



The Seventy Weeks in Daniel

Review

In the last chapter, I made the case that Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream consists of five unrighteous empires occurring before a supernatural stone crushes the last empire with “feet of iron and clay.” When this last empire is destroyed, the messianic kingdom is inaugurated. I discussed Daniel’s axiom, which teaches that Christ’s actual reign over this world begins immediately after the fifth kingdom of the Antichrist is destroyed and the Great Tribulation comes to an end. This is the same sequence of events found in Revelation.

I also described the central role that the restored temple of Israel plays in the messianic kingdom. The existence of a temple with priestly services during Christ’s reign is difficult to reconcile with the teachings of the New Testament. But one really cannot have the messianic kingdom without the restored temple, for the temple is an inseparable feature of numerous Old Testament prophecies.

The Seventy Weeks of Years

Daniel’s famous vision of the “seventy weeks” recorded in Daniel 9 provides an excellent outline of the events surrounding the temple that lead up to the restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, and its temple in the messianic kingdom. The vision is somewhat complex and requires a

great deal of concentration, so bear with me as I work my way through an analysis of it.

Much ink has been spilled on the interpretation of this vision, with many analyses driven by the interpreter's view of God's endgame. I will offer an interpretation from the perspective of postrestorationism, which teaches that there will be a literal seven-year Tribulation that is followed by the millennial reign of Christ, when Christ removes Satan and rules the world from his throne in heaven. The second coming occurs on the last day, when Christ ushers in the eternal age to come.

Daniel's visions occurred after the Babylonians had conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and taken the Jews into exile. Daniel knew from the prophet Jeremiah that God had brought these judgments on Israel because of their sin of idolatry. As a man of God and a man of prayer, Daniel had been praying for the nation to repent and for God to restore Jerusalem and its temple. In response to his prayer, God sent the angel Gabriel to Daniel to give him understanding as to how this restoration would come about. Daniel reported:

While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, . . . came to me . . . "Oh Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. . . . Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city." (Dan. 9:21–24)

In the Olivet Discourse, Christ refers to Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks when he discusses the temple's future:

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) [Daniel's vision]. (Matt. 24:15)

Christ is telling us to read Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks in conjunction with his discourse in order to understand what must take place on this earth before he comes again at the end of the age. In effect, he is preaching a sermon that includes an exposition of Daniel's vision, particularly as it relates to the temple's future desolations. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand the vision of the seventy weeks to properly understand the Olivet Discourse and God's endgame.

The prophet Jeremiah had been with the Jews in Israel before and during the exile. He correctly predicted their exile for unfaithfulness. But he also foretold a day when the Jews would repent, be given new hearts, and return to the promised land during an age of righteousness. Daniel was aware of the following prophecy by Jeremiah:

There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country. . . . Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . . For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days [after judgment], . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer. 31:17–33)

From this prophecy, Daniel knew that one day the Jews would be given new hearts under a new covenant. They would then be restored to the promised land during the messianic kingdom.

Daniel was also aware of another prophecy by Jeremiah as to how long they would be in exile: “This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations [Israel and Judah] shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (Jer. 25:11). Daniel most likely linked these two prophecies together. The desolation of Jerusalem and its temple by the Babylonians would last about seventy years, at which time the Jews would be given new hearts under a new covenant, ushering in the messianic kingdom. Daniel began to pray earnestly for this restoration and the rebuilt temple, which he believed would occur after seventy years of captivity.

Much to his disappointment, Gabriel appeared to Daniel in response to his prayer and informed him that it may take seventy years before the Jews return to Jerusalem to begin rebuilding the temple, but it will take much longer than seventy years for Israel to truly repent in preparation for God to fully restore Israel and its temple in the messianic kingdom. In fact, Gabriel informed Daniel that it would take *seventy times seven years* to usher in an age of righteousness for Israel. And there will be even more occasions when Israel is unfaithful and the temple desecrated yet again as punishment for their transgressions.

Introductory Overview

The vision from Gabriel begins with an introductory overview, which culminates with the restoration of Israel and its restored temple in the messianic kingdom. Following the overview is an amplification of this vision. This section includes a sequential breakdown of the seventy weeks. The restoration of Israel and its temple occurs at the end of this period of seventy weeks of years.

A careful analysis of the vision of the seventy weeks reveals that it includes two future desolations of the temple. The first desolation can be linked to the destruction of the temple in AD 70 during the fourth-kingdom Roman Empire, when a large majority of the Jews rejected their Messiah. The second desolation will occur during the Great Tribulation of the fifth kingdom, when the Antichrist enters the temple to be worshiped as God. This is followed by the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple in the messianic kingdom, which completes the vision. Let's begin with the overview:

Seventy weeks are decreed about your people [Israel, or the Jews] and your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness [the messianic kingdom], to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place [restore the temple in an age of righteousness]. (Dan. 9:24)

The phrase “to finish the transgression” means that the Jews in exile are still being disciplined for their unfaithfulness. But there will be additional forms of transgression in the future (such as when they reject their Messiah). The phrase “to atone for iniquity” is most likely a reference to Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross.

The phrase “to bring in everlasting righteousness” means to bring in a continuous “age of righteousness” during the messianic kingdom. The phrase “to seal both vision and prophet” means that the prophets' predictions of the messianic kingdom will be fulfilled after the seventy weeks are complete. The phrase “to anoint a most holy place” is a reference to the Holy of Holies and the temple that are to be consecrated for religious services during the messianic kingdom.

Daniel knows the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Micah that reference the restoration of Israel and its temple in the messianic kingdom. Within this grammatical-historical context, there are sound reasons to conclude that the phrase “to anoint a most holy place” refers to the reestablishment of religious services at the restored Ezekiel temple in the messianic kingdom during an age of continuous righteousness after the renewal and restoration of Israel.

In the amplified section that follows this overview, Gabriel lays out a pattern of events that will occur over seventy weeks of years before the restoration is complete and the messianic kingdom is realized on this earth. This is when the Ancient of Days establishes the Son of Man’s dominion over this earth.

The concept of weeks can be understood as sabbatical years based on the way Jewish jubilees were computed. One week would be seven years instead of seven days. Seventy weeks would be $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. After the completion of seventy weeks of years, the Anointed One, or the Messiah, will restore Jerusalem and its temple in an age of righteousness.

In this vision, the word *prince*, which means ruler, is used in two ways. “An anointed one, a prince” refers to the Messiah as the ruler of Israel and the world. The Messiah will initially be cut off after making atonement for our sins, but after the Antichrist is destroyed, he will set up his messianic kingdom. And “the prince who is to come” refers to Satan as the ruler of this world of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. Satan will incite his people to cause two future desolations of the temple before the Messiah rules the world.

Let’s read the vision and then do the math to determine the timeline for the restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, and its temple, when Christ establishes his kingdom on this earth:

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince [Christ], there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time [the temple’s rebuilding begins]. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing [Christ is crucified]. And the people of the prince [Satan] who is to come [in the final week] shall destroy the city and the

sanctuary [Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple]. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he [the Antichrist] shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering [in another temple]. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate [during the Great Tribulation], until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator [the Antichrist is destroyed]. (Dan. 9:25–27)

Once the desolator is destroyed, the seventy weeks are complete and the reign of the Messiah over this world begins. The Jews are given new hearts and Jerusalem and its temple are restored during an age of righteous humanity.

Gabriel describes seventy weeks of years ($7 + 62 + 1$) until the Ancient of Days establishes the Anointed One's messianic kingdom. And we would multiply the particular number of sevens times the number seven to compute the sequence of events until Christ's reign begins.

Let's do the math. The first seven weeks would be 7×7 years = 49 years. Many scholars date the call to restore the temple to its full priestly services to the decree of Artaxerxes I in 457 BC, based on Ezra 7:11–16. Daniel was writing in 457 BC. Thus, it would be 49 years after the decree that the temple functions would be restored: $457 - 49 = 408$ BC, which is historically accurate. Daniel said that "it shall be built again with squares and moat, *but in a troubled time*" (9:25). We know from Ezra and Nehemiah that the returning Jews faced significant opposition when they rebuilt the temple (Ezra 4 and Neh. 4–6).

It is another 62 weeks ($62 \times 7 = 434$ years) until the "anointed one" arrives on the scene ($408 \text{ BC} - 434 = \text{AD } 26$). This places Christ's arrival around AD 26—or about the time of Christ's public ministry. His coming to this earth was also the time of his rejection and crucifixion, when he is "cut off" after atoning for our sins. This means that his age of everlasting righteousness on this earth was not inaugurated at that time.

After atoning for our sins and being cut off, the Anointed One ascends to the Ancient of Days in the clouds. As Lord-elect, sitting at the right hand of God, he waits until the end of the seventy weeks for the inauguration of his dominion over this earth.

Gabriel tells Daniel that after the Anointed One is cut off, yet another destruction of Jerusalem and its temple like the Babylonian

destruction will follow: “And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (9:26). This occurred in AD 70 when the Romans sacked the city and destroyed the temple. As Jesus said, not one stone will be left on another.

Daniel says the following about Satan and his people:

And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince [Satan] who is to come [again in the final week] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood. (9:26)

The “prince” is a reference to Satan, who inspired unbelievers (his people) to act against Jerusalem and its temple. In AD 70 the Romans poured into Jerusalem and swiftly destroyed the temple. Satan’s “people” include the unbelieving Jewish Zealots whom he inspired to start a revolt against Rome as well as the unbelieving pagan Romans whom he inspired to crush the revolt. Even though Christ had ordained the destruction of the temple, it was Satan’s people (unbelieving Jews and pagan Romans) who would “destroy the city and the sanctuary.”

During Jeremiah’s day, it was Satan who influenced his people, the unbelieving Jews, to rebel against God’s covenant and worship idols. And it was Satan’s people, the pagan Babylonians, whom he used to destroy Jerusalem and the temple as a God-ordained form of judgment against the unfaithful Jews. And it is Satan “who is to come” in the final week who influences his people in that day.

At this point, we have sixty-nine out of seventy “sevens” accounted for. That leaves only one seven-year period remaining before the restoration of Israel and the inauguration of the Messiah’s kingdom of everlasting righteousness on this earth. The “anointed one” has been cut off and has ascended to heaven. In the meantime, over the centuries, Christ has continued to gather repentant sinners into his kingdom. But he is waiting on the Father to determine when the last week will unfold and come to an end so that his reign over this world can begin. Therefore, we do not know how many years go by until the last seven-year period occurs and Christ’s inauguration day arrives. Jesus taught the disciples that only the Father knows when the last seven-year period will unfold and the messianic kingdom will be established:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that *the Father has fixed by his own authority.*” (Acts 1:6–7)

The Father has the authority to determine the “times and seasons” when this final week will occur. At its conclusion, it leads to Christ’s reign and the restoration of Israel.

During this interim period leading up to the Tribulation during the seventieth week, the world will remain Satan’s dominion. Unrighteous rulers under his influence will continue to cause wars between nations: “To the end there shall be war.” As Jesus said, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt. 24:7). The curse on the earth will remain in place as well, in that further “desolations are decreed.” Jesus said, “There will be famines and earthquakes in various places” (Matt. 24:7). Jesus further taught, “All these [wars and natural disasters] are but the beginning of the birth pains” (Matt. 24:8). That is because they are leading up to the full labor of tribulation that will be experienced during the final week.

The Final Week

The final seven-year period starts when the desolator makes “a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering” (9:27). The phrase “a strong covenant with many” means to make a strong agreement between many parties. This is probably a peace agreement that the desolator negotiates between Israel and the many warring countries hostile to Jerusalem.

At some point Israel will build another temple in Jerusalem. I believe this will cause another war in the region, for I cannot imagine the Palestinians or the Muslim nations allowing this to happen peacefully. The Antichrist will then establish a peace treaty between Israel and her enemies that will initially protect Jerusalem and its newly rebuilt temple.

But three and a half years into the treaty, the Antichrist is going to let this accomplishment go to his head. He will become delusional, believing he is the world’s savior, and will enter the temple, making

himself out to be God. He “puts an end to sacrifice and offering” and demands to be worshiped as God. This desolation of the temple is an abomination to God.

It is then that the Great Tribulation begins, taking place over the final three and a half years: “on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate.” This matches what Jesus preached:

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, . . . For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (Matt. 24:15–21)

Satan causes a powerful delusion to come upon unbelieving Jews and Gentiles; they will believe that the Antichrist is God incarnate. The Antichrist then enters a rebuilt temple claiming he is God and sets up an idol of himself in the temple. This brings another form of desolation to the temple and even greater tribulation upon Israel and the world for the next three and a half years.

The final week comes to an end when the short reign of the Antichrist or the desolator comes to an end: “And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” The “decreed end,” according to another vision of Daniel’s, is when the desolator is destroyed by fire:

And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. . . . and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. (Dan. 7:11, 26)

And according to Revelation, the “decreed end” is the lake of fire: “And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet . . . These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur” (19:20). Satan is then bound, and the millennial reign of Christ begins.

The completion of the last seven-year week brings the seventy weeks to a conclusion, which leads to the restoration of Israel and the beginning of the reign of the Messiah. The Anointed One, previously cut off after he atoned for iniquity and ascended to the Ancient of Days, now establishes his kingdom of righteousness on this earth. Christ sits

on his throne and governs Israel and the world from the right hand of the Father. The “most holy place” is finally restored and anointed for priestly services.

This follows the same pattern established in prior visions of Daniel, whereby the destruction of the desolator marks the time when the Anointed One begins his reign:

But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion [Satan and the Antichrist's] shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. (7:26–27)

Or, after the last of the five satanic empires comes to an end:

As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. . . . the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. . . . the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. (2:34–35, 44)

But how are “the saints of the Most High” going to inherit Christ’s kingdom if they have already died or are killed by the Antichrist? For the departed saints to participate in his messianic kingdom, they will need to be resurrected. That, of course, is what Ezekiel 37, known as the valley of dry bones, envisions with the resurrection of the Jewish saints to reinhabit the restored nation of Israel. This is also the pattern found in Revelation 20, where John envisions the saints from all nations experiencing the first resurrection in order to inherit the millennial reign of Christ.

With these interpretations in mind, let’s revisit this vision of the seventy weeks and see how well it harmonizes with the Olivet Discourse. Daniel prayed for the Jews to be given new hearts and for the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple after seventy years of captivity, only to be told by the angel Gabriel that it will take seventy weeks of years to complete this restoration and usher in the messianic kingdom:

- **Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city** [before Israel, Jerusalem, and its temple will be truly restored in the messianic kingdom],
- **to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin** [for the punishment of repeatedly breaking their covenant with God],
- **and to atone for iniquity** [through the Messiah's atoning sacrifice],
- **to bring in everlasting righteousness** [the messianic kingdom],
- **to seal both vision and prophet** [to fulfill this vision and all the other messianic prophecies pertaining to Israel, Jerusalem, and its temple],
- **and to anoint a most holy place** [establish the Ezekiel temple in the messianic kingdom]. [*End of overview*]
- **Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem** [as foretold by Jeremiah] **to the coming of an anointed one, a prince** [the Messiah],
- **there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat** [After forty-nine years, Jerusalem and the temple are rebuilt by Nehemiah and Ezra, with priestly functions restored in 408 BC],
- **but in a troubled time** [Nehemiah and Ezra experienced great opposition during the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple].
- **And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off** [After 434 years in AD 26, the Messiah will come, but he will be rejected and crucified to "atone for iniquity"]
- **and shall have nothing** [He did not rule the world at that time—the world remains Satan's unrighteous regime. He then ascended to heaven: "with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days" (Dan. 7:13). The Son of Man is Lord-elect and sits and waits for the Ancient of Days to determine when his reign begins].
- **And the people** [unbelieving Jews and pagan Romans] **of the prince** [Satan] **who is to come** [in the future desolation of the temple] **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood** [Roman troops poured into Jerusalem in AD 70, bringing utter desolation to the city and the temple],

- **and to the end** [of Satan's reign over this world of wicked, warring kingdoms] **there shall be war** ["For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt. 24:7)].
- **Desolations are decreed** ["There will be famines and earthquakes in various places" (Matt. 24:7)].
- **And he** [the Antichrist] **shall make a strong covenant with many for one week** [a peace agreement between Israel and the many warring countries hostile to Israel],
- **and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering** [After three and a half years, the Antichrist puts an end to temple sacrifice because he enters the temple and declares himself to be God: "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" (Matt. 24:15)].
- **And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate** [the Antichrist] [As Jesus taught, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (Matt. 24:21)],
- **until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator** [as Daniel taught, "And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. . . . and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end (Dan. 7:11, 26).

This completes the seventy weeks and brings us full circle to the events laid out in the overview. The Messiah has made atonement for their sins. The transgressions of the Jewish people have come to an end, and the temple is restored. The Messiah rules the world during an age of righteous humanity. All prophecies and visions pertaining to the messianic kingdom are fulfilled. After the fulfillment of all these prophecies, it is the close of the age, when "the Son of Man comes in his glory" to rapture the saints into the clouds to the Father's heavenly kingdom, where, in the very presence of the Ancient of Days, there will no longer be a temple.

The Two Gospel Accounts of the Olivet Discourse

One of the difficulties theologians have in interpreting Christ's Olivet Discourse on Daniel's vision is that Luke's account is notice-

ably different from Matthew's account. For example, Luke emphasized the first desolation when the temple is destroyed by the Romans. He never used the phrase "the abomination of desolation" that refers to the seventieth week when the Antichrist enters the temple claiming he is God. In contrast, Matthew emphasized the second desolation by the Antichrist. The Antichrist does not destroy the temple; rather, he desolates the temple by entering the Holy of Holies claiming to be God. He then directs his war against the saints during the Great Tribulation.

Luke's audience was mainly Greco-Roman, whereas Matthew's was a more Jewish one, so they probably had their reasons for emphasizing the different desolations of the temple. Let's first see how Luke referenced the first desolation of Daniel, and then we will look at how Matthew referenced the second desolation that occurs in the seventieth week. Each desolation has its own distinctive characteristics, so it is fairly easy to see which of the two desolations they emphasize.

Let's compare Luke's account to Daniel's.

The first desolation of Daniel:

And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood. (9:26)

Luke's account of the first desolation:

And they asked him, "Teacher, . . . what will be the sign when these things are about to take place [the destruction of the temple]?" And he said, . . . "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. . . . For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people [the unbelieving Jews]. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (21:7-24)

During the First Jewish-Roman War (AD 66–73), the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem, and both the city and the temple were destroyed. In the aftermath of this desolation, Luke recorded Christ describing Jerusalem and its temple as being “trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Since AD 70, Jerusalem has truly been trampled on by a succession of invading Gentile nations. Even today, much of East Jerusalem and the temple mount remain occupied by Gentile Palestinians.

Also notice that in Luke’s account, the destruction of the temple by the Romans is part of God’s vengeance toward the Jews for having rejected their Messiah. This wrath was not directed against the saints:

For these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. . . . For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people [the generation of Jews who rejected Christ]. (21:22–23)

In fact, Luke informed the saints that when they see an army amassing around Jerusalem, they can easily escape the tribulation that will fall on the city by fleeing to the mountains. The Jewish saints of the first century heeded Christ’s warning. They fled the region and escaped the tribulation that fell on those who remained in Jerusalem. Unbelieving Jews did not follow Christ’s advice; they experienced horrible tribulation during the siege and were either killed by the soldiers or captured and sold as slaves to other regions of the empire. Again, the saints who wisely fled Jerusalem did not experience this tribulation because this wrath was not directed against them.

In contrast, Matthew’s account of the Olivet Discourse matches the final week of Daniel’s second desolation, which involves the Antichrist. Matthew recorded Christ as making specific reference to the “abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel” that occurs in the final week. This tribulation will be directed against the saints. Also notice that Jesus did not warn the saints to be on the lookout for armies surrounding the city to destroy it. Rather, he said to be on the lookout for the time when the desolator appears within the temple “standing in the holy place.” The temple itself is not destroyed but is instead used as a place of worship of the false messiah.

Moreover, in Daniel’s vision, there is no evidence that the Antichrist brings an army against Jerusalem when he enters the temple claiming

to be God. Daniel described this second desolation as occurring during a period of peace after a strong covenant is made between Israel and her enemies. We get the impression that the Antichrist and his false prophets will be accepted by the deceived people. He will simply walk into the temple to desecrate it. The warning to be on the lookout for the Antichrist entering the temple is directed to the saints so they can at least attempt to hide from him.

Let's compare Matthew's account to Daniel's.

The second desolation of Daniel:

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering [when he enters the temple]. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. (9:27)

Matthew's account of the second desolation:

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . . For then there will be great tribulation [against the saints], such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (24:15–21)

In Daniel's other description of the Great Tribulation, he taught that, rather than the unbelieving Jews being the object of this persecution, the saints will be targeted by the Antichrist and will be unable to escape this time of trial:

As I looked, this horn [the Antichrist] *made war with the saints and prevailed over them*, . . . He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, . . . and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time [three and a half years]. (7:21–25)

In Revelation, John made the same observation:

And the beast [the Antichrist] was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months [three and a half years]. . . . it was allowed *to make war on the saints and to conquer them*. . . . If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. (13:5–10)

According to Matthew's account, Jesus also warned the saints in Judea to flee to the mountains when this war against the saints unfolds. But he indicated that the saints will not be able to escape this tribulation as easily as they did during the Roman desolation: "For then there will be great tribulation [against the saints], such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (24:21).

The first desolation Luke emphasized is directed against the unbelieving Jews who rejected their Messiah. Jerusalem and the temple will be surrounded by armies, and the temple utterly destroyed, similar to the Babylonian invasion and destruction. The saints can easily escape this persecution by getting out of Jerusalem when they hear of the approaching armies. And the Gentiles will continue to trample on Jerusalem and the temple mount for some time.

The second desolation emphasized by Matthew is when a rebuilt temple is desolated by the Antichrist when he enters the temple claiming to be God. It is not destroyed by an invading army; rather, it is used as a place of worship by the Antichrist. The extreme persecution that follows will be directed against the saints, who will not be able to easily escape this war against them. According to Daniel's vision, immediately after the Antichrist is destroyed and the Tribulation comes to an end, the messianic kingdom will begin. The Son of Man's age of righteous humanity will be established by the Ancient of Days. All nations will experience peace on earth when Israel and Jerusalem are restored and its temple is anointed as the most holy place—never to be desecrated again by any demonic empire.

Many theologians have failed to recognize these obvious distinctions between the two desolations. They assert that there is only one desolation that already occurred in AD 70. Therefore, there is no future Great Tribulation. This is a serious mistake because many Christians

under their influence will not be prepared for this period of human history if it occurs in their lifetimes.

Summary

Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks and Christ's discourse on this vision are undoubtedly quite complex and involved. And having a restored temple as described by Ezekiel in the messianic kingdom presents numerous theological problems. But the restored temple is an inseparable feature of numerous Old Testament prophecies, and it plays a central role in God's endgame. The vision of the seventy weeks revolves around Israel and the Jewish temple.

Daniel and Christ envisioned two future desolations of the temple. The first desolation corresponds to the sixty-ninth week of Daniel and occurred in AD 70 during the fourth-kingdom Roman Empire, or the "legs of iron," when the temple was destroyed.

Christ taught that during the first desolation, the destruction of the temple by the Romans will be directed against the unrepentant Jews for their transgression of having rejected their Messiah. The Jewish saints, who have accepted their Messiah, can easily escape this persecution by getting out of Jerusalem when they hear of the approaching armies. After this destruction, the temple mount will be trampled on by the Gentiles for some time. Only the Father knows when the final week will unfold and the reign of Christ will begin.

The second desolation occurs during the fifth kingdom of the "feet of iron and clay" and corresponds to the seventieth week of the seven-year Tribulation. Christ taught that during this desolation, the Antichrist will use the temple as a place of worship. And the Antichrist will go to war against the saints because they will refuse to worship Satan and the false messiah. Christ warned that it will be extremely difficult for the saints to escape this period of great persecution. After the Antichrist is destroyed and the Tribulation comes to an end, the seventy weeks are complete and the messianic kingdom will begin.

In the next chapter, I will examine the meaning of Christ's reference to "this generation" when referring to the Jews in the Olivet Discourse. The generation of his day will see the destruction of the temple in their lifetimes, but there is a future generation that will experience the messianic kingdom.