

THE 70 Weeks of Daniel~The Backbone of Bible Prophecy

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*H*aving an understanding of Daniel chapter 9:20-27 will help you have a better understanding of all the end times prophecies. It is a key to understanding the prophetic Scriptures. The prophecy of this chapter has been rightly called by scholars “the backbone of Biblical prophecy.” Let’s take a look at it.

20 Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, 21 yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, [the word translated there “man” can also be translated “servant.”] whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering.

The “evening offering” began at 3:00PM and consisted of a perfect yearling lamb offered as a whole burnt offering. This sacrifice of course foreshadowed Christ’s death and it is interesting to note that the Gospels tell us that Jesus died at that very hour, 3:00PM (Matthew 27:45-50).

22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. 23 “At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision; 24 “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city...”

The Hebrew word “weeks” here is the word *heptad*. A heptad is used to designate a collection of seven things. A more accurate translation of that Hebrew word *heptad* would be the word “sevens” [John Walvoord, *End Times*, p. 112]. Gabriel is saying “Seventy sevens are determined for your people...” Sevens of what? Years. Daniel had been praying about years (9:2) and God answered his prayer in that context. So, what do we get if we multiply seventy times seven? 490 years. So Gabriel is saying, “490 years are determined for your people and for your holy city...” According to Gabriel, this prophecy has to do with Daniel’s people, the Jews, as well as the city of Jerusalem. Daniel is praying about the 70 years of captivity in Babylon that he was a part of and God basically says, “I want to show you about another seventy, a time in which I will accomplish all My plans for your people and your holy city.”

What is God going to accomplish? Let’s read v. 24 again: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” There are six things that God is going to accomplish in that 490 year period. They are divided into two groups of three each. The first pertain to Israel’s sin and their redemption.

24 “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, [1] to finish the transgression [or just “to finish transgressions”] [2] to make an end of sins, [3] to make reconciliation [that word can also be translated “atonement”] for iniquity [which of course was made possible through the Messiah’s death on the cross]...”

The second coming of Christ will put an end to Israel’s transgressions and sins. The next three things that God is going to accomplish in this time period pertain to the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom on Earth. When He comes, He will [4] “bring in everlasting righteousness” (v. 24b). Jesus is going to reign in righteous judgment over the Earth, and Israel will be restored to walking righteously with the Lord. Fifthly [5] “to seal up vision and prophecy” (v. 24b). All that God has predicted through visions and oral and written prophecies for Israel will be fulfilled at Jesus’ second coming. Sixthly [6] “and to anoint the Most Holy” (v. 24b). This could refer to the millennial temple described in Ezekiel 41-46, which will be set apart to God. It could also refer to Christ Himself, the Holy One, who will be enthroned as the King.

25 “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;

What is “seven weeks” (or sevens) plus “sixty two sevens”? Sixty nine weeks, or sixty nine sevens. Sixty nine groups of seven years = 483 years. What would happen 483 years from “the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem”? The Messiah would come. We know from historical records that the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 5, 444 B.C. [See p. 115 -116 in *End Times* for more details surrounding the different decrees that went out]. You can read about it in Nehemiah 2:1-8. It was Artaxerxes’s generous decree that made it possible for Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. So the decree went out and 483 years later the Messiah, Jesus Christ, rode a donkey into Jerusalem on March 30, A.D. 33 [*End Times*, Walvoord, p. 116]. God told the Jewish people, through Daniel’s prophecy, the very year that their Messiah would come! Now, at first glance the period of time from 444 B.C. to A.D. 33 does not seem to equal 483 years (the sixty-nine “sevens”). But in Biblical times they used a different calendar than we do today. Their years were only 360 days long. If you keep that in mind and multiply the 483 years (the 69 weeks or “sevens”) by 360 days, the total number of days is 173,880 days, which corresponds exactly to the time of 444 B.C. to A.D. 33, when leap years are added. This total of 173,880 days ended shortly before Jesus was crucified.

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

The first segment of the 490 years was the period of “seven weeks” that we read there in v. 25. Seven weeks, or seven *heptads* of years is 49 years. That’s how long it was going to take the Jewish people to rebuild the city of Jerusalem from the time of Artaxerxes’s decree. And that is what happened. The city of Jerusalem was rebuilt from 444 B.C. to 395 B.C. Daniel’s prophecy here not only reveals the year that the Messiah would come, but we’re also told what would happen to the Messiah. Notice (v.26)

26 “And after the sixty two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;

So the Messiah would be “cut off?” The word translated “cut off” is used of executing the death penalty on a criminal. Thus the prophecy clearly points to the crucifixion of Christ. It says the Messiah would be cut off, “but not for Himself.” What does that mean? It means that at His death He would, as other translations say, “have nothing” in the sense that Israel had rejected Him and He would not receive the royal glory as the King on David’s throne over Israel.

26b “and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

So, the prophecy continues with a description of the judgment that would come on the generation that rejected the Messiah. What city was going to be destroyed? The very city that this whole passage is about! JERUSALEM. And not only was the city going to be destroyed but so was the Jewish sanctuary, a reference to their temple. Now, let me ask you a question: Who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple after the Messiah was cut off? The Romans. Titus led the attack in A.D. 70. Now, did you catch what Gabriel said there in the last part of v.26? He tells us about “a prince who is to come.” This prince will come from the very people who destroyed Jerusalem. The Romans. My friends, this prince is a reference to the one that we call the *antichrist*.

27 “Then he [this prince, this antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;

Remember, what Gabriel said in v. 24. “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.” When Messiah was crucified, only 69 weeks of years (483 of the 490 years) had been used up. Where is the 70th? Right here in v. 27, is what Bible scholars call, “THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL.” The prince to come, the antichrist, when he rises to power out of the Revised Roman Empire, is going to make a covenant with Israel for seven years. When that covenant is made the clock will begin. This will be the seventieth and final week for Israel, before Christ returns. Jesus said this will be a time of “tribulation” (Matthew 24:21), so we often refer to this period as “the tribulation.” But notice what this prince is going to do half way through the seven year period.

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

This ruler will end the Jewish sacrifice and offering. This expression refers to the entire Levitical system, which suggests that Israel will have restored that system in the first half of the seventieth “seven.” In the second half of the seven year time of Tribulation, the Antichrist will gain world wide political power (Rev. 13:7-8) and will cause the world to worship him (2 Thessalonians 2:4).