

Answer to Dr. Leslie McFall's Critique of 'The Time of the End'

Part 4 – The Problem of Daniel's 70 Weeks

By Tim Warner | June 2014

One of Dr. McFall's attempts at criticizing my work concerns the 70-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9. It is significant that his view is the one that is out of touch with conservative Christian scholarship concerning this passage. Mine is generally consistent with the consensus view – that the object of the prophecy is the coming of the Messiah Jesus. His paper, DO THE SIXTY-NINE WEEKS OF DANIEL DATE THE MESSIANIC MISSION OF NEHEMIAH OR JESUS, was published in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 52 (2009) 673–718,¹ and provides additional details of his view. Rather than dealing directly with the arguments presented in my book, Dr. McFall simply promoted his own unique interpretation. His argument is essentially that my chronology must be wrong because it does not agree with his unique interpretation of this prophecy.

In his critique, Dr. McFall first argues that the “70 weeks” in verse 24 refers to the 70-year exile, but the “7 weeks” and “62 weeks” and “1 week” (which equal 70 weeks) in verses 25-27 follow after the exile, from Cyrus' decree to Nehemiah. Consequently, he sees this as a prophecy of 140 weeks. To substantiate his claim that the first set of “70 weeks” were already fulfilled when Daniel was approached by Gabriel, Dr. McFall argues for a past tense translation of the words, “*seventy weeks are determined.*”

“The consensus translation of Daniel 9:24 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 the most Holy.” This is a false translation. The 70 ‘sabbatical years’ are not in the future. They are in the past. The punishment of 70 (sabbatical) years had just come to an end in 536 BC when Daniel spoke these words. The 70 years refers to the period of exile prophesied by Jeremiah. Daniel 9:24 refers to these 70 years as completed, and so in the past, not still to come in the future, as every English translation has translated this verse. The verse should read: “Seventy weeks WERE DETERMINED upon your people. . . .””²

¹ http://lmf12.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/daniel_69_weeks.pdf

² p. 11

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Dr. McFall is drawing a conclusion from the Hebrew suffix conjugation which is not capable of establishing a certainty. A much stronger case for the past tense can be made from the LXX reading συνετηθησαν (aorist passive indicative) which usually refers to a past action. However, granting that "were determined" is the correct translation, Dr. McFall's exegesis of this text does not logically follow from his own translation because he has entirely missed the meaning of the word itself. Both the Hebrew and Greek (LXX) words are fairly rare. Both literally mean to make a precise cutting, hence to "determine" something. They do not mean to execute what has been determined, which is the sense Dr. McFall is attempting to force into this passage. That the execution of what has been determined takes place afterwards is proven by the use of the same Greek word in Isaiah 28:12 LXX. The perfect participle form used here is an even stronger way of expressing the past tense³: *"Therefore you must not rejoice, neither let your bands be made strong; for I have heard of works having been completed, and **having been determined** by the Lord of hosts, which he will execute upon all the earth."*⁴ This verse shows conclusively that when God has "determined" something the execution of it is still in the future. Dr. McFall is misusing the grammar in order to force his view into Daniel 9.

What had just occurred (passed) when Daniel was given this prophecy was God's precise determination of 70 weeks to accomplish certain things: *"To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy."*⁵ None of these "determined" things were accomplished during the Babylonian exile because all of them involve the work of the Messiah, Jesus. The first three refer to His sacrificial death (finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity) and the remaining three refer to His second coming and Kingdom (bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, anoint the Most Holy). Dr. McFall might attempt to find some obscure way to claim fulfillment for these during the exile, but it is impossible to explain away the last clause, *"to anoint the Most Holy."* The LXX has *"to anoint the holy of holies"* which is no doubt the correct sense of the Hebrew. Yet, the 'anointing' of the holy of holies in the Temple rebuilt after Cyrus' decree was delayed for years as construction was repeatedly stalled by the local opposition. This event said to be within the 70 weeks could not have been fulfilled during the 70-year exile prior to Cyrus' decree.

³ While the aorist indicative usually implies a past event, that is not always the case. However, the perfect participle form implies a past completed action with the results continuing to the present. This is the strongest way of placing an event in the past in Greek.

⁴ My translation of the Greek

⁵ Dan. 9:24

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The device Dr. McFall uses for making the word “weeks” disappear and substituting “years” is clever, but forced. The 70-year exile was indeed punishment for Israel's not keeping the Sabbatical years. *“And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.”*⁶ Dr. McFall correctly notes that all seventy years were the collection of Sabbath years that had not been previously kept (which I also noted in my chronology). However, the word “weeks” means “sevens” (a group of seven). It does not mean “seventh” (the last in a series of seven) as Dr. McFall concludes without any justification. He has exchanged the numerical term for the ordinal term. Yet, both Hebrew and Greek use a different term for the numerical “seven” and the ordinal “seventh.” The term used here is the numerical term. If Dr. McFall's interpretation was valid, Daniel would have the ordinal term here, “seventh.”

Even more problematic for his view is his “bait and switch” tactic for the same word “sevens” used in verses 25-27. Even if the use of “weeks” (sevens) is broad enough to be interpreted as the ordinal number (seventh), the continued use of the same term in the following verses would require that all of the years from Cyrus to Nehemiah were also contiguous Sabbatical (seventh) years. Since God drove Judah from the land so that the land could rest and enjoy her Sabbaths, how can Dr. McFall have Judah back in the land, farming it, while the Temple was being constructed during 70 more “Sabbath” (seventh) years? Dr. McFall is playing fast and loose with his terminology.

Dr. McFall's interpretation directly contradicts Jesus Himself. Jesus placed *“the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet,”* (which Daniel 9:27 places in the middle of the 70th week) in the future. Dr. McFall has it in Nehemiah's day. Jesus told His disciples to be looking for this event.⁷

Daniel was told when the 70 weeks would commence. *“Know therefore and understand, That **from the going forth of the command** To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.”*⁸ Thus, the terminus a quo is clearly given as the command going forth to restore Jerusalem. This command was the one given by Cyrus in his first year.⁹ Just before Gabriel told Daniel the 70-week prophecy,

⁶ 2 Chron. 36:20-21

⁷ Matt. 24:15

⁸ v. 25

⁹ Ezra 1:1-4 The first year of Cyrus was also the first year of Darius, his father-in-law. When Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonians, he immediately installed his father-in-law as the local ruler over the province of Babylon. Thus Daniel wrote that this occurred in the first year of Darius, who was the local ruler.

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he informed Daniel that the command had just been given. *"At the beginning of your supplications **the command went out**, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision."*¹⁰ The command to restore and build Jerusalem was the decree of Cyrus the Great.¹¹ This is the beginning of the 70 weeks.

Daniel placed a second destruction of Jerusalem between the 69th and 70th weeks, which would have to be about the time of Nehemiah's death in Dr. McFall's chronology. *"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined."* So, when was Nehemiah cut off? When was Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed again? When was this "war?"

By far the most disturbing feature of Dr. McFall's interpretation concerns his anointing Nehemiah as the messiah of Daniel 9:25-26.

"The term 'messiah', which means 'an anointed one', was given a new, linguistic significance when its Greek form 'christos' became the supreme way to refer to the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ—Jesus Messiah. Almost any leader who was anointed or appointed to his political or spiritual office was a 'messiah'. So the term had the more mundane meaning of 'leader' until Jesus became the supreme Leader of Israel by God's appointment. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to read this later, fully developed significance back into the Old Testament use of the term.

"Nehemiah was appointed by a foreign power to be Governor of Judah (Pecha; Neh 5:14; 12:26; he is also called Tirshatha with control over priestly affairs, Neh 8:9; 10:1), and Cyrus, a foreign king, was appointed by Israel's God to be his messiah over Israel."¹²

The Hebrew term "messiah" was reserved exclusively for those whom God Himself had appointed to the office of high priest or king through one of His prophets in a public "anointing" ceremony. The term "anoint" refers to the process of pouring oil upon the head of the new high priest or king as a public sign that God has appointed this person to one of these two offices. It was first instituted through the prophet Moses as he publically anointed his brother Aaron as high priest¹³ (which also symbolically anointed all future sons in his loins who would become high priests). It was used again

¹⁰ v. 23

¹¹ See chapter 15 of The Time of the End where several proofs of this fact were given.

¹² Mc Fall, Leslie, DO THE SIXTY-NINE WEEKS OF DANIEL DATE THE MESSIANIC MISSION OF NEHEMIAH OR JESUS? p. 1, http://lmf12.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/daniel_69_weeks.pdf

¹³ Ex. 29:4-9

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as the prophet Samuel anointed Saul king of Israel¹⁴ (which also included his sons who would have succeeded him). Samuel then referred to Saul as "His [God's] anointed [messiah]."¹⁵ However, God removed the anointing from Saul because of his disobedience. Samuel the prophet then publically anointed David as the next king,¹⁶ and all future sons who were in his loins who would become king. David is referred to repeatedly as the Lord's "anointed" (messiah). "*Great deliverance He gives to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed, To David and his descendants forevermore.*"¹⁷ From this point on, the term "anointed" (messiah) referred to the Davidic dynasty, all those who would "*sit upon the throne of David.*"¹⁸ Ultimately, the promised son of David who would sit upon David's throne and rule over the house of Israel forever would be Jesus the Messiah.¹⁹

When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, God put an end to the Davidic dynasty through Solomon.²⁰ Yet, as we see from the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, Jesus descended directly from David's son, Nathan, through Mary's father, Heli. Jesus was also the adopted son of Joseph. Thus, God's promise to David remained intact via the virgin birth. Jesus has a right to the throne because he was adopted by Joseph. Yet, even Joseph himself could not have been king because he was a physical descendant of Jeconiah whose physical descendants had been cursed. Because Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph, He bypassed the curse. And since He was a descendant of David through Nathan via Mary, He alone could fulfill the covenant God made to David. Jesus is the "Messiah" (anointed king) because He is the only undefiled Son of David²¹ who also has the legal right to the throne of David. God's prophet, John the Baptist, anointed Jesus at His baptism, and the Father's voice from heaven removed all doubt.²²

The only non-Israelite to ever be "anointed" by God was Cyrus. The prophet Isaiah symbolically "anointed" Cyrus even before he was born as God's appointed king of the entire Persian empire. He did this to put him in place to rule over Israel after the exile, and to facilitate the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple.²³ Israel needed a

¹⁴ 1 Sam. 10:1

¹⁵ 1 Sam. 12:1-3

¹⁶ 1 Sam. 16:1-13

¹⁷ Ps. 18:50

¹⁸ 1 Kings 2:25; Jer. 22:2,4; Jer. 29:16

¹⁹ Isa. 9:6-7

²⁰ Jer. 22: 28-30; Jer. 36:30

²¹ Acts 2:29-31

²² Acts 10:38

²³ Isaiah 44:24 – 45:7

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government, but its own kings could not be trusted. So God appointed a Gentile king over Israel through Isaiah the prophet.

Dr. McFall's statement that *"almost any leader who was anointed or appointed to his political or spiritual office was a 'messiah'"* is simply false. Nehemiah was never anointed. He was the local representative of Artaxerxes, who was not even himself a "messiah." No prophet of God appointed him to the office of God's "messiah."²⁴

Dr. McFall's paper on Daniel's 70 weeks²⁵ seeks to utterly demolish any prophetic chronological link between Cyrus and Jesus, making it impossible to construct a biblical chronology for this period using his presuppositions. Yet the utter brilliance of Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy is that it bridges this chronological gap in advance and points directly to Jesus as the Messiah, leaving Israel with absolutely no excuse for rejecting Him. God brought about the second destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 because the Jews did not keep up the Jubilee calendar, calculating the time of Messiah's arrival from Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy. *"For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*²⁶

Through one divine revelation to the prophet Daniel, contained in only four verses, the reality of the existence of God is proven (because He has done the impossible by accurately predicting the distant future²⁷), the identity of this God is proven (the God of Daniel, God of Israel), and the identity of the Messiah is given – Jesus.²⁸ This prophecy, like no other, is a testament to the glory of God. Dr. McFall has sprayed his graffiti all over it, making Nehemiah the messiah. He has taken the side of unbelieving Israel in vandalizing this prophecy. Now he is attempting to take away from the reader the means to calculate the return of Christ by those who are eagerly awaiting His arrival.

It is not difficult to uncover the real reason Dr. McFall makes Nehemiah the messiah of Daniel 9. It is the same reason that he castigates me for using the "Bible only" approach to chronology and why he insists on forcing his views into the Scriptures using

²⁴ Some might suppose that Joshua and Zerubbabel were "anointed ones" based on the English translations of Zech. 4:14. However, the Hebrew text does not use the word "anointed" (messiah), but "ben-yitshar" (sons of oil). The LXX has "sons of fatness." In the context, these two were symbolically feeding olive oil into a menorah, which represented *"not by power, or by might, but by My Spirit, says the LORD."*

²⁵ Mc Fall, Leslie, DO THE SIXTY-NINE WEEKS OF DANIEL DATE THE MESSIANIC MISSION OF NEHEMIAH OR JESUS? http://lmf12.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/daniel_69_weeks.pdf

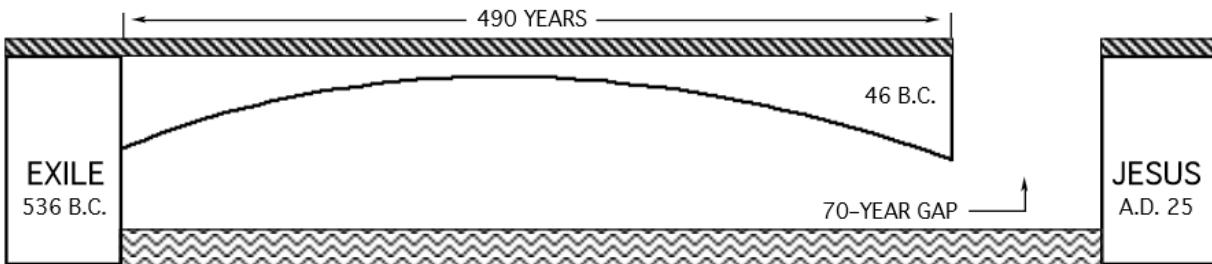
²⁶ Luke 19:43-44

²⁷ See Isaiah 41:21-24

²⁸ As my book shows, this prophecy also provides a framework for synchronizing the Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles.

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unsound exegesis. He is more devoted to keeping the secular chronologies intact than he is devoted to faithfulness in handling God's words. Daniel's prophecy proves beyond all doubt that the secular histories for the Persian period are about seven decades too long. If Cyrus' decree was in 536 BC – a date that is considered absolute fact by Dr. McFall – then Jesus cannot be the Messiah of Daniel's prophecy. The graphic below comes from Dr. McFall's own published paper on this subject, illustrating the problem.²⁹



Rather than recognizing that the established date for Cyrus' decree (536 BC) is simply wrong, Dr. McFall instead destroys the single most amazing and beautiful prophecy in all the Bible – the absolute proof that God is real and that Jesus is the Messiah.

The damage being done by this kind of "scholarship" is far more severe than any failed attempt at calculating the second coming of Christ by some hayseed pastor from the Colonies. If Dr. McFall wants my reason for taking a "Bible only" approach to chronology and not citing the works of other current scholars, HERE is my answer: If his approach to Daniel's 70 weeks is an example of current "scholarship," I want no part of it. Why should I pollute the pure chronological data of Scripture with forced interpretations that seek to bend the Bible to fit historical dates constructed by secular scholars whose presuppositions deny the creation week, Noah's flood, and biblical prophecy? The reader can decide for himself which approach is consistent with the objective pursuit of truth.

In his critique, Dr. McFall implied that I was not forthcoming by not calculating the BC dates that correspond with my AM dates – that I was trying to conceal something. I challenge him to use an even standard of transparency and post my four-part rebuttal on his site in addition to his critique of my book.

²⁹ Mc Fall, Leslie, DO THE SIXTY-NINE WEEKS OF DANIEL DATE THE MESSIANIC MISSION OF NEHEMIAH OR JESUS? p. 4, http://lmf12.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/daniel_69_weeks.pdf