

Daniel's Seventy Weeks

by Frank Viola

Students of Old Testament prophecy are well aware of "Daniel's seventy weeks." That phrase comes from this text:

Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. (Daniel 9:24 ESV)

For centuries, scholars have tried to make sense of the seventy weeks. The text is clearly talking about Jesus Christ—the One who puts "an end to sin," who will "atone for iniquity," and "bring in everlasting righteousness."

Seventy weeks, or seventy sevens (sabbaths), equals 490 years. The problem is that no one could be certain when to start counting.

The problem is resolved, however, by Matthew 1:1-17, where the genealogy of Jesus Christ is listed. Matthew's Gospel arranges the genealogy of Jesus into three groups of fourteen generations (six sevens). And Jesus begins the seventh. In other words, Matthew uses "generations" instead of "years." He counts from Abraham to the birth of Christ.¹

Using this calculation, the math works. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel's seventy weeks. The time had finally come. The super Jubilee was fulfilled in Christ. The great Sabbath had arrived. Jesus would set His people free, end Israel's exile and forgive their sins.

The moment had come when all the sevens (sabbaths) would come storming together. What Israel, and the world, had waited for was now fulfilled in Jesus.

It's no mistake that Matthew, whose theme is the kingdom of heaven, begins his Gospel with the words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ" (Matthew 1:1). That can be translated "the book of the beginning" or "the book of genesis."²

Matthew depicts Jesus as the new Adam launching a new creation. Those who are part of the insurgence take part in this new genesis.

¹ For this interpretation of Daniel 9:24, see N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 137-138; N.T. Wright, *When God Became King* (New York: Harper One, 2012), 69-71.

² The Greek expression in Matthew 1:1 is *biblos genesis* (or *geneseōs*) means "the book of generation, genealogy, or genesis."

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