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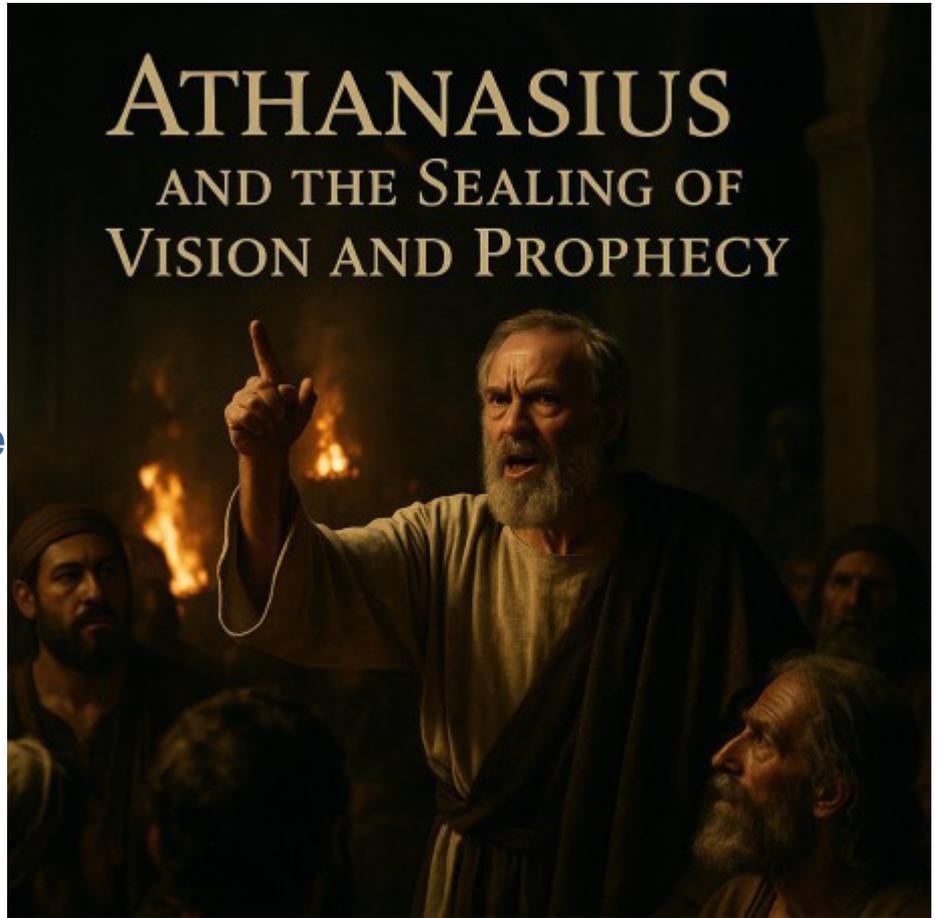
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Historical Writers - Athanasius and the Sealing of Vision and Prophecy



By Dan Maines

Athanasius and the Sealing of Vision and Prophecy

Athanasius, the 4th-century Bishop of Alexandria, stood boldly for truth when most of the world opposed him. In his work *On the Incarnation of the Word*, chapters 39-40, he confirmed that Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks was already fulfilled in Christ, that vision and prophecy had ceased, and that Jerusalem's destruction proved the end of the old covenant. His testimony stands as powerful historical evidence that the early church understood fulfillment, not futurism.

Daniel's Prophecy and Its Completion

Daniel 9:24 declares, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place." Athanasius recognized that this prophecy reached its fulfillment in the first century through Christ's coming, sacrifice, and the destruction of Jerusalem. He rightly saw that Daniel's words pointed to a specific time when sin would be atoned for, righteousness established, and prophecy brought to completion.

† Daniel's seventy weeks weren't left open or pushed into the future, but completed when the Messiah came. That's why Athanasius pointed to the ceasing of prophecy and vision as a clear sign that Christ had fulfilled all things spoken by the prophets. The ending of the prophetic era marked the beginning of the everlasting kingdom of Christ.

The End of the Shadows

† Athanasius wrote that prophecy and vision ceased from Israel because Christ, the Holy of Holies, had come. Once the reality appeared, there was no more need for shadow. The prophets were raised up to foretell His coming, but when He came, the purpose of prophecy was fulfilled. The temple, sacrifices, and priesthood all foreshadowed the Word made flesh. When He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, the old order passed away.

† The temple was destroyed because its purpose was finished. Everything that once pointed forward to Christ found completion in Him. The end of Jerusalem and its priesthood wasn't a tragedy but the visible sign that the shadow had given way to the substance.

† This is why, after His coming, Jerusalem was destroyed. The prophetic gift, once active among Israel, ceased because its purpose was complete. There was no longer a need for the sign when the thing signified had arrived. Athanasius said it was "a sign and an important proof of the coming of the Word of God that Jerusalem no longer stands, nor is any prophet raised up." The silence of prophecy was itself a witness that Christ had accomplished redemption and sealed the covenant.

† Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote that the temple was utterly destroyed and not one stone left upon another (Wars 6.4.5), confirming the Lord's words in Matthew 24:2. Eusebius later recorded that the desolation of Jerusalem marked the close of the prophetic age, just as Daniel and Athanasius declared. Even the Roman historian Tacitus described Jerusalem's ruin as final, proving that vision and prophecy were sealed exactly as foretold.

† The silence after Jerusalem's fall wasn't absence but evidence. The same God who had spoken through the prophets now spoke through His Son, and no new revelation was needed because the truth had come in full.

The Anointed One and the End of the Old Age

† Daniel's seventy weeks culminated in the anointing of the "Holy of Holies." Athanasius identifies this not with a building or a future temple, but with Christ Himself. He's the anointed sanctuary, the dwelling place of God among men. When He came, the earthly anointings ended. The kings and priests of Israel existed only until the true King and High Priest was anointed by the Spirit at His baptism and glorified through His resurrection.

† Christ is the Holy of Holies anointed in Daniel's prophecy. His death and resurrection brought an end to the old priesthood and established a new and everlasting covenant. What was

temporary has passed, and what's eternal has been revealed.

† The ceasing of the kingship and prophecy in Israel wasn't a loss, but a transition from type to fulfillment. Christ's kingdom is everlasting and spiritual. His priesthood is eternal, "not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an indestructible life" (Hebrews 7:16).

† The visible kingdom of Israel ended so the invisible and everlasting kingdom of Christ could be revealed. The Law, the prophets, and the kingship all served their purpose until the anointed One came to reign forever.

Why Prophecy Ceased

† Athanasius rebuked the Jews of his time, saying, "Why are they so irreligious and so perverse as to see what has happened and yet deny Christ who has brought it all to pass?" Indeed, the very absence of prophets and kings after Christ stands as undeniable proof that Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled. Vision and prophecy were sealed, not postponed. The seventy weeks were accomplished when the Messiah came, was cut off, and made an end of sin through His death and resurrection.

† The absence of prophecy after Christ isn't silence but completion. When the Word Himself has spoken, no new message is needed. His life and resurrection are the final revelation of God's plan.

† From that point forward, no new revelation was needed, for "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God's revelation reached its completion in the person of Christ, and the destruction of the temple in AD 70 marked the final removal of the old system that had served only as a shadow of the true.

† The fall of Jerusalem confirmed Daniel's prophecy. It marked the close of the age, the sealing of vision, and the visible sign that the old covenant had passed away and the kingdom of Christ had taken its place.

The Man Behind the Words: Who Was Athanasius?

† Athanasius was one of the most important early Christian theologians and church fathers. He lived from about AD 296 to 373 and served as the Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt for more than 45 years, though much of that time he spent in exile because of his defense of biblical truth against heresy.

† He's best known for standing firmly against the Arian controversy, which denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Arius and his followers claimed that the Son was a created being, not eternal with the Father. Athanasius fought tirelessly to uphold the truth that the Son is of the same essence (homoousios) as the Father. His defense of this doctrine helped shape the Nicene Creed, which became the foundation of orthodox Christian belief.

† His most famous work is *On the Incarnation of the Word*, where he explains how God took on human flesh in Christ to redeem mankind. The words quoted in this sermon come from the end of that work, where Athanasius argues that the coming of Christ fulfilled prophecy, ended the old covenant, and brought about the sealing of vision and prophecy spoken of in Daniel 9.

† Athanasius' understanding of Daniel 9 proves that early Christians viewed the seventy weeks as completed. He saw the end of prophecy, the fall of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah as one continuous fulfillment of God's plan.

† Athanasius was exiled five times by Roman emperors because of his unwavering faith, yet he never compromised. His nickname in history is *Athanasius Contra Mundum* ("Athanasius

against the world") because even when the majority of bishops sided with Arianism, he stood alone for the truth of the Word.

† His steadfastness serves as an example for all who stand for truth today. Even when the world denied him, he held fast to the Word of God, proving that truth isn't determined by majority but by faithfulness.

† He died in Alexandria in AD 373, and his writings remain among the most influential in early Christian theology. His teachings on the incarnation, redemption, and fulfillment of prophecy continue to affirm that Christ's coming completed all that had been foretold in the Law and the Prophets.

† Athanasius' testimony confirms that even in the early centuries, faithful teachers recognized that Daniel's seventy weeks were fulfilled, prophecy sealed, and Christ's eternal kingdom established. His witness from history stands as a powerful ally to the fulfilled perspective today.

The Fulfilled Perspective

† Christ's coming brought the close of the prophetic age and the beginning of the everlasting kingdom. Prophecy served its divine purpose until the arrival of the Righteous One. Now the Word of God, once spoken through the prophets, speaks to us through the Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). The sealing of vision and prophecy isn't a loss of divine communication, but the perfection of it in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

† The prophetic age has ended, but the kingdom of Christ has no end. What Daniel foresaw and what Athanasius confirmed remains the same truth today: the promises of God have been fulfilled in Christ, and His kingdom stands forever.

† The seventy weeks are complete, the atonement made, the everlasting righteousness brought in, and the Holy of Holies

anointed. The Word has fulfilled what was written, and the proof of that fulfillment stands in history itself: Jerusalem destroyed, prophecy ceased, and Christ exalted.

How It Applies Today

† Today, we live in the fullness of that kingdom. The faith once delivered to the saints has been completed, and Christ reigns as the eternal High Priest and King. We no longer look for another revelation or a rebuilt temple, because the true temple is His body, and we're living stones within it.

† The message of Athanasius reminds us that history itself bears witness to the truth of fulfillment. The destruction of the temple, the ending of vision and prophecy, and the rise of the eternal kingdom all declare that the promises have been realized in Christ. Our call now isn't to wait, but to walk in the righteousness He brought, proclaiming the finished work of redemption to all nations.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Daniel 9:24-27, Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 7:16, John 1:14, Matthew 24:2

† Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word, Chapters 39-40

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6.4.5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5; Tacitus, Histories 5.13

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