

St. Hippolytus: Commentary on the Prophet Daniel Regarding the “70 weeks”



St. Hippolytus (A.D. 170 - 230), celebrated August 13, was a disciple of St. Irenaeus, hierarch in Rome, and a prolific writer. He is most well known for his work “Refutation of all Heresies.” He also was the first to write a commentary on Scripture. *The Commentary on the Prophet Daniel* has only recently been translated. Herein are excerpts from that translation

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Hippolytus of Rome: Commentary on Daniel

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<http://www.chronicon.net/>

Daniel’s vision of the 70 weeks [Daniel 8:15-27], pp 147-155.

28.1. And so since even the angel Gabriel, just as it² is understood by us, described these things in this way to the prophet, these things also happened and all these things are plainly recorded in the Maccabees,³ let us also see what he says in the vision of the weeks.

28.2. For in this way, after reading the book of Jeremiah the prophet, in which it is written that the Most Holy Place is to be desolate seventy years,⁴ in fasts and petitions, he made confessions and asked that the people would quickly return from captivity to the city of Jerusalem.

28.3. And so in this way he describes this and says, “In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus,⁵ of the seed of the Medes, who reigned over the kingdom of the Chaldeans, I, Daniel, understood in the books the number of years for the completion of the desolation of Jerusalem, that is seventy years, as the word of the Lord came upon Jeremiah the prophet. And I gave my face to the Lord my God, to seek in prayer and supplications, with fastings and in sackcloth. And I prayed to the Lord my God and I confessed and I said, ‘Lord, great and wonderful God who keeps your covenant and has mercy to those who love you and to those who keep your commandments, we have sinned, we did wrong, we were lawless, and we departed, and turned from your commandments and from your laws and we did not obey

2 Or: he

3 Maccabees 1:20-64

4 Jeremiah 25:11

5 Ἀσουήρος

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your slaves, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings and our chiefs and our fathers and all the people of the land. To you Lord be righteousness and unto us be shame of

face as on this day to the men of Judah and to those who dwell in Jerusalem.”¹

29.1. And so confessing from the face of the people, he describes these things, declaring the sins of the people and of their fathers, who did not obey his slaves the prophets, who were sent to them to speak in the name of the Lord. 29.2. And when he was proclaiming every supplication in humility and fastings and sackcloth, the angel Gabriel was sent forth to him, in order to cause him to understand what was sought by him.

29.3. For Daniel speaks in this way, “And while I was still speaking and praying and declaring my sins and the sins of my people, prostrating my pitiful case before the Lord my God concerning the holy Mountain, and while I was still speaking in prayer, behold, the man Gabriel, whom I saw in the vision in the beginning, came flying and he touched me around the evening sacrifice and he caused me to understand and spoke with me and said, ‘Daniel, now I have come to teach you understanding. In the beginning of your supplication the word went out and I myself came to proclaim to you that you are cherished man.’”²

30.1. See how the prophet likened the swiftness of angels to winged flight, on account of the nimbleness and the lightness of the weight of the angels, who are spirits flying quickly to obey what is commanded as Solomon says, “Do

1 Daniel 9:1-7

2 Daniel 9:20-23

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not curse your king in an oath lest¹a winged bird carries your words to him.”²

30.2. And so the angel Gabriel speaks to him in this way,

“From the day you gave your face to be humbled before the Lord your God your supplication was heard and I myself was sent to cause you to understand³ so that you may not inquire further before the time of time happens, for you are a greatly cherished man. For you desire to see these things, which are about to be ministered through me, but they will be fulfilled in their own time. ⁴

30.3. And he added saying, “Seventy weeks have been cut out for your people and for the holy city, for sin to be ended and for sin to be sealed and for unrighteousness to be erased and for lawlessness to be atoned and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal dreams and prophecy⁵ and to anoint a Holy of Holies. And to know and understand from the procession of the words for an answer to build Jerusalem until Christ the ruler, seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.”⁶

30.4. And so having named seventy weeks he divided them into two, so that what was spoken by him to the prophet may be understood all the more.

30.5. For he says that thusly, “Until Christ the ruler, seven weeks,”⁷ which is forty-nine years. For also in the twenty and first year Daniel sees these things in Babylon. 30.6. And so when adding forty-nine years to twenty-one years, they fulfill seventy years, which the blessed prophet Jeremiah has spoken, that for seventy years the Most Holy Place shall be desolate⁸ from the captivity which happened to them under Nebuchadnezzar

1 Lit: lest when

2 Ecclesiastes 10:20

3 Daniel 10:12

4 Hippolytus adds text not in Daniel at this point

5 Lit: a prophet

6 Daniel 9:24-25

7 Daniel 9:25

8 Jeremiah 25:11

and after these things the people shall return and the sacrifices and offerings of Christ their ruler shall be offered.

30.7. But of which Christ does he speak, except Jesus son of Josedek, who returned together with the people at that time, and in the seventieth year, after the Most Holy Place was built, he offered a sacrifice according to the law?¹ 30.8. For all kings and priests were called Christs on account of them being anointed with holy oil, which Moses arranged long ago.

30.9. And so these carried the Lord's name² with themselves predicting the future model and bringing to light the image, until he who came from heaven, the perfect king and priest, Christ, who alone does the will of the Father, as is written in the book of kings, "And I shall raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do all according to my heart."³

31.1. And so in order that the time when he is about to come may be shown which the blessed Daniel desired to see, he says, "And after seven weeks another sixty-two weeks,"⁴ which encompasses the time of four hundred and thirty-four years.

31.2. For after the people returned from Babylon their ruler Jesus son of Josedek and Ezra the scribe and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, who was from the tribe of Judah, four hundred and thirty-four years occurred, until the advent of Christ, so that the Priest of priests was shown in the world and he who took away the sins of the world was clearly demonstrated as John says concerning him, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."⁵

31.3. Similarly Gabriel also says, "and to erase unrighteousness and for sins to be atoned,"⁶ 31.4. But who erases our unrighteousness? Paul the apostle teaches you

1 Ezra 3:8, 5:2

2 Lit: the Lord Name

3 1 Samuel 2:35

4 Daniel 9:25

5 John 1:29

6 Daniel 9:24

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saying, "He himself became our peace, who has made the two one and who broke up the dividing wall, enmity in the flesh, having abolished the law of commandments in the decrees of the Law,"¹ and "having erased our sins which were written against us, which were opposed to us, and taking it from our midst, affixing it to the cross,"² and so "to erase unrighteousness and for unrighteousness to be atoned."³ 31.5. But who are they whose unrighteous are atoned except they who believe in his name and through good works are these atoned before his presence⁴?

32.1. Because after the people returned from Babylon four hundred and thirty and four years occurred until the generation⁵ of Christ, it is easy to perceive what has been set before.

32.2. For since the first covenant with the sons of Israel was given after four hundred and thirty-four years, it is absolutely necessary for the second also likewise to be determined in the same time, so that it may be expected by the people and may be easily recognized by the believers.

32.3. And on account of this Gabriel says, "And to anoint a Holy of Holies."⁶

32.4. But no one is the Holy of Holies, except the Son of God alone, who comes and shows himself to be he who is anointed by the Father and was sent into the world; he said to them, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me, he sent me to evangelize the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to preach freedom to the captives and to restore sight to the blind, to preach an acceptable year of the Lord.”⁷

32.5. And so as many as have believed in the heavenly priest, these are cleansed by the same

1 Ephesians 2:14-15

2 Colossians 2:14

3 Daniel 9:24

4 Lit: face

5 Lit: genesis

6 Daniel 9:24

7 Luke 4:18

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priest, and their sins are wiped away¹. But as many as have disbelieved him, as setting him up to be nothing but a simple man, their sins are sealed as undiminished².

32.6. From which the angel, foreseeing that all were not destined to believe in him, said, “to end sin and to seal sin.”³

32.7. For as many as disobeyed him until the end, their sins were ended and were sealed to be kept for judgment. But as many were destined to believe in him and confessed to him as able to forgive sin, their sins were wiped away⁴.

33.1. And on account of this he says, “And to seal vision and prophecy⁵.”⁶

33.2. For after the fullness of the law and the prophets he himself has come, for the law and the prophets were until John, it is necessary that the things which were spoken by them be sealed, so that at the advent of the Lord all things which have been loosed and all things which have been sealed, may be brought to light, and what was not

able to be made known may easily be perceived, and that which was bound long ago now may be loosed by him.

33.3. As the Lord himself has said to the chiefs of the people, when they were angry at him when they saw him commanding powers on the day of the Sabbath and healing every disease and every sickness. But he said to them, “Hypocrites, each of you, looses the ox and the donkey from the stall and leads it away and gives it water. But this daughter, who is of Abraham, whom Satan has bound ten and eight years, is it not necessary for her to be loosed on the day of the Sabbath?”⁷

1 Or: erased

2 Or: permanent

3 Daniel 9:24

4 Or: erased

5 Or: a Prophet

6 Daniel 9:24

7 Luke 13:15-16

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33.4. And so as many as Satan has bound and ensnared, when the Lord comes he shall loose them from the bonds of death, having bound the strong man who was against us, and having freed humanity. As Isaiah also says, “Then he will speak to those in bonds, ‘Freedom’ and to those in darkness, ‘Be illuminated.’”¹

33.5. But on account of all which was spoken long ago through the law and the prophets, which has been sealed and which was unknown to men, Isaiah says, “And they will give the sealed book to a man skilled in letters and they will say to him, ‘Read this,’ and he will say ‘I am not able to read it, for it is sealed.’”²

33.6. For it is absolutely necessary that what was spoken long ago through the

prophets to the unbelieving Pharisees, who pretended to know the letters of law, that it was sealed, but to those who believe all things, it was opened.

34.1. And so all which has been sealed long ago now through the grace of the Lord, has been opened to the saints. For he himself was a perfect seal and key which is from David who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.

34.2. As also John says, “And I saw at the right hand of him who sat upon the throne a book written inside and out, which was sealed with seven seals. And I saw an angel preaching in a great voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the book and to loose its seals?’ And no one was able in heaven nor upon the earth nor under the earth to open the book nor to look at it. And many were weeping because no one was found worthy to open the book nor to look at it. And the one from the elders says to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the lion from the tribe of Judah has conquered, the root and the offspring of David, and he opens the book and looses its seven seals.’ And I saw in the midst of the throne and in the

1 Isaiah 49:9

2 Isaiah 29:11

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midst of the elders a lamb standing, who was slain, who had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God which are sent on to all the earth. And he came and he took the book from the right hand of him who sat upon the throne, and when he took the book, the four creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the saints, and they sang a new song saying, ‘You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals because you were slain and you purchased us for God by your blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and you made a

kingdom and priests for God and they shall reign upon the earth.”¹

34.3. And so he took the book and loosed it, so that what was spoken long ago secretly concerning him, now may be preached with boldness upon the rooftops. 34.4. And on account of this the angel said to Daniel, “Seal these words because the vision is of the end of time.” ² But they did not say “Seal,” to Christ, but, “Loose what was bound long ago,” so that through his grace we may recognize the will of the Father and we may believe on that one whom he sent, Jesus Christ our Lord, the Savior of men.³

35.1. Indeed it says, “and to return and a street and wall shall be built.”⁴ And it really happened. For the people returned and built this city and temple and its wall in a circle.

35.2. Then he says, “after sixty-two weeks, times shall be spun out⁵ and he shall set forth a covenant with many for one week. And in half of the week sacrifice and the drink

1 Revelation 5:1-10

2 Daniel 12:4, 9

3 Lit: upon the Savior of men

4 Daniel 9:25

5 Or: exhausted

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offering shall be taken away and upon the Temple shall be an abomination of desolation.”¹

35.3. For after sixty-two weeks was fulfilled and after Christ has come² and the Gospel has been preached in every place, times having been spun out, the end remains one week away, in which Elijah and Enoch shall be present and in its half the abomination of desolation, the Antichrist, shall appear who threatens desolation of the world. After he comes, sacrifice and drink offering, which now in every way is

offered by the nations to God, shall be taken away.3

1 Daniel 9:27

2 That is his first advent

3 Hippolytus seems to interpret these as spiritual sacrifices not literal sacrifices of the rebuilt Temple.

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