

“SEVENTY WEEKS OF YEARS.”

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March 12, 2017, 6:00PM

Scripture Texts: Daniel 9:20-27

Introduction.

Of the interpreting and reinterpreting of many prophecies there is no end and our text is no exception. Daniel is right up there with Revelation as holding the attention of those obsessed with prophecy these days.

This text is especially important to people who call themselves Dispensationalist. They have particular views about the end times, the role of Israel, the seven years of tribulation, the rapture of the church and the person and work of the anti-Christ. I offered many counter views in our study of Revelation.

Someone put this book in my book a few weeks ago which tries to interpret Daniel and Revelation from a Dispensational perspective in the light of current events especially in Israel. In his previous book he predicted that the seven years of tribulation would be from 2010 to 2017.

In this new book (written in 2013) he explains he was wrong, that 2017 instead of being the end of the seven years, should be the beginning of the seven years, actually February 11, 2017.

This passage of Scripture is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult to understand. It is obscure and does not give up its meaning easily. One commentator called it a dismay swamp.

Five hundred years ago John Calvin wrote:

“This passage has been variously treated, and so distracted, and almost torn to pieces by the various opinions of interpreters, that it might be considered nearly useless on account of its obscurity. But, in the assurance that no prediction is really in vain, we may hope to understand this prophecy, provided only we are attentive and teachable according to the angel's admonition, and the Prophet's example” (John Calvin, *Daniel*, p. 195).

II Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

In the spirit of John Calvin and II Timothy 3 we will attempt to understand what God has revealed to Daniel and to us.

Context.

Remember the context. Daniel had been doing his devotions and read in Jeremiah that God promised to restore His people to their land and to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple after seventy years of exile in Babylon. Daniel knew that time was nearing and began praying a prayer of confession, in which he asked God to remember His promise concerning His city and His people who are called by His name.

God immediately hears His prayer and sends the archangel Gabriel from heaven to give Daniel insight and understanding into the vision he is about to receive. In other words, what we have just read is God's answer to Daniel's prayer.

Daniel prayed that God would behold His city and His people and this is given as an encouraging word to his people and the holy city. They are not utterly cast off and exiled forever. God still has a future and a hope for them.

God sent Gabriel to Daniel to make things clear, not more confusing. Gabriel begins by explaining the meaning of seventy and breaks down the seventy into three unequal parts.

Of course his explanation leaves us with lots of questions. What is the meaning of the seventy weeks, of the time of restoration, of the identity of the two princes mentioned, of this second destruction and the abominations and desolations? And when will all this take place, is this the first coming of the Messiah or the second coming at the end of time?

Based on my reading of Scripture and about ten scholars, I am going to offer a summary of what seems to me to make the most sense of the available Biblical information.

What are the Seventy Weeks and when do they begin?

We are aware of the general significance of the number 7 in Scripture. It signifies completion or perfection. Seven days of creation signify God's completion of His good work. In Revelation we saw several cycles of seven, cycles of completion or perfection, the completion of God's work and God's judgment.

Gabriel makes clear the seventy years of Jeremiah are different than the seventy weeks or seventy sevens that God is showing Daniel. Daniel is being shown something new.

The Hebrew word translated weeks is the word seven. A week is seven days. Another way of translating this is seventy sevens, or seventy weeks of years. There is an example of this in Leviticus 25:

Leviticus 25:8 You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the *seven weeks of years* shall give you forty-nine years.

So this seventy weeks of sevens is 490 years.

Yes, the seventy years is coming to an end, but if the Jewish people were expecting that at the end of their exile they would return to their Promised Land and life happily ever afterwards, then they don't have it right. Israel's return is a short sighted perspective. God has a much longer view in mind.

There will follow another seventy of sevens before there is a full restoration or a final restoration. What they are going home to is not the end, God has much more in store for his people.

Furthermore, Gabriel announces when the seventy sevens will begin and that the seventy sevens will come in three unequal periods.

The first period is God's immediate response to Daniel's prayer. There will be seven weeks or seven sevens or 49 years. During this time there will be a decree, a going out of the word from Cyrus the king of Babylon allowing God's people to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

This will be the time written about in Ezra and Nehemiah. Remember that was a time of trouble as the people of God faced much resistance while they were rebuilding.

There is much debate about when these seventy sevens begin, but the most natural reading is that the 70 weeks of years begins at the end of Jeremiah's 70 years of captivity. This would fit as the clearest answer to Daniel's prayer.

Ezra 1:1-3 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: 2 "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. 3 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.

II Chronicles 36:20-23 He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. 22 Now 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: 23 "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 the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

The decree of Cyrus in 538 BC ended the 70 years of exile, and began the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The second period will be sixty-two sevens or 434 years. This period is given one sentence by Gabriel, he says nothing about it. This matches the time between the OT and the NT when there is nothing written in the Bible. God is silent, there are no prophets declaring the Word of the Lord. That period of silence will be broken when John the Baptist begins to preach.

The final third period will be one more seven or week of seven years.

This is the time of Jesus and the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

This is an intense period that captures some of the most important events in human history. In this time two princes or anointed ones are mentioned.

Who is the coming prince?

First, the end of the 62 weeks or years will be marked by the coming of an anointed one. This is another term for the Messiah, the anointed one of God. The name Christ is not Jesus' last name, it is His supreme title and it means Anointed One, Jesus the Christ.

People in the OT were anointed to be set apart for special offices, kings, priests, and prophets. But the Messiah was set apart and consecrated by God as prophet, priest and king.

This anointed one will be cut off and rejected, left with nothing, forsaken by God, cut off from the Father's favor as He bears our guilt.

Isaiah 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

He will change everything as is seen in vs. 27. He will make a new covenant and the old covenant with its sacrifices and blood is now obsolete and can end.

This anointed one will fulfill everything spoken of in vs. 24 as we will see later.

A ***second*** prince will come who is called the ruler of the people who will lead his people to destroy the city and the temple again.

This ruler was the Roman prince and general Titus Vespasianus who led the armies of the Roman Empire to destroy Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. The abomination of desolation may refer to his setting up idols and pagan practices in the temple.

Dispensationalist think this is the anti-Christ of the future. They disconnect the people of the prince from the prince himself. But the text shows they are contemporary.

What is the meaning of 9:27?

Daniel 9:26b-27 Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

Dispensationalist insist that vs. 27 refers to new events after vs. 26, events far in the future. Others see vs. 27 as parallel to vs. 26, referring to the same events.

This describes the seventieth week. In the first half of the week Christ is in view. The covenant is the new covenant made in His shed blood.

The blood of Jesus made the Jewish sacrifices obsolete and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD made the sacrifices impossible. The Temple was desecrated and destroyed.

In the second half of the week the end is in view, until the decreed end comes. In other words, we are living the second half of this final week of the seventy sevens of weeks. At the end of this week the predetermined desolation of the desolator will take place, God’s decree concerning the end of Satan.

Let me illustrate what that end will look like from God’s perspective.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/223720/hitting-bullet-bullet-mona-charen>

The Aegis-class cruiser USS Lake Erie (“Courage, Determination, Peace” reads her shield) was pitching and rolling in heavy seas west of Hawaii on the night of February 20. Her mission was to shoot down a disabled satellite that was tumbling toward the Earth’s atmosphere. The spy satellite carried a toxic fuel, hydrazine, that might — on the off chance it hit a populated area — have posed considerable health risks. March 1 was the deadline for action: on that date, the bus-sized craft would bounce against the outer reaches of atmosphere, thus sending it into a more erratic orbit. The firing window was only about 30 seconds long. At 10:30 eastern time, the USS Lake Erie was able to fire an SM-3 missile 153 miles into space and score a direct hit on a target that was traveling at 17,000 miles per hour. A fireball and vapor cloud testified to success.

The timing had to be precise and accurate, everything had to be calculated ahead of time, predetermined.

God has already made His calculations, the timing is set down to the second, when the evil one, the destroyer, the tormentor of God’s people and God’s kingdom will be destroyed. It is already dialed in. Satan is in His cross-hairs and the date is marked on God’s calendar.

This should give us some confidence, and some courage and boldness, fearlessness.

God has a specific timetable. Everything is exactly on schedule and going exactly according to plan. The number of days are fixed. This season of grace and mercy and gathering in of the elect is limited.

As Daniel prayed for the promise of God to be fulfilled and as God answered Daniel's prayer and showed him what He was about to do, so we are part of God's plan, our prayers are part of His purposes. Pray with knowledge about God's promises for the future, pray with confidence and boldness that God gather the nations and bring about the completion of all He has purposes on earth.

Are we aware of the unseen hand of God in our daily routine, when everything is normal? Are we aware of the faithful day in and day out protection and preservation and provision of God? When we go to school or work? When we marry and bury? When we buy and sell? When we laugh and when we cry?

Behind the scenes of our lives is the grace of God oiling the works, the daily machine of life, keeping things moving and running.

And what is true for the sheep is true for the flock. God is protecting and preserving and providing for His Church in all the earth. God is present in all of history, in all events, great and small. Even to the very end of time

If God did not spare His own Son, what else will He not do for us? All of this demonstrates God's great love for us. Everything is grace, the steadfast love and kindness of God causing all things to work for His glory and our good.