

Daniel 7:13 – Son of Man ... Coming on the clouds of heaven

¹³ “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

One of the key phrases and concepts that was introduced in Daniel 7 is the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. While this may seem a trifle phrase and concept that we can easily gloss over without much thought, the ancient Jewish Rabbis properly understood this as describing the coming of the Messiah. Only the Messiah could come in the clouds of heaven and that is why Caiaphas tore his clothes when Jesus quoted from Daniel in Matt 26:63–65. When he stood before Caiaphas, Jesus depicted this coming in the clouds as yet future (ὄψεσθε, future middle 2nd plural of ὁράω – to see), and it refers to the future Second Coming of Christ and cannot refer to His first advent. This is why Daniel 7:13 cannot refer to His first coming.

The general chronology of Daniel 7 supports this; as well as Revelation 19 and Matthew 24 (the major passages on the Second Coming). We have the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, the destruction of the little horn, and then the establishment of the kingdom. This agrees perfectly with the premillennial position.

Are there other passages that mention “Son of Man ... coming in the clouds of heaven?” Yes, there are; and they provide additional focus.

Matthew 24:30 (and other similar passages in the gospels)

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.

We will study Matt 24 at a later time in much detail, but the main point here is to notice that the phrase is capitalized in the NASB text. This means that translators recognize this phrase as a direct quote from the Septuagint (Greek OT). Notice the additional details in this passage; namely, that a sign will appear in the sky and that all the tribes of the earth will mourn.

Revelation 1:7

⁷ BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

The Revelation passage also makes reference to a sign, such that everyone will see Him, and the tribes of the earth mourn over Him. The additional detail of “those who pierced Him” is included in this passage as well.

With these additional details (piercing and mourning), I believe we can comfortably correlate one additional passage of significant value in our discussion. That would be Zechariah 12:10.

Zechariah 12:9-10

⁹ And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

The Zechariah passage, along with the Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation passage allow us to partially piece together a coherent set of Second Coming events that will play out in the immediate timeframe of the end. Here is what we can conclude so far, at the Second Coming ...

1. Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.
2. As He is coming, the whole world will see Him.
3. When the Jews around the world see Him (a subset of 2 above) they will recognize Jesus as their Messiah.
4. God will pour out the spirit of grace and supplication to the Jews causing their **national repentance** at the Second Coming
5. As an outward sign of their national repentance, they will all mourn over Him as they would weep bitterly over a firstborn son who has died.

If we were to study the details of how these things will happen in the future, we will uncover (not that it is hidden) that one of the major purposes of God for the future seven-year tribulation period is to bring the nation of Israel to its knees into repentance. In conjunction with this purpose, it will be the goal of Satan to destroy the nation of Israel during the tribulation period so there are no Jews left to repent and thereby prevent the Second Coming.

These are absolutely critical concepts to keep in mind as we go along in our study of eschatology. We will see that other eschatology systems that incorrectly piece together past/future events cannot give a coherent view that harmonizes these related passages (and others). For example; the Preterism of mainstream Protestant theology.

Why is this relevant to Daniel chapter 9? From the OT scriptures, the blessing and cursing section of Deuteronomy, it is required that the *repentance* of the nation must take place before national *restoration*. The OT prophets we have studied in the past (Joel and Micah) attest to this. For example, consider Joel 2. The chapter begins with a proclamation that the Day of the Lord is coming. He urges His people to repent with fasting, mourning, and weeping. He tells the entire nation in 2:16–17 to join in this repentance. In verse 18 ... Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and will have pity on His people. The description of the Messianic age follows and continues into chapter 3. The point is that *national repentance is required before national restoration* can take place and the scriptures indicate that that national repentance will occur (for most Jews) at the Second Coming of Christ. This is why in Acts 3 (Peter's second sermon), he urged the Jews to repent (Acts 3:19–20) ...

"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;²⁰ and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,²¹ whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

Daniel 9:1–2

¹ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans-- ² 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.

"In the first year of his reign" ... would be approximately 538 BC. Since the Babylonian exile began in 605 BC, this would mean that 605 – 538 = 67 years have transpired in exile. Daniel would have been in his 80s by now. The two passages Daniel would have studied are Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10-14 (briefly look these up in context).

Daniel recognized that God's judgment to exile the nation would last 70 years. Why is the 70 years so specific? Is there any reason why God chose 70 years to send the nation into exile? Yes. Consider the end of 2 Chronicles ... chapter 36 ends with ...

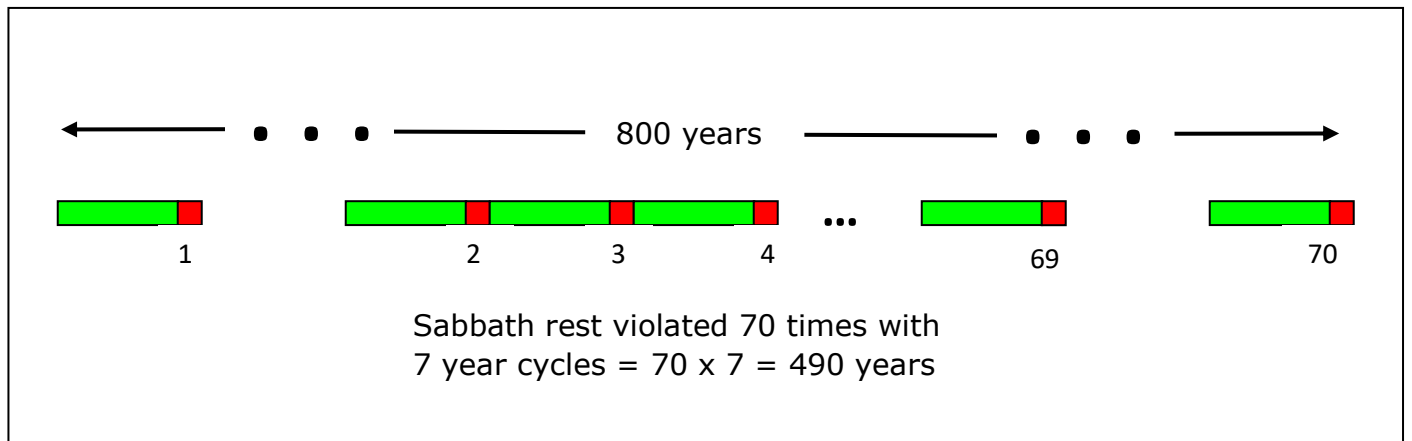
²¹ To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths, and all the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.

What does it mean that the land is supposed to have a sabbath rest? Where are the instructions in the Mosaic Law for the requirement? The instructions for giving the land its Sabbath rest are found in Leviticus 25.

¹ The LORD then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, ² "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the LORD. ³ 'Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, ⁴ but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

Why did God send the nation into exile? For their rebellion. Why was 70 years chosen by God for the duration of the exile? This corresponds to the number of years which the nation failed to give the land its Sabbath rest. Since the sabbath cycle for land was 6 years farming, followed by 1 year of sabbath rest, this corresponds to a total of 70 x 7 = 490 years within their history (it was more than 800 years from Egypt to the exile) that they neglected to follow the Mosaic Law.

If we detail the narratives in the Kings/Chronicles we surely understand that there were good kings and bad kings. During the time of the good kings, it is a fair assumption that the king required the nation to observe the Sabbath rest for the land every seven years. But there were certainly bad kings who occasionally did not hold the nation to this requirement. Since God decreed through Jeremiah that the Babylonian exile would last 70 years, and part of the reason (perhaps even the only reason) the exile lasted 70 years was to allow the land its Sabbath rest, we can conclude that during the reign of the kings of Israel the nation had violated the Sabbath rest cycle a total of 70 times.



The above helps illustrate the historical situation as the Kings/Chronicles do not provide enough details to specifically decide when the nation of Israel skipped the Sabbath rest for the land. God certainly kept track of that and He says it happened 70 times; since He invented arithmetic ... He surely knows how many times they violated the sabbath rest laws.

These two ideas (the repentance of the nation before the Second Coming and the sabbath rest for the land) come together to provide important background into Daniel 9.

In Daniel 9, some 12 years or so after the vision of chapter 8, Daniel is still perplexed by the vision. He is investigating the prophet Jeremiah and begins to confess the sin of the nation before the Lord God. Perhaps Daniel was unsure that the closeness of the end of the exile would cause his people to return to God ... so he took matters into his own hands with his rather lengthy prayer in verses 3–19. Let us skip this section and go right to verse 20. I will be preaching a sermon on Daniel's prayer in the coming weeks.

Daniel 9:20–23

²⁰ Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in *my* extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. ²² He gave *me* instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. ²³ "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell *you*, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

Notice that Gabriel came to explain the vision. What vision? There are two schools of thought, neither of which is completely convincing. One, since Daniel was still confused about the vision of chapter 8, Gabriel came to explain more details about it (though it was 12 years later). Two, the statement is general in nature ... "I have come to give you understanding into the things which I am about to tell you." I think the first seems reasonable in that the topic of the Second Coming was not mentioned in chapter 8, nor the coming kingdom. Perhaps chapter 9 is a continuation/enhancement of the end of the vision in chapter 8 and the focus is now on the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem and its relation to the coming kingdom.

Daniel 9:24–27

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*. 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."

Daniel 9:24–27 is the most difficult passage in the OT to interpret correctly because of the number of exegetical decisions that need to be made. We will go through much of this material in great detail. These items will be numbered along the way for clarity and structure. There are some preliminary items that need to be considered. Let's get started ...

Item 1: Are the numbers/time periods in Daniel 9:24–27 to be taken literally?

Factors that indicate that we should take the numbers/time periods literally:

- A. Daniel was contemplating the end to a literal 70-year exile.
- B. Specific numbers are used in the prophecy, for example, 1, 7, 62; it seems unreasonable that specific and definite numbers would be used for indefinite time periods.
- C. There is nothing in the context that suggests a non-literal use of the numbers.

Item 2: Where in Jeremiah was Daniel reading from?

- A. Jeremiah 25:11–12
- B. Jeremiah 29:10–14

Both passages clearly speak of a literal 70-year captivity in Babylon; Jer. 29 also speaks of a restoration. Though Daniel was correct in his understanding of what would happen after the exile (Jews would return home), and when it would end (soon), that return would not yet involve the full restoration predicted by the OT prophets in the coming kingdom. Gabriel was sent to give him insight into the correct **timing** of God's plan. This plan was a plan of **delayed** restoration; the proper theological term for this kind of delayed fulfillment is called "prophetic postponement." God has specifically postponed the full restoration of Israel until another period of time is completed. Gabriel came to elaborate on the nature of that time period.

Item 3: What is the meaning of "seventy weeks?"

The Hebrew text literally says "seventy sevens" have been decreed. That these should refer to groups of seven years is suggested by Daniel's contemplating the reason for the exile, to allow 70 Sabbath resting years for the land. As we saw above, one of the purposes of the Babylonian exile was to allow the Sabbath rest for the land, which had been violated 70 times during Jewish history. Since the Sabbath years occurred in groups of 7 (six years to plant crops, one year for Sabbath rest of the land) the total number of years would be $70 \times 7 = 490$ years total.

The terminology "seventy weeks/seventy weeks of years" refers to seventy sevens of years. The translators of the NASB choose "seventy weeks" to allow us to get a better picture of what is meant. Just about every commentator and scholar agrees that the seventy sevens refers to 490 years. Sabbath violations over 490 years ... now another 490 time period has been decreed.

Item 4: What is the meaning of the verb in vs. 24 that is translated "have been decreed?"

This is a unique word that appears only here in the entire OT. It has the basic meaning of "cut" or "sliced off" and it came to mean "divide" or "determine." It appears that Gabriel chose this unique word to say that God was carefully choosing or determining the length of Israel's remaining prophetic history.

Item 5: What does the prophecy pertain to, i.e., who is it for?

This is perhaps the most significant point in the entire prophecy. Since Daniel was praying specifically for his people and his holy city, Gabriel informs him that the prophecy pertains to exactly what Daniel was praying for. The prophecy is "for your people and your holy city." This is such an obvious statement that it is stunning that many expositors and scholars try to make it fit within the context of the NT church.

In the time of Daniel, who were Daniel's people and his holy city? There can only be one unique answer to this question that makes sense to Daniel. The prophecy pertains to the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem only. Any attempt to make this include the church in some way misses the mark totally. One of my favorite quotes from a snarly dispensationalist on this topic comes from Robert Culver:

"Let the postmillennial and amillennial commentators look long and steadily at this fact. This prophecy is a prophecy for Daniel's people and Daniel's city. No alchemy of Origenistic spiritualizing interpretation can change that."

Poor Man's Diagram of the Seventy Weeks Prophecy

²⁴ "Seventy weeks have been decreed

for **your people**

and

for **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.

²⁵ So you are

to know and

(to) 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

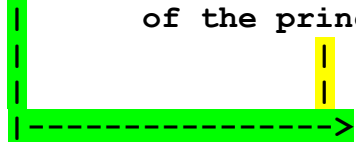
the Messiah will be cut off and
(will) have nothing,

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
(to) 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."