

Seven and Sixty Two Weeks

A series on Daniel's prophecy of seventy sevens (part 3)

Throughout the Old Testament, few have been esteemed by God as highly as the prophet Daniel. In loving devotion to God and with a regular prayer life, Daniel serves as an exemplary life of faith.

Despite the edict of the new Gentile king, Cyrus the Great, Daniel continues to pray three times a day giving thanks for God's blessings, among other things, as one of three commissioners in charge of the whole kingdom and his distinction among them (Dan 6:1-10).

Despite the threat against his own life in the lions' den, Daniel's devotion and trust in God testifies to Cyrus the Great of the real existence of God and the integrity of Daniel's service to Him and indirectly to Cyrus himself (Dan 6:16-28).

Despite his personal victories and stature, Daniel continues to seek God by prayer and supplication with fasting, sackcloth and ashes! In his prayers, he confesses personally and for his people, recognizing their disobedience and failure of upholding their commitment to the Law, and pleads for forgiveness and restoration in light of Jeremiah's prophecy (Dan 9:1-19).

Before Daniel finishes praying, the angel Gabriel appears to share God's message to help Daniel understand an earlier vision (Dan 9:20-23; 7:1-28). It is because of his faithfulness to God and the love for God's people that Daniel receives a message to help calm his fears for God's people in light of the Gentile kingdoms that precede the Divine Kingdom (Dan 7:28).

While Daniel is attempting to understand Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years for the completion of "the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan 9:2), the angel Gabriel enumerates 70 weeks has been decreed for his people. Jeremiah's prophecy will commence soon (Jer 25:8-13; 29:10), and Daniel receives additional information about the future of his people. The angel Gabriel specifically mentions two significant periods of time: 7 weeks and 62 weeks which is only 69 weeks.

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. 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. (Dan 9:25-26)

Daniel learns that when there is a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem:

7 weeks – Jerusalem will be rebuilt "with plaza and moat even in times of distress."

62 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."

When was the decree made to restore and rebuild Jerusalem? There are several possibilities that scholars have debated over time.

1. Cyrus the Great (2 Chron 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4)

Around 538 B.C., the first decree by Cyrus the Great, consistent with Jeremiah's prophecy, promised the repatriation of the Jews to their land and materials for the rebuilding of the House of God. However the angel Gabriel spoke of a decree to rebuild the city Jerusalem not just the Temple.

While there is no direct record of Cyrus the Great's decree of rebuilding Jerusalem, this decree is the basis for a later decree that call for it, which God accredits to Cyrus (Isa 44:26-28; 45:13).

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2. Darius the Great (Ezra 6:1-12)

Around 520 B.C., when the provincial governor questions the Jews who authorized the rebuilding of the Temple, a letter is sent to Babylon seeking confirmation from Darius the Great. After searching the royal archives and discovering Cyrus the Great's original proclamation, Darius the Great issues a confirmatory decree authorizing that the rebuilding be unhindered, paid from the royal treasury of the provincial governor, and the Levites' requirement of food offerings be met on a daily basis.

3. Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:12-26)

Around 457 B.C., Artaxerxes I issued a decree reiterating Cyrus the Great's initial proclamation of allowing the Jews to return to their home land. In addition the decree stipulates the provision of money and food offerings for the worship of the God of Israel.

4. Artaxerxes I (Neh 2:5-8)

In 444 B.C., Artaxerxes I accedes to Nehemiah's request and allows him to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. This date and decree is the time from which the angel Gabriel's 7 and 62 weeks commence from. From Ezra's perspective, Cyrus the Great's decree initiated God's plan of returning the Exiles, Darius the Great affirmed it, and Artaxerxes I completed God's plan (Ezra 4:3-7).

Establishing this decree as the one the angel Gabriel referred to is attributed to Dr. Harold Hoehner who refined the work of Sir Robert Anderson and recognized which New Year's Day reckoning that Nehemiah was using (Nisan 1 verses Tishri 1).

7 Weeks: The Rebuilding of Jerusalem

According to the message from the angel Gabriel, it would take 49 prophetic years (7 weeks x 7 years / week) to rebuild Jerusalem with "plaza and moat."

The Hebrew term behind the English translation "plaza" can be better understood as a "broad open space," which, if it was confined, a "plaza", or, if not, it would be "streets." In this passage, it is more likely to have the general sense of streets.

The Hebrew term behind the English translation of "moat" has the meaning of a "trench" or "ditch." It referred to a ditch that was dug exterior to the city's walls that was intended to strengthen the defensive capabilities of the wall.

While Nehemiah completes the initial rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem in 52 days (Neh 6:15), there is little record of when Jerusalem was finally rebuilt in the fashion mentioned by the angel Gabriel. Subsequent to the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., Jerusalem was left in ruins for some 140 years, and there was considerable debris (Neh 4:10).

To determine when Jerusalem was rebuilt according to prophecy, some calculations are required:

1. The number of prophetic years is 49:

(7 weeks) x (7 years / week)

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2. The number of solar years that is equivalent to 49 prophetic years is 48 solar years.

$(49 \text{ prophetic years}) \times (360 \text{ days} / \text{prophetic year}) \times (\text{solar year} / 365.24219 \text{ days})$ to the nearest integer

A prophetic year, based on how God records time in the Bible, is 360 days a year; however, contemporary calendars are based on the solar year, the time it takes for the earth to orbit the sun, with a seasonal adjustment (i.e. leap year) so that the seasons correspond to the calendar. A prophetic year of 360 days is equivalent to a solar year of 365.24219 days.

3. Jerusalem, in light of the angel Gabriel's message, was rebuilt with streets and a strong defensive wall system by 396 B.C.

$(444 \text{ B.C.}) - (48 \text{ years})$

62 Weeks: Messiah the Prince

On the basis of Dr. Harold Hoehner's work, the timing of Messiah the Prince's arrival can be generally seen as:

1. The number of prophetic years is 483:

$(69 \text{ weeks}) \times (7 \text{ years} / \text{week})$

2. The number of solar years that is equivalent to 483 prophetic years is 476 solar years.

$(483 \text{ prophetic years}) \times (360 \text{ days} / \text{prophetic year}) \times (\text{solar year} / 365.24219 \text{ days})$ to the nearest integer

3. Messiah the Prince, in light of the angel Gabriel's message, arrives in 33 A.D.

$(444 \text{ B.C.}) - (476 \text{ years})$

Note: there is no year that is numbered as zero. The year 1 B.C. is followed by the year 1 A.D.

Calculating to the day, Dr. Hoehner also established that the 69 weeks after Artaxerxes I's decree matched the exact day of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Although later scholars discovered some errors in taking into account the Hebrew calendar for the dating of Artaxerxes I's decree, Dr. Hoehner's work was strengthened and testified to the literal accuracy of the angel Gabriel's message. The following dates have been determined:

Sunday, Nisan 9 (March 29, 33 A.D.): Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem (Matt 21:8-11; Mark 11:7-10; Luke 19:35-41; John 12:12-15; Zech 9:9).

Daniel's 69th week ends on this day.

Friday, Nisan 14 (April 3, 33 A.D.): Jesus was cut off or crucified.

Just as Daniel 9:26 predicts "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing," and this is the apex of the Hebrew chiasm that exists here.

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