

How do we define 'weeks' as years?

Quite simply, the Hebrew word is *shabua* which literally means 7. It is easier to read this passage using the word 'seven' rather than week, because we immediately think of Monday to Sunday. In their divinely inspired calendar, the Jews had a 'seven' of years as well as a 'seven' of days.

Six years the Jew was free to till and sow his land, but the seventh year was to be a Sabbath rest for the land. (Leviticus 25:3-4). And upon a multiple of this important 'week' of years – seven Sabbaths of years – 49 years - there was the great jubilee year, every fiftieth year, when debts were wiped out, estates returned to their original owners, and slaves went free (Leviticus 25:8-9). You will remember Jacob worked for Laban 7 years for Rebecca and gets Leah, and works another 7 years. Genesis 29:27. There were 7 fat years and 7 lean years when Joseph was in Egypt. So to the Jew, this was quite a normal way of expressing a time scale. It is only to our western ears that it seems strange.

Also, Daniel knew the length of the Babylonian captivity which had been based on the violations of the divine law of the Sabbath years – much the same as the children of Israel went round for 40 years in the wilderness, a year for every day that they went into the Promised Land and didn't believe what God said. Similar principle. According to 2 Chronicles 36:21 the Jews had been removed from the land in order that it might rest for 70 years which means that the Sabbath rule had been violated for a total of 490 years, or exactly seventy 'sevens' of years.

It is appropriate then, that at the end of these violations, the angel is sent to reveal the start of a new era of God's dealings with the Jews which would extend for the same number of years covered by the violations of the sabbatical years.

None of us is likely to follow all this enough to want to start working things out with a calculator, but just in case you do, the Jewish year consisted of 12 months of 30 days – 360 days and the book I have mentioned goes into some detail about the exact number of days 69 years made up when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt. Apparently the number was 173,880 and he works out the day, month and year from that – whew!

I realise that if all this is new to you, your head will be reeling by now, but suffice it to say that there is so much evidence to prove biblically that the 70 weeks of Daniel refer to years that we really do not need to worry, but should concentrate on the significance of the prophecy with regard to the book of Revelation and end time chronology.

The 70th week:

Here really is the part we are really interested in. Daniel clearly tells us what is going to happen after the Messiah is 'cut off' – murdered. He starts to refer to someone who is going to come, a ruler who is going to make a covenant with the Jewish people, appear to allow them to carry on with their Temple sacrifices, but in the middle of the 7 year agreement he has made with them, reneges on the deal, puts his own statue up and begins to persecute them unmercifully. Paraphrase of verses 26,27 of Daniel 9.

Daniel now not only knows that his release is soon to come, but he has also has the prophetic horizon extended by 490 years.

So back to Daniel 9:21-23 *'While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.'*

The angel, or Archangel Gabriel, the same Archangel who is going to announce the birth of the Messiah to Mary, is going to give God's answer to Daniel's prayer.

And the answer is in Daniel 9:24-27. Just four verses, and we will now look at them in detail

'Seventy weeks - or sevens - are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy'. NKJV.

Notice first of all, the seventy weeks are determined on Daniel's people, the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem. We have a problem because we all know what a week is, it starts on Sunday and runs for the next 6 days. So we read into the scripture what we already know, that seventy weeks are determined, but if we take this scripture as literally seventy weeks, we will run into an awful lot of problems. The Hebrew word is the word shabua and it means seven, it does not mean days, weeks, months or years, it is the word for seven. Daniel 9:24 is saying seventy times seven are determined on the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem and there is no indication that it is days, weeks, months, years, or anything else. There is another place in Daniel where the word shabua is mentioned and this time it gives a clear time period.

Daniel 10:2,3 *'In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.*

In that passage the word 'shabua' is mentioned, but literally it says in the Hebrew, shabua of days, so here in this passage it is three sevens of days, or 21 days. It is obvious that it is not months or years, as no one could fast for 21 months, let alone 21 years. In Daniel 9:24, there is no qualification on the word shabua, because it is both days and years and that is very important. Let's take the days first of all:

- $70 \times 7 = 490$ days. Days are not specified, but let's just take it as being days for a moment. 490 days is about one and a third years and this is the answer Daniel wants to hear, the answer to his prayer in fact. He is standing in Babylon in 537 BC, he is reading Jeremiah who said the captivity would last 70 years, and he knows if you add 70 to 606 the year the captivity began, you come to 536 BC so Daniel knows in the next year or so the captivity will be over. I say the next year or so because we don't know when in the year 536 God would bring an end to the captivity, also we do not know when in 537 he was reading, so it will be in the next year, possibly up to two years from Daniel's viewpoint. Quite naturally he wanted to know when. So God answers and says, it will be seventy sevens.

However, when you read on in this verse, you see it has much greater significance than the Jewish people going back to the land. That is the 'days' aspect, but what about the 'years' aspect?

- $70 \times 7 = 490$, this time let's apply years, which reveals a staggering and amazing thing that the Archangel Gabriel says to Daniel. Gabriel states to Daniel that the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem have 490 years of history to come. So Gabriel has extended the prophetic horizon by 490 years and then he says what will happen at the end of the 490 years.

There are six things that are going to happen 1,2 and 3 all relate to sin, 4,5 and 6 relate to God's plan.

'Seventy weeks - or sevens - are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy'. NKJV.

1. To finish the transgression, in other words the Jewish people have sinned against God, but in 490 years it is all finished, the judgement is over.
2. To make an end of sin, or in other words, God is going to count them no more.
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity.

These three have to do with sin and it is both a lovely answer to Daniel's prayer, because the three Hebrew words here in relation to sin are the three words Daniel used when confessing the sin of the nation, iniquity, transgression and sin.

Daniel 9:5 *'we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgements'*

God's answer to Daniel is that in seventy sevens it is all finished. God is not only talking about the sins of the Jewish people, because as we now know God was talking about the sins of the whole world. So there is the first three, let's look at the next three:

4. After seventy sevens to bring in everlasting righteousness. In other words a day is coming when every judge will give righteous judgement and righteousness will be seen in all situations.
5. To seal up the visions, and if you have the word 'prophecy' in your translation, it should be the word prophet, not prophecy. What does that mean to seal up? The phrase 'seal up' means to shut up, to close.
6. And to anoint the most holy is a reference to the Temple, and here he says at the end of the 490 year period the final place for worship is going to be established.

These are six amazing claims.

So with regard to the **days**, the prophecy is specifically about the Jewish captivity. It is the one connected with the **years** that concerns us. the Angel Gabriel said there would be a period of 490 years. It will begin at a certain point and it will end at a certain point, but when it ends, sin will be dealt

with, iniquity will be dealt with, reconciliation for everyone will have come in, there will be righteousness everywhere.

Daniel 9:25 *'Know therefore and understand that **from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty two weeks; the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.**'* - this last part of the verse is incorrectly translated, it should say in a little bit of time e.g. the last week.

What is happening here is that we are being given the starting point of the 490 years. So the start point has to do with the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem and nothing else. When Nebuchadnezzar walked out of Jerusalem in 586 BC all he left was a pile of rubble, he absolutely destroyed the whole place, it was a scene of total devastation but here Gabriel is saying a day is going to come when someone will give the order to rebuild Jerusalem to its former glory. It is crucial to us to know when this decree was made in order that we can correctly count the start of the 490 years and prove this prophecy.

There are four possibilities:

- A decree by king Cyrus the Persian.
- The decree of Darius, the Persian, not the one at the beginning of Daniel 9.
- Artaxerxes Longimanus' first decree.
- Artaxerxes Longimanus second decree.

It is critical to know which one of these decrees it is, because if we do not know which decree it is, we do not know from which point the 490 years begins, nor when it ends.

Ezra 1:1-3 *'Now, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,*

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: all the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with Him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.'

This is the Cyrus decree and we can see this is not the decree we need because it is a decree to build the Temple, not the city. So we can rule that one out.

Ezra 6:1-3 *'Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus:*

In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices and let the foundations of it be firmly laid, its height 60 cubits and its width sixty cubits.'

This is the Darius decree, which is simply a restatement of the Cyrus decree so it is not that one.

Ezra 7:11 -17 and 27 *'Now this is the copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord and His statutes to Israel:*

Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra, the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: perfect peace, and so forth. I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counsellors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand; and whereas you are to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem; and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem – now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.

Blessed be the Lord of God of our fathers who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.'

This is the first decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus – Longimanus simply means the long handed one. The Persians were very good to the Jewish people. This decree is to do with the beautifying of the Temple, so again it is not the one we are looking for. That only leaves us with number four, which is found in –

Nehemiah 2:1-8 'And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the king said to me 'Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart'. Then I became very afraid, and said to the king, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire? Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), 'How long will your journey be? And when will you return?' So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Furthermore I said to the king, 'if it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.' And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me'.

This is the decree to rebuild the city and this is seventy or eighty years after the archangel Gabriel spoke. It is Artaxerxes Longimanus second decree so the 490 year period begins with this decree.

The decree is given in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, so we can say, great, we have got the year. So we begin the calculation of the 490 years from the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem made by Artaxerxes in 445 BC. History tells us that the date of Artaxerxes ascension to the throne of Persia was 465 BC. The 20th year of his reign would place the date of this decree at 445 BC. So here we have the beginning of the 70 weeks.

The angel told Daniel: *'know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there shall be 7 weeks and 62 weeks, the streets shall be rebuilt again and the wall, even in a short space of time'*.

Again, keeping in mind that Daniel's 70 weeks of years are divided into three parts:

1. 7 weeks of years = 49 years
2. 62 weeks of years = 434 years
3. 1 week of years = 7 years

70 weeks in total = 490 years.

Let's look at the first period of time, 49 years: from the month of Nisan (March) 445 BC the date the building permit was issued to Nehemiah until the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the walls of the city took 49 years and was completed in 396 BC.

The second period of time, 434 years -

Daniel 9:26 *'After the sixty two 'sevens' Messiah shall be cut off but not for himself and the people of the prince – or ruler - who will come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood; and desolations have been determined.'*

This second period began in 396 BC immediately after the rebuilding of Jerusalem and continued for 434 years until Messiah the Prince was 'cut off' – murdered in AD 30 at Calvary. At the cross, Jesus the Messiah, was cut off in death 'but not for himself' – it was for us and for all who will believe. At the end of Daniel's 69th week, Jesus was crucified. Thus this prophecy of Daniel accurately pinpoints and predicts the time of Jesus death – a prophecy given over 500 years before His birth.

'and the people of the prince – or ruler – who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary and the end shall be with a flood'. Who are these people? This passage has reference to the Romans, who were in occupation when Jesus was alive, they fulfilled the prophecy of the destruction of the city and the temple and brought the desolations of verse 26 – Roman soldiers under Titus destroyed the city and the Temple in AD70. When the Jews referred to a flood, they think not only of water, but of an army which was so huge in number that it looked like a tidal wave moving over the land. When the Roman Empire, under Titus, took over, as prophesied, it looked like a flood to Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. As an item of history, the Romans should never have taken Jerusalem in the natural, but fighting broke out among the three Jewish groups in the city and ten years food supply went up in one night, and not long after that the city fell, together with the Temple, which has never been rebuilt to this day. Instead on the site, stands the Dome of the Rock – the Islamic Temple.

'The prince that shall come' in verse 26 is a reference to the Antichrist himself who will come. It is likely that he will come from the people who destroyed the Temple in AD 70, e.g. Rome. Jerusalem was destroyed about 40 years after the crucifixion of Jesus. He himself prophesied it in Matthew 24:1,2 *'then Jesus went out and departed from the Temple, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them 'Do you not see all these things (or more correctly, don't look at these things!) Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.'* He is here prophesying the destruction of the Temple in AD70 and the fact

that every stone would be turned over to find the gold. The whole of the outside of the Temple had been faced with gold, so when Titus set fire to it, the gold melted and went between the cracks of the stones, hence not one stone will remain upon another...people plundering, looking for gold, turning over the stones.

So, we cannot come to any other conclusion that 69 weeks of the Daniel prophecy have been fulfilled, but what about that 70th week? Or the seven years of Israel's history that have yet to come?

Here we come into the third period of time, and the last seven years.

This time is known as the time of 'Jacob's trouble' Jeremiah 30:7 *'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.'*

This is the final week of years, which is yet to be fulfilled in the future and is known as Daniel's 70th week.

Daniel 9:27 *'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 setup an **abomination that causes desolation**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.'*

The 'he' in this passage is the Antichrist himself, who having made a covenant of 7 years with the Jews to enable them to sacrifice in their rebuilt Temple – they are not believing in their Messiah at this point – suddenly, in the middle of the seven years, breaks his treaty with them, invades Jerusalem, defiles the Temple, setting himself up as god. Matthew 24:15 *'Therefore, when you see the 'abomination of desolation' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand)...'* Jesus is repeating the warning in Daniel of the antichrist setting himself up as a god.

And here we really come to the worst time in human history as Satan is thrown down with great fury to vent his rage on the Jewish nation. As it says, again, in Matthew 24:21,22 *'For then shall be Great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor shall ever be, and except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.'*

I think we will end there for today. You have seen that without the book of Daniel, it is impossible to understand what is being said either in Matthew 24 or the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

To sum up then, the book of revelation can be split into:

Chapters 1 – 3 the warnings to the churches

Chapters 4 – 22:21 the wrath of the Lamb being poured out on the unbelieving nations and on the nation of Israel in particular, but all Israel shall be saved.

We have seen that the Great Tribulation is a period of 7 years, prophesied by Daniel in Daniel 9 and that we are in a parenthesis of time between the 69th week of Jewish history and their 70th week. The history of the Jewish people is on hold until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, then their history will resume – the final 7 years.

Tomorrow we will be looking at whether or not the church will go through this time and the reasons for and against this.

God bless you and thank you for listening.

NB To those receiving notes by e.mail. If you find I have given you incorrect scripture references, *please* let me know – it will likely be a typing error! Thank you. B