

Is Jesus the Messiah?

Christmas

December 21 & 28, 2014; January 04, 2015

Proof of the First Advent (continued)

9. The best English word to translate *shavua* ' is heptads which mean "groups of seven."¹
10. The question that arises is, "What is the grouping in Daniel 9? Is it 7 days, 7 literal weeks, or 70 lunar years? The context instructs us and we get help from the dictionary:

This term occurs twenty times in the Old Testament, always indicating a period of seven. Indeed, the word obviously comes to us from *sheva* ' [שֶׁבַע seven] and could be literally translated "seven-heptads/years." In Daniel 9:24, 25, 26, 27 it denotes a period of seven years in each of its appearances in these four verses. This is proven by the context wherein Daniel recognizes that the seventy-year period of captivity is almost over. Just as Daniel is in prayer concerning this matter, the angel Gabriel appears and informs him that Israel's restoration will not be complete until she goes through another seventy periods-of-seven.²

11. The Jewish Diaspora, following its defeat by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., was held captive in Chaldea for seventy years. The reason for this prolonged absence from the land of Israel is based on its citizens' prolonged failure to observe each seventh-year's Sabbatical rest over a 490-year period.
12. It becomes evident that God works on a time-certain schedule regarding His dealings with the Jewish people. The Levitical sacrifices and festivals are observed on a strict annual schedule.

¹ "heptad. A group or series of seven, the number seven, period of seven years." *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. William Morris, s.v. "heptad."

² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 899.

13. The Sabbatical was not observed for seventy consecutive heptads which resulted in Chaldea becoming the predator nation that placed the Jews in a seventy-year enslavement in Babylon.
14. The divine purpose for the Sabbatical year is important to understand and becomes instructive regarding the Lord's grant of an additional seventy heptads assigned to Israel.

In 445 B.C., dating from the decree by Artaxerxes Longimanus (Nehemiah 2:1–8) to restore and build Jerusalem, the Jews were promised 490 more years to evangelize other nations (Daniel 9:24–26). The term “seventy weeks” used by Daniel refers to a literal period of 490 years. However, seven years short of the time allotted to them for this particular operation, the cross occurred—the Messiah was “cut off” as prophesied in Daniel 9:26—and the Jewish age was halted. But God still owes Israel seven more years, and He will keep that promise during the Tribulation, a period called in Scripture the “time of Jacob’s distress” (Jeremiah 30:7) or that “seventieth week” of Daniel 9.³

15. The Sabbatical year’s observance had a two-fold purpose. In Scripture, the title for the seventh-year hiatus is שָׁבֻת שָׁנִים (*shabbathōn shanim*): “a year of solemn rest.”

In this early period of the history of Israel the regulation regarding the 7th year was primarily intended for the relief of the poor and for the awakening of a sense of responsibility in the hearts of those better provided with the means of subsistence. The text says expressly, “But in the 7th year you shall let it rest” (lit, “you shall release it”), implying that the land was entitled to a rest because it needed it; it must be released for a time in order to gain fresh strength and insure its future fertility.

All their agricultural, social, commercial and political relations were to be built upon their Divine calling and shaped according to God’s sovereign will.

But did they live up to the Sabbatical year? All we can gather from these [biblical] passages is the palpable conclusion that the law regarding the Sabbatical year had not been strictly obeyed, a deficiency which may mar the effect of any law.⁴

³ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Anti-Semitism*, 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., 2003), 81.

⁴ William Baur, “Sabbatical Year,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 4:2635.

16. The mandate for the Sabbatical year is first delivered by Moses in:

Leviticus 25:1 - The Lord then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying,

v. 2 - “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land will have a Sabbath to the Lord.

v. 3 - ‘Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyards and gather in its crop,

v. 4 - 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.

v. 5 - ‘Your harvest’s aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a Sabbatical year.’” (NASB)

17. In order to understand the details of “Daniel’s Seventieth Week,” we need to understand the reason for the seventy-years of Babylonian captivity and the resultant seventy heptads assigned by Daniel’s prophecy:
- (1) The Israelites ignored seventy septennial years of mandated Sabbatical rest which totaled 490 years since its last observance.
 - (2) When the surviving remnant of Israelites are transferred to Babylon, they spent 70 years in captivity, each one making up for each of the 70 Sabbatical years that were not observed over the past 490 years.
 - (3) In the process, the Lord included further discipline on the Israelites for additional violations of Mosaic policies.
 - (4) The 490-luner-year payback of missed Sabbatical years began with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus in 445 B.C.

- (5) They will progress continuously until Jesus, the Messiah/Christ, makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on April 3, A.D. 33. That will cause the prophecy to enter into a hiatus of unknown length beginning after the 69th heptad totaling 483 years.
- (6) Within the prophecy's total of 490 years, there are three events that will occur, each indicated in Daniel's prophecy.

Daniel 9:25 - "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command [**decree issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus in 445 B.C.**] to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince [**c. Palm Sunday A.D. 33**]; there shall be seven weeks [**seven heptads = 49 lunar years**] and 62 weeks [**62 heptads = 434 lunar years for a total of 483 years⁵**]; the streets of Jerusalem shall be built again and the walls, even in times of distress [**Roman occupation**].

⁵ From 445 B.C. to A.D. 33 is 478 tropical years with is five years short of the required 483. But since the Jewish calendar is lunar containing only 360 days, then we must calculate into the equation the missing five days per year over the course of 483 tropical years which adds six more years giving a total of 484. Several theologians have tackled this puzzle using different approaches including Robert Anderson, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Jack Finegan, Clarence Larkin, and Philip Schaff. Each came very close to the needed 483-year total.