

a covenant” for the final “seven.” The content of the covenant is not clear, but in the middle of the seven, he ends sacrifices in the temple and establishes “an abomination that causes desolation.” Thus, the temple must be rebuilt after its 1st-century destruction and sacrifices resumed. Furthermore, this action *recalls* the ruler from the *third* kingdom who “took away the daily sacrifice” (8:11). But it cannot be the same person because the third kingdom is followed by a fourth kingdom and there is not sufficient time for an additional kingdom in the second half of the 70th seven. Instead, this “ruler who will come” should be identified with the little horn of the fourth kingdom who will “speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws” for a period lasting three and a half times (7:25).

JESUS’ INTERPRETATION OF DANIEL

What will characterize the period between the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (in AD 70) and the final seven? Verse 26 says that “war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.” This is precisely what Jesus warned his disciples would occur between his crucifixion and his return: “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come” (Matt 24:6).

But Jesus also understood from Daniel that things would get worse and he specifically warned that people should flee “when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel” (Matt 24:15). This would be a time of terrible distress, “unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again,” but then “they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matt 24:21, 30). Jesus’ words confirm several matters of interpretation: (1) Daniel is a trustworthy prophet; (2) Daniel’s words will be fulfilled literally; (3) the period after the 69th seven as well as the 70th seven were still future in Jesus’ day; (4) the 70th seven will conclude with Jesus coming with the authority of the Father to establish his kingdom on earth forever (cf. Dan 7:13-14).

DANIEL 9: SEVENTY SEVENS FOR ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM

THE MESSAGE OF DANIEL 9

The Lord reveals that Israel’s exile will continue for seventy sevens and culminate in a wicked ruler who will desecrate the temple before everlasting righteousness is established.

OUTLINE OF DANIEL 9

- I. Daniel recognizes that the time of Jerusalem’s desolation is coming to an end (9:1-3).
- II. Daniel confesses the nation’s sin and pleads for the Lord to restore Jerusalem and its temple (9:4-19).
- III. The angel Gabriel explains that seventy sevens are decreed for the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem (9:20-27).
 - A. The angel Gabriel responds to Daniel’s prayer (9:20-23).
 - B. Seventy sevens are required to atone for sin and bring in everlasting righteousness (9:24).
 - C. Sixty-nine sevens are decreed for the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah (9:25).
 - D. After the sixty-ninth seven, the Messiah will be killed and Jerusalem will be destroyed (9:26).
 - E. In the middle of the seventieth seven, the ruler will desecrate the temple and then be destroyed (9:27).

INTERPRETATION OF DANIEL 9

THE SETTING

Daniel’s prayer of confession and petition for the restoration of his people and Jerusalem was motivated by his observation of two realities: (1) the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah was nearly complete, and (2) the Babylonian kingdom had fallen, just as Jeremiah had predicted (25:11-12). Thus Daniel prayed that God would “turn away [his] anger and [his] wrath from Jerusalem” and “look with favor on your desolate sanctuary.”

THE RESPONSE

The angel Gabriel was dispatched with “an answer” to Daniel’s prayer. The purpose of the vision was “to give [Daniel] insight and understanding.” The vision is a direct response to Daniel’s request

concerning Jerusalem and the temple, and thus the “seventy sevens” are decreed for “your people and your holy city.” Thus, everything in the vision must be related to the Jewish people and Jerusalem, and attempts to change the meaning to some other people or place must be resisted.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SEVENTY SEVENS

The message gives the end of the matter before the beginning. Verse 24 describes the result of the 70 sevens. (The “sevens” could be a period of seven days, but that will not fit the context, so all agree that a “seven” is a period of seven years.) The purpose of the 70 sevens may be summarized as bringing an end to sin and establishing God’s kingdom on earth. This end to sin cannot precede the destruction of the ruler who sets up an abomination that causes desolation (verse 27), and thus all six of the items mentioned in verse 24 should be understood as occurring *at the end* of the 70 sevens. In other words, Daniel had prayed that the end of the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah would result in the purification of God’s people and the restoration of Jerusalem. But Daniel learns now that this won’t be accomplished after 70 years but after 70 sevens (of years). It should be noted that Jesus’ work on the cross in fact provided the *basis* for atoning for wickedness, putting an end to sin, etc., but it did not yet accomplish that, particularly in the lives of the Jewish people and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTY SEVENS

Attempts to make the 70 sevens a symbolic and therefore indefinite period of time are refuted by the precision of verses 25-27. Seventy is not simply a large number symbolizing completion, but it is a precise number divided into three distinct periods: 7 sevens, 62 sevens, 1 seven. The 70 sevens begin with a “word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.” This cannot be (1) Cyrus’ decree in 538 BC to return (Ezra 1:2-4) because he permits reconstruction of the temple but not of the city (Ezra 4:21); or (2) Artaxerxes’ permission in 458 to allow Ezra to return because this only allowed for the return of people and temple offerings (Ezra 7:13-28). The only possibility is (3) the decision by Artaxerxes in 444 to allow Nehemiah to return to rebuild the city which now “lies in ruins” (Neh 2:1-5).

THE CALCULATION OF THE SEVENTY SEVENS

The first period of 7 sevens is the time when Jerusalem is “rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble,” corresponding to the 49 years when the city was rebuilt under the leadership of Nehemiah and his successors. The mention of this period in this prophecy served as a “short-term fulfillment,” allowing God’s people to see that his word was true and to enable them to calculate the following 62 sevens.

Daniel was told that the 69 sevens would go “until the Anointed One [Messiah] comes” and that “*after* the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing” (Dan 9:26). Indeed, Jesus came at the end of the 69 sevens and shortly thereafter he was crucified and left with nothing (cf. Isa 53:8-10). The calculation is as follows:

Order given to restore Jerusalem: March 5, 444 BC

The Messiah presents himself to
Israel riding on a donkey: March 30, AD 33

This is exactly a period of 69 sevens, when a year is reckoned as a period of 360 days (cf. Dan 7:25; Rev 11-13).

$69 \text{ sevens} \times 7 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$

$\text{March 5, 444 BC} + 173,880 \text{ days} = \text{March 30, AD 33}$

A GAP BEFORE THE SEVENTIETH SEVEN

After the Messiah is killed, Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed (Dan 9:26). Jesus anticipated both his death and the city’s destruction (Luke 19:41-44). That there is a gap between the 69th seven and the 70th seven is clear from the context: it is *after* the 69th seven that the Messiah is killed and Jerusalem and the temple is destroyed, but it is *before* the ruler “will confirm a covenant...for one seven,” that is, the 70th seven. The length of the gap is never stated and cannot be known.

THE SEVENTIETH SEVEN

The people who destroyed the city (in AD 70) were the Romans, and thus the “ruler who will come” is a future Roman who “will confirm