

3. Substance of the Vision (9:24–27)

²⁴“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

²⁵“Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ²⁷He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

These are four of the most controversial verses in the Bible, and Baldwin calls this “the most difficult text in the book.” Before the particulars are examined, it will be helpful to present a brief summary of the major interpretations of “the seventy sevens,” or traditionally “the seventy weeks.” Although there are many variations, these four views are representative of those held by the majority of scholars today.

1. They are literal years extending through the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. According to this view, the “sevens” or “weeks” are made up of seven years each, resulting in a total period of 490 years (seventy times seven). The “decree” (or “word”) of v. 25 is said to allude to Jeremiah’s prophecy of the seventy years of captivity (Jer 25:1, 11) that was delivered in 605 B.C. Although the text begins the seventy sevens with this “decree,” those who hold this view inconsistently hold that the “sevens” commence in 586 B.C., the date of Jerusalem’s fall (in order to make the timetable work correctly). The termination of the sevens is understood to be the end of Antiochus’s persecution (either the cleansing of the temple in 164 B.C. or Antiochus’s death in 163 B.C.), at which time the kingdom of God supposedly would come upon the earth, an event that obviously did not take place. Although this period of time is far short of 490 years, about sixty-five years, Montgomery declares, “We can meet this objection only by surmising a chronological miscalculation on the part of the writer.”²⁹

Daniel divided the seventy sevens into three groups, seven sevens, sixty-two sevens, and a final seven. The first seven sevens was supposed to extend from Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 B.C. to 539/538 B.C., the time of Babylon’s fall, the release of the Jewish exiles by Cyrus, and the anointed one, who most consider to be Joshua the high priest (associated with Zerubbabel, the civil leader at the return; cf. Ezra 2:2; 3:2; 5:2; Zech 3:1; 6:11).

The next sixty-two sevens encompass the time from Joshua to the death of another “Anointed One,” the high priest Onias III (170 B.C.). Antiochus’s persecution is the subject of the last seven, a period that extended from 170–163 B.C. Yet Antiochus did not stop the sacrifice for a full three and one-half years (half of the seven; 9:27) but for only a little more than three years.

None of the variations of this view really satisfy the requirements of the biblical text. The “decree” to rebuild Jerusalem would most logically refer to a decree of a king, not Jeremiah’s prophecy, which does not speak of rebuilding the city (acknowledged by Towner) but simply announces that the captivity will last seventy years. According to this view, the total number of years in the seventy sevens is incorrect. It is difficult to believe that the writer could have been so

historically uninformed that he would lose track of over half a century (sixty-seven years). An interpretation that creates a historical inaccuracy should be rejected, at least if another reasonable one can be found. This view also understands that the writer of this passage mistakenly predicted the coming of the Lord in his day, alleged to be the time of Antiochus IV.

2. The “seventy sevens” are symbolic periods of time ending in the first century A.D. Young holds that the first period of seven sevens extends from Cyrus’s decree allowing the return of the Jewish exiles in 538 B.C. to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, approximately 440–400 B.C. The next sixty-two sevens stretch from about 400 B.C. until the first advent of Christ; the last seven continues from the first advent until an unspecified point sometime after Christ’s earthly ministry but before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

This view presents several problems. (1) A “seven” is best interpreted to represent seven years, not an indefinite period of time (see discussion of the term “seven” at 9:24). (2) The sevens vary greatly in length within each period. For example, in the first period (538–400 B.C.) each of the seven sevens are about twenty years in duration, whereas in the second period (400 B.C. to first century A.D.) each of the sixty-two sevens is only about six years in length. Even if the sevens are symbolic, we would expect them to be fairly similar in length. (3) Young places the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 (v. 26) after (rather than during) the seventy sevens. Yet v. 26 seems to place Jerusalem’s destruction after the sixty-nine weeks but before the seventieth week in v. 27. (4) Only a strained interpretation of v. 24 sees its complete fulfillment in Christ’s first advent.

3. They are symbolic periods of time ending at Christ’s second coming. Keil, Leupold,³⁷ and others espouse an alternative symbolic view. The seventy sevens are a prophecy of church history (both the Old Testament and the New Testament church) from Cyrus’s decree in 538 B.C. until the return of Christ at the end of the age.

According to this interpretation, the first seven sevens extend from Cyrus’s decree in 538 B.C. until the coming of Christ (the Anointed One) in the first century A.D., a period of about 550 years. The next sixty-two sevens span the time from Christ to the persecution of the church by the Antichrist at the end of the age. During this time (at least two thousand years), the city (spiritual Jerusalem, the church) will be built even “in times of trouble.”³⁹

Events in vv. 26 and 27 occur in the last seven. “The Anointed One will be cut off and have nothing” does not mean that the Messiah will be put to death but speaks of the attack upon Christ and his church at the end when Christ will have “lost His place and function as the *Maschiach*.” Leupold expresses it this way, “As far as the world is concerned, Messiah shall be a dead issue.”⁴² The “ruler” (vv. 26–27) is the Antichrist, who will destroy the city and sanctuary (spiritual Jerusalem and the temple of God, i.e., the church) and stop all organized worship.⁴⁴ Leupold remarks that the visible aspects of the church (“organized religion and worship as offered by the church of the Lord”) “shall be destroyed and with them the influence of the Christ that we now still know and feel to be abroad in the earth.” These conditions will continue until judgment is poured out upon the Antichrist at the coming of the Lord.

There are a number of problems with this view. (1) It is extremely subjective and varies greatly from other interpretations. (2) A glaring problem is the inconsistency of interpreting literally the building of the city as it relates to Cyrus’s decree but figuratively the building of the city as the church (spiritual Jerusalem) later in the same verse (v. 25). (3) Another significant deficiency is the idea that Christ and his church will be defeated during the last days. According

to Scripture (e.g., Matt 24:14; Rev 11:1ff.), Christ will always have his witnesses, and huge numbers of persons will receive the gospel message in the period just prior to Christ's return. (4) The sevens are more unevenly distributed here than in the previously noted version of the symbolic view. In the first group of sevens, each seven would cover a period of almost eighty years (538 B.C. to the first century A.D.). The second period contains sevens of over thirty years each (first century A.D. to at least the present), and the length of the final seven is unknown.

Baldwin also understands the seventy sevens to be symbolic periods that extend from Cyrus's decree to the second coming of Christ, but like Young she believes the sixty-nine sevens conclude with the first coming of Christ, which is a far better interpretation than that of Leupold and Keil. But the final seven extends from the first century until the end, which results in one seven lasting up to two thousand years, rendering the sevens even more disproportionate than those of Keil or Young. Even with this latter problem, Baldwin's view is the best of the symbolic interpretations since the first sixty-nine sevens appear clearly to conclude during Christ's first advent and the final seven is terminated by his second advent.

4. They are literal years ending with Christ's second coming. This view agrees with the first that the sevens are literal seven-year periods totaling 490 years. The first seven sevens (forty-nine years) commence with a command to rebuild Jerusalem (either the decree to Ezra in 458 B.C. or the decree to Nehemiah in 445 B.C.) and terminate with the completion of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah about forty-nine years later (either ca. 409 B.C. or ca. 396 B.C.). The next sixty-two sevens (434 years) extend from the end of the first group of sevens to Christ's first coming (either his baptism in A.D. 26 or Christ's presentation of himself to the people as Messiah on Palm Sunday in A.D. 32/33).

After the coming of the Messiah, he was rejected by Israel; and the time of the Gentiles began, which is not counted in the "seventy sevens." Just as God focused his attention on the Jewish people for about two thousand years, these past two thousand years his attention has been focused on the Gentiles. However, just as many Gentiles were saved during the Old Testament period, in this present age there are many Jewish believers. At the end of the present age, God will again deal with Israel in a special manner, and the final seven will begin.

During the last seven, which immediately precedes Christ's second advent, there will be a terrible time of tribulation for Israel and the world. God will use this trial to bring Israel and countless others to saving faith. At that time the majority of the people in Israel will acknowledge Jesus as the promised Messiah, repent, and be saved (cf. Rom 11:25–29; Zech 12:10–13:1). The final seven (seven years) will be terminated by Christ's second coming and the establishment of his earthly kingdom, which will last a thousand years. Christ's reign will, of course, continue beyond the millennium into the eternal state. This last approach seems to be the most exegetically viable alternative.

(1) Period of Time (9:24a)

9:24a Gabriel declared that the time involved was "seventy sevens" (*šābu'îm šib'îm*). "Sevens" (traditionally "weeks") is a literal translation of the Hebrew and refers to periods of seven without specifying what the units are. These may be sevens of years, days, months, or indefinite periods of time. Sevens of days or months would not meet the requirements of the text in any sense. As previously noted, some scholars consider the sevens to be indefinite time periods, but most hold that they refer to periods of seven years each. First, years fit the context

well. Second, the Hebrews were familiar with the concept of sevens of years as well as of days because the Sabbatical Year was based on this premise. Every seventh year there was to be a sabbath of rest for the land (cf. Lev 25:1–7). God promised that if Israel did not keep these sabbath years, they would be driven from the land and scattered among the nations (cf. Lev 26:33–35; cf. Jer 34:12–22). According to 2 Chr 36:21, one result of the seventy-year Babylonian captivity was that the land was allowed to rest in order to make up for the sabbath years, which the Jews had failed to keep. Therefore in Scripture only two types of weeks or sevens are mentioned—sevens of days and sevens of years. All agree that days is not a valid option in this context; only sevens of years remain. The burden of proof rests squarely upon anyone who would take the sevens in any other sense.

Third, those who contend that the sevens are symbolic must account for the fact that specific numbers are used and for division of the seventy sevens into units of seven, sixty-two, and one. Why would such definite numbers be employed to represent periods of indefinite length?

Fourth, if the numbers are symbolic, they should at least be proportionate to the length of the period represented. Montgomery rightly insists, “The denomination must remain the same: ‘week’ cannot be a variable quantity, as now a septennium and now some other quantity of time.” Yet this is not the case with the symbolic views as has been noted.

Fifth, if the seventieth seven is the future tribulation (as this commentator holds), there is evidence in other Scriptures that the duration of that period will be seven literal years (see discussion at 7:25).

Therefore “seven” is best interpreted to represent seven years, and “seventy sevens” would equal 490 years. Daniel was told that these “seventy sevens” had been “decreed.” The verb translated “decreed” (*hātak*) occurs only here in the Old Testament but is used in later Hebrew and Aramaic to mean “cut, cut off, decide.” This meaning fits the context well. God had “cut off” or “cut out” a certain period of time (490 years) from the remainder of history for a specific purpose.

(2) People (9:24b)

9:24b Gabriel told Daniel that this time had been set apart “for your people and your holy city.” The identification of the people and the city are clear from the context. Daniel’s people were the Jews, and his holy city was Jerusalem. Some scholars (e.g., Young, Keil, Leupold) symbolize “your people” to refer to “spiritual Israel,” the church, and the “holy city” to mean the heavenly Jerusalem. Yet such a view is not supported by the text. Gabriel’s words in vv. 24–27 contain specific references to Israel, the temple, and the city of Jerusalem. Moreover, this revelation was an answer to Daniel’s prayer, which concerned the Jewish people. For these reasons the majority of scholars rightly understand this prophecy to refer to the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

(3) Accomplishments (9:24c)

9:24c Lacocque rightly accepts the view that v. 24 would serve as fitting conclusion to the angelic revelation, even though it comes at the beginning. “The eschatological blessings are described first, before the steps which lead to them are spoken of.” God’s purpose in the events of the “seventy sevens” is the subject of the verse.

These six goals will not all be fulfilled until the arrival of the future kingdom of God. Keil remarks: “From the contents of these six statements it thus appears that the termination of the

seventy weeks coincides with the end of the present course of the world,” and Baldwin adds that the verse “is speaking of the accomplishment of God’s purpose for all history.”⁵⁴ These great acts will affect not only Israel but all of humanity.

1. “To finish transgression” is the first named achievement. Most authorities, taking the *qere* reading, have understood the Hebrew verb in this first phrase as *kālā*, “be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished, spent.” Others (e.g., *kethiv*, Wood, Young) have taken the word to be *kālā*, “shut up, restrain, withhold.” If the latter is correct, the idea could be that transgression is not completely stopped but lessened. Yet it could also mean that transgression is restrained completely, at least for a time. Thus the meaning would be very similar to that of *kālā*. Both translations are possible, but since the next phrase speaks of putting “an end” to sin, “to finish” (*kālā*) seems to be the better rendering. Virtually all translations understand the meaning to be “to finish” or something similar (e.g., NIV, KJV, NASB, NRSV).

In the Hebrew “transgression” (*peša*) is definite, which may indicate that a particular “transgression” was intended. If so, it probably would refer to Israel’s rebellion against God. It occurs elsewhere in Daniel only in 8:12–13, but the semantically related verb *’ābar* (“transgress”) occurs in 9:11. However, “transgression” in general seems to be the intended meaning. Humanity’s transgression against God did not cease after the crucifixion of Christ but will end with his return and subsequent millennial and eternal reigns.

2. “To put an end to sin” may either be translated *tāmam*, “be complete, come to an end, finish,” or *hātam*, “to seal, affix a seal, or seal up. Either translation would make sense and have basically the same meaning, for “sealing up” sin would be tantamount to putting an end to it. Yet “to put an end to” would fit the context better, a reading most scholars and translations accept.

Archer notes that “sin” is a more general term than “transgression,” which involves “revolt against authority.”⁵⁹ Just as in the first case (“to finish transgression”), this prophecy cannot be fulfilled in any real sense until Christ personally returns to earth. Sin will be controlled during the millennium and cease completely during the eternal state. The future kingdom of God includes both periods.

3. “To atone for wickedness” is the third accomplishment. Basically, the Hebrew verb *kipper* (“to atone”) means “to make a covering.” This symbolism is drawn from the Old Testament sacrificial system in which the blood was sprinkled over the mercy seat in the temple, depicting that the sin of the people was forgiven because it was covered by the blood (cf. Lev 16:15–16).

“Wickedness” is a translation of the Hebrew word *’āwōn*, traditionally rendered “iniquity.” So an atonement will be made for persons who are guilty because of their wickedness. Baldwin comments: “If there is progression and not repetition in these parallel clauses, the last marks the climax: *to atone* (or ‘make reconciliation’) *for iniquity*.... If God is regarded as the subject, it is announcing that God has found a way of forgiving sin without being untrue to His own righteousness.”

In the first two acts sin was to be ended and transgression finished. This would be accomplished through the atonement spoken of here. This atonement for humanity’s sin was made by Jesus Christ upon the cross. His blood is the covering for sin. All the blessings of the coming kingdom of God have been made possible by what Christ accomplished at Calvary.

4. “To bring in everlasting righteousness” signifies that at the end of the seventy sevens an era of righteousness will pervade the earth, which will continue for eternity. As the prophecy pertains to Israel specifically, it indicates that at the end of the sevens the nation as a whole will have received permanently a right relationship with God that will result in living according to

God's will. Only when the kingdom of God is ushered in at Christ's return will such a state of universal righteousness be possible.

5. "To seal up vision and prophecy" may be interpreted in two ways. Hebrew *ḥātam* means to "seal, affix seal, seal up." "To seal" may refer to the closing up of a document, for in ancient times a scroll was rolled up and sealed shut for preservation (cf. Jer 32:10ff.; Dan 8:26; 12:4, 9). A seal was additionally employed as a mark of authentication by a king or other official (cf. 1 Kgs 21:8; Esth 3:12; Dan 6:17 [18]).

In the first case "to seal up vision and prophecy" would signify that these forms of revelation would be closed, and in the second the idea would be that God will someday set his seal of authentication upon every truly God-given revelation ("vision and prophecy") by bringing about its complete fulfillment. The result would be the same in either case. Whitcomb observes: "Since Christ, in all His glory, will be present with His people, there will be no further need for visions and prophecies." "To seal up vision and prophecy" must include revelation concerning both Christ's first and second advents. Therefore this promise cannot be fulfilled until the end of the age.

6. "To anoint the most holy" may denote either the anointing of a holy person or a holy place. *Māšah*, "to anoint," means "to consecrate for religious service." Young takes this phrase to speak of the most holy person, Jesus Christ (Messiah), and believes that his anointing for ministry is intended (cf. Isa 61:1).

However, the phrase "the most holy" (lit., "holy of holies") almost certainly refers to "a most holy place" (NRSV), as Keil recognizes.⁶⁵ Wood comments: "The phrase 'holy of holies' ... occurs, either with or without the article, thirty-nine times in the Old Testament, always in reference to the Tabernacle or Temple or to the holy articles used in them." In this verse the Hebrew reads *qōdeš qādāšîm* ("holy of holies"), and Montgomery notes that the simpler term *qōdeš* ("holy") in v. 26 "refers without question to the sanctuary." There it is translated "the sanctuary" in virtually all versions (e.g., NIV, NASB, NRSV, KJV). Almost certainly the longer form in v. 24 would have the same meaning.

Keil understands the phrase "to anoint the most holy" to apply to the consecration of the church (God's spiritual temple) at the end of the age. Archer interprets this "most holy place" to be a literal, future temple.⁶⁹ If a future temple is intended, which seems the best view, then it would be the edifice described in Ezek 40–48. Daniel would have assumed that his readers were familiar with the prophecy of their contemporary, Ezekiel. This temple will be built and consecrated for service at the onset of the millennium.

What a glorious prophecy this is! As Leupold declares, "In these six statements we have the sum of all the good things that God promised to men perfectly realized."

(4) Beginning of the Seventy Sevens (9:25a)

9:25a The text divides the seventy sevens into three groups. Gabriel states that the first two groups (seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens) will conclude with the coming of "the Anointed One, the ruler" (9:25).

Gabriel told Daniel to pay special attention ("know" and "understand" are synonymous here) to the very important information that he was about to receive, partially because here was the answer to Daniel's prayer for an end to Jerusalem's desolation. The starting point of the seventy sevens is now revealed. They will commence with a decree (literally a "word") "to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.).

Scholars who symbolize the sevens generally take the decree of Cyrus issued in 538 B.C. as the beginning date for the seventy sevens (e.g., Young, Leupold, Keil, Calvin). Cyrus's proclamation allowed the Jewish exiles to return to Palestine and to rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:2–4; 6:3–5), but it did not specifically command the building of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, those who defend this view argue that permission to build Jerusalem was implicit in the command. It is a fact, however, that the city was not reconstructed until almost one hundred years later; for Neh 2:17 reports: "Then I [Nehemiah] said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace'" (cf. Neh 1:3; Ezra 4:12ff.). Hoehner also seems justified in drawing a distinction between the commencement of the rebuilding with Cyrus's decree and the city's complete restoration during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.⁷⁴ This latter restoration seems to be the meaning of Dan 9:25.

Other scholars have suggested the decree of Artaxerxes I to Ezra (458 B.C.) as the starting point of the seventy sevens (e.g., Archer, Wood, J. B. Payne). This decree permitted Ezra and other Jews to return to Palestine and concerned the establishment and practice of the proper services at the temple (Ezra 7:11–26). But again there was no specific command to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

A second decree of Artaxerxes I issued to Nehemiah (445 B.C.) is a popular view (e.g., Walvoord, Whitcomb, Sir Robert Anderson, Hoehner). Actually, this does not seem to have been a formal decree but involved permission for Nehemiah to visit Palestine (Neh 2:5–8). Nevertheless, Artaxerxes' words to Nehemiah probably meet the criteria of the *dābār*, which may mean "decree, message, or word." This decree to Nehemiah specifically mentions the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh 2:5), which is the strongest argument in favor of it.

Only the third decree specifically refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but it is reasonable to assume that all three orders allowing the Jews to return to their land implied permission to rebuild the city. It seems clear from the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah, however, that the city was still in a state of ruins in their day, almost one hundred years after the first return.

The view accepted here is that the decree to Ezra in 458 B.C. is the correct starting point for the seventy sevens, but a survey of the events contained in the first sixty-nine sevens is necessary to demonstrate the appropriateness of this option.

During this period, a number of significant events would transpire. Jerusalem would be restored, but most importantly an Anointed One would come who would be "cut off." Sometime after this last occurrence, Jerusalem and the temple would again be destroyed during a time of war.

A total of sixty-nine sevens (seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens) would pass, and then a momentous event would take place, the "Anointed One, the ruler," would come. "Anointed One" is a translation of the Hebrew *māšīaḥ* also rendered "Messiah" (KJV, NASB). *Māšīaḥ* was a term that could designate kings and priests. Thus it seems that this "Anointed One" must be either a priest, a king, or someone who is both.

Hebrew *nāgīd* ("ruler") may refer to a leader, "ruler" (NIV), or prince (NRSV, NASB, KJV). The term may also denote a priest, but this is rare.⁷⁸ Therefore an anointed one would come who would be a leader, prince, or king of the Jewish people.

Christians have traditionally identified this "Anointed One" as Jesus Christ, who is called in the New Testament both king and priest. Without doubt the requirements of the text could be fulfilled in him. Although some question might still linger concerning the identification based solely on the information provided in v. 25, the description in the following verse of "the

Anointed One” being “cut off” and the teaching concerning Messiah’s person and work elsewhere in Scripture confirm that this individual is Jesus Christ.

Moreover, a prediction of the coming Messiah in this context would be expected. In v. 24 Daniel was told that sin would come to an end, an atonement for sin would be made, everlasting righteousness would come, and all prophecy would be fulfilled. Scripture is clear that it would be the Messiah who would atone for sin by offering himself as the perfect sacrifice and would put an end to sin and bring in everlasting righteousness.

Jesus is called the “Anointed One” (Messiah, i.e., Christ) because he was anointed by the Holy Spirit to do his work. He is both priest and king (cf. Zech 6:13; Ps 110:4; Matt 27:11; Heb 4:14–15; 5:6). He is called the “ruler” because he is the king of the universe and someday will personally rule the earth from his throne in Jerusalem. Young comments that Daniel was to look for one who was both an anointed one and a ruler and “when such a one appeared, the prophecy would be fulfilled.”

The coming of the Messiah at the end of sixty-nine sevens could refer to Christ’s birth, his baptism, or his presentation to Israel as its promised Messiah on Palm Sunday. Jesus’ baptism is the most likely choice since it was at that time that Jesus officially took upon himself the role of the Messiah and began his public ministry.

How does the coming of Christ relate to the chronology of the seventy sevens? Scholars who hold that the sevens are symbolic of indefinite periods believe that no exact timetable is involved. For example, Young (cited above) maintains that the period from Cyrus (538 B.C.) until the first advent of Christ covered sixty-nine sevens, and this period merely happened to equal about 550 years.

Those who begin the sevens in 445 B.C. are faced with a dilemma; 483 years after 445 B.C. comes to A.D. 39, a date well after the time of Christ. To solve this problem Anderson argued that the 483 years are years of 360 prophetic days rather than years of 365 days. He calculated that from the decree to Nehemiah given on March 14, 445 B.C. (Neh 2:1) until the triumphal entry of Christ on April 6, A.D. 32, there were 173,880 days. At this time Christ presented himself to Israel as their Messiah. Christ was rejected, and the sixty-nine sevens came to an end. Though in some instances in prophecy, notably Daniel and Revelation, a year is rounded off to 360 days, Archer has convincingly demonstrated that the Jews followed a 365-day year.⁸²

Not only is the 360-day year theory unlikely, but a major problem with Anderson’s view is that most consider that Christ was not crucified in A.D. 32 but in A.D. 30. If so, Anderson’s calculations will not work. Hoehner has basically taken Anderson’s view and updated it. He begins the seventy weeks on March 5, 444 B.C. and understands the sixty-ninth week to have concluded on March 30, A.D. 33, which he calculates was the day of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He continues to accept the 360-day prophetic year, however, with its seemingly insurmountable problems and espouses the date of A.D. 33 as the year of Christ’s crucifixion.

Other scholars (e.g., Archer, Wood, Payne) believe that the decree of Artaxerxes I to Ezra in 458 B.C. (or 457) is the beginning point of the seventy sevens. If this view is correct, 483 years after 458 B.C. would result in a date of A.D. 26, the time when many scholars believe Christ was baptized and began his public ministry as the Messiah. Jesus’ anointing for ministry came at his baptism (cf. Matt 3:16); thus he became the “Anointed One” at that time, an amazing fulfillment of prophecy.

Daniel separated the first sixty-nine sevens into two parts: seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. Evidently something significant was due to occur seven sevens (forty-nine years) after the sevens began. If the decree was given in 458 B.C., the date of this event would be 409 B.C.

Since the restoration of the city under Nehemiah and Ezra is specifically alluded to in the latter part of v. 25, the completion of their rebuilding projects apparently marked the end of the first seven sevens or forty-nine years. In the Elephantine Papyri another man is stated to be governor of Judah in 407 B.C., indicating that Nehemiah had passed from the scene by that time. Thus a date of 409 B.C. for the end of Nehemiah's work is possible.

(5) Events of the First Sixty-Nine Sevens (9:25b–26)

9:25b According to the latter part of v. 25, during these sixty-nine sevens the city of Jerusalem would “be rebuilt with streets and a trench.” Jerusalem was in ruins when this prophecy was uttered, and God's promise that the holy city would be restored would have brought great comfort to Daniel and his fellow Jews. “Streets” is a rendering of the Hebrew word *rēḥôb*, which refers to a broad place or plaza in a city. Every city had such a place for markets, town assemblies, and other gatherings (cf. Jer 5:1; Song 3:2; Nah 2:4).

“Trench” is a translation of Hebrew *hārûs* (only here in the Old Testament), derived from a root meaning “to cut.” Thus the term basically describes something “cut out.” Some translations have rendered the word as “moat” (NASB, NRSV). Although Babylon was encompassed by a moat, the idea of a moat surrounding Jerusalem in that dry area seems unlikely. Hartman believes it was “a trench cut into the rock outside the city walls in order to increase the exterior height of the walls.” The KJV evidently followed Theodotion's translation, *teichos*, “wall,” and Jeffery remarks that “a possible emendation of the Hebrew would give this meaning.” Jeffery adds: “An even slighter emendation would give the word ‘streets,’ which would agree with the reading underlying the Peshitta, and has the advantage that ‘broad places’ and ‘streets’ are mentioned together elsewhere.”⁹⁰ Porteous relates that the term has been found in the Dead Sea Copper Scroll with the meaning “conduit” and would refer to the water system of Jerusalem. This latter meaning would make good sense here.

Most understand the phrase “in times of trouble” to refer to the struggles involved in rebuilding Jerusalem during Nehemiah's governorship (cf. Neh 4:1ff.; 9:36–37).

9:26a After the reconstruction of Jerusalem in the first seven sevens (forty-nine years), another “sixty-two sevens” (434 years) would pass. Then two momentous events would take place. First, the “Anointed One” would come (v. 25), then he would be “cut off.” Apparently his coming would be immediately at the end of the sixty-two sevens, but how much later he would be “cut off” is not specified. It is reasonable to expect that the incident would ensue relatively soon.

The verb translated “cut off” is the common verb for “cut” (*kārat*). It can be used literally (Exod 4:25; 1 Sam 5:4; 1 Kgs 5:6; Job 14:7) or figuratively. The word is used figuratively of eliminating, removing, or destroying something (e.g., Deut 12:29; Josh 7:9; Ps 37:38), often specifically referring to being “cut off” in death (e.g., Gen 9:11; Exod 31:14; Jer 9:21; 11:19). Here it is found in one of the Old Testament prophecies of the crucifixion of Christ (cf. Isa 53:8, which uses a synonym, *gāzar*).

“And will have nothing” (similar NASB, NRSV) is a translation of the Hebrew *wə'ên lô*, which could be rendered literally “and [but] not to [for] him” (cf. “but not for himself,” KJV) or “and [but] nothing to [for] him.” The KJV's translation would signify that Christ's death was for others, which is certainly a scriptural truth. But the phrase *'ên lē* is in Hebrew an idiom for “not have” (cf. Gen 11:30; Isa 27:4). Therefore the NIV translation is correct. Thus when Christ died, his earthly ministry seemed to have been in vain. His disciples had deserted him, and from all appearances he had not accomplished what he had set out to do. As Van Groningen says, “Their

promised royal One, the anointed King given by Yahweh to them as mediator of the covenant, is to be put to death as a pauper.”

9:26b Gabriel had already revealed to Daniel that Jerusalem would be rebuilt after the Babylonian destruction, but now he informed the prophet that sometime in the future Jerusalem and the temple would again be destroyed. This time the destruction would not be by the Babylonians but by “the people of the ruler who will come.”

Historically the next destruction of Jerusalem and the temple after the Babylonian period was that perpetrated by the Romans, and Josephus understood Daniel to have prophesied this Roman destruction of Jerusalem. In A.D. 70 Titus Vespasianus led the Roman legions against Jerusalem and utterly destroyed both the city and the temple. Exactly forty years after his crucifixion, Christ’s prophecy about these events was fulfilled (cf. Matt 24:1–2).

Yet the subject of this sentence is not the “ruler who will come” but “the *people* of the ruler who will come.” The “people” who would destroy Jerusalem and the temple were the Romans, but v. 27 makes clear that this “ruler” will be the future persecutor of Israel during the seventieth seven. “The people of the ruler” does not mean that the people “belong to” the ruler⁹⁶ but rather that the ruler will come from these people. If the text is to be taken literally at this point, this future ruler will come out of the peoples and nations that made up the ancient Roman Empire. Daniel already had divulged in chap. 7 that the Antichrist’s origin will be from the fourth empire, Rome.

In this context “the end” alludes to the end of the city, that is, its destruction. “Flood” is a figure emphasizing the magnitude of the devastation (cf. Isa 8:7–8; 28:2; Dan 11:10, 22, 26, 40). The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 did indeed come like a great “flood” that swept over the city and destroyed it.

War probably is the subject of “decreed” rather than “desolations.” The translation would then be, “And until the end, war has been decreed with (or “and”) desolations. Still the meaning would be virtually the same as that in the NIV text.

This war will be “decreed” by the Lord as a judgment upon Israel. Jerusalem will experience a period of conflict that will include a series of desolations. This war and the desolations brought about by it will continue until the end, that is, until the city is completely destroyed.

(6) Events of the Seventieth Seven (9:27)

9:27 Daniel here described “the completion of God’s purpose.” As previously explained, a “seven” represents seven years, and the seventy sevens are terminated by the second advent of Christ. Therefore the events of the seventieth seven transpire over a seven-year period immediately prior to the Lord’s return.

If the sixty-nine sevens (483 years) conclude with Christ’s first coming and the final seven (seven years) is terminated by Christ’s return, there must be an interval of time between the end of the sixty-ninth and the beginning of the seventieth seven. The text also indicates that the seventieth seven would not follow the sixty-ninth immediately. For example, Christ’s crucifixion (“Anointed One ... cut off,” v. 26) and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (v. 26) would occur *after* the sixty-ninth seven, but *not during* the seventieth seven (v. 27), revealing a gap between these sevens. R. Gundry observes: “The possibility of a gap between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks is established by the well-accepted OT phenomenon of prophetic perspective, in which gaps such as that between the first and second advents were not perceived.”¹⁰¹

Not only are gaps between first and second coming events common, but the two thousand year span (at least) found here may also be explained by the nature of this revelation. God was answering Daniel's prayer, which specifically concerned the future of the nation Israel. Shortly after Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah (after the sixty-nine sevens), Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jewish people were dispersed throughout the earth, and for almost two thousand years Israel as a nation did not exist. Therefore this period was omitted from the prophecy. Israel has now been reestablished as a nation (1948), suggesting that the seventieth seven may soon begin.

The events of the last seven will begin with a covenant. Young argues that the one making the covenant will be the "Anointed One" (Jesus Christ) of v. 26 and that the clause should be translated as, He "will cause to prevail" a covenant. By this Young means that Christ "fulfilled the terms of this Covenant of Grace, that upon the basis of His finished work, life and salvation might be freely offered to sinners."¹⁰³ Young also believes that the "end to sacrifice and offering" spoken of as occurring in the middle of the final seven was brought about by Christ's death. The Old Testament sacrificial system came to an end since the sacrifice they typified, that of Jesus Christ, had been offered. Christ's death, it is agreed, did end the need for the sacrificial system, but the question is whether that truth is taught in this verse. Most scholars believe it is not.

As for the end of the seventieth seven, Young declares that it will "run out" at least by A.D. 70, but he does not know exactly when. "It would seem, therefore, that the *terminus ad quem* was not regarded as possessing particular importance or significance." In reality the end of this final seven is one of the most significant events in history, the second coming of Christ.

Young's identification of Jesus Christ as the perpetrator of this covenant is not supported by the context. The text indicates that this covenant is confirmed (even Young's translation "prevailed," which is almost certainly incorrect here, would not relieve this problem) for one seven. Most naturally this is taken to mean that the person in question makes a covenant that "lasts" for seven years. Christ did not institute a covenant that continued merely for seven years, for even Young holds that this final period ended sometime not too many years after the Lord's death. Christ's covenant with believers endures forever. Finally, if this seven immediately precedes the end of the age, as most scholars hold, the pronoun "he" cannot refer to Christ's appearance at his first coming but must speak of someone living in the last days.

The majority of scholars correctly hold that "he" denotes the "ruler" spoken of in the previous verse, and Archer points out that "normally the last eligible antecedent is to be taken as the subject of the following verb."¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the context of the passage and the book as a whole supports this identification. His behavior and ultimate doom match that of the "little horn" described in chap. 7—the future ruler of a great empire in the last days and the persecutor of the saints—the Antichrist (so Archer, Wood, Whitcomb, Keil, Leupold). The term "confirm" can mean "make strong" (Ps 12:4, "triumph") and with *bērît*, "covenant," here seems to mean "make a firm agreement." Baldwin may be correct in seeing in this use of the unusual verb *gābar* "the implication of forcing an agreement by means of superior strength." Here "covenant" (*bērît*) indicates "a treaty" or "alliance," a meaning it often has in the Old Testament (cf. Gen 14:13; 21:27, 32; 31:44; Obad 7).

This agreement will be made with "many" (lit., "the many"). Walvoord believes the phrase "the many" refers to unbelieving Jews, whereas Archer¹¹¹ and Young contend that these are "true believers," the likely meaning of the expression in Isa 53:11–12. In this context, however, "the many" is best taken as a description of the Jewish people as a group, the nation of Israel.

Antichrist, on behalf of his empire, will make a treaty with the nation of Israel. This agreement probably entails a promise of protection in return for certain favors (likely including those of an economic nature). It is easy to understand why Israel would enter into such an arrangement with the powerful forces of Antichrist. With such protection Israel will feel safe and secure. The term of the treaty will be “for one seven,” that is, seven years.

“In the middle of the seven” the Antichrist “will put an end to [*šābat*] sacrifice and offering.” This event takes place after three and one-half years. The seventieth seven is commonly referred to as the tribulation period, and the second half of this seven is known as the great tribulation (Rev 7:14; cf. Matt 24:21). It is in this last part of the tribulation that the Antichrist persecutes believers and commits other atrocities. The length of the great tribulation, three and one-half years, is spoken of several times in Scripture and should be taken literally (cf. 7:25; Rev 11:2; 12:14; 13:5). Whitcomb notes: “The clarification provided here is that the three and one-half years of 7:25 follow an initial three-and-one-half-year period at the beginning of which the Antichrist” will make a treaty with Israel. He will break this treaty at the midpoint.

That there will be “an end to sacrifice and offering” does not necessarily mean that the sacrificial system will be reinstated in Israel, as Whitcomb thinks,¹¹⁶ although this is possible. It may only indicate that worship in general is forbidden. Reasons for this order are not stated, but evidently religious Jews will be persecuted because they will oppose the Antichrist’s evil administration. Antichrist will also come to the point where he demands allegiance from his citizens above that to God (cf. 11:36; 2 Thess 2:4). Naturally believers will refuse.

The NIV’s translation would indicate that Antichrist will place some kind of object (“abomination”) in the temple precincts (“on a wing of the temple”) that will be offensive to the Jews and cause them not to worship there (“causes desolation”). “Of the temple” is placed in brackets by the NIV translators, showing that it is not in the Hebrew text. The NIV’s interpretation (followed by Montgomery)¹¹⁸ is possible but would seem unlikely since “wing” (*kānāp*) is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament referring to a part of a building or building complex. Moreover, “abomination” is plural (“abominations”) in the Hebrew so that if taken with “desolation” it would literally read “abominations of desolation” rather than “abomination of desolation” as in 11:31 and 12:11. The NIV and NRSV have followed the Greek versions in translating “abomination” (singular), probably reflecting an attempt to make the phrase conform to later passages (11:31; 12:11). It is true that some sort of offensive object or objects will be placed in the temple by Antichrist (cf. 12:11; Matt 24:15), but it is best not to force that meaning here.

A literal rendering of the Hebrew text is, “And on the wing of abominations one who causes desolation [will come].” It seems best to understand “on the wing of abominations” with the KJV as a figure for “overspreading abominations,” that is, great abominations or wickedness. “Wing” is used in a destructive sense in Isa 8:8 as well. Concerning “abominations,” Baldwin comments: “The word is used frequently of idolatry and implies something filthy and loathsome of which people should be ashamed (Ho. 9:10; Na. 3:6).” Antichrist’s incredible atrocities against his fellow human beings and his attacks upon God himself (cf. 7:21–25) will include even the idolatrous claim that he is deity with an attempt at forced worship of himself (cf. 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:8, 14–17).

“One who causes desolation” (similar to NASB) refers to the Antichrist, who will forbid worship and thereby make the temple area desolate (empty). Rather than being an object that desolates in this context, it appears to be the Antichrist himself who desolates. This person’s

terrible atrocities (“abominations”) and the fact he causes the temple to be desolate (because of his religious persecution) results in the judgment announced in the latter part of the verse.

This will be a terrible period in the world’s history, but the Lord has “decreed” that these atrocities will not continue forever. Antichrist’s wickedness will last only “until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” “Poured out” picturesquely describes the flood of judgment that will overtake the Antichrist (cf. 7:9–11, 26; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:19–21). “On him” is literally “on the desolating one” (“desolator,” NRSV; Heb. *šōmēm*), a reference to Antichrist, which will cause the temple to become desolate.

Daniel’s message of the seventy sevens is one of the greatest prophecies in the Bible. Leupold calls it “the divine program for the ages.” Regardless of disagreement over dates and some matters of interpretation, certain facts seem clear. The passage predicts the coming of the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth. Messiah will die, and subsequently the city of Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed. At the end of the age an evil ruler will arise who will persecute God’s people, but his wicked activities will not continue, for the same Messiah who died will come again. He will judge the Antichrist and all those who follow him. Then the period characterized by the great accomplishments set forth in v. 24 will ensue. Although this message was first given to the Jewish faithful, all believers will participate in the kingdom of God. Leupold comments that the “glorious victory” of Christ described in this chapter “should be in the forefront of the thinking of God’s people.”¹

¹ Miller, S. R. (1994). *Daniel* (Vol. 18, pp. 252–273). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.