

Daniel's 70 Weeks

Is Prophecy Sealed?

The famous "70 Weeks" prophecy of [Daniel 9](#) has been called by some Bible scholars the "backbone" of Bible prophecy because it is the one that "seals up" other prophecies. If this is true, it would seem to be rather important for those interested in the interpretation of Bible prophecy to figure it out correctly. [Daniel 9:24](#) mentions several things that are to be accomplished in the 70 Weeks:

"Seventy weeks are determined 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."

Several other events are included in the 70 weeks and they are mentioned in the following verses.

While the "holy city" is apparently Jerusalem, remember that the name "Jerusalem" is also a figure of the Church in the New Testament, as in [Galatians 4:26](#).

Note that the 70 Weeks are what "seal up" the vision and prophecy. This is quite general, and it suggests other prophecies of scripture and visions depend, in some way, on this one. How could the 70 Weeks prophecy seal up other prophecies? That too is a mystery. If one can solve the riddle of the 70 weeks, he should also be able to find out what these other prophecies are, and how they can be properly interpreted. Here is a clue: the time periods mentioned in Revelation, "time, times, and a half," and its equivalent, three years and a half, need to be interpreted by means of the 70 weeks prophecy. Since this phrase "time, times, and a half" which comes from Daniel's prophecies is found in [Revelation 12:14](#), it forms an obvious connection or link between the two books. This period is also given as 1,260 days in [Revelation 12:6](#), 42 months in chapters 11 and 13. The 1,260 days would be 3.5 years, each year having 12 months of 30 days. In such a scheme, a year would have 360 days, although we know today the length of the solar year is 365.25 days. Some have postulated there is such a thing as a "prophetic year" that must be used for calculating the 70 Weeks.

An interesting interpretation of Daniel's 70 Weeks was proposed in 1895 by Sir Robert Anderson, a brilliant biblical scholar, which made this assumption. Anderson claimed that from the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem to the appearance of the Messiah (the seven weeks and threescore and two weeks of verse 25) worked out to exactly 483 biblical years equalling 360 days, or 173,880 days. It is worthwhile to examine this idea carefully. The discussion below reviews some background information on the solar-lunar calendar that was in use in Daniel's time.

Does a "Prophetic Year" Equal 360 Days?

In the solar-lunar calendar used by the Hebrews in ancient times, the length of a month was determined by the phases of the moon. Our word "month" reflects the ancient connection with the moon's period. The precise duration of the moon's period is 29.531 days. It is close to 30 days, but not quite. Because of this, the ancient calendar which was used by the Babylonians, Hebrews, Greeks, and most other nations in antiquity had years of varying length. Most years had 12 months [or 'moons'], but some years had 13 months. The priests of the various nations would determine the length of the year by observation, and there was a fair bit of confusion when bad weather interfered with observations of the moon. About the 8th century B.C. the Babylonians discovered a 19-year cycle, in which seven years had an extra month. In a 19-year cycle there were 235 lunar months. This period was about 2 hours, 4 minutes, and 25 seconds longer than 19 solar years, which worked out rather nicely, as it allowed the calendar to get in tune with the seasons more precisely each 19 year period.

The Athenian astronomer [Meton](#) rediscovered the 19-year calendar cycle in 433 B.C., (or perhaps he learned it from the Babylonians.) It was therefore called the Metonic cycle. In the 4th century A.D. the Metonic cycle was adopted by the Jews as an aid to calculating the calendar, and since then, the specific years in each 19-year cycle, in which an extra month was added, were established in a definite sequence: the extra month was added in the years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 19. These were called leap-years, the rest common years. Note there were 7 of these leap years in a 19 year period. The Jews also divided the hour into 1,080 "parts" of three and one third seconds. The Jewish Encyclopedia [Funk and Wagnalls, N.Y. 1902, vol 3], article "Calendar", p. 505 states: "Nineteen lunar years with seven extra months equal nineteen solar years minus one hour, 485 parts." So, one cannot assume, "the Jewish year had only 360 days" for interpreting Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy. The old year ended and a new one began at a new moon, not after so many days had elapsed, as in our calendars. This fact appears to undermine the interpretation of the 70 Weeks of Daniel popularized by Sir Robert Anderson, ingenuous though it may be.

[Hipparchus](#), in 130 BC, determined the length of the solar year as 365.25 days.

The Three Parts of the 70 Weeks

The 70 weeks of Daniel are separated into three distinct parts, suggesting that different units are involved in the various parts. [Or else, why would the 7 weeks, and the 62 weeks, and one week be mentioned separately?] The emphasis is on "sevens," and while there may be 7-year periods involved, this may not be true of all the parts. The three parts to the 70 Weeks prophecy resemble the three sections or parts in the phrase "time, times, and a half" that are mentioned in Daniel.

In [Daniel 12:7](#), the phrase "time, times, and a half" is given as the duration of the period encompassed by his prophecies. The completion of this period, whatever it means, marks a time when "all these things shall be finished." The pattern which is evident in the phrase "time, times, and a half" can be applied to two of Daniel's mysterious time periods, the 1,290 days of [Daniel 12:11](#), and the 1,335 days of [Daniel 12:12](#), to help us understand and explain them. Looking at the pattern imbedded in the phrase "time, times and a half," we can insert the different units for year lengths in the three divisions, as a kind of template, to obtain:

[Daniel 12:7](#): time + times + a half

[Daniel 12:11](#): 1290 days = 390 + 2 x 360 + 360/2

[Daniel 12:12](#): 1335 days = 360 + 2 x 390 + 390/2

John in Revelation applies this same pattern to derive his variations on three and a half years:

[Revelation 11:2](#): 42 months = 12 + 2 x 12 + 12/2

A phrase quite similar to "a time, times and a half" is mentioned in [Daniel 7:25](#); here it is given as "a time, and times, and the dividing of time." Most Bible scholars have assumed they are the same, but although the two phrases are similar, they are not identical. The pattern or structure here is similar to that of the 70 Weeks of [Daniel 9:24-27](#), which has a period of 7 weeks, plus 62 weeks, plus a final divided week.

[Daniel 7:25](#): time + times + dividing of time

[Daniel 9:24-27](#): 7 weeks + 62 weeks + divided week = 70 weeks

These may well be identical; perhaps [Daniel 9](#) interprets 7:25. The final week was divided by the crucifixion; Christ was crucified "in the midst of the week," [[Daniel 9:27](#)] after an earthly ministry lasting three and a half [literal] years. According to the explanation of 70 Weeks suggested here, there was a final three and a half years remaining, in which he was to "confirm the covenant with many," referring to the gospel being preached in the world. This final half week can [and should, IMO] be identified with the "time, times and a half" discussed above, and the various forms in which it is expressed by John, as a cypher or symbol for the remaining time of the Church, and this seems to be the sense intended in [Daniel 12:7](#).

The writing on the wall

The "times" phrases have a three part structure somewhat similar to the message that the king Belshazzar saw being written on the wall, just before Babylon fell, which Daniel interpreted. He we have:

[Daniel 7:25](#) time + times + dividing of time

[Daniel 12:7](#) time + times + a half

[Daniel 5:25](#) tekem + 2 x mene + upharsin

[Daniel 5:26-28](#) weighed + 2 x numbered + divided

Perhaps there is an encoded message in the phrase "time, times and dividing of time," similar to the cryptic writing on the wall that Daniel interpreted. If so, it would likely have something to do with time.

A period of 7,000 days can be used as the unit for 'sevens' in the first part, giving 49,000 days, about 133 years or 7 periods of 19 years, for the first 7 weeks. The 19-year period is a kind of "week", because there are 7 extra months every 19 years.

It seems that the beginning of the 70 Weeks was the decree of Cyrus, about 538 B.C., when the original commandment to rebuild Jerusalem was made. This decree is mentioned in [Ezra 1:3](#). Cyrus was foretold in the prophecy of [Isaiah 44:28](#) to be the one to order the building of Jerusalem, and the foundation of the temple. This prophecy was fulfilled around the same time Daniel received the vision of the 70 Weeks prophecy and the information recorded in Daniel chapter 9.

Counting from Christ

The appearance of Jesus Christ, and his anointing, when he was baptized by John the Baptist, was a focal point of the 70 Weeks prophecy, and it occurred at the end of the 62 weeks. [Daniel 9:25](#) says: Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks...

There were two periods, then, to the Messiah; the seven weeks, followed by the 62 weeks. One way to figure this prophecy out would be to count back from the beginning of Christ's ministry, the date of his appearance to Israel, which was upon his baptism. This can be determined from information given in the gospel of Luke. [Luke 3:23](#) says Jesus Christ was about 30 years old at his baptism, which occurred during the ministry of John the Baptist, probably a few months after John began preaching. This ministry is dated as being the 15th year of the Roman Emperor Tiberius [[Luke 3:1](#)]. The reign of Tiberius is reckoned from the year in which Augustus died, which was 19 August, 14 AD. This suggests the baptism of Christ was 28 AD; or, if Luke used the Syrian calendar which began the year in the fall, it could have occurred late in 27 AD.

Ben Zion Wacholder has proposed that the ministry of John coincided with one of the sabbatical years of the sabbatical cycles which were part of the Mosaic Law, mentioned in [Leviticus 25:4](#). This makes sense, as the people would likely have had more free time during a year when the land was allowed to rest, and debts were cancelled. The year 27-28 AD, according to Wacholder, was one of these sabbatical years. Wacholder says the heptomads or "sevens" of Daniel's prophecy were understood by the Jews in ancient times as referring to these sabbatical cycles. Perhaps at least part of the prophecy does. The 70 weeks are divided into distinct periods, which allows for different units in the various parts. If we count back 62 sabbatical cycles from the sabbatical year 27-28, we come to the year 408-407 BC, which turns out to be a Jubilee year. This would be another focal point in Daniel's prophecy.

What about the first part of the prophecy, consisting of 7 "weeks?" If the above dates are correct, these might be periods of 7,000 days, or about 19 years; 7 of these periods would be 49,000 days, or about 133 years. Counting back from the year 407 BC, takes us to 540 BC. In the sabbatical cycle which began in this year, Daniel received the vision of the 70 weeks, and Cyrus made the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, from which the 70 weeks are counted. The date of this decree is usually given as 538 BC. Here is some interesting evidence for this identification of the "sevens" in the first part of the prophecy with 7,000 days or 19 year periods. Divide 7,000 days by 19, to obtain the number of days in a "year." Multiply this number by 3.5, to obtain the number of days in three and a half years. The result is very nearly 1,290 days, which is one of the ways Daniel refers to the sign of three and a half years, in [Daniel 12:11](#).

The Final Week

Now, what about the final, or 70th week? This final week is a figurative period of seven years, and it is during this "week" that Christ "confirms the covenant with many," as stated in [Daniel 9:27](#). This period began when Christ began his ministry. His ministry lasted three and a half years. The prophecy said he would be "cut off," a reference to the crucifixion, after 62 weeks [[Daniel 9:26](#)].

In the final, 70th week, Christ is to "confirm the covenant with many." This final week is still in effect, because Christ still "confirms the covenant" with believers. The first half of this week was the ministry of Christ on the earth. The last half is symbolic of the entire time of the Church. James Burton Coffman of Abilene Christian University has also recognized this. [Coffman, J.B., 1989. Commentary on Daniel, ACU Press, p. 189] He identifies the "time, times, and a half" with the 1,290 days and the 1,335 days, and says all these refer to the entire period between the First and Second Advents of Jesus Christ, the "whole Christian dispensation." Other Bible scholars and commentators have reached the same conclusion. The sacrifice and oblation was to cease "in the midst of the week" [[Daniel 9:27](#)]. The sacrifices of the Jewish ritual system ended at the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, and were made obsolete when Christ was crucified.

The interpretation of the mysterious three and a half years, or the "time, times, and a half" of Daniel and Revelation, then, is this: it is a symbolic period which represents the time of the Church, and the time remaining in which the gospel is preached in the world, when Christ is "confirming the covenant with many." The phrase is also used to refer to a portion of this period.

After the crucifixion of Christ, a final period of three and a half years remains, which is the last half of the final "week" in the 70 Weeks. The first half of this prophetic "week" was the three and a half year ministry of Christ on the earth in the first century. The second half of the final "week" represents the entire period of the Church. The final three and a half years of Daniel's 70th week, also referred to as a period of 1,260 days, and as 42 months, or any reference to a time period associated with the number "three and a half" is a figure or symbol of the period in which the scriptures and the Holy Spirit are in the world, from the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church in the first century, on the day of Pentecost after the crucifixion of Christ, to the return of Christ to the earth.