Understanding Daniel 9:24–27: Prophecy Fulfilled in Christ, Not a Future Tribulation

Introduction

Daniel 9:24–27 is one of the most frequently cited passages in discussions about end-times prophecy, especially by proponents of dispensationalism. It contains the well-known "seventy weeks" prophecy, which has been interpreted in various ways to support complex eschatological systems, including a future seven-year tribulation period. However, a careful, contextual reading of this passage—alongside a historical and theological understanding—reveals that its fulfillment centers not on a future Antichrist but on **the first coming of Christ** and His redemptive work.

The Seventy Weeks: Sevens of Years

The angel Gabriel tells Daniel, *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city"* (Daniel 9:24). The Hebrew word for "weeks" (□□□□□□□□, *shavu'a*) literally means "sevens." In this prophetic context, almost all Bible scholars agree it refers to **weeks of years**, meaning 70 periods of 7 years, totaling **490 years**.

These 490 years are decreed to accomplish six redemptive goals:

1. To finish the transgression
2. To make an end of sins
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity

4. To bring in everlasting righteousness
5. To seal up the vision and prophecy
6. To anoint the Most Holy

These goals are not achieved by Antichrist, war, or tribulation—but through the redemptive work of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Structure: 7 + 62 + 1 = 70 Weeks

The prophecy divides the seventy weeks into three sections:

- **Seven weeks** (49 years): the time of rebuilding Jerusalem after the decree
- **Sixty-two weeks** (434 years): the duration from the rebuilding until the coming of the Messiah
- **One final week** (7 years): where the key redemptive acts take place

Adding 7 and 62 gives **69 weeks** (483 years) from the decree to the coming of *"Messiah the Prince."*

The Messiah "Cut Off"—Not a Gap, But Fulfillment

Daniel 9:26 states, *"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself…"* The Messiah is **cut off**—a clear reference to the death of Christ. Notably, this happens **after** the 69th week, not in a hypothetical gap. Yet dispensationalism teaches that this 70th week is postponed for over 2,000 years and will begin after the rapture.

But this is nowhere indicated in the text.

There is no suggestion of a **gap** between the 69th and 70th weeks. In fact, if one accepts the idea that the 69th week ended at Christ's ministry (or Triumphal Entry), the natural flow of the prophecy leads directly into the 70th week—not a long postponement.

Who Confirms the Covenant?

Verse 27 says, *"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease…"*

Dispensationalists argue that "he" refers to a future Antichrist who makes a peace treaty with Israel. However, this interpretation detaches the verse from its immediate context. The most recent subject mentioned is **the Messiah**, not the "prince that shall come."

The "he" who confirms the covenant is best understood to be **Jesus Christ**:

- Jesus came to confirm the **New Covenant** (Jeremiah 31:31; Matthew 26:28).
- He ministered for **three and a half years**, and in the **midst of the week**, He was crucified—bringing an **end to the sacrificial system**, not by force or destruction, but by fulfilling it (Hebrews 10:10–14).
- This fulfillment rendered the old system obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

The Destruction of the Temple

Verse 26 also says: *"The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary."* This refers to the **Romans** under Titus in 70 AD. The prince is not the Antichrist, but a reference to the Roman leadership, whose armies (the "people") destroyed Jerusalem.

Some dispensationalists argue that this "prince" is a future ruler—yet this overlooks the plain historical fulfillment in 70 AD.

Summary of Interpretive Problems with the Dispensational View

1. **No textual indication** of a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks
2. The **"he"** in verse 27 most naturally refers to the Messiah, not a future Antichrist
3. The 70 weeks were decreed for **Daniel's people**, and the prophecy was fulfilled in the **first century**
4. There is **no scriptural basis** for identifying this week with a future "tribulation"
5. The **New Testament never references** a postponed 70th week or a seven-year tribulation based on Daniel

---

Conclusion: A Fulfilled Prophecy in Christ

Daniel 9:24–27 is a powerful and Christ-centered prophecy. It sets a specific timeframe for the appearance of the Messiah

and describes His mission—to put an end to sin, to bring reconciliation, and to establish a new covenant with His people.

The attempts to stretch the 70th week into the distant future—often motivated by modern theological frameworks—fail to respect the structure, context, and focus of Daniel's vision. The entire seventy-week period finds its **culmination in Jesus Christ**, not in a future Antichrist.

This interpretation aligns with the witness of the early church, the reformers, and a long tradition of historic Christian exegesis. Rather than looking forward to a future seven-year tribulation, believers should rejoice in the finished work of Christ—who fulfilled the promises made to Daniel, and who reigns now as the true Prince of peace.