

The Seventy Weeks

Daniel 9: 24-27

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There is no prophecy of which the general scope is more certain than this of the Seventy Weeks; yet there are few on which so much debate has wrought, so much difference exists even among genuine believers. This is apt to create a certain measure of prejudice. So slow are our hearts to expect sure light from God, that the existence of a great variety of opinion, more especially if it be in those that love and value the truth, is apt to deter and turn aside even children of God. It ought not to be so; yet it is too often the fact. Yet to exclude part of the truth of God is not faith, but manifestly owing to prejudices or prepossessions; and particularly has it been so in the case of these Seventy Weeks.

But this at least is plain, that what God was here revealing to Daniel He was revealing through His servant to us. There is a snare too prevalent among Christians, now as ever, that they are on the look-out for something to bear upon their own circumstances. They have been apt to consider that the Church of God, being so great an object to God Himself, must therefore be always the foremost thought in prophecy.

But this does not follow, nor is it true in the Old Testament. The Church is not properly a subject of prophecy, but part of the mystery for which Scripture left room, and which is now revealed. Yet there may be some here who are under the influence of this opinion, and for their sake especially I may say that, besides salvation, there are two great subjects in the Bible; the one is the kingdom in the Old Testament, and the other is the Church in the New Testament. But nearer to God than the kingdom or the Church there is another object, and this is Christ, who is Saviour, as well as Head of the Church, and King not only of Israel but of the nations too. Hence the true key to understanding any part of Scripture, you will find, is to divest yourself as much as possible of any such external prepossession — in favour, for instance, of either the kingdom on the one hand or the Church on the other — as would hinder you from seeing that God is first of all thinking of Christ, whatever His special relation may be.

In this scene of the Old Testament we see the true centre — Christ, but Christ there in view of the kingdom in its earthly aspect; that is, the kingdom of Messiah as the display of the divine power on earth, of which display Israel is the centre. Indeed this is what gives us the real importance of either Israel or the Church; it is not because of anything intrinsically deserving in them, but wholly of Christ as connected with each. The moment we see that God is glorifying His Son, we understand that His object in heaven or earth must be Christ.

God, however, takes care that in the Old Testament there are words which could not be understood until the Church or Christianity came in. These words here and there received a blessed meaning when the assembly was introduced. And so with the New Testament: God takes care that none should think that the kingdom is done with. And this was of great importance. God had not abandoned the kingdom. Be it that the Church comes in; but even when it has been revealed fully, the kingdom must come also; so that neither when He was about to form the Church had He dropped the kingdom, nor, on the other hand, when He has brought out all His glorious thoughts as to the Church, has He given up the kingdom. 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.'

This helps us in the subject before us. If I approach it with the desire of seeing how it applies to me or the Church I am off the true ground. The translators seem to have turned aside the edge of the

passage by trying to make its meaning bear on the Christian Church, whereas you will learn that this adds nothing to us, but rather takes away. Whatever is meant for the Church is given in the best possible way in the Scriptures which speak about the Church: everything from elsewhere is apt to weaken the truth.

I will use no further preface, but at once turn to that which is before us; and I think we shall see at a glance what God has in view in the Seventy Weeks.

But first of all I would call your attention to the error of regarding the vision as something which one cannot comprehend. The word is, 'Understand the matter, and consider the vision.' Further, had it been simply for Daniel's personal understanding, it would not have been revealed to us. Daniel was inspired by the Holy Ghost to reveal the Seventy Weeks that we might not only read but with intelligence. We may, therefore, look to God to-night to give us such help by grace that we may comprehend this great matter.

And first of all you will notice that in the 24th verse you have the entire period. 'Seventy weeks are determined;' which is to say, that from the mass of time God was pleased to cut out a certain portion for a special object; but whether the portion or portions set apart, or cut out, for the object in question — seventy weeks — were to be all in consecutive order, or whether there was to be a gap or breach between them, remains to be seen. But the first object conveyed is, 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint a Holy of holies.'

Thus we have the scope of the vision; but we are not left to conjecture. 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people.' Whose people? Daniel's people. The Church? Clearly not. They were the Jews, notoriously at that time in the utmost possible depression — so completely degraded from the grand position in which God had planted them in their earliest history, that God had at this time taken away His name from them. Gabriel does not say that seventy weeks are determined on 'God's people' or on My people, as if speaking for Him, but on 'thy people.' They were only Daniel's people now. Hosea had predicted this a long time before. He was the instrument in making it known to Israel, a most solemn fact for an Israelite that had the fear of God and felt the just delight that his nation had been singled out from all others to be the people of Jehovah and have Jehovah as their God. But God announced to them by His prophet that they were no longer to be His people, though grace will surely make them so once more and for ever in the latter day (Hosea 1, 2, 3.).

And now, you observe, they were in captivity. It is true the time was very nearly at hand when God declared that they should return from Babylon; but they were not yet taken from under His sentence. It was just before Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years was fulfilled. They were on the eve of closing the seventy years of captivity in Babylon, and Gabriel was sent to announce the 'Seventy Weeks' — that is to say, seventy weeks of years. Of course, these years were on that very same people; but on that people, be it noted, not yet taken from under God's solemn 'Lo-ammi.' Whatever might be His glorious purposes in the future, and whatever His gracious ways with them for the present, still it is distinctly 'thy' people Daniel's people. God no longer owns them publicly as His people. No doubt there were believers among them, children of God like Daniel and others (as for instance, his three companions were of similar spirit, having received like precious faith with him); but the angel was not speaking of believers only, but about the Jews as a people.

It is the Jews then who are called, not 'My people,' but 'thy people' — Daniel's people. 'Seventy

weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city.' Jerusalem, doubtless, is still called a holy city; but it is no longer as God's own city: it is 'thy' — Daniel's — holy city. All this tends to make the great object of the Seventy Weeks perfectly plain. It is not Christianity or the Church that is contemplated, but Jerusalem — Daniel's holy city, and Daniel's people, the Jews.

The Seventy Weeks therefore, it will be seen from the very words with which they open, are bound up in the clearest possible manner with the Jewish people. 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.' Of the aim one cannot doubt when we look at these expressions as a whole; though we might perhaps have a question if we took up an isolated one. For instance, 'to finish the transgression' is, literally, to restrain it. But if one might have a little question about its meaning alone, when he adds, 'to make an end of sins' or, literally, to seal up sins, 'and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,' these words make the bearing perfectly plain. The seventy weeks were determined upon Daniel's people and Daniel's holy city to bring in the blessed time of which the prophet spoke — to fulfil the promises that God from the beginning held out to Israel. This, clearly, is the object; and accordingly we have it both in respect of sins, to close them, and in respect of righteousness, to bring it in, and not only so but to bring it in everlastingly (that is, righteousness not only given but also secured for ever). There could be no just question, therefore, that what Daniel was intended to gather, and what faith did gather, from Gabriel's communication was this, that at the end of these seventy weeks of years the long-promised blessing would be made good to Israel.

It is plain however that we must look into the prophecy to see whether the Seventy Weeks were to be continuous; whether or not there intervene a breach, an interruption or postponement of some. But at any rate these Seventy Weeks, described as they are here — for this is all-important for the truth of the prophecy — must be filled up in all their details for the Jew and Jerusalem. I shall show the importance of this before I have done. Clearly the end of the seventieth week would close, according to the word of God, with the fulness of blessing, and righteous blessing, brought home to Daniel's people and Daniel's city. That is, it is not at all a question of saving souls and bringing them to heaven; it is not here a question, therefore, of the purposes of God in connection with Christ above. It is the earth, and, above all, the well-known city, Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. These are the objects of the prophecy. 'And to seal up the vision and prophecy' is another thing, too, confirmatory of what I have said. Prophecy, instead of being given out more, was to be sealed up; the whole thing was to be closed. It implies the completion of what prophets had been raised up to predict; henceforth it was to be sealed up, and a Holy of holies anointed; or, in other words, the unfailing power of the Spirit of God would make the sanctuary of the Lord to be in the fullest sense the most Holy. There is in the phrase a slight difference, which has been used, not only by unbelievers, but even by believers, to bring in confusion. But I do not dwell on small points now, wishing to develop the object of the prophecy in as clear and brief a manner as possible.

Let us examine further. The 24th verse sums up the general scope of the Seventy Weeks; but now we come to look at the parts into which the Seventy Weeks are broken up. 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.' Here again we have most abundant confirmation, if this were needed, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. It is not the new and heavenly city, but the old Jerusalem. The end, no doubt, would be Jerusalem brought under the new covenant and the Messiah — under the sway of the King, when the Lord will reign over Israel; but still it is Jerusalem.

'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.' Surely this is a remarkable way of expressing it. The natural mode, it might seem to us, would be sixty nine or three score and nine; but not so: it is 'seven weeks, and threescore-and-two-weeks.' There is a design in this. God never says a word without a blessed reason — a wise and gracious motive; and so there is here. In thus naming the seven weeks there is a purpose, which appears in what follows; for we shall find that each of these two portions of time—the seven weeks, that is, forty-nine years, and then again the sixty-two weeks of years that follow — has a description that follows, which explains them, and shows the reason of the division, as well as the starting point. 'From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: the street shall be built again and the wall, even in troublous times.' Here is the reason of naming the seven weeks. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, hindered as it might be, was an object of interest to God: His word both predicts and records it.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and their fellows, might show their scorn of the little walls that were rising up. Precious to God was the death of His saints — their very dust; even then His servants took pleasure in the stones of Jerusalem. So it will be in the day that is coming, when indeed it will be the full accomplishment of what is always before God. But even that which reminded Him, if I may so say, or was at any rate meant to remind His people, that God had purposes of good for His degraded and long guilty Israel — that God would yet appear for them, and rear up Jerusalem to far more than pristine splendour — this was before God even then. It is full of interest, and, I think, an instructive thing for us, beloved friends, that God in a day of ruin takes special consideration of what is despised. Nay, I believe further, that what was lowly, and calculated to draw out the indignation of those that hated them, and the scorn of proud men against them, had a very special interest for God, and God reveals it here. We might have thought it not worth while to have spoken of such a thing in a book of prophecy; but God would give ample encouragement to the Jew in the midst of such adversaries. Was it not sweet to them to know that God had told it them beforehand? Were they then to be discouraged? Now the books of Ezra and of Nehemiah particularly throw beautiful light upon the facts which were the accomplishment of this word. There we find the street built again; there we find the details of the wall. We know the different men that took part in building it. We know some women too; for these too were not wanting even for that work. Wherever the heart is in question, you do not find women absent; and so it was that God has taken care to record their names for ever — those that took part in the building of that very wall, and occupied those very streets in these troublous times.

In short, then, we see these seven weeks are singled out that God might give us not merely a history but a prediction of the troubles. The derision, the hatred, the enmity, the endeavours to destroy, the continual intrigues and plottings in and round the land, the efforts to stir up the court of Persia against them, the carelessness of the people, the faults of the princes, the unfaithfulness of the priests — all these things counter-worked, the bitterest and most humiliating of all their sorrows being found among themselves — Daniel's people, not the Gentiles or even the Samaritans. Here then we have the prediction, not only the history of it; so much does God think of His people in the day of small things. This, I think explains the reason of the seven weeks.

But now for the sixty-two weeks. What makes up the sixty-two? Ah! here we come to something, I will not say externally grand, but I do say of all moment for God and man; and what was that? The death of the Messiah — his cutting off. 'After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off.' You will notice the peculiarity of the expression. It is not here said precisely, that He would be led as a lamb to the slaughter. It is not the point that He is to have our iniquities laid upon Him.

'It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him.' This is not the way in which it is now spoken of. The death of the Lord Jesus may be looked at in one of two ways; either from God's side, in the way of atonement, or from man's side, in the way of rejection. It is in the latter point of view that Daniel was here inspired to predict it. 'Messiah shall be cut off.' It is the violence of His death from man's hatred, and particularly too, as we know, because He had been cut off through the Jewish people — Daniel's people. That is the very scene opened here. We find it elsewhere. 'After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off but not for himself.'

Now here I have to call attention to the warping, not to say the blinding, influence of prepossession. Our translators considered that the death of the Messiah could only be viewed as an atonement. I dare say we have known people of similar mind. We have known persons who could not take in the death of the Lord for anything except to atone for sins. That is, being preoccupied with self and the wants of self, they have forgotten that God comprises other views. For instance, God must use the death of the Lord Jesus as a proof of the wickedness of man. This is not atonement, although it be when man is thus guiltily rejecting and slaying the Messiah that God accomplishes atonement. But still, we may look at it on the side of man and man's wickedness, or on the side of God, and God's grace, which are two different things. In short, the true meaning of the clause is not that which our translators have given. The margin is much more correct — 'and shall have nothing.' I am not aware of any version which, on the whole, presents the true thought more clearly than this.

It has been a matter for a great deal of discussion to many, and particularly among scholars. And my experience, beloved friends — and I know a little about what these men have said and written — is this, that there are no men less to be trusted than mere scholars, because, being scholars, they are naturally apt to be proud of their scholarship; and whatever we are proud of is always the very thing in which God will humble us. There is the mistake that Christian people often make. They very often overvalue the knowledge of a little Greek or less Hebrew. Depend upon it, that to know the English Bible well is far better than to know somewhat of Greek or Hebrew; and I have rarely found that knowing a little of these languages has any other effect ordinarily than to give a good deal of conceit. It enables persons, of course, to talk about knotty points, especially to those that do not understand them; but I do not think that really profitable for either party. However, I will, not expatiate upon this, although no doubt it has its practical lesson, because among active-minded Christians, such as those who are present, there is very often a strong desire to know accurately the things that God wrote. Now, if He give means and opportunity, I would not say a word to discourage; but I do advise you, before you begin, not to expect too much from it. Whatever may be the opportunities that you can look to have for learning, you are never likely to be great scholars. You may learn a little; but you must remember that as those of old who translated the Bible were men of real learning, so you are never likely, in this respect, to compare with them; nor can you hope to get by such study beyond what you have already got in the English Bible.

Is there no means then of getting further light? Certainly, and here we have a little help in the margin; for God takes care, in His grace, to raise up persons who, perhaps, spend a great deal of a long, laborious, and uninterrupted life in many of these pursuits; but even this would enable them, you may depend upon it, only to speak with considerable moderation. I think you will find that persons who know most are apt to speak most moderately. They are diffident, after all, as to their own judgment; and although they would give it where it is called for, they would not pronounce so dogmatically as a learner. Through such helps God corrects mistakes for His people.

I say then that the margin here gives the scope, in my opinion, more exactly; for it is not a

question at all of the Messiah not being cut off for Himself. The thought would thus be that He was cut off for other people. This is the implication, as it seems to me, of our version — 'but not for himself.' He was cut off for our sins. He suffered in atonement for our iniquities. Thus they only viewed the death of Christ in the light of expiation. But not so. The meaning is, that Messiah should be cut off and have nothing; that is, His inheritance is completely gone, His people refusing Him, His land not possessed, His kingdom denied, everything that belonged to Messiah taken away from Him. It was not only that Christ met with a violent death, but there was no repentance on the part of the people afterwards. Their cry was, 'His blood be on us and on our children.' Was this atoning blood? or was it not the expression of utter unbelief and the occasion of divine judgment? The Lord told them that He was about to leave their house desolate. He would not call it His Father's house now but 'their' house, and they should not see Him henceforth till they should say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.' And they will say so in the day that is coming; but this day is not yet come. Consequently, after the Lord was cut off on the cross, we see the Jewish people persisting in the same unbelief which put Him to that shameful death. They gave him up then to the hands of lawless men — the Romans, insisting on His crucifixion. And this is the point that the Spirit of God reveals here. He 'shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.' The literal meaning — though you must not suppose that the literal meaning is always the best way of rendering words — is this, 'And it shall not be to him.' This, of course, conveys no intelligible idea to most readers; but I presume that the meaning of the Hebrew idiom is, that nothing He could claim as His should belong to Him. He had now lost everything, as far as man was concerned. The Jews had risen up in rebellion against their own King, their own Messiah, the anointed Prince. They had put Him to death on the cross, and He had nothing. All the earthly hopes of Israel were buried in the grave of the Messiah. But it did not at all contradict what God shows elsewhere, that He will revive them in the end, and set them upon a solid basis that never can be shaken — that He will Himself see to it, and found it in pure grace upon that very cross, but the cross as used by God and not by man. Man used it to reject the Messiah. God will use it as a foundation for the kingdom in power and glory by-and-by, just as He has made it the foundation for our salvation and bringing us to heaven. But this is not what is spoken of here. All the vision makes known is what concerns Daniel's people and Daniel's city. And how did the cutting off of Messiah affect them? In rejecting Him they lost their place and nation. It was not only that He had nothing of all His earthly kingdom, but that they lost everything along with Him; and this is shown more fully afterwards.

'And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city.' Now, I ask, when did this come to pass? Clearly at the destruction of Jerusalem. We have seen that the cutting off of the Messiah was after the sixty-two weeks in addition to the seven (or sixty-nine weeks). Here is an interruption, and there could not be a more admirable place for marking the course of the seventy weeks as stopped. The death of the Messiah was a clean breach, not only between God and man, but very particularly between God and Daniel's people and so-called holy city. Daniel's people, Daniel's holy city, rose up against their own Messiah, and crucified Him. Consequently, sixty-nine weeks having run out now, it was 'after' that period. He does not say exactly at the sixty-ninth, but afterwards. That is, there is room left for a space, less or more: God does not say how long or how short. All we can surely gather from prophecy is this: Messiah was not to be cut off till after the sixty-nine weeks. 'After' that time, be the interval less or more, Messiah was to be cut off, and He was to have nothing. And then the next thing of which we hear is an event that took place some forty years, we may say in a general way, afterwards; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem.

Hence it is evident that the past siege has nothing to do with the line of these weeks. Their course is interrupted. The last link of the chain was broken after the Messiah's cutting off. The course of the

sixty-nine weeks till then has been uninterrupted; but now the gap comes in. It is created by the death of Messiah; and the next thing that we hear of is, that 'the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city.' What people is here meant? The Roman people. Mark, he does not say that the prince shall come and destroy. He avoids saying so. The people of the future prince — 'the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy.' There is the most guarded care not to tell us that the prince came then, but only that 'the people' of the coming prince would then come for their destined work of destruction. And this is so true that, although they had a prince at their head, the prince who then came up in command of the Romans was anxious not to destroy all. The great desire of Titus, as everybody who knows history must be aware, was to spare the temple; but, as the well-known historian of the Jews tells us, a Roman soldier flung a fire-brand into the temple, and the consequence was that, in spite of the efforts of the Roman commander, it was thoroughly consumed.

Thus, you see, Titus is not the prince that is meant here at all. It is a prince that was coming after the people came. His people were to destroy the city and the sanctuary, and so they did. The Romans came up, were manifestly used as the executors of God's vengeance against the Jews, and did destroy the city and the sanctuary, as the prophecy declares.

But there is a coming prince. A prince of whom? Of Israel? No; of the Romans. That prince has never yet come, and to this I call your particular attention. We have had the Messiah, the Prince; but He is the One that was cut off. Here we have a prince spoken of as coming after Messiah had come and been cut off. His people came and destroyed the city and the sanctuary; but he himself is not come. He was yet to be born. It is a future prince — a Roman prince; and this is the great link for which Satan is waiting. When the prince lifts up his head, Satan means to put forth his power in a way that he has never yet been able to do. He is coming, 'The people of the prince that shall come' — or of a prince that shall come — 'shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood.' The destruction of Jerusalem was not at all to be the end of Jerusalem's sorrows. 'The end thereof shall be with a flood,' just like water that does not come down in one sudden shower merely, but in an overwhelming flood. 'And unto the end war, desolatenesses, are determined.' That is, you have a long vista of things desolate as well as war, and this decreed, impending over Jerusalem after the destruction of it by the Romans.

Such has been the history of Jerusalem. What has it been up to the present day, but a city evidently and always under the abiding wrath of God! None but the enemies of God have been allowed to possess it. Nominal Christians, you know, took possession of it for a short time; but they were comparatively soon turned out, and the most violent enemies of Christianity, and especially of the Jews, as the rule, have followed. Even the nominal Christians hated the Jews. Thus Daniel's people have never had any except their bitterest enemies there, whether they might be Christians who attempted to found their supposed Christian kingdom, or Saracens, or Turks that hold Jerusalem up to the present moment. 'To the end of the war desolations are determined'; even as we have nothing but disaster threatened upon Jerusalem, so we also see how evidently this prophecy has nothing at all to do with the Church. It is Daniel's people, and Daniel's holy city.

But now we come to the last verse: 'And he shall confirm the covenant.' Who is he? Why, the last person just named of course. Who is that? 'The prince that shall come.' It is the Roman prince; and there is what has made the difficulty for most people in reading this prophecy, and made it impenetrable. They have actually confounded the Roman prince with the Messiah. They have not seen the Roman prince at all. They thought it must be Messiah that was to confirm the covenant. They had the new covenant in their minds, and therefore they could not understand. But where would be the good

of a new covenant for 'one week'? A covenant for the soul — a covenant for our sins — a covenant for the glory of God — how could this avail only for seven years? Where would be the sense of it? No; it is not Messiah. The Spirit of God here speaks of another prince, and a counter-prince — a prince that will ruin the people instead of loving them — a prince to be connected with the people that destroyed the city and sanctuary instead of building either up. Messiah is to build the temple; Messiah is to sit on the throne of His glory, and build it up another day. But this is to be an adversary of the Messiah — one of His great antagonists; for I suppose, not to speak of an antagonist opposed to both, that two will be at work on the same side; there will be a religious chief, and a political chief: — a fact indeed of great importance for understanding, not only this Scripture, but prophecy in general. If the religious chief is to have his seat at Jerusalem, the political chief will have his seat at Rome (that is to say, 'the prince that shall come,' or the Roman prince). The prince of Jerusalem would not be described as either coming or making a covenant with his own people. This, of course, would be quite senseless. A reigning prince does not make a covenant with his own people. He makes laws, and he sees to the execution of his laws. But we can understand a league, treaty, or alliance, whatever the form of it may be, with another people. Thus every word confirms what I have said — that the person spoken of in the 27th verse does not mean the Messiah, who is the prince of Israel; nay, he does not mean the Antichrist, or the false prince of Israel who will be reigning by-and-by in Jerusalem; but the Roman prince, or 'the beast,' the prince that shall come in the closing crisis.

When he is come, then, he shall confirm a covenant with the many 'for one week.' This is the last week. Here again we see that the last week was severed from the chain of the sixty-nine. The first sixty-nine weeks ran without a break to the cutting off of Messiah. After the sixty-nine He was cut off. Then was the snapping of the connection of the last week from the chain. That week remains to be accomplished in due time; and as the first sixty-nine weeks ran out before Christ's death, the last week is occupied with the Roman antagonist of Christ — the future political chief of the Roman empire who covenants with the mass of Daniel's people, Daniel's holy city. But then the end of that seventieth week is that the Messiah comes in power and glory; and in spite of the efforts of those that help or hinder, and the excessive wickedness then to be found in Jerusalem, all the promises will be accomplished. The Seventy Weeks will be fulfilled, and divine blessing will follow.

Who can deny a great gap? and in the midst of that gap what has come in? Christianity, the calling of the Church. This it fills up the space between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth; so that God is always actively working in His own grace and wisdom. Not a hint of this grace to the Gentiles appears here where the prophet speaks only of Messiah's rejection, and the consequent desolation of Jerusalem. Up to the sixty-ninth week it was a question of that poor people being delivered; but they trusted instead to the will of men and their own will to their utter ruin. They were slaves of Satan. The moment you get man's will you will always find Satan's service. Yet so it was. Satan hastened to take possession of that people too glad to throw off Jehovah, as it were, from making use of them as His goodly horse; and on the back of Judah vaulted Satan who thereon became their master and lord. Only there are greater abominations in store.

When and what will these greater abominations be? for such is not the case now. The Jews are what you may call decent people as yet. They are not worshipping stocks and stones. The unclean spirit that possessed them is gone. He left them, as our Lord intimated, after the Babylonish captivity, and he has stayed away for many hundred years. The house is still empty, swept and garnished; but He told them that the unclean spirit shall return, and return not as he went out, but with seven spirits worse than himself. The full power of Satan would accompany the unclean spirit in taking once more possession of Judaism. This is to be in the seventieth week.

Let us look a little more into details. 'And he,' this prince, 'shall confirm a covenant.' It does not mean the covenant. There is no such word there as the definite article. It is corrected in the margin. This is another case in which the margin gives a sense better than the text. You cannot always expect that; for sometimes the text is far better than the margin. But here we have two instances in this very prophecy where the margin is undoubtedly accurate. He shall confirm a covenant. Man is never to be trusted; and so, whatever the appearances may say, the Roman emperor is yet to make a covenant with the Jewish people to let them have their own religion — to sanction its exercise in their own city, and in their own sanctuary. For this, I apprehend, is what the covenant was about. 'He shall make a strong covenant with the many.' 'The many' means the mass of the Jewish people; and the mass of the Jewish people are thus singled out for the reason that there will be some who will not trust the prince. There will be godly ones at this very time truly looking to the Lord. There will be a remnant, whose minds will turn towards Him and His coming; and the Lord will be working in them to draw forth that cry, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.' They are looking for another prince; they are looking for Messiah the Prince; they are looking for Him whom their fathers pierced, whom they will acknowledge they pierced themselves when He appears in glory. And for this very reason, though they are only gradually rising, as it were, out of their long slumber of unbelief — for this reason, being born of God, they distrust the arm of flesh. They look for promotion neither to the north, nor to the east, nor to the west. They cry to Jehovah; and accordingly a covenant with the Roman prince does not satisfy them but the mass of the Jews, corrupt and about to apostatize. 'He shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week.' For the present, however, he engages to let the Jews have their own worship for the space of seven years.

'And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.' It is not Christ doing so by His death, which is the very perverse meaning tradition has put on this passage. Why, the cross had taken place many hundreds of years before — we may say nearly two thousand years before. We have seen in the beginning of the 26th verse 'Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing;' and then followed disasters on the Jewish people and city and temple. When finally we plunge into the last week, it is the latter day, the end of the age; and this Roman prince comes forward, who makes a covenant with the mass of the Jews (that is, the unbelieving portion of them or the great majority of the nation); and he promises to let them have their own worship undisturbed, but in the midst he breaks it. Men cannot be trusted in divine things. Even when they agree together against our Lord Jesus, their witness is not true. Man never succeeds where it is a question of God. The only hope for man is God Himself; and the only way in which God will make good his hopes is by his bowing to Christ Himself.

Now there was just the secret: Christ was a stone of stumbling, and the Jews would not have Him. By-and-by they fall not only under the wilful king, the Antichrist in Jerusalem, but besides there will be the Roman prince — the revived imperial head — the great leader of the western powers in the day that is coming. Ere long he stops their worship, he will impose idolatry once more. 'He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease' — the general expression, you know, for the various offerings that the Jews presented to God. God will not be with their effort: it is not really in the current of God's ways. The time is not come. It is not a question of their offering sacrifice and oblation, but of their repenting and receiving Christ — of their finding out their sins, and looking to God about them. But no, they have trusted the prophet-king in Jerusalem, and they have trusted the emperor in Rome; and this is the result from them both: 'He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.'

One is sorry, where much is excellent in combating rationalism, to have to complain of the way in which a learned person here deserts his text, and mixes up without the least warrant the middle of

verse 27 with the first clause of verse 26, to the total confusion of God's word. The most ancient commentary extant (Hippolytus, Rom. de Antichristo), which even at Rome, in 1772, they printed along with the true and lately-found Septuagintal version of Daniel, might have guarded him from an error as popular now-a-days and long-prevalent as it is grave and obvious. 'The entire cessation' (says Dr Pusey, Lectures on Daniel, p.184) 'of the bloody sacrifices of the law has a twofold aspect — of mercy and of judgment. To those who have believed in Jesus, He caused the sacrifice and oblation of the law to cease by replacing the shadows, which portrayed His atoning sacrifice, by Himself, the substance, of offering Himself once for all, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To the Jews, who rejected Him, He caused sacrifice and oblation to cease by the destruction of the temple and city, and the dispersion of the people. On this, the death of the Messiah, follows the sentence of that utter destruction of the city and temple.' Quite true; but the cessation of sacrifice and oblation stands in a wholly distinct connection, and as evidently after the Roman destruction of the city, and in the midst of an entirely novel state of things, as the cutting off of Messiah is before that destruction. Is it not serious to bring in the cessation of the Jewish ritual where Scripture is silent, and to avoid speaking of it where Scripture expressly asserts it?

It is agreed that the central unmistakable prophecy lies in the connection of the destruction of the temple and city with their great sin, the cutting off of Messiah, and that the connection here is not of time but of cause and effect. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem is carefully intimated to be within the gap after the sixty-nine weeks close, and before the seventieth begins. Some forty years, as we know, followed the sixty-ninth week, and the Romans came and took away both their place and nation. Ever since war, desolatenesses, have not been more surely decreed than accomplished.

But the seventieth week awaits its fulfilment; and it clearly supposes two immense changes still in the womb of the future, but as sure to be in the appointed hour, the end of this age, as every other word of the prediction. The Roman empire, or fourth beast, is to ascend out of the abyss, as St John declares in the Revelation, to revive, after its long state of nonexistence, before it consummates its iniquity against the returning Lord Jesus as it did of old in His cross. 'The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and' [not 'yet is,' but] 'shall be present.'

This is one mighty change, pregnant with awful effects for mankind in general, and especially in these lands of the west; but there is to be another equally sure — the return of the Jews in unbelief into their own land by political means, and to the destruction of the mass when the Lord appears to the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, with all their adherents, and the deliverance of a godly remnant. The beast of Rev. 13, 17. is the Roman empire, and the 'coming prince' of the seventy weeks is none other than its last head, who is to confirm a covenant for the last week (or seven years) with the mass of the Jews, and break it in the midst, causing sacrifice and oblation to cease; when we see the last half-week of tribulation follow, or the three and a half years of Daniel and the Apocalypse.

The prophet does not say, but carefully avoids saying, what Dr Pusey makes him say (p. 188), that 'in the last seven' of the 490 years Messiah was to be cut off, or that in the midst of those seven He was to make sacrifice to cease; but to confirm a covenant, not with all, but with the many. It has been shown fully that not the foreign or Roman prince, but his people were to come, as they did, and waste city and sanctuary, with war and desolatenesses decreed to the end; and that this prince himself is to confirm covenant for seven years before this age concludes with the many of the Jews, but break covenant, and protect idols or abominations, and not without the guilty consent of the Jews; so that a

desolator will come upon the desolate city, but a desolator quite as opposed to the Roman prince as to his associate, the false prophet-king in Jerusalem.

This alone squares with the grammatical context, with the scheme of prophecy in general, with a covenant for seven years (which most would think distinct enough from an everlasting one like Messiah's), and with the evil character of 'the many' in our prophet. The reader can compare 'the many,' or mass, in Dan. 9: 27, Dan. 11: 33, 39, and Dan. 12: 3, with chaps. Dan. 11: 34, 44, and Dan. 12: 2, 4, 10, where the article is absent and no such sense is intended. 'The many' cannot be viewed as the same with 'many,' but in contrast with the remnant who bow and taste the mercy of the Lord, who certainly are not to know sins ended, expiation for iniquity made, everlasting righteousness brought in, any more than vision and prophecy sealed up, or holy of holies anointed, till the seventy weeks are complete. The destruction and lasting desolation of the city and temple are not closing traits of the vision, but during a timeless gap after the sixty-ninth week and before the seventieth. Nor is there to be consolation for Daniel, or at least for his people as such, till all the weeks are ended. No doubt we Christians enter into the blessing, while the gap goes on for the Jew; and because we by grace believe, sin is brought to an end for us, and everlasting righteousness brought in — not a covenant for seven years, which no scripture connects with Christ. But for the Jew it is desolation, with worse to come, when the foreign prince of Rome confirms covenant 'for one week' with them, and yet breaks it off in the midst — a covenant which is plainly not the new covenant, but merely a human convention for seven years' liberty to worship after the Jewish sort. Compare Dan. 7: 25 for the Roman prince's changing times and laws, and at this very epoch and for the remaining half-week. It is the Jewish laws and seasons, not the saints, which shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of times. It is the more to be regretted that one should find such mistaken interpretation here, especially as Dr Pusey does not deny, but seems to look for the Jews anew acquiring property in Jerusalem, 'preparing the way probably for Antichrist' (page 189, note).

But here we come to a very difficult phrase indeed. I am afraid the margin does not help us now; but I will endeavour to render a little aid. I have no doubt God has given special light for the moment out of His word; and you must remember that Christian people have been examining carefully our English version for the last 250 years since the translation was made. We must not be surprised therefore, if faults have been found in such a long period of examination, where such vast numbers study, men of prayer as well as of spiritual ability, some few mighty in the word of God.

The literal meaning of the clause is this: 'Upon the wing of abominations a desolator.' Here as often the literal way of rendering it gives but little notion of the sense; but the truth of it is that 'wing' is used figuratively. Now there are two ways in which a wing is thus used in Scripture. From the expanded wing, it may be either for the wider extension of anything or for protecting, as when the hen spreads her wing over her chickens. Thus the figure is frequently used as where the Lord speaks of the bird and her young, and so on. In this case, to spread a wing over signifies to protect the weak in the hour of danger or the like. It is thus used in a good sense, which is one use of the word wing; but there is another use, where it is rather the idea of overspreading from spreading out the wing. Here our translators considered that the word meant the overspreading of the desolations. They took the word 'wing' to indicate the abundant extent or spreading out of those abominations. I take it in the other sense that the wing means protection, and therefore that the preposition means not 'upon,' but 'because of,' or 'on account of;' for the word may mean either the one or the other. If it be a material thing, it means 'on' or 'over;' but if it be a motive, it is rather 'because,' or 'on account,' of the protection of abominations. And everybody knows that 'abomination' means an idol; as the 'abomination of Moab,' or the 'abomination of Ammon,' means the particular idol that each worshipped. 'On account of the protection

of abominations a desolator.' This is the meaning of it — that God will raise up a desolating power to come down on the Jews, chastening them because of the protection given to idols. They had made, as the prophet Isaiah calls it, 'a covenant with death and an agreement with hell:' and he speaks of this very time, this very people, and this very circumstance. Isaiah 28 will furnish you with the most important commentary on, or further confirmation of, the expression.

Let us then consider what the meaning is that we have gathered from all. 'And on account of the protection of idols;' that is, because the Roman prince, along with his ally in Jerusalem, had not only interrupted the nominal worship of God among the Jews, but countenanced idolatry in their midst. The worship of God, begun in unbelief, had no value, no power, no acceptance. But still, after all, it was sincere; and it might be said to be, as far as it went, true in the way of form, if nothing more. But forms do not last; and men in the end find their level before God when they take up forms. They must then have reality, and when the forms are not filled with truth, they discard the forms for error, because error is more congenial to the heart of man in his natural state. Hence therefore they have determined to put an end to these forms of the worship of the true God. The emperor of Rome — along with the Antichrist his ally in Jerusalem, the great spiritual chief at that time, the religious head of the world — agrees to set up idols in the temple of Jerusalem. The latter finally sets himself up as an object of divine worship. This is the man of sin, man worshipped as God in the temple.

But Daniel does not give all these details. We only hear that in the midst of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease, and on account of the protection of idols [there shall be] a desolator. You may remember the same general truth elsewhere as 'the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.' It is the same time and the very same place. Compare, with Matt. 24: 15, Rev. 13: 14, 15. Because of the protection (which I take to be the meaning of the word 'wing') given to these idols, there will be a desolator. A great scourge will be sent in the providence of God to chasten them. That desolator I hold to be what is called 'the king of the north.' He is the person that is referred to here; so that, in a few brief words, we have a reference and an insight to a great mass of facts in Scripture. A desolator is sent down; and you will find that in Isaiah 28, to which I have called your attention already, where you have this 'covenant of death and agreement with hell,' you have an 'overflowing scourge,' the very personage that is called here a desolator.

It is a power from the north, the sovereign of Asia Minor acting under Russian influence. I do not say that it is Russia; but I do say that it is a power completely carrying out the designs of Russia, which is no less jealous of the western powers than anxious to get Jerusalem under its sway. And then they will think they have got a case, and that it is their bounden duty to interfere. Here is the emperor of the west supporting the king in Jerusalem, who is setting up idols and himself in the temple there. The emperor of Russia will not allow this, and he seizes the fact as an opportunity for carrying out his own ambitious designs. His care is not for God; but he makes this his occasion. Men must, of course, always have some plausible excuse for aggrandisement; and this will be the plea. It seems a righteous one; and, having a ground of righteousness in it, God favours it at the beginning. As far as there is righteousness, God always goes so far with it, no matter who they are. Suppose even a child of God, but that what he does will not stand scrutiny? does not God chasten for that bit of unrighteousness? Always. It may be that other people take advantage of the unrighteousness. God will deal with them afterwards; but He will chastise the righteous first. (Cf. 1 Peter 4)

Here then, where all is bad, God permits these men to show themselves out; and, first of all, He judges and scourges the infamous alliance between the people in Jerusalem and the emperor of the west. The desolator comes down from the north, takes Jerusalem in part, and leads into captivity a

certain portion (Zech. 14). Excited with hopes, and filled with the highest expectations of success, he goes down into Egypt — as we are told in the last prophecy of this book — to punish the king of the south (that is, the king of Egypt) in that day. In the meanwhile Christ appears and destroys the antichrist. It is the day of the Lord and of His glory; and when the king of the north comes up again, it is not a question of the emperor of the west, for he is gone; it is not a question of the king of the Jews, for he is destroyed. The northern foe too meets the Highest, and the question is decided. He is cast into Tophet. How worthy of God when the day is come to judge the quick!

This therefore is the point, although it be not all entered into here; but you will see the general facts. 'On account of the protection of idols [there shall be] a desolator until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate,' that is, upon Jerusalem.

Thus, then, beloved friends, I have given as succinctly, and at the same time with as much clearness, as I was capable of, the general meaning of the prophecy. May the Lord help you, in reading His word, to be more and more strengthened in your souls, and may you be enabled also to see **MORE THE CONNECTION WITH CHRIST, AND SO THE DEPTH, OF THE WORD OF GOD. W. K.**