

# Rest and then Say, "There's No Other Way!"

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When anyone receives a personal letter (or email), the mind subconsciously asks the question, "*What is the writer's intent?*" Response to personal communication is guided by our perception of the sender's reasons for writing.

If you believe, as I do, that the Bible is the inspired, written word *from God to us*, then we are wise to ask the questions: (1) "What is God's intent in giving us His Word?" and (2) "If it is correct that '*The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever*,' then what does God's word say about *how* we glorify and enjoy Him?" When we correctly answer those two questions, we have discovered the general theme of God's Word.

I propose the overall, general theme of the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is God's expressed desire that His people **rest** in Him. "*Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

God's preeminent desire for His people is not that we work; not that we serve; not that we worship; not that we love; not that we forgive; not that we pray; not that we witness; and not even that we glorify Him. God's preeminent desire is that we *rest in Him*. Only after we find our rest in Him will we have the desire to serve, to worship, to love, to forgive, to pray, to witness and to glorify. If this concept were in the form of a principle, it would sound like this: *Our rest in Him becomes our glory of Him*.

## Rest in the Old Testament

*Rest* is the theme of the Bible from the beginning. God created the universe and then He *rested*. The Hebrew word translated "rest" in Genesis 2:2 is *shabbat*, from which we get our English word sabbath. God did not rest on the **seventh** day of creation because He was tired, for the Scripture says "*The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary*" (Isaiah 4:28). God rested because His work of creation was a "*complete and perfect*" work, or as the King James translators put it – "*very good*." When God completes a perfect work that He performs, the appropriate response is *rest*.

When God chose the Jews as His people from among all the nations of the earth, He gave them a commandment to rest on the **seventh** day of the week (Leviticus 23:2-3). The weekly Sabbath rest from physical work was to be a picture of God's people *resting in Him*. Any Hebrew who violated the weekly Sabbath rest was put to death (Numbers 15:32-36). This penalty may sound harsh to modern ears, but the punishment definitely conveys God was either serious about the Sabbath itself or what the Sabbath ultimately pictured.

In addition to every weekly Sabbath rest, every **seventh year** became a year of agricultural *rest* (Heb. *shmita*) for the Hebrews and their land (see Leviticus 25:1-8). God's people could till, sow and harvest for six years, but they were leave the ground fallow and rest it from sowing and harvesting during the **seventh** year. God promised the Hebrews, "*I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will be bring forth the crop for three years*" (Leviticus 25:21). God's people were to *rest* and trust Him—His provision, His promises and His faithfulness.

Finally, in addition to a weekly *rest* and a **seventh year** sabbatical land *rest*, after completing **seven sevens** of agricultural rest—that means 49 years—God commanded the Hebrews to celebrate *another entire year of rest* called the Jubilee Year (the 50th year). The Jubilee Year began the tenth day of the

seventh month (Tishri) which was **The Day of Atonement**. The Jews called The Day of Atonement "*The Sabbath of Sabbaths*" and of all the sacred days in Israel, commencement of Jubilee was the most sacred (Leviticus 25:8-17). "*This fiftieth year is sacred—it is a time of freedom and of celebration when everyone will receive back their original property, and slaves will return home to their families*" (Leviticus 25:10 NIV). During Jubilee, captives were to be set free, debts were to be forgiven, and the Hebrews were taught to *rest* in God's perfect provision for them. Rest, not work, was the predominate theme of the Law of God.

The Hebrews were taught that "*The Law was only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the reality themselves*" (Hebrews 10:1). Just like seeing a shadow tells you that a *real* person is coming, so too the Old Covenant Law, including the commandments to *rest* (Sabbath Laws), was a shadow that prefigured the One who would come and give *real, eternal rest*. The major consequence of sin is labor, "sweat work," and "thorns and thistles" in the harvest. Sin produces the opposite of rest, and the Law foreshadowed God's determination to wipe out the destructiveness of sin through the Anointed One (Messiah).

The problem with the Jews is that they not only violated the Law of God when it came to *rest*, they ultimately rejected the One whom the Law prefigured.

### **The Hebrews Refusal to Rest**

Moses led God's people in an exodus from Egypt in **1491 B.C.** Due to a lack of trust in God's faithfulness to fulfill His promise of bringing them safely into the Promised Land, Israel wandered for forty years in the desert. Again, the opposite of rest is restless, laborious wandering.

Finally, Joshua led the Hebrews in 1450 B.C. into the Promised Land. The Jews conquered and divided the lush land among their twelve tribes. Israel finally rested in God's abilities and not their own, and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. When Israel became tempted again with the delusion of self-sufficiency, they labored on their own at Ai and lost the battle. God was teaching His people the principle of *resting* in Him even in time of conflict.

After taking possession of Canaan, the Israelites initially obeyed God's Sabbath laws regarding *rest*. But as time passed, the Hebrews began looking around at other nations, and they began to beg God for a king to rule over them. It looked easier from their perspective to trust in a monarchy rather than to rest in a theocracy. "*Set a king over us like all the nations who are around us*" (Deuteronomy 17:14). The Apostle Paul says, "*When Israel asked for a king, God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years*" (Acts 13:21).

Bishop Ussher's chronology places Saul's coronation as king of Israel in **1095 B.C.** *The crowning of Saul as king of Israel marks the exact year the Hebrew people stopped observing Sabbath rest.* Institutional systems designed to give people security without promoting *rest* in God--regardless of whether the system is corporate, political, or religious in nature--will create within people a sense of self-sufficiency.

For **490 years** after Saul's coronation as king, God's people *refused* to keep the **seventh year** agricultural *rest* commandment. The reason for their refusal is not given, but it couldn't have been because of ignorance. The Law of God was clear, and it was clearly understood by the Hebrews. In spite of God's expressed command that they rest in Him on various sabbaths, the Hebrew people began tilling, sowing, and harvesting crops *during* the **seventh** year. Those 490 *shabbat* forsaking years (from 1095 B.C. to 605 B.C.) meant the **seventh** year agricultural land *rest* was not kept by Israel **seventy** times (**70 x 7** years equals **490** years). When God initially gave Israel the Law on Mt. Sinai, He told the people what would happen if they refused to observe the Sabbaths.

"I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate...I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become wasted. Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of desolation while you are in your enemies

land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it" (Leviticus 26:31-35).

**490 years** after Israel stopped practicing *sabbath* rest upon Saul's coronation as king (1095 B.C.), God raised up Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon to punish Israel. The year was 605 B.C. It was King Nebuchadnezzar's first year on the throne. His father, King Nabopolassar, had defeated the Assyrians four years earlier (609 B.C.), leading Babylon to become the world's second great empire (Assyria had been the world's first). In **605 B.C.** King Nabopolassar abdicated the Babylonian throne and gave it to his son Nebuchadnezzar II. King Nebuchadnezzar led his army to Jerusalem to make war against the Hebrews. God's judgment of Israel had begun.

God used King Nebuchadnezzar to fulfill the promise He made to Israel in Leviticus 26:31-35, a promise of judgment via desolation and destruction if the Hebrews violated God's Law regarding *rest*. Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in 605 B.C., the first of what would eventually be three Babylonian attacks on the Jewish capital city (605 B.C.; 597 B.C.; and 587 B.C.) In the first siege, Nebuchadnezzar captured Daniel and a handful of other young Hebrew men and took them back to Babylon to serve in his court (see Daniel 1). The prophet Daniel would never again return to Israel.

King Nebuchadnezzar came back to Jerusalem in 587 B.C. for his third and final attack against the capital city of the Jews. He laid siege to the city for several months and eventually succeeded in **586 B.C.** in demolishing the Hebrew Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar carried away the rest of the Jews into Babylon. **586 B.C.** marks the beginning of what is commonly called the Babylonian Captivity for the Jews. Israel experienced God's promised judgment for their violations of *Sabbath Law*. Understanding the reason for the Babylonian captivity crystallizes one's understanding of the Old Testament, particularly the Law and the Prophets and the historical narratives, for all these writings deal with *Israel's refusal to rest in God*, as well as God's promised judgment on Israel for their violations of His command to *rest*.

### **70 Years of Judgment for Babylon and for Israel**

The number **70** is the number of years associated with God's judgment upon *both* Babylon and Israel. God promised He would raise up Babylon to desolate Israel for their sin, but He would only allow Babylon **70 years** as a world power before He would make them become servants of other nations and free His people from their captivity. Throughout Scripture, God orchestrates pagan nations to accomplish His purpose, but then punishes those same nations for their free-will rebellion against Him. A sovereign God is able to *orchestrate* all events, even acts of sin which He never authors or originates, for an ultimate good purpose.

This is what the LORD says: 'When seventy years are completed **for Babylon**, I will visit you (My people) and fulfill my good word to you...' (Jeremiah 29:10).

"When **seventy years are completed** I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the Lord, 'for their iniquity...I will bring upon Babylon all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings will make slaves of them, even them; and I will recompense them according to their deeds and according to the work of their hands.'" (Jeremiah 25:12-14).

Babylon became a world power when it defeated Assyria in **609 B.C.**, but **70 years later**, in **539 B.C.**, just as God promised, God brought the Babylonian kingdom to an end. God used the Medes and the Persians and their combined armies under the leadership of the remarkable Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, to defeat the mighty Babylonians. Cyrus and his Persian engineers diverted the river running underneath the walls of Babylon and dried up the river bed. The Medo-Persian army then snuck into the walled city of Babylon, breaching the impenetrable walls of Babylon, crawling on their bellies *underneath the walls*. The very night the Persians invaded Babylon, King Belshazzar and his 1,000 Babylonian princes were drinking themselves into a drunken stupor inside the Palace Walls of the Great Hall (see Daniel 5). The city of Babylon, fortified by walls people consider to be one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World, fell to

King Cyrus and the Medo-Persian army during one night of fighting.

The **70 years** of Babylonian self-sufficiency were up (**609 B.C. to 539 B.C.**). The Hebrew prophecies of God's judgment against Babylon, prophecies given decades before Babylon's actual fall, are gripping portrayals of what happens to any person or country of people, whether Hebrew or not, who deem themselves sufficient and the Creator God unnecessary (see Isaiah 13:9-13 as an example of a prophecy predicting the downfall of Babylon).

God also judged His people, the Hebrews, with **70 years** of desolation for their self-sufficiency refusal to rest in God. Of all the nations on the earth, Israel should have known better. In the last chapter of Chronicles, the chronicler describes the reason for **70 years** of Hebrew desolation and exile at the hands of the Babylonians:

*"The land (of Israel) **enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.**" (2 Chronicles 36:21).*

Israel's punishment at the hands of the Babylonians was to be **70 years** to make up for the **70** Sabbatical years of agricultural rest that Israel refused to keep beginning with Saul's anointing as king (1095 B.C.) and ending with Nebuchadnezzar's first appearance at Jerusalem (605 B.C.).

Some believe this judgment of **70 years of desolation** for the land of Israel began in **609 B.C.** In that year, King Josiah, one of the good kings of Israel's southern kingdom, refused the Egyptians permission to pass through Judah on their way to help the Assyrians fight their losing battle against the Babylonians. The Egyptian pharaoh was so furious with Josiah's refusal of safe passage that he led the Egyptian army to war against the Hebrews in what is called the **Battle of Megiddo**. King Josiah was killed by the **Egyptian Pharaoh Necho** at that battle (see II Kings 23:29-30). God's judgment on Israel through the new world power of Babylon had begun. If the clock for the **70** years of promised desolation for Israel did indeed begin in **609 B.C.**, then the promised desolation of Israel ended in **539 B.C.** with the fall of the Babylon and the decree from King Cyrus of Persia that the exiled Jews could return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4).

Others believe Israel the **70 year** judgment of desolation for refusing to *observe Sabbath rest* begins with the destruction of the Temple and the Hebrews exile to Babylon in **586 B.C.** From the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II in **586 B.C.** to the dedication of the Second Temple by a few of the returning Hebrew exiles in **516 B.C.** there was a period of time that passed of exactly **70 years**. 70 years without the Temple. 70 years without the Temple rituals. 70 years of desolation among the Hebrews. Jeremiah explains, just as the writer of Chronicles did in II Chronicles 36:21, that Israel's **70 years** of desolation corresponds to the Hebrews forsaking the **70** seventh year Sabbath rests for those 490 years.

"The whole land will be a desolation and a horror ... (until) **seventy years** are completed ..." (Jeremiah 25:11-12).

Wherever you put the starting and stopping point of the **70 years** of desolation for Israel--either **609 B.C. to 539 B.C.** or **586 B.C. to 516 B.C.** -- there can be no denial that God used the Babylonians to destroy the First Temple, to desolate the land, to scatter His people among the nations, and to fulfill His promised judgment against Israel for *refusing to rest*.

### **Daniel's Vision of Eternal Rest in the Eternal King**

During the Babylonian exile, Daniel wrote the book that bears his name. Daniel states in Daniel 9:2 that he knew how long Jerusalem would be desolate because he had read Jeremiah: *"I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last **seventy years**"* (Daniel 9:2).

Then, later in the same chapter, Daniel records an amazing vision that God gave him through the angel Gabriel. It is a vision regarding another 490 years. I'm sure Daniel must have caught his breath when he heard ("seventy sevens") because the desolation Israel was experiencing in his day was a result of Israel's previous 490 year period of refusing to *rest*. He must have deemed his vision troubling for his nation because it spoke of an *additional* 490 years of sin, culminating in the final abolishment of the Temple, Jerusalem and the Jewish way of life. Yet the vision included some good news as well. The vision is found in Daniel 9:24-27. In the first verse alone (Daniel 9:24), six things are said to occur by the end of the 490 year time period:

**"Seventy sevens** (490 years) *have been decreed for your people* (the Jews) *and your holy city* (Jerusalem), to (1) *finish the transgression*, (2) *to seal up sin*, (3) *to atone for wickedness*, (4) *to bring in everlasting righteousness*, (5) *to seal up the vision and prophecy* and (6) *to anoint the Most Holy Place*. (Daniel 9:24).

Daniel was told by God in this vision that He would establish a set time table of *another 490 years* to "finish the transgression." The Hebrew text uses masculine plural for these **seven sevens** (490 years) with a **singular** verb (i.e. "490 years **is** decreed"). The seven sevens are conceived as ONE UNIT OF TIME. There are no gaps. In the same way the first unit of 490 years of *rest* refusal was continuous (1095 B.C. to 605 B.C.), so too this second 490 year period of Israel's refusal to *rest* will be a continuous, single unit of time. God's people had already refused to *rest* for 490 years and the Jews as a result the Jews found themselves in Babylonian captivity. God came to Daniel while in captivity and said, "This is not the end for 'your people.'" God then set a **second** 490 year time period and said these "seven sevens" or 490 years were decreed for six reasons:

**(1). "To finish the transgression."** Earlier in the chapter Daniel had prayed to the Lord saying, "*Israel has transgressed Thy law*" (Daniel 9:11) It is a beautiful prayer (Daniel 9:5-11) where Daniel confesses **Israel's sin** of refusing to *rest* in God and violating His Law. To "finish the transgression" at the end of this second 490 years will be Israel's ultimate resistance to, and rejection of, the Person to whom all the Sabbath Laws point—Jesus Christ. Israel's rejection of the shadow of rest (the Law) was serious and brought temporal punishment at the end of Israel's first 490 year period of sin. Israel's rejection of the reality of rest (the Lord) brings eternal punishment at the end of Israel's second 490 year time period of sin.

**(2). "To make an end of sin"** or "seal up sins" At the end of this second unit of 490 years (seventy sevens), Israel will complete her transgression against God. Again, their sin during the first 490 year period was a refusal to *rest* in God. Likewise, Israel's transgression during this prophesied second 490 year period of sin is their continuing refusal to *rest* in God, resulting in a rejection of the Messiah. Just prior to His death, Jesus said to the Jews, "*Your house is left to you desolate*" (Matthew 23:38). In the same manner the Hebrews experienced desolation at the end of the first 490 period of Sabbath neglect, so too the Hebrews would experience desolation at the end of their second 490 period of Sabbath neglect (i.e. "*the rejection of Jesus, the true Sabbath rest*"). This phrase "to make an end of sin" is literally "to seal up sins" and has its fulfillment at the end of the prophesied 490 years when the Jews would reject God's Son and have Him crucified. Jesus said to the Pharisees just prior to His crucifixion, "*Go ahead and finish what your ancestors started*" (Matthew 23:32).

**(3). "To make an atonement for iniquity."** This is a very clear statement of the cross, the place where "*God presented Christ as an atonement for sin*" (Romans 3:25).

**(4). "To bring in everlasting righteousness."** Everlasting righteousness is the result of the at-one-ment and once-for-all death of Jesus Christ for sins (see Hebrews 9:12 and Hebrews 10:10). The atonement of Christ for sins is the ultimate place of *rest*. "*For now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the Law*" (Romans 3:21). "*A righteousness that does not come from my obedience to the law, but that which is through faith in Christ*" (Philippians 3:9). The everlasting kingdom of the eternal King is filled with sinners who have found their eternal *rest* in Him.

**(5). "To seal up the vision and the prophesy."** To seal up means to "fulfill and confirm" all the

prophecies of the Old Testament related to the Messiah (see Luke 18:31). E.J. Young in his classic book *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Eerdmans, 1949) writes about this phrase "(The word) vision was a technical name for revelation given to Old Testament prophets (cf. Isaiah 1:1; Amos 1:1; etc.) The prophet was the one through whom this vision was revealed to the people. The two words, vision and prophet, therefore, serve to designate the prophetic revelation of the Old Testament period. This revelation was of a temporary, preparatory, typical nature. It pointed forward to the coming of Him who was the great Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15). When Christ came, there was no further need of prophetic revelation in the Old Testament sense." Jesus Christ "sealed up" the vision and the prophesy of the Old Testament Law and Prophets. All was fulfilled in Him.

**(6). "To anoint the most holy place."** The title "Anointed One" translates the word Christ (Greek) or Messiah (Hebrew). Jesus the Anointed One experienced His anointing by the Holy Spirit at His baptism and the beginning of His public ministry. "To anoint the most holy place (or one)" is either a reference to the Spirit anointing Jesus at the River Jordan or Jesus anointing the Holy of Holies in heaven when He entered after His resurrection with "His blood" rather than "the blood of goats and calves" (Hebrews 9:11-14). Either way, this sixth item is a reference to Jesus the Anointed One.

The prophecy of Daniel 9:24 states that all six things above are decreed to occur within the 490 time period. The next three verses, Daniel 9:25-27 tell us **when** this 490 year time period begins and ends.

### **The Prophecy that Precisely Predicts the Time of the Coming of Messiah**

Daniel's vision and prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) that God gave him regarding another 490 year time period (i.e. **70 sevens** or **70 weeks of years**) is *the most amazing prophecy in the Old Testament*. It names the date of the Anointed One's appearing. It is most likely the prophecy that sent the Magi from the East to Jerusalem asking Herod, "*Where is He that is born King of the Jews*" (Matthew 2:2). The Magi, coming from the area of ancient Babylon and Persia, would have been familiar with Daniel's famous prophecy, because for centuries all the trained Magi in the east learned to revere the ancient Jewish seer named Daniel due to his legendary interactions with the powerful Babylonian kings. Once Daniel arrived in the east in 605 B.C., he never went back to Jerusalem. Some believe Daniel is buried in Susa, Iran.

The timetable of Daniel's Messianic prophecy in **Daniel 9:24-27** is 490 years (**seventy sevens**). At the end of Israel's first 490 time period of *rest* refusal (1095 B.C. to 605 B.C.) there came temporary judgment from God (70 years), but at the end of this second 490 year period of Israel's *rest* refusal Daniel's vision prophesied an even more severe judgment for Israel because of their rejection of the Anointed One who gives *real rest*. The first time, Israel rejected the Law (the shadow of reality); the second time, Israel rejected the LORD (the reality of the shadow). Here is the prophecy of the timing of the second 490 year time period given to Daniel by God while in captivity in Babylon.

"**(25)** So you are to know and discern that **from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince** there will be seven sevens (49 years) and sixty-two sevens (434 years); it (Jerusalem) will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. **(26)** Then after the sixty-two weeks (comes the 70th week) the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and (as a result) the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its (Jerusalem's) end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; **desolations are determined**. He will confirm a covenant with many (in the) one 'seven.' **(27)** In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and 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" (**Daniel 9:25-27**).

The 490 years of Daniel's vision, known as the 70 Weeks of Daniel, begins with "the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." This decree to "restore and rebuild Jerusalem" was given by Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus in **458 B.C.**

**458 B.C.** is the year when the clock begins for Daniel's 70 Weeks. King Artaxerxes was the fifth Persian

king to rule Persian since Cyrus the Great. Artaxerxes was the son of the famous Persian King **Xerxes**. Sadly, many Christians know very little of Artaxerxes Longimanus, so named "Longimanus" (Latin) because his right hand was longer than his left. Kids today know of his father, Xerxes, because of the popular movie 300, but Christians should know about Artaxerxes because he is mentioned multiple times in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The dates for Artaxerxes' reign as king of Persia are well documented by ancient sources. These sources include all the Greek historians, Ptolemy's Canon, the Babylonian business tablets, and the Elephantine papyri from Egypt. From these documents we know that Xerxes was killed in late December of 465 B.C., and the reign of Artaxerxes begins at that time. This is why the decree to restore and build Jerusalem, issued in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign, is confidently identified as the year **458 B.C.**

The entire decree of Artaxerxes is found in Ezra 7:7-26 and it includes:

- (a). Artaxerxes permission for *"any of the Israelites ... including priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem with"* Ezra, to go (Ezra 7:13).
- (b). Artaxerxes giving to Ezra large portions of *"silver and gold"* (Ezra 7:15-16) for the work of restoring Jerusalem. The walls, gates, and roads were all in horrible disrepair.
- (c). Artaxerxes declaring that Ezra would have *"everything he asked"* (Ezra 7:7) in fulfilling the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. Thirteen years later when Nehemiah made it to Jerusalem (**445/444 B.C.**), he was surprised and disappointed to hear that Jerusalem's walls and gates were *still* in disrepair (Nehemiah 1:1-3). Ezra had been given by Artaxerxes the authority and the resources to rebuild and restore Jerusalem, but it seems Ezra was too busy with social and religious restoration to get the city rebuilt. With Nehemiah's help, Jerusalem's infrastructure was finally restored ...

### **The 490 Year Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 Is Separated Into Three Continuous Time Sections:**

- (1). The first section of time is **7 sevens**, or seven weeks of years (49 years). Since this prophecy begins in 458 B.C., the 49 year section has its termination in **409/408 B.C.** when there was the dedication of the restored Jerusalem. This 49 year time period is described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the last chronological books of the Old Testament.
- (2). The second section of time is **62 sevens**, or sixty-two weeks of years (434 years). This section of time flows immediately after the first section of 49 years. This 434 year section of time covers what is called the inter-testament time period (the time between the testaments) and the first portion of the 1st century A.D. This is the period for the rise of the Pharisees and Sadducees and the Sanhedrin among the Hebrews--an ever increasing institutional rebellion against God. Since the 7 sevens of years and the 62 weeks of years flow as one time unit, the **483** years they total indicate a **VERY SPECIFIC YEAR**. Start with 458 B.C. and the decree of Artaxerxes, recognize that from 1.B.C. to A.D. there is only one year (there is no year "zero"), and count off 583 years and you arrive at **A.D. 26** - the year of Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism and commenced His three-and-a-half year public ministry. Jesus' baptism and anointing mark the beginning of the final seven years of the vision (see below).
- (3). The third and final section of time is **1 seven** or one week of years (7 years). This last 7 year time period is the final section of Daniel's prophecy and is often called **Daniel's 70th Week**. As stated above, these last seven years begin with Jesus baptism and anointing. Some Christians believe there is a "gap" between the 69th week and the 70th week, but that defies logic because God never mentioned to Daniel there is a gap between the 69th and 70th week, the Hebrew language treats the entire 490 period as one unit of time (i.e. *"seventy weeks is determined"*), and the first 490 year time period to which this second 490 year time period corresponds had no gaps.

### **The 70th Week of Daniel Is About Christ**

The 70th Week of Daniel--the last 7 years of the 490 year time period--begins in A.D. 26 at Jesus' baptism and anointing, goes 3 and 1/2 years until His crucifixion, and then concludes with the stoning of

Steven—the first Christian martyr—in A.D. 33. Right before Jesus was crucified He decreed the destruction of the Temple and the Jews, but the fulfillment of that decree would come 40 years later. God judged Israel for their first 490 year period of *rest refusal* with Babylonian Captivity, but the judgment of God after this second 490 year period of *rest refusal* would be much more severe. God is serious about rest. The person who refuses to rest in the Jubilee that comes from heaven experiences severe judgment.

Before we look at the judgment that came to Israel for rejecting the Messiah, let's see what happens within or shortly after 70th Week of Daniel. I will take the events of the 70th week in chronological order of their historical occurrences as we examine Daniel 9:25-27:

(1). *"He will confirm the covenant with many (in) one seven"* (v. 27).

The "He" here is Jesus Christ, not any anti-christ. There is nothing in the text that would lead us to believe the He "who confirms the covenant" is anyone other than Messiah the Prince of the previous verse. God makes covenants. This covenant is the New Covenant, the same covenant Jesus described to His disciples when He held up the wine and said, *"For this is My blood of the covenant which is to be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins"* (Luke 22:20).

(2). *"The Messiah will be cut-off and have nothing"* (v. 26)

This is, of course, referring to the crucifixion of the Messiah which occurred 3 1/2 years into Daniel's 70th Week. At His death, Jesus was stripped of all His possessions and buried in a borrowed tomb.

(3). *"In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering"* (v. 27)

Christ does this by His death. By the shed blood of Jesus Christ, God put to an end to the Old Testament economy of blood sacrifice and grain offerings. Though the Jews continued with their ritual sacrifices for one more generation, the cross put an end to God's recognition of such. Jesus fulfilled the Law, and never again would heaven appreciate any blood sacrifice that takes the place of God's Son.

(4). *"Desolations are determined"* (v. 26)

When Jesus cleared the Temple with a whip, overturning the tables of money changers, He said, "Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). This was on Monday of Passion Week. Messiah Prince decreed the destruction of the Temple, the desolation of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews (Matthew 24), the judgment of God upon the Hebrews for rejecting the Jubilee. The text simply says desolations are determined. The fulfillment of God's decree to desolate Israel would wait 40 years (a generation) and be completed in A.D. 70 by the Romans when Jerusalem and the Temple were utterly destroyed.

(5). *"And the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary"* (v. 26b).

The prince is Messiah the Prince. The people who come to destroy the city and the Temple are His agents. It is no more unlikely that the sovereign God could use the Romans in A.D. 70 to destroy the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and scatter the Hebrews than it is that God could use the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians to do the same thing in terms of judgment on His people in the Old Testament. The apocalyptic language of judgment used by Jesus in Matthew 24 as He describes the impending destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (i.e. "within a generation") is exactly the same imagery used by the Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament to describe the of God judgment on various other nations (see Joel 3:15).

(6). *"And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war"* (v. 26c).

When Jesus described the coming judgment on Israel in Matthew 24, He said "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars ... but that is not yet the end." The Romans fought the Jews for nearly three

years, and all the way to the very end, when the Temple and the city were finally destroyed, there was war. The reference to "a flood" is Hebrew apocalyptic language used to describe God's judgment and an outpouring of Divine wrath (see Nahum 1:8).

(7). *"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" (v. 27c).*

It is said by Josephus, the captured Jew who served as historian for the Roman general Titus, that when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, they used pulleys and ropes to pull every stone so that not one was left standing on another. They set fires to melt the gold and silver in the Temple down, and slaughtered any Jew who did not run to the hills.

This judgment of the Jews was "decreed" by God. It was very similar to the desolation and destruction of Israel by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The difference, however, is clear. There will never be another Temple built by God. There will never be another sacrificial system reinstated by God. There will never be another favored nation.

Those who rest in Christ are the Temple of the living God. Those in Christ, Jew and Gentile, are "the chosen nation of God." Those who rest in Christ are "the royal priesthood." The New Covenant abolishes the Old Covenant. The New Covenant does a much better job of showing what it means to rest in God by faith, receiving a righteousness that does not come from the Law, but comes from God and is found by faith in Christ.

#### **APPLICATION: Christ is the Fulfillment of the Law; He is My Jubilee**

God abolishes the Old Covenant Law and institutes the New Covenant through His Son. The Law is only a shadow of the eternal realities that have come in Jesus Christ. Everything in Old Testament Scriptures—the Law, the Prophets, the sacrificial rituals, etc. — point to the Messiah. The Anointed One fulfilled the Law, every jot and tittle, and then God abolished the Old Covenant, including all the Sabbath commandments of rest, and now encourages the world to embrace ("kiss") His Son. God's intention has always been to promote the Person who gives *real rest*, not to crystalize the shadow (the Law) that only prefigured *real rest*. Legalism is ultimately a turning away from *that which is real* through the embracing of the picture rather than the Person whom the picture is intended to represent.

When a sinner finds *real rest* in God through trusting the Person and work of Jesus the Anointed One, the sinner is displaying faith that **God will perform a good work**—similar to the work of Creation—for sinners, in sinners, and through sinners. This work of God in delivering us from our sins will result in God's declaration of "Very good!" Yes, that's right, God alone takes the chaos of a sinner's life and makes something very, very good.

*"For we are His workmanship,"* (Ephesians 2:10) and *"If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation"* (II Corinthians 5:17). The ultimate response to a perfect work of God is *rest*. The entire intent of God in giving us His word is that we *rest* in Him! For those of you who wish to work, labor and toil for God's acceptance and love, and find it difficult to *rest* in God and embrace with joy the fact that *God deems you good because you are His work*, I would encourage you to realize the seriousness of your dilemma.

If God punished Israel for *refusing* to rest in Him under the Old Covenant dispensation, *"How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?"* (Hebrews 10:29).

When Jesus began His public ministry, He preached his first sermon from Luke 4:18-19. He read out loud for all the Jews to hear:

*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."*

The text Jesus read was from the scroll of Isaiah. The prophet was describing the events for the Jubilee year in Israel, events called for by the Law (release of captives, forgiveness of debts, etc.). After Jesus read from Isaiah during his inaugural ministry sermon:

*"He rolled up the scroll, handed it to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him. Jesus began by saying to them, **'Today, this Scripture is fulfilled'**" (Luke 4:20-21).*

Jesus told his disciples *"Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. **I have come to fulfill them!**"* (Matthew 5:17). Jesus Christ is the reality of *rest*. The shadow of the Law only pointed to Him. God gave Jesus Christ as an atonement for sin to set sinners free. God gave Jesus Christ as an atonement for sin to forgive sinners' debts. God gave Jesus Christ as an atonement for sin in order to fashion "a new creation," for every sinner in Christ is "the workmanship of God." Just like God rested after the initial creation, He *"who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion"* (Philippians 1:6), and when it is completed, He will say "Very good. Well done. I am pleased." Why?

Because your deliverance is a perfect work of your God. He never fails.

Rest.

The intent of God in giving us His word is for us to rest in Him. Rest in Christ. Rest in His work. Rest in His performance. Rest in His faithfulness.

Rest.

Rest in knowing you are deemed perfectly righteous because He has given you a righteousness that is not your own and does not come from your obedience to any Law; He has given to you a righteousness that comes from God and is found by *rest in Christ*

Rest and then say, "There's no other way!"