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IS DANIEL'S SEVENTY-WEEKS PROPHECY MESSIANIC? PART 2

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THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY the seventy-weeks prophecy in Daniel 9:24–27 has been considered one of the most cherished messianic passages of the Old Testament. Part 1 in this series surveyed views on this crucial passage by the early church fathers up through the early part of the fifth century.[1] Although they differed widely in their interpretations of various details and their chronological calculations, they were in near unanimous agreement that Daniel 9:24–27 is to be fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not surprisingly the messianic interpretation of these verses has been vociferously attacked by critical scholars, most of whom maintain that this passage is not predictive prophecy at all but is an after-the-fact allusion to various events during the Maccabean period when the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes sought to impose Hellenism on Judea and suppress Jewish observance of the Mosaic Law.[2] These skeptics typically interpret the מָשִׁיחַ of Daniel 9:25 as either Cyrus, Zerubbabel, or the high priest, Joshua son of

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1 J. Paul Tanner, "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 1" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (April–June 2009): 181–200.

2 Some of the more prominent proponents of the Maccabean thesis include J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1927), 372–404; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 244–45, 249–54; and John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 345–46, 352–60. Early expressions of this interpretation were presented by John Marsham, *Chronicus canon aegyptiacus, ebraicus, graecus* (London: Wells & Scott, 1672); and Anthony Collins, *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy* (London: Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1727).

Jehozadak, all of the sixth century B.C. On the other hand they say the מָשִׁיחַ in verse 26 is Onias III, who served as high priest at the time Antiochus IV Epiphanes took the throne of Syria.

In recent times even a few evangelicals have abandoned the messianic interpretation. Noteworthy examples are John Goldingay in the Word Biblical Commentary and Thomas McComiskey in an influential Christian journal.[3] Yet these two writers differ significantly. Goldingay writes, "The form of the revelation suggests it is a quasi-prophecy, whose setting would then be Jerusalem between the introduction of new forms of worship in 167 B.C. and their abolition in 164 B.C. . . . The narrative introduction refers explicitly to a setting in the exilic period and presumably in Babylon, but that is presumably part of the fictional scene-setting for the revelation which aligns the chapter as a whole with the rest of the book."[4] Such words as "quasi-prophecy" and "fictional scene-setting" are hardly evangelical descriptions.

This article seeks to defend the messianic interpretation of Daniel and to interact with some of the exegetical arguments advanced by McComiskey. The goal, as stated in the first article, is not to exegete the entire passage or argue again for a dispensational interpretation. Instead the article presents several exegetical matters that favor the messianic interpretation, with responses to some of the arguments advanced against this. In particular the article examines the מָשִׁיחַ references, considers the implications of the purpose statements in verse 24, clarifies the significance of the *'aṯnāḥ* punctuation marker in verse 25, and considers whether the seventy weeks should be taken literally or symbolically.

THE REFERENCES TO מָשִׁיחַ

In some Bible translations (such as the KJV, NASB, and NKJV) the translation "Messiah" appears in verses 25 and 26, suggesting that the individual in view is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament whom Christians believe to be Jesus of Nazareth. The NIV translates both references as "the Anointed One," which, although a different translation, amounts to the same identification by virtue of the use of capital letters. The NRSV, on the other hand, has

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[3] John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), 229–31, 257–63, 266–68; and Thomas McComiskey, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel against the Background of Ancient Near Eastern Literature," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985): 18–45.

[4] Goldingay, *Daniel*, 237–38.

"an anointed ruler" in verse 25 and "an anointed one" in verse 26 (both lower case), thus ruling out any link to the Messiah.[5]

In verse 25 the figure is referred to as מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד and in verse 26 as simply מָשִׁיחַ. Theoretically it is possible that these expressions could be translated as something other than "Messiah," and it is also possible that two different individuals (at different points in history) might be intended. The question, however, is not what these terms might theoretically mean but what the author (both human and divine) *intended* by them.

The noun מָשִׁיחַ is derived from the verb מָשַׁח, meaning "to anoint." Anointing was a practice in the Old Testament for someone entering an office or important service for the Lord, or for marking inanimate objects to consecrate them before the Lord.[6] For example the first use of the verb מָשַׁח in the Old Testament occurs in Genesis 31:13 in reference to the stone pillar that Jacob anointed with oil at Bethel to commemorate the place where God visited him in a dream and confirmed to him the Abrahamic promises. The stone pillar was no longer a mere rock; it now served as a witness to the vows the patriarch had made. Once anointed, these persons or objects were no longer *ordinary,* for they were now marked out for God's use and His purposes.

People who were anointed included the high priest, kings, and even (at times) prophets. The first anointing of a person occurred when Moses anointed Aaron as the first high priest (Lev. 8:12). Subsequently other high priests were anointed (16:32). Kings were anointed as rulers, as were Saul (1 Sam. 10:1) and David (16:1, 13). Although anointing of prophets is rarely mentioned, Elisha was anointed by Elijah (1 Kings 19:16).[7]

The noun מָשִׁיחַ, used of a person who is anointed, occurs thirty-eight times in the Old Testament. Although מָשִׁיחַ was used of the anointed high priest, two observations are in order. First, מָשִׁיחַ was only rarely used as a term to designate a high priest and was not

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5 That a nonmessianic interpretation is intended by the NRSV is made clear by the punctuation in Daniel 9.25, separating the seven weeks from the sixty-two weeks The "anointed one" comes after seven weeks, which would suggest an individual in the sixth or fifth century B C

6 For detailed studies of משׁח and its derivatives see John N Oswalt, "משׁח," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2·1123–27; and K. Seybold, "מָשַׁח," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* ed G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids· Eerdmans, 1998), 43–54.

7 Other possible references to prophets as anointed ones include 1 Chronicles 16 22 and Psalm 105:15, but these are subject to debate.

used of a priest after Moses' day (confined to Lev. 4:3–5, 16; 6:15 [Heb., v. 22]).[8] Second, in the few cases where it was used of a high priest, it always occurred in the format הַכֹּהֵן הַמָּשִׁיחַ, "the anointed priest." Twice מָשִׁיחַ (in the plural) was used of the patriarchs as recipients of the Abrahamic Covenant (1 Chron. 16:22; Ps. 105:15). Only once was it ever used of a foreign king, namely, Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1.[9] In most cases the word was used of the king over the theocratic nation, primarily of Saul and David. It is not accurate to say (as some have claimed) that מָשִׁיחַ never referred to "the Messiah." Because of the promises given to David that one from his line would ultimately have an eternal throne and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12–16), high expectation was placed on the Davidic kings as God's "anointed" with the anticipation that in one of them these promises would find their ultimate fulfillment. For example in Psalm 132:17–18 God proclaimed, "There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth; I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed [למשיחי]. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon himself his crown shall shine." The clear reference to the Davidic Covenant in verse 11 supports this interpretation.

Some verses that refer to David may also find their ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah. A case in point is Psalm 2:2, "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed (משיחו)," which Acts 4:25–28 clearly indicates has been fulfilled in Jesus. Indeed He is the "anointed one" par excellence, being anointed by God the Father "with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). Oswalt adds, "Even during intertestamental times rabbis were already understanding the unqualified references in the Ps to find their ultimate significance in this eschatological figure. . . . Once the NT identified Jesus as the Anointed One, the Messiah, all the unqualified references to the 'anointed one' in the OT could be seen to have even more relevance."[10]

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[8] Although the noun form מָשִׁיחַ *as a title* was restricted to occurrences in the Pentateuch, the verb מָשַׁח was used of Zadok, anointed as priest in Solomon's day (1 Chron. 29:22), and the Pentateuch looks forward to anointing priests in generations after Aaron (Exod. 30:30–31; Lev. 16:32; Num. 35:25). Cf. the expression בְּנֵי־הַיִּצְהָר ("sons of [olive] oil") used of Zerubbabel and Joshua in the postexilic period (Zech. 4:14).

[9] Elsewhere the verb מָשַׁח was used of Hazael of Aram in 1 Kings 19:15. Elijah was to anoint Hazael as king, so that he might become a divine scourge on Israel. Yet he is not *titled* "My anointed."

[10] Oswalt, "משח," 2:1126. A case in point is Psalm 45:6–7 [Heb., vv. 7–8] ("God, Your God, has anointed You"), which the author of Hebrews said is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 1:8–9).

Still other verses include promises for the Davidic king that have their ultimate realization in David's greater Son (e.g., Pss. 18:50; 20:6). Also Isaiah anticipated the anointing of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 61:1, undoubtedly a messianic text. In light of the universal scope of the king's reign, Hannah's prayer finds its fulfillment in the Messiah. "The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed [מְשִׁיחוֹ]" (1 Sam. 2:10). Thus there is good evidence that the word "Messiah," as the ultimate Son of David, is within the semantic range of meaning for the Hebrew noun מָשִׁיחַ.

As already noted, this noun in Daniel 9:25–26 does not refer to a high priest because the designation מָשִׁיחַ for a high priest was not used beyond the Mosaic period, and whenever it was used it was always *clarified* by juxtaposition with the word "priest" in the articular expression הַכֹּהֵן הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

Some appeal to Isaiah 45:1 to support their contention that the Persian king Cyrus is the מָשִׁיחַ of Daniel 9:25. But this seems improbable because the term מָשִׁיחַ in Isaiah 45:1 is *clarified* by the juxtaposition of Cyrus's name with the term מָשִׁיחַ (לִמְשִׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ). This shows that this foreign king is described by God as His anointed one. However, such clarification is noticeably absent in Daniel 9:25.

In Daniel 9:25–26 מָשִׁיחַ is used in a unique way. Only here does מָשִׁיחַ occur without the article and without any qualifying noun or pronoun. The more formal designation for the king of Israel was "the Lord's anointed" or sometimes "My anointed" (1 Sam. 2:35), "Your anointed" (Ps. 132:10), or "His anointed" (1 Sam. 12:3). In Daniel 9:25, however, the one in view is designated מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד, an expression that occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. The expression is doubly unique. The noun נָגִיד, which occurs forty-three times in the Old Testament, has a wide semantic range. The word basically means "leader, ruler, prince," and is used most frequently for various kings of Israel (for Saul in 1 Sam. 9:16 and David in 2 Sam. 5:2). Several times נָגִיד is used of a priest (e.g., 1 Chron. 9:20), twice of foreign rulers (Ps. 76:12; Ezek. 28:2), once of nobles (Job 29:10, in the plural), and a few times of military commanders (1 Chron. 13:1) and tribal heads (27:16). Yet only rarely does the term occur in the prophets.[11] However, in Isaiah 55:4 the term נָגִיד is used in a prophetic reference to the Messiah. "Behold, I have made

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[11] In the prophets נָגִיד is found only in Isaiah 55:4; Jeremiah 20:1; Ezekiel 28:2; Daniel 9:25–26; and 11:22.

him a witness to the peoples, a leader [נָגִיד] and commander for the peoples." Hence both the term נָגִיד and מָשִׁיחַ are capable of referring to the Messiah, the promised Son of David.

The question, however, is how מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד should be understood in Daniel 9:25. Is there anything in the preceding context that would be a suitable reference to the Messiah? Of course Daniel 8 refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and by way of typology the Antichrist himself. And the "little horn" is referred to in Daniel 7. However, these are unsuitable candidates for מָשִׁיחַ, because in biblical literature a מָשִׁיחַ is always someone (as king or priest) who represents God or who acts as an agent to advance His covenant purposes. A suitable candidate in a previous chapter in Daniel makes perfect sense, namely, "One like a Son of Man" to whom is "given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him" (7:13–14).

Daniel 9 is also linked to chapter 7 by references in both chapters to a "week" and to the Antichrist. Daniel 9:27 speaks of an individual who makes a covenant with Israel for a week but breaks it in the middle of the week. Since a "week" (שָׁבוּעַ) is a period of seven years—as virtually all scholars maintain, whether conservative or critical, and regardless of their eschatological persuasion, though some would treat it symbolically—then half a week represents a period of three and a half years. This corresponds precisely to the "time, times, and half a time" in 7:25 (i.e., three and a half years) in which the "little horn" of 7:8 is allowed to exercise his evil rule.[12] This is not mere coincidence; the same figure (the Antichrist) is in view in both passages. This link, then, serves to support contextually the argument that the מָשִׁיחַ of 9:25 is the "Son of Man" of 7:13, namely, *the* Messiah.

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12 The word translated "time" (Aramaic, עִדָּן) can mean time in general or a definite period of time, depending on the context. In Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 it means a definite portion of a year. The word "times" in 7:25 is vocalized in the Masoretic text as a plural (עִדָּנִין), yet there is good reason to regard this as a *dual form* ("two times"). As Montgomery notes, "The word is pointed as a pl., but the Aram. later having lost the dual, the tendency of זז is to ignore it in BAram" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 312). Franz Rosenthal adds, "The dual is preserved only in remnants. . . . All other forms of the dual of the masc. noun, including those with pronominal suffixes, are identical with the pl. forms and not distinguishable from them" (*A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983], 24). This is confirmed by the fact that the word "eyes" (עֵינִין) in Daniel 7:8 seems to be in the plural, though it would naturally be understood as dual. (The word for "hands" in Aramaic is יְדִין). The best interpretation, then, of Daniel 7:25 is that the expression "time, times, and half a time" means a period of three and a half years.

THE *'AṬNĀḤ* PUNCTUATION MARKER IN VERSE 25

Although the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7:13–14 is the most logical referent for מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד in 9:25, McComiskey (following the argument commonly used by critical scholars) objects to this identification because of a punctuation marker known as an *'aṭnāḥ* in the Masoretic text. That mark (֑) is placed between the words "seven weeks" (שָׁבֻעִים שִׁבְעָה) and "sixty-two weeks" (וְשִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם). McComiskey says this means that the מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד appears after seven weeks (of years) from the issuing of the "decree [דָּבָר] to restore and rebuild Jerusalem," not after sixty-nine weeks (seven and sixty-two weeks). If McComiskey is correct, then the מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד in verse 25 cannot be the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Instead, he would be someone who appeared seven weeks (i.e., forty-nine years) following the decree—though McComiskey takes the seven weeks symbolically, not literally.[13] The NRSV reflects this understanding of the *'aṭnāḥ* in its translation. "Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time."

This translation, however, is not convincing. First, in their original form the Hebrew manuscripts did not have vowel points or accentuation markers. These were added by Jewish scribes known as Masoretes many centuries after the time of Jesus' crucifixion. The primary Hebrew manuscripts—the Aleppo Codex and Codex Leningradensis—are from the Ben Asher family of Masoretes of the tenth century A.D. Various systems of vowel pointing and accentuation were developed gradually, but this one goes back to about A.D. 600–700, and it was standardized by the Western Masoretes of Palestine in the ninth and tenth centuries.[14] Thus there

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[13] Several suggestions have been made as to which decree is referred to in Daniel 9:25. The more common suggestions are (a) the decree of Cyrus about 539–538 B.C. permitting the return from exile and rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1:1–4; 6:3–5); (b) the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra about 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:11–26); and (c) the authorization of Artaxerxes permitting Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. (Neh. 1–2). McComiskey rejects the idea that a royal decree is meant, choosing to take דָּבָר in 9:25 as a "prophetic word," namely, the prophecy of Jeremiah 29:10 ("The Seventy 'Weeks' of Daniel," 26). While McComiskey's suggestion is certainly possible (granting that דָּבָר is not a specific term for "decree"), דָּבָר can certainly be used of a king's *command* (e.g., 1 Chron. 21:4), thus making possible any of the first three suggestions. More recently Robert Chisholm has argued that דָּבָר in Daniel 9:25 refers to the prophetic decree in Jeremiah 30:18, a passage that he dates to 597–586 B.C. (*Handbook on the Prophets* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 315).

[14] The history of vowel pointing and accentuation is carefully explained by Ernst

is nothing inspired about the accentuation markers, and they are certainly subject to debate. The primary Greek version of Daniel (which was accepted by the early church fathers) was the text of Theodotion. Although there is some dispute as to the identity of Theodotion and when this text originated, the point is that this Greek text reflects no bifurcation of the verse between the two temporal references.[15] Beckwith highlights the significance of these early translations that preceded the imposition of Masoretic punctuation. "In the Septuagint, in Theodotion, in Symmachus and in the Peshitta the 7 and 62 weeks are treated as a single period, at the end of which the anointed one comes. The same is true even of Aquila's translation, though Aquila's rabbinical education was unimpeachable."[16] Even Jerome, who knew Hebrew and lived in Palestine in the latter part of the fourth century A.D. where he certainly would have known of the best manuscripts of that day, made no indication in his Latin Vulgate translation of separating the seven and sixty-two weeks. He translated מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד quite literally as *christum ducem* ("Christ, a leader").

Because of the heated verbal polemics between Christians and Jews over the centuries, some might even claim that Jewish scribes purposely inserted the *'aṯnāḥ* in verse 25 in order to refute the Christian claim that Jesus is the predicted Messiah. Yet this the-

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Würthwein, He writes, "It is not known when pointing originated. . . . Bruno Chiesa's study of indirect sources suggests a time between A.D. 650 and 750 as more probable, because the Babylonian Talmud which was completed about A.D. 600 makes no reference to pointing. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein also assumes a time around A.D. 700 as probable" (*The Text of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 21).

[15] Granted, not all scholars are persuaded by Theodotion's translation of Daniel 9:25 (some would see it as a *divergence* from the Hebrew text rather than a faithful rendition of it). Yet it should be admitted that Theodotion *may* be an accurate and unbiased translation, barring any evidence to the contrary. In any case Theodotion's translation was significant, as William Adler acknowledges. "The impact of this rendering on Christian exegesis was profound. It offered chronographers an additional 49 years to fill up the interim period between the 'going forth of the word' and Christ's advent. At the same time, it allowed interpreters to impose a single messianic interpretation on the χριστὸς ἡγούμενος of v 25 and the events of v 26. Neither the Vulgate, nor the Syriac text, nor the other Greek versions did much to dispel the impression. To the contrary, their renderings, even more than Theodotion, encouraged interpreters to assume that the 69 weeks formed a single block of time and that vv 25 and 26 referred to the same 'anointed one'" ("The Apocalyptic Survey of History Adapted by Christians: Daniel's Prophecy of 70 Weeks," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, ed. James C. VanderKam and William Adler [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 223).

[16] Roger T. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation," *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1979–1981): 522.

ory can neither be proved or disproved.[17] Beyond these points, however, some clarification is needed about the purpose and accuracy of the Masoretic use of the *'aṯnāḥ*. It is sometimes mistakenly assumed that the *'aṯnāḥ* served always as a disjunctive accent, marking a major break between clauses. Although it certainly had this use, that was not its only function. Genesis 1:1 contains an example of the nondisjunctive use of the *'aṯnāḥ*, where the punctuation marker is placed beneath אֱלֹהִים, thereby separating "In the beginning God created" from "the heavens and the earth." Here the *'aṯnāḥ* has more of an *emphatic* function, causing the reader to pause in thought after reading of Elohim the Creator God before reading what He created. In an excellent analysis of the Hebrew *'aṯnāḥ* Owusu-Antwi remarks, "It is a distinguishing feature that the Hebrew verse is divided into two parts termed 'dichotomy,' for the purposes of chanting. The *'aṯnāḥ* is generally employed to mark the caesura of the dichotomy. Although *'aṯnāḥ* is the principal divider within the verse, the accentuators did not hesitate to make strict rules for logical (or syntactical) division give way, when they wished to express *emphasis*, or otherwise give effect to the reading."[18]

Owusu-Antwi suggests several more ways in which the *'aṯnāḥ* is used. A second case is seen in Genesis 35:9, where the *'aṯnāḥ* indicates a pause other than a full disjunctive, where an English

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[17] Though no evidence exists that the Masoretes had any bias in inserting the *'aṯnāḥ*, some church fathers were aware of Jewish anti-Christian interpretations of Daniel 9. "Indeed, much of the commentary on Dan 9:24–27 is marked by its polemic anti-Jewish flavor. Jerome, on uncertain authority, goes so far as to suggest that the interpretation of Dan 9:26 by the Jews of his time was guided by anti-Christian animus. While allowing that the death of the 'anointed one' predicted in v 26 may have referred to Christ, the 'Hebrews,' he says, took the words וְאֵין לוֹ to mean that 'the kingdom of the Jews will not be his.' In opposing the manifest messianic meaning of Daniel 9, Eusebius states the Jews willfully misrepresented these verses by insisting that the events forecast in the prophecy had not yet been realized" (Adler, "The Apocalyptic Survey of History Adapted by Christians," 220–21).

Beckwith, on the other hand, does contend that the Masoretic punctuation in verse 25 may have had its early roots in reaction to Christian interpretations. "It seems likely, therefore, that between the Bar Kokba revolt (132–135 A.D.) and about the end of the second century, a disillusioned Judaism had reacted against the Messianic interpretation of the 70-weeks prophecy, and had devised the interpretation reflected in the Massoretic punctuation, with two anointed ones at different eras, the first being Joshua the son of Jozadak and the second either Ananus (as suggested by Josephus) or perhaps Phanni (high priest at the date when the Temple was overthrown" (Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming," 541).

[18] Brempong Owusu-Antwi, *The Chronology of Dan 9:24–27*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1995), 186 (italics his).

comma would be appropriate. A third case is the use of the *'aṯnāḥ* as a pause, somewhat like a colon or semicolon, as in Genesis 6:15. A fourth case is in 1 Kings 8:42, where the *'aṯnāḥ* has a parenthetical purpose. Owusu-Antwi then surveys the possible ways that the *'aṯnāḥ* was used with numbers. In Numbers 1:46, which has the number 603,550, an *'aṯnāḥ* occurs between six hundred and three thousand, and five hundred and fifty, as though to mark thousands from hundreds. There is certainly no full disjuncture in this case; rather the *'aṯnāḥ* aids in clarification.

In some cases the *'aṯnāḥ* has been wrongly placed. These have been identified by Wickes in his detailed analysis of Hebrew accentuation.[19] Even in Daniel 9:24 the *'aṯnāḥ* may be inappropriately placed. One might expect that the *'aṯnāḥ* would be placed after the first clause stating the time involved (i.e., after the words "your holy city"), or after the word "iniquity" (עָוֹן). The latter would divide the first three infinitives (each involving a word for sin) from the final three infinitives (each of which is positive in nature). Yet this is not the case. Instead the *'aṯnāḥ* is placed after the fourth infinitive ("to bring in everlasting righteousness").

In verse 25 the presence of the *'aṯnāḥ* between the "seven weeks" and "sixty-two weeks" should not be the governing factor for understanding this verse. As already noted, the *'aṯnāḥ* was not in the original Hebrew text, but was added by Jewish Masoretic scribes who lived centuries after the Crucifixion. Furthermore an *'aṯnāḥ* does not always indicate a full disjunctive accent but can have other functions (e.g., giving emphasis or clarification). Some may object that the verse should have said "sixty-nine" weeks rather than "seven and sixty-two" (if that was indeed the intended time until Messiah). However, there is good reason for expressing *two stages* of time. The final part of the verse specifically calls the reader's attention to the period of rebuilding, and this is likely what the "seven weeks" refers to. Besides, it is illogical to separate the sixty-two weeks from the seven weeks and have a separate sentence begin in verse 26, for this implies that the rebuilding efforts took sixty-two weeks of years (i.e., 434 years).[20]

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[19] William Wickes, *Two Treatises on the Accentuation of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1881; reprint, New York: KTAV, 1970), 74.

[20] McComiskey suggests that "sixty-two weeks" is the time Jerusalem "continues to exist" following the rebuilding ("The Seventy 'Weeks' of Daniel," 25). Yet the text makes no point about Jerusalem's continuation of existence; only its rebuilding is referred to.

Implications of the Purpose Statements in Daniel 9:24

Verse 24 cites six things God will accomplish in the seventy weeks. How these are interpreted affects one's decision about the messianic nature of this passage. These are expressed in the Hebrew text by a series of six infinitives expressing purpose. Most conservative evangelicals, whether premillennial or amillennial, see these purposes somehow connected to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Many dispensationalists argue that they will not be totally accomplished until the second coming of Christ. If these purposes of God are fulfilled in any way by Christ, then this would reinforce the messianic interpretation of the passage.

McComiskey says that מָשִׁיחַ in verses 25 and 26 refers to different individuals: the Persian king Cyrus in verse 25 and the Antichrist in verse 26.[21] This leads McComiskey to view all six purpose statements in verse 24 as eschatological and connected somehow with the activities of the Antichrist (or that culminate with the Antichrist). Although McComiskey does not explain all six purpose statements, he does explain the phrase "to atone for iniquity" as a case in point. He says this should not be understood messianically but rather in regard to the atonement of the land of Israel while the Jews were in the Babylonian exile. He attempts to support this by an appeal to Isaiah 27:8–9 where he argues that the word כָּפַר means "to expiate" or "to purge." He concludes, "The exile, in which Daniel was living, was understood by Isaiah to be a means of atoning for Israel's transgressions. Thus, the words 'to atone for iniquity' may be understood to present the long weeks of Jerusalem's desolations as a means by which the land was to be purged from the devastating effects it suffered because of Israel's sin."[22] Yet two factors suggest that the fulfillment of Isaiah 27:8–9 is best understood in light of Christ's second coming. First, the following verses (vv. 12–13) depict the regathering of Israel to inhabit Jerusalem in the millennium—they clearly go beyond the regathering from the Babylonian exile. Second, Paul quoted from Isaiah 27:9b in Romans 11:27b when he explained how God will ultimately fulfill His covenant promises with Israel as a nation when He takes away their sins. Romans 11:26 makes clear that this will happen when Christ returns.

Even if some of the six purposes for the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24) could be understood in a nonmessianic way, one stands out as

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21 McComiskey, "The Seventy 'Weeks' of Daniel," 28–30.

22 Ibid., 35.

clearly messianic—and one that, interestingly, McComiskey does not address. This is the fourth purpose statement, "to bring in everlasting righteousness." The words "everlasting righteousness" do not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. Of course the noun צדק ("righteousness") and its cognate forms occur scores of times.[23] Many of these pertain to a person having a standing of righteousness, or they evaluate whether the nation has pursued righteousness. Of interest, however, is the fact that this word is used numerous times in Isaiah. Many verses state that the Messiah will transform the nation in righteousness. After lamenting the nation's sinful state in Isaiah 1, the prophet Isaiah looked ahead to Jerusalem's eventual restoration: "After that you will be called the city of righteousness, a faithful city" (1:26). This is closely related to 2:1–4, which records the vision in which the prophet saw Jerusalem "in the last days" and the Lord being among them to "teach us concerning His ways." This glimpse of the nation's future under the Messiah is like a budding flower, which opens a bit more in the messianic passage of 11:1–10. Here is the promise that One will branch from the stem of Jesse (the Davidic King Messiah), and "with righteousness He will judge the poor" (v. 4), and "righteousness will be the belt about His loins" (v. 5). Another glimpse of Messiah's righteous rule is stated in Isaiah 16:5. "A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, and a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; moreover, he will seek justice and be prompt in righteousness" (cf. 32:1). The vision Isaiah had for Jerusalem's eschatological righteousness in the early chapters of his book comes into full bloom toward the end. "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will designate" (62:1–2).

When Daniel wrote that one of the purposes for the seventy weeks is "to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24), this would have been freighted with meaning for the Jews, for they were looking forward to what the Messiah, Son of David, would accomplish for Israel as a nation and for the world. His kingdom will be a kingdom characterized by righteousness under His righteous rule.[24] Understood in this way, the designation מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד ought

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[23] The masculine noun צדק occurs about 120 times in the Old Testament, and the feminine noun צְדָקָה occurs over 150 times.

[24] Kenneth L. Barker, "Premillennialism in the Book of Daniel," *Master's Seminary*

to be seen as messianic and not a reference to some other anointed ruler or priest. Obviously the seventy weeks cannot have been fulfilled in the Maccabean period when Antiochus terrorized the nation, because God did not then "bring in everlasting righteousness."

Should the Seventy Weeks Be Taken Literally or Symbolically?

Those who follow the Maccabean theory of a second-century B.C. fulfillment (as well as those who interpret the מָשִׁיחַ of Daniel 9:26 as the Antichrist) are forced to argue that the time period of seventy weeks should be understood symbolically. Ample research has been done on the Hebrew term "weeks" (שָׁבֻעִים) to establish that this means a *period of seven* and that in this context it implies a period of seven years.[25] Hence the seventy weeks represent a total of 490 years, and even most critical scholars acknowledge this.[26]

In seeking to build his case that these seventy sevens (490 years) should be understood symbolically McComiskey notes that in ancient Near Eastern literature the numbers seven and seventy had a symbolic significance.[27] "According to the view presented here the structure of Dan 9:24–27 is based on seventy *šābu'îm* which span the period of time from Jeremiah's prophecy to the An-

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Journal 4 (spring 1993): 37. For a different view of "bringing in everlasting righteousness" see J. Barton Payne, "The Goal of Daniel's Seventy Weeks; Interpretation by Context," *Presbyterion* 4 (spring 1978): 33–38. He argues that this is the righteousness for believers that is provided by the shedding of Christ's blood (Rom. 3:22, 25). However, Gabriel's message to Daniel concerns the lack of righteousness in the nation that had brought about God's punishment (see Dan. 9:7). This argues in favor of national righteousness being brought in by Messiah.

[25] For discussions of "weeks" as seven-year periods see John C. Whitcomb, "Daniel's Great Seventy-Weeks Prophecy: An Exegetical Insight," *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (fall 1981): 259–63; Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part VI: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (January–March 1975): 47–65; and Paul D. Feinberg, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27," in *Tradition and Testament*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 189–220.

For arguments that שָׁבֻעִים means literal "weeks" rather than "units of seven," see Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Hebrew Masculine Plural for Weeks in the Expression 'Seventy Weeks' in Daniel 9:24," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 31 (summer 1993): 105–18; and Frank W. Hardy, "The Hebrew Singular for 'Week' in the Expression 'One Week' in Daniel 9:27," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 32 (autumn 1994): 197–202. For Jewish calculations of Daniel 9:24–27 (both messianic and nonmessianic) that assumed שָׁבוּעַ means seven years see Roger T. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming," 522–31. In the Jewish Mishnah the term שָׁבוּעַ clearly means seven years (see Mishnah 4 [נזיקין], Makkot [מכות] 1:10).

[26] See, for example, Collins, *A Commentary in the Book of Daniel*, 352.

[27] McComiskey, "The Seventy 'Weeks' of Daniel," 35–44.

tichrist. There is no apparent interruption in the sequence. The numerical concepts of seven and seventy are understood to have a symbolic significance. That significance, we have learned, is the concept of totality or fullness."[28]

Yet those who argue for a symbolic understanding of the seventy weeks of years are overlooking the obvious. Daniel's prayerful confession and plea on behalf of the nation in Daniel 9 began with his reading Jeremiah 25:11–12 and 29:10 that the nation's exile in and servitude to Babylon would end after seventy years (not after 490 years) and the Babylonian king would be punished. Judah lost her independence in 609 B.C. when Pharaoh Neco II of Egypt killed King Josiah and Judah became a vassal state of Egypt, only to be made a vassal state of Babylon four years later. In 539 B.C.—seventy years later—Babylon was overthrown, and the prophecy of Jeremiah was literally fulfilled. Daniel hoped that Jerusalem's desolations would be complete with Babylon's downfall, but the Lord showed him that seventy *sevens of years* would still be needed for her desolations to be fulfilled. Since the latter was established on a foundation of seventy literal years, logically the extended period should be viewed as literal as well.

A second critical weakness of the symbolic view of the seventy weeks has to do with the Jewish interpretations of Daniel's seventy-weeks prophecy—some messianic and some nonmessianic—that preceded the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Beckwith has demonstrated that three types of chronological schemes were used in Jewish literature: (a) the Hellenistic scheme (which existed in two forms: one from the Old Greek Septuagint translation and a second from the Hellenistic Jewish historian Demetrius); (b) the Essene scheme embodied in the Book of Jubilees and other works from the mid-second century B.C.; and (c) the Pharisaic scheme, first attested in the *Assumption of Moses*.[29] Some of these Jewish chronological schemes were messianic (but not related to Jesus) and some nonmessianic, and yet they were *all* based on a computation of a literal 490 years stemming from Daniel's prophecy. Significantly these reckonings derive from the very period of time (the intertestamental period in which apocalyptic literature flourished)

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[28] Ibid., 41.

[29] Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming," 522–32. One of the factors contributing to the differences between the various Jewish interpretations is the fact that they used different dates for the time of the Babylonian exile. In fact, except for Demetrius they all tended to date the Exile later than historians do today, primarily because their records for the Persian period were inaccurate and too short.

when McComiskey has said symbolic figures were used in Jewish and non-Jewish literature. While apocalyptic literature did utilize symbolic figures at times, the evidence regarding Daniel 9:24–27 is strongly to the contrary. This is a particularly important point, since those advocating these various Jewish schemes relied primarily on the Hebrew text (predating the Christian era) and not the later Theodotionic Greek text. Furthermore in the early centuries following the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, two primary Jewish interpretations of this passage—that of Josephus and that of the second-century A D. Jewish chronological work, *Seder Olam Rabbah*—viewed the 490 years literally and viewed the terminus ad quem as in the events of A.D 70.[30]

Thus the מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד of Daniel 9:25 would be expected after seven and sixty-two "weeks," that is, 483 years from the time that the decree (דָּבָר) was made to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Since it can be easily demonstrated that such a period of time existed until the Lord Jesus Christ in His first advent, and since the Messiah, Son of David, is the most probable understanding of מָשִׁיחַ in this context, this interpretation best accounts for the many variables.[31] Another point to note is that the מָשִׁיחַ in verse 26 is the same figure as the מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד in verse 25. These are the only two anarthrous constructions of מָשִׁיחַ in the Old Testament, and the difference between

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[30] See ibid , 533–37, and Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 240–46. Beckwith presents the case that Josephus interpreted the "anointed one" (who was cut off, Dan. 9:26) as the high priest Ananus, who was murdered by the Idumaeans in the temple in A D 66 ("Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming," 535–36). An alternative Jewish view was to see the terminus ad quem of the 490 years in the Bar Kokba revolt of the second century A D , based on a reckoning of Daniel's prophecy from the end of the Exile rather than its beginning. Based on this outlook, the Messiah could be expected between 133 and 140, the very time when Bar Kokba (regarded by his followers as "Son of a Star," i.e., the Messiah, based on Num 24·17–19) inspired the third and final Jewish rebellion

[31] Those who take the messianic view of this prophecy and who understand the time reckoning literally do not all hold to the same method of calculation. Gleason Archer and Stephen Miller believe that the sixty-nine sevens extended from the decree of Artaxerxes with Ezra about 457 B C to the commencement of Christ's public ministry in A D 26/27, based on solar year calculations (Gleason Archer, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* vol 7 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985], 114–16; Stephen Miller, *Daniel,* New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 263–65). But Harold Hoehner and Paul Feinberg believe that the sixty-nine sevens extend from the decree of Artaxerxes with Nehemiah in 444 B C to the passion week of Christ in A D 33, based on prophetic or lunar years of 360 days. With either view the effect is the same. the calculations are literally true of Christ (Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ; Part VI· Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," 47–65; and Feinberg, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27," 189–220).

them can be easily explained by noting that once the author introduced him as מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד in verse 25, he simply needed to refer to him by the more abbreviated designation מָשִׁיחַ in the following verse. With such close proximity of the references one would not expect two different individuals to be referred to. As Feinberg has ably demonstrated, the Hebrew term for "cut off" (כָּרַת) in verse 26 is an appropriate reference to Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. "The 'cutting off' of Messiah indicates a violent death. The Hebrew word is used of making a covenant, involving the death of a sacrificial animal (Gen 15:10, 18). The word is used of the death penalty (Lev 7:20) and always of an unnatural violent death (cf. Isa 53:8)."[32] McComiskey, however, argues that the second מָשִׁיחַ in verse 26 cannot refer to Jesus Christ, because, he says, the words "and have nothing" would be contrary to what had been predicted in 7:13–14 that the Son of Man will receive universal dominion. Yet this objection is not convincing. The implication of the words "and have nothing" is that following Christ's death (after the first sixty-nine weeks) He did not receive the full realization of these promises at that time. These promises regarding His kingdom await His second coming (Luke 21:27–31).

CONCLUSION

The seventy-weeks prophecy in Daniel 9:24–27 is one of the most significant messianic passages in all the Old Testament. A survey of interpretations for this passage by early church fathers reveals that this passage was overwhelmingly understood as a messianic passage. This has also been the traditional view of biblical commentators throughout the centuries. While one is not surprised that critical scholars in more recent centuries have rejected the messianic view (dating Daniel late and interpreting it in light of the Maccabean period), it is surprising to find some notable evangelical scholars rejecting the messianic view.

However, the historic view of the church rests on solid exegetical ground from which one need not retreat. The מָשִׁיחַ in verses 25 and 26 is best understood as referring to the eschatological Messiah, the greater Son of David. If Cyrus or some high priest were in view, the verses would no doubt have been phrased differently. Furthermore the link of this passage with Daniel 7:13–14 and the Son of Man suggests that this promised Ruler is undoubtedly in view. This is further confirmed by the goals set forth in 9:24, espe-

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32 Feinberg, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27," 202.

cially that of bringing in "everlasting righteousness." In the Old Testament prophets this is the expected accomplishment of the Messiah as part of His kingdom blessings, as repeatedly seen in Isaiah.

Those who object to the messianic interpretation have argued that the position of the Hebrew punctuation marker *'aṯnāḥ* between the numbers in verse 25 demands that the "anointed one" of that verse must come after only seven "weeks" of years following the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, not after sixty-nine "weeks." Yet a closer examination of the Hebrew *'aṯnāḥ* indicates that this need not be the case, because the *'aṯnāḥ* can be used in ways other than indicating a full disjunction. Furthermore the late addition of this punctuation marker (long after the first century A.D.) calls into question how reliable this marker is, since it was not part of the original text and therefore was not inspired.

Some reject the messianic view by viewing the numbers symbolically, since the numbers seven and seventy were sometimes spiritualized in apocalyptic literature. However, Daniel's prayer in 9:4–19 was based on his expectation of exile for a literal seventy years. The divine response to his prayer was that an *extended* period of God's chastening on the nation would transpire not in seventy years, but in seventy times seven years. If the first period of the Exile was literal, one should expect the extended chastisement to be literal also. Even early Jewish views of Daniel, both before and after A.D. 70, followed a literal understanding of the years involved.

Daniel 9:24–27 is a glorious messianic revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, announcing among other things the time of His coming and His death before the cataclysmic events of A.D. 70. The passage remains a bedrock of prophetic revelation.