

Revelation Handout 7: The Vision of Daniel and 3.5 Years

Daniel 9:20–27 (JAC's paraphrase)

Now, while I was speaking—while I was praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people, Israel, to God and was presenting before Yahweh, my God, my supplication on behalf of the holy mountain of my God, while I was still in prayer, then the man, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the previous vision, came to me in my extreme weariness, about the time of the evening offering.

He instructed me and talked with me, saying,

“O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you of it, for you are highly esteemed. So, give heed to my message and gain an understanding of the vision:

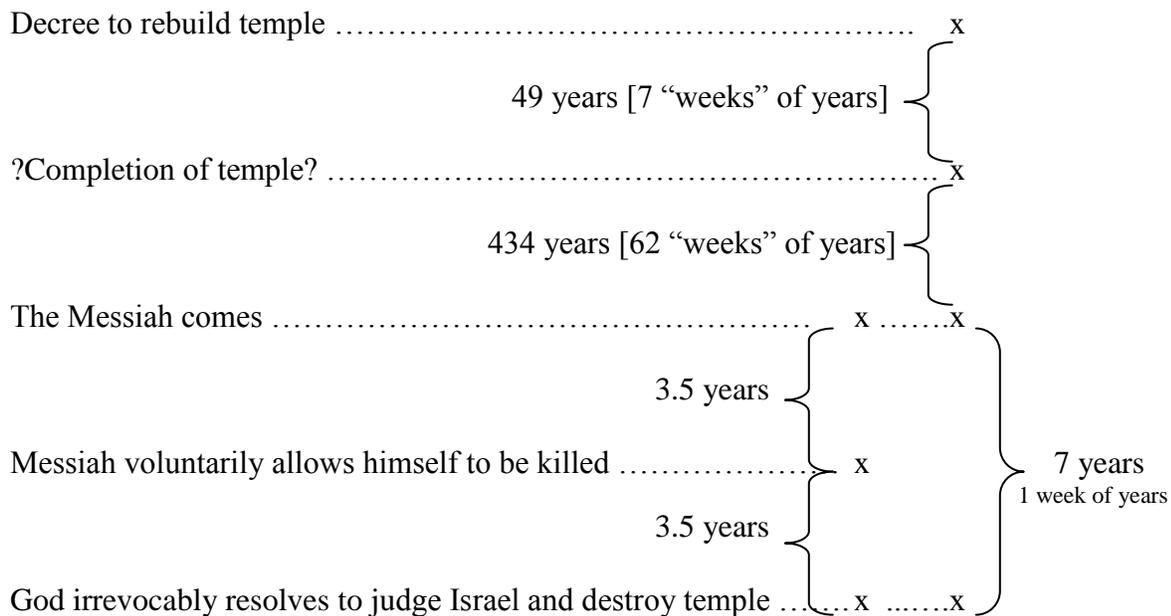
Seventy units of seven years (490 years) have been decreed for your people and your holy city. That is the amount of time that has been given to them to stop their transgressions, to put an end to their sin, and to make propitiation for their iniquity. If, in that time, they will do so, then they will secure everlasting righteousness, will avoid what the prophets, in their visions, had warned them of, and will anoint the Holy One over all the holy ones.

So you should know and understand that from the time that a decree is issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Messiah, the ruler, there shall be 7 units of seven years (49 years) followed by 62 units of seven years (434 years). Jerusalem and the temple will be built again, with plaza and moat, even during times of difficulty and distress. Then after the latter 62 units of seven years (434 years), the Messiah will be cut off and be no more. Then, for that very reason, the people of the ruler who is to come [*the Romans under Titus*] will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of the temple and the city will come with a flood; there will be war up to the final end, where complete desolation is decreed.

Now God will keep this covenant with his people, the many, for the entire unit of the final seven years following the coming of the Messiah [*that is, for all 7 years of the final 7-year unit of the 490 years*]. But, half way through that final 7-year unit, he will put an end to offerings and grain offerings [*that is, the Messiah will allow himself to be killed as a propitiatory offering*]. Then, because the murder of the Messiah will be the last in a long line of many abominations, there will be one [*that is, God*] who brings desolation to Jerusalem, desolation to the point of its complete destruction. The very thing God has decreed will be poured out upon the city such that it will experience complete desolation.”

Summation of Daniel 9:20–27

God made a promise to Daniel that he would grant Israel 490 years (from the issuing of a decree to rebuild in Jerusalem) within which time it was supposed to get its act together and come to true repentance. But God tells Daniel that 3.5 years into the last 7 year unit of the 490 years given to Israel to get their spiritual act together, the Jews will kill the Messiah—an event that, by all rights, should be the “last straw,” the final abomination in a long string of abominations committed by the Jews in the eyes of God. But, as abominable as killing the Messiah is, God—as promised—will not seal the fate of the temple and Jerusalem until the 490 years is complete. God will honor the promise he is making to Daniel. Accordingly, after killing the Messiah, the Jews still have 3.5 years within which to repent of their evil and thereby save the temple and Jerusalem from destruction. If they repent after that last and final abomination, God will forgive them and give them “eternal righteousness,” etc.



> 1 “week” of years = a unit of 7 years duration

God promised Daniel that he would give Israel 490 years from the time of the “decree” to rebuild the temple before he resolved to judge his people and to destroy the new temple. The ultimately abominable act of murdering God’s Messiah happened 3.5 years before that promised time span had expired. God tells Daniel that, in spite of the outrage of murdering his Son, Israel would be given the whole 490 years. The ultimate abomination of the Messiah’s murder would not cause God to abandon his promise. Hence, God gave Israel another 3.5 years (literally, I think) before he “determined irrevocably” that he would destroy the temple. The irrevocable determination by God to destroy the temple would correspond roughly with the apostle Paul giving up on the Jews and resolving to take the gospel to the Gentiles. It would seem that, at that point, the Jews had had their chance to repent of killing the Messiah, had failed to do so, and had sealed the fate of Jerusalem and the temple. God was now committed to destroying the temple, just as he had warned.

The Meaning of the Number 3.5 in Revelation

God had given Israel 490 years to come to repentance before he would resolve to bring judgment upon them. The last 3.5 years of that 490 years is a remarkable 3.5 years. They stand as a dramatic display of God's mercy. During those 3.5 years, God mercifully granted Israel a second chance, even after they had committed the unpardonable act of rejecting, and murdering, the Messiah. The book of Revelation turns the number "3.5" into a symbol. "Three and a half" becomes a number that represents *a period of time wherein God mercifully delays his judgment*. There is no reason to ever expect that 3.5 is a literal time span in Revelation. Regardless of how long the period of time is, if it is described as "3.5 years," it is a period of time *where God mercifully delays his judgment*.