

# Through the Bible – Daniel

## *The Seventy Weeks of Daniel*

### *Introduction*

You can't study the book of Daniel for any length of time without stumbling across Daniel 9. Daniel 9:25-27 comes in response to the prayer of Daniel for his people. The Lord reveals to him that there are seventy "sevens" left for the children of Israel. These seventy "weeks" (of years) as they are typically called, form the blueprint for the plan of God through the end of the world.

The first seven weeks culminate in the completion of Jerusalem's wall, followed by sixty-two more weeks. But after this, it says that the Messiah will come and will be cut off. Then the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed before the last seven years, where there will be great trouble. The interpretation of this prophecy is debated, but we can draw some important conclusions from it

### *The First Sixty-Nine Weeks*

Daniel asked God how long until the promises made to his people would be fulfilled, the restoration of Jerusalem, and God gives him a specific answer: 490 years. This is an incredibly specific prophecy of the end of the world. Negotiating its interpretation can be tricky, but we needn't be intimidated.

There are several "time stamps" that allow us to keep track of this prophecy. It begins with the decree to go and rebuild Jerusalem, which was given by Artaxerxes on March 5, 444 BC (Nehemiah 2). The next crucial moment is the completion of the city of Jerusalem, after 7 weeks, or 49 years. This took place in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and their books tell the story. This then initiates a 62-week (434-year) period.

We could get lost in the numbers and years, but the next the tentpole event in this timeline is the Messiah being cut off after sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years. Clearly, to a New Testament Christian, this is a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We know that the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem happened on March 30, 33 AD, so that gives us a more specific point of reference. This was when Jesus was finally announced as the Messiah, when He allowed Himself to be known. Interestingly enough, Jesus was surprised that the Jews did not know that He would be coming on that day. Clearly, He took this prophecy seriously, as we should.

So far, according to the Bible, the timeline of Daniel's 70 weeks has been spot on, with 483 years spanning the return to Jerusalem, the completion of the walls, and the death of Jesus. But what about week 70? Shouldn't the Kingdom have come seven years after the cross?

## *Week Seventy*

The seventieth week is where the controversy comes in, but when we incorporate the teaching of Revelation, which closely parallels Daniel, we see another week of years that must be accounted for. Daniel's seventieth week is a reference to the Great Tribulation. Revelation teaches that there will be seven years of trouble and war before the return of the Lord. This is our lost week. But why is there a separation between the end of the sixty-ninth week and the beginning of the seventieth?

Before this question is answered, we must see that this prophetic timeline is given to the nation of Israel, not to the Church. The Church is not mentioned in Daniel, or anywhere in the Old Testament for that matter. God is dealing with His Covenant people, the Jews. Daniel was asking how long until God's promises to Israel would be consummated. The Tribulation period is even called in Jeremiah "the time of Jacob's trouble." (Jeremiah 30:7)

The answer is given by Jesus in Matthew 23. "See! Your house is left to you desolate; For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matthew 23:38-39) Israel rejected their Messiah. And as judgment, Jesus tells them that they would be left desolate.

Because Israel was not ready for her consummation, God launched His plan of the Church in order to prepare Israel's heart and to reach out to the Gentiles at the same time. Paul in Romans 9-11 describes how God has given Israel temporary blindness until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. God is accomplishing His purposes without His chosen people, allowing them to wander in their unbelief.

The main narrative of Scripture is about God being faithful to His people Israel. So, if God's plans have paused with Israel now, when that seventieth week begins, the Tribulation period, His plans with Israel will resume. What then will happen to the Church? What will happen to those who have already tasted the firstfruits of His Kingdom? Is it possible that God could remove them from the scene in the Rapture, thus returning to His Covenant people, the Jews?

## *Conclusion*

Daniel was given a revelation of the end of the world, as God would have had it. Yet the rejection of the Messiah was Israel's rejection of God's Kingdom. Therefore God gave the firstfruits to the Church, and stopped the prophetic clock. Yet one day the Lord will direct His attention once again to the Jews and will bring in their final week. For seven years there will be tribulation, but it will drive the chosen people of God to call out to their true Messiah, and the Kingdom of God will come. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!