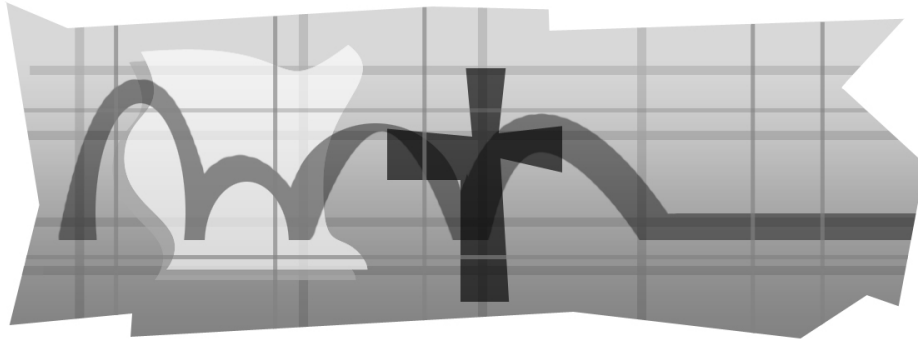


70 Weeks



SABBATH—AUGUST 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 9:24-27; Ezra 4:7-16; Ezra 7:6, 7, 11-17.

MEMORY VERSE: “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed [appointed] for your people and your holy city to finish transgression [sin], 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” (Daniel 9:24, NIV).

THE JUDGMENT IN DANIEL 7 AND THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY IN DANIEL 8 ARE THE SAME EVENT. It happens after the 1,260 years.

Daniel 8 ended with the vision of the 2,300 days not explained. Daniel 9 picks up with the end of Daniel 8. Gabriel offers Daniel the explanation he did not have in chapter 8. So, Daniel 8 and Daniel 9 are one: a vision and a partial explanation (Daniel 8), and then the rest of the explanation (Daniel 9).

This week, we continue to study Daniel 9. We will focus on the 70-week prophecy. This prophecy is powerful proof the Bible is inspired and that Jesus is “the Messiah the Prince” (Daniel 9:25). Jesus is the center of the prophecy and the foundation (basis) for the 2,300-day prophecy.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 6**70 WEEKS (Daniel 9:25)**

We saw last week that the vision of Daniel 8:14 was a time prophecy about the 2,300 days. In Daniel 9, Gabriel returns to give Daniel another time prophecy—the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:24).

Which prophecy is longer, 2,300 days or 70 weeks?

We have two time prophecies working together: (1) the 2,300 days and (2) the 70 weeks. The 70 weeks is the shorter of the two prophecies.

70 weeks

2,300 days

How does Gabriel first introduce the 70 weeks? What verb does he use? Daniel 9:24.

Many translations use the verb “determined,” or “decreed.” But the basic meaning is “cut off.” This is how most Hebrew dictionaries describe it. (Unfortunately, the verb does not appear anywhere else in the Bible, so we cannot see how the Bible uses this verb in other verses.) Bible experts have noticed that the verb in Ugaritic¹ means “cut off.” So, the basic meaning of Daniel 9:24 is “70 weeks are cut off.”

¹Ugaritic—a language almost the same as Hebrew.

²events—things that happen.

Cut off from what? From another time prophecy? What other time prophecy? It is the *mareh*, the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 (Lesson 6). The 2,300 days is the longer of the two prophecies.

So, we are given two time prophecies: (1) 2,300 days and (2) 70 weeks. The 70 weeks is to be “cut off” from the 2,300 days.

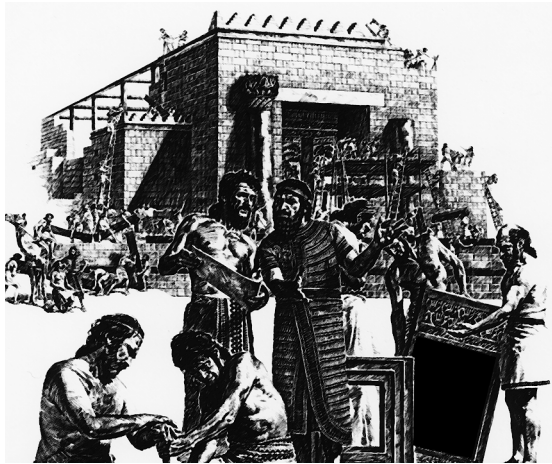
Suppose you tell a neighbor that you have five free hours on Sunday. The neighbor remembers your five free hours. On Sunday, he says he needs help painting a room. “It will take only an hour,” he adds. What does that mean? How does that help us understand the connection between the two time prophecies of Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24?

MONDAY—AUGUST 7**THE MESSIAH THE PRINCE
(Daniel 9:25)**

What two events² are connected with the time frame in Daniel 9:25? Of those two events, which comes at the beginning of that time frame? Which event comes at the end?

In Daniel 9:25, 69 of the 70 weeks are explained. The prophecy begins with the command to rebuild Jerusalem. Sixty-nine weeks later, the prophecy ends with “the Messiah the

Prince.” So, we have two historical events in Daniel 9:25: (1) the command to rebuild Jerusalem and (2) “the Messiah the Prince.”



The prophecy begins.

The Hebrew word for “Messiah” is translated in Greek as *Christos* (Christ). So who is this prophecy talking about? Matthew 1:1; Matthew 16:16; Acts 3:15; Acts 5:31.

We can see here a very important point: This prophecy focuses on Jesus. The first 69 weeks of the prophecy are used to bring us to Jesus as the Messiah.

It is important to remember that Seventh-day Adventists are not alone in seeing this as a prophecy of Christ. Many other churches have long understood this prophecy as one of the most powerful pieces of proof that Jesus was the Messiah.

Review other Old Testament prophecies that point to Jesus.

How should these prophecies make your faith in Him stronger for what He has done for us? Put together a study of these prophecies that you can share with an unbelieving neighbor or friend.

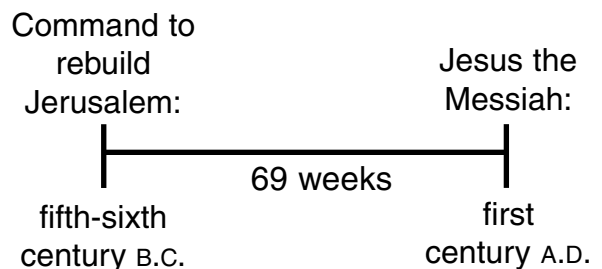


The prophecy ends.

TUESDAY—AUGUST 8

THE COMMAND (Daniel 9:25)

Daniel 9:25 begins with the command to rebuild Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 ends with the Messiah, 69 weeks later. People might not agree on exact dates, but we know that the command to rebuild Jerusalem was in the sixth or fifth century B.C. We also know that Jesus lived and died in the first century A.D.



What proof do you see here for the day-year principle?³ Why can the 69 weeks not be taken as real time?

The important question now is, what is the date of the command to rebuild Jerusalem? We believe that the 69 weeks end with Jesus. So, we can narrow down the known commands to the command given in 457 B.C. This was the command given by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his rule. (We will study more about this command later.)

Notice all the historical figures tied in with events surrounding Jesus—Matthew 1:19-22; Matthew 2:1; Matthew 27:1, 2; Luke 2:1-7; Luke 3:1-3; Luke 23:7. Through these (and others), we can set the dates of Jesus' life and work.



John the Baptist and other historical figures help us set dates for Jesus' life and work.

Let us look at some of the common dates used for the command in Daniel 9:25:

538 B.C. Using the day-year principle for the 69 weeks (483 years)

would bring “the Messiah the Prince” (Jesus) to 55 B.C. This would be an impossible date for Jesus.

520 B.C. That starting date would bring Jesus to about 37 B.C. This also would be an impossible date for Him.

444 B.C. This date places the beginning of Jesus' work about A.D. 39 or 40 and His death sometime in the early A.D. 40s. That is much closer than the two earlier choices. But New Testament experts know that these dates also do not work for Jesus.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 9

“REBUILDING THE EVIL CITY” (Ezra 4:12, NIV)

Daniel 9:25 gives us a prophecy of “the Messiah the Prince.” The Messiah is Jesus. But Daniel 9:25 ties this important prophecy to the command to rebuild Jerusalem. Would the Bible give us such an important prophecy without giving us the answer to it? Clearly not.

Ezra 4:7-16 deals with events after the end of Jewish imprisonment in Babylon. As you read Ezra 4:7-16, answer these questions:

1. To whom is the letter being sent?
2. What is the complaint against the Jews?
3. According to the letter, who let the Jews return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city?

³day-year principle—in Bible prophecy, a day equals one year.

After the Jews returned to Jerusalem, a group of Persian officers wrote to King Artaxerxes. They complained about the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem. They made two important points: (1) The city was being rebuilt (Ezra 4:12). (2) The Jews had come there because of the king. The letter said, “We are sending this letter to you, King Artaxerxes. It is from your servants who live west of the Euphrates River. We want you to know that the Jews who left you and came up to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that evil city. It [the city] has caused trouble for a long time. The Jews are making its walls like new again. They are repairing the foundations”⁴ (Ezra 4:11, 12, NIV). The Jews who were rebuilding the city had come there because of King Artaxerxes. The king must have given the command that let the Jews rebuild their city. The question is, what command was that?

The Jews rebelled. All seemed lost. But God gave them mercy.⁵ What should this tell us about



Never give up.

never giving up on anyone, no matter how far that person has fallen?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 10

457 B.C. (Ezra 7:6, 7, 11-17)

Yesterday we studied about the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem. We saw that it was because of King Artaxerxes that the Jews had returned to the city. The king must have been the one who gave the command “to rebuild Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25). That is exactly what the Jews were doing.

The Bible speaks of only one command given by Artaxerxes that could fit this situation. That is in the seventh year of the king’s rule. This can be firmly dated to 457 B.C.

What is going on in Ezra 7:6, 7, 11-17?

The book of Ezra is not in the proper order of time. The events in Ezra 4 came later than the events in Ezra 7. And nothing in this command talks about rebuilding Jerusalem. But it is already understood that this is what the command was about because rebuilding Jerusalem is exactly what the Jews were doing. Both they and their enemies understood that the command was ordered by Artaxerxes in his seventh year. The Jews must have included the command “to rebuild Jerusalem” as part of the king’s decree. This is even clearer because nothing in the letter gives

⁴foundations—the lowest part of the city that supported the city’s buildings and walls.

⁵mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

any idea that rebuilding Jerusalem was going against the king's command.

So, Ezra 4 and Ezra 7 make it clear that the command, dated in the seventh year of the rule of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7, 8), is really the command "to rebuild Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25).

This too can be firmly dated at 457 B.C. (Some may argue for 458. But this is only a six-month difference.)

Also, if one believes that Jesus is "the Messiah the Prince," this date works perfectly. In other words, Jesus is our Guarantee of this prophecy.

Why should Jesus be our Guarantee in everything relating to our faith?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 11

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read the following quote from a biography of scientist Isaac Newton. Newton was a serious student of the book of Daniel. "Who cares if Newton was correct in saying that the prophecy of the seventy weeks in the book of Daniel took place during the 490 years from Ezra's leading the Jews back to Jerusalem in 457 B.C. to the Crucifixion in A.D. 33/45?"—Adapted from A. Rupert Hall, *Isaac Newton: Adventurer in Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 372.

How would you answer the question, "Who cares?"

"It would seem that the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:12) suggests that the king had suggested in his command that he let Judah have its own government. As a result, Artaxerxes' 'word' or decree (command) of 457 B.C. gives the best beginning date for Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy and the longer time span of the 2,300 days-years (Daniel 8; Daniel 9)."—Adapted from *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Frank Holbrook, editor (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), p. 74.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a class, review everything we have studied so far until everyone understands the subject.
2. Have people in the class talk about how the 70-week prophecy, or any other prophecy, has influenced their lives. What can we learn from what they say about how God can use prophecy to reach us? How much do you think prophecy should influence our witnessing⁶ efforts? Is it possible to put too much focus on prophecy?

⁶witnessing—teaching people about Jesus by what we say and how we act.