

Ministry of Grace

Daniel's Seventy Weeks

Daniel 9:20-27

²⁰While I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, flew swiftly to me and reached me about the time of the evening offering.

²²And he talked with me, and informed me, and said, " Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight and understanding. ²³At the beginning of your prayers the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly loved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:

²⁴"Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. ²⁵Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street will be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. ²⁶And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah will be cut off, and will have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it will be with a flood, and till the end there will be war, desolations are determined. ²⁷Then he will confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he will bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations will be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate one." [NASB]

Notes

The term ‘weeks’ in verses 24 through 27 is from the Hebrew *shabua*, which means ‘sevens’ without specifying whether it is days, months or years. Hence, verse 24 begins with, “**Seventy sevens are decreed for your people ...**” There has been much debate over the centuries as to what time period is actually implied by the term “sevens.” The conservative interpretation usually regards the time units as “weeks (or sevens) of years.”

The only interpretation, however, that gives any literal meaning to this prophecy is to regard the time units as prophetic years of 360 days each, according to the Jewish custom of having years of 360 days with an occasional extra month inserted to correct the calendar as needed. The seventy times seven is, therefore, 490 years with the beginning at the time of “**the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem**” found in verse 25 and the culmination 490 years later in verse 27. [John Walvoord]

If we convert these 490 prophetic years into solar years (a solar year is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.51 seconds or 365.2424 days) it equals 482 solar years and 353 days.

Daniel 9:24

²⁴“Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. [NASB]

The six items to be completed in the 70 sevens are:

- “**to finish the transgressions**” – *Pesha*’ is the Hebrew word translated “transgression.” It literally means “a moral or religious revolt or rebellion against God.” Thus the phrase, “to finish the transgressions,” is a reference to the ending of Israel’s rebellious transgressions against God. This will occur at the second coming of Christ to set-up his kingdom on earth.
- “**to make an end of sins**” – This may be interpreted as either the taking away of sins or of bringing sin to final judgment. The word “sin” is from *khat-taw-aw*, which means “youthful indiscretions” or “evil committed against another or against God.”
- “**to make atonement for iniquity**” – This seems to be a rather clear picture of the cross of Christ in which Christ reconciled Israel, as well as the world, to Himself (**2 Corinthians 5:19**). The Hebrew word *kipper* (**reconciliation**) when used in relation to sin means to cover, to wipe out, to make as harmless, non-existent, or inoperative, to annul, to withdraw from God’s sight, with the attached ideas of reinstating in His favor, freeing from sin, and restoring to holiness. [John Walvoord]

“**Iniquity**” is translated from the Hebrew word *awvone*. This word indicates sin that is particularly evil, since it strongly conveys the idea of twisting or perverting deliberately.

- “**to bring in everlasting righteousness**” – There is a sense in which this also is accomplished by Christ in His first coming in that He provided a righteous ground for God’s justification of the sinner. The many Messianic passages, however, which view righteousness as being applied to the earth at the time of the second coming of Christ may be the ultimate explanation. [John Walvoord]
- “**to seal up vision and prophecy**” – This is probably best understood to mean the termination of unusual direct revelation by means of vision and oral prophecy. The

expression “to seal up” indicates that no more is to be added and that what has been predicted will receive divine confirmation and recognition in the form of actual fulfillment. [John Walvoord]

- **“to anoint the most holy place”** – The words “most Holy” are actually written as “holy of holies” in the original. This most likely refers to the holy of holies in the new Jerusalem that is re-created when God creates the new heavens and the new earth (**Revelation 21:1-3**).

Daniel 9:25

²⁵ Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street will be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. [NASB]

This verse sets out the beginning point of the 70 sevens. It is “from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.”

The word translated “wall” (*harus*) is not the normal word for wall (*homa*). The root *haras* means “to cut, sharpen, decide.” The nominal form *harus*, found only here, is rendered by ancient interpreters as “walls.” Most modern lexicographers render it “ditch,” or “moat.” [Walvoord]

“The Command to Restore and Build Jerusalem”

There are four decrees recorded in Scripture that we need to look at:

1. Decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple (approx. 538 BC):

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel--he is the God who is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-3) (also see **Ezra 6:1-5** and **2 Chronicles 36:22, 23**) [NKJV]

2. Decree of Darius Hystaspes confirming the decree of Cyrus (approx. 510 BC):

"Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away. Let the work on this house of God alone. **Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God.** The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. And whatever is needed--bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require--let that be given to them day by day without fail, that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons. (**Ezra 6:6-10**) [ESV]

3. Decree of Artaxerxes for Ezra to go to Jerusalem (approx. 458 BC):

This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the LORD and his statutes for Israel: "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. **And now I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God,** which is in your hand, and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem. With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem. Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem. And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which it falls to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury. "And I, Artaxerxes the king, make a decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, up to 100 talents of silver, 100 cors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons. We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God. "And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach. Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment." (**Ezra 7:11-26**) [ESV]

4. Decree of Darius Artaxerxes Longamanus to Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem (approx. 445 BC):

And I said to the king, "**If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it.**" And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." **And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.** Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. (**Nehemiah 2:5-9**) [ESV]

Of the 4 decrees that could possibly satisfy this criterion (see Timeline of the Book of Daniel) only the last, the decree of Artaxerxes Longamanus (**Nehemiah 2:5-9**) was specifically to rebuild the city. This occurred in approximately 445 B.C.

Calculation of “seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” until the Messiah

Using a 360 day year (a prophetic year), the 69 weeks of years add up to 173,880 days. This is equivalent to 476 solar years plus an additional 21 days. Taking 445 BC as the starting point that brings us to the year AD 30 (note that there was no year 0, but years went from 2 BC to 1 BC to AD 1). Since Christ was approximately 30 years old (**Luke 3:23**) when he began his ministry and his ministry lasted for approximately 3 years, this would lead to a date of approximately 4 B.C for His birth.

Why is it 4 years off? Didn't the first year start with the birth of Jesus? – In about AD 523 a monk by the name of Dionysius Exiguus (in English, this translates to Dennis the Little) calculated the date of Christ's birth as 25 December 753 AUC (the 753rd year since the founding of Rome). Thus having the year AD 1 begin on January 1, 754 AUC (the 754th year since the founding of Rome.) He apparently made an error in his calculations though, since we know that Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod the Great who died in the year 750 AUC (approximately 4 BC). By this reckoning, it would make the birth of Christ around 4 BC and the date of the crucifixion approximately AD 30.

Also notice that the John the Baptist was expecting the coming Messiah at the time of Christ's ministry. (see **Matthew 11:3. Luke 7:19, 20**) The two disciples on the Road to Emmaus had expected Jesus to be the Messiah (**Luke 24:21**). Also, the crowds who escorted Jesus into the city at the triumphal entry must have believed that this was the one who was to come. Therefore, they proclaimed “blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” (**Matthew 21:19; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35**) The observant Jews were expecting the Messiah to come at any time because of the prediction that Daniel had made.

Daniel 9:26

²⁶And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah will be cut off, and will have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it will be with a flood, and till the end there will be war, desolations are determined. [NASB]

Whereas the previous verse stated that the 69 weeks would culminate in the coming of the Messiah (anointed one, or Christ), this verse states that **after** the 69 weeks the Messiah will be “cut off.” The word for “cut off” is important. Edward B. Pusey wrote, “The word ... never means anything but excision; death directly inflicted by God, or violent death at the hands of man. It is never used of mere death, nor to express sudden but natural death.”

It is interesting to note, not only was Christ “cut-off” from man and life at the cross, but his cry from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46**) indicates that he was “cut-off” from God the Father for a period of time while he was bearing our sins that the Father could not be part of. Jesus made this proclamation at the end of the three hours of darkness.

The center part of verse 26 states “the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Historically the destruction of Jerusalem occurred in 70 A.D. ... The intervention of two events (Christ being cut-off and the destruction of Jerusalem) after the sixty-ninth seven, which in their historic fulfillment occupied almost forty years, makes necessary a gap between the

sixty-ninth seven and the beginning of the seventieth seven of at least this length of time. [John Walvoord]

If you compare this destruction of the city with the events of **Revelation 11:2** (“The holy city will they tread underfoot forty and two months”) it becomes clear that the Revelation 11 event is different from the one mentioned in this verse. Hence, it follows that the destruction of the city is historical rather than future. As a result, it is probably better that all of verse 26 be taken historically.

The last phrase can be literally translated as, “and ruins are determined, and war will be until the end.”

Daniel 9:27

²⁷Then he will confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he will bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations will be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate one.”
[NASB]

In contrast to the rather clear fulfillment of verses 25 and 26, verse 27 is an enigma as far as history is concerned; and only futuristic interpretation allows any literal fulfillment. The determination of the antecedent of “he” in verse 27 is the key to the interpretation of the passage. If the normal rule be followed that the antecedent is the nearest preceding possibility, it would go back to the “prince that will come” of verse 26. This is the normal premillennial interpretation which postulates that the reference is to a future prince who may be identified with the Antichrist who will appear at the end of the inter-advent age just before the second coming of Christ. [John Walvoord]

The word translated “confirm” literally means, “to cause a covenant to be established or, possibly, to cause a covenant to prevail.” Literally, this verse starts off with, “And he will confirm a covenant with the many one seven.”

The word “abomination” used by Christ in **Matthew 24:15** may be a reference to Antiochus Epiphanes as implied in **Daniel 11:31**, but in **Daniel 12:11** it clearly refers to the future stopping of the daily sacrifices, forty-two months before the second advent of Christ. Thus, this stopping of the daily sacrifice occurs in the middle of the 70th week. The desolation according to this passage will continue until the consummation, pictured dramatically in Revelation 19, when the beast and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire. This will be the end point of the seventy sevens of Daniel which coincides with the second advent of Jesus Christ to the earth.

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