "put an end to sacrifice and offering." This appears to be a reference to a desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - Thus, the 70th week is divided into 1260-day halves.

The Olivet Discourse

The Olivet Discourse is recorded in Matthew 24:4-25:46 as a response to questions from Jesus's disciples. (Cf. Mark 13:3-37; Luke 21:7-36). This lesson only considers Mathew 24:4-28.

- Importantly, like Daniel's "70 Weeks", this discourse concerns Israel and its relation to Gentile nations. It is not addressed to the Church (although we can learn from it).

Jesus cautions about the future (Matthew 24:4)

Interestingly, Jesus answers his disciples. However, his answer is primarily for the benefit of others who would be living in the future. Although similar things as described by Jesus have happened and continue to happen, these things about which Jesus spoke have not been fulfilled to this day.

1st Half of the 70th Week (Matthew 24:5-8)

- Many will come "in [Jesus's] name" claiming "I am the Christ."
- Israel will "hear of wars and rumors of wars" but should not be alarmed.
 - What they will hear is true, "nation will rise against nation."
 - But, they themselves are not involved.
- This "beginning of the birth pains" is seen as a reference to the 1st half of the 70th week. Any difficulties for the Jews during this period are relatively mild.

2nd Half of the 70th Week (Matthew 24:9-14)

- Trouble now comes to Israel. The Jews are subject to tribulation, death, and hatred. (Cf. John 15:18-25)
- The intense pressures will produce internal strife among the Jews themselves.
- False prophets will arise deceiving many.
- Because of rampant sin, even the love of believers for the Lord will diminish. (Cf. Revelation 2:4 for those in the Church)
- There is a promise that those Jews God brings safely through, who endure to the end of the 70th week, will enter the millennial kingdom.
- A "gospel of the kingdom" will be proclaimed worldwide.
- After these things have taken place, the end of the 70th week will come. (Cf. Matthew 24:6, 13)

Details About the Middle (Matthew 24:15-20)

- A desecration will take place that stops use of the Jewish Temple, perhaps like that seen in Daniel 11:31.

- This is the event occurring in the middle of the 70th week as mentioned in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:27).
- The Jews are warned to use this event as a signal to flee from the land.
 - Those fleeing are warned to do so with haste.
 - Have pity for those who are encumbered.

Details About the 2nd Half (Matthew 24:21-27)

- This period of tribulation will be unparalleled. Never has there been nor will there be anything like it. The designation "great tribulation" is seen as a reference to the 2nd half of the 70th week.
- God has ordained that these days be "cut short."
 - Otherwise, no human being would survive.
 - God is cutting them short for his children.
- False Christs and false prophets will appear in various places and will seem to be genuine since they will "perform great signs and wonders." They should not be believed.
 - These false Christs and false prophets will not lead astray God's elect.
 - These claims to be "the Christ" are similar to what had taken place in the 1st half of the 70th week (Matthew 24:5), but now with "signs and wonders."
- Unlike the false Christs and false prophets who must be located ("in the wilderness" or "in the inner room"), when the true Christ ("the Son of Man") comes, he will be clearly seen far and wide, just as lightning is seen.