

Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks

Daniel 9:24-27

Daniel 9:24-27: *"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.

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.

²⁶ *"And after the sixty-two weeks*

Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;

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.

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."

Background Notes

In our last talk we mentioned that the seventy-week prophetic vision of Daniel 9 has been called "The Backbone of Bible Prophecy" because, like Daniel 2 and 7, it gives us a broad sweep of world history as it relates to the Jewish people, the Messiah and the worldwide earthly kingdom of the Messiah. But in Daniel's vision of chapter 9 we have not only a

general overview of history, we have a detailed and chronological timetable of events from Daniel's day until the second coming of Christ. In reference to the Daniel 9 prophecy, one commentary said: "Probably no single prophetic utterance is more crucial in the fields of biblical interpretation, apologetics, and eschatology."

We saw in the first part of the chapter that Daniel was praying on the basis of Jeremiah's prophecy. Jeremiah 25 predicted that the Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years. Daniel realized that the 70-year period would soon come to an end. At this point Daniel had been in Babylon for 67 years, so Daniel was praying about the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem.

It was in this context that the angel Gabriel came to Daniel with the message that there was more in store for Jerusalem and the Jewish people than just the return after the seventy years of captivity -- in fact, there were **70 "sevens"** that had been decreed for Daniel's people and for Jerusalem.

The word "weeks" here can be misleading, because we immediately think of a week as seven days. However, the original word used here just means a "unit of seven" or a "set of seven." It could be seven days, or seven months, or seven years. The best English translation of this word would be "heptads." A heptad is a unit of seven. As the word dozen means a unit of twelve, so the word heptad means a unit of seven. So seventy heptads or seventy "time units," each consisting of seven something's had been decreed for Israel. We'll see in our doctrinal points that the heptad time unit of "seven" is not seven days, or seven months, but **seven prophetic years**.

In verse 24, Daniel was told that by the time this prophecy would be completely fulfilled, six specific matters would be accomplished and resolved:

1. Transgression would be finished - that is, Israel would be spiritually restored.
2. Sin would be judged.
3. Atonement would be made for iniquity. This was certainly accomplished in the death of Christ at Calvary.
4. Everlasting righteousness would be brought in -- a reference to the coming earthly kingdom reign of our Lord.
5. The vision and prophecy would be sealed - that is, the seal of fulfillment.
6. The Most Holy Place would be anointed - that is, in the future millennial Temple prophesied in detail in the book of Ezekiel.

Verse 24 gives the overview of the 70-week prophecy. Verse 25 gives details of the first 69 prophetic weeks, and verse 26 gives details of a period of time between the 69th and 70th weeks. Then verse 27 gives details of the 70th prophetic week.

Doctrinal Points

1. The first 69 prophetic weeks of Daniel 9 occurred in the past.

Verse 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.”*

We learn from this verse that from a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Messiah, there would be 7 “sevens” and 62 “sevens” -- a total of 69 sevens.

Several decrees were given during Persian rule that authorized the Jews to return to Jerusalem, but only one specifically gave permission to the Jews to **rebuild** Jerusalem, including the ruined walls. That decree was given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes in 445BC. Let’s read about it in Nehemiah 2:5-7, “*And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.”* ⁶ *Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?”* So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. ⁷ *Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah...”*

Now if the heptads of Daniel 9 are time units of seven years each, then sixty-nine heptads is 483 years. Looking ahead from any one of the Persian decrees concerning Jerusalem, 483 years brings us to the 1st century -- the time of Christ. If the heptads are seven-year time units consisting of 360-day years (rather than 365-day years, because both the Jews and the Babylonians observed time in 360-day lunar years), then it has been calculated that from 445BC the 483 prophetic years (69 heptads) would terminate on the very day of the Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem! Verse 26 says that after the 62 heptads, or a total of 69 heptads, the Messiah would be cut off, obviously referring to the crucifixion.

Now why are the 69 heptads (or 483 years) divided into 7 heptads + 62 heptads? How many years is seven heptads or seven sevens? Answer: it is 49 years. What is 49 years in Jewish reckoning? It is one jubilee period. So the angel Gabriel told Daniel that in the first jubilee period from the edict of 445BC, Jerusalem would be completely rebuilt with its walls and defenses -- even in spite of difficulties and opposition! Read the whole book of Nehemiah in this connection. The first 69 prophetic weeks of Daniel 9 occurred in the past.

2. The final 70th prophetic week of Daniel 9 is future.

Verse 27 gives us details of the final heptad, or the final seven years of the prophecy. Verse 26 implies that there would be a time gap between the crucifixion of Christ and the final heptad of seven years, which we believe is still future. We refer to this final seven years as the Tribulation period, based on our Lord’s Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25, as well as on the prophecies of the book of Revelation.

In verse 26 we see that the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70AD is included in this time gap, as well as the many wars and destructions of Jerusalem over the years since the time of Christ.

Verse 27 tells us that someone will make a firm covenant with the Jewish people for the seven years, but in the middle of the seven-year period he will break the treaty. There will be abomination and desolation and destruction in Jerusalem until this covenant breaker is himself destroyed. We believe that this judgment will come with the return of the Lord at the end of the seven-year tribulation period.

Who is the “he” (v27) who makes and breaks the covenant? Answer: We believe that the “he” is the prince of verse 26. Notice that the prince of verse 26 is not the Roman general, Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD. No, verse 26 indicates that it was the people of the prince who is to come that destroyed the city and the Temple (in other words, the Romans).

So we believe that this covenant maker/covenant breaker of the future is the Roman beast of Revelation 13 with the number 666. He is the little horn of Daniel 7, and he will come out of the territory of the old Roman Empire which will then be a revived Roman Empire. If we are now on the threshold of the end times, it is possible that the European Union will be the basis this revived Roman Empire. The seven-year covenant will probably involve decisions on such issues as a Palestinian state, a Temple in Jerusalem for the Jewish people, oil, and other politically hot-button items.

Three and a half years into this final heptad of seven years, the covenant will be broken and the abomination of desolation will be set up in the Holy Place, also referred to prophetically by our Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:15. The last three and a half years of this final heptad of seven years is known as the Great Tribulation. The final 70th prophetic week of Daniel 9 is future.

Practical Application

Don't confuse the covenant of Daniel 9 with the “New Covenant.”

The covenant of Daniel 9:27 is not the New Covenant made by Christ. The Lord is **not** the “prince” of verse 26, and the breaking of the covenant is **not** the crucifixion of Christ.

The covenant of verse 26 is a peace treaty made with the Jewish people by the “Roman prince” of the end times. This Roman prince emerges as the Roman beast (of 666 notoriety), especially when he betrays Israel and breaks the end time covenant of the future Tribulation period.

So don't confuse the covenant of Daniel 9 with the New Covenant.