

The 70 weeks simplified

by Douglas E. Cox

A good understanding of the prophecy of the 70 weeks can greatly strengthen our faith in the gospel, as Daniel's prophecy is demonstrably accurate, and when understood properly it helps us to understand other difficult topics, such as the significance of the *time, times and a half*, which is symbolic of the church age. Daniel 12:7 shows that it extends to the end of the age, when all Daniel's prophecies will be fulfilled.

The times of the Gentiles

Jesus referred to the times of the Gentiles, in Luke 21:24, indicating that a limited time has been determined, when the people of God remain under the dominion of Gentiles, and when the holy city is "trodden under foot." He was not speaking of the earthly Jerusalem, but the heavenly one. It is reasonable to identify the times of the Gentiles with the four periods of seven times mentioned in Leviticus 26.

Daniel said, in his prayer recorded in chapter 9, that the curse of the law of Moses had been poured out on Israel. This alludes to the four periods of seven times in Leviticus 26.

In Figure 1, the exile in Babylon is identified with the first of the four periods of seven times. The three sections of Daniel's 70 weeks, 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and one week, correspond to three periods of seven times, where "time" is a variable having different units in each of the three sections. In the last of the four periods of seven times, God remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This corresponds to the 70th week in Daniel 9:27, in which Christ confirms his covenant for one week.

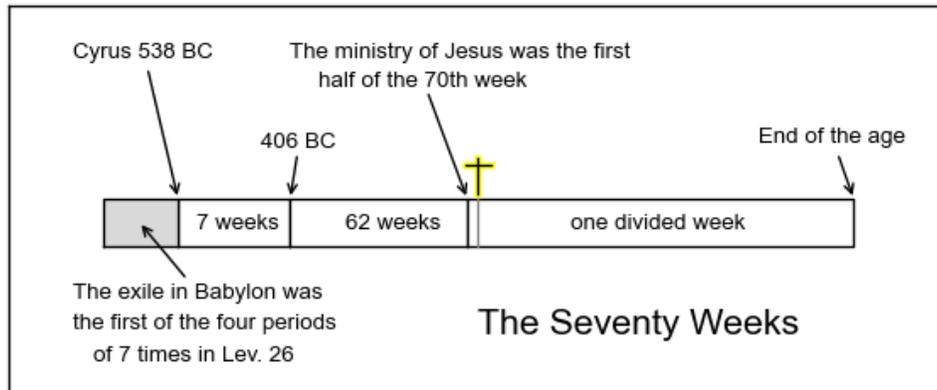


Figure 1: Timeline of the 70 weeks

The period of the exile, which was 70 years according to a prophecy of Jeremiah, may be viewed as "seven times" where a "time" is ten years. The three sections of the 70 weeks each correspond to seven times. The final week is seven times, as a "week" is "seven times." The 62 weeks are seven times, where a "time" is 62 years, which was the age of Darius (or Cyrus) when he became king of Babylon.

The first section of the 70 weeks is seven times, where a "time" has the units of seven leap years. Seven such years with an extra month occur in 19 years, and so seven times, where the "times" are weeks of leap years, spans 133 years total, which together with the second section of 62 weeks makes 567 years. This is the time period from the decree of Cyrus to the ministry of Jesus in 28 AD.

The first two sections of Daniel's 70 weeks apply to the earthly city, together with a portion of the last week. The units of the times in these periods are weeks of years, or weeks of leap years, or "times" that span 62 years. But the units for the final half of the 70th week are not earthly units. Since the

last half-week applies to the heavenly Jerusalem, rather than the earthly one, its duration is given in units that are symbolic rather than natural units of earth time. The time required for building the church of God is unknown to man. The last half-week spans the whole age of the church.

The heavenly Jerusalem, which Jesus said would be "trodden under foot," is the city to which the last half week of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy applies. After the crucifixion, Jesus was raised up to heaven, and he builds the heavenly Jerusalem, and the true temple, which is the church.

The time, times and a half

This expression is introduced in the vision of Daniel 7, where it is the time for which the little horn in the fourth beast exerts its power over the saints. The expression applies to the whole age of the church, not only in its entirety, but also to a portion of it. Several numbers in prophecy used to represent the age of the church fit the *pattern* in the expression *a time, times, and half a time*. The numbers mentioned in Daniel 12:11-12 are three years and a half, where the years are of two kinds; they consist of both regular years of 12 months, and leap years of 13 months, one year differing from the rest in each case. But this assumes that the months are exactly 30 days, which is not true of real months, which are slightly less. Thus, the prophetic numbers do not represent a *literal* three years and a half.

William Hendriksen wrote: [1]

The expression 'a time, and times, and half a time' occurs first in the book of Daniel 7:25; 12:7. It is the period of the antichrist. John emphasizes the fact that the spirit of the antichrist is in the world already. (I Jn. 4:3). In the Apocalypse this period of three years and a half refers to the entire gospel age. It is followed by the 'three days and a half' during which 'the beast that comes up out of the abyss'—the antichristian world in its final phase—will kill the witnesses and will silence the voice of the gospel (cf. Rev. 11:7 ff.).

Jesus said that in his generation, all things would be fulfilled. He included himself, when he referred to "this generation." He did not mean all prophecy would be fulfilled in the first century AD as preterists think. Jesus remains alive, as he rose from the grave, and so his generation extends to the end of the age, and beyond. This is shown in the graphic above. His generation

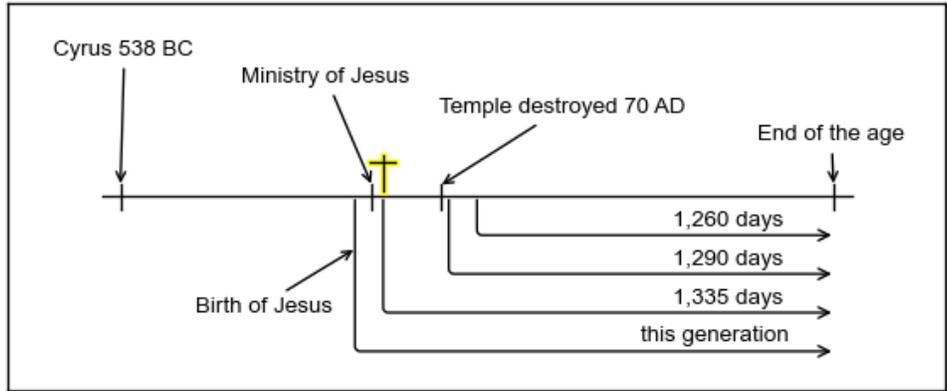


Figure 2: The time, times, and a half represents the remaining time of the church

extends from the time of his birth. It does not end at the end of the age, like the other periods illustrated. But other time periods in prophecy terminate at the time of Christ's coming, and the resurrection. The chart shows several periods, all representing either the last half of the 70th week, or a portion of it. They show a progression, of a decreasing time period. The time remaining for the church becomes smaller, and eventually runs out, as illustrated in the graphic above.

Of the 1,335 days, which spans the whole of the church age, the angel said to Daniel, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." [Daniel 12:12] Jesus waits for his church to be completed, when all the saints are raised up together. Then there will be a great celebration.

The 1260 day period is the duration of the ministry of the two witnesses, and the time when the church sojourns in the wilderness, where she is nourished. In the description of the ministry of the two witnesses it is said that they have the power to shut heaven. "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." [Revelation 11:6] Heaven was not shut, when John received the revelations of the Apocalypse, but after the Apocalypse was written, no further revelations were given to the church. The canon of scripture was sealed. Since the writing of the Apocalypse, the two witnesses, the Spirit and the Word of God, have remained in the world. The writing of the Apocalypse, probably about 95 AD, began the

1,260 days, which extends to the end of the age.

The 1,290 days is intermediate between the 1,335 days, and the 1,260 days. This number identifies the abomination of desolation. John referred to the Antichrist spirit, and he said there were already "many antichrists." This is the abomination of desolation. It has been active in the church, since the time of the Apostles. Some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, after most of the apostles had died, it began to exert its seducing influence. In the chart above the 1,290 days signify the setting up of the abomination of desolation.

The 1,260 days

Figure 3 provides a more detailed view of the 1,260 days. In the end of the age there is a period when the two witnesses are described as corpses lying in the street, in public, and they are made the subject of ridicule and jest. The world rejoices over their destruction. Flawed interpretations of prophecy are among the things which have killed the witnesses. The three and a half days when the witnesses lie exposed as corpses signifies a brief period near the end of the age. When the two witnesses appear as corpses in the street, the time remaining for the church is short.

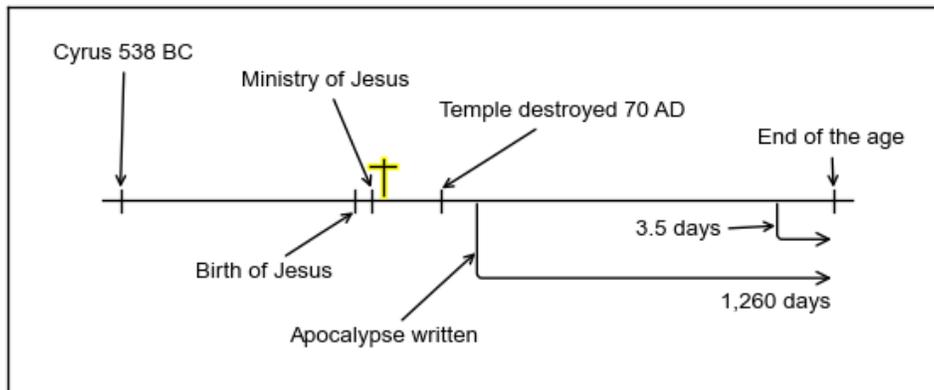


Figure 3: The 1,260 days

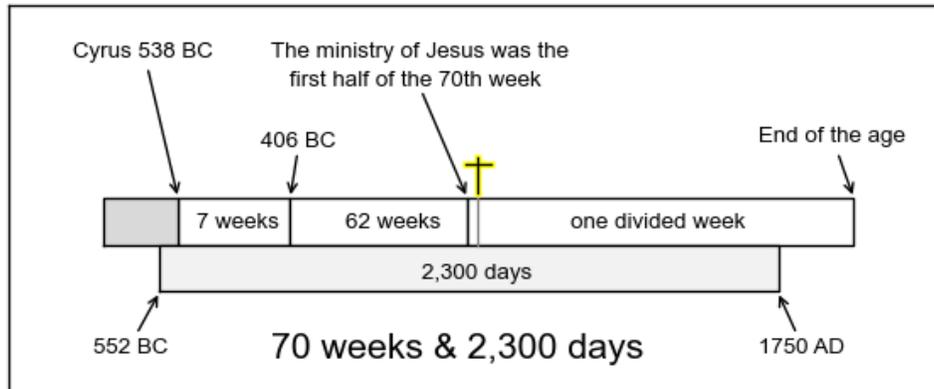


Figure 4: The relation between the 70 weeks and the 2,300 days

The 2,300 days

In the prophecy of the 2,300 days, the angelic messenger makes no mention of a start date, and so the time period that this number specifies must begin when the words were spoken. Daniel reported that he saw the vision in the third year of Belshazzar, whose Babylonian name was "Belsharushur," and his reign is given as 555-538 BC, [Daniel 8:1] so the third year of his reign would be about 552 BC.

The prophecy predicts the time of the scientific revolution in astronomy, as the heavens referred to in verse 10 is the starry heavens. The little horn which grew up to the sky cast stars down to the earth, and trampled upon them.

The heavens or the universe is God's "sanctuary." The starry heavens were to be cleansed, 23 centuries after Daniel received the vision. This was fulfilled by the scientific revolution, and the discoveries in astronomy that overthrew the old cosmology, and belief in a rigid firmament revolving around the earth once a day, carrying the stars and sun and moon and planets.

The old geocentric cosmology, and all that was associated with it, was abolished. Man's view of the heavens was set right.

The 2,300 days represent the length of time that the delusion of geocentrism was to continue. After the time was fulfilled, the old beliefs were abandoned in a very brief span of time. The discoveries of men like J. Ke-

pler, Galileo, and Isaac Newton were universally accepted beginning about 1750 AD.

The relationship between the 2,300 days of Daniel 8 and the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 is illustrated in Figure 4.

References

1. William Hendriksen. *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*. Baker Books, 1998. p. 144.