

DANIEL'S SEVENTY-WEEK PROPHECY

A KEY TO ALL PROPHETIC SCRIPTURE

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“Seventy weeks [‘Seventy sevens’] 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.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks [‘seven sevens’], and threescore and two weeks [‘threescore and two sevens’]: The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after threescore and two weeks [‘threescore and two sevens’] shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself [*lit.*, ‘and shall have nothing’]: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined [*lit.*, ‘and unto the end war and desolations are determined’].

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [‘one seven’]: and in the midst of the week [‘the seven’] 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 [*lit.*, ‘upon the desolator’ (the one who confirms and then breaks the covenant, the Antichrist)]” (Dan. 9:24-27).

The word “week” or “weeks” in the prophecy is an English rendering of the Hebrew word, *shabua*, which is a septenary number and could be better rendered “seven” or “sevens.” Therefore, for the

remainder of this study, this is the terminology which will be used.

The word *Shabua* is used two places in the Book of Daniel — in 9:24-27 and a couple of verses later in 10:2, 3. The word itself does not designate the length of the seven. The length (days, years, etc.) must be determined from the text and/or context.

In chapter nine, the prophecy consisting of seventy sevens is an end result of Daniel’s prayer concerning Israel’s captivity in Babylon. Daniel had understood from Jeremiah’s prophecy that the captivity in Babylon would last *seventy years* (v. 2; cf. Jer. 25:11, 12), he knew that this time was about up, and he had sought the Lord’s face through “prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.”

He had confessed over and over the sins of the people, which had resulted in their captivity (vv. 3-19; cf. Lev. 26:33-35, 40-42; II Chron. 7:14; Jer. 29:10-14). And while Daniel was presenting himself before the Lord in this manner, the angel Gabriel (who had been sent at the very beginning of his prayer and supplication) appeared to him, making known to Daniel that he was there to provide more “skill and understanding” surrounding the matter Daniel had been praying about (vv. 20-23). Then, to bring this to pass, Gabriel made known to Daniel the prophecy of the Seventy Sevens (vv. 24-27).

“Years” are in view in the context of the prophecy — *the seventy-year captivity in Babylon from Jeremiah’s prophecy* that Daniel had been praying about. Thus, it would only be natural to continue this thought and understand the prophecy of the Seventy Sevens as *sevens of years*.

This would be in contrast to the only other place in the Book of Daniel where the Hebrew word *shabua* appears, in 10:2, 3. In these two verses, the *shabua* is specifically stated to be *sevens of days*. The Hebrew text has the word for “days” (*yom*) following the word *shabua*, letting the reader know that the sevens in view here are different than the sevens in the immediately preceding section (9:24-27).

(Most English translations [*e.g.*, KJV, ASV, NASB] use “weeks” to translate *shabua* in both places in Daniel, probably causing an element of confusion, for the context in one shows that sevens of years are in view, and the text in the other shows that sevens of days are in view. The NIV translators took a different approach, using “sevens” in chapter nine but “weeks” in chapter ten.)

In short, the angel Gabriel made known to Daniel that it was not just *ten sevens* (70 years) but *seventy sevens* (490 years) that the Jewish people would have to remain in Gentile lands before being reestablished in their own land, with that seen introduced at the beginning of the prophecy then brought to pass — “to finish the transgression...” (v. 24b).

(The seventy years spent in Babylon, *in one respect*, foreshadow a much longer period of time during which the land from which the Jewish people had been uprooted would, of necessity, lie fallow and realize her Sabbaths. The land would need to lie fallow for *seventy Sabbath years*, something necessary to fulfill the requirements of the Law [Lev. 25:3-5; 26:33-35; cf. II Chron. 36:20, 21]. And, with a Sabbath year occurring only once every seven years, this would require seven times seventy years — four hundred ninety years.

This is what the angel Gabriel made known to Daniel through the prophecy in Dan. 9:24-27. A remnant would be allowed to return at the end of seventy years. But the return of the entire nation and the restoration of the theocracy would have to await the complete fulfillment of the four hundred ninety years.

Then, *in another respect*, according to Jeremiah’s prophecy, the Israelites had spent *the complete time removed from their land, in Gentile lands, which God had specified [seventy years — a complete period of time (7X10, both numbers showing completeness)]*. Also, according to Jeremiah’s prophecy [Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10-14], concerning God visiting and restoring the Jewish people at the end of these seventy years, *the entire nation could have returned at this time had national repentance occurred*.

But the nation, by large, at the end of these seventy years had settled down in Babylon and *remained unrepentant*. Thus, any continued restoration of the nation beyond a returning remnant — with repentance shown by a remnant of the people [*e.g.*, Dan. 9:1-19] — did not occur at this time. And another period of time during which Israel would have to remain in Gentile lands was revealed — *not just seventy years this time but intensified by SEVEN [7X70], four hundred ninety years*. The time during which the Jewish people would remain dispersed among the nations was increased *in exact accordance with God’s warning previously revealed through Moses [Lev. 26:14-21]*.

[Something very similar to the seemingly paradoxical overall scope of the preceding was seen almost six hundred years later. This occurred in connection with the Jewish

people very near the end of the four hundred ninety years, during the offer and reoffer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, contingent on national repentance (as seen in the gospel accounts and the Book of Acts).

In one respect, had national repentance occurred, the kingdom would have been restored to Israel at the full end of Daniel's prophecy (with time in *the last "seven"* [seventieth week] of the prophecy being brought to completion). But, *in another respect*, the kingdom could not have been restored to Israel at this time; time in the prophecy, of necessity, had to stop *one "seven"* short of completion [e.g., only 4,000 of the 6,000 years in the septenary arrangement of time during Man's Day, introduced in Gen. 1:1-2:3, had expired; and the 2,000-year dispensation in which God would deal with the Church — seen, for example, in Gen. 24 — must yet occur].)

Also, between the end of the seventy years of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the Israelites in Babylon and the beginning of Daniel's prophecy of the four hundred ninety years, bringing matters surrounding the dispersion of the Jewish people to a close, there is another break in time. Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years ended about 535 B.C., but Daniel's prophecy concerning the four hundred ninety years did not begin until about 444 B.C.

The prophecy of the Seventy Sevens begins with "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (v. 25a), and that command, according to Nehemiah chapters one and two was issued by the Persian king, Artaxerxes, in the twentieth year of his reign, which, according to secular history, was 445 or 444 B.C.

(There are earlier decrees in Ezra, issued by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes [1:1, 2; 4:1-5, 11-24; 6:1-5, 14, 15; 7:11, 20, 27], which had to do with the Temple. But the decree by Artaxerxes in Nehemiah is the only decree issued which had to do with the city itself, which the prophecy in Daniel specifically singles out [2:1ff]. And this is the only decree which fits the chronology of the prophecy in Daniel; and it fits this chronology exactly, to the day.)

From the issuing of the decree by Artaxerxes "to restore and to build Jerusalem" until the time Israel's Messiah appeared (cf. Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1ff) would be sixty-nine sevens (483 years), and at the end of this

time Israel's Messiah would be "cut off" (vv. 25, 26a).

(The Hebrew word translated "cut off," *karath*, is used many times in the O.T. referring to the death of individuals [e.g., Lev. 7:20, 25, 27; Num. 19:13, 20]. And it is apparent that this is the manner in which the word is used relative to Israel's Messiah in Dan. 9:26a.

To see and understand how the time from Artaxerxes' decree to Christ's crucifixion is exactly 483 years [using 444 B.C. and 33 A.D. respectively], note these figures: $444 + 33 = 477$ years. But these are years of 365 days per year [or 366 days every fourth year], and Scripture uses a 360-day year [cf. Gen. 7:11, 24; 8:3, 4; Dan. 7:25; Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:14; 13:5]. To convert, the total number of days is needed. Thus, 477×365.25 [.25 added for leap years] = 174,224 days. Then, divide 174,224 by 360, which gives 483.96 years. But bear in mind that only parts of the first and last years are to be used, which would leave *exactly 483 years* if the correct beginning and ending dates within their corresponding years were used [444 B.C. and 33 A.D.].

Thus, the Jewish people at the time of Christ's first appearance could have looked at Daniel's prophecy and Artaxerxes' decree and not only have known *that their Messiah would be in their midst in 33 A.D. but also that they would slay their Messiah that year*. Christ was the Paschal Lamb, this Lamb was given to Israel, only Israel could slay this Lamb, and knowledgeable Jews *would have known that*. In fact, a knowledgeable Jew *could have known the exact day and time Israel would slay their Messiah in 33 A.D., for he would have known the exact day and time when Israel would slay the paschal lambs.*)

Then, according to Daniel's prophecy, the Messianic Era would be ushered in seven years following Messiah's death [cf. vv. 24, 26]. But, of course, this didn't happen. Instead, God stopped the clock, so to speak, at the time Israel crucified her Messiah; and the last seven years await a future fulfillment.

The break in time occurs in the middle of verse twenty-six, between Messiah's death and the appearance of "the people of the prince," who will destroy "the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [the rebuilt Temple on the Temple Mount]." "The people of the prince" is a Hebrew idiom referring to *the prince himself* (cf. Dan. 7:18, 27 where this same expression is used).

(Note that this destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary *can only refer to a future destruction*, not to the past destruction in 70 A.D., as often taught [cf.

Matt. 24:15-23; Luke 21:20-24; II Thess. 2:3, 4; Rev. 11:1, 2] Events in the prophecy *must occur during time covered by the prophecy itself.*)

This destroying prince is the man who will have made the seven-year covenant "with many" in Israel, marking the beginning of the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy (v. 27). This is the man seen riding forth on a white horse in the Book of Revelation when the first seal is broken, "conquering, and to conquer" (6:1, 2). And, as *the ratifying of this covenant* will mark the beginning of the seventieth seven in the Book of Daniel, *the breaking of the first seal of the scroll* will mark the beginning of this period in the Book of Revelation.

(Some have sought to see the antecedent of the pronoun "he" in Dan. 9:27 [the one who makes the covenant with many in Israel] referring back to *the Messiah* Who was to be slain rather than to *the prince* that would come in v. 26. Grammatically, either could conceivably be the antecedent. However, "the prince" is the nearer antecedent, and the rules of grammar always favor the nearer as the antecedent in cases of this nature, unless, of course, something in the passage clearly shows that it isn't.

In this case though, such doesn't exist. In fact, the passage clearly shows just the opposite, that "Messiah" couldn't possibly be the antecedent [e.g., Israel's Messiah didn't make a covenant with His people at the time of His first coming; and the Jewish sacrifices didn't stop until the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.].)

When this future prince appears and makes his covenant "with many" in Israel, the Jewish people, in accordance with time in the prophecy, will be placed in the position of *having just crucified their Messiah*. The crucifixion occurred at the very end of and closed out the sixty-ninth seven.

The Jewish people, time-wise in relation to the prophecy, will then be living at the very beginning of the seventieth and last seven. Time for them will be *exactly as if Christ were still on the Cross, or had just been placed in the tomb, awaiting resurrection*. And God will deal with the Jewish people accordingly (cf. Matt. 23:37-39).

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