

Charts: Daniel's Seventy Weeks

PREFACE

Invariably there is a moment in any study—it came in our studies of Hebrews, of Thessalonians, and *really* showed up in First Corinthians 7—there comes a moment when one is almost sorry one has decided to tackle the study. The text is so challenging, so troublesome, so fraught with peril, that all one can do—short of running, screaming into the night—is gulp twice, pray *really* hard, take a deep breath, and forge ahead.

We are now at that point in this study of the Last Things. The Tribulation portion of the Eschaton is without question the most troublesome, most controversial, most argued and debated portion. The Tribulation occupies the lion's share of the book of Revelation—out of the book's 22 chapters, 16 of those chapters deal with events in or immediately surrounding the Tribulation.

Any deep study of the Tribulation produces much... well, tribulation. Reiterating what I said in our first session, one of the more troublesome aspects of this is that highly respected, knowledgeable, wise, Spirit-filled Christian scholars disagree with each other—especially regarding the portions of Scripture that pertain—or some insist do *not* pertain—to the eschatological environment. While many commentators and biblical scholars are in agreement with this church's position, many commentators I have repeatedly used for other studies embrace a different position regarding the Tribulation—or, more often the case, disagree on some of the details. Add to all this the contemporary, *non*-scholarly ideas based more on headlines than textual analysis, and one can soon regret opening such a can of worms. Yet, there can also be tremendous joy of discovery in such an enterprise. My prayer is that you have already experienced some of that joy—or will in due course.

Before we begin examining what takes place during the Tribulation, we need to lay the groundwork for understanding it as a whole. We need to look at the forest before we examine every individual tree.

In this session we will begin our examination of Daniel's "Seventy Weeks," in broader terms; then in our next two sessions we will carefully step through the Daniel 9 prophecy with the accompanying chart as our guide. **So be sure to have this chart (#7) with you for our next two sessions.**

ISRAEL

As Oliver Greene puts it in his book, *Bible Prophecy* (1970), “The Great Tribulation has nothing to do with the church. The Scriptures which describe the Great Tribulation speak of Israel (Jacob), and *the church* is not once named—which, of course, makes perfect sense, since the church has just been removed from the earth.

- In Jeremiah 30:6-7 the Tribulation is called ‘the time of Jacob’s trouble’ [or distress]
- In Ezekiel 22:18-22 we note that it is *Israel*, not the Church, that will be cast into God’s melting pot to be melted and refined in the fires of God’s wrath.”

Read Ezekiel 22:17-22.

- “In Malachi 3:2-3 it is *Israel* who will go through the fire for purification, and again in Zechariah 13:9 it is God’s people (Israel) who will pass through the fire to be refined as silver and gold are refined.” (Oliver Greene)

Thus, immediately after the Rapture, there will be no Christians—only unbelieving Gentiles and Jews who have rejected Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah. Over the next seven years that will change; while some will have their hatred for Christ deepen, others will turn to embrace Him, and many Jews will place their faith in Him as the true Messiah. A great number of *them* will be not just persecuted, but killed.

DANIEL’S SEVENTY YEARS

From where do we get the idea of seven years—or two halves of three-and-one-half years—for the span of the Tribulation? For that we need to begin with the prophecies given to Daniel. [Turn please to Daniel 9.](#)

Note: In addition to The Revelation (chapters 5-20), principal sources for the Tribulation include Daniel (chapters 7-12); and Christ’s eschatological (“Olivet”) discourse, found in Matthew 24:1-25:46, Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:5-36. Most of what we believe to substantiate our position comes from harmonizing these and other passages from God’s word.

Read Daniel 9:24-27.

This is the foundational passage for both “Daniel’s Seventy Weeks” and “Daniel’s *Seventieth* Week.” In upcoming sessions we will be digging into the details of the events of which the angel Gabriel speaks; for now we want to just note the numbers ([follow along with the chart](#)):

- v24: “Seventy weeks have been decreed...”
- v25: “...from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [[i.e., 69 weeks total](#)]; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.”
- v26: “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing...”
- v27: “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering...”

All our common versions except for the NIVs translate this “weeks”; the NIVs supply the meaning behind it: units of “seven.” And this is to be understood—especially in evangelical/dispensational circles as 490 years ($70 \times 7 = 490$). But how do we get from “weeks” or “units of sevens” to years? [Keep your finger here as we turn to Leviticus 25.](#)

Read Leviticus 25:8.

Depending on your version, the key word is translated either “sabbaths” or “weeks,” but the connection is clearly drawn here for using “weeks” to stand for “seven years.” So to wrap it back to v27 in Daniel’s prophecy, where we see the events of the Tribulation in shorthand,

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, [[7 years](#)] but in the middle of the week [[after the first 3 ½ years](#)] he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Once again, ours is a *dispensational* position.

- Some see Daniel’s “Seventy Weeks” prophecy being fulfilled in its entirety by historical events that culminated in the events of AD 70, when Rome destroyed the Jerusalem temple and the city.
- Some assign the activity of the “horn” (i.e., the beast, Antichrist) to a Roman Catholic Papal power.

- Many biblical scholars see this prophecy fulfilled in the brutal subjugation of Jerusalem by the Syrian king Antiochus IV, who came to power around 170 BC. He is commonly referred to as Antiochus Epiphanes—“epiphanes,” which means “god manifest” (Antiochus claimed to be Zeus incarnate). Let me read from an article from the venerable Biblical Archaeology Society:

Antiochus arrived in Jerusalem to find the people in an open state of revolt against him and each other. The chaos he found in Judea immediately followed a humiliating defeat in Egypt, and the ruler took out his frustrations on the Jewish people. Antiochus took control of the situation by slaying many innocents and brutally enforcing his cultural and religious policies on the population. A time of great tribulation occurred as traditional practices such as circumcision were outlawed, sacred scriptures were burned, and violators were brutally punished even unto death. Having already laid siege to the Temple Mount and destroying many of its fortifications, Antiochus built a new fortress known as the Acra (literally, “the Citadel”) to consolidate his power over Jerusalem and strengthen his political agents. As a culmination, he proceeded to profane the Temple of Yahweh by erecting idols within it and even going so far as to sacrifice pigs upon the altar, presumably to Zeus. (*Biblical Archaeology Society*)

Antiochus does indeed fulfill much of the description and prophecies regarding Antichrist; dispensationalists would say that he was an historical *type* of Antichrist—not the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy, but a “now—not yet” foreshadowing of Antichrist—just as Melchizedek, for one example, was a type of Jesus the Christ.

There are two more ways in which the duration of the Tribulation (or portions thereof) are described. [Back to Daniel, Chapter Seven this time.](#)

Read Daniel 7:25.

The “he,” in v25 is the beast, Antichrist; the “time, times, and half a time”—one year + two years + half a year = 3½ years— represents the last half of the seven-year Tribulation, i.e., the Great Tribulation. Halves of the seven year Tribulation are also described as “1,260 days” ([Revelation 11:13 and 12:6](#)) and “forty-two months” ([Revelation 11:2](#)).

As the accompanying chart shows, Daniel’s “Seventy Weeks” begins in 457 BC, so those who are better than me at math might have already deduced that we have a problem here. If Daniel’s “Seventieth Week” is yet future, well, that would obviously be more than just a tad beyond 490 years from 457 BC!

The dispensational position on this is that the church, and hence the Dispensation of Grace (the church age, a period of indeterminate length) was not revealed to Daniel. This creates a “gap,” or indeterminate “interlude” between Week 69 and Week 70 of Daniel’s Seventy Weeks. The math works when that gap lying between Christ’s baptism and the Tribulation is removed.

Eyebrows may indeed rise over the formidable “gap” or “interlude” in the seventy weeks that, so far, has lasted better than two thousand years—and may appear all too convenient. J. C. J. Waite, in the *New Bible Dictionary*, points out that, “Such prophetic gaps are not uncommon in the OT.” Then he cites the example of Isaiah 61:2, part of the passage Jesus read in the Nazareth synagogue when he presented Himself as the fulfillment of that prophecy. Here is what Jesus read, as recorded in Luke 4:18-19.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

In the synagogue, however, Jesus did *not* read the next line in the original Isaiah passage; v2 in Isaiah 61 reads,

to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn; (emphasis added)

Jesus said that He was there to fulfill “the year of the Lord’s favor,” *which included His vengeance*. Yet Jesus did not implement that vengeance during His first time on earth, but most certainly will in His second, which will occur, at last count, at least two thousand years after He declared that prophecy fulfilled in Him. More on this interlude, or gap, in our next two sessions.

HOW LITERAL IS THE TIMELINE?

Much ink has been spilled and many trees have gone to their doom over the last two thousand years to rationalize the math of the various eschatological positions.

Generally speaking, the dispensational position is to interpret God’s word literally: if it says seven years, then we take it to mean just that; if it says that Christ will reign on earth, and Satan to be chained in the abyss, for one-thousand years, then we take it to mean what it says: one thousand years. Critics raise their voices especially when years switch to months or days, for it’s true that calendars change. In ancient times a year was not always, nor everywhere, 365 days. Some times a year was twelve thirty-day months; at times five days were tacked on at the end to balance it out—at times not. Leap years? Nope.

My personal position is this: While I interpret the lengths to be literal, I also know that it is too easy to pinpoint an event on a chart—an event that might take quite a while to run its course from beginning to end. We can quite accurately pinpoint—but of course, not date—the Rapture, because Paul tells us it occurs in the blink of an eye. Just so, it is easy to draw an arrow to a point in the timeline to mark the occurrence of The Great White Throne, but no one on earth can say how long that judgment process will take. Will Time itself grind to a halt during that event, or will it keep moving?

So, speaking personally, my devotion to God’s inerrant word is not going to be compromised if some of these sharp edges are rounded off, or if one period spills over into the next—or, a more probable circumstance, the various event groupings that we so neatly arrange on our charts do not always *immediately* follow one another. That is, there may be “interludes” scattered about between, say, The Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation, or between The Tribulation and the Millennium.

THE DATES

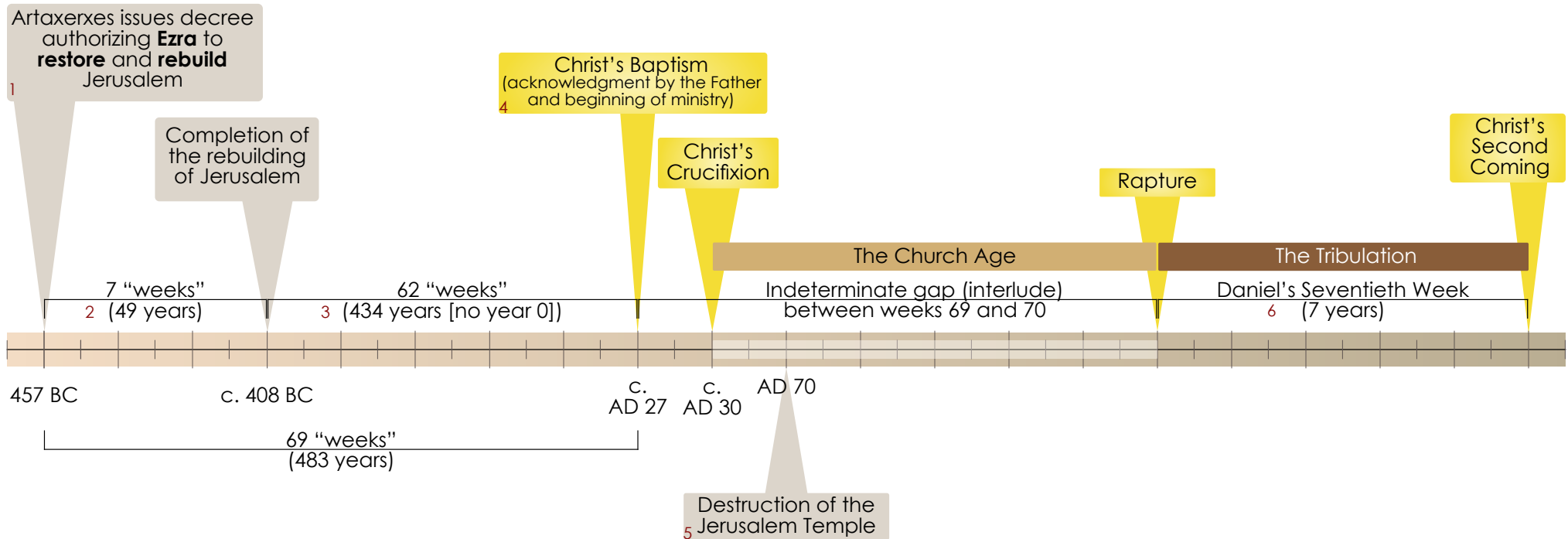
The data for the accompanying chart has not been copied from any one source, but reflects my conclusions after consulting many sources. The commonly used events and dates cited for the beginning and midpoints of the seventy weeks are, in the opinion of many, in error. In preparation for this study of the Last Things I have referenced primarily two older chart series—the most recent published in 1970 by evangelist Buel L. Liming, and (the better of the two) the charts published by Clarence Larkin in 1919. I have consulted respective commentaries—not least, Gleason L. Archers’ on the book of Daniel; Archer was the highly respected professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

I have also referenced my own legwork from an earlier study on Ezra and Nehemiah (in 2014). Finally, because the process involved math, Linda was brought in to supervise and check the calculations (for in that regard I cannot be trusted). After sifting through all the various schemes for Daniel’s seventy weeks, the events and dates on this chart, I believe, track the best.

In our next two sessions we will return to Daniel 9 and examine in detail that key passage. Be sure to bring with you Chart #7.

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

Daniel 9:24-27
(written in the sixth century BC)



Footnotes

1	2	3	4	5	6
Ezra 7:11-26	Daniel 9:25	Daniel 9:26	Luke 3:21-23	Luke 21:20-24	Daniel 9:27

- one "week" = a unit of sevens = 7 years
- 70 "weeks" = 70 x 7 = 490 years
- "time, times, and half a time" = one year + two years + half a year = 3½ years

