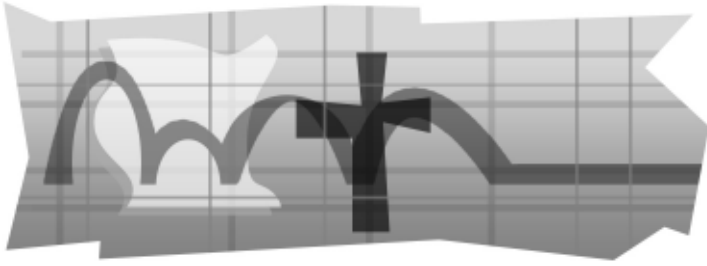


# 70 Weeks



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Dan. 9:24-27; Ezra 4:7-16; 7:6, 7, 11-17.*

**Memory Text:** “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and 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” (*Daniel 9:24*).

So far, these few points should be clear: The judgment in Daniel 7 and cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 are the same event, and it occurs after the 1,260 years.

Second, 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 lacked in the previous chapter. Thus, 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 with Daniel 9, focusing on the amazing 70-week prophecy, which provides powerful evidence not only for the inspiration of Scripture but for the Messiahship of Jesus, “the Messiah the Prince” (*Dan. 9:25*), who—as the center of the prophecy, forms the foundation for the 2,300-day prophecy, as well.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 12.*

## 70 Weeks

As we saw last week, the vision of Daniel 8:14 was a time prophecy, the 2,300 days. Now, in Daniel 9, Gabriel returns and gives him another time prophecy, this time of 70 weeks (*Dan. 9:24*).

**Do a little math. Which prophecy is longer, 2,300 days or 70 weeks?**

We are presented with two time prophecies juxtaposed with each other, the 2,300 days and the 70 weeks, the 70 weeks being the smaller of the two.

70 weeks

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2,300 days

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

Though various translations are used for the verb (root is *chatchak*), such as “determined,” or “decreed,” the basic meaning is that of “cut off,” which is how most Hebrew lexicons define it (unfortunately, the word doesn’t appear anywhere else in the Bible, so we can’t see how it is used elsewhere in Scripture). In Ugaritic, a language similar to Hebrew, scholars have noted that the parallel word in that language for *chatchak* means “cut off,” as well. Thus, the basic rendering of the text is “70 weeks are cut off.”

Cut off from what? What else other than from another time prophecy? What other time prophecy? Obviously, the *mareh*, the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14, the longer of the two prophecies.

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

**Suppose you mention to a neighbor that you have five free hours on Sunday. On Sunday the neighbor, after making a direct reference to your five free hours, says that he needs some help to paint a room. “It will take only an hour,” he adds. What’s the immediate implication, and how does that help us understand the link between the two time prophecies of Daniel 8:14 and 9:24?**

## The Messiah the Prince

**Read** carefully and prayerfully Daniel 9:25. What two specific events are directly related to the time element given there? Of those two events, which comes at the beginning of that time element, and which comes at the end?

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Here, in this one verse, 69 of the 70 weeks are accounted for. The prophecy begins with the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and 69 weeks later it ends with “the Messiah the Prince.” Thus, we have two historical events to work with: the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (which would have been of obvious import to Daniel) and “the Messiah the Prince.”

**When** you understand that the Hebrew word for “Messiah” is translated in Greek as “Christos,” or Christ, to whom then is this prophecy referring to? See Matt. 1:1, 16; 16:16; Acts 3:13-15, 18; 5:30, 31.

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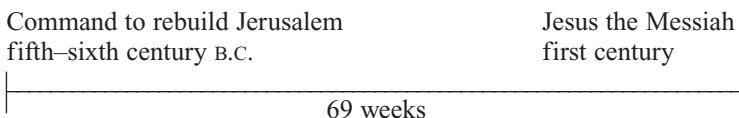
Thus, we can see here a crucial point: This prophecy is centered on Jesus. The first 69 weeks of the prophecy are used to bring us to Jesus, “the Messiah the Prince.” We can say, then, that the prophecy has its foundation in Christ Himself. To the degree, then, that we can have confidence in the messiahship of Jesus, is the degree that we can trust the prophecy itself.

What’s crucial to remember, too, is that Seventh-day Adventists hardly are alone in seeing this as a prophecy of Christ. Christians of many denominations have long understood this prophecy as being one of the most powerful evidences for the messiahship of Jesus Christ. After all, we have Daniel, living 500 years before Christ, giving us a time prophecy concerning Christ.

**Review other Old Testament prophecies that point to Christ. How should these strengthen your faith in Him and what He has done for us? Put together a study on those prophecies to share with an unbelieving neighbor or friend.**

## The Decree

Daniel 9:25 begins with the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem and ends with the Messiah, 69 weeks later. And though people might disagree on exact dates, we know for sure that the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem was in the sixth or fifth century B.C. and that Jesus lived and died in the first century A.D.



**What** immediate evidence do you see here for the day-year principle? Why can the 69 weeks not be taken as literal time?

The crucial issue facing us now is, What is that starting date, the date of the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem? Fortunately, as long as we believe that the 69 weeks end with Jesus, we can narrow down the known decrees to only one, the one given in 457 B.C., which was the command by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign (see following daily sections).

**Look** up these texts (*Matt. 2:1, 19-22; 27:1, 2; Luke 2:1-7; 3:1-3; 23:1-7*). Notice all the historical figures tied in with events surrounding Jesus; through these (and others) we can reconstruct the dates of Christ’s life and ministry.

With this in mind, let’s look at some of the common dates used for the decree in Daniel 9:25.

Take, for example, 538 B.C. Applying the day-year principle to the 69 weeks (483 years) would bring “the Messiah the Prince,” Jesus, to 55 B.C., an impossible date for Jesus.

The same with another common date, 520 B.C. That starting date would bring Jesus to about 37 B.C., an impossible conclusion.

Finally, the only other common date is 444 B.C., which, if used, would place the beginning of Jesus’ ministry about A.D. 39 or 40 and His death sometime in the early A.D. 40s. And though that’s much closer than the other two options, New Testament scholars know that those dates don’t work for Jesus.

## “Building the Rebellious and Bad City”

Daniel 9 gives us a prophecy of “the Messiah the Prince,” who we know is Jesus. Yet, it ties this important prophecy with a specific historical date: the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem. Would Scripture give us such an important prophecy without also providing the key to understanding it? Obviously not.

**Read** Ezra 4:7-16, which deals with events after the end of the Babylonian exile of the Hebrew nation. As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- 1 To whom is the letter being addressed?
- 2 What is the specific complaint against the Jews?
- 3 According to the letter, who sent, or allowed, the Jews to return to Jerusalem in order to do what they were doing?

Look at what’s happening. Sometime after the Jews returned to Jerusalem, a group of Persian officers wrote to King Artaxerxes, complaining about the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem. In the letter they stated two important points: (1) that the city was being rebuilt (*Ezra 4:12*) and (2) that the Jews who were rebuilding had come there because of the king. Said the letter, “Be it known unto the king, *that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations*” (*vs. 12, emphasis supplied*). In other words, the Jews who were rebuilding the city had come there because of King Artaxerxes. He must have issued the decree that allowed them to rebuild their city. The question is, What decree was that?

**Despite rebellion and apostasy, God granted mercy and grace to the Hebrew nation, though from a human perspective all seemed lost. What should this tell us about never giving up on anyone, no matter how far he or she has fallen (including ourselves)?**

## 457 B.C.

Yesterday we saw that the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem were rebuilding it. We saw, too, that it was because of King Artaxerxes that they had returned to the city. He must have been the one who issued the decree “to restore and to build Jerusalem” (*Dan. 9:25*), for that’s exactly what they were doing.

Interestingly enough, the Bible mentions only one decree issued by Artaxerxes that could fit these specifications, and that’s in the seventh year of his reign, which can be dated firmly to 457 B.C.

**Read Ezra 7:6, 7, 11-17. What is going on here in this decree issued by Artaxerxes in regard to what the Jews are doing in Jerusalem?**

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The book of Ezra is not in chronological order, so the events in Ezra 4 came later than what was in chapter 7. And though nothing in this decree specifically talks about rebuilding the city, it was obviously understood to entail that, because, according to what we read yesterday, that’s exactly what the Jews were doing. Both they and their enemies understood that the decree, issued by Artaxerxes in his seventh year, by which the Jews “which came up from thee to us” (*Ezra 4:12*), must have included the command “to restore and to build Jerusalem.” This is even more obvious because nothing in their letter expressed any idea that rebuilding of the city by the Jews was somehow in contradiction with the decree of the king.

Thus, taken together, Ezra 4 and 7 make it clear that the decree, dated in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes (*Ezra 7:7, 8*) is indeed the “commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (*Dan. 9:25*).

This, too, can be firmly dated at 457 B.C. (and though some argue for 458, the difference entails only a six-month discrepancy).

Also, if one believed that Jesus were “the Messiah the Prince,” this date would work perfectly. In other words, Jesus is our Surety in regard to this prophecy.

**Why should Jesus be our Surety in everything regarding our faith?**

**Further Study:** Look at this quote from a famous biography of scientist Isaac Newton, a fervent student of the book of Daniel: “Who cares whether Newton was correct in maintaining that the prophecy of the seventy weeks in the Book of Daniel referred to the interval of 490 years after Ezra’s leading the Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem (457 BC) to the Crucifixion in AD 33/34?”—A. Rupert Hall, *Isaac Newton: Adventurer in Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 372.

“It would seem, therefore, that the rebuilding activity of the city of Jerusalem proper (Ezra 4:12) which occurred in the wake of these favors, suggests that the royal consent was implied in this decree to permit Judah to have a visible center from which the newly granted civil and judicial privileges of the state could be administered. Consequently, Artaxerxes’ ‘word’ or decree of 457 B.C. provides the best commencement date for Daniel’s 70 weeks prophecy and the longer time span of the 2300 day-years (Dan 8–9).”—*The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Frank B. Holbrook, editor (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), p. 74.

See also LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, for scores of quotes from scholars, using the 457 B.C. starting date. For why we choose 457 over 458, see Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood’s *The Chronology of Ezra 7*.

## Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, review everything that we’ve studied so far until everyone in the class understands the material.
- ❷ Have people in the class talk about how this 70-week prophecy, or any other prophecy, has made a significant impact in their lives. What can we learn from what they say on how God can use prophecy to reach us? How much of a role do you think prophecy should play in our witnessing efforts? Is it possible to put too much emphasis on prophecy?

## Blind, But He Can See

Tiago da Silva

Tiago had known since childhood that a genetic disorder would eventually rob him of his eyesight. But he refused to believe that day would come. However, when he was 12 years old his vision began to cloud. He could see colors and shapes but could not read letters. Within a few months his eyesight was gone completely.

His mother had repeatedly urged him to study Braille in preparation for his blindness, but he had resisted, feeling that somehow learning Braille would hasten the day when he would not be able to see. But when his classmates grew tired of reading his lessons to him, he could put off learning Braille no longer. Tiago fought discouragement and trusted in God to get him through the difficult transition from a sighted world to a sightless one.

When his classmates ignored him or avoided him, he cried to God for help. Tiago was especially thankful for a few close friends who never left him.

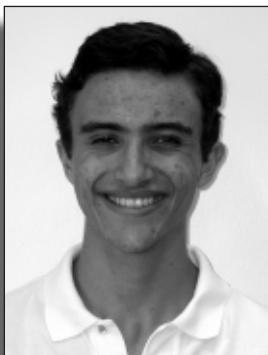
When Tiago was 15, a family who lived across the street invited his mother to attend a stop-smoking clinic in the Adventist church. Tiago's mother smoked, and Tiago urged her to stop. She told Tiago that she would go to the stop-smoking class if he went with her. Although they missed some meetings, she was able to stop smoking.

The neighbors then invited Tiago and his mother to attend evangelistic meetings that followed the stop-smoking seminar. Tiago knew nothing about Adventists, but he decided to go. They took the Bible study lessons offered at the meetings, and a teacher came to their house to correct them every day.

Tiago told his closest friend what he was learning at the evangelistic meetings and invited her to attend with him. Although she hesitated at first, she went, and afterward she enrolled in a Revelation seminar. After the meetings ended, Tiago and his mother began attending the Adventist church. Tiago's father goes with them when he is not working.

Recently Tiago decided to accept Jesus. He shares his testimony: "Young people have many barriers; my barrier is my blindness. But my faith is bringing me a new way of seeing life. If young people would study the Bible and accept the truths they find there, they would have a new way of seeing things too."

Our mission offerings help sponsor evangelistic outreaches such as the one that brought Tiago and his family to Jesus.



*Tiago da Silva is a high school student living in Curitiba, Brazil.*