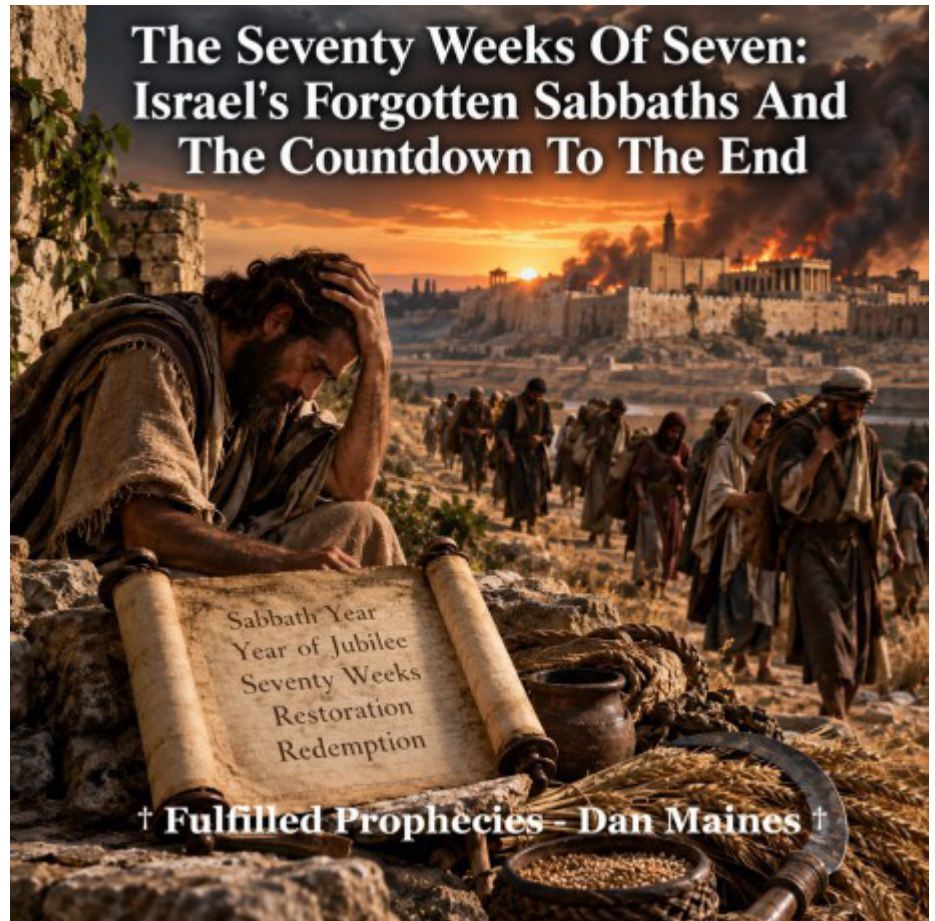


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## The Seventy Weeks Of Seven: Israel's Forgotten Sabbaths And The Countdown To The End



By Dan Maines

## The Seventy Weeks Of Seven: Israel's Forgotten Sabbaths And The Countdown To The End

### Introduction

† Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks didn't appear in a vacuum. Daniel had been reading Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the seventy years of Jerusalem's desolation when he began praying about Israel's covenant unfaithfulness (Daniel 9:2-5).

† The Law had already warned Israel that the land itself was to receive a Sabbath every seventh year. If Israel refused to obey,

God warned that exile would follow and the land would enjoy the Sabbaths Israel had denied it (Leviticus 25:1-7; 26:33-35).

† Second Chronicles makes the connection explicit. Judah's exile allowed the land to enjoy its Sabbaths, fulfilling the word spoken through Jeremiah (2 Chronicles 36:20-21).

† Daniel then received a prophecy structured around another period of sevens, seventy weeks, or seventy sevens. The relationship is striking. Israel's history of broken covenant Sabbaths stood behind the seventy-year exile, and Daniel's seventy sevens carried the covenant countdown forward to Messiah, atonement, Jerusalem's desolation, and the end determined upon the city and sanctuary (Daniel 9:24-27).

† Deuteronomy 32 provides the covenant framework for understanding why Israel's story reached that end. Israel forgot the Rock who gave them birth, provoked God through covenant unfaithfulness, and was warned that their latter end would come upon them (Deuteronomy 32:18-20, 28-29).

† The seventy weeks weren't an isolated prophetic clock. They belonged to the covenant history that began in the Law and moved toward Israel's appointed judgment and the accomplishment of redemption in Christ.

### **Leviticus 25:2-4**

Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land which I am going to give you, then the land shall have a Sabbath to the Lord. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its produce, but during the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

† The Sabbath principle wasn't limited to the seventh day. Israel's covenant included a Sabbath year for the land every seventh year.

† Israel possessed the land under covenant obligations. The land belonged to God, and Israel's continued enjoyment of it was connected with covenant faithfulness (Leviticus 25:18-23).

† Every seventh year therefore testified that Israel's life in the

land depended upon God rather than upon Israel's agricultural strength.

### **Leviticus 25:8-10**

You are also to count off seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, that is, forty-nine years. You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. So you shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.

† God specifically commanded Israel to count seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven, producing forty-nine years.

† This makes the language of Daniel's seventy sevens especially significant. Israel's covenant calendar was already structured around groups of seven years long before Gabriel announced the seventy sevens (Daniel 9:24).

† The forty-nine-year cycle led to Jubilee, liberty, restoration, and release. Daniel's seventy sevens likewise moved toward something greater, the accomplishment of redemption through Messiah and the conclusion of the old covenant age (Daniel 9:24-27).

### **Leviticus 26:33-35**

You, however, I will scatter among the nations, and I will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become ruins. 'Then the land will restore its Sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and restore its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it will have the rest which it did not have on your Sabbaths, while you were living on it.

† God warned Israel beforehand that covenant rebellion would eventually result in removal from the land.

† The exile wasn't disconnected from Israel's neglected land Sabbaths. God specifically said that while Israel was removed,

the land would receive the Sabbath rest it hadn't received while they lived there.

† This establishes an important covenant connection between Israel's failure concerning the Sabbath years and the judgment of exile.

## **2 Chronicles 36:20-21**

He took into exile those who had escaped from the sword to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept the Sabbath until seventy years were complete.

† Scripture itself explains the seventy-year Babylonian captivity in terms of the land enjoying its neglected Sabbaths.

† This doesn't require us to reconstruct every individual missed Sabbath year. The inspired writer gives the theological explanation, the seventy-year desolation fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy while allowing the land to receive its Sabbath rest.

† Daniel knew Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy, and Daniel 9 begins precisely with Daniel recognizing that those seventy years were reaching their appointed completion (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10).

## **Daniel 9:2-3**

in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God, to seek Him by prayer and pleading, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

† Daniel's seventy-weeks prophecy must be read in the context in which God gave it. Daniel was thinking about Jeremiah's seventy years when Gabriel revealed the seventy sevens.

† Daniel wasn't asking about events thousands of years beyond Israel's covenant story. His concern was Jerusalem, Israel's sins, the sanctuary, the covenant, and the promised restoration

(Daniel 9:4-19).

† The movement from seventy years to seventy sevens isn't accidental. The seventy years addressed Babylonian desolation, while the seventy sevens carried the prophetic timetable forward to the greater covenant resolution involving Messiah and Jerusalem.

### **Daniel 9:24**

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the wrongdoing, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

† The seventy weeks were specifically decreed upon Daniel's people and Daniel's holy city. That identifies Israel and Jerusalem as the covenant setting of the prophecy.

† Seventy sevens equal 490 units in the prophecy's sabbatical structure. The repeated pattern of seven strongly recalls the covenant calendar of Sabbath years and the seven-times-seven Jubilee cycle (Leviticus 25:8-10).

† The goals of the prophecy move beyond the return from Babylon. They include dealing with transgression and sin, reconciliation for iniquity, everlasting righteousness, the completion of vision and prophecy, and the anointing of the most holy.

† These themes bring the prophecy directly to the work of Christ and the completion of Israel's prophetic covenant story (Luke 24:44-47; Hebrews 9:26).

### **Daniel 9:25-26**

So you are to know and understand that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with streets and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a

flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

† The seventy sevens moved toward the Anointed One. Messiah wasn't a side issue in Daniel's prophecy, He was central to its fulfillment.

† The Anointed One would be cut off, and afterward the city and sanctuary would be destroyed. The prophecy therefore joins Messiah's redemptive work with the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem.

† The sequence doesn't require inserting an undefined prophetic age between Messiah and Jerusalem's destruction. The prophecy moves from restoration, to Messiah, to His being cut off, and then to the determined destruction of the city and sanctuary.

### **Daniel 9:27**

And he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come the one who makes desolate, until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, gushes forth on the one who makes desolate.

† The final seven completes the seventy-seven structure. The prophecy doesn't announce a separate future seven-year period detached from the previous sixty-nine sevens.

† Christ's sacrifice brought the sacrificial system to its covenant purpose. Animal sacrifices could never finally remove sin, but Christ offered the effective sacrifice once for all (Hebrews 10:1-14).

† Jerusalem's temple sacrifices continued outwardly until the city's destruction, but their covenant significance had been surpassed by Christ's completed sacrifice. The physical temple system was then removed in the judgment Daniel had foretold (Matthew 24:1-2, 15-16).

### **Deuteronomy 32:18-20**

You forgot the Rock who fathered you, And forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord saw this, and spurned them Because

of the provocation by His sons and daughters. Then He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom there is no faithfulness.

† Moses described Israel's covenant problem with devastating simplicity, they forgot their Rock.

† Their failure to keep God's covenant requirements, including the Sabbath laws of the land, wasn't an isolated agricultural mistake. It was part of a larger pattern of forgetting the God who established them as His covenant nation.

† Moses connected that rebellion with their end. The covenant that established Israel also contained the warnings concerning what persistent rebellion would eventually bring upon them (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

### **Deuteronomy 32:28-29**

For they are a nation destitute of counsel, And there is no understanding in them. If only they were wise and they understood this; If only they would discern their future!

† Moses called Israel to consider their latter end. Daniel later received a measured timetable concerning Daniel's people, Jerusalem, Messiah, and the determined desolation.

† This doesn't mean Deuteronomy 32 by itself supplies the mathematical calculation of Daniel's seventy weeks. It provides the covenant framework, Israel's rebellion would eventually reach its appointed covenant judgment.

† Jesus later applied the language of Deuteronomy's corrupt generation to the generation facing Jerusalem's judgment, declaring that all these things would come upon that generation (Matthew 23:32-36).

### **Historical References**

† Josephus described the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in AD 70. His account provides historical testimony concerning the war, famine, siege, destruction, and desolation that overtook the city.

† Eusebius later connected Jerusalem's calamities with the

judgments Christ had announced concerning that generation and recorded that believers escaped the city before the war. † These historical witnesses don't establish the meaning of prophecy. Scripture interprets Scripture. They provide historical testimony that Jerusalem and its sanctuary were destroyed within the generation to which Jesus gave His warnings (Matthew 24:2, 34).

### **How It Applies To Us Today**

† Israel's neglected Sabbaths teach us that God's covenant words weren't empty threats. What God warned would happen eventually happened.

† The seventy years of exile and Daniel's seventy sevens shouldn't be separated from their covenant setting. The Law, the Prophets, Daniel, and Christ tell one unfolding story.

† The Sabbath-year pattern pointed to dependence upon God, while Jubilee proclaimed liberty and restoration. Those covenant shadows find their greater reality in Christ, who proclaimed liberty and accomplished redemption (Luke 4:18-21).

† We aren't waiting for another seventy weeks or another final seven-year prophetic countdown. Daniel's timetable centered upon Messiah and Daniel's people and holy city, and Jerusalem's old covenant sanctuary was destroyed in AD 70 just as the prophecy declared.

† The lesson isn't that Christians today must calculate neglected land Sabbaths. The lesson is that God faithfully accomplished what He promised, Christ completed the redemptive work toward which Israel's covenant history was moving, and we now live in the reality of what those covenant shadows anticipated (Colossians 2:16-17).

### **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** Were Israel's neglected land Sabbaths a major reason for the Babylonian exile?

**A:** Yes. Scripture explicitly connects the exile with the land receiving the Sabbath rest Israel had failed to give it (Leviticus

26:33-35; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21). Israel's larger problem, however, was covenant rebellion against God, of which the neglected Sabbaths were one important expression.

**Q:** Does seventy weeks mean seventy groups of seven?

**A:** Yes. Daniel 9:24 announces seventy sevens. In the context of Israel's covenant history and its established sabbatical-year structure, this forms a period of 490 in the prophetic timetable (Leviticus 25:8-10; Daniel 9:24).

**Q:** Is there a relationship between the forty-nine-year Jubilee structure and Daniel's seventy sevens?

**A:** There is a strong covenant and literary relationship in the repeated seven-year structure. Leviticus specifically establishes seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven years, while Daniel's prophecy uses seventy sevens. We shouldn't claim that Daniel explicitly says every detail of the Jubilee law is being mathematically reproduced, but the sabbatical background helps explain why a prophecy concerning Israel's covenant history is expressed in sevens (Leviticus 25:8-10; Daniel 9:24).

**Q:** Did Israel forget their Rock?

**A:** Yes. Moses explicitly said Israel forgot the Rock who gave them birth and connected their rebellion with their coming end (Deuteronomy 32:18-20, 28-29).

**Q:** Did Daniel's seventy weeks end with a future seven-year tribulation thousands of years later?

**A:** The text presents seventy consecutive sevens decreed upon Daniel's people and holy city. It moves toward Messiah, His being cut off, and the determined destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. The passage itself doesn't state that the seventieth seven is removed from the first sixty-nine and transferred thousands of years into the future (Daniel 9:24-27).

**Q:** What was the ultimate answer to Israel's covenant problem?

**A:** Jesus Christ. Daniel's prophecy moves directly toward the

Anointed One, reconciliation for iniquity, everlasting righteousness, and the completion of the prophetic program. Christ accomplished the sacrifice for sin that the old covenant sacrifices could never accomplish (Daniel 9:24-27; Hebrews 9:26; 10:10-14).

## † This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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### Source Index

† Leviticus 25:2-4; Leviticus 25:8-10; Leviticus 26:33-35; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Daniel 9:2-3; Daniel 9:24; Daniel 9:25-26; Daniel 9:27; Deuteronomy 32:18-20; Deuteronomy 32:28-29  
† Josephus; Eusebius

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