

## Church Fathers on Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week

Barnabas writes, *"For it is written, 'And it shall come to pass, when the week is completed, the temple of God shall be built...in the name of the Lord.' I find...that a temple does exist. Having received the forgiveness of sins...in our habitation God dwells in us....This is the spiritual temple built for the Lord."* (EOB, 16:6)

This early Christian writer connects Daniel's vision of seventy weeks with the prophecy of Haggai 2:7-9 and the building of a *"spiritual temple,"* the Church. The author of the Epistle of Barnabas obviously believed that Daniel's 70th week was fulfilled with Christ's first advent.

Clement became bishop of Alexandria until his death in 215 AD. Clement writes of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD in the prophetic language of Daniel's seventy weeks, *"Vespasian rose to the supreme power (Emperor of Rome) and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place"* (STO, XXI, 142-143).

Origen writes, *"The weeks of years up to the time of Christ the leader that Daniel the prophet predicted were fulfilled"* (TPR, IV:1:5).

In 203 AD Tertullian wrote, *"Vespasian vanquished the Jews...and so by the date of his storming Jerusalem, the Jews had completed the seventy weeks foretold by Daniel"* (*An Answer to the Jews*, VII; CID).

Athanasius was bishop of Alexandria from 326 to 373 AD. *"Jerusalem is to stand till His coming (Daniel's reference to Messiah's appearing in His First Advent), and thenceforth, prophet and vision cease in Israel...but from that time forth all prophecy is sealed and the city and Temple taken"* (INC, XXXIX:3-XV:8).

**Irenaeus and his pupil Hippolytus are the only two writers from the early Church period who believed in a still-future fulfillment of Daniel's 70th week.** They both placed the 70th week at the end of the gospel age and so are the first interpreters to postulate a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks (AG, V). *Both predicted a specific date for the second coming that has long since come and gone.* <sup>[SEPISEPI]</sup> But their belief in a future 70th week was never widely accepted!

Jerome specifically pointed out that the number of years in their system did not coincide with the historical events they purported to cover. He wrote, *"If by any chance those of future generations should not see these predictions of his (Irenaeus) fulfilled at the time he (Irenaeus) set, then they will be forced to seek for some other solution and to convict the teacher himself (Irenaeus) of erroneous interpretation"* (CID)

Eusebius (325) wrote: *"So when all the intermediate matter between the seven and the sixty-two weeks is finished, there is added, 'And he will confirm a Covenant with many one week,' and in half the week the sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and on the Holy Place shall come the abomination of desolation...Let us consider how this was fulfilled.*

*"The whole time of our Savior's teaching and working miracles was three years and a half, which is half a week...*

*"And from that time a succession of all kinds of troubles afflicted the whole nation and their city until the last war against them, and the final siege, which destruction rushed on them like a flood with all kinds of misery of famine, plague and sword, and all who had conspired against the Savior in their youth were cut off; then, too, the abomination of desolation stood in the Temple...These words our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ sealed, when he said, 'When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, standing in the Holy Place, then ye shall know that her desolation draws near.'" (The Proof of the Gospel, chapter 2)*

To see the patristic confusion over the 70 weeks, see: <http://www.bible.ca/H-70-weeks-daniel.htm>

- 160AD Clement of Alexandria (On Daniel 9:24-27 ; The 'Seventy Weeks' of Daniel) "160 AD Clement of Alexandria **"Cyrus had, by proclamation, previously enjoined the restoration of the Hebrews.** And his promise being accomplished in the time of Darius, the feast of the dedication was held, as also the feast of tabernacles. There were in all, taking in the duration of the captivity down to the restoration of the people, from the birth of Moses, one thousand one hundred and fifty-five years, six months, and ten days; and from the reign of David, according to some, four hundred and fifty-two; more correctly, five hundred and seventy-two years, six months, and ten days. From the captivity at Babylon, which took place in the time of Jeremiah the prophet, was fulfilled what was spoken by Daniel the prophet as follows: **"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to seal sins, and to wipe out and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies. Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the word commanding an answer to be given, and Jerusalem to be built, to Christ the Prince, are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; and the street shall be again built, and the wall; and the times shall be expended. And after the sixty-two weeks the anointing shall be overthrown, and judgment shall not be in him; and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary along with the coming Prince. And they shall be destroyed in a flood, and to the end of the war shall be cut off by: desolations. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the middle of the week the sacrifice and oblation shall be taken away; and in the holy place shall be the abomination of desolations, and until the consummation of time shall the consummation be assigned for desolation. And in the midst of the week shall he make the incense of sacrifice cease, and of the wing of destruction, even till the consummation, like the destruction of the oblation."** That **the temple accordingly was built in seven weeks, is evident; for it is written in Esdras. And thus Christ became King of the Jews, reigning in Jerusalem in the fulfilment of the seven weeks.** And in the sixty and two weeks the whole of Judaea was quiet, and without wars. And Christ our Lord, "the Holy of Holies," having come and fulfilled the vision and the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Holy Spirit of His Father. **In those "sixty and two weeks," as the prophet said, and "in the one week," was He Lord. The half of the week Nero held sway, and in the holy city Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius.** And Vespasian rose to the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place. And that such are the facts of the case, is clear to him that is able to understand, as the prophet said. On the completion, then, of the eleventh year, in the beginning of the following, in the reign of Joachim, occurred the carrying away captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar the king, in the seventh year of his reign over the Assyrians, in the second year of the reign of Vaphres over the Egyptians, in the archonship of Philip at Athens, in the first year of the forty-eighth Olympiad. The captivity lasted for seventy years, and ended in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, who had become king of the Persians, Assyrians, and Egyptians; in whose reign, as I said above, Haggai and Zechariah and the angel of the twelve prophesied. And the high priest was Joshua the son of Josedec. And in the second year of the reign of Darius, who, Herodotus says, destroyed the power of the Magi, Zorobabel the son of Salathiel was dispatched to raise and adorn the temple at Jerusalem. The times of the Persians are accordingly summed up thus: Cyrus reigned thirty years; Cambyses, nineteen; Darius, forty-six; Xerxes, twenty-six; Artaxerxes, forty-one; Darius, eight; Artaxerxes, forty-two; Ochus or Arses, three. The sum total of the years of the Persian monarchy is two hundred and thirty-five years. (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, book 1, chapter 21)
- 160AD Tertullian "Vespasian, in the first year of his empire, subdues the Jews in war; and there are made lii years, vi months. For he reigned xi years. And thus, in the day of their storming, the Jews fulfilled the lxx hebdomads predicted in Daniel ." (An Answer to the Jews 8.) (On the Seventy Weeks of Daniel)

- 200AD Hippolytus of Rome (70 weeks) 16. That transgressions, therefore, are blotted out, and that reconciliation is made for sins, is shown by this. But who are they who have reconciliation made for their sins, but they who believe on His name, and propitiate His countenance by good works? **And that after the return of the people from Babylon there was a space of 434 years [bible.ca note: the actual number is 538 years till Christ's birth], until the time of the birth of Christ, may be easily understood.** For, since the first covenant was given to the children of Israel after a period of 434 years, it follows that the second covenant also should be defined by the same space of time, in order that it might be expected by the people and easily recognised by the faithful. 17. And for this reason Gabriel says: "And to anoint the Most Holy." And the Most Holy is none else but the Son of God alone, who, when He came and manifested Himself, said to them, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me;" and so forth. Whosoever, therefore, believed on the heavenly Priest, were cleansed by that same Priest, and their sins were blotted out. And whosoever believe it not on Him, despising Him as a man, had their sins sealed, as those which could not be taken away; whence the angel, foreseeing that not all should believe on Him, said, "To finish sins, and to seal up sins." For as many as continued to disbelieve Him, even to the end, had their sins not finished, but sealed to be kept for judgment. But as many as will believe on Him as One able to remit sins, have their sins blotted out. Wherefore he says: "And to seal up vision and prophet." 18. For when He came who is the fulfilling of the law and of the prophets (for the law and the prophets were till John), it was necessary that the things spoken by them should be confirmed (sealed), in order that at the coming of the Lord all things loosed should be brought to light, and that things bound of old should now be loosed by Him, as the Lord said Himself to the rulers of the people, when they were indignant at the cure on the Sabbath-day: "Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years, be loosed on the Sabbath-day?" Whomsoever, therefore, Satan bound in chains, these did the Lord on His coming loose from the bonds of death, having bound our strong adversary and delivered humanity. As also Isaiah says: "Then will He say to those in chains, Go forth; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." 19. And that the things spoken of old by the law and the prophets were all sealed, and that they were unknown to men, Isaiah declares when he says: "And they will deliver the book that is sealed to one that is learned, and will say to him, Read this; and he will say, I cannot read it, for it is sealed." It was meet and necessary that the things spoken of old by the prophets should be sealed to the unbelieving Pharisees, who thought that they understood the letter of the law, and be opened to the believing. The things, therefore, which of old were sealed, are now by the grace of God the Lord all open to the saints. 20. For He was Himself the perfect Seal, and the Church is the key: "He who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth," as John says. And again, the same says: "And I saw, on the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals; and I saw an angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" and so forth. "And I beheld in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, a Lamb standing slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having harps and golden vials full of incense, which is the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." He took the book, therefore, and loosed it, in order that the things spoken concerning Him of old in secret, might now be proclaimed with boldness upon the house-tops. 21. For this reason, then, the angel says to Daniel, "Seal the words, for the vision is until the end of the time." But to Christ it was not said "seal," but "loose" the things bound of old; in order that, by His grace, we might know the will of the Father, and believe upon Him whom He has sent for the salvation of men, Jesus our Lord. He says, therefore, "They shall return, and the street shall be built,

and the wall;" which in reality took place. For the people returned and built the city, and the temple, and the wall round about. Then he says: "After threescore and two weeks the times will be fulfilled, **and one week will make a covenant with many; and in the midst (half) of the week sacrifice and oblation will be removed, and in the temple will be the abomination of desolations.**" 22. For when the threescore and two weeks are fulfilled, and Christ is come, and the Gospel is preached in every place, the times being then accomplished, **there will remain only one week, the last, in which Elias will appear, and Enoch, and in the midst of it the abomination of desolation will be manifested, viz., Antichrist, announcing desolation to the world.** And when he comes, the sacrifice and oblation will be removed, which now are offered to God in every place by the nations. These things being thus recounted, the prophet again describes another vision to us. For he had no other care save to be accurately instructed in all things that are to be, and to prove himself an instructor in such. 23. He says then: "**In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia,** a word was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar; and the word was true, and great power and understanding were given him in the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three weeks of days. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three weeks of days were fulfilled. On the fourth day of the first month I humbled myself," says he, "one and twenty days," praying to the living God, and asking of Him the revelation of the mystery. And the Father in truth heard me, and sent His own Word, to show what should happen by Him. And that took place, indeed, by the great river. For it was meet that the Son should be manifested there, where also He was to remove sins. (The interpretation by Hippolytus, (bishop) of Rome, of the visions of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar)

- 200AD Hippolytus of Rome (On The "Iron Kingdom" of Daniel 7) "Speak with me, O blessed Daniel. Give me full assurance, I beseech thee. Thou dost prophesy concerning the lioness in Babylon; for thou wast a captive there. Thou hast unfolded the future regarding the bear; for thou wast still in the world, and didst see the things come to pass. Then thou speakest to me of the leopard; and whence canst thou know this, for thou art already gone to thy rest? Who instructed thee to announce these things, but He who formed thee in (from ) thy mother's womb? That is God, thou sayest. Thou hast spoken indeed, and that not falsely. The leopard has arisen; the he-goat is come; he hath broken his horns in pieces; he hath stamped upon him with his feet. He has been exalted by his fall; (the) four horns have come up from under that one. Rejoice, blessed Daniel! thou hast not been in error: all these things have come to pass. ... "After this again thou hast told me of the beast dreadful and terrible. 'It had iron teeth and claws of brass: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.' Already the iron rules; already it subdues and breaks all in pieces; already it brings all the unwilling into subjection; already we see these things ourselves. Now we glorify God, being instructed by thee." (Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, p. 210, pars. 32, 33.)
- 200AD Hippolytus of Rome (70 weeks) 43. With respect, then, to the particular judgment in the torments that are to come upon it in the last times by the hand of the tyrants who shall arise then, the clearest statement has been given in these passages. But it becomes us further diligently to examine and set forth the period at which these things shall come to pass, and how the little horn shall spring up in their midst. For when the legs of iron have issued in the feet and toes, according to the similitude of the image and that of the terrible beast, as has been shown in the above, (then shall be the time) when the iron and the clay shall be mingled together. Now Daniel will set forth this subject to us. For he says, "**And one week will make a covenant with many, and it shall be that in the midst (half) of the week my sacrifice and oblation shall cease.**" **By one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world of which week the two prophets Enoch and Elias will take up the half.** For they will preach 1, 260 days clothed in sackcloth, proclaiming repentance to the people and to all the nations. (Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, p. 210, pars. 43.)

- 220 AD Sextus Julius Africanus "On the Seventy Weeks of Daniel. 1. This passage, therefore, as it stands thus, touches on many marvellous things. At present, however, I shall speak only of those things in it which bear upon chronology, and matters connected therewith. That the passage speaks then of the advent of Christ, who was to manifest Himself after seventy weeks, is evident. For in the Saviour's time, or from Him, are transgressions abrogated, and sins brought to an end. And through remission, moreover, are iniquities, along with offences, blotted out by expiation; and an everlasting righteousness is preached, different from that which is by the law, and visions and prophecies (are) until John, and the Most Holy is anointed. For before the advent of the Saviour these things were not yet, and were therefore only looked for. And the beginning of the numbers, that is, of the seventy weeks which make up 490 years, the angel instructs us to take from the going forth of the commandment to answer and to build Jerusalem. And this happened in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia. For Nehemiah his cup-bearer besought him, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be built. And the word went forth commanding these things; for up to that time the city was desolate. For when Cyrus, after the seventy years' captivity, gave free permission to all to return who desired it, some of them under the leadership of Jesus the high priest and Zorobabel, and others after these under the leadership of Esdra, returned, but were prevented at first from building the temple, and from surrounding the city with a wall, on the plea that that had not been commanded. 2. It remained in this position, accordingly, until Nehemiah and the reign of Artaxerxes, and the 115th year of the sovereignty of the Persians. And from the capture of Jerusalem that makes 185 years. And at that time King Artaxerxes gave order that the city should be built; and Nehemiah being despatched, superintended the work, and the street and the surrounding wall were built, as had been prophesied. And reckoning from that point, we make up seventy weeks to the time of Christ. For if we begin to reckon from any other point, and not from this, the periods will not correspond, and very many odd results will meet us. For if we begin the calculation of the seventy weeks from Cyrus and the first restoration, there will be upwards of one hundred years too many, and there will be a larger number if we begin from the day on which the angel gave the prophecy to Daniel, and a much larger number still if we begin from the commencement of the captivity. For we find the sovereignty of the Persians comprising a period of 230 years, and that of the Macedonians extending over 370 years, and froth that to the 16th year of Tiberius Caesar is a period of about 60 years. 3. It is by calculating from Artaxerxes, therefore, up to the time of Christ that the seventy weeks are made up, according to the numeration of the Jews. For from Nehemiah, who was despatched by Artaxerxes to build Jerusalem in the 115th year of the Persian empire, and the 4th year of the 83d Olympiad, and the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes himself, up to this date, which was the second year of the 202d Olympiad, and the 16th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, there are reckoned 475 years, which make 490 according to the Hebrew numeration, as they measure the years by the course of the moon; so that, as is easy to show, their year consists of 354 days, while the solar year has 365 $\frac{1}{4}$  days. For the latter exceeds the period of twelve months, according to the moon's course, by 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  days. Hence the Greeks and the Jews insert three intercalary months every 8 years. For 8 times 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  days makes up 3 months. **Therefore 475 years make 59 periods of 8 years each, and 3 months besides. But since thus there are 3 intercalary months every 8 years, we get thus 15 years minus a few days; and these being added to the 475 years, make up in all the 70 weeks.** (Sextus Julius Africanus, 220 AD)
- 225AD Origen "The weeks of years, also, which the prophet Daniel had predicted, extending to the leadership of Christ, have been fulfilled" (Principles, 4:1:5). (On the Seventy Weeks of Daniel)
- 403AD Sulpcius Severus (On Daniel's Seventy Weeks) "But from the restoration of the temple to its destruction, which was completed by Titus under Vespasian, when Augustus was consul, there was a period of four hundred and eighty-three years. That was formerly

predicted by Daniel, who announced that from the restoration of the temple to its overthrow there would elapse seventy and nine weeks. Now, from the date of the captivity of the Jews until the time of the restoration of the city, there were two hundred and sixty years." (p. 254, ch. 11, Sacred History)

- 420 AD Cyril of Alexandria "**Now three score and nine weeks of years contain four hundred and eighty-three years.** He said, therefore, that after the building of Jerusalem, four hundred and eighty-three years having passed, and the rulers having failed, then cometh a certain king of another race, in whose time the Christ is to be born." (Cyril of Alexandria, 420 AD)