

# The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks

*A Supplemental Study to Daniel Nine and the Revelation Series*

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*"About the time of the End, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation, in the midst of much clamor and opposition." Sir Isaac Newton*

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## **The Passage Itself – Daniel 9:24-27**

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Daniel 9:24–27

## **Some Introductory Thoughts**

When it comes to the subject of biblical prophecy, there is simply no more important passage than Daniel 9:24–27, especially in the area of the first coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the coming Great Tribulation Period. Understanding this key passage of Scripture is crucial to making sense of all biblical prophecy. Other Bible teachers have recognized its importance in their words form a fitting

introduction to this very important supplement to our study of the book of Daniel and the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Alva J. McClain wrote a remarkable study of this passage in his little book ***“Daniel’s Prophecy Of The Seventy Weeks.”*** McClain was the late president of Grace College and Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana for 25 years and he composed this book in 1940 after a study of a lifetime! He was a very diligent student of the Word of God and a diligent teacher. His little book is a classic and is getting harder to find. But one of the things I look for when I visit any pastor’s library is a copy of this slender volume which testifies of his commitment to a dispensational interpretation of biblical prophecy. Here are some things that McClain had to say concerning this passage:

*“Probably no single prophetic utterance is more crucial in the fields of Biblical Interpretation, Apologetics, and Eschatology...A proper understanding of the 70 weeks of Daniel not only safeguards the Christian against the elaborate guesswork of those who persist in setting dates for the Lord’s return, but also furnishes the infallible key to the real chronology of all New Testament prophecy.”*

The late Dr. John Walvoord of the Dallas Theological Seminary is acknowledged by many as the Dean of American writers on the subject of biblical prophecy from a dispensational standpoint. Listen to what he has to say about this passage:

*“In the concluding verses of Daniel nine, one of the most important prophecies in the Old Testament is contained... Properly interpreted, the prophecy of Daniel furnishes an excellent example that prophecy is subject to literal interpretation. Practically all expositors, however opposed to prophecy per se, agrees that at least part of the 70 weeks of Daniel is to be interpreted literally... If the first 69 weeks of Daniel were subject to literal fulfillment, it is a powerful argument that the final 70<sup>th</sup> week will have a similar fulfillment.”*

Clearly this is a crucial passage of Scripture and its interpretation is the key to most of the New Testament’s prophetic utterances. Therefore, we’re going to study this passage in more depth than usual. These notes, gleaned from my study of this passage and from the works of some of the best authors on the subject, are offered as a signpost to help direct you in your further study of this passage at home.

## **The Background of the Passage**

In order to fully grasp the significance of this passage from the book of Daniel, we must understand the background and context of this passage. Dr. J Vernon McGee gives us a very clear summary of what Daniel had in his mind before this prophecy was given:

*"Now Daniel was puzzled as to how the end of the seventy years of captivity would fit into the long period of Gentile world dominion which the visions in chapters 7 and 8 had so clearly indicated. He obviously thought that at the end of the seventy years his people would be returned to the land, the promised Messiah would come, and the kingdom which had been promised to David would be established. How could both be true? It appeared to him, I am sure, to be an irreconcilable situation created by these seemingly contradictory prophecies.*

*The Seventy Weeks, or the seventy sevens, answer two questions. Israel's kingdom will not come immediately. The seventy sevens must run their course. These seventy sevens fit into the Times of the Gentiles and run concurrently with them. They are broken up to fit into gentile times. The word for determined literally means "cutting off." These seventy sevens are to be cut off, as the following verses will indicate. The seventy sevens for Israel and the Times of the Gentiles will both come to an end at the same time, that is, at the second coming of Christ. This is important to know in the correct understanding of the prophecy." McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 587). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

## **The Value of This Passage**

There are three extremely important observations made by McClain concerning the value of Daniel 9:24-27 to those of us who are living in the church age and waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. This passage serves as a witness to the truth of Scripture.

*"That part of the prophecy relating to the first sixty-nine weeks has already been accurately fulfilled (as I expect to show), and in this remarkable fulfilment we have an unanswerable argument for the divine inspiration of the Bible. It is, in fact, nothing less than a mathematical demonstration. For only an omniscient God could have foretold over five hundred years in advance the very day on which the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem and present Himself as the "Prince" of Israel. Yet this is precisely what has been done in the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks."*

2. This passage exposes the folly of the critic of biblical prophecy.

*It is "the impregnable rock upon which all naturalistic theories of prophecy are shattered. These theories deny the possibility of any "predictive element" in prophecy. And since the Book of Daniel did forecast many well attested historic events, the critics have sought to save their theories by denying to Daniel the authorship of the book and moving its date down to a point subsequent to the events described, thus making the unknown author a mere historian who pretended to be a prophet. In this rather easy and summary fashion, they hoped to get rid of the troublesome specter of "predictive prophecy." But no critic has ever dared to suggest a date for the Book of Daniel as late as the birth of our Lord. Yet Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks predicts to the very day Christ's appearance as the "Prince" of Israel. Therefore, when the critics have done their worst, no matter where they place the date of the book, the greatest time-prophecy of the Bible is left untouched. And on this prophecy, the whole case of the critics goes to pieces. For if even so much as one predictive prophecy is established, there remains no valid a priori reason for denying the others."*

3. This passage is the chronological key to New Testament prophecy.

*It is "the indispensable chronological key to all New Testament prophecy. Our Lord's great prophetic discourse (the Olivet) recorded in Matthew and Mark fixes the time of Israel's final and greatest trouble definitely within the days of the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20). And the greater part of the Book of Revelation is simply an expansion of Daniel's prophecy within the chronological framework as outlined by the same Seventieth Week, which is divided into two equal periods, each extending for 1260 days, or 42 months, or 3 1/2 years (Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Therefore, apart from an understanding of the details of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel, all attempts to interpret New Testament prophecy must fail in large measure."*

### **Nine Key Points to Keep in Mind**

As we begin our study in Daniel 9:24-27, there are nine things we must keep in mind in order to be faithful to the teaching of God's Word. If we anchor our thinking around these nine points, biblical prophecy will not confuse or confound us.

1. The focus of this passage is upon Daniel's people (the Jews) and their city (Jerusalem). See verse 24. Keep in mind the Church is not here. It is not in view at all! (Reformed theology attempts to substitute the church for both Daniel's people and his city-this is clearly not taking the Bible literally!)

2. This passage features two impressive and powerful Princes. They are separate and distinct from each other. They must not be confused in our thinking. The first Prince is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is here called “Messiah the Prince.” See verse 25. The second Prince is the coming Prince whose people destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. These people are the Romans. This Prince is to be a leader of a revived Roman Empire in the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. He is none other than the Antichrist. See verse 26.
3. The entire time period is designated as “70 weeks.” See verse 25. These 70 weeks are further divided into three distinct periods.
  - a. First, there is the initial period of seven weeks which deals with the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.
  - b. Second, there is a period of 62 weeks which ends with the Messiah making an appearance and then being cut off for the people.
  - c. Third, there is one last week in which the Jews will be betrayed and slaughtered by the Antichrist.
4. The beginning of the 70 weeks is foretold. See verse 25. This event is clearly marked by the issuing of the decree by a Gentile ruler to rebuild Jerusalem. This decree, noted in both the Bible and secular history, can be historically verified.
5. The end of the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks (7 weeks + 62 weeks = 69 weeks) is clearly marked by the sudden appearance of “Messiah the Prince.” See verse 25.
6. Sometime after the 69 weeks end, two significant events are to occur:
  - a. Messiah the Prince will be cut off (and not for Himself)
  - b. Jerusalem will be destroyed by the people of the prince who is yet to come.
7. After the cutting off of Messiah the Prince and the destruction of Jerusalem, there will be a final week (the 70<sup>th</sup> week) the beginning of which is to be marked by the confirming of a covenant or treaty of peace with the Prince who is to come (the Antichrist) for a period of one week. See verse 27.
8. In the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and cause sacrifice to cease. This will plunge Israel into a time of severe suffering and desolation under the wrath of God lasting until the consummation (the end of the week). See verse 27
9. At the time of the completion of the entire 70 weeks, there will be a time great and unparalleled blessing for Israel and by extension for the world (see verse 24). These blessings include:
  - a. “To finish the transgression”
  - b. “To make an end of sins”
  - c. “To make reconciliation for iniquity”

- d. "To bring in everlasting righteousness"
- e. "To seal up the vision and prophecy"
- f. "To anoint the most holy."

### **The Meaning of the Word "Weeks"**

Our Scripture announces that "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Daniel 9:24

Naturally the first question we must ask ourselves is "what does the word 'weeks' mean?" When we think of weeks we think in terms of periods of seven days. This is not necessarily what Daniel would have thought. "Weeks" or "shabus" is somewhat akin to our English word "dozen." For us, "dozen" means "12 of something." It could be 12 days, 12 months, or 12 years-the word doesn't simply tell us. It just says that we are going to be dealing with 12 of something. Likewise, in the Hebrew vocabulary, the word "weeks" means "seven of something." Applying that to our verse, God is saying seventy "sevens (weeks)" are involved in God's prophetic plan. It becomes very important for us to determine exactly what is being measured when God uses the term "weeks."

The Jews of the Old Testament recognized three classifications of weeks:

1. **A week of days (7 days) or a Sabbath week.** This is a period of six working days and one day of rest on the Sabbath day or the seventh day. In the Jewish economy it began on Sunday and ended on Saturday night. This arrangement can be noted in the creation account and also in the law of Moses as quoted below:

*"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11*

2. **A week of years, which was reckoned from one sabbatical year to another, and consisted of a period of seven years.** It consisted of six working years and one year of rest called the sabbatical year. We can illustrate this usage of the word "weeks" by two examples:

- a. **God commanded His people to work the land for six years and on the seventh or sabbatical year allow the land to lie fallow and “rest.”**

*“And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. 3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; 4 But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. 5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. 6 And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, 7 And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat. Leviticus 25:1–7*

- b. **This type of week is also referred to in the crooked dealings of Laban with his son in law Jacob.** This is a very sad and unfortunate incident in the life of the future children of Israel but it clearly demonstrates the use of seven year periods as weeks.

*“And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? 16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. 18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, **I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.** 19 And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. 20 **And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.** 21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. 23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. 24 And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. 25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? 26 And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. **27 Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.** 28 **And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week:** and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. 29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. 30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, **and served with him yet seven other years”.** Genesis 29:15–30*

You could certainly asked Jacob how he understood the word “week” and the term seven-year period would have easily been interchangeable here

3. **There was also the “week” of 7×7 years (that is seven sabbatical years) which marked the beginning of the year of Jubilee-every 50<sup>th</sup> year.** This is detailed in Leviticus 25:8-13:

*“And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. 9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. 10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. 11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. 12 For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. 13 In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession.”*

Please note the phrase “seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years” was understood by Israel to mean **weeks of years**. Here clearly the period of seven years was looked on as one week.

And I believe a strong case can be made that when Daniel heard “**70 weeks**,” he would have automatically thought of seventy-sevens of years or a period of 490 years. And here’s why this is true:

1. **Daniel had just been thinking in terms of periods of seven years. This chapter opens with his contemplation.**

*“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2 In the **first year** of his reign I Daniel understood by books the **number of the years**, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish **seventy years** in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel 9:1–3*

2. **Daniel knew the length of the captivity of his people was based upon the Sabbath law.** The land was to rest for the Sabbath years missed by the people. Seventy of the seven-year periods were missed, which amounted to **490 years** during which the practice was ignored. So, the children of Israel were taken out of the Land of Promise and placed into captivity so that the Land could have her rest. They were exiled **one year for every**



**seven-year period that they missed** which totals a 70-year period of captivity.

*"To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until **the land had enjoyed her sabbaths**: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil **threescore and ten years**." 2 Chronicles 36:21*

*"And **this whole land shall be a desolation**, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**. 12 And it shall come to pass, when **seventy years** are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." Jeremiah 25:11-12*

3. Daniel would have understood the significance at the end of this 70-year period of judgment for the Jews. An angel was sent to him with the announcement that a **NEW ERA** of God's dealings with the Jews which would be **exactly the same length as the previous period of 490 years** for which they had been judged. As Lehman Strauss so aptly says:

*"Returning now to Daniel nine, the conclusion is that the prophecy of the "70 weeks" refers to seventy sevens of years, 490 years. Daniel had been reading in Jeremiah of the 70 years' captivity recorded by Jeremiah are coming to an end. Then it is as if God said, "yes, Daniel, you have discovered rightly that the seventy years captivity recorded by Jeremiah are coming to an end. But now I want to show you another 70, a time. Within which I will accomplish all my plans for my people and my holy city."*

Daniel clearly understood in the context of all of these factors that God was referring to a time period of **70 weeks of years** or **seventy sevens of years** or (more simply) **70 x 7 = 490 years**.

And it is also interesting that Daniel 10:2-3 is the only other mention of the word "weeks" in the book of Daniel.

*"In those days I Daniel was mourning **three full weeks**. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till **three whole weeks** were fulfilled."*

However, Daniel used a different form of the Hebrew word which can only mean "weeks of days" in Daniel chapter 10. Why use a different form? Simply put, Daniel did not fast for 21 years, but 3 weeks of days or 7 days x 3 weeks of days = 21 days. He used the different form because he wanted to make a clear separation between the **weeks of years in chapter 9** and **the weeks of days in chapter 10**. So, it is clear that the 70 weeks or "seventy sevens" of Daniel are a period of 7x70 years or 490 years. Or as Alva J McClain puts it:

*“Therefore, by every fair and sensible rule of interpretation, the **seventy sevens** must be understood as years, not days which we must surreptitiously change in the years to make the prophecy come out right.”*

### **What is the Length of a Year in Prophecy?**

If the prophecy of the 70 weeks is a period of 490 years in which God is going to accomplish His full purpose with the nation of Israel, we must ask the question just how long is the year in prophecy? After all, our way of marking time is somewhat different from that of the Jews of the Old Testament. The history of setting up calendars to mark the passing of time is a rich one. Our own calendar openly admits a flaw in its own system because every fourth year (leap year) we must add a day to make the calendar come out right. It is a scientific fact that it takes the earth about 365 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  days to completely rotate around the sun which is one of our basic measures of time – we call this complete rotation around the sun a “solar year”.

*However, this was not measurement of time for the **Old Testament Jews** and it is very clear. **There is abundant evidence that the prophetic year as mentioned here in Daniel (and elsewhere in the Bible) is composed of 360 days or 12 months of 30 days each (which is essentially a lunar year).***

There are two great arguments for the 360-day lunar prophetic year. One is based on history and the other on prophecy itself. Let’s examine both carefully. The historical argument goes like this. In Genesis we are told that the flood began on the **seventeenth day of the second month**.

*“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, **in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month**, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” Genesis 7:11*

And we are told that the ark came to rest in the seventh month also on the seventeenth day:

*“And the ark rested in the **seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month**, upon the mountains of Ararat.” Genesis 8:4*

The period of time between the second month and the seventeenth day of the month and the seventh month and the seventeenth day of the month is exactly five months.

And as God would have it we are told the time in numbers of lunar days as well, namely 150 days.

*“And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.” Genesis 7:24*

*“And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.” Genesis 8:3*

So, **five months equals 150 days** which comes out to **five months of exactly 30 days** each! If we assume this extends to an entire year, a year of 12 months of 30 days each would be the result and the entire year would be 360 days long.

The prophetic argument of the year being 360 days in length is even more convincing and powerful because it arises directly out of this passage in Daniel chapter 9. In Daniel 9:27 we read:

*“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week**: and in **the midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Daniel 9:27*

In this verse he, the antichrist, makes a peace treaty (covenant) with the Jewish people for **ONE WEEK** and in the **middle of that week** he shall cause the sacrifices of the Jews to end. The Antichrist makes a treaty of peace for a period of **one week** or as we shall see **SEVEN YEARS**. In the middle of that seven-year period (3 ½ years) he turns on the Jews and persecutes them until the end of the seven years or for the last **3 ½ years** – we call the seven years “the Tribulation Period” and the **last 3 ½ years are called the “Great Tribulation” or “time of Jacob’s trouble.”** This same time period is referred to in Daniel 7:24-25:

*“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” Daniel 7:24–25*

A time, times, and the dividing of a time is an Aramaic idiom for 3 ½ years (**a time = one year, times = two years, the dividing of time = ½ a year – thus 1+2+ ½ = 3 ½ years**). This same period of time is referred to in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ in Revelation 12:13-14:

*“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” Revelation 12:13–14*

Now, in this exact context of prophetic history, the Apostle John declares that the persecution of the Jews will last **42 months**:

*“And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” Revelation 13:4–7*

To make it even more clear, John tells us that this same period would be “**a thousand two-hundred and three score days**.”

*“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” Revelation 12:6*

Therefore, we have *the same period of time* referred to as **3 ½ years** (a time, times and the dividing of time); **42 months**; and **1260 days**. Each term is precisely **identical**:

- 42 months of 30 days is precisely 1,260 days.
- 42 months divided by 12 months of 30 days in a year = 3.5 years or 3 ½ years.
- 1260 days divided by 30 days in a year = 42 months.
- 360 days in a year (12 months of 30 days) x 3.5 years = 1,260 days.

**Bottomline:** Any way you chose to add it up, the prophetic year is a period of 360 days in duration. With that in mind, we can now begin to understand the 70 weeks of Daniel.

### **The Historical Event That Begins the Seventy Weeks of Daniel**

This is very clearly spelled out for us in Daniel 9:25 –

*“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”  
Daniel 9:25*

The event that marks the beginning of Daniel’s Seventy Weeks is “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” This is the command or decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. History tells us of three decrees concerning the restoration of worship of God in Jerusalem.

#### **1. The first decree was issued by Cyrus in 538 BC and is recorded in Ezra:**

*“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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and **build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.** 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” Ezra 1:1-4*

You will note that this decree was LIMITED to the rebuilding of the temple. Therefore, this cannot be the decree referred to in the ninth chapter of Daniel.

#### **2. The second decree was issued by Darius in 517 BC and is recorded in Ezra 6:1-12.**

*“Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. 2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, **Let the house be builded, the place where***

*they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; 4 With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the king's house: 5 And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, **be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem**, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God. 6 Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: 7 **Let the work of this house of God alone**; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. 8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews **for the building of this house of God**: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. 9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: 10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. 11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. 12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy **this house of God which is at Jerusalem**. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed." Ezra 6:1-12.*

Once again, this decree is LIMITED to the rebuilding the Temple and thus it does not satisfy the requirements of Daniel chapter nine.

### 3. **The third, and final, decree was issued by Artaxerxes in 445 BC as recorded by Nehemiah:**

*"And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. 2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, 3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? 4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. 6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. 7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; 8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." Nehemiah 2:1-8*

This meets EXACTLY the requirements of Daniel 9 and we are given precise details as to the actual date that it was issued. Note again Nehemiah 2:1

*“And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king...”*

We know Artaxerxes came to the throne in 465 BC. The month was Nisan and it was a Hebrew custom that the date would be understood as the first of the month if no other date is given. Therefore, according to our calendar the date would have been March 14, 445 BC.

### **The Beginning and End of the First Sixty-Nine Weeks**

We have now established the Seventy Weeks are weeks of years, and that length of the year is 360 days. This whole period of Seventy Weeks began on March 14, 445 BC. Now we are ready to make some computations which will take us to a significant event of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the following information was first worked out by Sir Robert Anderson, the real-life Sherlock Holmes who was not only the head of Scotland Yard during the days of Jack the Ripper but also a brilliant Bible scholar. The organization of this information comes from Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks by Dr. Alva J McClain from with now I quote:

“In order to find the end of the Sixty-nine Weeks, we must first reduce them to days. Since we have 69 Weeks of seven years each, and each year has 360 days, the equation is as follows:  $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$  days. Beginning with March 14, 445 B.C., this number of days brings us to April 6, 32 A.D.

In order to prove that the 173,880 days equal exactly the period from March 14, 445 B.C., to April 6, 32 A.D., it is necessary to compute this period in terms of our own calendar year, as follows:

**445 B.C. to 32 A.D. is 476 years** (B.C. 1 to A.D. 1 is one year)

**$476 \times 365$  days = 173,740 days**

Add for leap-years 116 days (3 less in four centuries)\*

March 14 to April 6 24 days (inclusive)

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Total 173,880 days

\* (Just for you math junkies: To divide 476 by 4 would give 119 leap-years. But since century-years are not leap-years unless divisible by 400, and since 476 years involve four centuries, it follows that only one of the four century-years would be a true leap-year. Therefore, it is necessary to subtract 3 from 119 to get the exact number of extra leap-year days in 476 years. You want precision – God has it!)

April 6, 32 A.D., therefore, is fixed definitely as the end of the era of the first 69 Weeks; and according to Daniel's prophecy, it should mark the very day of Messiah's manifestation as the Prince of Israel. Without attempting to enter into the clear but intricate chronological calculations set forth by Anderson in his book, *The Coming Prince* (pages 95-105), I shall simply state his conclusion that April 6, 32 A.D., was the tenth of Nisan, that momentous day on which our Lord, in fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, rode up to Jerusalem on the "foal of an ass" and offered Himself as the Prince and King of Israel."

The Gospel record gives us a precise account of the events of April 6, 32 AD (and please note the precise language which our Lord uses concerning it):

*"And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, 30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. 31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him." Luke 19:28-34*

All of this the Lord Jesus Christ did in exact fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9

*"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, **thy King cometh unto thee**: He is just, and having salvation; Lowly, and riding upon an ass, And upon a colt the foal of an ass."*

### **CHRIST IS MESSIAH THE PRINCE!**

Continuing on in Luke's account we read:

*"And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37 And when*



*he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.” Luke 19:35–38*

The multitude understood this symbolism from Zechariah 9 and from Daniel 9:25 and they began to cry out using the quotation from the Messianic Psalm 118:22-26

*“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. 23 This is the LORD’s doing; It is marvellous in our eyes. 24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.”*

Returning to Luke’s account, we read this in verse 39:

*“And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” Luke 19:39–40*

You will recall in your reading of the Gospels that the LORD JESUS CHRIST was continually warning the disciples not to make Him known, **BUT HE NOW** only urges them on, but makes it clear this is His will. **WITHOUT A DOUBT WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THIS DAY IS NOTHING SHORT OF THE DIRECT FULFILLMENT OF DANIEL 9:25!** Now Christ can be fully revealed to the nation of Israel! His hour has come! Messiah the Prince is revealed at exactly the correct date: April 6, 32 AD.

Even more powerful than these incidental observations are the **direct words of our Lord Jesus Christ on this occasion**:

*“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Luke 19:41–44*

Standing and weeping as He looked over the skyline of Jerusalem **on that day** (April 6, 32 AD), our Lord Jesus Christ makes it clear that this is **an important day for the nation of Israel**. Had they but recognized Who He really was, their joy would have been complete. But the Lord Jesus Christ knew the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks was being literally fulfilled.

Remember again the words of Daniel 9:25-

*“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” Daniel 9:25–26*

And now, 483 years after the clock of prophecy had begun to tick on the fate of Israel with the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 BC, the very moment had arrived. Messiah the Prince had come and presented Himself to the nation.

Now **two great events** were certain to occur:

- ❖ Messiah would be cut off, but not for Himself.
- ❖ And the city of Jerusalem with its Temple would be destroyed.

Within days, the Lord Jesus Christ would be betrayed, crucified, declared dead and be buried in the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and precisely one-week (seven days) Christ would rise from the dead victorious over sin, Satan, and death!

Within one generation (AD 70 to be precise), the second part of Daniel’s prophecy would come to pass as the city and the sanctuary would be utterly destroyed, fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself also on this occasion:

*“For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Luke 19:43–44*

Let me bring this section of our study of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks to a close with the concluding words of Dr. Alva J. McClain from his book “**Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks**”:

*“Thus the 173,880 days of the first Sixty-nine Weeks ran their course to the very day-- deep and abiding encouragement to all who love the Lord and His precious Word of prophecy. And I close this discussion with but one remark: The exact fulfilment of this prophecy is sufficient to demonstrate the accuracy of Daniel and also by implication the inspiration of the Bible and the truth of Christianity. Only God can "declare the end from the beginning" and forecast to the very day "things that are not yet done" (Isa. 46:10).”*