



## Daniel 9.24-27

The 70 “weeks” prophecy is one of the more challenging passages in Daniel. Various interpretations have been given to the prophecy, and we simply do not have the time to discuss them all. However, when kept in context, the meaning of the prophecy becomes more clear and I hope and pray that this lesson will provide insight and not confusion. I would highly recommend reading Phil Roberts’ 1986 Florida College lecture on the subject. His insight aided me greatly in my study of the passage. (<https://bookstore.floridacollege.edu/product/52045/LEAVING-A-MARK/>)

Daniel 9:24–27 (NASB95)

24“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.

25“So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

26“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

27“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

### ***The prophecy is God’s response to Daniel’s prayer.***

We must not forget that the bulk of this chapter is devoted to Daniel’s prayer which he made once he understood that the 70 years of captivity had been completed (vs. 2). We mustn’t forget that God had warned that captivity would be the result of covenant unfaithfulness (Leviticus 26.34). But God had

also promised that when the people confessed their iniquities, He would restore them to the land (Leviticus 26.40-42). Daniel's prayer was the exact kind of prayer God was looking for, thus the Lord sent a response to Daniel even before he was finished praying (vss. 20,21,23). This is important to keep in mind because it places the beginning of the 70 "weeks" at the time when Daniel uttered his prayer (539 B.C.).

### **Why 70?**

- First, let's consider that while many of our most prominent English translations read "Seventy weeks" (NASB, ESV, NKJV), the NASB includes a footnote stating "or units of seven" and this is reflected in translations such as the NIV (seventy sevens) and NLT (seventy sets of seven). I believe this is the better way of reading the text.
- Now consider the significance of 7 units of time in the Mosaic covenant:
  - » Israel was to observe the Sabbath, every 7th day (Exodus 31.13).
  - » The land was to "rest" every 7th year (Leviticus 25.3-4).
  - » Seven sabbath years, i.e. every 49 years, was a year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25.8ff).
  - » "This whole complex of sabbath keeping—days, years, and Jubilees—was especially well-suited to be a sign of the covenant because of the faith it demanded on the part of the Israelites. Consider the faith required for the people of an agricultural economy to go without cultivating their land for an entire year, not to mention the two years of the Jubilee. Surely one of the first laws to be ignored during periods of unfaithfulness would be the sabbath, and especially the seventh-year sabbaths." (Phil Roberts)
- And what would happen when Israel was unfaithful to their covenant? Ultimately, they would be taken out of the land and the land would be allowed to "enjoy its sabbaths" (Leviticus 26.34). With that in mind, consider what was written when God's people went away into Babylonian captivity: "... until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete." (2Chronicles 36.21). Thus, if each year of captivity was to fulfill one sabbatical year, then 70 years of captivity were the result of 490 years of covenant unfaithfulness.
- Returning to our text, Daniel prayed for forgiveness and restoration once the 70 years of captivity were coming to an end, each year of captivity representing one missed sabbatical year. Israel was punished for the prior "seventy sevens" of disobedience, and now God was revealing what would take place during the course of the next seventy sevens. "Just as the preceding epoch of Israelite history had culminated in failure and

captivity because of the unfaithfulness of Israel, now a new epoch of seventy times seven will begin which will culminate in salvation and redemption because of the faithfulness of God to his part in the covenant." (Phil Roberts)

- \* I do not take this to mean that the vision was fulfilled in an exact seventy sevens (490 years), nor do I believe we were intended to reach that conclusion. The captivity did not last an exact 70 years, but the 70 year number represented something of significance, for not only did 70 years of captivity mean the land had been deprived of 70 sabbaths, but 10 years of Jubilee were also skipped. Israel was punished for the last seventy sevens, but what would the next seventy sevens hold?

## **Jubilee**

- As we've already seen, the Mosaic Law stated that every 7th sabbatical year (7 sevens) a year of Jubilee was proclaimed (Leviticus 25.8ff).
- That the concept of Jubilee is prevalent in the vision seems evident. Consider that the seventy sevens are broken down into 3 parts: 7 sevens, 62 sevens and 1 seven. The first part, 7 sevens, is the time of Jubilee. And as we've already seen, 70 sevens comprises 10 periods of Jubilee (7x7x10).
- But what was so significant about Jubilee?
  - » First, let's consider that each sabbath day not only commemorated rest (Exodus 20.11) but deliverance (Deuteronomy 5.15).
  - » The dual concepts of rest and deliverance were central to the sabbatical year as the land rested, slaves were released and debts were canceled (Deuteronomy 15.1-18).
  - » And these concepts culminated on the year of Jubilee as the land and inhabitants rested and as they proclaimed "a release through the land to all its inhabitants." (Leviticus 25.10).
  - » "It is because of sin that man has to labor by the sweat of his brow to obtain his food. Because of sin men and women are enslaved to sickness and disease, from which they long to be delivered, as was the woman of Luke 13:10-17. And because of sin the Israelites had to be sent into the bondage of the Babylonian captivity. In short, sin brings bondage and enslavement; deliverance from sin brings rest." (Phil Roberts)
- Now note what the Lord declared would happen in the vision of 70 sevens:
  - » "finish the transgression" Perhaps bringing an end to the transgressions of the Jews.

- » “make an end of sin” Either by forgiveness or judgment... or both.
- » “make atonement for iniquity” Via the sacrificial death of Christ.
- » “bring in everlasting righteousness” Through faith in Christ, as opposed to the condemnation experienced by the Jews in Daniel’s day.
- » “seal up vision and prophecy” Signifying the completion of God’s will.
- » “anoint the most holy place” “The grammar is ambiguous and could refer to the anointing either of a person or of a place. And both temple and Messiah are part of the context of this passage. It is my belief that the reference is to Jesus as the Messiah, but with the realization that he is also the true temple or “Most Holy” who would, in his own person, replace the physical temple of the Jews (cf. John 2:19–21).” (Phil Roberts)
- » In short, the vision was about deliverance and rest! “Because of sin, the preceding epoch of ten Jubilees had not brought liberty, but a return to bondage—the very antithesis of what the sabbath law stood for. So now the angel announces to Daniel a new epoch of ten Jubilees to bring in the true salvation and deliverance from bondage that God was preparing for his people.” (Phil Roberts)

### **70 sevens in three parts**

God’s people were in captivity for 70 years because of unfaithfulness, but the vision of 70 sevens emphasizes God’s faithfulness to His promises and the blessings that would come on His people. Significantly, the period of 70 sevens is broken down into 3 parts, each showing a different way in which God would bless His people. Let’s note these using the NLT translation:



Daniel 9:24–27 (NLT)

24“A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

25Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times.

- » 7 sevens: Jerusalem rebuilt and restored, God's answer to Daniel's prayer (vss. 17-19).
- » 62 sevens: coming of Messiah the Prince, God's promise of the One who would rule over His everlasting Kingdom (7.13-14).

26 "After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end.

27 The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him."

- » 1 seven: destruction of the desolater. Recall that God revealed the 4th beast (world empire, Rome) would wage war against the saints (7.21,23-25), but the 4th beast would be destroyed (7.11,22,26-27).
- » You will note that the killing of the Anointed One is not attributed to the "ruler" that would arise. Perhaps, the Lord intended for it to be understood that the killing of the Anointed One was the culmination of Jewish rebellion and sin.
- » The ruler who would arise (Rome) would destroy both the Temple and Jerusalem, bringing an end to the Jewish state.
- » Vs. 27 could still be talking about Rome's treatment of the Jews, but it seems more likely that this references Rome's treatment of Christians. Rome sought to impose its will on God's people (the idea behind making a strong or firm covenant), sought to stop Christian worship (i.e. put an end to the sacrifices and offerings) and enforced the worship of Caesar (object of desecration or abomination).
- » But Rome's fate was decreed, the one that brought desolation would be destroyed!