

## Part I

### THE FIRST SIXTY-NINE WEEKS AND THE COMING OF THE MESSIANIC PRINCE

In approaching the first sixty-nine weeks of the prophecy, it should be remembered that this period of sixty-nine weeks begins with the "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" and that it ends with the manifestation of Messiah as the "Prince" of Israel. Our purpose will be to ascertain the nature and length of the "weeks," discover in history the events which mark their beginning and end, and then see whether the prediction fits the history from a chronological standpoint; for the one point in the prophecy upon which all interpreters agree is that the first sixty-nine weeks have been fulfilled and are past. About four questions will cover the field of investigation.

#### I. WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF TIME INDICATED BY THE "WEEKS" OF THIS PROPHECY?

What kind of "weeks" are they? To the casual English reader, the word "week" means but one thing, that is, a period of seven *days*. And many interpreters have accepted this rather superficial view of the matter. Taking the "Seventy Weeks" as "weeks" of days, they have then proceeded to translate the days into *years*. If we ask by what right they take such liberties with the inspired Word of God, they answer that "in prophecy a day stands for a year." This is the so-called "Year-Day" theory of prophetic interpretation employed by certain Protestant writers and also by Seventh Day Adventism and Russellism. To me it has always seemed an arbitrary method, although claiming the support of some great names. I cannot discover any sound Biblical authority for putting "years" where the sacred text reads "days." The folly of this system appears most clearly in attempts to handle the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6, which constitute simply one-half of the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy. Here the "Year-Day" theorists are compelled either to abandon their scheme or else make *one-half* of the last week of Daniel equal to over twice as many years as are found in the other sixty-nine and one-half weeks. The precise figures, according to this theory, would be as follows: 69 1/2 weeks equal 486 1/2 years; but the last 1/2 week equals 1260 years! If such a violent and inconsistent device is the only way, as some have claimed, to make the prophecy "come out right," then we had better cease all attempts to interpret prophecy. It is this sort of thing that makes the skeptics smile and

brings the whole study of prophecy into disrepute.

Turning now to the simple facts concerning these "weeks" in Daniel, we shall find no necessity for tampering with the exact language of the text. The Hebrew word is *shabua*, which means literally a "seven," and it would be well to read the passage thus, dropping for a moment the word "week" which to the English ear always means a week of days. Thus the twenty-fourth verse of Daniel's ninth chapter simply asserts that "seventy *sevens* are determined" (cf. Stuart's translation), and what these "sevens" are must be determined from the context and from other Scriptures. The evidence is quite clear and sufficient, as follows:

Most important is the fact that in their divinely inspired calendar, the Jews had a "seven" of *years* as well as a "seven" of *days*. And this Biblical "week" of years was just as familiar to the Jew as the "week" of days. It was, in certain respects, even more important. *Six years* the Jew was free to till and sow his land, but the *seventh year* was to be a solemn "Sabbath of rest unto the land" (Lev. 25:3-4). Upon a multiple of this important week of years--"seven Sabbaths of years"--there was based the great jubilee of social and economic adjustment every fiftieth year, when debts were wiped out, estates returned to the original holders, and slaves went free (Lev. 25:8-9). Nothing could be so important to the Jew as this week of years.

Now there are several reasons for believing that the "Seventy Sevens" of Daniel's prophecy refer to this well known "seven" of years. In the first place, the prophet Daniel had been thinking not only in terms of years rather than days, but also in a definite multiple of "sevens" (10 x 7) of years (Dan. 9:1-2). Second, Daniel also knew that the very length of the Babylonian captivity had been based on Jewish violations of the divine law of the Sabbatic year. Since according to II Chron. 36:21 the Jews had been removed from off the land in order that it might rest for *seventy years*, it should be evident that the Sabbatic year had been violated for 490 years, or exactly seventy "sevens" of years. How appropriate, therefore, that now at the end of the judgment for these violations the angel should be sent to reveal the start of a *new era* of God's dealing with the Jew which would extend for the same number of years covered by his violations of the Sabbatic year, namely, a cycle of 490 years, or "Seventy Sevens" of years (Dan. 9:24).

Furthermore, the whole context of the prophecy demands that the "Seventy Sevens" be understood in terms of years. For if we make them "sevens" of days, the entire period would extend for merely 490 days or a little over *one year*. Considering now that within this brief space of time the city is to be rebuilt and once more destroyed (to say nothing of the tremendous

events of verse 24), it becomes clear that such an interpretation is altogether improbable and untenable. Finally, there is a remarkable and convincing argument based on the usage of the Hebrew word, curiously overlooked by many of the commentators. Outside of the prophecy of the "Seventy Weeks," the Hebrew word *shabua* is found only in one other passage of the book (10:2-3), where the prophet states that he mourned and fasted "three full weeks." Now, here it is perfectly obvious that the context demands "weeks" of *days*, for Daniel would hardly have fasted twenty-one years! And significantly, the Hebrew here reads literally "three sevens of *days*." Now, if in the ninth chapter, the writer intended us to understand that the "Seventy Sevens" are composed of days, why did he not use the same form of expression adopted in chapter ten? The quite obvious answer is that Daniel used the Hebrew *shabua* alone when referring to the well known "week" of years, a customary usage which every Jew would understand; but in chapter ten, when he speaks of the "three weeks" of fasting, he definitely specifies them as "weeks of *days*" in order to distinguish them from the "weeks" of *years* in chapter nine. And if the "weeks" of chapter nine were composed of days, there would have been no possible reason for changing the Hebrew form in chapter ten.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, by every fair and sensible rule of interpretation, the "Seventy Sevens" must be understood as years, not days which we must surreptitiously change into years to make the prophecy come out right.

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1 **Editorial note by Ken:** The argument in this paragraph is really quite simple, but Dr. McClain's presentation of it is not as clear as it could be.

- The **key word** in the argument is *shabu'im* which means "weeks" or "sevens." (McClain's *shabua* is the singular form.)
- This same word is used in a **phrase** both in Dan. 9:24 and Dan. 10:2. However:
- (1) Dan. 9:24 has just **two** words in the phrase: *shabu'im shib'im*. The word *shib'im* is "seventy." Thus literally the phrase is "sevens seventy," meaning "seventy sevens" or "seventy weeks."
- (2) Dan. 10:2 has **three** words in the phrase: *shelshah shabu'im yamim*. The word *shelshah* is "three," and the word *yamim* is "days." Thus literally the phrase is "three sevens of days" or "three weeks of days."
- Therefore, the question is this: why did Daniel say simply "seventy sevens" in 9:24 but "three sevens **of days**" in 10:2? The implication is this: if Daniel meant seventy sevens **of years** in 9:24 (490 years--which we believe **is** Daniel's meaning), he needed to make it clear that he meant rather three sevens **of days** in 10:2 (21 days). He did so by explicitly adding the word "of days."
- Looking at 10:2, one could ask: if *shabu'im* by itself always means "weeks of days," then why add the word, "of days"?
- Looking at 9:24, one could also ask, as McClain did: "if in the ninth chapter, the writer intended us to understand that the "Seventy Sevens" are composed of days, [then] why did he not use the same form of expression adopted in chapter ten ["seventy sevens of days]?"

## II. IF THESE "WEEKS" ARE COMPOSED OF YEARS, WHAT IS THE LENGTH OF THE YEAR?

It is quite well known that the various calendars of the nations have used years of different lengths, correcting the error by the addition of days from time to time. Even our own year of 365 days is not exact, the shortage being a little less than one day in four years. If, therefore, the time of the Seventy Weeks is to be calculated exactly, we must know the length of the year involved. And unless this information is supplied by the inspired Word, the case is hopeless. But there is conclusive evidence to show that the prophetic year of Scripture is composed of 360 days, or twelve months of 30 days.

The first argument is *historical*. According to the Genesis record, the Flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month (7:11), and came to an end on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (8:4). Now, this is a period of exactly five months, and fortunately the length of the same period is given in terms of days--"an hundred and fifty days" (7:24; 8:3). Thus the earliest known month used in Biblical history was evidently thirty days in length, and twelve such months would give us a 360-day year.

The second argument is *prophetical* and is absolutely conclusive because it is based on a measure included within the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks under discussion. Dan. 9:27 mentions a period of Jewish persecution at the hands of the Coming Prince who will make a covenant with that people. Since this persecution begins in the "midst" of the Seventieth Week and continues to the "end" of the Week, the period is obviously three and one-half years. Dan. 7:24-25 speaks of the same Roman Prince and the same persecution, fixing the duration as "a time and times and the dividing of time"--in the Aramaic<sup>2</sup>, three and a half times. Rev. 13:4-7 speaks of the same great political Ruler and his persecution of the Jewish "saints" lasting "forty and two months." Rev. 12:13-14 refers to the same persecution, stating the duration in the exact terms of Dan. 7:25 as "a time and times and half a time"; and this period is further defined in Rev. 12:6 as "a thousand two hundred and three score days." Thus we have the same period of time variously stated as 3 1/2 years, 42 months, or 1260 days. Therefore, it is clear that the length of the year in the Seventy Weeks prophecy is fixed by Scripture itself as exactly 360 days.

## III. WHEN DID THE WHOLE PERIOD OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS BEGIN?

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2 See Appendix.

Having found that the Seventy Weeks are "weeks" of *years*, and that these years are each 360 days in length, our next problem is to find the historical date when the whole period began. And here we are not left in any doubt, for the twenty-fifth verse of the prophecy names a definite historical event: Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of *the commandment* to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks." If now we can locate this "commandment," or decree, and fix its date accurately, we shall have the terminus from which the prophecy takes its start.

This "commandment," by a large number of interpreters, has been identified with the decrees issued by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, recorded in the Book of Ezra. But these decrees without any exception have to do with the rebuilding of the *Temple*, not the city. Let the student read carefully Ezra 1:1-2; 4:1-5, 11-24; 6:1-5, 14-15; 7:11, 20, 27, and notice that in every case the decree concerns the "house of the Lord." But there is no authorization for the rebuilding of the city. And it is an interesting fact that the rebuilding of the Temple was stopped for a time because of accusations from Jewish enemies that the Jews were attempting without authority also to rebuild the *city* (Ezra 4:1-24). The very evident motive on the part of some interpreters to find the decree in Ezra was to get the prophecy of the Weeks started early enough to make the first 69 Weeks end near the *birth* of Christ. Otherwise it is very doubtful whether anyone would ever have turned to the decrees in Ezra. The early date is not only unnecessary but plunges the entire chronology into endless confusion and disagreement.

There is only one decree in Old Testament history which, apart from all expedients of interpretation, can by any possibility be identified as the "commandment" referred to in Daniel's prophecy. That decree is found in the Book of Nehemiah<sup>3</sup>. Let the student read carefully 1:1-4 and 2:1-8, noting several facts: First, that it was a report of the ruined condition of the "wall" and "gates" of the *city* that aroused the deep concern of Nehemiah, Jewish "cupbearer" to King Artaxerxes. Second, that after earnest prayer he dared to petition the King "that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the *city* of my fathers' sepulchres, *that I may build it*" (2:5). Third, that his bold request by the grace of God succeeded, as he tells us: "And the king *granted me*, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (2:8). But most important of all, we should notice how carefully Nehemiah, writing by divine inspiration, records the exact date of this decree: "*in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king*" (2:1).

For those who believe in Biblical inspiration and the genuineness of

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3 See Appendix.

predictive prophecy, it will be no surprise to learn that the date fixed by Nehemiah happens to be one of the best known dates in ancient history. Even the latest edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, certainly not biased in favor of prophecy, sets the date of Artaxerxes' accession as 465 B.C.; and therefore his twentieth year would be 445 B.C.<sup>4</sup> The month was Nisan, and, since no day is given, according to Jewish custom the date would be understood as the first. Hence in our calendar the date would be *March 14, 445 B.C.* Here we have the beginning of the Seventh Weeks.

#### IV. WHEN DID THE FIRST SIXTY-NINE WEEKS END, AND WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT DATE?

Having found that the Weeks are composed of years, that the length of the prophetic year is 360 days, and that these years began on March 14, 445 B.C., the ground is now cleared for the chronological computation. And for this I am indebted to the painstaking research of the late Sir Robert Anderson, the results of which are set forth in his great book, *The Coming Prince*, a work occasionally sneered at by the critics but never answered.

In order to find the *end* of the Sixty-nine Weeks, we must first reduce them to days. Since we have 69 Weeks of seven years each, and each year has 360 days, the equation is as follows:  $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880 \text{ days}$ . Beginning with March 14, 445 B.C., this number of days brings us to April 6, 32 A.D.

In order to prove that the 173,880 days equal exactly the period from March 14, 445 B.C., to April 6, 32 A.D., it is necessary to compute this period in terms of our own calendar year, as follows:

445 B.C. to 32 A.D. is	476 years (B.C. 1 to A.D. 1 is one year)
476 x 365 days	173,740 days
Add for leap-years	116 days (3 less in four centuries) <sup>5</sup>
March 14 to April 6	24 days (inclusive)
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Total	173,880 days

*April 6, 32 A.D.*, therefore, is fixed definitely as the end of the era of the first 69 Weeks; and according to Daniel's prophecy, it should mark the very day

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> Note: To divide 476 by 4 would give 119 leap-years. But since century-years are not leap-years unless divisible by 400 and since 476 years involve four centuries, it follows that only one of the four century-years would be a true leap-year. Therefore, it is necessary to subtract 3 from 119 to get the exact number of extra leap-year days in 476 years.

of Messiah's manifestation as the *Prince* of Israel. Without attempting to enter into the clear but intricate chronological calculations set forth by Anderson in his book, *the Coming Prince* (pages 95-105), I shall simply state his conclusion that April 6, 32 A.D., was the tenth of Nisan, that momentous day on which our Lord, in fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, rode up to Jerusalem on the "foal of an ass" and offered Himself as the *Prince* and *King* of Israel.

That our Lord understood perfectly the crucial nature of His action on that day is unmistakably clear from the record in Luke 19:28-44, a passage which should be studied carefully noting the following details: First, realizing that the day had arrived for Him to ride up to Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zech. 9:9, He sends His disciples to procure the "colt" upon which as the *King* He must appear (30-34). Second, the whole multitude of the disciples, clearly understanding the meaning of His act, began to shout a well known quotation from a Messianic Psalm (118:22-26), saying, "Blessed be the *King* that cometh in the name of the Lord" (37-38). Third, although previously He had forbidden the disciples to make Him known as the Messiah, now He rebukes the Pharisees' protest and commends the disciples' shout, saying that "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (39-40). Certainly something was happening here that had never happened before.

But most important of all, we have from the lips of Christ Himself an estimate of the unparalleled importance of that day and what He was doing. Weeping over the city because He knew in advance the certainty of His rejection, He laments, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in *this thy day*, the *things which belong unto thy peace*, but now they are hid from thine eyes" (42). What "day"? Why, the day God had fixed in Daniel's prophecy, the day that belonged to Israel, the day on which their "Messiah" would manifest Himself as the "Prince," the exact *173,880th* day of the prophecy! And what were "the things" belonging to their peace? They are the identical "things" named in verse 24 of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, those marvelous blessings promised to Israel by that God Who never breaks a covenant. But now for a time all these "things" are to be hid from the eyes of the nation; their enemies will prevail over them; and the city will be once more destroyed. But why? The answer is tragic but just: "*Because thou knewest not THE TIME OF THY VISITATION*" (44).

Thus the 173,880 days of the first Sixty-nine Weeks ran their course to the very day--deep and abiding encouragement to all who love the Lord and His precious Word of prophecy. And I close this discussion with but one remark: The exact fulfilment of this prophecy is sufficient to demonstrate the accuracy of Daniel and also by implication the inspiration of the Bible and

the truth of Christianity. Only *God* can "declare the end from the beginning" and forecast to the very day "things that are not yet done" (Isa. 46:10).

## APPENDIX

### *Footnote 2. The Aramaic "Times"*

The Book of Daniel contains a section (2:4-7:28) written in the "Syriack" (2:4) or Aramaic language. Although the Aramaic word translated "times" in 725 is not dual but plural in form, undoubtedly the plural is here used with a dual significance (see Barnes, Com.; Keil, Com.; also Gesenius, Lex.). This is confirmed by the parallel expression which occurs in Daniel 12:7, "a time, times, and a half," where the word "times" is a dual form in the Hebrew original.

### *Footnote 3. The Nehemiah Decree*

"This . . . is the only decree which we find recorded in Scripture which relates to the restoring and building of the city" (Tregelles, *Daniel*, page 98).

### *Footnote 4. The Year of Artaxerxes' Accession*

Some readers have been confused by counting the calendar year 465 as the first year of the king's reign, and thus 445 would be the twenty-first year of his reign instead of the twentieth. This apparent discrepancy disappears if we understand the king's *accession (de jure)* took place in July, 465 B.C., and therefore his first year would actually extend to July, 464. Thus the month Nisan (March) of the king's first year would actually fall in the calendar year 464, and the month Nisan of his twentieth year would fall in the calendar year 445, as stated above.