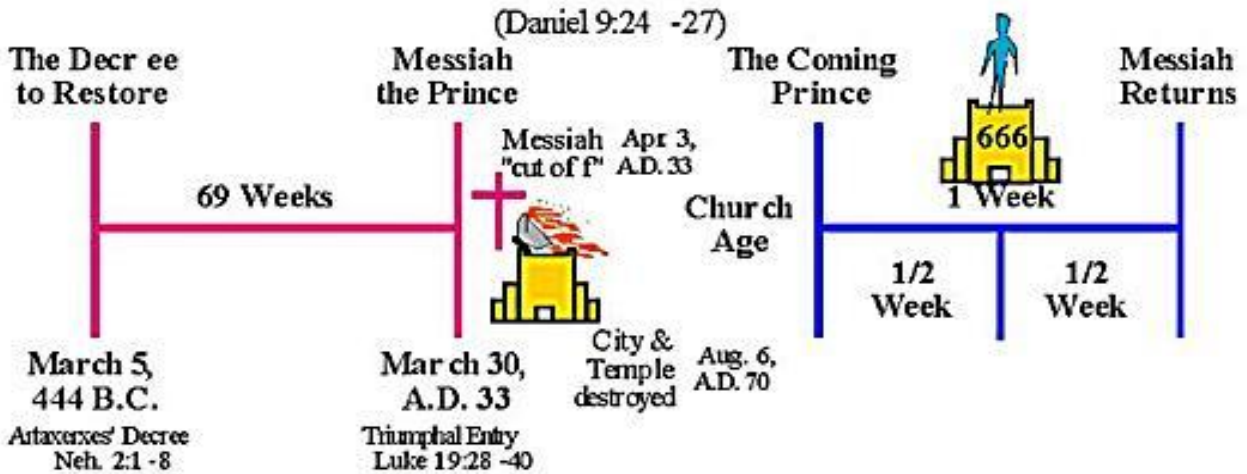


# Seventy Sevens

## Daniel's Seventy Weeks



By Brian C Thomas

### Introduction

The Seventy Sevens prophecy is found in the book of **Daniel 9:20-27**. This is one of the greatest prophecies of the Bible because it foretells the timing of the First and Second coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In studying this prophecy, it is important to keep in mind that this message was concerning events related to the Jewish nation BUT have great significance to the Gentiles and the Christian Church today.

### Background

The nation of Israel had a long history of rebelling against God. God had blessed and delivered them many times from their enemies. One of these occurred when He delivered them from four hundred-thirty years of slavery in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. God had warned His people that repeated disobedience would cause Him to allow enemy nations to overtake the Jews (**Leviticus 26:17**). The book of Daniel opens by describing the invasion and capture of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Daniel along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Jewish captives and were selected as servants to the king due to their great wisdom. During this period of exile, the Babylonian kingdom was overtaken by the Medo-Persians which were ruling the nation during the Seventy Sevens revelation. In the opening of chapter 9, Daniel was praying and confessing the sins of Israel so that God would be merciful and deliver them once again from

an enemy, the Medo-Persians. He knew they had been captured because of their rebellion against God and that Jerusalem would lie in ruins for seventy years according to the prophet Jeremiah (**Daniel 9:2, Jeremiah 25:1-14**). Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. (**Jeremiah 39**) and Daniel knew the seventy year period of exile was coming to an end.

### **Daniel 9:20-21**

*<sup>20</sup>While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill- <sup>21</sup> while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. - NIV*

In verse 20, Daniel is reflecting back on his prayer to God for the sins of his people. Verse 21 states that the angel Gabriel appears in response to his prayer. Daniel had been visited by Gabriel before concerning other visions (see **Daniel 8:15**). Gabriel comes to Daniel flying swiftly and touched him about the time of the evening oblation, which is the evening sacrifice.

### **Daniel 9:22-23**

*<sup>22</sup> He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. <sup>23</sup> As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: - NIV*

Gabriel is now giving Daniel instruction. He explains that his prayer has been heard and that an answer has been given because Daniel is highly thought of due to his great faith. Gabriel proceeds to decode the message and vision for Daniel.

### **Daniel 9:24**

*<sup>24</sup> "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. - NIV*

Gabriel is telling Daniel that his people, the Jews, and his holy city, Jerusalem, have "Seventy sevens" to accomplish the tasks at hand. A key point to unlocking this prophecy is determining what is "Seventy sevens". The word "sevens" in Hebrew is actually translated to mean "weeks" in English. Therefore, we know "Seventy sevens" if referring to an amount of time, namely "Seventy weeks". But the "weeks" are actually years. A search of other scripture reveals that one prophetic day equals one year. God described one day to represent one year in His commands to Ezekiel (**Ezekiel 4:4-6**). Another example is found in **Numbers 14:34** in which God said the Israelites would wander in the wilderness one year for

each of the forty days. This means that one day equals one year and one week equals seven years. This prophecy can therefore be referred to as "Seventy Weeks of Years" and we can conclude that this prophecy covers a period of 490 years ( $70 * 7 = 490$ ).

So we see that the nation of Israel has 490 years to accomplish the following tasks:

- Finish transgression
- Put an end to sin
- Atonement for wickedness
- Bring everlasting righteousness
- Seal up vision and prophecy
- Anoint the most holy

The first task, finish transgression, refers to the Jewish rebellion to God. Remember that Daniel received this vision prior to Christ ever coming to earth as the Son of God but the Jewish rebellion would also include the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Daniel is receiving the message that the Jews will reject Jesus.

The second task, put an end to sin, refers to ending the immorality within the Jews. The Jews often turned to idol worship and committed many other sins in rejection of God throughout their history. Gabriel is saying the end to this sinful nature will come once the Jews accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

The third task, atone for wickedness, would come when Jesus shed His blood on the cross as a sacrifice for all sin. There are numerous examples throughout the Old Testament of God commanding a sacrificial lamb to be provided as atonement or forgiveness for the people's sin. Jesus put an end to the need for these sacrifices when He gave His life on the cross as the pure and holy Sacrificial Lamb.

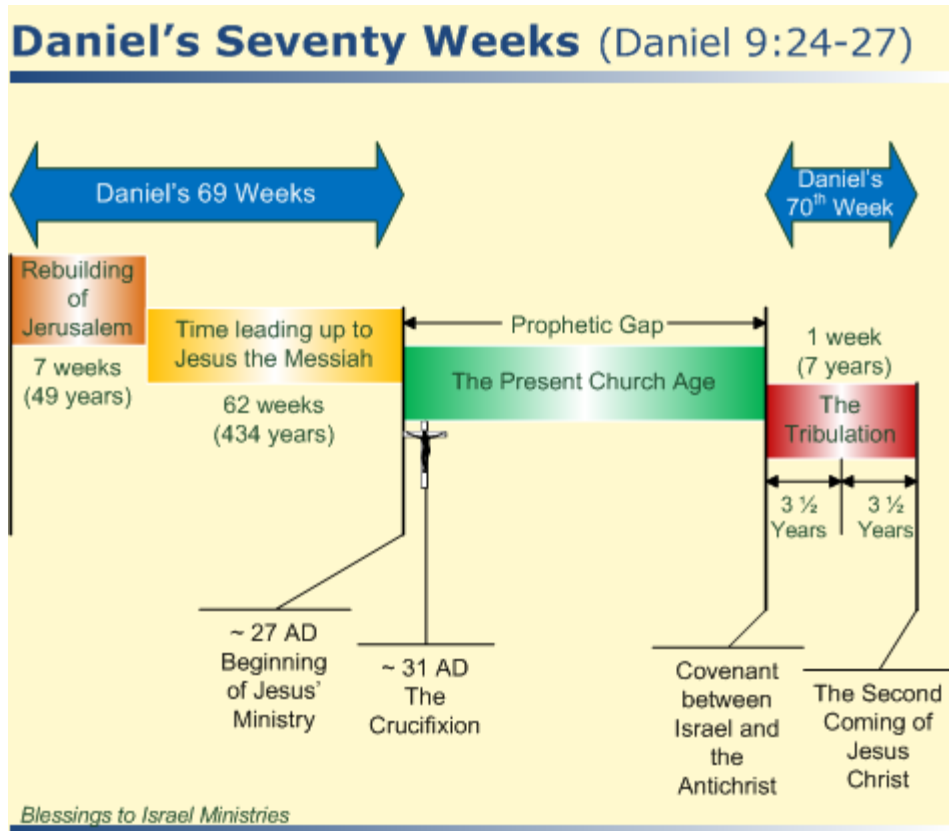
The fourth task, bring everlasting righteousness, refers to the period when Jesus would reign supreme on earth as Lord of lords and King of kings. This period will be established during the 1000 year earthly reign of Jesus. He will bring everlasting peace and righteousness.

The fifth task, seal up vision and prophecy, refers to the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies. According to **1 Peter 1:11**, the Messianic prophecies fall into two categories: the Sufferings of the Messiah and the Glory of the Messiah. Jesus was persecuted and scorned during his first visit to earth. The Jews rejected Him and crucified Him at the cross. But at His second coming, Jesus will return in great honor and glory (**Matthew 24:30**).

The last task, anoint the most holy, has caused debate amongst many theologians. Some think this means the anointing of Jesus Christ while others believe it refers to

the anointing of the Holy Temple. I tend to lean towards anointing of the Holy Temple since the anointing of Jesus seems to occur in the fourth and fifth tasks.

Now that all tasks for the 490 year period have been given, we will see which tasks have already occurred as of present day and which are still to come.



### Daniel 9:25

*25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens'. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. - NIV*

Here we find the starting point to this 490 year period. The clock began ticking when the decree was issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. As I mentioned earlier, Daniel received this message from Gabriel during the time of Israel's exile to the Medo-Persian Empire. Most theologians believe Daniel received this prophecy in 538 B.C. Under the new Medo-Persian rule, the Jews were allowed to begin returning to Jerusalem. One major problem with this return to Jerusalem was that the city was in ruins. King Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C to put down a revolt.

The key to this prophecy is when was the decree issued "to restore and rebuild Jerusalem". The following dates are offered as possibilities:

538 B.C. - Cyrus, King of Persia, issued a decree to Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (**2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3; and Ezra 6:1-5**).

457 B.C. - Artaxerxes, King of Persia, issued a decree to Ezra giving him permission to resume the Temple services, appoint judges and magistrates to administer justice over the people, teach the Law of God, and punish those that do not obey the Law (**Ezra 7:11-28**).

445 B.C. - Artaxerxes issued a decree to Nehemiah allowing him to go to Judah (Jerusalem) and rebuild the walls of the city (**Nehemiah 2:1-8**).

Daniel goes on to mention in verse 25 that "Seventy sevens" will be broken up into different periods. The first period is seven 'sevens' or 49 years ( $7 * 7$ ) and the second period is sixty-two 'sevens' or 434 years ( $62 * 7$ ). The scripture does not specify how long it took to rebuild Jerusalem but it may be that it took 49 years which would be the first period of seven 'sevens'. This means there would be 483 years from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the time when the Anointed One comes. The Anointed One is Jesus Christ.

### **Daniel 9:26-27**

*<sup>26</sup> After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. <sup>27</sup> He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. - NIV*

Verse 26 states that after the sixty-two 'seven's (a total of 483 years would have passed at that point), the Anointed One would be cut off. The cutting off of the Anointed One would be fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross. The Bible does not record what date Jesus was crucified but most theologians accept 30 A.D. or 33 A.D. as the year of crucifixion. The exact year is up for much debate. But whether it was 30 A.D. or 33 A.D., 483 years earlier would have been between 453 B.C. - 450 B.C. This comes very close to the years in which decrees were issued concerning restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem. There is much debate concerning whether these were years based on the Jewish calendar of 360 days/yr or years based on the Gregorian calendar of 365 ¼ days/yr. This leads to discussions surrounding leap years and many other complicated mathematical calculations...I will not go into that detail at this point. I feel the main thing to consider is the proximity of the dates

and therefore fulfillment of the scripture. I think if exact dates were that important, the date of Jesus' birth and death would have been recorded in the Bible.

The verse also states that the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed. History reveals that the Romans invaded and destroyed the newly reconstructed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as fulfillment of this prophecy. This text also gives insight to the origin of the Antichrist, "*The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary*". This ruler is the Antichrist and since we know the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., this implies the Antichrist will be a future ruler of the Roman Empire. Of course the Roman Empire no longer exists today. So you may ask, the Roman Empire came and went but where was the Antichrist? If we fast forward to present day, the Roman Empire is being revived but under a new name, the "European Union". It is possible that a boastful and charismatic leader will arise out of the European Union someday as fulfillment of this prophecy. Up to this point, the nations of the EU have shared in the leadership role in 6 month cycles. But the EU is already having talks of selecting a permanent president; Barack Obama and Tony Blair are a couple of names that have been proposed to fill this role. While the most popular belief is that the Antichrist will come from the EU, others believe his origin will be from the ancient Babylon territory (which is the present day area that centers around Iraq, Iran). Only time will tell where the Antichrist origin will be. This prophecy will be fulfilled in the last 'seven' mentioned in verse 27. Verse 26 goes on to mention that the end would come like a flood with war continuing until the end. You can turn on the World News on any given day and see reports of terrorist attacks going on in and around Israel. The nation has been under attack for thousands of years. As we come nearer to the end, the intensity and frequency of wars increase...they are increasing just as a flood of water gets stronger and stronger as it rushes downhill. The prophecy is being fulfilled even today just as Daniel said it would.

Sixty-nine of the seventy sevens involves prophecies that have already been fulfilled. The last seven in verse 27 is referring to future prophecies. The period from the end of the sixty-ninth seven to the beginning of the last seven is referred to as a prophetic gap - an undefined period of time. A great mystery is, when does the last seven start? We see here that the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for one 'seven'. This one 'seven' is a period of seven years and will be the Tribulation period. This covenant will likely involve the Antichrist offering protection and peace to the nation of Israel from its surrounding Arab enemies. The Jewish nation will eagerly accept this treaty after being under attack for so many years and having grown war weary. They will not realize the offer is being made by the Antichrist because he will disguise his true nature and identity. The verse proceeds by stating the Antichrist will turn against Israel in the middle of this seven year

period. He will put an end to the temple sacrifice and offering, enter the temple and announce that all should worship him as god. He will likely set up an idol in the Temple as fulfillment of "*he will set up an abomination that causes desolation*". The Jews will become outraged and revolt against the Antichrist. This revolt will lead to the killing of two-thirds of the Jewish population. The Antichrist will have 3 ½ years of rule in the Great Tribulation in which he will cause more persecution of Jews and Christians than the world has ever seen. He will terrorize all who do not accept his "mark of the beast". His reign will come to an end when Jesus returns to bring peace and usher in the Millennium. An interesting note is that the Antichrist's 3 ½ year reign mimics Jesus' 3 ½ year ministry during his first coming. This is another example of how Satan has tried repeatedly throughout history to imitate Jesus as the Messiah. But the Jews and Christians can have great hope and joy knowing that Jesus is and always will be the Messiah, King of kings and Lord of lords.

### **Conclusion**

In concluding, God gave these prophecies as tools for empowerment for His people. They are not meant to scare and there is nothing to be afraid of as long as you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He will protect His people! We find hope and joy in the soon return of our Savior Jesus Christ. Until then, Blessings to Israel and to the only wise God, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.