

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

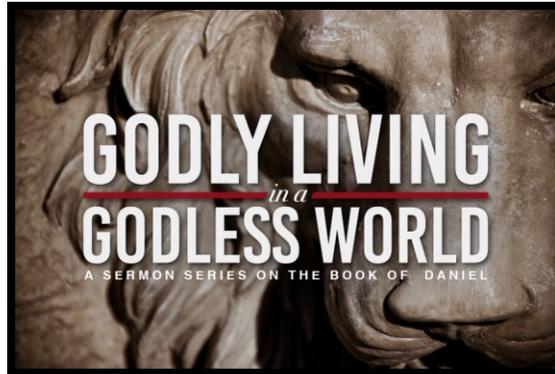
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 9:24-27

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

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God's answer to powerful, passionate prayer sometimes is composed of near and far fulfillment, and sometimes the answer for the latter is beyond the scope of anything you asked for. As a young thirty-one-year-old church planter in liberal California (my home state) in 1989, I learned the essence of this prayer premise on the anvil of adversity mixed with moments of great joy in the blessing of the Lord.

Starting with a rag-tag group of nineteen committed believers from a debunked, dysfunctional prior church plant, seemed like the perfect thing to do in my young pastoral mind. Over the next nineteen years, I watched God move in profound, miraculous ways, and I also felt like I had returned to the wrestling team my Freshman year in High School.

- The secular school did not like our vinyl church sign hanging on their fence on Sunday mornings. They found it offensive.
- Teachers had a penchant for accusing our children's workers of stealing things from their classrooms.
- Power hungry saints from larger churches came to get a better opportunity to exercise their power in a smaller, easier to access church environment.
- Couples came and then went because our children's program was not big enough for them.
- Certain elders had secret meetings to push their agendas.

- Numerous leaders attacked other leaders behind the scenes in a quest to get them removed because they stood in their way.
- Gossip became the spiritual gift of a large swath of the membership.
- People left the church because some facet of the biblical teaching offended their skewed and sinful worldviews.
- The church split in 1993 over a power move by some powerful people whose leader wanted to approve my sermons prior to preaching them.
- When the devious sheep couldn't get their way because a pastor stood in their way, they hurled mean-spirited names at him . . . nineteen to be exact.
- Even my special needs son was not exempt from rude and crude statements from the power hungry saints.

Yeah, it seemed like a wrestling match, no make that something akin to the Babylonian Captivity.

Trust me, you do not know how many times I prayed the doxology of Ephesians 3:

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

I, like Daniel, struggled in God's presence in prayer numerous times. I also lived to watch Him answer that prayer in that little church:

- Many people from many ethnicities came to know Christ as Savior.
- Baptisms became the order of the day more often than not.
- God set up the perfect circumstances so we could have our first building.
- Great, godly leaders arrived to help build the church to God's glory.
- Our children's program grew and flourished despite internal opposition.
- Our teens got to experience having their own shepherd.
- Mangled marriages were saved by the power of Christ, His gospel, and the Word.
- God taught this shepherd how to shepherd in adversity, how to move toward godly goals even when the winds blew contrary to you, and how to be positive and encouraging even when the Devil sowed seeds of discontentment and chaos.

I give testimony today of a living God who answers the passionate prayers of His people at pivotal times in their lives. I give testimony of a living God who also not only answers you in the present, but who quite often answers your prayer in a fashion you never anticipated. Yes, for almost twenty years I prayed for God to bless that church plant, and He did; however, God's greatest answer to that prayer came when God I accepted the call eight years ago to shepherd

this church. The blessings He has poured out on this place are an answer beyond anything I ever anticipated from Him. You have your own prayer testimony regarding this place, I'm sure, but this is my perspective. I give Him praise for being a Father who answers our prayers in His good time, and who frequently answers them in the future in such a magnanimous fashion you cannot help but know He is with you and He is going before you, despite the circumstances.

This personal story is but a small reflection of Daniel's story. His prayer in chapter 9 of his inspired writing in the Old Testament develops a prayer principle we all need to read and heed:

Powerful Prayer Is Needed At Pivotal Times (Daniel 9:1-27)

Because Daniel was faithful to pray at the pivotal time of his beleaguered nation, God answered him definitively and intricately far beyond his wildest dreams. The final movement of this prayer template not only introduces us to the last component of powerful praying, it reveals how God typically answers our prayers with a word for the present, followed by words which unfold in the future. This reality is tucked away in the fifth component of powerfully praying:

Consider The Facts Of Powerful Payer (Daniel 9:20-27)

By way of review . . .

God Provided a Messenger (Daniel 9:20-23). God dispatched Gabriel, His special emissary regarding Israel, to Daniel as he prayed for wisdom and insight regarding Israel's imminent return to the Promised Land. Never underestimate or question what God is doing in His dimension as you pray. Or should I say, stop underestimating and questioning God. He hears and He acts as a loving Father.

With the arrival of this angelic messenger, we also learned that . . .

God Provided a Message (Daniel 9:24-27).

The Purpose of the Message. Gabriel quickly informed Daniel that God has six distinct purposes regarding His chosen people (Genesis 12:1-4; Deuteronomy 7):

²⁴ "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, **to** finish the transgression, **to** make an end of sin, **to** make atonement for iniquity, **to** bring in everlasting righteousness, **to** seal up vision and prophecy and **to** anoint the most holy *place*."

The prepositions isolate the divine purposes, and they are all about redeeming the nation in the future, establishing true righteousness on earth, fulfilling all prophecy with the arrival of the Messiah, and the creation and establishment of a new messianic Temples in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-48).

All of these divine purposes would/will occur, according to God, over the next "seventy weeks," or "seventy sevens." As stated in our last study, since Daniel realized from Scripture that Israel spent 70 years in captivity for every seven year Sabbatical Rest cycle the nation chose to ignore, this series represented 490 years of outright disobedience. The new, or next, divinely

ordered series designed to accomplish God's six stated kingdom/redemptive goals, would likewise be composed of "seventy sevens" or 490 literal years. This word, in and of itself, demonstrated to Daniel that God had a near and far term plan for His people, and that God had heard the passionate prayer of His saint at this pivotal time in the history of the nation.

From verse 25 to verse 27, God next released Gabriel to educate Daniel regarding . . .

The Plan of the Message (Daniel 9:25-27). First, I invite you to read what is both one of the most profound, powerful prophecies in the Old Testament, as well as one other most complex and intriguing.

²⁵ "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. ²⁶ "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷ "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

From this divinely ordained word is it quite apparent that God underscores that He, the living God, is in total control of world history and He, and He alone, is guiding it to accomplish His six kingdom/redemptive purposes. Daniel's book is replete with this motif. Here is one illustration:

³⁷ "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; ³⁸ and wherever the sons of men dwell, *or* the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold (Daniel 2).

The kings of the world do God's bidding. He raises one up and puts another one down, regardless of what they think or how much power they think they possess, with a view of moving history toward the complete fulfillment of His six-fold kingdom/redemptive purposes as outlined by Gabriel. For those of us who claim the name of Christ and who have experienced a presidential race to end all presidential races, we need to trust that God's hand is at work and we need to be the Church to the watching world.

With verses 25 through 27, God, via Gabriel, unfolds the prophetic timeline for how these six divine purposes regarding Israel (and ultimately the world) will be played out, literally. Put differently, God shows when the next 490 prophetic years commence, how it is divided, and what occurs at its consummation. These prophetic waters are deep, but most thrilling for those who wade into them. They also provide rock solid evidence that there is a God and He has spoken. Such data should turn the most hardened skeptic toward the worship of this God. Yes,

God's fingerprints are all over this prophetic plan for the final 490 years of Gentile world history as it pertains to Israel and God's coming kingdom.

From my years of studying this prophecy to end all prophecy, I see it divides into three distinct movements of time. First, . . .

- *It Has Time Segments* (Daniel 9:25-27). Translated, this last 490 year prophetic period which leads to the coming of the Messiah is broken up into three periods: seven weeks or 49 years (calculating weeks as years based on the computation of the former 490 years) and sixty-two weeks or 434 years, and one final week representing seven years.

²⁵ “So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. ²⁶ “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.²⁷ “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

How utterly exciting! God tells us precisely before the fact how He will providentially guide Israel's history . . . and our history . . . to the coming of the prophesied King of Kings, the Messiah (Psalm 2; Isaiah 2; 9:1-6 . . . and referenced in Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 22, 27; 8:25). Time is not aimlessly unfolding before our eyes but is firmly within the loving and holy graspe of God Almighty, and He has every intention (coupled with all power) to make sure it terminates/consummates with the arrival of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, as prophesied (Zechariah 12-14).

With verse 25, God tells us when this final prophetic time segment would commence.

²⁵ “So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

The time trigger for this final facet of God's kingdom program is the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. There are three views regarding this exciting beginning point:

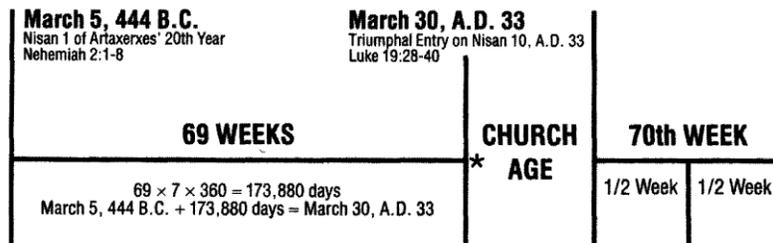
1. The decree of the Persian King Cyrus issued in 538 B.C. (Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5).
2. The decree of Persian Artaxerxes Longimanus (476-425 B.C.) issued in 458 B.C. (Ezra 7:11-26).

3. The decree of Persian Artaxerxes Longimanus issued in 444 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:5-8, 17-18).

Since the terminus of this decree is the coming of the Messiah, I think we can safely remove view one because it would terminate too early in the life of the Messiah. Views two and three are more viable choices; however, between these two, I believe the third is more tenable because the actual royal decree to rebuild Jerusalem proper did not come until 444 B.C., as detailed in Nehemiah 2:1-6. This decree came in the Jewish month of Nisan, or our March 5 of 444 B.C. Hence, within this first 49 year cycle, God prophesied and promised that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, to answer Daniel's prayer. This literally occurred as prophesied. And within the next 434 years God guided history so that Israel was in the Promised Land to experience the coming of the long-awaited Messiah and Davidic Prince.

Basing, therefore, our calculations on lunar time reckoning, as the Babylonians and Jews did in Daniel's day (and beyond even into New Testament times, cf. Revelation 11:2; 12:6; 13:5), we arrive at the profound prophetic timing of the Messiah's arrival in world history . . . given over five hundred years before the fact. You skeptics might need to read that again. The following chart, based on the calculations of one of my former Greek professors at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Harold Hoehner, demonstrates the absolute divine precision of this messianic prophecy:

Daniel's Seventy Weeks



Verification

444 B.C. to A.D. 33 = 476 years
 476 years \times 365.24219879 days = 173,855 days
 + days between March 5 & March 30 = 25 days
 173,880 days

*Messiah cut off after 69 weeks – April 3, A.D. 33.

Rationale for 360-Day Years

1/2 week – Dan. 9:27
 Time, times, 1/2 time – Dan. 7:25, 12:7;
 Rev. 12:14
 1,260 days – Rev. 12:6, 11:3
 42 months – Rev. 11:2, 13:5
 Thus: 42 months = 1,260 days = time,
 times, 1/2 time = 1/2 week
 Therefore: month = 30 days, year = 360 days

No wonder the Jews in the time of Jesus anticipated the arrival of the Messiah. Daniel had told them He was coming, and they could actually calculate His glorious and humble arrival.

According, however, to verse 26, the Messiah's coming would end with His death.

²⁶ “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,

Stop right there. Jesus had to come based on the time calculation listed above because it was prophesied He would die as the Passover Lamb (Isaiah 53), and Friday fell on Passover of 33 A.D. The other option for Passover on Friday was in 30 A.D., which is too early for His crucifixion. Hoehner's work, which is a product of his Ph. D. dissertation at Cambridge University, is, therefore, the preferred and more tenable date for the Messiah to be “cut off.”

The Hebrew, “to cut off, *karat* (כָּרַת) in the Niphal form denotes death (Genesis 9:11; 41:36; Leviticus 19:8; Isaiah 11:13; Zechariah 13:8).¹ More than 700 years before Christ was born, Isaiah, the prophet, prophesied that the Messiah would be the Suffering Servant and THE substitutionary, vicarious, and sacrificial lamb for the sins of mankind. The imagery of the Abraham sacrificing his only son, Isaac, typologically looked forward to this, as did the burnt offering sacrifices, as well as the blood sacrifice associated with the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). With the Messiah, all sacrifices would culminate in His being “cut off,” and, indeed, He did fulfill all of them, as prophesied. Why did He die? Paul powerfully answers this query:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father (Galatians 1).

Here's another:

¹ S. R. Driver and Charles A Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, ed. Francis Brown (Lafayette, Indiana: Associated Publishers and Authors, INC, 1981), 504: **Niph.** Pf. 3 ms. נכרת Jo 1:5 + 5 times; נכרתה Jo 1:16 + 2 times; 3 fs. נכרתה Gn 17:14 + 16 times; נכרתה ψ 37:38; 2 ms. נכרתה Ob 10; + 8 times Pf.; *Impf.* נכרתה Gn 9:11 + 21 times; נכרתה Ob 9; 3 mpl. נכרתה Zc 13:8; נכרתה Jos 3:13 ψ 37:9; + 9 times *Impf.*; *Inf.* הנכרתה Nu 15:31 ψ 37:34.— **1.** *be cut off:* **a.** of things, froward tongue Pr 10:31; burden from a nail Is 22:25; chariots Zc 9:10; dwelling Zp 3:7. **b.** of persons, the people of the land by a famine (ך) Gn 41:36 (E); all flesh by waters of deluge (ממי) Gn 9:11 (P); the anointed Dn 9:26; enemies Is 11:13; Mi 5:8; the wicked Is 29:20; Ho 8:4; Na 2:1 ψ 37:9, 22, 28, 34, 38; Pr 2:22; others Ob 9, 10 Zp 1:11; Zc 13:8; 14:2. **c.** in the technical phrases of H and P הנכרתה הנפש ההיא *that person shall be cut off* (by death penalty) מעמיה Gn 17:14 Lv 7:20, 21, 25, 27; Nu 9:13; Lv 19:8; מישאאל Ex 12:15; Nu 19:13; מישאאל Ex 12:19; מקרב עמיה Ex 31:14; Nu 15:30 (עמיה); מלפני Lv 22:3; מתוך הקהל Nu 19:20; similarly with variation of subject Ex 30:33, 38; Lv 17:4, 9, 18:29; 20:18; 23:29, and with omission of word with מן Lv 17:14; 20:17; Nu 15:31⁰. **2.** *be cut down*, a tree Jb 14:7. **3.** *be chewed* between the teeth Nu 11:33 (J). **4.** *be cut off*, in a more general sense, *fail:* of waters Jos 3:13, 16 (JE) 4:7⁰ (D); new wine Jo 1:5; meat v 16; hope Pr 23:18; 24:14; a name Is 48:19; 56:5; Ru 4:10; a sign Is 55:13; faithfulness Je 7:28; לא יכרת לי איש *there shall not fail thee a man* 1 K 2:4; 8:25 = 2 Ch 6:16; 1 K 9:5 = 2 Ch 7:18; Je 33:17; 18; 35:19; לא יכרת מן *there shall not fail of* Jos 9:23 (J) 2 S 3:29.

⁹ But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren . . . (Hebrews 2).

Jesus died as our perfect sin-substitute in time and space history in the precise year Gabriel told Daniel He would. In so doing, God told Daniel that He would not only work in and through Israel in the future, He would bring the Messiah as the only one who could effectively deal with their sin problem so the messianic kingdom could come.

And not only was the Messiah “cut off,” he died “having nothing,” as prophesied. What does this mean? His people deserted Him. The religious leaders turned on Him. Even His disciples turned and ran, and the soldiers gambled His meager clothing away at the foot of His cross. Yes, He died a destitute man from the world’s perspective, as God had revealed to Gabriel to reveal to Daniel. Don’t tell me you need more facts before you will believe in Him as your Savior. The cold, hard facts are sitting right before you. The question is, What will you do with them? Will you believe or will you remain in your unbelief?

The next time sequence is disclosed by Gabriel with these amazing words:

. . . and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined (Daniel 9).

What does this denote? The word “the” before prince can be classified as the article of previous reference. Ostensibly, this means we have encountered this prince before who would follow Christ. Who is he? He is, first and foremost, Titus who did, in fact, destroy Jerusalem 37 years later in 70 A.D. Secondly, and in light of the coming world ruler who arises from the revived Roman Empire of the end times (Daniel 2, 7), this Roman prince, Titus, probably serves as a picture of the Anti-Christ who will also attack the Jews prior to the final revelation of the Messiah. In any event, let us not miss the prophetic import of this passage. God fulfilled the prophesied time segments to bring the Messiah to be our sin sacrifice just like He said He would, and by so doing He began the fulfillment of the Father’s six-fold plan for the end of time regarding Israel and ultimately the Gentiles.

In addition to this time segment, we can also sense a second time concept in verses 26 and 27, a concept which shows the plan . . .

- *It Has Time Stall* (Daniel 9:26-27). First, let’s read the verses in question:

²⁶ “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷ “And he will make a firm covenant with the many

for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The question here is this: Does the final 70th literal which, which represents a literal seven years, come immediately after the other 69 prophetic weeks, composing 483 years? If so, then all of this has been fulfilled and we now await the coming of Christ. I'm not convinced. In fact, based on the following points, I think there is a definite time break between the 69th and 70th prophetic week.

One, the 70th week is treated as distinct from the first 69 weeks in the prophecy, occurring apart from them. This shows it is possibly chronologically concerned with another period in time.

Two, we cannot easily and effectively plug these final prophetic years into the life of Christ for they cannot and will not fit. Hence, they must look to a future time.

Three, after the timing of the death of Christ, as prophesied, there was a forty year gap before Rome finished off Israel, thereby finalizing the 69th week of Daniel. This, by definition, shows there can be time lag in the prophecy.

Four, time gaps in prophecy are nothing new. Jesus' first sermon in Nazareth readily demonstrated He fulfilled the first part of Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah's ministry to the brokenhearted and captives to sin (Isaiah 61:1-2a); however, Jesus closed the scroll (Luke 4:18-19) without saying He then fulfilled the second part of the messianic prophecy which details the Messiah as the warrior who brings divine judgment to the wicked (Isaiah 61:2b). To have a 2,000 year gap is not shocking at all where God's plans are concerned.

Five, no matter how one might try, there is no way to squeeze a literal seven year period representing the 70th week of Daniel into Roman history. Actually, no part of it fits so as to be highly believable.

Six, Jesus warned us in His Olivet Discourse, that the Anti-Christ would in the future commit desecrate a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15). Since this could not refer to the Herodian temple, we must look forward to the Tribulational temple. Once we do this we have, by default, embraced the notion there is a gap in time between the 69 prophetic weeks of 483 years and the final one of 7 years.

Seven, Scripture is clear that the Anti-christ will be quite active in the 70th prophetic week (Daniel 2:41-43; 7:8, 23-25; 11:36-45; Matthew 24:15-24; Revelation 6-18). Since this is still future we can, once more, safely posit there is a break between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel's prophecy.

What is this time gap called? The Age of Grace. It's the age where Jesus graciously calls all sinners, regardless of who they are, to believe in Him as their personal resurrected Savior and Lord. All those who confess Him shall find forgiveness for their sins and become inheritors of eternal life (Romans 10:9). In light of this, I must ask you: Is He your Savior? If not, what barriers are keeping you from coming to Him in faith? Believe me, those barriers and excuses will bring no consolation to you when you are cut off from His glorious presence on the day of

judgment. Wise people consider the evidence just presented and bow before His blood-stained cross, seeking His forgiveness and cleansing.

One last component of the prophetic plan God revealed to Daniel through the angel, Gabriel can't be missed:

- *It Has Time Summation* (Daniel 9:27). Again, we will read the text and then offer some salient observations:

²⁷ “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The antecedent of the “he” is the prince of verse 26, or the Roman leader. Since we know the Anti-christ will come from the revived Roman Empire, and that there is a gap between verses 26 and 27, this man is none other than the man of sin or the Anti-christ. Again, this cannot refer to Titus for he never made a covenant of this nature with Israel, denoted by “the many” (Daniel 11:39; 12:2), and he certainly did not make a peace treaty with them for a seven year period. He, on the contrary, decimated them, as a people. This prophecy, therefore, must look well into the future, and it does. Even the book of Revelation, written some thirty years after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., informs us that the work of the world's final king, the Anti-christ, was/is still future.

What is foretold here? God informs Daniel that Israel will go through another literal time of trouble prior the final revelation of the Messiah. As the first 69 prophetic weeks were literally fulfilled, this final 70th week would consist of seven literal years of Satanic attack against Israel at the hands of the final prince, the Anti-christ. His geo-political arrangement with Israel would start with a peace treaty at the beginning of the seven year period. In the middle of that period, or 3 ½ years into it, he would/will break that treaty and summarily stop their worship of God in their rebuilt temple (which is currently being pursued by Jews in the Holy Land via the Temple Institute).

In fact, he would desecrate the temple like Antiochus Epiphanes did years earlier with his abominable actions (1 Maccabees 1:45-54; Daniel 11:31; 12:11). Desolation and destruction will then follow his evil actions against Israel as he sets himself as God of this world. We can readily see how this could easily transpire. The Middle East knows no peace, and the Islamacists surrounding Israel currently violently oppose them at every turn, and would love nothing more than to see their national demise. Into this mix it is prophesied a false prince will literally arise and his peace will be false and short-lived. Revelation 13 details how he will oppose Jews and saints without mercy.

But all of this Satanic activity will only last 7 years per God's decree. Just as the literal 70 year captivity drew to a divine close, this 70th literal week, or seven year period will find reach its end. And how will it end? With the literal and glorious return of Jesus, as He said:

²⁷ “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Friend, currently we are living at 11:59 p.m. on God’s prophetic clock, and right now the clock is on a divine pause. Once, however, He starts that clock back up with the signing of the peace treaty between the Anti-christ and Israel, mankind will descend into the final seven years of world history. Believe me, from what I know of that period from prophecy, you are not going to want to be there. You are going to want to be with Christ in heaven. In this Age of Grace He, the one who came and died as precisely prophesied, is lovingly and tenderly calling to you.

Will Thompson’s old hymn *Softly and Tenderly* puts this all in perspective with these moving, timely lyrics:

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
 Calling for you and for me;
 See, on the portals He’s waiting and watching,
 Watching for you and for me.
 Refrain:
 Come home, come home,
 You who are weary, come home;
 Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
 Calling, O sinner, come home!