

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:10)

Seventy Prophetic Weeks of Daniel

Chapter 9 of the book of Daniel stands as the paragon of Bible prophecy. This single chapter of 27 verses proves beyond doubt that God revealed the future course of world events to faithful men of God, and they wrote about events to come as they were led by the Holy Spirit. This was declared by the apostle in 2 Peter 1: 19-21:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The prophecy recorded in this chapter proves that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel. Chapter 8 tells about a little horn, the Antichrist, who will rise up in the last days to challenge the Christ. The little horn will magnify himself and will command that millions be killed for failing to worship him as God. He will rule over a 10-nation kingdom and gain control of the whole earth. The prophecy about the little horn began in chapter 7 where his kingdom is described, and the chronological appearance is given. Chapter 9 describes his evil nature and great power. Chapter 9 tells about his deceitful dealings with the nation of Israel. Chapter 9 also tells us about the Great Horn. This Great Horn will be from the horn of David so described in Psalm 132:17-18:

"There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

The prophecy of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 tells us how the horn of David, the Messiah of Israel, would be cut off from His people until the abomination of the little horn had run its course.

The reason the 9th chapter of Daniel is the proof test of Bible prophecy is that it tells the exact date when the restoration of Jerusalem would begin after the Babylonian captivity and how long it would take. It informs us of the crucifixion of Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the 7 years preceding His coming again. All these things were written over 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. It still stands as the cornerstone of Bible prophecy, proof that God knows all things from beginning to end.

The setting in time for chapter 9 was in the first year of the reign of Darius over the province of Babylon. At this time, Babylon had fallen to the Medes and Persians. After the defeat of Babylon and the institution of a new government, Daniel began to contemplate the effect this turn of events would have on the status of the Jews in that country. The prophet began by studying the books of Jeremiah. Daniel probably read first from Jeremiah 25:11:

"And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

Searching further concerning what would happen to the Jews after the 70 years had expired, he read from Jeremiah 29: 10:

"For thus says the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

As Daniel read the books by Jeremiah, he understood his fellow prophet wrote only as he did-by the Word of the Lord: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Daniel was not so vain as to believe he had cornered the market on prophetic revelations. He accepted the prophecies of Jeremiah as also coming from the Lord; and according to the prophecies of Jeremiah, the time for God to look again upon His people, hear their cries, and deliver them from bondage had arrived. This promise of God is given in 2 Chronicles 7:14:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

When Daniel understood by the Word of the Lord by Jeremiah that God would again look upon His people from whom He had turned His face, their 70 years of bondage would end. So Daniel began to fast in sackcloth and ashes, an outward manifestation of extreme self-abasement. After Daniel had emptied himself of all self-glory and self-righteousness, he sought the face of the Lord God by prayer. From the record, we know that he ran after the Lord in prayer. He pursued the Lord to get His attention.

At the beginning of his prayer, Daniel made his own confession, asking God to forgive him of his own sins. Although there is not a single sin mentioned against Daniel in the Bible, the prophet was careful to avoid the error of self-righteousness. He claimed only the righteousness of God which is imputed by faith. Next, Daniel reminded the promises of God to forgive those who confessed Him, turned from their wicked ways, and sought His face.

After Daniel had pursued the Lord in prayer until he was assured of an audience, he submitted his petition. In his prayer, we find the basis for Christian patriotism (w. 5-14).

There are 3 main divisions in Daniel's prayer. The first part concerns the reasons for Israel's trouble. God already knew all about it, but Daniel revealed to the Lord that he himself knew why his nation had been conquered by a foreign aggressor, hundreds of thousands killed, the young men made eunuchs, the women raped, and the cities plundered. Let us now consider these reasons for Israel's judgments which Daniel gave.

1. As a nation, Israel sinned and committed iniquity-adultery, fornication, sexual perversion, and idolatry.
2. Israel mocked and killed the prophets who attempted to warn them to turn from their sins.

3. Israel rebelled against God, departed from the precepts of God upon which the nation was founded, and said, "We will not be judged of the Lord"-meaning they would not abide by God's ordinances for human government.

4. Because of the people's transgressions, they had become confused as to their national mission.

5. The king, the governors, and the mayors became confused because the people were confused. It was war one day and peace the next. When Babylon invaded Israel, the king would agree to a peace treaty one day, but would break it the next.

6. According to verse 12, the greatest evil perpetrated upon the nation was by the judges from the high court right on down to the lower courts. They no longer judged according to God's moral Law, but rather according to political expedience and their own greed. The law breakers were not prosecuted, and the victims were ignored.

7. Because the nation failed to heed the warnings of the prophets to repent, God brought judgment upon all Israel, and Daniel declared that the nation deserved no less than it received.

The second part of Daniel's prayer for his nation is found in verse 15:

"And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly."

Throughout Scripture Israel is reminded of their deliverance by God out of the hands of their oppressors in Egypt. They are continually reminded of this because God has a plan and purpose for saving them from bondage. For this reason, He saved them with mighty signs and wonders, so their children and their children's children would never forget to uphold that mission for which God saved them. God delivered Israel to form a holy and righteous nation so they might testify of Him to the whole world and be a blessing to all people.

The third part of the prophet's prayer is recorded in Daniel 9:16-19. Over and over in the petition division of his prayer, Daniel pursued the Lord. Some might wonder why this old Jew was so bothered. He was in his mid-80s; he was prime minister to King Darius; he had a fine place with servants; he had honor and the best physical comforts the kingdom could provide. Why didn't he just relax and enjoy retirement? The reason is that he loved his nation, and he loved his people. Like all Jews, in general, he had an inherent, restless awareness of a plan and purpose for them. This sense of destiny is stated in Isaiah 43:5-6:

"Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

Daniel's prayer of confession for his people is important to our understanding of the remainder of the chapter. Daniel knew from the prophecy of Jeremiah that God had promised that the duration of Israel's captivity in Babylon would be 70 years. The 70 years had expired, so Daniel was seeking in prayer the answer to the question that

concerns every religious Jew: Would this be the time God would bring in the kingdom and send the Messiah?

The power of Daniel's prayer is witnessed by the fact that God heard him at the very beginning, and He knew exactly what Daniel would say (verses 20-23). Before Daniel had finished his prayer, the archangel Gabriel tapped him on the shoulder to inform the prophet that he had been commanded to fly swiftly to him. How fast is swiftly in the heavenly realm? We have no idea, except that it must be faster than light. Gabriel's flight to Daniel could not have taken over an hour, because the Jewish oblation lasted from 3 to 4 in the afternoon. This was the period the priests in the Temple offered the sacrifice on the altar. It is called the ninth hour in Scripture. The reason the sacrifice had to be offered during the ninth hour was that the offering of an animal looked forward to the eternal sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. It was in the ninth hour after Jesus finished His atoning work on the cross where He died for the sins of the world (Matthew 27:45-50).

As the sacrifice was being offered, the priest prayed for the acceptance of the sacrifice for the sins of Israel, and he prayed again for Israel to become holy and righteous in God's sight so that Messiah would come and bring in the kingdom promised in the covenants. Therefore, it was according to biblical instruction and Jewish tradition for Daniel to be praying at oblation time toward Jerusalem for God to forgive the sins of Israel and fulfill His promise in the covenants. We are informed that Gabriel told Daniel that he was sent to give him skill and understanding. This knowledge was what all the prophets had wanted to know the time when God would take away Israel's transgression and fulfill the kingdom covenant. Gabriel said he would give this information to Daniel because Daniel was greatly beloved, meaning he was loved greatly by the Lord. Gabriel is the messenger of the Messiah's coming. We read in Luke 1:26-32 that Gabriel was sent by God to inform Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, the Son of the Highest.

The message God gave Gabriel to deliver to Daniel concerning the taking away of Israel's transgressions, the coming of Messiah, and the bringing in of the kingdom, is given in Daniel 9:24-27. Gabriel informed Daniel that concerning the bringing in of the kingdom of God to Israel, a 70-week plan was in operation. During this period, Daniel's prayers would be answered. This plan involved the following things which Daniel prayed for:

1. Finish the transgression;
2. Make an end of sin;
3. Make reconciliation for iniquity;
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness;
5. Seal up the vision and prophecy; and
6. Anoint the Most Holy (place).

In considering the meaning of the 6 things which Gabriel prophesied, let us keep in mind that, according to verse 24, they concern Israel as a race, the holy city Jerusalem, the land of Palestine, the Temple, and the Messiah. The prophecy is Jewish from

beginning to end. Gentiles are not even referred to in an indirect way, and the dispensation of grace is completely hidden from view. The single reference to any Gentile says "the people of the prince that shall come." This is a prince and a people who are not of Israel, and this single reference proves the Antichrist will not be an Israeli. Now we will consider the 6 things Gabriel promised Daniel relating to the kingdom over which the Messiah will reign:

Finish the Transgression: "Finish the transgression" means that the transgression of Israel against the law and commandments of God will be brought to an end when Christ returns to rule on David's throne (Ezekiel 39:24-25).

Make an End of Sin: The end of sin is when the sinner accepts Jesus Christ as the One who died for sin. The sin mentioned by Gabriel meant the sins of Israel. Israel, as a nation, has not up to this time accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah; therefore, the nation as a whole continues in sin. Israel will be saved from their sins by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord when He appears to the nation in all His glory (Romans 11:26-27).

Make Reconciliation for Iniquity: Iniquity means wickedness and a sinful condition-lost in sin. Today moral conditions in Israel are about the same as they are in the U.S., but when Jesus Christ returns as King of Israel and the law goes forth from Jerusalem, the iniquity of Israel will be taken away. Every living Jew will look upon Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him as the only Son. As promised, they will become a nation of priests for God to all the world (Zechariah 12:10-12; Revelation 1:5-7).

Bring in Everlasting Righteousness: No individual, including the Jew, has any righteousness of his own. The only righteousness that man can attain is that righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ, and that is in imputed righteousness. Righteousness shall prevail over all Israel when Jesus Christ is received as the Messiah. This truth is declared in Jeremiah 23:6.

Seal Up the Vision and the Prophecy: This does not mean the particular vision and prophecy which God delivered to Daniel. It means all visions and all prophecies recorded in the Bible. All the prophecies recorded in the Bible were revealed to Israelites, and all prophecy is sealed up in Israel. Daniel was commanded to seal up the book of his prophecy until the time of the end, meaning when the Jews began to return to the land. And only when the Jews began to return to their land did men begin to understand the prophecies that applied to the last days. Gentile ministers today expound the prophecies that were given to the Jews, but the time is coming when Christ returns that the gift of prophecy and visions will again be sealed up in God's covenant people (Joel 2:27-28).

Anoint the Most Holy: This anointing of the Most Holy, or Holy of Holies, means the sanctification of the Temple with the presence of Messiah. This will not occur until the Lord comes to His Millennial Temple. We read of this glorious event in Ezekiel 43:2, 4-5.

All of the things Daniel prayed for Israel will be fulfilled when Israel looks upon the One whom the nation nailed to a cross and receives Him as the Messiah. The hope of those things promised by God in the covenants lies in a Savior, a Redeemer, a Deliverer, the One whom the New Testament reveals as the Lord Jesus Christ. The Messiah, according to Gabriel, would come to Israel at the end of the 69 prophetic weeks, only to be cut off. But there is still one week left-the 70th week, and it is the last day of this week that holds the prophecy of His coming again.

So far in our study of the ninth chapter of Daniel, we have discussed the first 69 of the 70 prophetic weeks, a period of 483 years. According to Gabriel, the period was to begin with the signing of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. It is agreed by the vast majority of biblical authorities that Christ was crucified at the age of 33 1/2 years. Therefore, it occurred in A.D. 34. It has been discovered, and widely reported in thousands of reliable publications, that an error was made by the Romans of 4 years in setting up their calendar, the same calendar we use today. This was a plus factor, therefore we have to add to the 34 years, 4 more years. We then subtract from the 69 weeks, 483 years, the sum of 34 years and 4 years, and we arrive at 445 years. Artaxerxes signed the decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 445 B.C., proving beyond any reasonable doubt that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel. The Messiah had to be cut off in A.D. 34, and Christ is the only person that history records as claiming to be this Promised One.

Gabriel also prophesied that after the Messiah was cut off that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. This happened. And so we read again in Daniel 9:26, "and the end thereof shall be with a flood." What end? The end of the 70 weeks, the last week, a period of 7 years known as the Great Tribulation. The prophecy of Gabriel indicated that between the 69th and 70th weeks there would be a breach, and we know this breach as the diaspora of the Jews, and the dispensation of grace for the Gentiles. This breach has now lasted for almost 2,000 years. We read again in Daniel 9:26, "and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." So we know that the 70th week will be a time of desolations-war, pestilences, and famine. Jesus Himself referred to the final week of Daniel in Matthew 24:15-16, 21-22.

Let us now continue and read more about this last week in Daniel 9:27:

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Who is the "he" that is going to confirm the covenant with "many" in Israel for one week, or 7 years? What is the covenant he is going to confirm? What is this person going to do in the Temple in the middle of the 70th week? And what is determined to be poured upon the desolate?

There are some who teach that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, confirmed the covenant with Israel. However, there is no evidence that Jesus confirmed any covenant with Israel. Also, there is certainly no evidence that Jesus anointed the Most Holy, restored the

kingdom of Israel at that time, took away ungodliness from Jacob, or brought in everlasting righteousness. Quite the contrary is true. In reality, there is only one possible antecedent to the pronoun "he." That person is the prince described in the previous verse, the prince of the Roman Empire. Just as Titus was a prince of the Roman Empire, even so the Antichrist will be a prince of the revived Roman Empire. The dispensation of grace is not in view. It exists only as the times of the Gentiles referred to by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse.

The prophecy process from the cutting off of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem that was to occur after the fulfillment of the 69th week leads right into the Tribulation period. Certainly, Titus made no covenant or treaty, nor confirmed any agreement with the Jews. He was the absolute victor. Titus did attempt to negotiate a cessation of hostilities with Josephus, but the Jews refused. The reason they refused to agree to a peace treaty was that until the very end they were expecting the Messiah to come and save them. This was also recorded by Josephus. The Messiah did not come because they did not cry out to God to send Jesus back. The Jews have yet to repent for killing the Messiah; they have not as a race been converted through faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah; they have not as yet cried out to God to send Jesus back. Only when the Jews believe in Jesus and cry for Him to return will the Deliverer roar out of Zion; and all Israel will be saved.

As declared at the beginning of Daniel 9:27, the minute the prince of the revived Roman Empire affixes his signature to a treaty with the government of Israel, confirming the covenant, the 70th week will begin. Since 1948 there have been numerous attempts to bring peace between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations, but to date all such attempts have failed.

Now we notice in verse 27 that the treaty that will be entered into between Israel and the Antichrist will not be just any ordinary treaty. We are told it will be "the covenant." We understand that God confirmed many covenants with Israel, but when the Scriptures refer to "the covenant," there is only one covenant in consideration. It is the first covenant God made with Abraham—an agreement entered into between Abraham and God to the effect that the land of Palestine be given to the patriarch's seed for a future mighty nation, an everlasting inheritance (Gen. 12:1-2).

At this moment, the U.S. and Israel are trying once more to get the Arab nations to recognize Israel's right to exist as a nation on the land covered in God's covenant with Abraham. This in itself is an important sign that the 70th prophetic week of Daniel is about to begin, and the coming of Jesus Christ is even at the door. One day, soon, these peace negotiations will succeed. There will be a treaty between Israel and the Arab nations.

It is evident from the prophecies associated with the 70th week that once the Antichrist signs the covenant, Israel will receive the right to resume sacrificial worship on the Temple Mount. Jews from the tribes of Levi and descendants of Aaron are being trained in Temple worship today, so this could occur quite rapidly. But we read in Daniel 9:27

that in the middle of the week (the middle of the Tribulation) the man of sin will cause the sacrifice in the Temple to cease. The covenant is broken.

Matthew 24:15-21 reveals that when Antichrist stops the sacrifice, the Jews are to flee to the mountains; and we believe the place to which they will go will be Petra. According to Revelation 12:6,14, those Jews that escape will be hidden for 1,260 days, or a time, times, and a half a time. A "time" in Jewish reckoning was one year, from one Passover to the next. A "time" would be one year; "times"-two years; "half a time"-one-half a year.

The Antichrist will confirm the covenant in Israel with many. Not all the Jews will be deceived; some will oppose it. The Antichrist will not initiate this covenant; he will simply agree to honor the covenant God made with Abraham concerning the land of Canaan. The peace treaty confirming the covenant, which entails Israel's right to the land, will hold for 3 1/2 years. It appears from prophecy that the first 3 1/2 years of Daniel's 70th week will witness a turbulent political and religious world adjustment. These changes will lead up to the projection of the revived Roman Empire of Europe as a world power. The little horn of this European federation will rise to a position of world leadership, and we are told that by peace he will deceive many. Paul indicates that all the world will be deceived by him.

The Abomination of Desolation by the Antichrist will usher in a period of 3 1/2 years of desolation. Gabriel informed Daniel that the last half of the 70th week will be a time of war, and the end will come with a flood. This will evidently not be a flood of water, but a flood of Tribulation judgments. It will not rain for the second half of the Tribulation; therefore, the flood is to be understood symbolically-a judgment of fire and desolation comparable to the destruction left by the flood of Noah's day.

From the book of Revelation we know that universal judgment will come, and the pale horse of death will claim hundreds of millions. The desolation the Antichrist will cause is mentioned in four places in Daniel and many places in other prophecies. For example, we read of this time in Ezekiel 29:10-12: "Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene (Aswan) even unto the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years."

So the desolation that will be brought upon Egypt will be widespread over the earth. Egypt will be made desolate by the Abomination of Desolation, in the midst of the nations that will be desolated. The end of the carnage and desolation is described in Revelation 19. Jesus Christ will return with the armies of heaven; and the little horn, the Antichrist, will be defeated as he attempts to bring all the armies of the world against Jerusalem to prevent the second coming of Israel's Messiah. At the conclusion of the 3 1/2 years of desolation, Jesus Christ will return to judge the nations with a rod of iron and fulfill God's promise to Israel.

The anointing of the Temple with the Messiah's presence will signify that the Lord is dwelling among His covenant people, and all the promises made to Israel will have been consummated. The last promise to be taken care of is described in Ezekiel 44:1-4. Jesus Christ will stand upon Mt. Olivet. He left from Mt. Olivet; He will come back to Mt. Olivet. He will cross the Kidron Valley and enter the Golden Gate, also called the Eastern Gate. This gate is now sealed, as the prophecy states, but it will be opened for the Messiah. He will go into the Millennial Temple, and it will be filled with His glory. This glorious sight, as described by Ezekiel, will bring to a victorious end the 490 years of prophecy committed to Daniel by Gabriel. At this Christmas season we need only to look to Israel to know that the appearing of Jesus Christ in all His glory as Lord of lords and king of kings is very near.

N. W. Hutchings

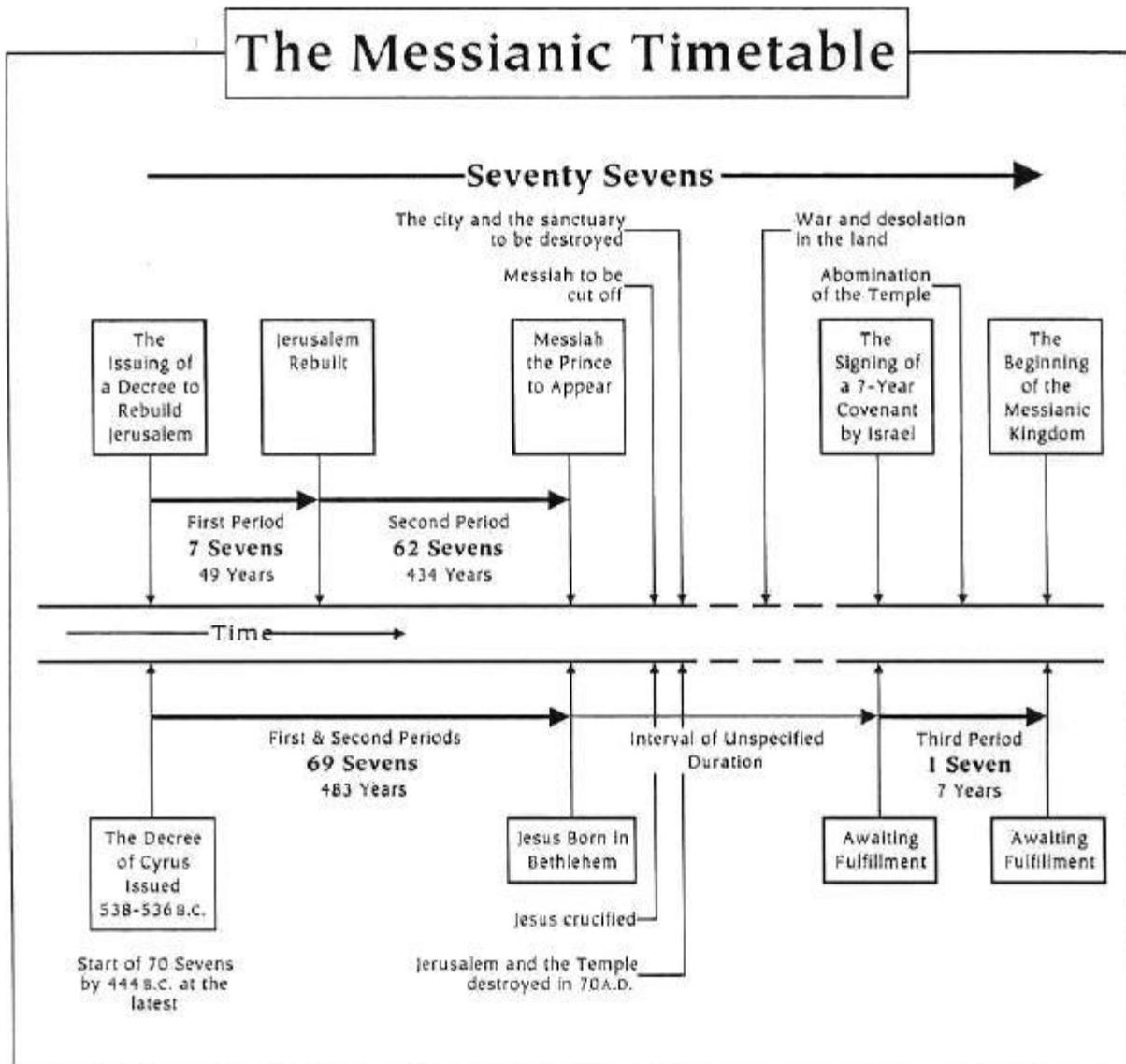
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Daniel 9:24-27

teaches that:

- ✧ Messiah would be present 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem.
- ✧ Messiah would be legally executed.
- ✧ Messiah's death would result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- ✧ Messiah's birth and death, therefore, must both have happened prior to 70 A.D.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks

From EVERY PROPHECY OF THE BIBLE, by John Walvoord, Chariot Victor Publishing, Colorado Springs, 1999. (pages 248-259)

Daniel's Third Vision: The Seventy Sevens of Israel: The Place of Israel in the Times of the Gentiles

Daniel 9:24-27. In the verses which follow Daniel recorded one of the most comprehensive and yet concise prophecies to be found in the Bible concerning what is called "seventy sevens." This revelation should be placed alongside prophecy concerning Gentiles outlined previously in Daniel. The chronology and sequence of events in the times of the Gentiles, like Israel's seventy sevens, climaxes in the Second Coming. Daniel was informed concerning how Israel related chronologically to this same Gentile period of time.

Gabriel declared, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy" (v. 24). Gabriel first presented the prophecy as a whole, covering a period he declares as 'seventy sevens.'"

The Seventy Sevens: Liberal Interpretation

The prophecy, because of its precision, has aroused great opposition from liberal expositors who attempt to explain it away as somehow a garbled restatement of the seventy years of Israel's Captivity. Most liberals also hold that Daniel was a forgery written by a person in the second century B.C. instead of the sixth century B.C. and, accordingly, they are opposed to anything that would constitute a prophetic vision of the future. In other words, liberals attempt to say that this was not prophecy at all, at the same time realizing that they have a difficult passage to explain. Actually, they themselves admit that they have no reasonable interpretation.

Seventy Sevens as 490 Years

Unfortunately, even conservative scholars have not all agreed on the interpretation of the "seventy sevens," most of the trouble being the determination of the beginning date of the series. Conservatives generally feel the time units are years; in other words, seventy sevens add up to 490 years. Conservative scholars, particularly those who are eschatologists, resist the idea that this is a literal 490 years because they have difficulty in finding fulfillment that is satisfactory to their other views.

Even liberal commentators, however, agree that the units were years, not days of twenty-four hours as 490 days would not constitute a comprehensive prophecy. Conservative scholars generally have recognized that seven was often used in relation to some great work of God. Orthodox Jews have not done any better in their interpretation in believing that the prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 which does not give literal fulfillment to the passage. Proceeding, however, on the concept that the units are years, a number of interpretations challenge any united understanding of this passage.

Seventy Sevens: Christological or Non-Christological

In general, interpretations divide between Christological and nonchristological explanations. Those who reject a Christological meaning do not take Scripture as literal prophecy. Those who believe that these prophecies relate to Jesus Christ and the ultimate fulfillment of the Second Coming usually regard the first sixty-nine years as literal years. Amillennarians usually follow the same procedure, but there is considerable difference of opinion on whether the last seven years have been or will be fulfilled literally. This is the crux of the problem.

Seventy Sevens: Major Events

According to Daniel 9:24, six major events characterize the 490 years: (1) "to finish transgression," (2) "to put an end to sin," (3) "to atone for wickedness," (4) "to bring in everlasting righteousness," (5) "to seal up vision and prophecy," and (6) "to anoint the Most Holy" (v. 24). As none of the six achievements were explained, it leaves the expositor to find a plausible explanation.

The accomplishment defined as "the finished transgression" most probably refers to Israel's tendency to apostasy which must be brought to a close as Israel is brought to restoration and spiritual revival at the time of the Second Coming. Practically all premillennial expositors agree that the terminus of this prophecy is before the future millennial kingdom. The restoration of Israel spiritually and the return to Jerusalem as mentioned by Daniel in prayer, of course, has already been fulfilled, but the ultimate restoration of Israel awaits their regathering at the time of the Second Coming. Obviously, the Old Testament sacrifices could not bring Israel to this important milestone, and it required the death of Christ on the cross establishing grace as a method of divine dealing with Israel. The fulfillment of many details of the New Covenant for Israel (Jer. 31) would not begin until the Second Coming. Eschatologically, Israel will be restored because God will deal with them in grace rather than what they deserve.

The objective, "put an end to sin," may be understood either as bringing sin to its point of forgiveness or it could mean bringing sin to its final judgment. A variation in the text also permits a translation "to seal up sin." The total explanation apparently includes all of these elements of bringing sin to its end, bringing sin into judgment, and extending forgiveness for sins already committed. It is obviously God's program to bring sin into judgment and to bring forgiveness to those who receive grace.

The third achievement, "to atone for wickedness," refers both to the death of Christ on the cross which is the basis for all grace and the application of this, especially to Israel, at the time of the Second Coming. The expression "to atone" literally means "to cover." The death of Christ deals with sin in the final way that the sacrifices of the Old Testament could only illustrate temporarily. When Christ died on the cross He brought in permanent reconciliation for those who would turn to Him in faith (2 Cor. 5:19).

The fourth achievement, "to bring in everlasting righteousness," was made possible by the death of Christ on the cross. The application of this to Israel individually and nationally relates to the Second Coming. As stated in Jeremiah 23:5-6, "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which He will be called: 'The Lord Our Righteousness.'" The time of this is the Second Coming, the same time as David will be resurrected to be a regent under Christ (30:9). Righteousness is one of the outstanding characteristics of the millennial kingdom in contrast to previous dispensations.

The fifth objective of the 490 years is "to seal up vision and prophecy." This expression refers to completion of the inspired Bible with the writing of the New Testament. The figure of "seal" refers to the sealing of a letter after it is completed and closed and now rendered safe by the seal. In like manner, God has completed the inspiration of the Bible, and no additional books will be written.

The sixth achievement, "to anoint the Most Holy," has brought a variety of interpretations, some relate it to the dedication of the temple built by Zerubbabel (516 B.C.), others to the sanctification of the temple altar in the Maccabean period after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes (165 B.C.) (cf. 1 Macc. 4:52-56), or in the distant future to the dedication of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-27). Still others refer it to the millennial temple described by Ezekiel (Ezek. 40-42). Because the prophecy is not entirely clear, probably the best conclusion is that its complete fulfillment is still future and refers to the New Jerusalem which will be God's temple in eternity. Because the other items of prophecy concluded with the Second Coming, there was no clear event at that time relating to the temple. The anointing of the Most Holy will, however, be in keeping with other facets of the 490 years that have to do with judgment of sin, atonement, forgiveness, and spiritual restoration.

Seventy Sevens: Date of Its Beginning

Another important decision in interpretation of this passage is the question of the beginning of the 490 years. This is described in Daniel 9:25, "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the Ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two sevens.'

Daniel was instructed, "Know and understand this," but it is questionable whether he understood it. If students of Scripture today, after much of Daniel has been fulfilled,

have difficulty pinpointing the beginning of the 490 years, it is obvious that Daniel would have the same problem.

Amillennarians tend to adopt a view which, essentially, does not give the prophecy literal fulfillment. One suggestion is that the period begins in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was destroyed. The decree then is a command of God, something that the text does not support, and its fulfillment falls far short of being literal.

If the decree refers to a political decree, four different decrees have been suggested: (1) the decree of Cyrus that the temple be rebuilt in 538 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:20-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-5); (2) the decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:6-12); (3) the decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26); and (4) the decree of Artaxerxes given in Nehemiah authorizing the rebuilding of the city (Neh. 2:1-8). Though it is clear that the decree of Cyrus authorized the rebuilding of the temple, there is question whether he authorized the rebuilding of the city. The later decrees in Ezra apparently deal only with the temple. In any case, the city wall and the city were not rebuilt until the time of Nehemiah (445-444 B.C.). Scholars differ as to whether the exact date is the last month of 445 B.C. or the first month, 444 B.C. Though scholars continue to differ on the subject, the most plausible explanation is the 444 B.C. date because this works out precisely to the fulfillment of the prophecy and also coincides with the actual rebuilding of the city. This interpretation provides the most literal explanation without disregarding some of the specifics of the prophecy.

Amillennarians, who in general have taken this prophecy in less than its literal sense, in many instances tend to avoid the 444 B.C. date in favor of having fulfillment at the time of Christ's first coming. Under this projection the decree was issued at an earlier date than 445 B.C., and the first half of the last 7-year period, according to their interpretation, was fulfilled in the life of Christ, culminating in His crucifixion which they place at the middle of the last 7 years. This, however, provides no realistic fulfillment of the prophecy of the first 3.5 years and certainly no fulfillment of the last 3.5 years.

As in the interpretation of many other prophecies, a literal or normal interpretation requires a future fulfillment, in this case fulfillment of the last 7 years of the 490 years of prophecy.

Seventy Sevens: Date of Culmination

If 444 B.C. is accepted as the beginning date of the 490 years, the 483 years would culminate in the year A.D. 33 where recent scholarship has placed the probable time of the death of Christ. In interpretation the Bible authorizes the use of the prophetic year of 360 days. The 360 days are multiplied by 483 years, or the 490 years minus seven. The computation comes out at A.D. 33. The concept that the prophetic year is 360 days is confirmed by the 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), with the forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), and with a time, times and half a time, or 3.5 years (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14). This interpretation permits the 483 years to run their course. The intervening time between

the 483 years and the last 7 years was provided in the prophecy itself as would be seen in examination of Daniel 9:26-27.

Seventy Sevens: First Seven Years

The 490 years is divided into three parts. First, a 7-year period, then sixty-two times seven, or 434 years, and then the final seventieth seven, or the last 7 years.

The 483 Years in the Jewish and Gregorian Calendars

Jewish Calendar (360 days per year*), $(7 \times 7) + (62 \times 7)$ years = 483 years, 483 years \times 360 days = 173,880 days

Gregorian Calendar (365 days a year), 444 B.C. to A.D. 33 = 476 years, 476 years \times 365 days = 173,740 days, + 116 days in leap years + 24 days (March 5-March 30) = 173,880 days

See comments on Daniel 9:27b for confirmation of this 360-day year. Since only one year expired between B.C. and A.D. 1, the total is 476, not 477. *.A total of 476 years divided by four (a leap year every four years) gives 119 additional days. But three days must be subtracted from 119 because centennial years are not leap years, though every 400th year is a leap year. (From *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament* (Victor Books, 1985), p. 1363. Used with permission).

According to verse 25, in the first seven years the streets and a trench will be built in times of trouble. This period of forty-nine years described the aftermath of Nehemiah building the wall of Jerusalem and requiring one out of ten in Israel to build a house in Jerusalem which was fulfilled in the fifty years after the building of the wall. This was in complete fulfillment of the first seven times seven years.

Seventy Sevens: Next 62 Sevens, 434 Years

The second segment of sixty-two sevens, or 434 years, was added to the first 49 years, bringing the total to 483 years.

Seventy Sevens: Events between Sixty-Nine and Seventy Sevens

In this period the Anointed One, or the Messiah, is born and is cut off after the conclusion of the 483rd year as stated in verse 26, "After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing."

A further prophecy is given of an event after the sixty-ninth seven and before the seventieth seven, "The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed" (v. 26).

Two major events mark the difference between the ending of the sixty-ninth "seven" and the beginning of the seventieth "seven," meaning that the Messiah would be cut off approximately A.D. 33 and that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed in A.D. 70. Obviously, if the fulfillment of the last seven years immediately followed the preceding period, there would be no time in which to consider the destruction of Jerusalem as part of the fulfillment which would precede the last seven years. Again, a literal interpretation, as held by premillennarians, is preferable to the amillennial explanation that this has already been fulfilled in one sense or another. The end came for Jerusalem in its destruction in A.D. 70, and following that, war continues with its desolations as history has confirmed.

Seventy Sevens: Seventieth Seven

The final revelation in Daniel 9:27 states, "He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven,' but in the middle of that seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Seventy Sevens: Amillennial Interpretation of Seventieth Seven

Daniel 9:27 brings to a head the various interpretations of this passage. Amillennarians, in opposition to the premillennial interpretation which considers this last 7 years still future, have offered at least four other points of view: (1) liberal Amillennarians find fulfillment in the second century B.C. in the Maccabean time of persecution during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes; (2) Jewish scholars find the seventieth week related to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; (3) Amillennarians who are conservative hold the seventieth week, particularly the last half, as an indefinite period; (4) Amillennarians also consider 7 literal years beginning with the 3.5 years of Christ's ministry, climaxing in His death and followed by the last 3.5 years of the 490-year period for which they have no specific interpretation.

The millenarian views, as well as that of the Jewish scholars, all have the problem of not explaining the prophecy in its normal, literal sense. No specific fulfillment can be found for major elements of the prophecy, particularly the last half of the seventieth week which, according to the Scriptures, climax in the Second Coming.

Seventy Sevens: Premillennial View of Seventieth Seven

Premillennarians confirm its future fulfillment by the identification of "the ruler who will come" of verse 26 with the "he" of 9:27, the future world ruler. By contrast, some Amillennarians hold that the one confirming the covenant in verse 27 was Christ Himself with reference to the New Covenant, but this covenant is obviously longer than seven years in duration.

The interpretation of "he" which begins verse 27 is crucial to understanding this prophecy in its fulfillment. In normal laws of reference a pronoun refers back to the last

preceding person mentioned. In this case it is the "ruler who will come" of verse 26 rather than "the Anointed One" of the earlier portion of that verse. Because the fulfillment was never literally accomplished by Christ in His first coming, and even the New Covenant which they claim is referred to here cannot be related to a seven-year covenant because it is eternal, leaves the identification of the covenant-maker as the future world ruler, or Antichrist of the end time, a Roman related to the people who destroyed the city.

This is in keeping with other prophecy which indicates that he will stop sacrifices in the middle of the last seven years, the conclusion confirmed later in Daniel 12:7 in reference to the last three-and-a-half years and the revelation of daily sacrifices being abolished and the abomination set up in verse 11.

The concept that there is a time gap between 9:26 and verse 27, though opposed by many Amillennarians, has a great deal of scriptural confirmation. One of the most important confirmations was the fact that the Old Testament presents the first and second coming of Christ as occurring at the same time as Isaiah 61:1-2. If the entire Inter-advent Age can be interposed between references to the first and second coming of Christ in the Old Testament, it certainly sets a precedent for having a time gap between the sixty-ninth "seven" and the seventieth "seven" of Daniel 9:24-27.

As in other problems in prophecy, so much of the difficulty comes when interpreters fail to take note of the particulars of the prophecy. Once it is understood that prophecy needs to be fulfilled literally and completely, many of the problems disappear.

Seventy Sevens: Covenant with World Ruler

If the covenant of Daniel 9:27 is not the covenant of grace made possible by the death of Christ as Amillennarians suggest, to what can this be referred? The best explanation is that this refers to the coming world ruler at the beginning of the last seven years who is able to gain control over ten countries in the Middle East. He will make a covenant with Israel for a seven-year period. As Daniel 9:27 indicates, in the middle of the seven years he will break the covenant, stop the sacrifices being offered in the temple rebuilt in that period, and become their persecutor instead of their protector, fulfilling the promises of Israel's day of trouble (Jer. 30:5-7). The temple of that future day will be desecrated much as Antiochus desecrated the temple in his day in the second century B.C., stopping the sacrifices and putting the temple to pagan use.

Just as Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. desecrated the temple in Jerusalem by offering a sow on the altar and setting up an idol of a Greek god, so in the end time the final world ruler, who will claim to be God, will set up an image of himself and constitute the abomination of the temple as was described in Daniel 9:27. The establishment of such an image was mentioned in Revelation 13:14-15. This will be accomplished by the beast out of the earth, the religious ruler who will be affiliated with the beast out of the sea who will be the world ruler (vv. 11, 14). The beast out of the earth "ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the

sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed" (vv. 14-15). The fact that the final world ruler was presented as God was also mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, "He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

Seventy Sevens: Best Interpretation

Accordingly, the best explanation of the 490 years is that the 483 years were fulfilled just before the time of Christ's crucifixion, that an interval time between Christ's crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem of more than thirty-five years will occur, fulfilling Daniel 9:26, with both events occurring in that period.

The final seven years, however, will begin when the ruler of the ten nations in the Middle East, who yet will appear, will fulfill the description as being a ruler related to the people who destroy the city of Jerusalem, that is, the Roman people. He will begin the final seven-year period by making a covenant of peace with Israel which will be broken after the first three-and-a-half years. This approach has the advantage of giving literal fulfillment to the prophecy and harmonizing it with any other prophecies of the end time.

Other interpretations simply do not fit the passage. Some have suggested Antiochus Epiphanes as the person who would fulfill this in the second century B.C. However, there is nothing in history that corresponds to a seven-year covenant following Antiochus. Only those who believe that Daniel is a forgery, written in the second century B.C., offer any support for this point of view.

Taken as a whole, the "seventy sevens" of Daniel's prophecy present the whole history of Israel from the time of Nehemiah in 444 B.C. until the Second Coming. Interposed is the present age not revealed in the Old Testament, which often prophesied the First Coming as the same event as the Second Coming and did not take into consideration the present age between the two events.

In Daniel's vision, then, he not only covered the sweep of Gentile prophecy terminating in the Second Coming, but he revealed that the "seventy sevens" of Israel will conclude with the same event, the Second Coming. The fact that Israel is already back in the land, that a world movement toward world government is also current, and that there is already a world religious movement combine to indicate that the time of fulfillment of end-time events may not be distant. Added 5/12/03.