

GOD'S PATHWAY THROUGH PROPHECY

Daniel's Pre-eminent Prophecy – The 70 Weeks!

Daniel 9:24-27

INTRODUCTION: Possibly the single most wondrous prophetic miracle of all of God's Holy Word is the prophecy known as Daniel's 70 Weeks. This specific prophetic message contains and consummates the whole force and flow of God's pathway through prophecy. It is essential to a comprehensive comprehension of God's eschatological purposes and program for this world and His elect among both Jew and Gentile. Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks divides into three clear parts of 7 weeks, followed by sixty-two more weeks, followed by the final 70th week. The whole of the first 69 weeks move toward the final 70th Week and sets the historical and contextual background for the 70th Week. The 70th Week culminates and climaxes God's pathway through prophecy, but it cannot be understood apart from the context of the first 69 weeks. It has therefore become an unfortunate and dangerous habit for many students of prophecy to hastily rush into a discussion of the 70th Week without pausing to accurately investigate and interpret the first 69 weeks. This leads to unnecessary and unfortunate speculations and conjectures about both the first 69 weeks, and the 70th Week itself. The simple fact is, that before one can understand the 70th Week, he must understand the first 69 weeks. Context is King, and the prophetic context of the 70th Week is the miraculous message and fulfilment of the historical context of the first 69 weeks. As we travel along God's pathway through prophecy this study will consider the first 69 weeks prior to examining the final 70th Week.

Daniel's 70th Week does not occur in a vacuum; but is rather the grand climax culminating a long series of 70 prophetic "weeks!" Of these 70 prophetic "weeks" 69 "weeks" have already been literally and historically fulfilled. The body of the 70th Week must be contextualized within the framework of the preceding weeks. This means that any examination of the 70th Week, must begin where the Bible begins, with a careful consideration of the first 69 "weeks" of the prophecy which fixes the setting, shape, and scope of the final "week" known in end-times studies as "Daniel's 70th Week"! It is here that the present study starts by first considering the PREPARATION and PRELUDE to the 70th Week. This prophetic preparation and prelude to the 70th Week pertains to the first 69 weeks. These first 69 weeks were prophetic when Daniel spoke of them, but in our time, they are now a fulfilled fact of history past. Looking back upon the first 69 weeks of prophetic history prepares us to look forward to the final 70th Week of prophetic future along God's pathway through prophecy.

I. The prophetic **PREPARATION** for the 70th Week – vs. 1-2

"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; 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."

A. Daniel's Personal INVESTIGATION

NOTE: Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks began with an inspired investigation by the prophet motivated by a desire to discover specific elements concerning the captivity of the Jewish people in Babylon, and the restoration of God's chosen people to their homeland. Daniel's explanation of his investigation provides light in no less than four areas.

1. The **SEASON** of the investigation – *“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus”* – By this season Daniel was an aged prophet. The first world-empire of prophecy, Babylon, had now fallen to the second major Gentile power of Medo-Persia under the rule of Cyrus the Great. The time of Darius' first year as ruler over the Capital city, *“the realm of the Chaldeans,”* was 538 B.C. His rise to the throne as replacement of Belshazzar was commented earlier in 5:31. During this time Darius the Mede served as the vice-regent to Cyrus, who had just conquered Babylon one year earlier in 539 B.C. Darius' status as a subordinate sovereign is intimated by the relative clause, *“which was made king.”* Conservative historians believe this Darius to be the (*Gubaru*) “governor of Babylon” referenced in an ancient Babylonian inscription known as the “Nabonidus Chronicle”.
2. The **SUBJECT** of the investigation – *that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem* – Daniel was a student of God's Word, including the prophetic Scriptures. He knew the Word of God, and he knew the word of the Lord regarding God's divine judgment of the Jewish people in Babylon. He knew the **WHAT** behind the great prophecy of the 70 years Babylonian Exile spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: *“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 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”* (Jer. 25:11-12). He also knew the **WHY** revealed in the Hebrew Chronicles, *“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 Chron. 36:21). Daniel knew that the Jewish people suffered exile and bondage in Babylon for 70 years because they had forsaken the Lord's covenant by failing to observe the sacred Sabbatical year for 490 years. Thus, for a total of 70 Sabbatical years, based upon a system of seventy sevens, the land was robbed of her rest. In His just judgment God restored 70 years of rest to His land by removing the rebellious Jews for the exact literal period of seventy years. Daniel's thoughts were thus rooted in and focused upon this concept of 70 weeks of years. Daniel fully expected God to fulfill the 70 years of captivity in a literal and historical manner. He also anticipated that the restoration of the Jews to their land would literally and historically come to pass.

Because Daniel was a literalist relative to Bible prophecy, he longed to understand the exact manner by which God would fulfill His promises. What Daniel did not fully understand was the means and methods by which God would work out the literal-historical fulfillment of His Word. Little did he know that God had sovereignly determined to use his personal passionate prayer to be the means by which God would fulfill His word and accomplish His work. It is true that nothing God does is divorced from the prayers of His people. Thus, the Holy Spirit moved Daniel to pray.

3. The **SOURCE** of the investigation – *I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet* – When Daniel had questions he looked to God’s Word for answers. Daniel knew Jeremiah’s prophecy and he expected it to come to pass literally. Based upon his calculations Daniel knew that the fulness of the time had come and he turned to God’s Word for reassurance and clarification. His confidence was in the Word of God!

4. The **SENSE** of the investigation – Through sacred Scripture the prophet gained a sure sense of God’s program for His people. It cannot be overstated that Daniel had a sense of the literal fulfillment of prophetic Scripture. For Daniel there was no room for spiritualization or speculation. What God says, is exactly what God means, and it shall come to pass in real literal space-time history. For this reason, the prophetic Scriptures moved Daniel to pray with passion for the fulfillment of God’s promises concerning His people.

B. Daniel’s Personal **INTERSESSION**

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes...And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision (Dan. 9:3, 20-23).

NOTE: Daniel provides the perfect personal portrait of how the study of Bible prophecy should impact every child of God. Prophecy should move us to literal expectation, sincere repentance, and fervent prayer. Knowing prophecy and believing prophecy did not move Daniel to cold complacency, but to active anticipation and passionate prayer for repentance, restoration, and refreshment! God’s providential plan was to fulfill His purposes through the passionate prayer of his prophet. And so, Daniel’s prayer was heard and answered in a most magnificent manner

that brought greater illumination and inspiration resulting in the additional revelation of the 70 Weeks.

C. Daniel's Personal **ILLUMINATION**

1. The **SPEED** of the illumination – Daniel repeatedly points to the fact that God's illumination came "*while I was speaking in prayer.*" The heavenly messenger reinforced this by saying, "*at the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth.*" God is a God who answers prayer. And when those prayers intersect with His plans and purposes at the providentially prescribed time, God's answers come swiftly. Because God's providential plan and purpose had reached God's providentially prescribed period, the prayer of God's servant was answered with haste. Whenever God's plans and purposes are mixed with the prayers of God's people at the right time on God's cosmic calendar, there is no delay or deterrence in the answer.
2. The **SERVANT** of the illumination – Because the prophecy of the 70 Weeks is divine revelation in its purest form, it represents truth which Daniel could not have known on his own, and would not have known on his own. Revelation requires supernatural illumination. All Daniel could do was pray and look to God's Word. God and God alone could answer sovereignly and supernaturally. In answering God dispatched the angel Gabriel, God's appointed messenger servant sent forth to minister to Daniel, and through Daniel, to the whole of God's elect people. This is the fulfillment Hebrews 1:14.
3. The **SETTING** of the illumination – The setting of this great revelation was a time of prayerful pondering based upon the revealed truth of God's Word. Based upon the prophetic promise spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, the fulness of the time had come for God's Word to come to pass. This was not a time of Daniel's whimsical wishes, but God's will and work. It was a time that called for insight and understanding. Thus, the angel commands Daniel to "*understand the matter, and consider the vision.*" The hour was an hour of consideration and understanding. The setting was ripe and ready for fresh revelation from the Lord. With the close of the 70 years of Babylonian Captivity based upon a period of 490 years; a new day was dawning in which God's full and final dealings with the Jewish people would take place based upon another time frame of 490 years known as the 70 Weeks.
4. The **SHOWING** of the illumination – This yet future and final period of 490 years now assumed center stage in the progressive revelation of God which He sovereignly and supernaturally revealed to His chosen prophet through the angelic agency of Gabriel. As Amos the prophet promised, "*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*" (Am. 3:7).

II. The prophetic **PRELUDE** to the 70th Week – vs. 24-25.

“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. 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.”

A. The **DECLARATION** of the Prophecy –

This begins with yet another “angelic announcement” in which Gabriel (v. 21) reveals four preparatory points to God’s inspired prophet which provide the interpretive context for the final 70th Week.

1. Its **PERIOD** – “*Seventy weeks*” marks the subject matter of the entire prophecy. The 70th Week is the culmination of a prophetic program of 70 total weeks. It is the final week in the chain of weeks and must be understood in the light of the preceding 69 weeks which this present study now examines.
2. Its **PREDETERMINATION** – The verbal phrase, “*are determined*” discloses the fact that the entirety of the 70 weeks and all of the events contained therein are part of God’s foreordained program for the ages. He is the God of Heaven who calls all things from the beginning so that all things are part of His eternal counsel and will. Nothing happens on the stage of human history that has not been written by God before the world began. He both ordains and orchestrates the prophetic scenario according to His own wise and sovereign predetermined will.
3. Its **PEOPLE** – “*Upon thy people*” sets the focus upon the people of Daniel, the Jews of the house of Israel (1:3-6). The prophecy of the 70 Weeks refocuses God’s spotlight on the nation of Israel and God’s chosen people, the Jews. This does NOT imply that it has no reference to the Gentiles, but that its primary purpose is Jewish.
4. Its **PLACE** – “*And upon thy holy city*” refers to Jerusalem, Daniel’s beloved homeland, and the apple of God’s eye. Jerusalem marks “ground-zero” on the stage of prophetic history. God not only has a plan for Daniel’s people; but also for Daniel’s holy city of Jerusalem.
5. Its **PURPOSES** – The angelic messenger gives six sovereignly determined reasons for the force and flow of the 70 prophetic weeks as they refer to, and

relate to the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem. This six-fold purpose is stated as follows:

- 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

B. The **DURATION** of the Prophecy –

Gabriel told Daniel that “SEVENTY WEEKS;” or more literally, “SEVENTY SEVENS” are determined. The question must be asked, “Seventy sevens of what?” Do the “seventy sevens” refer to seven weeks of days, or to seven weeks of years? Certain Bible teachers have grossly erred in assigning Daniel’s statement to seventy sevens of days, thus limiting the prophecy to a mere 490 days, or just over a one-year period. Those who do so ignore major points of evidence within the immediate and remote contexts of Scripture. By doing so they erroneously argue that Daniel’s prophecy has long since passed.

There are at least four lines of infallible biblical evidence which demonstrate that the prophecy does not refer to weeks of days, but weeks of years. First, we have the evidence of CONTEXT. It must always be kept in mind that context is king! In this case context involves two lines of truth. One, according to Daniel 9:1-2 the prophet was already thinking in terms of years as opposed to days. More importantly, he was thinking of 70 years as they relate to the Jewish conception of seven-year segments within the Sabbatical year construct (Lev. 25:8-9). Daniel understood that the Babylonian Captivity itself was based upon the Sabbatical Years; a period of 490 years divided by segments of seven. Two, within the text itself, the first 69 weeks are said to extend from the time in which a decree is given, to the time in which the Messiah, the Prince of Israel, officially enters into the holy city of Jerusalem. As shall soon be seen, history has long since confirmed both events and demonstrates that they span a period of many years, as opposed to a period of mere days.

Second, we have the evidence of JUDAISM. Within the Jewish calendar the Jews had a sacred and sure conception of both “seven years” as well as “seven days”! The concept of “seven sevens” of “years” is spelled out in Leviticus 25:3-4, 8-9. Both scriptures refer to the period of “seven-sevens” of years within the Sabbatical system. In fact, the most important feature of Judaism was calculating “weeks of years” based upon the Sabbatical system leading up to the year of Jubilee. This very system was directly linked to the Babylonian Captivity and the contemplations of Daniel.

Third, we have the evidence of TERMONOLOGY. When Daniel speaks of “seventy sevens” he employs the word (Heb. *shabua*) literally meaning “sevens”! But it must be noted that in Daniel 9 he chooses to leave it undefined. Daniel uses this word only one more time in his book. In chapter 10:2-3 Daniel uses (*shabua*) once again. But this time he modifies the word with the term “days”! In this second instance Daniel clarifies that he is speaking of “sevens” of days. One must ask why he did not do the same thing in chapter 9 if his goal was to convey days. The only logical answer for the differing constructions is that he was not speaking of “days” but of “years” in chapter 9!

The fourth and final evidence may very well be the strongest of all the evidence. It is the evidence of PROPHECY. It must ever be remembered that the “seventy weeks” are a collective grouping of sevens. In short, the first 69 weeks are the same as the 70th week, and visa-versa. This means that if the 70th week is not a week of days, but a week of years, then so also are the preceding 69 weeks. The good news is that the prophetic Scriptures provide clear confirmation that there is much more to the 70th week than a mere week of days. In fact, the 70th week is a period that will last for seven years (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6; 13:5). So then, since the 70th Week is a period of seven years, each of the preceding weeks must also constitute a period of seven years as opposed to seven days. This means that the 70 Weeks of Daniel chapter 9 speak of 490 prophetic years, as opposed to 490 days.

The “seventy weeks” are weeks of years as opposed to weeks of days. Each day of each week represents one year so that each week is a period of seven prophetic years. Since the years of Daniel’s prophecy are prophetic years based upon the Jewish prophetic calendar, each year consists of 12 months, consisting of 30 days per month, for a total number of 360 days per year. 70 weeks of years would equal a total of 490 years. 490 years multiplied by 360 days per year totals 176,400 days. Since each week constitutes a 7-year period of 360 days per year, then the 70th Week itself is a 7-year period consisting of 360 days per year for a grand total of 2520 days.

C. The **DECREE** of the Prophecy –

“From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem” provides a prophetic key to the start of the entire 70 weeks of years. Gabriel tells Daniel that the first of the 70 weeks will begin with a specific royal command/decreed focused upon the restoration and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. Note that the specific command concerns the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, rather than the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The former decree came at a specific time and is recorded in Nehemiah, whereas the latter decree came at a different time and is recorded in the book of Ezra. Although

Daniel received this prophecy in the year 538 B.C., the aspect of the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem was literally and historically fulfilled on March 14, 445 B.C. when Artaxerxes issued his now famous decree for Nehemiah to return and rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1). Thus, the first of the 70 weeks of years began on March 14, 445 B.C.

D. The **DAY** of the Prophecy –

Gabriel went on to say, “*unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks*”. This marks not only the starting point, but also the stopping point of the first 69 weeks. The first 69 weeks would commence with the decree and would culminate with the official arrival of Messiah the Prince on God’s appointed day which Gabriel states would occur exactly 69 weeks after the issuing of the decree. Since the decree came on March 14, 445 B.C. one can calculate $69 \times 7 \times 360$ and arrive at 173, 880 days. Counting from March 14, 445 B.C. takes one to the date of April 6, 32 A.D., the very day the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey and was formally presented to Israel as their long anticipated Messiah on what Jesus Himself called, “*this thy Day*” (Lk. 19:41-44). So then, the first 69 weeks have now been literally and historically fulfilled, having commenced on March 14, 445 B.C. and having concluded on April 6, 32 A.D. This leads to the next point in the prophecy.

III. The prophetic **PARENTHESIS** before the 70th Week – v. 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”

NOTE: Although the first 69 weeks ran consecutively as an unbroken sequence of history, Gabriel carefully informs Daniel of a great “Parenthetical Period” between the close of the first 69 weeks and the start of the 70th Week. While he does not define the length of this parenthesis, he does mark it out by revealing three prophetic events which are to take place during the great interval between the close of week 69 and the opening of week 70. These three events signal the parenthetical period and permit God’s sober and vigilant people to know where things stand in relation to the 70th Week.

A. The **Death** of Jesus –

Gabriel reports that **AFTER** the 69th week concluded, and **BEFORE** the 70th Week commences, “*shall Messiah be cut off*”. The verb “cut off” (Heb. *karath*) denotes “the severing of life through death.” The first event marking the great parenthetical period was to be the death of Jesus, Israel’s Prince. The Messiah was to be violently “cut off” and put to death by the hands of others. The fact that this act of “cutting off” would be an act of murderous violence, rather than a death by natural

causes is stressed by the statement, “but not for himself.” In other words, Messiah would not die of Himself, or by Himself. He would be cut off by the hands of others. This event occurred on April 10th, 32 A.D. when the Romans and the Jews conspired together to bring about the crucifixion of Christ.

B. The **Destruction** of Jerusalem –

The second event which was to occur during the great interlude was that “*the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*”. Gabriel specifies that sometime after the Messiah is cut off, the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple in the city will be destroyed. He also identifies those who will bring about this devastation. It will be “the people of the prince that shall come.” A final day pseudo-prince will come out of an ancient people, and these people will be the ones who destroy the city and the temple. This now famous event took place in the year 70 A.D. when Titus led the Roman army against Palestine, destroyed the city, and tore down the Temple stone-by-stone. This resulted in the literal, historical, space-time fulfillment of the prophecy uttered by Jesus Himself: “*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*” (Mat. 24:1-2). The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D. is a well-known account of ancient history.

C. The **Devil’s** false Jesus –

Daniel was forewarned that sometime between the close of the 69th week and the commencement of the final 70th week there would be a latter-day Roman “*prince that shall come*”. This prince shall derive from among “*the people*” who “*shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*” (i.e. the Romans). The Roman Prince that shall come is none other than Satan’s counterfeit Messiah, the Antichrist (Rev. 6:2). He shall come sometime after the cutting off of Messiah, and after the destruction of the city and the sanctuary in Jerusalem. With his arrival certain associations with the nation of Israel will take place which will signal the start of that final period of the prophecy of the 70 Weeks.

NOTE: The calculations provide indisputable evidence for the literal-historical reliability and veracity of Daniel’s first 69 weeks of his prophecy of 70 Weeks. The historical proof is:

BC 445 to AD 32 = 476 years (BC 1 to AD 1 = 1 year)

476 x 365 = 173,740 days

Add for leap years = 116 days (119-3 in 400 years)

Add March 14 to April 6 = 24 days (inclusive)

Totals = 173,880 days, or 69 weeks of 7 years

Beginning on Nisan 1, 445 BC!

This means that the miraculous message of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks has already seen the first 69 weeks literally and historically fulfilled in the following manner.

DANIEL'S FIRST 69 WEEKS Beholding A Supernatural Miracle

The literal-historical fulfilled aspects of Daniel's Prophecy:

- In 538 BC, Daniel prophesied that a specific decree to rebuild Jerusalem would come.
- 93 years later, this specific decree came in 445 BC by a pagan king named Artaxerxes.
- According to Daniel, this decree marked the beginning of a period spanning 490 years.
- Daniel's prophecy focused on 70 weeks of years, not days.
- Each day of each week represented a year so that each week equaled 7 years.
- The first year of Daniel's prophecy commenced on March 14, 445 BC with the decree.
- The first 7 weeks, or 49 years related to the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.
- This 7-week period extended from March 445 BC to 396 BC when Jerusalem was restored.
- The next 62 weeks, or 434 years were to climax with the official arrival of Israel's Prince.
- Calculating forward from March 14, 445 BC, a total of 69 weeks brings us to April 6, 32 AD.
- The calculation formula is $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$ days.
- This calculation takes us from March 14, 445 BC to the day April 6, 32 AD.
- Thus, in 538 BC Daniel prophesied that Israel's Prince would arrive on April 6, 32 AD.
- The amazing wonder is the fact that Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey for His triumphal entry on Sunday, April 6, 32 AD the very day prophesied by Daniel 571 years earlier.
- Thus, Daniel's first 69 weeks have been fulfilled to the very literal-historical letter.

- This means that we can confidently expect that the 70th week, the final 7-year period of Daniel's prophecy, will also be literally and historically fulfilled in true space-time history upon this planet.

HISTORICAL PROOF:

BC 445 to AD 32 = 476 years (BC 1 to AD 1 = 1 year)

$476 \times 365 = 173,740$ days

Add for leap years = 116 days (119-3 in 400 years)

Add March 14 to April 6 = 24 days (inclusive)

Totals 173,880 days or 69 weeks of 7 years beginning Nisan 1 445 BC

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Is. 46:9-10).