

ABSTRACT

“In the Fullness of Time: Recognizing Daniel 9:24-27 in the New Testament”— This article explores the influence of the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 in the New Testament. Of particular interest to this study is the string of references that refer to “the fullness of time.” The author enquires about the significance that the people of the New Testament placed upon these statements, how they were impacted by the vision of Daniel 9:24-27, and how widespread was the understanding of the 70 weeks as weeks of years in the early Christian Church. The paper concludes that the understanding of people in the New Testament era was that “the fullness of time” had arrived, based on the “weeks” of Daniel’s prophecy being counted as years rather than days.

Keywords: prophecy, seventy weeks, Daniel, New Testament, “the fullness of time”

RESUMEN

“En la plenitud del tiempo: Reconociendo Daniel 9:24-27 en el Nuevo Testamento”— Este artículo explora la influencia de la profecía de las setenta semanas de Daniel 9:24-27 en el Nuevo Testamento. De particular interés para este estudio es la serie de textos que se refieren a “la plenitud del tiempo”. El autor indaga sobre el significado que las personas de tiempos del Nuevo Testamento les dieron a estas declaraciones, cómo fueron impactadas por la visión de Daniel 9:24-27 y cuán extendido se encontraba el entendimiento de las setenta semanas como semanas de años en los primeros tiempos de la iglesia cristiana. El documento concluye que la comprensión del pueblo en tiempos del Nuevo Testamento era que había llegado “la plenitud del tiempo”, basándose en las “semanas” de la profecía de Daniel contadas como años en lugar de días.

Palabras clave: profecía, setenta semanas, Daniel, Nuevo Testamento, “la plenitud del tiempo”

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME: RECOGNIZING DANIEL 9:24-27 IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Introduction

Although much has been written on the seventy-week prophecy found in the ninth chapter of Daniel, there has been little consensus concerning its significance, or the time periods it describes.¹ However, there may be merit in considering the impact of this prophecy in the NT. Of particular interest to this study is the string of references that refer to “the fullness of time.”² What significance did the people of NT times place upon these statements, and how were they impacted by the vision of Dan 9:24-27?

Additionally, how widespread, in the early Christian Church, was the understanding of the 70 “weeks” being counted as years rather than days?³ Even in the third century BC, it is “striking and

1. William Whitla, *Sir Isaac Newton’s Daniel and the Apocalypse: With an Introductory Study of the Nature and the Cause of Unbelief, of Miracles and Prophecy* (London: John Murray, 1922), 117. For a convenient survey of the various approaches to the dating of Dan 9:24–27, see Brempong Owusu-Antwi, “An Investigation of the Chronology of Daniel 9:24-27” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1993), 11–68.

2. See, for example, Matt 2:7, 16; 4:17; 8:29; 21: 36, 43; Mark 1:15; Luke 2:28, 29, 36; 9:51; 11:50, 51; 19:44; 21:22; John 7:6, 8, 30; 12:27; Acts 17:30; Rom 5:6, 11; 2 Cor 6:1, 2; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10; 2:12; 3:4, 5; Col 1:26; Titus 1:2; 1 Pet 1:10–12, 20; 4:7. There is also evidence in both Jewish and early Christian tradition, of a similar chronological framework for the vision of Dan 9.

3. There is wide agreement among biblical commentators that the vision refers to years, not days: Wendy L. Widder, *Daniel, The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 200–205; Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 300, 301; W. B. Nelson, *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 232–233; LeAnn Snow Flesher, “Daniel 9:24-27 and the Tribulation,” *RevEx* 109, no. 4 (2012): 585; René Péter-Contesse, and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 252; John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 352; Devorah Dimant, “The Seventy Weeks Chronology (Dan 9,24–27) in the Light of New Qumranic Texts,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings*, ed. A. S. Van der Woude (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 57–76. For a range of modern interpretations of the 70-week time period, see Michael Kalafan, “The Impact of the Book of Daniel on Christology: A Critical Review of

significant,” to note that the LXX, renders the “sevens” of Dan 9 as “weeks of years.”⁴ This paper addresses some of these questions, beginning with the broad sweep of the vision, then by analyzing the elements mentioned in v. 24, and finally drawing conclusions.

The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27

First, to the prophecy itself. After a prayer of confession and a plea for the forgiveness and restoration of his people in exile, the prophet Daniel is visited by the angel Gabriel with a vision intended to give him “insight and understanding” (Dan 9:22, NIV⁵). This is in contrast to the previous two visions (chapter 7 and chapter 8) that left Daniel sick with grief (7:28), and without strength or understanding (8:27). Gabriel speaks of seventy “sevens”—units of probationary time⁶—that would climax in six outcomes: finishing transgression, putting an end to sin, atoning for wickedness, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing up the vision and prophecy, and anointing the most holy (9:24). It may be seen that these phrases occur in pairs, and that the first three elements correspond to and prepare the way for the second group of three.⁷

the Prophecy of the ‘Seventy Weeks’ of the Book of Daniel” (PhD diss., New York University, 1988). See also Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 314–320. It is instructive to see how the early church fathers laid the groundwork for most, if not all, of the modern views. See Gleason L. Archer Jr., trans., *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 95–108. For a counter view, see Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 459–462. For a history of interpretation, see Gerhard F. Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 3 (Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 3–63.

4. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1950), 1: 175.

5. Unless otherwise noted (like in this case), biblical quotations in this article are from the NKJV.

6. It is significant that Jerome concludes the opposite—rather than seeing this as probationary time, he considers the time has passed, and the people have been rejected. “By no means are they God’s people . . . nor is Jerusalem the holy city of God.’ . . . And so . . . hearken unto that which shall befall thy people in seventy weeks of years, and those things which will happen to thy city.” *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 95.

7. Nelson concurs with the parallel arrangement but prefers to see it as a table listing first negative, then positive aspects. See Nelson, *Daniel*, 234. For a similar arrangement in organizing the phases of the creation week, see Jacques B. Doukhan

Relationship Between the Elements of Daniel 9:24

The People, the City, and the Sanctuary ⁸	The Messiah ⁹
finish transgression	bring in everlasting righteousness ¹⁰
put an end to sin	seal up the vision and prophecy
atone for wickedness	anoint the most holy

The first column describes the complexity of the problem of evil, with three different synonyms for evil (among the people), and the second column uncovers the comprehensiveness of its remedy (affecting both city and sanctuary). It may be observed that the second column is the catalyst for the first: finishing transgression is made possible by the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; the climax of the prophetic corpus sees an end to sin; and atoning for wickedness is accomplished by the anointing of the most holy—either a clear reference to the day of atonement, or the consecration of a new high priesthood.¹¹

“The six actions of 9:24 provide a panoramic overview of the period described in 9:25–27,”¹² all of which are contingent on the coming of “the Anointed One” (v. 25, NIV)¹³ who would confirm the

and Laurence A. Turner, who both speak of forming, then filling, so that what is created on the first three days are filled with substance/creatures on days four to six. Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story” (ThD diss. Andrews University, 1978), 48–49; Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 10.

8. William H. Shea, *Daniel 7–12: Prophecies of the End Time*, The Abundant Life Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 54. Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed suggest this column relates to sin. Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 301. Andrew E. Steinmann suggests the first group points to “the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the purpose and goal of the seventy weeks,” and covers the people and their sin. Steinmann, *Daniel*, 465.

9. Shea, *Daniel 7–12*, 54. Newsom and Breed suggest this column relates to restorative transformation. Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 301.

10. Newsom Breed connect this phrase with the “setting right of the sanctuary” in Dan 8:14. Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 302.

11. Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9,” *AUSS* 17, no. 1 (1979): 5. Steinmann argues against the anointing of a temple and points instead to “the Holy One of God”. Steinmann, *Daniel*, 466–467.

12. Greg Goswell, “Where is David in the Book of Daniel?” *ResQ* 56, no. 4 (2014): 219. Shea observes that v. 24 is “a summary or conclusion” of vv. 25–27. Shea, *Daniel 7–12*, 55.

13. Michael J. Gruenthaner avers that v. 24 is “indubitably Messianic.” Michael J. Gruenthaner, “The Seventy Weeks,” *CBQ* 1, no. 1 (1939): 47, 54.

covenant for one “seven,” and put an end to sacrifice and offering at the midpoint of that period (v. 27), when he would be put to death (v. 26).¹⁴ As a step toward pinpointing that time, the vision speaks of starting the clock when the decree goes out to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (v. 25, NIV).

Among the various suggestions for identifying the decree are: the decree of Cyrus king of Persia¹⁵ in about 538 BC (Ezra 1:2-4),¹⁶ the decree of Artaxerxes authorizing Ezra’s rebuilding in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7, 11–27), in 457 BC,¹⁷ Nehemiah’s rebuilding (Neh 2:8-9), in 445 or 444 BC,¹⁸ or the word of God to Daniel.¹⁹ It can be argued that only the edict of Artaxerxes fully satisfies the restoration of the city (9:25), with all its civil construction (street and wall) being implemented, and legal infrastructure (Ezra 7:25, 26)

14. Devorah Dimant observes that 70 weeks of years can be interpreted as 70 cycles of sabbatical years. Dimant, “Seventy Weeks Chronology,” 61.

15. Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Hermeneutical Factors in Determining the Beginning of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:25),” *TrinJ* 6, no. 2 (1985): 131-149.

16. G. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 351-352; Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 202–203; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1949), 418-420; Meredith G. Kline, “The Covenant of the Seventieth Week,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 462.

17. William H. Shea points out that Ezra is using the Jewish civil calendar (as opposed to the Persian calendar), leading to 457 rather than 458 BC. Shea, *Daniel 7–12*, 65, 66. See also J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 148-150; Paul D. Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24-27,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 191-195; Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 33. F. F. Bruce chooses 587 BC. F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (Den Haag: van Keulen, 1959), 69.

18. A. C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel* (New York: Publication Office “Our Hope”, 1911); Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (1872-1878; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), 178–195; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971).

19. Widder, *Daniel*, 203, based on the pattern of the “word going out” from God to Jeremiah (Dan 9:2) God’s word going out in judgement (v. 12), Gabriel coming to Daniel after the “command went out” (v. 23), leading to the command going out to rebuild and restore Jerusalem (v. 25).

becoming operational.²⁰ Previous decrees may have allowed the return of the captives, and the stop-start rebuilding of the temple, but it was the last one that provided the complete restoration stipulated in Daniel's prophecy. Perhaps in this context however, it may be more instructive to examine the impact and immediate relevance of Daniel's prophecy on the era of the incarnation and ministry of Christ.

Daniel 9:24-27 and the New Testament

The NT provides ample evidence of how the elements of the vision are included in the preaching of both Jesus Christ and the authors of the early Christian canonical documents. The common thread among them is the concept of "the fullness of time," found in ways that parallel the three elemental pairs referred to earlier:

- a. finishing transgression with everlasting righteousness;
- b. sealing the prophecy with an end to sin;
- c. the coming of the Anointed One to atone for iniquity.

Finishing Transgression with Everlasting Righteousness

The first element of Daniel's prophecy concerns the ushering in of everlasting righteousness. This is what Dan 9 promises (v. 24), so it is significant that the NT focuses on the announcement of the kingdom, observed at the dawn of Jesus' ministry—immediately after his wilderness temptations. At that time, he began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17). This matches a prophecy that Isaiah made of light dawning for a people who had previously been in darkness—that one day they would see a great light (Isa 9:1-2; Matt 4:15-16). Daniel gave the specifics of that timing, referred to by Isaiah.

Mark's Gospel is more chronologically specific when identifying the ushering in of everlasting righteousness: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). There is a hint of Daniel's prophecy in these words. Jesus expands the timeframe of the kingdom even further when he proclaims, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present

20. See Roy Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 72-75; Owusu-Antwi, *The Chronology of Daniel 9:24-27*, 281-303.

with power” (Mark 9:1). As Joel Marcus comments, “Mark also, like Jesus before him, saw the eschatological epoch as already dawning, a point driven home by the transfiguration narrative that immediately follows.”²¹ If this is so, then those of Jesus’ inner circle of Peter, James, and John, experienced that dawn in the next few verses on the mount of transfiguration.²² In other words, the first glimpses of everlasting righteousness were seen on that mountain, pointing towards a future restoration, when everlasting righteousness would be the new reality.

Peter later referred to his experience on the mount of transfiguration: “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet 1:16, NIV). He spoke of a specific time, again hinting at Daniel’s prophecy:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow (1 Pet 1:10–11, NIV).

Peter is here referring to the earnest efforts of the prophets of old struggling to discern the time and circumstances of the suffering Messiah. When they envisioned this end game, they knew that it would not happen in their day, but much later. Daniel specified that time, and Peter was convinced that his time was the day (v. 12). He

21. Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, 27A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 630. Bede said something similar: “The transfiguration points symbolically beyond itself and toward the final resurrection, when the garments of the faithful will become white as snow when they are purified in heaven”. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *Mark ACCS, New Testament 2* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 109.

22. Peter T. Heide, “Rethinking the Gospel of Mark: Resurrection Narrative as Epic,” *CurTM* 41, no. 6 (2014): 378–380; David M. Miller, “Seeing the Glory, Hearing the Son: The Function of the Wilderness Theophany Narratives in Luke 9:28–36,” *CBQ* 72, no. 3 (2010): 499. See also James A. Brooks, *Mark*, NAC 23 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 138; R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 213. For a contrary view, see Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 261 (who sees the fulfillment in the *Parousia*); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 357; Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 166–167; William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 2001), 242; Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 143; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 412.

concludes his statements on chronology by affirming: “[Christ] indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:20).

Paul says something similar. He speaks of God’s purpose—“that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him” (Eph 1:10). It is significant that Paul connects this inauguration of the adoption as God’s children with the birth of Christ—which he also describes as taking place in “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4, ESV; cf. v. 5); and the only time specified by the prophets was what Daniel predicted.

In his other epistles, Paul observes: “The mystery which has been hidden . . . has been revealed to His saints” (Col 1:26; cf. Rom 16:25–26). “And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Rom 5:11). Paul recognizes that the day in which he speaks is a significant transition point in history. He comments elsewhere: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God” (1 Cor 4:5). He identifies his own time as the time in which “the mystery of Christ” had “been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets,” and he universalizes the effect of this phenomenon, so that “the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men . . . has now been revealed by the Spirit . . . that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ” (Eph 3:4–6). And to Titus he shares the “hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested his word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior” (Titus 1:2–3). In other words, the mission and message of Christ was eagerly anticipated, but was now reality, beginning something new—the everlasting righteousness prophesied by Daniel.

Further evidence of the significance of the time is found in Paul’s assertion to the philosophers of Athens that in the past God overlooked the ignorance of the Gentiles, but now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Elsewhere, he affirms “that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise,

having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). This is a different story to the original expectation of the disciples, even right up to the time of Jesus’ departure to heaven from the Mount of Olives. Their concern was, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). To this Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (v. 7). The restoration of the kingdom that the disciples hoped for was a poor substitute for the “times of refreshing,” that the prophets spoke of, during which heaven would receive Jesus, “until the time comes for God to restore everything” (Acts 3:19–21, NIV). Although this probably refers to the distant return of Jesus when he would restore everything,²³ there was the hint that “even now, those who turn to him for forgiveness may enjoy in advance some of the blessings associated with the coming era.”²⁴

However, after Pentecost, the apostles were sure that the time for action (for them), was now, not in the future. They proclaimed, “now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11). Paul said something similar to the Corinthian believers: “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:1–2). These words to Gentile believers are consistent with the sense of Rom 11 that speaks of a time when some “branches” are broken off, and new “branches” are “grafted in” (Rom 11:1–5, 13–21). This is consistent with the probationary warning of Dan 9:24.

To sum up, this section on everlasting righteousness beginning at the time of Christ’s ministry, highlights the proclamation of the good news and is focused on its unique time in history. Jesus preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and Peter described his experience on the mount of transfiguration, which Jesus identified as being a first glimpse of the kingdom. Luke describes those times as times of refreshing (Acts 3:19, 20), while Paul spoke of them as the day of salvation, affirming that now (for his generation), they were in

23. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 289; John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 134–135.

24. David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 180.

a transition between branches being broken from the root, and new ones being grafted in, consistent with Daniel's prophecy of time being set for God's people before further judgment against them would take place.

Sealing the Prophecy with an End to Sin

The second reflection in the NT from Dan 9 is the warning of the coming destruction of the city and the sanctuary (v. 26).²⁵ The first hint of this is in the preaching of John the Baptist when he asked the crowds, "Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" and then, more specifically, "The ax is already at the root of the trees" (Luke 3:7, 9, NIV).²⁶ Later in his discourse, when speaking of the one coming who would be greater than him, John spoke of Messiah clearing the "threshing floor" (v. 17, NIV); a clear reference to the end of one era and the beginning of another.

Probably the best-known reference to impending doom is when Jesus responded to the disciples' admiration of the beautiful temple glinting in the afternoon sun (Mark 13:1, 2; Luke 21:5, 37). His reply must have stunned them: "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt 24:2). They equated that prediction with the end of the world (Matt 24:3), but Jesus had already hinted that these things would occur much sooner. At the same time, he also warned of imposters that would try to impersonate Him: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them" (Luke 21:8).

Previously, after denouncing the teachers of the law and the Pharisees with seven woes for their hypocrisy (Matt 23:13–32), Jesus

25. Shea speaks of "the Desolator" who would bring "desolation to the city of Jerusalem and to its temple" in AD 70. "Thus, despite the bright spots of this prophecy—the restoration of the people and the coming of the Messiah—it ends with the somber note of another destruction." Shea, *Daniel 7–12*, 54.

26. The suggestion of a time of "tribulation" at some time after the death and resurrection of Christ seems to be lost sight of with the suggestion that Dan 9:25–26 either refers to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or the tribulations outlined in Rev 6–16. See Flesher, "Daniel 9:24-27 and the Tribulation," 591. Wendy L. Widder, a critical scholar, concedes that the historical events surrounding Antiochus are "not the end of the matter," but are transcended by Jesus' warning in his "Olivet Discourse" of the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Widder, *Daniel*, 204.

had warned of coming persecution for the believers (v. 34). Next, he declared that the present generation would be held accountable for the blood, not only from present persecution, but also for all previous martyrs—“Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation” (v. 36). Or, as Luke records it, “the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world . . . shall be required of this generation” (Luke 11:50–51). Later in his Gospel, Luke quotes Jesus: “Your enemies will . . . level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (19:43–44).

In Luke’s account of the judgements on Jerusalem, he quotes Jesus saying: “For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22). In other words, the reference to a probationary cut-off that Daniel had warned about, was to be fulfilled in the time of that particular generation. Jesus continued: “They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (v. 24). Peter reflected these concerns, suggesting how the early church would be impacted with the impending destruction of Jerusalem: “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet 4:17).

In the same week that Jesus made those provocative statements, just before his crucifixion, he told the parable of the abusive tenants who killed the son of a vineyard owner. He then likened the father’s reaction to the murder of his son, to a stone that crushes—a parallel to the stone smashing into the feet of the stature in Daniel’s vision (Dan 2:34, 35, 44). Jesus then applied that prophecy to the nation, by likening himself to the stone that was rejected by the builders (“the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone;” Matt 21:42). He then warned that “whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (v. 44). Or as Daniel describes it in chapter 9, “The decreed end is poured out upon the desolator” (Dan 9:27, NRSV).

In the early days of Jesus’ ministry, he was discreet about his identity and asked others not to reveal it. He spoke in parables and metaphors that seemed a bit obscure. But on this occasion Jesus is speaking more openly, and “when the chief priests and Pharisees

heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them” (Matt 21:45). Jesus’ concluding statement in this discourse was, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it” (v. 43), which is one of the outcomes of the probationary conditions of Dan 9.

Thus, the era of foretold destruction of the city and sanctuary began when Jesus launched his ministry. His cousin John warned about the ax already being laid at the root of the tree. Jesus was more direct with his warning that the present generation would be held accountable for the blood of all previous martyrs, and that the days of vengeance were imminent. Simply, the kingdom of God was taken from them and given to others (Matt 21:43).

The coming of the Anointed One to Atone for Iniquity

Perhaps the most obvious connection between Dan 9 and the Gospels comes with the events surrounding Jesus’ birth and the description of his mission.²⁷ The first of these is the occasion of wise men from the East who follow a rising star, and on their arrival at Jerusalem ask, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (Matt 2:2, NIV). The magi could either have been wise men or astrologers.²⁸ It appears they were familiar with the sacred writings of the Jews, and apparently associated the appearance of a strange star with the prophecy of Balaam: “A star shall come out of Jacob” (Num 24:17). Their question to Herod about a newly-born king (Matt 2:2) is the conclusion they came to after reading the ancient Jewish writings. Dan 9 is the only OT reference to put a time to this event, suggesting that the wise men connected the prophecy of a rising star (Num 24:7) and the 7 plus 62 weeks of years until the appearance of “Messiah the Prince” (Dan 9:25), and then set out to find him.²⁹ Whatever the explanation, the timing of the appearance of a

27. “There is no doubt but what [*sic*] it constitutes a prediction of Christ’s advent, for He appeared to the world at the end of seventy weeks.” Jerome, quoting Africanus. *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 95.

28. D. Mark Davis, “Matthew 2:1-12,” *Int* 57, no. 4 (2003): 420-422.

29. George R. Knight notes that we have no way of knowing how the connection was made between a special king and a star, but that the Roman historian Suetonius (c. AD 100) speaks of “an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world.” George R. Knight, *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994), 51–52.

rising star was significant enough for them to set out on a journey that would have lasted months.³⁰ Would they have set out on such an arduous journey if they were not convinced about their assumptions, calculations, and conclusions?

When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem, Herod “was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him” (Matt 2:3, NIV). Herod determined from the chief priests and teachers of the law that Messiah “was to be born . . . in Bethlehem of Judea” (vv. 4–5), and from the wise men “the exact time the star had appeared” (v. 7, NIV). The decreed death of all baby boys under the age of two, based on the timing of the star as reported by the wise men (Matt 2:16), demonstrates Herod’s fear that maybe the eastern sages were correct in identifying the long-awaited messianic deliverer, and Herod determined to remove any threat to his own kingly status.

Before the arrival of the magi, and a week after the birth of the infant Jesus, when his parents took him to the temple for his “purification rites” (Luke 2:22, NIV), old Simeon rejoiced that he had seen the much anticipated “Consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25ff). Soon after, the “very old”³¹ prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36, NIV), who had also been expecting the One who was to bring “redemption in Jerusalem,” shared her happiness in seeing the fulfillment of her expectations in the birth of this baby (v. 38). The rejoicing of these two old saints is evidence of a wider expectation, at that time, of an imminent and significant birth, and they both saw this baby as the fulfillment of that anticipation.

Writing several decades later, Paul described Jesus’ birth in terms of “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman” (Gal 4:4). The use of the aorist indicative active, ἦλθεν, suggests a point in time past, when a chronological waypoint had been reached. Did the magi determine this as they worked with the holy texts of a foreign nation to conclude that a king was going to be born at the time predicted by Daniel the prophet? If that is so, then Jesus’ birth was not only calculated by foreign wise men but also anticipated at least in some sections of the general populace,

30. Michael J. Wilkins suggests that if they came from the region of Babylon, a distance of 900 miles (1450 km), it would have taken them several months. Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 94.

31. She had been married for seven years and widowed for eighty-four years, making her at least 104 years old.

demonstrating that Daniel's seventy weeks' prophecy was still recognized as significant, well into the first century AD.

Let me refer here to a Hindu practice, the Kumbh Mela festival, which celebrates the journey of a pot of divine nectar that lasted twelve divine days or twelve years of mortal time.³² This is recorded in Hindu scriptures dating back to at least the fourth century BC, indicating that a year and a day were interchangeable between human and divine measurements of time. It seems then this concept was widespread across the ancient world, giving the wise men of the East ready access to the practice of counting a day as a year, enabling them to include it in their calculations.

The timing of the arrival of the "Anointed One" prepares the way for what he will achieve. Daniel 9:27 mentions something significant: "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and in the middle of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease." As Sidney Greidanus affirms,

Jesus made "a strong covenant" with many when he turned the Passover Feast (in remembrance of God's deliverance from Egypt) into the Lord's Supper in remembrance of God's deliverance from sin through Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus said, "This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). With his sacrificial death, Jesus made the Old Testament sacrifices cease. Matthew reports that when Jesus "breathed his last," "at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:50-51)—the Old Testament way of atonement was brought to a close.³³

The coming of the Anointed One created no small commotion, demonstrated by the satisfied recognition by two aged prophets that a long-anticipated event had finally come, the arrival of the eastern sages in Jerusalem, Herod's death decree for all baby boys less than two years old, and Paul's summation that the birth of the child that ushered in all these events, occurred in "the fullness of time." Additionally, the Hindu festival focusing on the passing of time being measured in days by the gods, but in years by humanity, indicates

32. "History of Kumbh Mela," accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.kumbhamela.net/origin-of-kumbha-mela.html>.

33. Sidney Greidanus, "Applying Daniel's Messages to the Church Today," *CTJ* 47, no 2 (2012): 273.

that this method of time reckoning spread wider than just the readers of Hebrew Scripture, and gives further evidence that the wise men from the East had at their disposal a method of determining Daniel's prophetic timing for the coming of a king—or the rising of a star as Balaam put it (Num 24:17). However, the prophecy not only spoke of the birth of the Anointed One, but also his death, which was alluded to in Dan 9:27, and is what we shall examine next.

The Anointed One Cut off

The prophecy of Dan 9 refers to the “Anointed One” being put to death “but not for Himself” (v. 26; *וְלֹא לְבִלְתִּי מָשִׁיחַ יִצְרָח*). Peter alluded to this when he spoke of the prophets predicting the sufferings of Messiah (1 Pet 1:11). Significantly, Peter applied these prophecies not to the time of the prophets, but to his own day (v. 12). The Gospel accounts explain it this way. In the days before his crucifixion, Jesus predicted his death to a group of Greeks who had come to see him (John 12:20–21). He spoke of the necessity for a grain of wheat to “die” and to be planted in the ground, or it would remain a solitary seed rather than multiplying into many (vv. 23, 24). He concluded by declaring: “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” (v. 27–28, NIV). To underscore the significance of the occasion, “a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again’” (v. 28, NIV). At the murmur of the crowd Jesus confirmed that the voice was to assure them that the time for judgement had come, when “the prince of this world will be driven out” (vv. 29–31). The repeated mention of time in this narrative is significant. A waypoint had been reached.

On another occasion Jesus landed on the far shore of Galilee in the region of the Gadarenes, and was confronted by “two demon-possessed men” (Matt 8:28–34). They greeted him with the shouted question, “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?” (v. 29, NIV). What appointed time? Even though many Bible commentators see this as the judgement at the end of time,³⁴ from the

34. See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 376; C. S. Keener, *Matthew*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 210.

concern of the demons it appears they understood the appearance of Jesus as a sign of their imminent doom. The impending death of Jesus would be the death-blow to the reign of evil. The demons' description of the time as "appointed," indicates that they understood a significant milestone had been reached and is further evidence of a NT link to the Dan 9 prophecy.

Still more evidence is seen in the description of Christ facing his impending crucifixion. "When the time had come," Luke says, Jesus "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Reflecting on this, Paul writes, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). In recognition of the climax of the event, at the moment just before his death, Jesus gasps, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). His destiny on earth, previously prophesied by Daniel, has been fulfilled.

The significance of this suffering Messiah theme is further alluded to on the occasion, towards the end of his earthly sojourn, that he delayed his visit to Jerusalem for the feast of Succoth, telling his brothers in Galilee that the time (for his death) had not yet come (John 7:6, 8). However, he did make an appearance at the temple halfway through the festival (v. 14), asking the people why they wanted to kill him (v. 19). While some accused him of being demon possessed for making such a claim (v. 20), others readily admitted that there was in fact a plot brewing for his death (v. 25). They reasoned that if the authorities were not following through with this threat, then Jesus must indeed be the Messiah (vv. 25, 26). However, after more confrontational dialogue with the crowd, the public sentiment rapidly changed, and they tried to arrest him, but were unable to do so, "because his hour had not yet come" (v. 30). Three times within this account the statement is repeated that his time or his hour had not yet come (vv. 6, 8, 30), reinforcing the link between the concepts of impending death and a scheduled time.

In sum, two demon-possessed men questioned Jesus about the end of demonic activity. Jesus delayed his trip to Jerusalem because his time had not yet come, and when the time approached, he steadfastly set his face for Jerusalem, while after the fact, Paul summarized by saying that Jesus died, for the ungodly, at the due time.

Conclusion

First, we noticed Jesus preached that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17), and the Gospel writers concurred that their

day was unique, that the time had been fulfilled (Mark 1:15), while Paul affirmed that the mystery of God previously hidden was now revealed (Eph 3:4; Col 1:26).

In more direct terms, Jesus warned the Pharisees, “All these things will come upon this generation . . . [and] your house is left to you desolate” (Matt 23:36, 38). He was referring to the death of prophets at the hand of national and religious leaders, and that the current population would reap the consequences of that ongoing subversion—confirming the words of Daniel, that their probationary time had ended.

However, the coming and the subsequent mission of Messiah is the most dramatic line of evidence. Wise men from the East came looking for a newborn king on the strength of their calculations, based on their observance of a rising star, and the prophecies of Balaam and Daniel. They would not have made such an arduous journey if they were not convinced of the validity of their findings. And the fact that other religious traditions were already familiar with a year and a day being interchangeable between mortal and divine reckoning introduces the possibility of a wider understanding of this type of time-reckoning. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that both Anna and Simeon were also aware of the timing of the birth of the Promised One whose birth they had eagerly anticipated.

Drawing all these lines of evidence together, their cumulative weight demonstrates that the people of faith, both within Judaism, and in the early Christian Church, together with others who observed from a distance, were convinced that they were on the brink of something significant; something that had been foretold centuries beforehand. They expected the birth of a Deliverer, largely because of Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy sevens. Anna, Simeon, the wise men from the East, and the NT authors, represent a wide cross-section of the populace that were convinced that Messiah had been born. And it is that Messianic element that gives Dan 9 its vitality. The understanding of people in the NT era was that “the fullness of time” had arrived, based on the “weeks” of Daniel’s prophecy being counted as years rather than days. Therefore, as Jesus and his followers preached, their message had dramatic impact, and it spread rapidly, because it meshed with the hopes and expectations of the people of that time.

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