

## SEVENTY YEARS, SEVENTY “SEVENS” OF YEARS, AND THEN WHAT?<sup>1</sup>

ANTHONY BUZZARD

Seventy “sevens” are decreed for your people and your holy city, for putting an end to transgression, for placing the seal on sin, for expiating crime, for introducing everlasting uprightness, for setting the seal on vision and on prophecy, for anointing the holy of holies. Know this, then, and understand: From the time there went out this message: “Return and rebuild Jerusalem” to the coming of an Anointed Prince, seven “sevens” and sixty-two “sevens,” with squares and ramparts restored and rebuilt, but in a time of trouble. And after the sixty-two “sevens” an Anointed One put to death and will have nothing. The city and sanctuary will be ruined by a prince who is to come. The end of that prince will be catastrophe and, until the end, there will be war and all the devastation decreed. He will strike a firm alliance with many people for the space of a “seven”; and for the space of one half “seven” he will put a stop to sacrifice and oblation, and on the wing of the Temple will be the appalling abomination until the end, until the doom assigned to the devastator (Dan. 9:24-27, NJB modified).

The introduction of the Messianic kingdom immediately in connexion with or following events of the author’s own time, is fully in accord with other Old Testament representations. Isaiah places the advent of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Originally presented at Atlanta Bible College’s Theological Conference, March, 2007.

Messianic king in immediate connexion with a deliverance from Assyrian oppression (Isa. 8:16-9:7; 10:33-11:1), likewise Micah 5:4-6; and Deutero-Isaiah blends in one picture the release and restoration from Babylonian captivity, and the final consummation of the divine purposes for Israel. The same principle is illustrated in Christ's eschatological discourse in Matthew 24.<sup>2</sup>

This is a discussion of the famous seventy “sevens”<sup>3</sup> prophecy of Daniel chapter 9. Daniel presents a unique mathematical prediction which alerted the people of God to the time of the birth of the Messiah after 69 “sevens” and foretells a happy outcome for Jerusalem after a yet future time of trouble and punishment. That brilliant future for Israel and the world, however, cannot occur before “this Gospel of the Kingdom is announced to all the nations” (Matt. 24:14). Only then can “the end come.” No flood came until Noah had finished work on the boat. This may be a lesson for us.

I begin by setting the historical scene:

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. All the leading priests and the people also were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of the LORD that he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against his people became so great that there was no remedy. Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who

---

<sup>2</sup>“Daniel,” Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911, 1:556.

<sup>3</sup>Note that NIV “sevens” is correct rather than the “weeks” of KJV. NLT is right with “seventy sets of seven.”

killed their youths with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young men or young women, the aged or the feeble; he gave them all into his hand. All the vessels of the house of God, large and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officials, all these he brought to Babylon. They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, *to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah*, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, *to fulfill seventy years* (2 Chron. 36:11-21).

“And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon *seventy years*. Then it will be when *seventy years* are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation’” (Jer. 25:11-12). “Thus says the LORD: ‘Only after *seventy years* have elapsed for Babylon will I visit you and fulfill for you my promise to bring you back to this place’” (Jer. 29:10).

Finally this good news when the seventy years expires:

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in *fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah*, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him! Let him go up” (2 Chron. 36:22-23).

This brings us to Daniel’s important visitation from Gabriel in the first year of Darius (538 BC). The expiry of the seventy years was very close and this prompts Daniel’s prayer: “In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely,

*seventy years*” (Dan. 9:2). Daniel began to pray for the restoration of Israel based on Jeremiah’s prediction.

The same plea for restoration and peace in Israel is found in Zechariah 1:12: “Then the angel of the Lord, answering, said, ‘O Lord of armies, how long will it be before you have mercy on Jerusalem and on the towns of Judah against which your wrath has been burning for *seventy years*?’” And Zechariah 7:5: “Say to all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these *seventy years*, was it for me that you fasted?’”

The issue facing interpreters of the famous 70 “sevens” prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 is this: Is this period of time, 490 years, one that ends:

a) Somewhere in the early chapters of Acts, perhaps at the death of Stephen (i.e. around 33 AD, although the chronology of Acts is not specific) and then continues *beyond* the expiry of the 490 years for *another* 40 years, thus extending to AD 70, or

b) Is the right interpretation the one which makes terminus of the prophecy, as in every other of Daniel’s prophecies, the grand restoration and ultimate peace in the Kingdom for which we all yearn and pray “Thy Kingdom come”? (The two choices are diagrammed in the chart at the end.)

I have noted that in all of the biblical investigations which have led us to the Abrahamic Faith, the simple solution seems to be the best. God is one, is an easy concept. Jesus is the Messiah, son of David is not complex. The presence of supernatural evil as an external power of evil in the universe is an easily documented biblical fact. Is it unreasonable to look for the climax to the “70 sevens” prophecy as the second coming of Jesus and the restoration of Israel, at least a remnant of Israel, i.e., a collective, national conversion of “Jews,” which has been such an important element of the Gospel as Abrahamics have understood it?<sup>4</sup>

There is an important logical coherence in the whole of Daniel 9. Daniel has read in Jeremiah that 70 years of punishment had been allotted to Israel for her persistent failure to listen the prophets. The key to Daniel’s impassioned prayer (he was probably in his eighties

---

<sup>4</sup> This eventually bright future for Israel is supported I think with complete clarity by Paul in Rom. 9-11 and backed by the best commentary, for example the *International Critical Commentary* on Romans and C.K. Barrett’s famous commentary on Romans.

at the time) is his desire for an *end* to trouble in Jerusalem and the reestablishment of national sovereignty for his people. It is exactly the same passion for the future of Jerusalem and Israel which drove the famous last request of Jesus' Apostles when they asked, after a six-week seminar on the Kingdom (Acts 1:3), “Is this now the time for you to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

At the simplest level, Daniel obviously wants to know when things are going to be OK again. When will the promised restoration, as seen by all the prophets, be a reality? When will the expiry of the 70 years bring the promised relief and release?

When will the world be at peace under the Messiah? That is really the key biblical issue, for us now as much as for the people of God in all ages. Daniel is looking for restoration and peace. I find it quite bizarre to imagine that Gabriel brings him an answer involving a closing date of AD 70, when in fact, far from a restoration of the city, Jerusalem took its hardest hit and was burned to the ground. Is that really the terminus point for this grand prophecy? Remember how the prophecy ends: “Even to *the end* there will be war; desolations are determined...On the wing of abominable things he will come desolating, even *until* [and here comes the good news] *a complete destruction, one that is decreed*, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” (Dan. 9:26-27). Does not this language strongly suggest that at *the end* of the famous period of  $70 \times 7$  years = 490 years, the enemy of Israel will be eliminated and thereupon peace and all the good things yearned for and prayed for by Daniel, for the city and the people, will finally become a reality? Would it not be the height of cynicism for Daniel to have been given a calculation ending in AD 70 when the city suffered its worst, and ongoing destruction? (remedied in a very unsatisfactory and obviously non-final way by 1948 and the reestablishment of Israel, amidst terrible problems ever since).

And is not a terminus for this prophecy around 33 AD, perhaps the stoning of Stephen, equally baffling? And how does one justify a period of 490 years with a fulfillment that would be, if ending in AD 70 as historicists say, a prophecy of 530 years? (i.e. AD 30, plus another 40 years to AD 70).

My first point is that there is a logical parallel between the promised restoration after 70 years under Nebuchadnezzar and the *ultimate* restoration following the “70 times 7 years” of Gabriel's prophecy. We are taught to expect restoration at the end of the 70

times 7 years, not two millennia of further trouble initiated by a massive destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

If sound Bible study comes from “joining the dots,” connecting obviously related topics, then it is clear that Daniel’s final heptad, or period of seven years, singled out for special attention, does not stand alone. Is it not reasonable to find the explanation of that 3½-year period in the book of Revelation which five times refers to just such a period of “time, times and half a time” — 42 months, or 1260 days<sup>5</sup> — as a period of trouble in the Middle East? It would seem to be a major hermeneutical mistake to divorce Daniel 9:27 from its companion texts in Revelation. And since Revelation does not deal with AD 70, then the presumption is that Daniel 9:27, with its period of 3 1/2 years, also does not have anything to do with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. It terminates rather in the real and ultimate restoration of Jerusalem still lying in the future.

But other considerations lead me to think that classical futurism is the right reading of the prophecies in general and in particular Daniel 9. Part of my conviction is based on the wide range of disagreement among historicists as to the proper way to assign periods of supposedly 1260 *years*.

It was some thousand years after New Testament times that the idea was first proposed that days in prophecy really ought to mean *years*, and search was then made for ways of fitting these prophecies into already fulfilled history. It was that day-year theory which gave William Miller a basis for his failed prophecy of 1844, and after him the Seventh-Day Adventists their now discredited theories of a heavenly cleansing of the sanctuary in 1844, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses their equally failed prophecies for the Second Coming. The Watchtower, controlling the theology of millions of keen Bible students, tried to excuse its errors by pretending that they were right, in at least one of many failed prophetic forecasts, by saying that the Parousia *did* happen in 1914, only invisibly! Later Edgar Whisenant, former NASA rocket engineer, sold two million copies of his book *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. He too was using a day-year theory and when 1988 failed he tried 1989 and that failed too. Happily the Church of God (Abrahamic Faith) has been wise enough to stay out of the date-setting business. Herbert Armstrong, of course, confidently knew that 1975 was definitely to

---

<sup>5</sup>Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.

be the onset of the great tribulation, and later followers of his thought that Herbert would be raised from the dead on a certain date. Their hopeful surrounding of his tomb at the appointed time did not bring him to life. He is still dead with the remainder of the dead.

The 70 “sevens” prophecy of Daniel provides no reasonable basis for a day=year theory, because Gabriel spoke not of 70 *weeks* of years but of 70 heptads, or units of seven undefined. Context shows that in this case the heptads have to be heptads of years. The heptads could be sevens of minutes or hours, or days or years or millennia. In fact on the basis of the part of the prophecy already fulfilled in the first coming and death of Jesus, we know that the “sevens” are sevens of years. This is suggested too by Daniel 9:2 where Daniel is contemplating a period of 70 *years*. Gabriel then answers Daniel’s prayer with an extended prophecy of  $70 \times 7 \text{ years} = 490 \text{ years}$ , which is also ten jubilee periods of 49 years, with the obvious implication that at the end, the real and final jubilee of the Kingdom will come. Jesus referred to his own announcement of the Kingdom as the proclamation of the “favorable [jubilee] year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

### **Pulling All the Evidence Together**

It is a curious fact that the crucial *last* part of the 70 sevens prophecy has not been connected to other passages of Scripture which show in what chronological setting it should be read. There is a direct link from Gabriel’s precious message to the words of Isaiah and also Paul. Much prophecy study has suffered from a lack of attention to the Assyrian antichrist material to which Paul pointed clearly when he cited Isaiah 11:4 in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, speaking of the final enemy, the man of sin.

In Isaiah 10 in an intensely Messianic context (see chs. 11, 12) we have warnings to Israel about the instrument of punishment God intends to use against Israel by means of “the Assyrian, the rod of my anger” (Isa. 10:5). The story goes like this:

So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria [cp. the good fruit of the humble hearts produced by the seed message of the Kingdom in the parable of the sower] and the pomp of his haughtiness”...The light of Israel will

become a fire and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour Assyria’s thorns and briars in a single day (Isa. 10:12, 17).

Then this:

Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who smote them [Assyria] but will truly rely on the LORD, the holy one of Israel. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return; *a destruction is determined*, overflowing with righteousness. *A complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord God of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.* Therefore thus says the Lord, God of hosts, “O my people who live in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did. For in a very little while, My indignation against you [Israel] will be spent and My anger will be directed to their [Assyria’s] destruction”...He [the Assyrian] shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. Behold the Lord, the God of hosts will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash; those who are tall in stature will be cut down and those who are lofty will be abased...Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse [the Messiah]...He will delight in the fear of the LORD...and he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked one...and the wolf will dwell with the lamb...They will not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 10:20-11:9).

Here we are clearly into the millennium.

Now what about that interesting information about the destruction of the future wicked person: In the very context in which a remnant of national Israel returns to the land, it is said: “*A destruction is determined*, overflowing with righteousness; *a destruction, one that is decreed* [*calah v’necheratza*], the Lord God of Hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land...Do not be afraid of *the Assyrian*” (Isa. 10:22-24). But this is not all Isaiah has

to say: “I have heard from the Lord God of hosts of a *destruction, one that is decreed [calah v’necheratza] on the whole earth*. Give ear and hear my voice. Listen and hear my words” (Isa. 28:22-23). Note now the immediate context of these words: “I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level. Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies [a false peace and security] and your [Israel’s] *covenant with death* will be canceled and your pact with Sheol will not stand” (Isa. 28:17-18). This end-time intervention of God to punish is described as God’s “unusual task, His extraordinary work” (Isa. 28:21). It will result in the millennial justice, after Israel has learned her lesson and been punished by God’s Assyrian rod. It involves too the abolition of a false covenant made by Israel.

Another witness to the proper reading of these prophecies is Paul. In his very important discussion of the future of the now blinded Israel, his colleagues who have not accepted the Messiah, Paul says, “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved. *For the Lord will execute his word on the earth [land] thoroughly and quickly*” (Rom. 9:27-28).<sup>6</sup> Here, amazingly, Paul cites the very verses in Isaiah we have been examining: “For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord God of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land” (Isa. 10:23).

But where is this Isaianic and Pauline end-time information coming from? Straight out of the 70 sevens prophecy of Daniel. Rather we should say that Gabriel got the gist of his message from Isaiah and Paul got it from both Isaiah and Daniel. Listen now to Gabriel: “One will come desolating on the wing of abominations [cp. the famous Abomination of Desolation], *until a destruction, one that is decreed [calah v’necheratza] is poured out on the one who makes desolate*” (Dan. 9:27. The marginal references to this verse rightly connect us to Isaiah 10:23 and 28:22, and we should add also to Paul in Rom. 9:27, 28).

Note the obvious factors in common in our passages from Isaiah, Daniel and Paul: “A *complete destruction, one that is decreed*, the Lord will execute in the midst of the land.” So says Gabriel to Daniel and God to Isaiah, and Paul references these passages when talking not about AD 33, much less AD 70, which is

---

<sup>6</sup> “A word of completion and cutting short.”

Israel’s low point, but the glorious future work of God and the Messiah in restoring Israel for the very last time, by destroying the vicious enemy, the Assyrian, which God will have used provisionally to punish His wayward people Israel.

I think that these passages successfully show that the expiry of the 70<sup>th</sup> “seven” of Daniel, in common with all of Daniel’s prophecies, brings the great Kingdom of God for which we pray and which the world so urgently and desperately needs. Paul, Isaiah and Daniel all speak of a false peace, a covenant with death, an evil Assyrian, King of the North. We did not mention the further reference to a failed covenant for Israel. With glimpses of the millennial peace in view, “God has filled Zion with justice and righteousness and He will be the stability of your times, a wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge” (Isa. 33:5-6). But before that good time coming, we have this warning:

Behold, their brave men cry in the streets and the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly. The highways are desolate, the traveler has ceased. He has *broken the covenant*; he has despised the cities; he has no regard for man. The land mourns and pines away...“Now I will arise,” says the LORD (Isa. 33:7-10).

The scene is consistently clear: First trouble at the hand of an Assyrian who promises a false peace with Israel, then a decisive decreed destruction of the evil one by God and thus the completion of the 70<sup>th</sup> “seven” resulting in and followed by blessed restoration. To make AD 33 or AD 70 the climax of this prophecy I think fails to grasp its immensity and significance for us today as we await the Kingdom of God.

We could add that the whole final vision of Daniel 11 and 12 only confirms this picture of end-time trouble from a final King of the North, readily equated with the King of Babylon who features as the great enemy of Israel at the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13). The whole of Isaiah 13 and 14 should be read here, showing the great Day of the Lord and the presence of the King of Babylon, the shining star of the dawn, presumably a false Messiah. All this is related to the apocalyptic falling of the stars, God’s punishment of the world, the final overthrow of Babylon and the subsequent restoration of Israel in that poignant passage. What a moving passage this is:

For the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel and settle them in their own land. Then

foreigners will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors. And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say, “How the oppressor has ceased, and how fury has ceased! The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.” The whole earth is at rest and is quiet. They break forth into shouts of joy (Isa. 14:1-7).

What a world that will be! Jeremiah pictures a tragic, yet hopeful straggling remnant making their final return to the land, so that the cry “*Bashana haba* — next year in Jerusalem” will be realized:

Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child together. A great company will return here. With weeping they will come, and by supplication I will lead them. I will make them walk by streams of waters...for I am a father to Israel (Jer. 31:8-9).

This great event will mark the beginning of the Kingdom jubilee year and the end of 10 times 49 preceding periods of time.

### **70<sup>th</sup> Week Future in the Earliest Premillenarian Church Fathers**

Confirmation of the futurist reading of Daniel 9 and the parallels in Revelation is provided by the earliest fathers:

“He whom Daniel foretells would have dominion for a *time, and times, and an half*, is even already at the door, about to speak blasphemous and daring things against the Most High.”<sup>7</sup>

He “shall purpose to change times and laws; and [everything] shall be given into his hand until a time of times and a half time,”

---

<sup>7</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 32.

that is, for three years and six months, during which time, when he comes, he shall reign over the earth.”<sup>8</sup>

“But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for *three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem*; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that ‘many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’”<sup>9</sup>

“‘And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.’ That refers to the *one thousand two hundred and threescore days* (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church.”<sup>10</sup>

#### **Further Note on Early Church Fathers and Futurism**

The earliest post-New Testament writers on prophecy were premillennial, post-tribulational futurists:

Until Augustine in the fourth century, the early Church generally held to the premillenarian understanding of Biblical eschatology. This chiliasm entailed a futuristic interpretation of Daniel’s seventieth week, the abomination of desolation, and the personal Antichrist. And it was post-tribulational...The possibility of a pre-tribulational rapture seems never to have occurred to anyone in the early Church.<sup>11</sup>

It is sometimes said that futurism is a modern phenomenon unknown before its appearance in 1580. It was then that the Jesuit Ribera published a long commentary on Revelation restricting most of its prophecies to the reign of a single Antichrist dominating the world for 3½ years just before the return of Christ. This point of

<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 5.25.3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.30.4.

<sup>10</sup> Hippolytus, *The Antichrist*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, Zondervan, 1973, 173.

view is demonstrably untrue in the light of the clear evidence of the early church fathers. Some of these had much to say about eschatology. As we have seen they also looked for a short reign of Antichrist just before the arrival of Christ to establish the millennial Kingdom on earth.

George Ladd, highly respected writer on eschatology, agreeing with Gundry cited above, makes the point clearly:

The futuristic interpretation was essentially *a return to the method of prophetic truth found in the early fathers*, essential to which is the teaching that the Antichrist will be a satanically inspired world-ruler at the end of the age who would inflict severe persecution upon the Church during the Great Tribulation.<sup>12</sup>

W.R. Kimball agrees that the early Church was “generally premillennial, posttribulation and futuristic in their eschatological belief.”<sup>13</sup> (It is most important to add that the *pre-tribulation* rapture theory is entirely missing from any writer before the 1800s). It is true that the church fathers did not expect a long period of time to intervene before the appearance of the Antichrist. However, they believed that the prophecies, read in a straightforward manner, described a *final short period* of intense tribulation *just before* the arrival of Jesus. This time of intense suffering, in which the Church would be involved, would last for 3½ years. The early church fathers definitely did not expect the Beast of Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 to rule for 1260 *years*. Such a day/year theory was not known prior to 1000 AD.

In 1826 modern futurism (still without the pre-tribulation rapture theory) was given publicity with the appearance of a book by Dr. Maitland, curator to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In his *An Enquiry into the Ground on Which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John Has Been Supposed to Consist of 1260 Years*, Maitland refuted the day-year theory and contended that the 1260 days be taken literally as a final period of unequalled persecution of the saints just before the Second Coming.

Of these nineteenth-century futurists George Ladd wrote: They “followed a pattern of prophetic events similar to that found in the early fathers...In fact they appeal to the fathers against the [then]

---

<sup>12</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, Eerdmans, 1980, 37, emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup>*The Rapture: A Question of Timing*, College Press, 1986, 29.

popular historical interpretation for support of their basic view. A pretribulation rapture is utterly unknown by these men.”<sup>14</sup>

It is important that the false idea that futurism was introduced by the Roman Catholics be corrected. The early church fathers’ type of futurism should make a special appeal to premillennialists who all agree that it was later developments, particularly under Augustine, which led to the amillennialist view of prophecy. The work of the ante-Nicene fathers, some of whom wrote in detail on Daniel, Matthew 24 and Revelation, reveals that they read the prophecies in a straightforward, natural way, using the words of Jesus to interpret Daniel. They linked Jesus’ reference to the great tribulation to its obvious base in Daniel 12:1, and saw the great tribulation as a final period of extreme agony just before the arrival of Jesus in glory. They did not confuse ongoing tribulations and trials which we all experience with the final “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 and Daniel 12:1.

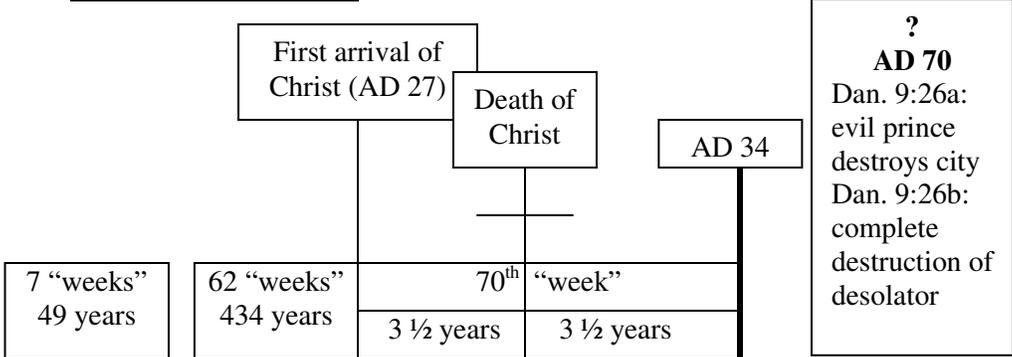
Today, we know that “this Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the world, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). Is it possible that Peter’s reference to us “hastening” the coming day (2 Pet. 3:12) could have a direct reference to us? Are we praying for the Kingdom to come, while not fully doing our part in the Gospel of the Kingdom’s announcement worldwide as a necessary precursor of the Kingdom? Could the flood have come if Noah had been slack in his work on the ark? I ask the question for our own meditation.

---

<sup>14</sup>*Blessed Hope*, 39.

# 70 Sevens Prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27)

## HISTORICISM:



## FUTURISM:

