

INTERPRETING THE VISION:
An Exegetical Study of Daniel 9:24

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Outline

Outline.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Exegetical Methods.....	2
Exposition.....	10
Conclusion.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	23
Appendix I.....	25
Appendix II.....	26

Introduction

Commenting on Dan 9:24, Calvin wrote, “this passage has been variously treated, and so distracted, and almost torn to pieces by the various opinions of interpreters, that it might be considered nearly useless on account of its obscurity.”¹ In order to try to understand this verse I propose to investigate the text through a consideration of historical fulfillment versus future fulfillment of the predictions it contains. I will argue that by giving priority to exegesis of the text of Dan 9:24, the “seventy weeks” prophecy contained in the passage Dan 9:24-27 as a whole strongly suggests a complete fulfillment of this prophecy in the events of the atonement of Jesus Christ in the 1st century A.D. I will not seek to unravel the mysteries of verses 25-27 in this text, but will content myself in this paper to come to some conclusions based on verse 24 as the programmatic introduction to the larger passage.

Should efforts to interpret Daniel 9:24 begin with the chronology of the “seventy sevens”, and thus seek to identify the anointed one and events to be accomplished through the lens of apparent fulfillment, or should such efforts begin with exegesis of the text itself prior to consideration of historical fulfillment? I will sample recent scholarship representing both general approaches and draw some conclusions regarding preferred starting points for understanding this prophecy.

Exegetical Methods

David H. Lurie, in his article for *Journal of the Evangelical Society* called “A New Interpretation of Daniel’s ‘Sevens’ and the Chronology of the Seventy ‘Sevens’”, offers a novel argument that the difficulty in applying the “seventy sevens” to any

¹ John Calvin, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Trans. by the Calvin Translation Society; 1852 Edition (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 195.

specific historical fulfillment can be resolved by redefining the “sevens” themselves. Based on the theory that the word, “שְׁבַעִים” is a participial form meaning “something that is ‘sevened’ or ‘besevened’,”² he suggests that the periods to which the number “seventy” is applied can be treated distinctly as “seven sevens” and “sixty-two sevens” (Dan 9:25). He argues that there is no *prima facie* reason to treat the predicted period as a contiguous “sixty-nine ‘sevens’”³ because they are actually separated by the text of verse 25 as “seven sevens and sixty-two sevens”. And because they are not necessarily contiguous, they can be interpreted at face-value as consecutive but distinct periods that are each in some way multiples “of seven years.”⁴

Lurie concludes that in verse 25, “seven sevens” refers to a period of 98 years (7 x 14) and, “sixty-two sevens” refers to a period of 434 years (62 x 7), totalling 532 years—exactly the elapsed period between Cyrus’ decree in 538 B.C. and the estimated birth of Christ in 6 B.C.⁵ This has the advantage of dating the *terminus a quo* of the “seventy sevens” from the decree of Cyrus, who is the subject of considerable witness in Scripture as the one provided by God for the liberating of the people of Judah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Isaiah 45:1, 13 and elsewhere. This possibility is very attractive not only on the basis of Isaiah’s prophecy, but also for the reason that the decree of Cyrus very likely was issued within one year after Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:1-19, and his receipt of the vision concerning the “seventy sevens”.⁶

² David H. Lurie, “A New Interpretation of Daniel’s ‘Sevens’ and the Chronology of the Seventy ‘Sevens,’” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 33, No. 3 (September, 1990), 306.

³ *Ibid.*, 308

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 307

Furthermore, and related specifically to the concern in this paper with the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9:24, this reinterpretation offered by Lurie provides a basis for understanding the whole period of “seventy sevens” to be fulfilled in the first century A.D.:

If the seventieth “seven” began at the birth of Christ in 6 B.C. and was fulfilled in the events of NT history when Christ “confirmed a covenant” with the Church in fulfillment of the prophecy of Dan 9:27, one obvious possibility is that the seventieth “seven” lasted seventy years and ended in A.D. 65, one year before the start of the Jewish war against Rome. The midpoint of such a seventy-year “seven” is A.D. 30, the commonly-accepted date for the crucifixion, which according to [schools of interpretation that assume a first century fulfillment] corresponds to the cessation of “sacrifice and offering” in fulfillment of Dan 9:27.⁷

Evangelical interpreters may find Lurie’s thesis to be an attractive option. He has provided a way to maintain the integrity of the prophecy while applying the issuing of the decree mentioned in Dan 9:25 to that of Cyrus, an option that seems to be favoured on biblical grounds. Certainly this option is attractive, but at what cost? There does appear to be some merit to Lurie’s argument, but if each “seven” can be understood to be any multiple of seven then with some juggling the prophecy could be made to fit nearly any historical situation. In fact, the seventieth “seven” could just as arbitrarily be applied to the entire period that has elapsed since the birth of Christ, suggesting a fulfillment in this current year of 2004.⁸ Such an arbitrary hermeneutic is suspect for the simple fact that the prophecy contains a specific period identified with specific numbers by which time six specific things were to be accomplished. If the period can be understood as virtually any period that consists of multiples of seven, then why did Gabriel not say more simply that “God has determined that in His time your people and your holy city are to...”, etc.?

⁷ Ibid., 309.

⁸ Instead of a “seven” consisting of 7 10-year periods, why not a “seven” consisting of 7 287-year periods? The result would be a seventieth week that stretches from 6 B.C. to 2004 A.D.

Lurie's case that the word, "שָׁבָעִים" is unique in Scripture and thus must mean something other than "Sabbaths of years"⁹ is, nonetheless, a critical observation. Future serious attempts to make sense of this prophecy in Dan 9:24 should take the ambiguity of the word, "שָׁבָעִים" into consideration, but do not need to go through the same hermeneutical gymnastics advocated by Lurie.

Rather than beginning with apparent historical fulfillment and interpreting the chronology of the prophecy in Dan 9:24 in such a way that confirms the interpreter's presuppositions, it seems wiser to begin with considerations internal to the text itself. In hopes of finding some clarity with which to move forward to a possible understanding of the prophecy, a key point raised by Tim Meadowcroft in an article for *Journal of Biblical Literature* may serve as a better starting place. Meadowcroft observes that insight might be gained by taking into consideration the semantic link between the "identity of the מְשִׁיחַ of vv. 25 and 26" and the "anointed in v. 24."¹⁰ I agree with him that "this link ought not to be ignored,"¹¹ since the word "מְשִׁיחַ"¹² in vv. 25 and 26 is derived from the verb, "מָשַׁח",¹³ the root of the construction, "וַיִּמְשַׁח", "...and to anoint" in Dan 9:24. The implication is that the "מְשִׁיחַ" of vv. 25 and 26 is the same thing or person as the

⁹ Ibid., 305.

¹⁰ Tim Meadowcroft, "Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9:24-27," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 120, No. 3 (2001), 429.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Francis Brown, et al, Hebrew-Aramaic and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Electronic Edition (IBT and Scribe, 2001) #5738.

¹³ Brown, #5735.

“קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים” of verse 24: “...the most natural understanding of the anointed one in vv. 25 and 26 is as that which is anointed in v. 24, namely, the קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים.”¹⁴

Meadowcroft goes on to argue for a non-individual, communal understanding of the holy of holies.¹⁵ But his foundational argument is contingent on the assumption that Daniel 9 was written in a 2nd century B.C. context.¹⁶ Working from this assumption he sees a correlation between 2nd century B.C. extra-biblical usage of the term “קֹדֶשׁ” and that found in Dan 9:24, “קֹדֶשׁ”. He writes, “It is... not surprising that the semantic field of the nominal form of קֹדֶשׁ has expanded in the direction indicated by the usage in the *Community Rule*”¹⁷, a document belonging to the 2nd century Qumran literature. Indeed, such a conclusion is not surprising when one’s presupposition places the origins of the “prophecy” in the same century as the evidence for the presupposed “expansion” of the semantic categories.

An orthodox dating of Daniel 9, such as that proposed by Lurie,¹⁸ might threaten Meadowcroft’s conclusion. Meadowcroft notes a wide range of histories of interpretation in his footnote #8 on page 431. Orthodox writers in this list include conservative writers like Young and Ford, and from the era of the Reformation, Calvin and Luther. Even the “so-called parenthesis interpretation”¹⁹ representing popular dispensationalism rejects such a late date of Daniel seeing real historical fulfillment of the prophetic period

¹⁴ Meadowcroft, 429-430

¹⁵ Meadowcroft, 439

¹⁶ Ibid., 430

¹⁷ Ibid., 439

¹⁸ Lurie, 307

¹⁹ Meadowcroft, 432

culminating in the first advent of Christ.²⁰ It is beyond the scope of this paper to defend the traditional date for the entire book of Daniel. Suffice it to say that objections to the traditional date, “may be divided into two classes--those who deny prediction in general, and those who claim that the apocalyptic character of the predictions of Daniel is a sufficient proof of their lack of genuineness.”²¹ Meadowcroft would appear to fall into this second class of critics.²²

The question might be asked whether Dan 9 is characteristic of 2nd century B.C. apocalyptic literature, or 2nd century apocalyptic literature is heavily influenced by 6th century inspired prophecy in Daniel? R. Dick Wilson, writing in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, is on point here:

There must have been a beginning, a first apocalypse, at some time, if ever. Besides, if we admit that the earliest parts of the Book of Enoch and of the Sibylline Oracles were written about the middle of the 2nd century BC, whereas the Book of Esdras was written about 300 AD, 450 years later, we can see no good literary reason why Daniel may not have antedated Enoch by 350 years. The period between 500 BC and 150 BC is so almost entirely devoid of all known Hebrew literary productions as to render it exceedingly precarious for anyone to express an opinion as to what works may have characterized that long space of time.²³

So for Meadowcroft to interpret the text of Dan 9:24 in light of usage characteristic of the 2nd Temple Period²⁴ is, given conservative dating for the origin of the prophecy, anachronistic.

Despite his overly liberal prejudices and anachronisms, Meadowcroft does bring attention to bear on an important consideration for the study of Dan 9:24. The seventy

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ R. Dick Wilson, “Daniel, Book of,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, New Ed. Stanley Morris, 1997; Gen. Ed., James Orr., et al. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939).

²² C.f., Meadowcroft, 430, 433-34, 435-36, 440, 445, esp. 447, 448.

²³ Wilson.

²⁴ Meadowcroft, 443

“sevens” must be interpreted finally in the light of the identification of the **קִדְּשׁ קִדְּשִׁים**.

Whoever or whatever is signified by this title is most likely to be equated in some way

with the **קִדְּשִׁי** of Dan 9:25 and 26:

As well as the interest... in an individual identity for the anointed one, most current approaches, whether historical or messianic, have in common that they approach the issue through the lens of the seventy “sevens”. A feature of my argument is a different point of entry into these verses, through the identity of the anointed one.²⁵

He freely admits, however, in a footnote that, “Observation of that link is not new, but the argument that the link can be observed without an individual messianic interpretation is largely unexplored.”²⁶ But unless one shares the presuppositions of one of those “two classes”²⁷ of scholars who disbelieve predictive prophecy outright, or who see in Daniel influence from 2nd century apocalyptic literature, attempts to understand this prophecy in Dan 9:24 without reference to an individual Messiah are pointless.

Sir Isaac Newton, in his *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*, observed this same link and approached this passage from an exegetical starting point. He summarizes:

Here, by putting a week for seven years, are reckoned 490 years from the time that the dispersed *Jews* should be re-incorporated into a people and a holy city, until the death and resurrection of *Christ*; whereby *transgression should be finished, and sins ended, iniquity be expiated, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and this Vision be accomplished, and the Prophet consummated*, that Prophet whom the *Jews* expected; and whereby *the most Holy* should be *anointed*, he who is therefore in the next words called the *Anointed*, that is, the *Messiah*, or the *Christ*. For by joining the accomplishment of the vision with the expiation of sins, the 490 years are ended with the death of *Christ*.²⁸

²⁵ Meadowcroft, 432.

²⁶ Ibid., 430, fn 5.

²⁷ Wilson.

²⁸ Isaac Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*, 1733 (Cave Junction, OR: The Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, 1991), 130.

Although J. J. Collins himself denies the authenticity of the book of Daniel, even sharing what he calls, “the consensus of modern critical scholarship,”²⁹ in denying that this prophet, Daniel, ever existed,³⁰ he too, like Meadowcroft above,³¹ admits that there exists a long history of conservative scholarship on Dan 9:24:

A long-lived tradition sees an allusion to the messiah here. The Greek *ἅγιον ἄγιων* is indeterminate. The Latin renders with masculine, *sanctus sanctorum*. Hippolytus affirms that the Holy of Holies (*ἅγιος δὲ ἄγιων*) is none other than the Son of God. The Peshitta reads a noun, מְשִׁיחַ, instead of the verb, מְשַׁח, thus “the messiah, the Holy of Holies.” Messianic interpretation was for long the central issue in the interpretation of Dan 9:24-27 but is now abandoned by all but the most conservative interpreters.³²

I can see no reason, aside from presuppositions denying divine predictions in prophecy or the authenticity of the book of Daniel, to abandon the consensus of this “long-lived tradition” or that of “conservative interpreters” that Daniel is an authentic work penned in the 6th century B.C. containing authentic divinely communicated predictions. However, having surveyed some of the critical liberal and conservative scholarship on this passage, I am also convinced that the key to understanding this prophecy is to be found in the identification of the מְשִׁיחַ of verses 25 and 26 with the קְדָשׁ קְדָשִׁים of verse 24. It remains to be seen whether the six things to be accomplished within seventy “sevens”, listed as a string of infinitives in Dan 9:24, are completely fulfilled at this time or await further fulfillment in the future.

²⁹ John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Ed. Frank Moore Cross; Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 1.

³⁰ Collins, 1.

³¹ Meadowcroft, 431-432.

³² Collins, 354.

Exposition

Turning, then, to the text of Dan 9:24, I will examine the biblical usage of קָדְשִׁים in order to isolate the range of possible applications in this verse. Following this examination, I will consider the infinitival construction וְלִמְשַׁח in relation to the occurrences of מְשִׁיחַ in verses 25 and 26, and the biblical usage of this word in order to further narrow the possibilities of meanings behind this part of the prophecy in Dan 9:24. Finally, I will apply the results of this study to the first five infinitives of Dan 9:24 and the syntax of the entire verse in an effort to determine how much of this prophecy can be understood to be already fulfilled within the specified time of “seventy sevens.”

קָדְשׁ קָדְשִׁים occurs 23 times in the biblical text: five times in Exodus, 12 times in Leviticus, once in Numbers, once in 1 Chronicles, three times in Ezekiel and once in Dan 9:24.³³ Throughout the 23 occurrences of these words, there are, not including the one in Dan 9:24, 13 distinct applications to,

1. the Altar of Burnt-offering, Ex 29:37, Ex 40:10;
2. the Altar of Incense, Ex 30:10;
3. the Tabernacle and all its contents, Ex 30:29;
4. the Incense itself, Ex 30:36;
5. the Grain offering, Lev 2:3, 10; 6:17; 10:12;
6. the Sin offering, Lev 6:17, 25, 29; 10:17;
7. the Guilt offering, Lev 6:17; 7:1, 6; 14:13;
8. the Show bread, Lev 24:9;
9. Freewill offerings, Lev 27:28;
10. Burnt offerings in general, Num 18:9;
11. Aaron and his descendants, 1 Ch 13:13;
12. The Temple of Ezekiel's vision and the entire top of the mountain, Eze 43:12;
13. The areas designated from the allotment of the land for the Temple and for the

³³ All such statistics were obtained by performing a “string search” within the text of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* BHS (Hebrew Bible, Masoretic Text or Hebrew Old Testament), edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph of the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, Fourth Corrected Edition, Copyright © 1966, 1977, 1983, 1990 by the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (German Bible Society), Stuttgart; using the software BibleWorks 6.0.008, Copyright © 2003 BibleWorks,LLC. See Appendix II for graphed statistics.

faithful Priests, Eze 45:3; 48:12.

All of the uses of קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים refer to one part or another of the system of ritual sacrifice instituted under the leadership of Moses.

Before proceeding, some might argue that this word should retain the sense of a place, being identified by its contents or function. All of the views entertained in Walvoord's dispensational work, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* are limited to an understanding of this קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים as the Holy of Holies in the Temple, past or future, or the altar.³⁴ The only exception he mentions is the interpretation of Edward J. Young, who argues that it refers to Christ Jesus himself.³⁵ It should be noted that if Gabriel had in mind the Holy of Holies of the inner sanctuary of the Temple, it would be more consistent with the Canonical witness to use the construction קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדָשִׁים, distinguished from the form in Dan 9:24 by the use of the article on the plural absolute form, "the holies". At this point, my goal is not to argue my conclusion, but merely to point out that the referent could be a place (since it is applied to the Tabernacle, Temple, and top of the Temple mountain), a person (since it is applied to Aaron and his descendants), or a thing (since it is applied to the altars, utensils and offerings). Whatever the actual truth of the matter, it must be related in some sense directly to the Old Testament system of sacrifices as its biblical usage necessitates.

³⁴ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 223.

³⁵ Ibid.; Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), 201.

Walvoord correctly points out that verse 24 is the major prophecy encapsulating the following verses 25-27: “The prophecy as a whole is presented in verse 24.”³⁶ On at least this point I am in full agreement with him. This is one of the reasons to begin with the relationship between **וְלִמְשַׁח** (“and to anoint”) and **מְשִׁיחַ** (“messiah”) as a starting point for the interpretation of verse 24. If the following three verses expand on what is introduced in verse 24, then the precise place to begin must be with the clearest connections between the introduction and the body of the prophecy. Three options present themselves in the text of 9:24-27:

1. **וְהַקִּדְשׁ** (“your *holy city*”)³⁷ in verse 24 is semantically related to **וְהַקִּדְשׁ** (“and the *sanctuary*”) in verse 26;
2. **לְכַלֵּא** (“to *finish*”)³⁸ in verse 24 is semantically related to **כָּלָה** (“complete destruction”)³⁹ in verse 27;
3. **וְלִמְשַׁח** (“and to *anoint*”)⁴⁰ in verse 24 is semantically related to **מְשִׁיחַ** (“messiah”)⁴¹ in verses 25 and 26.

The third option is to be preferred as a starting point for interpretation of the passage for two reasons, 1) it is twice attested in the passage 9:24-27, and 2) it is more narrowly defined in its biblical usage than either of the other two options. However, any adequate exegesis of verse 24 will certainly give serious consideration to the links identified in options one and two as well.

³⁶ Walvoord, 216.

³⁷ Brown, 8438.

³⁸ Brown, 4465.

³⁹ Brown, 4466.

⁴⁰ Brown, 5735.

⁴¹ Brown, 5738.

If one were to pick up a daily newspaper and read in a political commentary that, “One day it will come time to elect a certain Democrat,” and then in the next sentence read the prediction that, “...the man who will be elected is John Kerry,” only one natural conclusion would be allowed by the text: that the “certain Democrat” to be elected in the opinion of the writer is none other than John Kerry. This is the very situation before the reader of Dan 9:24-27. The text of verse 24 marks off “seventy sevens” to accomplish a number of things, including, “to anoint the most holy”. The text of verse 25 follows with new information that there will be “seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” until an “anointed prince”.⁴² The natural conclusion is that the “most holy” who is to be anointed is none other than the “prince” of verse 25.

Additional information is provided to aid in the identification of “the most holy anointed prince” in verse 26: “...after the sixty-two weeks [the] anointed one will be cut off”. From this brief analysis the following preliminary conclusion is possible: The strong indication of the text suggests that the identity of the “most holy” to be anointed, according to verse 24, can be more completely described as “a most holy anointed prince who is cut off after a total of sixty-nine weeks.” Certainly other conclusions are possible, but they should only be considered on the basis of further weighty evidence without consideration to pre-conceived theories of fulfillment.

The biblical usage of the verb **מָשַׁח** and its nominal form **מָשִׁיחַ** are consistent with a personal, individual referent and more to the point the usage of the words as attested in the Hebrew canon refer the title “anointed” back to an event of anointing the individual as ruler of Israel. In 1 Sa 10:1, Saul is anointed ruler by Samuel and in 1 Sa

⁴² Brown, 5738.

24:7, 11;26:16; 2 Sa 1:14, 16, Saul is thus called, "anointed". In 1 Sa 16:13 David is anointed by Samuel with oil and also by the Holy Spirit and in 2 Sa 19:22; 23:1, David is thus called, "anointed". In Lam 4:20, Zedekiah, the last king of David's line is called, "anointed". All of these, plus the two occurrences in Dan 9:24 and 25, are the only places in Scripture where this bare form מְשִׁיחַ ("anointed") is attested.⁴³

It is safe to say that a person called "anointed" in Scripture can be understood to be one who has been the object of an anointing action. Saul was anointed and thenceforth called "anointed"; David likewise was anointed and called "anointed." It is well within normal Hebrew usage, then, to see a natural link between the construction וְלִמְשִׁיחַ in Dan 9:24 and the subsequent word מְשִׁיחַ. Indeed, the nominal form almost causes the eye of the reader to scan up the page in search of an antecedent action of anointing. If Walvoord's own argument, regarding the antecedent of "he" in Dan 9:27,⁴⁴ can be made to apply here then it would require very substantial textual evidence to divorce the verbal form from the nominal form. Using his words, "if the normal rule be followed that the antecedent is the nearest preceding possibility, it would go back..."⁴⁵ to the "most holy" who is anointed in verse 24.

In support of this reading are the interpretations of Young,⁴⁶ Philip Mauro,⁴⁷ Calvin,⁴⁸ Newton,⁴⁹ J. E. H. Thompson,⁵⁰ John Gill,⁵¹ and H. Grattan Guinness,⁵² among

43 There are, however, 27 other occurrences of the word with pre-fixed prepositions, pro-nominal suffixes, articles and the like. Nonetheless, it seems prudent to limit the analysis of word usage to simple forms actually occurring in this passage. Hence, my argument in this paper will not strain points of grammar but rather seek Scriptural usage as support instead of toward conclusive negative arguments.

⁴⁴ Walvoord, 233.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Young, 201.

⁴⁷ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, (The Online Bible Millennium Edition, Version 1.20, Timnathserah Inc. 2002), "Chapter 3".

others. Against this reading scholars may be divided into one of two groups: liberal commentators including Collins,⁵³ Goldingay,⁵⁴ and Meadowcroft,⁵⁵ and dispensationalist writers including Hoehner,⁵⁶ and Walvoord.⁵⁷ In my discussion above concerning 2nd century apocalyptic and the potential influence of that genre upon the writing of the book of Daniel, it was noted that the biases of scholars who reject the authenticity of Daniel disqualify them from any significant contribution to the understanding of this prophecy regarding actual historical fulfillment whatsoever, since they reject the possibility of real prophecy or the authenticity of prophecy in Dan 9. The dispensational writers who disagree with a personal and individual Messianic fulfillment to the “most holy” do so on grounds altogether different from the liberal critics.

I have already argued in this paper that to approach this prophecy in such a way that interpretation of this verse becomes skewed to fit with the reader’s pre-conceived notions of fulfillment is completely inadequate. On the anointing of the “most holy” in v. 24, Walvoord does not actually offer an interpretation of his own, but rather lists a variety of interpretations by other authors. “There is really no ground for dogmatism here as

⁴⁸ Calvin, 203, 205, 209, 212, (esp.) 218 and 221.

⁴⁹ Newton, 130.

⁵⁰ J. E. H. Thompson, “Daniel” in the *Pulpit Commentary Series*, Eds., H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell; vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1950), 266-273.

⁵¹ John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, 9 vols., Revised Electronic Edition by Larry Pierce, 1995 (London: Matthews and Leigh, 1809), “Dan 9:24, 25, 26”.

⁵² H. Grattan Guinness, *Light for the Last Days*, New Edition by E. P. Cachemaille (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1917), 66-67.

⁵³ Collins, 354.

⁵⁴ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary 30, Gen. Eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; OT Ed., John D.W. Watts (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 260-261.

⁵⁵ Meadowcroft, 439.

⁵⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, “Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 132 (Ja-Mr, 1975): 64-65. The argument that the Messianic program awaits fulfillment implies a non-individual interpretation of the “most holy” in Dan 9:24.

⁵⁷ Walvoord, 223. Lurie does not state his interpretation of the “most holy” but rather argues for chronology to Christ dating from the earlier decree of Cyrus. However, in his conclusion he nods in the direction of a christological fulfillment of Dan 9:24-27 within the 1st century A.D. (309).

there is a possibility that any of these views might be correct.”⁵⁸ Indeed, without giving space to any discussion of the variety of possibilities suggested by the text itself, Walvoord allows his dogmatic opinion of chronological fulfillment to control his interpretation of the whole passage. He admitted, as noted earlier, that “the prophecy as a whole is presented in verse 24.”⁵⁹ It is extremely odd exegesis then to insist on interpreting the shorter, programmatic presentation of the whole passage in light of the much less certain details of the subsequent verses. His approach deserves sharp criticism for starting with his conclusion and commenting on the verses arbitrarily as they affect that conclusion.⁶⁰

Walvoord repeatedly asserts that only an exact, literal fulfillment can be offered as an acceptable interpretation of this passage: “[Young’s interpretation] makes impossible any exact fulfillment”;⁶¹ “In a word [christological interpretations do] not provide any normal or literal interpretation of the text and its chronology”;⁶² “...only futuristic interpretation allows any literal fulfillment.”⁶³ In this he is not alone. Harold W. Hoehner, in his article for *Bibliotheca Sacra* titled, “Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ—Part VI: Daniel’s Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology”, he follows the same eisegetical approach as Walvoord. He also criticizes Young for not indicating an exact “terminus ad quem of the seventieth week”,⁶⁴ and thus rejects Young’s thesis. He

⁵⁸ Walvoord, 223.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 216.

⁶⁰ See Walvoord, 221, 222, 223; he repeatedly offers an interpretation of aspects of verse 24 and then comments on how it should be understood in relation to a dogmatic theory of eschatological fulfillment concerning the nation of Israel. On the sixth element, the anointing of the “most holy”, he avoids any positive analysis whatsoever and instead sifts a variety of other interpretations through his theory of the Consummation (223).

⁶¹ Walvoord, 227.

⁶² Ibid., 230.

⁶³ Ibid., 231.

⁶⁴ Hoehner, 54.

adds, "...it seems that this system makes havoc of Gabriel's sayings, which were rather specific."⁶⁵ And this point leads to the heart of the matter for this paper.

These dispensational scholars insist that the whole passage, Dan 9:24-27, must be interpreted according to an exact fulfillment of the end of the "seventieth week", as show in the preceding paragraph. For their interpretations, the historical fulfillment of the end of the "sixty-ninth week" is a paramount consideration. Hoehner concludes that the "sixty-ninth week" terminates in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem⁶⁶ but that the "seventieth week" must be separated from the sixty-ninth by an indefinite period.⁶⁷ There is not space in this paper to refute the dispensational interpretation of Dan 9:24. Instead, this paper is concerned with whether exegesis of verse 24 can be applied to fulfillment in the atonement of Christ Jesus without doing violence to the possibilities of meaning in verse 24 itself.

So the question must be asked if any one of the six infinitives of verse 24 can be said with certainty not to refer to Christ and His atonement? This is because the programmatic announcement by Gabriel introduces this entire prophecy, in Dan 9:24-27, with the claim that six specific things would be accomplished within "seventy sevens". If all six things can be naturally understood to be fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus then it would argue for a reinterpretation of Dan 9:25-27 in the light of a complete historical fulfillment in the person of Christ Jesus.

On page 59 of Hoehner's essay, he writes, "...the "most holy" (קדוש קדשים) are technical words that are always translated in the Old Testament as the "holy of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 61.

holies.”⁶⁸ As I have shown in the analysis of the biblical usage of this term, this claim is patently false. Of the 23 occurrences of this precise term, there are 13 distinct referents including Aaron and his descendants (1 Ch 13:13). In fact this term is never applied exclusively to the Holy of Holies without the article on the second word (הַקִּדְשִׁים קִדְשׁ). My previous interpretation of the “most holy” in verse 24 as, “a most holy anointed ruler who is cut off after a total of sixty-nine weeks,” still stands as a plausible reading.

Turning now to the first five infinitival constructions in verse 24 it needs to be remembered that Gabriel limited the possibilities of fulfillment of these predictions with the words, “for your people and your holy city,” (Dan 9:24). So regardless of the range of possible meanings allowed by the text of these five items, there are two clues to assist the interpreter at this point: 1) these things must be concerned with Daniel’s people and city in some way, and 2) they may have some connection with the anointing of a “most holy prince who is to be cut off after sixty-nine weeks”—both clues are afforded by exegetical considerations of the text itself.

The first thing to be accomplished within “seventy sevens” is “to finish the transgression” (לְכַלֵּא הַפֶּשַׁע). Thompson rightly observes that this can also be rendered, “to restrain” transgression.⁶⁹ Contextually it must be remembered that Daniel has previously just finished confessing the sin of the people which resulted in the destruction of the city (Dan 9:4-13). What is announced thus far in verse 24, then, is that a deadline of “seventy sevens” has been allotted for the open rebellion of the people, their

⁶⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁹ Thompson, 267.

transgression, to be either finished or restrained. Hoehner sees the punishment of the seventy-year captivity as a proportionate consequence of ignoring the Sabbath Law for 490 years citing 2 Chr 36:21.⁷⁰ This view has strong merit.

Thus the “seventy sevens” deadline for the people’s transgression to be reigned-in is also proportionate following the Levitical pattern of a seven-times increase in the punishment for persistent transgression (Lev 26:27-35). The sense of a deadline takes on a judgmental mood as well through this insight. Daniel has prayed for forgiveness and restoration after admitting rebellion and transgression. Gabriel answers with the promise that the people will be restored to the city (Dan 9:25). But in effect he adds the revelation that they had better “clean up their act” within this new period “or else.” A close reading of Lev 26:27-35 confirms this interpretation. Persecution, scattering among the nations (not just to Babylon), and destruction of their cities and sanctuary was prophesied by Moses as punishment for continued transgression.

The second thing to be accomplished by the “seventy seven” deadline, is “to make an end of sin,” (Dan 9:24). But there is a textual variant here between “to seal” or “to finish”. Again Thompson is helpful, “to seal sins’ seems the better reading diplomatically—it is the K’thib, and that of some of the versions.”⁷¹ Young admits this possibility as well, suggesting that it would then have the idea of sealing sins up for future judgment and punishment.⁷² This view is substantiated by two considerations. First, the tone of deadline before judgment within “seventy sevens” is consistent with the idea of “sealing up sins” in the sense that evidence of a crime is sealed for judgment and sentencing. Second, the account in Mat 21 of Jesus’ example of the fig tree and His

⁷⁰ Hoehner, 49.

⁷¹ Thompson, 267.

⁷² Young, 198-199.

parable of the vineyard contains a similar perspective: the lack of fruit was the evidence that brought condemnation on the fig tree; the crimes of the vine-growers piled up until their final crime of killing the land-owners son—for the totality of these sins, sealed with the murder of the son, *and for that reason* the vine-growers were to be evicted (Mat 21:41, 43), broken and scattered (Mat 21:44). The k'thib reading וְלִחְתָּם חַטָּאוֹת “to seal sins” can thus be legitimately understood this way.

The third element of verse 24, “to make atonement for iniquity” is much easier. The verbal root of the construction וְלִכְפֹּר עוֹן is כָּפַר.⁷³ This verb is strongly attested in Leviticus always having to do with sacrifice of atonement.⁷⁴ So there is a hint at this point in verse 24 of something else in addition to judgment, warning and deadline. There is also the intimation in the form of specific sacrificial vocabulary of a provision for the “necessary propitiatory sacrifice”.⁷⁵ It would seem, therefore, that the possibility of two classes of Daniel’s people are distinguished: the unfaithful and the faithful.⁷⁶ Thompson is on solid ground when he asserts that there is reason to read this infinitival construction together with the next, “to bring in everlasting righteousness,” which is the fourth element of verse 24. He writes:

This is more than merely the termination of the suit of God against his people (Isa. Xxvii. 9). The phrase occurs in Ps. Cxix. 142, and is applied to the righteousness of God. These two, “atonement for sin” and “the everlasting righteousness” are found in Christ—his atoning death and the righteousness which he brings into the world.⁷⁷

⁷³ Brown, 4615.

⁷⁴ Thompson, 267.

⁷⁵ Young, 199.

⁷⁶ Certainly at this point in my exegesis there is absolutely no warrant for reading into this a distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

⁷⁷ Thompson, 267.

Moving, finally, to the fifth element of verse 24 then, the text reads, “to seal up vision and prophecy” (וּלְחַתֵּם חִזְוֵן וְנְבִיאָה). Calvin succinctly identifies the main possible readings here:

Either the advent of Christ should sanction whatever had been formerly predicted—and the metaphor will imply this well enough—or we may take it otherwise, namely, that all prophecies should cease... We know the Law to be distinguished from the gospel by this peculiarity,--they formerly had a long course of prophecy according to the language of the Apostle. (Hebrews i. 1) God spake formerly in various ways by prophets, but in these last times by his only-begotten Son. Again, the law and the prophets existed until John, says Christ. (Matt. Xi. 11-13; Luke xvi. 16; Luke vii. 28) [sic]⁷⁸

I understand “to seal” here to encompass both ideas. Certainly there is no difficulty in admitting that the text could convey the idea of authorizing the visions of the prophets in general, as well as consummating prophecy and the witness of the prophets in particular? Indeed, to insist on one reading against the other is to unnaturally limit the possible range of meanings in this text as it stands.

Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing study I conclude as follows. Gabriel’s message to Daniel revealed that his people and his city would be restored (Dan 9:25) in answer to his prayer (Dan 9:16-19), but this is accompanied by a further revelation that a new deadline is allotted to the people and the city: “seventy sevens” within which period,

1. they must finish or restrain their transgression;
2. their sins would be sealed for their own judgment;
3. atonement would be made for their iniquity, resulting in

⁷⁸ Calvin, 202.

4. the provision of everlasting righteousness for the faithful of Daniel's people (Heb 10:1-18);⁷⁹
5. the sealing, authorizing and consummating, of prophetic revelation entrusted to Daniel's people, and
6. the anointing of the most holy prince who would be cut off after sixty-nine weeks.

It is very plausible then, perhaps compelling, to conclude that the entire programmatic introduction of Dan 9:24-27, the "seventy weeks" prophecy, contained in verse 24 is fulfilled, based first on internal considerations of the text and careful exegesis of the same, in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁷⁹ Calvin, 216-217.

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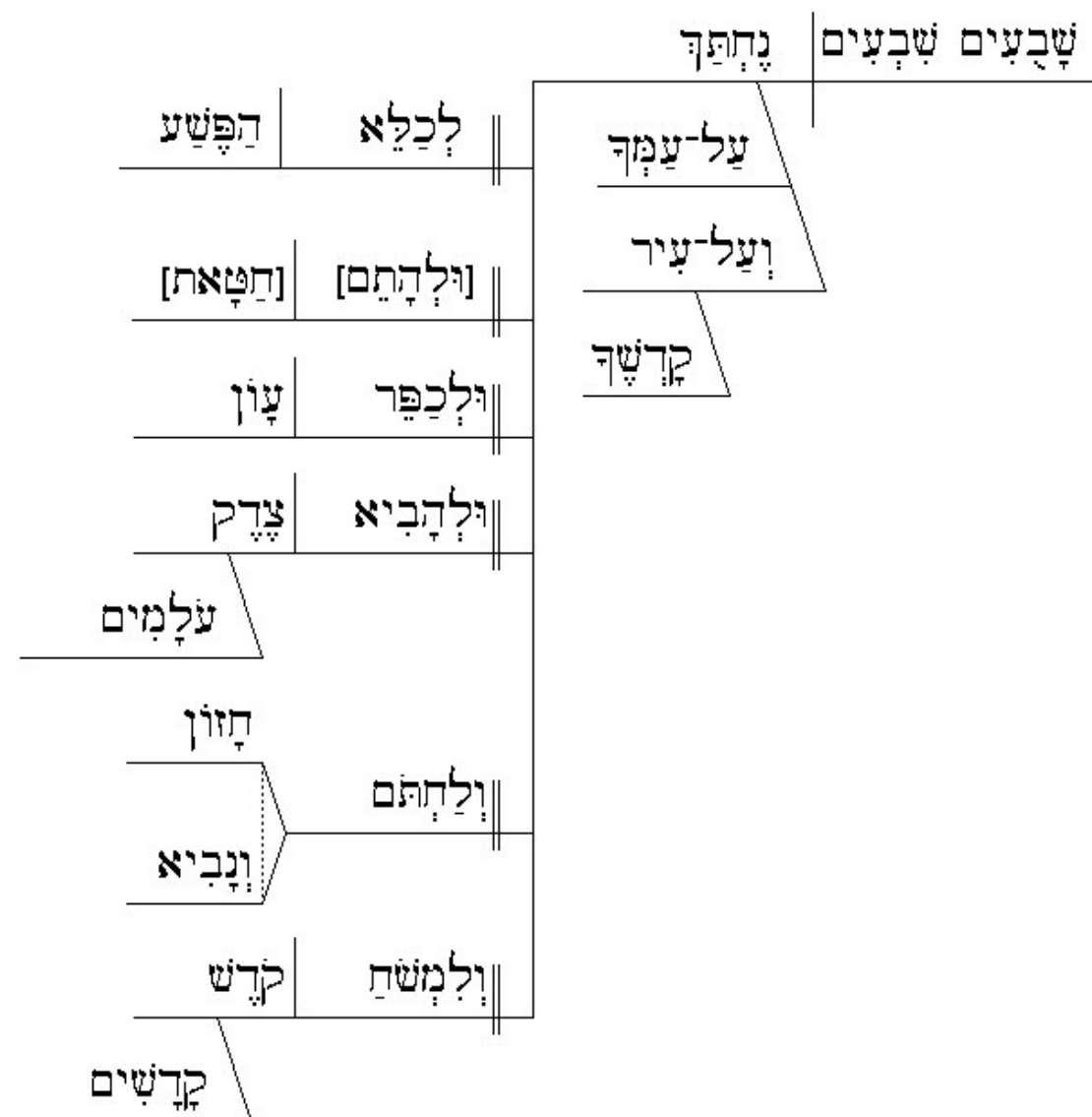
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Appendix I
Syntactical Diagram

Daniel 9:24



Translation:

“Seventy sevens are apportioned upon your people and upon your holy city to complete the transgression and to seal sins and to atone for guilt and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal a vision and a prophet and to anoint the most holy.”

Appendix II

Canonical Occurrences of קָדַשׁ קְדָשִׁים

