

TWO PROPHETIC ERRORS

POST-MILLENNIALISM AND DISPENSATIONALISM

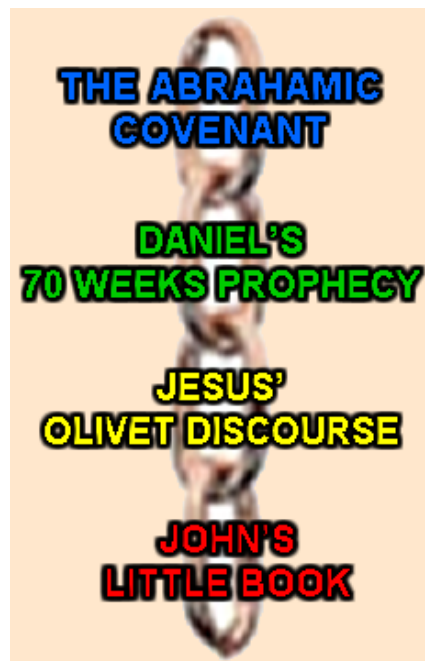
by Chuck Porritt

www.SecondTree.net

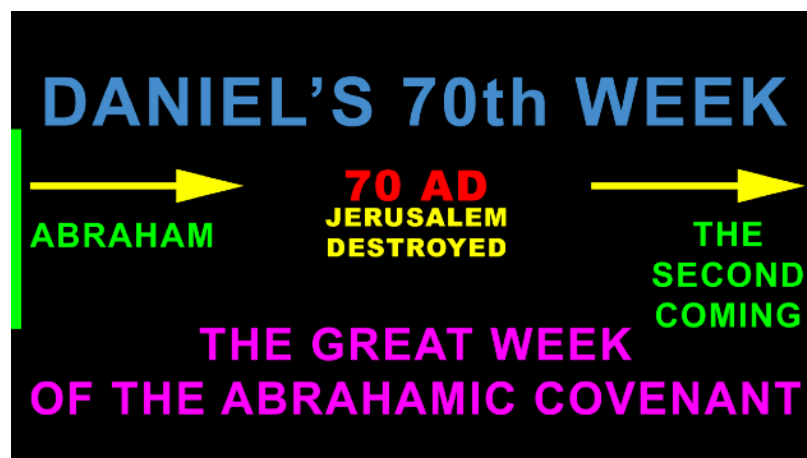
dcporritt@gmail.com

DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?

At the beginning of each page of the Prophecy Section of this journal I ask this question, and explain God's timetable for the second coming of Jesus Christ. That timetable is Daniel's '70th Week'. The first four pages of my Prophecy Section correspond to four links in a divine 'prophetic chain':

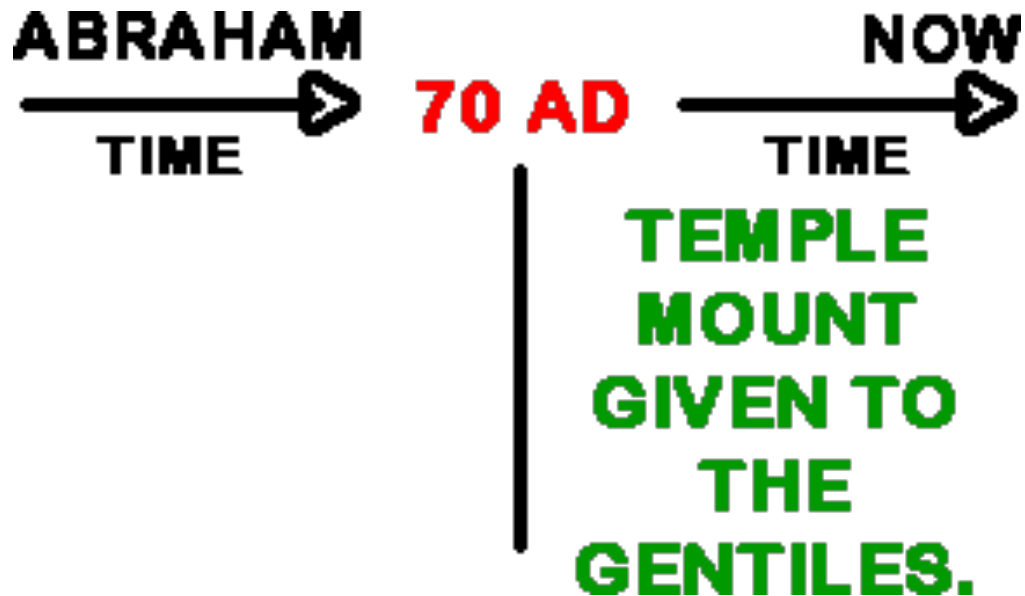


A side-by-side comparison of the three versions of Jesus' Olivet Discourse (from Matthew, Mark and Luke), combined with an examination of the four visions of John's Little Book (in Revelation chapters 11-13), leads to the undeniable conclusion that Daniel's 70th Week is the 'Great Week of the Abrahamic Covenant'.

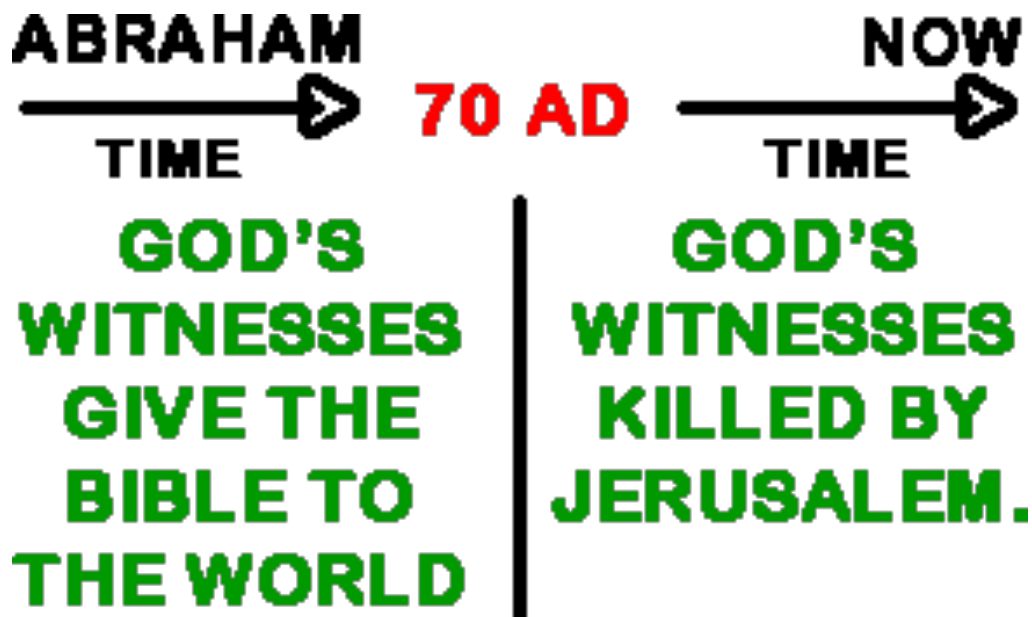


If John's 'Little Book' did not exist, I myself would feel compelled to embrace one of the other two major views on Daniel's 70th Week; either Post-Millennialism or Dispensationalism. But John's Little Book does exist. I present the four visions from that 'Little Book' in the four diagrams below:

1) THE TEMPLE AND THE COURTYARD (Revelation 11:1-2)



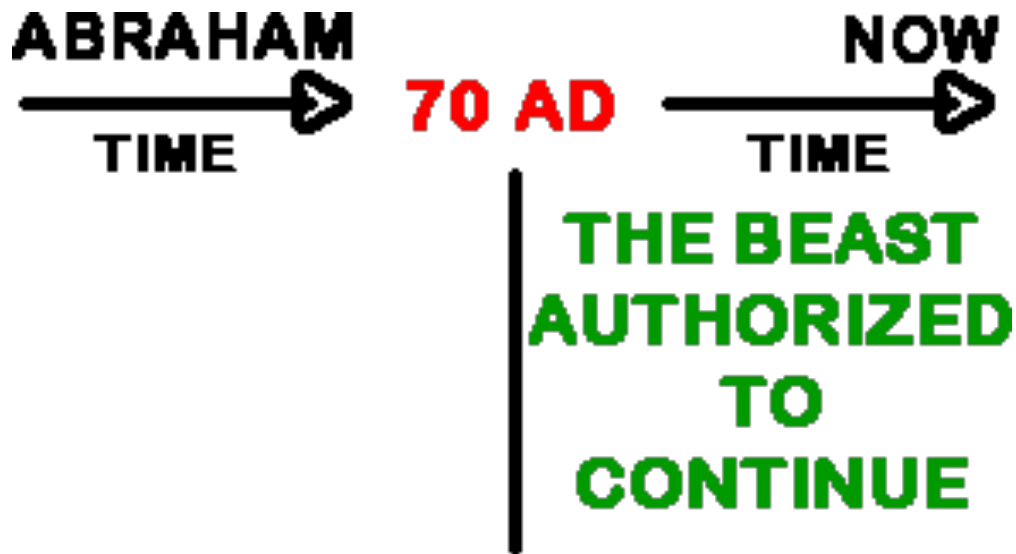
2) THE TWO WITNESSES (Revelation 11:3-12)



3) THE WOMAN, THE CHILD AND THE DRAGON (Revelation 12)



4) THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (Revelation 13)



THE MAJORITY VIEW ON OLIVET

For much of the history of the 'Christian Church' a great many Christians have understood that Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was Daniel's 'Abomination of Desolation', referred to by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. They have reached this conclusion through a simple, side-by-side comparison of Matthew, Mark and Luke's versions of Jesus' message. And by allowing Luke's version to shed light upon Matthew and Mark, they have rightly concluded that 70 AD marks the midpoint of Daniel's 70th Week.

It might be fair to say that, up until the rise of Dispensationalism in the late 1800's, this view of the Olivet Discourse was the majority opinion both in Protestant churches, as well as in the Latin and Greek churches. In fact, it may still be the majority opinion throughout the broader 'Christian World', despite Dispensationalism's widespread adoption.

POST-MILLENNIALISM

But while many Christians have correctly identified the midpoint of the Week, they often have not gone on to consider John's Little Book, and what its four visions reveal about the entire Week. Instead, they have operated on the assumption that the 70th Week is just like the first 69 Weeks of Daniel's '70-Weeks Prophecy'; a 'week' of 7 regular calendar years.

And so by combining their belief that **1)** 70 AD marks the midpoint of that Week, and **2)** that the 70th Week is only 7 years long (or something close to that), they have concluded that **3)** we are now living in the next phase of God's prophetic schedule; the Millennium.

Some of these Christians believe that Jesus' second coming already occurred in one sense, invisibly, at the end of the 70th Week. They believe that He came to bring judgment upon Israel and to establish His Church as the Millennium began. They believe, however, that the visible bodily return of Christ will not come until after (post) the Millennium. Hence the label: 'Post-Millennialism'.

THE POST-MILLENNIAL ERROR:
ASSUMING THAT THE 70th WEEK IS ONLY 7 YEARS LONG

Several beliefs are often associated with Post-Millennialism:

- 1) National Israel has now been forsaken by God, and replaced with the 'true Israel'; the Christian church. This has come to be known as '**Replacement Theory**'.
- 2) Christ will not come back until the Church has 'Christianized' and subdued the world. Many Postmillennialists believe that they must 'conquer the world for Christ' before He will come back to assume His rightful throne and leadership. This has come to be known as '**Dominionism**'. And rather than observe a clear separation between 'church and state', this view tends to blur that distinction. Indeed, some Postmillennialists believe that God wants them to 'become the state'.
- 3) Inherent within this idea, that God has ordained that the Church will subdue the world, is an inclination toward optimism about the future. Postmillennialists are confident that **a better world will come about through their efforts**. Such optimism fuels their enthusiasm for Christian service.

PRE-MILLENNIALISM

However, even though Post-Millennialism (and an associated Millennial view known as A-Millennialism) became common within Protestant churches in Great Britain and Europe, there were Protestants who opposed the Post-Millennial view. Some of those opponents were found among the 'Plymouth Brethren' of Ireland and England. And in the mid-1800's one of their leaders was a man named John Nelson Darby. Darby was correctly convinced that...

- 1) The Millennium will follow the physical, bodily second coming of Christ; to conquer and judge a rebellious world. Hence the return of Christ will be Pre-Millennial.
- 2) National Israel had not been cast off and forgotten by God. The scriptures definitely foretell a restoration of national Israel under Christ, as the promised Son of David and joint heir of the 'promised land' with Abraham.
- 3) Pre-Millennialists hold a more pessimistic view of the days before Christ's second coming; days characterized by increasing moral deterioration and overt hostility toward God. Because of this Dispensational expectation, some Post-Millennialists refer to Pre-Millennialists as 'Pessi-Millennialists'. But the question needs to be asked: 'Is it reasonable to label anyone who believes that Christ will ultimately come to conquer sin and death, and to rule the world in righteousness and peace, a pessimist?'

I myself am Pre-Millennial in my views. This message is not critical of Pre-Millennialism.

It is critical of the Dispensational version of Pre-Millennialism.

DARBY'S INVENTED GAP

Although Darby was correct in his views about the Millennium, he embraced the same mistake as the Post-Millennialists. He also assumed that the 70th Week is just like the first 69 weeks; a week of 7 literal years.

And so Darby felt compelled to separate the 70th Week from the first 69 weeks, pushing it out into the future; so that he could also move the Millennium (that follows the 70th Week) out into the future with it. Darby introduced a time gap between the 69th week and the 70th week that he called a divine 'Dispensation'.

Darby claimed that Israel's 'prophetic clock' stopped with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. And he taught that Israel's 'prophetic clock' would not start again until the beginning of the 70th Week. Darby called his gap between the 69th Week and the 70th Week the dispensation of 'the Church Age'.

This Dispensational 'Church Age' is the cornerstone of 'Darbyism' or 'Dispensationalism'. But in order to give their 'Church Age' credibility, Dispensationalists have gone on to divide all of human history into several successive 'divine dispensations'. And so Dispensationalism was turned into a 'systematic theology'. This has served two purposes:

- 1) To add credibility to the 'Church Age', by portraying it as only one small part of a greater whole; just one of 'many parts in a divine plan'.
- 2) To obscure the fact that the 'Church Age' is actually the one and only defining characteristic of Dispensationalism.

THREE DESCRIPTIONS OF JERUSALEM'S FALL

In order to understand Darby's thinking, it is first necessary to compare the three versions of Jesus' Olivet Discourse side-by-side. For a more in-depth discussion of the Olivet Discourse I would encourage my visitor to go to my page titled [The Olivet Discourse](#).



JESUS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

The three versions of the Olivet Discourse are essentially identical, except for Jesus' words about the approaching desolation of Jerusalem that would happen in 70 AD. Below I present this part of Jesus' message (about the destruction of Jerusalem) from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Matthew and Mark's versions are very similar to each other, describing the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as Daniel's 'Abomination of Desolation':

Matthew 24:15-16 When you therefore shall see the **ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** (spoken of by Daniel the prophet) stand in the holy place (whoso reads, let him understand), then **let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains**.

Mark 13:14 But when you shall see the **ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION**, (spoken of by Daniel the prophet) standing where it ought not (let him that reads understand), then **let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains**.

As I have pointed out in my previous message on **Daniel's 70-Weeks Prophecy**, Daniel's words in Daniel 9:27 (about someone coming 'upon the wing of abomination to bring desolation') are condensed in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 to a shorter phrase; 'the Abomination of Desolation'. And it is this shorter version that the Lord Jesus used in Matthew and Mark to describe the rapidly approaching destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

But notice the difference in Luke's version:

Luke 21:20-21 And when you shall see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its **DESOLATION** is near. **Then let them who are in Judea flee to the mountains.**

Luke goes on to explain what the armies surrounding Jerusalem represent; the fulfillment of Jesus' warnings that God would soon bring terrible judgment upon Israel:

For these are the days of **VENGEANCE**, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that nurse children in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and **WRATH UPON THIS PEOPLE**. And **they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** Luke 21:22-24

Matthew and Mark were writing as Jews. The Jewish people understood what an 'abomination' that brought 'desolation' was; something extremely evil that would bring destruction. Gentiles, however, would not have been as familiar with Daniel or these Old Testament words. And Luke was a Gentile, writing to a predominantly Gentile audience. In addition Luke was a close acquaintance and frequent traveling companion of the Apostle Paul; the 'apostle to the Gentiles'.

And so, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke presented Jesus' words in a way that Gentiles would easily understand. This is why Matthew and Mark had to say 'let the reader understand'; warning people to be careful with Daniel's phrase; the 'Abomination of Desolation'. By contrast Luke's gospel is very plain and straightforward, requiring no such warning.

INTERPRETIVE VIOLENCE

Darby knew that Daniel 9:27 placed the 'Abomination of Desolation' at the midpoint of the 70th Week:

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. But **in the middle of the week** He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation (which is determined) is poured out on the desolate. Daniel 9:27

And so if Darby was to move the 70th Week out into the future, he would have to move the 'Abomination of Desolation' out into the future with it. But Darby ran into a problem. In Luke's version of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus was obviously using the word 'desolation' to describe Rome's rapidly approaching destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. So Darby had to come up with a way to allow Jesus to talk about 70 AD in Luke's gospel, while making Jesus talk about something completely different in the more obscure wording of Matthew and Mark's gospels.

Darby relied upon a concept called 'Dual Fulfillment' to achieve his goal. This is based upon the fact that in some cases a passage of prophetic scripture can find its fulfillment at two

separate points in history. For example in Ezekiel chapter 28 the prophet was instructed to foretell the downfall of the king of Tyre. Yet it is obvious that at the same time God's words were describing the ultimate judgment and destruction of Satan.

Another example is of how both Isaiah chapter 47 and Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51 foretold the destruction of ancient Babylon at the hands of the Persians around 538 BC. And yet it is clear that these passages also look ahead to the greater, final destruction of 'Babylon' that is the theme of Revelation chapter 18. Dual Fulfillment is indeed a valid concept.

And so Darby claimed that Daniel's 'Abomination of Desolation' could be fulfilled at two different points in history as well. He claimed that 'Dual Fulfillment' allows us to see that while in Luke's gospel Jesus was talking about Rome's desolation of Jerusalem in 70 AD, in the exact same corresponding location in Matthew and Mark's gospels Jesus was supposedly referring to a completely different event; at the midpoint of a far-future '70th Week'.

But there is one problem with Darby's reasoning. It is indeed true that one passage in scripture can foreshadow more than one future event. But in the case of the Olivet Discourse we are talking about three passages. We are not reasoning from one passage to multiple possible meanings. We are reasoning from multiple passages to a single meaning.

We are examining the combined testimony of three witnesses in order to understand one specific message. This testimony of three witnesses challenges us to find clarity in Jesus' words, not cloudiness. The discovery of simplicity in Jesus' words should be the expectation of the Bible student; not complexity. After all, God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

This is the foundational claim and primary error of Dispensationalism; that Jesus was not being straightforward, but rather that it is necessary to 'read between His lines'.

Dispensationalism insists that three separate historical accounts of ONE message, given by ONE Man, on ONE day, to ONE group of people are actually saying TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS.

Matthew and Mark's versions of the Discourse include a warning to the reader to be careful to understand what Jesus was talking about. But Luke's version contains no such warning. This is because Luke was a Gentile, writing to a largely Gentile audience. And so Luke was more plainspoken and straightforward.

But instead of allowing Luke's version to shed light upon Matthew and Mark's versions, letting 'scripture interpret scripture', Dispensationalists blatantly disregard Matthew and Mark's warnings about being careful. Instead they have chosen to complicate the passage, and to insist that the testimony of its three witnesses differ radically from each other. They make the Son of God talk out of both sides of His mouth when He was giving the most important prophetic message in history! In effect they accuse Him of 'double-talk'.

However well-intentioned Darby may have been, and correct about the Pre-Millennial return of Christ and the errors of 'Replacement Theology' and 'Dominion Theology', his decision to twist God's word in order to create a fictional '70th Week' was a terrible mistake. Darby's 'ends' do not justify his 'means'.

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

In the first four pages of this prophecy section, I have provided the complete and correct explanation of Daniel's 70-Weeks Prophecy. And then building upon that primary framework of the 70th Week, I have also provided accurate prophetic explanations of Israel, the Beast, the False Prophet, Rome and the United States. A correct understanding of the 70th Week is absolutely necessary for an understanding of these other prophetic subjects. And it is foundational to true Christian faith and preparedness in these last days.

In those nine prophecy pages I chose not to comment on Post-millennialism and Dispensationalism. Instead I have simply let the proverbial 'lion' out of its cage; letting truth defend itself. But having done that, I believe it's also necessary to 'call out' error. We are admonished by God to use spiritual truth to pull down every 'stronghold' that exalts itself against the true knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4). And so in this page on prophetic errors I am doing that.

Both Post-Millennialism and Dispensationalism have left many in darkness; not only because they have missed the true meaning of Daniel's 70th Week, but because they have also abused it by forcing the events of John's Little Book into a framework of 7 literal years.

I will not say much more specifically about Post-Millennialism, because I have not had much exposure to it. I was initially evangelized, and then eventually came to repentance and faith within a Dispensational context. I do know that Post-Millennialists erroneously insist that many passages in Revelation should not be taken literally, but understood figuratively or symbolically.

But Post-Millennialism's primary error precedes their allegorization. Theirs is a 'sin of omission'; a sin of neglect. Rather than take the truth that they know (that 70 AD marks the midpoint of Daniel's 70th Week) and plug it into John's Little Book, they have chosen to 'bury their talent in the ground' (Matthew 25:24-28). They have squandered their 'gift'. By glorying in what they know, saying 'we see', they have blinded themselves. And thus they have validated the warning of the apostle Paul:

**And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.
1 Corinthians 8:2**

Dispensationalism's sin, however, is one of 'commission'; an assertive act. Dispensationalism (however well-intentioned) begins by mishandling Jesus' Olivet Discourse. And it then proceeds to compound its error by compelling other passages of scripture to support its mistake.

BEGINNING AT DANIEL 9:27

In my page titled **Daniel's 70-Weeks Prophecy**, I divide Daniel 9:27 into its three sentences; and then I explain each one. Daniel 9:27 reads like this:

- 1) Then he will confirm a covenant with many **for one week** (the 70th week).
- 2) But in the **middle** of that week he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt.
- 3) And on the wing of abominations will come **one who destroys**, until the decreed end is poured out upon the **one who destroys**. Daniel 9:27, New English Translation

In that page I point out that there are only two possible choices regarding the 'he' in this verse; it must be one of the two persons referred to in the previous verse 26. It must be either Israel's Messiah, or a prince of the Roman people; the people who would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. And then I go on to explain why it is Israel's Messiah who is the subject. The 27th verse reveals the three things that Jesus would be able to do as a result of His death:

- 1) Confirm the Abrahamic Covenant.
- 2) Bring an end to the old Mosaic Covenant.
- 3) Cast Satan out of heaven and down to earth; a winged abomination who would bring desolation (destruction).

Dispensationalists, however, have embraced the other choice. They claim that the 'he' of Daniel 9:27 is the 'prince who is to come'. And according to Dispensationalists this 'prince' is not Titus in 70 AD, but some future 'prince of Rome' in the distant future. He is supposedly the apostle Paul's 'Man of Sin', and the apostle John's 'Antichrist' (both rolled up into one person). And this 'Man of Sin'/Antichrist will supposedly fulfill the three sentences of Daniel 9:27 in the following ways:

- 1) He will establish a new covenant with the Jewish people at the beginning of a future '70th Week'.
- 2) He will bring an end to Jewish sacrifices and offerings in the middle of that 'Week'.
- 3) He will become an 'abomination of desolation' by standing in the Temple and calling himself God.

In order to refute Dispensationalism's error, I will discuss the four people whom they use to populate and validate their fictional story:

- 1) PAUL'S MAN OF SIN (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12)
- 2) ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES (found in Daniel chapter 11)
- 3) THE ANTICHRIST (found in the 1st and 2nd epistles of the Apostle John)
- 4) THE LITTLE HORN OF DANIEL CHAPTER 8

PAUL'S MAN OF SIN

Paul's 'man of sin' is described in 2 Thessalonians:

Let no man deceive you by any means. For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first. And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped. So that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

For centuries Protestant Christians have understood Paul's 'Man of Sin' to be the Roman Catholic priesthood. The Roman Catholic priesthood steals the three divine offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: Prophet, Priest and King.

Rome's priests portray themselves as God in three ways:

- 1) Beginning with Constantine, and his Council of Nicea, Rome began to confer upon itself the prophetic authority to not only decide what the Bible says, but also eventually to add to the Bible.

2) Beginning with Constantine, **priestly authority** to administer 'saving sacraments' began to be embraced (a concept called 'sacramentalism'). Eventually Roman priests would claim that they are offering the living body and blood of Christ to God in the Catholic Mass; as an atonement for people's sins.

The author of Hebrews tells us that this is a Priesthood reserved for the Son of God alone; that He alone is God who has stood in the heavenly Temple of God with His own blood (Hebrews 9:24). The Bible says that we must come directly to Jesus to be saved. But Rome says that we must come to Rome to be saved.

3) Beginning with Constantine, Rome's leadership has claimed **kingly authority** to declare and wage 'holy war' under the banner of the cross; thus making Rome the 'king of kings, and lord of lords'.

But Darby departed from this Protestant understanding, because there was a trait of Paul's 'Man of Sin' that was useful to him. That trait supposedly enabled Darby to claim that Paul's 'Man of Sin' could be an 'abomination of desolation'. Darby claimed that sitting in the Temple and calling one's self 'God' amounts to desolating the Temple; becoming 'an abomination that causes desolation'.

Before going any further, I must point out two things:

1) Contrary to Darby's definition, the biblical word 'desolation' always means **complete destruction**; often as a judgment from God. The world experienced desolation in the flood of Noah's day. Sodom and Gomorrah experienced desolation. Jerusalem experienced desolation at the hands of Babylon in 586 BC, and again at the hands of Rome in 70 AD. And 'Babylon the Great' will someday be made desolate (Revelation 17:16, 18:19).

2) There is nothing said by Paul (in 2 Thessalonians) about the 'Man of Sin' confirming covenants, bringing an end to sacrifices and offerings, or desolating anything.

Nevertheless Darby believed that he had found an Old Testament precedent that would justify calling Paul's 'Man of Sin' an 'abomination of desolation'. That 'precedent' was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (A4E). Darby claimed that God Himself had called A4E an 'abomination of desolation' (in Daniel 11:31), because A4E had called himself God while standing in the Temple in Jerusalem in 167 BC.

Darby and the Dispensationalists have made much of A4E's last name; 'Epiphanes'. It means 'God revealed' or 'God manifested'. And it is certainly reasonable to believe that A4E was arrogant, and may have even called himself 'God' as he stood in Jerusalem's Temple. It was not uncommon for kings and rulers in his day to attribute divinity to themselves, and to demand reverence or worship from others.

But for Dispensationalists this question is about more than an objective examination of history and the scriptures. For them it is a matter of life and death. If they cannot claim that Paul's 'Man of Sin' is the one who comes 'on the wings of abomination to bring desolation' in the middle of Daniel's 70th Week, then **the** central pillar of their future 70th week collapses.

Having already trampled upon Jesus' Olivet Discourse, the entire Dispensational narrative desperately hangs upon **one** question; Did God call Antiochus IV Epiphanes an 'abomination of desolation' in Daniel 11:31?

SETTING THE STAGE: DANIEL 11:29-31

After the famous Greek general, Alexander the Great, finished conquering much of the world, he died a short time later in 323 BC. After his death his Greek Empire was divided among his generals into four smaller Greek kingdoms. The people of Israel found themselves living between two of those kingdoms; the Seleucid kingdom to the north, and the Ptolemaic kingdom (in Egypt) to the south.

In the 11th chapter of the book of Daniel, God gave the people of Israel very specific prophecies regarding the future interactions and wars that these two kingdoms would have with each other. This very accurate foretelling of events was given by God because Israel would be trampled upon by these two kingdoms. These prophecies would be needed to strengthen, encourage and reassure the people of Israel during those difficult times.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (A4E) is the last Seleucid leader mentioned in Daniel chapter 11. His father, Antiochus III (Antiochus the Great), had been defeated and conquered by the Romans. As a result of that defeat, A4E had seen Rome and its power firsthand. The Bible describes A4E as a 'vile' man who would not rise to power in a dignified way, but through deceit and treachery (Daniel 11:21). He would not be viewed as royalty by others.

Daniel 11:29-31 describes A4E's third and final trip from his own land north of Israel, to confront the Ptolemaic Egyptian kingdom to the south of Israel (in 168 BC). A4E was pursuing further territory and wealth. But this third trip would not go well for A4E.

Below I present the Dispensational understanding of this passage. I have divided the passage into two parts (splitting verse 30 in half) for reasons which I will explain shortly. Dispensationalists claim that every 'he' in both of these two parts refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This is because they need A4E to be 'the abomination of desolation' in the final sentence. Therefore I have highlighted every instance of 'he' in red:

At the appointed time **HE** shall return and go toward the south. But it shall not be like the former or the latter. For (Roman) ships from Cyprus shall come against **HIM**. Therefore **HE** shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant (of Israel), and do damage.

So **HE** shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by **HIM**, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress. Then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and establish there the abomination of desolation. Daniel 11:29-31

Historians tell us that when A4E approached Egypt for the third time in 168 BC, the Ptolemaic dynasty called upon Rome for protection. And as A4E was preparing to attack, he was confronted by a Roman representative; Gaius Popilius Laenas. This Roman leader ordered A4E to retreat. And when A4E said that he wanted 'to think about it', the ambassador drew a circle around him in the dirt and told him that if he did not provide an answer before leaving the circle, it would be seen as a declaration of war against Rome.

These are the humiliating circumstances in which A4E bowed to Rome, and then did damage to Jerusalem on his way home. He might have been told while on his way to Egypt that the God of Israel had foretold his failure. If so, this might help to explain his rage against God's city, Temple and people during his return from Egypt.

But to this day the witness of the Jewish people is not that A4E desolated (destroyed) the Temple in his rage, but that he **DESECRATED** (defiled or polluted) it. Many Jewish people still celebrate the cleansing of the Temple, and its restoration for worship in traditions like Hanukkah; that look back to the re-dedication of the Temple. And A4E's presence in Israel did not last long. After attacking Jerusalem in 167 BC, he returned to his homeland and died in 164 BC.

WHAT DANIEL 11:29-31 REALLY SAYS

According to Dispensationalists, every instance of 'he' and 'him' (highlighted in red in the divided passage above), is a reference to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. And so according to Dispensationalism it is A4E who defiled the Temple, took away its sacrifices, and established 'the Abomination of Desolation' in verse 31.

But as I present these three verses once again, I would propose a different understanding. I have purposely divided this passage at the midpoint of verse 30, because I believe that the 'he' referred to after that midpoint is not Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but the Roman Empire. And so in this second presentation of this same passage, I continue to label references to A4E in red, but references to Rome in blue:

At the appointed time **HE** (A4E) shall return and go toward the south. But it shall not be like the former or the latter. For (Roman) ships from Cyprus shall come against **HIM**. Therefore **HE** shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant (of Israel), and do damage.

So **HE** (Rome) shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by **HIM** (Rome), and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress. Then **they** (Rome) shall take away the daily sacrifices, and establish there the abomination of desolation. Daniel 11:29-31

What I am proposing is that the midpoint of verse 30 marks a scripturally important transition point; from Greek dominance over Israel to Roman dominance. When A4E bowed to Rome's demand that he cease his aggression against Egypt and return home, that moment marked the final and total dominance of Rome over every remaining trace of the Greek Empire; bringing the people of Israel under Roman dominance at the same time.

In support of my argument, I would first point out that the numbering of Bible verses is not divinely inspired. People have created numbered verses for the convenience of finding things easily within the Bible. Therefore we are not obligated to assume that the 'he' in the first half of verse 30 is the same person as the 'he' in the second half of that verse.

Also in support of my argument I would emphasize two things:

1) God's prophetic words about A4E were given within the larger context of Israel's subjection to four successive Gentile empires. Israel had already passed through Babylonian and Persian domination. And A4E was a Greek 'king'. But God was revealing that A4E would be the last Greek king to dominate Israel; that he would bow and submit to the Roman Empire, and thus transfer dominion over Israel to Rome at that time.

2) And God did not want the world to be unaware of this important moment in history. God has gone out of His way to draw attention to it. After first coming to power, A4E made three trips to Egypt. And with each of those trips, God made it plain that He was very much in control of everything that was happening, and that He was pointing to a specific moment:

A) Regarding A4E's first trip to Egypt, God said "He shall devise his plans against the strongholds, **BUT ONLY FOR A TIME (Daniel 11:24).**

B) Upon A4E's second trip to Egypt, God said "Both of the kings hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table. But it shall not prosper, for **THE END WILL STILL BE AT THE APPOINTED TIME (Daniel 11:27).**

C) And then God gave His description of A4E's third and final trip to Egypt:

AT THE APPOINTED TIME he shall return and go toward the south. But it shall not be like the first or second time. For (Roman) ships from Cyprus shall come against him. Therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy Covenant (of Israel), and do damage. Daniel 11:29-30a

It is clearly important that we ourselves also recognize this 'appointed time'; this historical transition point from Greek dominance to Roman dominance over Israel.

ROME'S FULFILLMENT OF DANIEL 11:30b-31

I now present the second half of the above passage again, beginning with verse 30b:

And thus shall he (ROME) do. He shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. And arms shall stand on his part. And they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice. And they shall establish the abomination that makes desolate. Daniel 11:30b-31

All of the things mentioned in these verses were done by the Roman Empire:

1) Rome did indeed return to Israel after confronting Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

2) Rome did indeed exercise influence through Jews who were not faithful to God's covenant. Jewish support for the Idumean family that began with Antipas, the father of Herod the Great, is an example of this. Such Jews are called 'Herodians' in the New Testament. Their close cooperation with Rome and the family of Herod was a source of wealth, power and prestige.

The fact that Jewish leaders would politically blackmail Pontius Pilate, 'twisting his arm' with a warning that "If he showed mercy to One who called Himself 'the King of the Jews', he would be betraying Caesar" (John 19:12), also sheds light upon the political interactions between Rome and unfaithful Jews.

And the fact that Roman leaders were willing to keep the apostle Paul in chains (despite his Roman citizenship) in order to please Jewish leaders (Acts 24:27, 25:9), also points to the dark connections between Rome and unfaithful Jews.

3) And military 'arms' were established for Rome against Israel. By contrast, after his humiliation by Rome and his temper tantrum in Jerusalem, military power was never again possessed by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. As I have already pointed out, he would return home from Jerusalem to die 3 years later; in 164 BC. By contrast, through its great military power, Rome would be able to...

4) Pollute the Temple (the sanctuary of strength),

5) Take away the daily sacrifices, and...

6) Establish the abomination that brought desolation (destruction) to Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.

And the rest of Daniel chapter 11 goes on seamlessly to describe the long history of Rome since 70 AD; leading right up to Christ's second coming.

Dispensationalism's failure to recognize the transition that occurred in the middle of verse 30, from Greek dominance over Israel to Roman dominance, has led them to attribute the 'abomination of desolation' in Daniel 11:31 to the wrong person. The 'abomination that makes desolate' in Daniel 11:31 is indeed Rome's destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, just as the Lord Jesus was indicating in His Olivet Discourse.

Neither do Dispensationalism's claims about A4E find support in Jewish tradition. Some Jewish authors during the times of the Maccabees (who heroically fought against the Greeks) did view A4E as the 'abomination of desolation' in Daniel 11:31. But their words are not divinely inspired.

And their words are not faithful to the biblical definition of desolation. A4E did not desolate the Temple; he desecrated it. Nor could they appreciate the momentous transition from Greek to Roman dominance that was happening right before their eyes. They were too close to the events. They could not appreciate the 'big picture' of Daniel 11:29-31; as people coming later would be able to do with the benefit of hindsight.

THE ANTICHRIST

The Antichrist is mentioned in only four verses, all written by the apostle John, and found only in two of his letters. The word 'antichrist' never appears anywhere else in the scriptures. It means what it appears to mean; one who is against or opposed to Christ.

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

1 John 2:18-19

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22

And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 1 John 4:3

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 2 John 8

As we examine John's words, the one thing that defines the antichrist is false doctrine. More specifically, John defines antichrists as...

- A) Those who profess faith in Christ, but have departed from biblical Christianity.
- B) Those who deny the Father and the Son (the Trinity).
- C) Those who deny that the Son of God has come into the world in human flesh.

John's description of an antichrist could apply to any one of a number of people, religions or cults that have claimed to be Christian (or to have respect for Christ), but have departed from the true Christian faith.

It should be observed that John never says anything about the Antichrist establishing covenants, ending sacrifices, claiming to be God, having miraculous powers, cooperating with the Beast or being destroyed at the second coming of Christ. Nor does he link 'the Antichrist' with any other passage of scripture. The term 'antichrist' is not even found in the great prophetic book which John himself wrote; Revelation.

Rather than take caution from this, many have taken advantage of it. Because of his sinister name, and because so little is said about him, many have felt free to plug the Antichrist into their end-times scenario wherever they please. For Luther and the Calvinists the Antichrist was the Pope. For others the Antichrist has been 'the Prince who is to come' (of Daniel 9:26), the 'Abomination of Desolation', Paul's 'Man of Sin', and 'the Beast'. One cannot count all of the books, articles and movies that have flowed out of John's very limited words about 'the Antichrist'.

Although John says that there are many antichrists, in 1 John 2:18 he seems to refer to one specific person; the Antichrist, who maybe surpasses all other antichrists in his opposition to God. So who is this Antichrist? I do not know. One candidate to consider would be Mohammad. Islam claims Biblical roots and speaks well of Jesus, but fiercely denies that God has a Son, and that Jesus was 'Emmanuel'; 'God with us' in a human body. There is no other religion that more directly and forcefully denies the deity of Christ than Islam.

Muslims have written 'God has no son' inside their shrine, the 'Dome of the Rock', sitting on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This will ultimately prove to be a profound embarrassment to them. It was this One who declared Himself to be the Son of God, and who predicted the desolation of the Temple and its possession by the Gentiles, whose words they now fulfill through their occupation of the Temple Mount.

THE LITTLE HORN OF DANIEL 8:9-12

This 'little horn' is the City of Rome; beginning as a very small power on the edge of the Greek Empire. Rome first expelled Greece from the Italian peninsula in 'The Pyrrhic Wars'. It then defeated its southern enemy, Carthage, in 'The Punic Wars'. And finally it proceeded to move east, conquering Greece and Asia Minor (defeating Antiochus the Great) before eventually taking over the rest of the East (including Israel).

This Little Horn exalted itself against the Prince of God's host, the Lord Jesus Christ. It then brought an end to the daily sacrifices, destroying Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 AD. Because of Israel's transgressions the Roman Empire was allowed to continue its dominance over the Jews, and to establish a religion (Roman Catholicism) that casts truth to the ground. This passage is a striking combination of brevity and accuracy regarding Rome's history.

But needing to reinforce their claim that Antiochus IV Epiphanes was an 'abomination of desolation', Dispensationalists have claimed that this 'little horn' (who brought an end to sacrifices and destroyed the Temple in verses 11 and 12) is also A4E. But this is obviously untrue.

In verse 9 this 'little horn' is not described as just great, but as 'exceedingly great'. But A4E is described as a 'vile', unworthy person; who obtained power through craftiness and deception

(Daniel 11:21). And so, not ever having been great in any sense whatsoever, A4E died four years after being humiliated by the Romans in 168 BC.

WHY IT MATTERS

In this final section I am choosing to be autobiographical. I became a Christian in 1975, at the age of 25. I undeservedly had come into both the 'amazing grace' and 'sovereign grace' of God. And the first five years of my Christian experience were very blessed.

But over those first five years I had concluded that I could do pretty much whatever I wanted to; that there was nothing that could separate me from the love of God or jeopardize my eternal security. Mine was a perspective that is widely referred to as 'Once Saved, Always Saved'.

But as I became increasingly proud, judgmental, self-willed and lustful in my ways, God did something for me that fellow Christians would not have been able to do. He turned me over to Satan for my physical destruction, so that I might learn not to blaspheme against God (1 Timothy 1:20), and so that my soul might ultimately be saved (1 Corinthians 5:5). God could have just left me to my high-handed sins, but thankfully He didn't.

This happened in the early Fall of 1980, when I felt the Holy Spirit sensibly depart from me while I was driving home from church on a Sunday evening. I knew that I had been testing the limits of God's patience, and now I became absolutely terrified at the thought that I had committed an unpardonable sin; that I had cut myself off from the grace and mercy of God forever.

This terror put me on a path to re-examine what the Bible says about ultimately entering heaven. And it also put me on a path to right every wrong, confess every sin, and to apologize to every friend and family member whom I had offended. My constant and open declaration to any and all was that I had misrepresented and dishonored the God who had saved me.

It would not be until late December in that Fall of 1980 that God would providentially show me that there was still a possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation with Himself. But I was not restored to fellowship with Him. In fact a restored sense of His presence and His peace did not come to me until the Fall of 1985; five years later. Today my view is that the Lord was putting me out into a field to 'eat grass', until I could come to my senses; just as He had done with King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel chapter 4).

During those four months of fear, humility, confession, and repentance (from Labor Day until Christmas in 1980, when Ronald Reagan was defeating Jimmy Carter for president), I came to understand two things:

A) That God likens the Christian life to the experience of the Hebrew people in the wilderness; between their deliverance from the death and bondage of Egypt, to their hopeful entrance into the 'promised land' of Canaan (1 Corinthians 10:1-12, Hebrews 3:7-19, Jude 5).

When a person is 'born again' and becomes a Christian, they likewise are delivered from the penalty and power of their past 'Egyptian' life. But just as God allowed the faith and obedience of the Israelites to be tested in their wilderness journey before they could enter the 'promised land' of Canaan (Exodus 15:22-26), so He also has ordained a wilderness journey where the Christian's faith and obedience are also tested.

At the point of conversion, the newborn Christian is truly justified in the sight of God. If he or she should die at that time, they would most certainly go to heaven. But for most Christians that initial justification is followed by the trial of our faith in the wilderness of life.

Jesus' baptism represents God's 'order of salvation'. 1) Jesus came as though He was a sinner, needing 2) the washing away of sin in regeneration. Jesus then 3) received the Holy Spirit, before being 4) justified; declared fully pleasing by the Father. But Jesus also exhibited the final step in God's 'order of salvation'. Jesus was 5) led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for the testing of His obedience (Matthew 3:13-4:1).

B) That the United States is the 'Little Horn' of Daniel chapter 7. That America is a 'boastful' nation that will be blaspheming God and waging war against His people in the very last days; right up until the second coming of Jesus Christ.

As someone who had grown up saying the 'Pledge of Allegiance' every day in school, and had come to believe that the United States is the greatest and best nation in the history of the world, this revelation hit me like a punch in the stomach. I was greatly unsettled by it.

Ever since that Fall of 1980, and God's chastening of my heart, I have always connected the necessity of obedient perseverance with a proper understanding of prophecy. They are inseparable. Jesus repeatedly linked faithful obedience and vigilant watchfulness with each other; especially in Matthew's record of the Olivet Discourse, and in the book of Revelation. Jesus warned about 'foolish virgins', unwilling to consider the possibility that they might not be ready when He comes (Matthew 25:1-13).

I suspect that such 'foolishness' lies at the heart of both Post-Millennial and Dispensational error; because Christians have not believed that the fate of their eternal souls rests upon their fearful handling of God's prophetic words.

Such errors have not come because Daniel's 70th Week is hard to understand. Its meaning could not be more plain, as any loving God would certainly have it be. One only need compare the three versions of Jesus' Olivet Discourse side-by-side, with simplicity of heart and mind (like a child). And then take 70 AD as the midpoint of Daniel's 70th Week and plug it into the four visions of John's Little Book. This is how God 'makes simple people wise' (Psalm 19:7).

And a proper understanding of prophecy is not only for the Christian. It cannot and must not be separated from the Gospel message itself. Today prophecy is the Gospel more than ever before. We no longer live in the 'peaceful days' of the 20th century. Now the battle between God's people and Satan is fully joined. And a true grasp of prophecy is an essential part of the Christian's courage, spiritual armor and message. Christians without an accurate understanding of prophecy are 'at sea without a compass'.

And I am convinced that in these last days God is going to help the previously 'un-churched' and 'un-evangelized' people of the world to understand the glorious message and simplicity of Daniel's 70th Week, while He leaves foolish and stubborn churches to their blindness. This is why it matters.