

Chapter Two, Part One. This is the fourth installment of the Serial Publication in Video and PDF.

The
PRODIGAL SON
PROPHECY

God's Amazing Plan for the Restoration of the Two
Hebrew Houses and the Salvation of the Gentiles

By Dr. Scott Lively

THE PRODIGAL SON PROPHECY
Veritas Aeterna Press,
PO Box 2373, Springfield, Massachusetts, 01101

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CHAPTER TWO:

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEVENS

“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come” Isaiah 46:9-10.

God has arranged his time-keeping system in cycles of seven. Creation occurred according to this divine pattern of six 24-hour days of work and one of Sabbath rest. And the early Christians believed and taught that the totality of time allotted by God for physical creation to exist is seven thousand years: six thousand years of work and struggle by mankind followed by a thousand year Sabbath rest called the Millennial Kingdom. This in turn is followed by the destruction of all matter and our entrance into Heaven (2 Peter 3).

This is the same pattern of sevens found in the schedule of the Biblical Feasts in Leviticus 23, and the Jubilee Calendar in Leviticus 25.

There are seven Biblical Feasts, which God instructs are His appointed times of fellowship with man: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles or “Booths” is the “Sabbath” of the seven, representing God dwelling with man as He did during the Hebrew sojourn in the wilderness where they lived in tents (booths), following the Exodus from Egypt. In the prophetic sense, the Feast of Tabernacles represents the future Millennial Kingdom when Christ will literally dwell on earth with men, ruling as King of Kings on the literal throne of David. Tabernacles is an eight day festival, the eighth day representing the new beginning (prophetically, Heaven).

The Jubilee Calendar is a calendar of seven-year cycles, with each seventh year being the Sabbath year when the land must lie fallow (no planting of crops) and certain contracts between men must be considered fulfilled. Seven cycles of seven years round out the Jubilee and that final Sabbath year (the 49th year in the cycle) is called the High Sabbatical, ushering in the 50th, or Jubilee Year, the year of liberation: the land of the Hebrews must return to its original owners and captives are set free.

The importance of this pattern of sevens was burned into the minds of the Hebrews as they wandered in the desert, being fed daily by God’s provision of manna. God provided manna for six days only

and instructed men that they must gather a double portion on the sixth day because none would be provided on the seventh day, the Sabbath (Exodus 16:25). Importantly, the manna collected on the sixth day would last for two days, and not spoil in one day as it would at any other time. This teaching was so essential that a jar of manna was one of only three sacred items kept with the Ark of the Covenant, along with the stone tablets containing God's law, and Aaron's rod (Exodus 16:33, Hebrews 9:4).

The pattern of sevens (and of Jubilee) is also found in the way the feasts were kept. For example, the Biblical Feast of Pentecost falls on the 50th day after the Feast of First Fruits (when Jesus rose from the dead, the first fruits of humanity (1 Corinthians 15:20), following seven weeks of watching and preparation called the "Counting of the Omer."

There are far too many examples of God's use of seven in Scripture to recount in this section, but we have cited enough of them for our purposes. Seven days, seven years, seven weeks, seven cycles of days, weeks and years, seven millennia, seven seals, trumpets and bowls, and on and on.

NOT EITHER/OR, BUT BOTH/AND

As we begin to recognize and contemplate the cyclical and organic nature of God's perfect system of timekeeping, the contrast between the human and the divine perspective on things becomes clearer. The unaided Human perspective is flat, linear, two dimensional. But illuminated by the divine spark it perceives some of the depth and breadth of multiple dimensions. For example, it becomes possible to reconcile apparent contradictions in Scripture such as the doctrines of predestination and free will. The answer isn't that one must be true to the exclusion of the other, but that both can be true concurrently in different dimensions of reality: in this case from outside and inside of time (heaven and earth). Not "either this or that," but "both this AND that."

Predestination is the perspective of timeless heaven, where the Creation story has already finished but has not yet begun -- a paradox currently beyond our comprehension. Free will is the perspective of earth, where we human beings float in the river of time and perceive each successive moment and its very real choices as we pass from one to the next from the Alpha toward the Omega.

In like manner, any given passage of the Living Word of God may offer multiple perspectives of the truth it contains or teach multiple distinct and separate lessons based on the specific need or degree of spiritual maturity of the recipient. A clue to this deeper reality is found in Isaiah 28:9-10:

*"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, **precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**"*

The highest achievements of human reasoning and intellect from Pythagoras to Newton to Einstein are embodied in those first two steps: "*precept upon precept, line upon line.*" Deductive and inductive logic, the scientific method, mathematics, presuppositional theology, and every technological advance of humankind is made possible by our capacity to apply these rules of rationality written into our being by God.

But then he adds the third dimension of illumination: "*here a little, there a little.*" This passes beyond the realm of linear logic and the material world and draws from the eternal realm, a process in which Holy Spirit actively fulfills the promise of Christ that "*He will lead you into all truth*" (John 16:13). It is beyond our control but not random, available only to those who genuinely trust God to impart truth to us.

"Truth" is God's perspective of His Creation. In His omniscience His perception is utterly infallible and He has three successively more illuminating ways of teaching us about it: three ways that match the three steps of the above Isaiah passage.

1) Through diligent observation of His Creation for insights about Him whereby He reveals “precept upon precept.” Because “*what may be known about God is plain to [everyone], because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being **understood from what has been made**, so that people are without excuse*” (Romans 1:19-20);

And “*when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that **the requirements of the law are written on their hearts***” (Romans 2:14-15). Since this is true of the highest intellectual abstractions of the moral law then, *a priori*, it is more obviously true of the more fundamental laws of material nature, many of which are self-evident to any rational thinker.

2) Through His Living Word, the Scripture, “line upon line.” “*The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple*” (Psalms 19:7).

3) Through His Spirit, who dwells within us if we have accepted Christ and are sufficiently tuned in to Him to hear the still, small voice: “*here a little, there a little.*” God is like a divine tuning fork and His Holy Spirit is like the emanation of His vibration. The more we attune to His presence in us, the more we love Him and surrender to His will (Romans 8:28), the more we can perceive the truth in the supernatural “*here a little, there a little*” guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The more we appreciate that God’s Word is living and active, not just dead words on a page, the easier it is to recognize that there is often more than one way to interpret a given passage. That perspective will be helpful as we reconsider some of the familiar dogma of modern end-times theology.

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS AND THE PROBLEM OF THE 70TH WEEK

A common belief among mainstream Christians is that the Last Days Tribulation will last seven years and be preceded by the Rapture of the Church and the signing of some form of seven year peace treaty. (The “weeks” of Daniel are years, not days.)

There are several problems with this doctrine, not the least of which is the sole proof text used to support the notion of a “seven-year tribulation” and a “peace treaty.” That text is Daniel 9:24-27:

24Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

25Know 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: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

While this passage accurately prophesies the timing of the first coming of the Messiah and addresses the future second coming, the text does not state that there will be a seven-year tribulation or that it will begin with a peace treaty. Those conclusions are derived from the speculation of various prophecy teachers of the past, which are repeated as dogma by their current adherents. Granted, the seven-year peace treaty is a plausible theory, but it is not the only one.

It is equally plausible that the entire 70 weeks of Daniel was completed at the first coming of Christ, and the *pattern* of the 70th week will be repeated in the last days. I will address this alternative and the phenomenon of repeating Biblical patterns below.

It is also plausible that it is Christ, not the Antichrist who “*confirms a covenant with many:*” the Covenant of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As I read the passage carefully I see that v 25 says that 69 weeks lead up to the coming of the Messiah:

"unto Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks."

In my view that countdown leads up to but does not include His first advent. It's like saying, "33 more shopping days until Christmas." Christmas is not included in the 33 days.

Verse 26 appears to support this by saying:

"AFTER threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off."

In other words, the cutting off of the Messiah occurs IN the 70th week. It doesn't say "in the 69th week," it says "after." That precludes a 70th week being projected into the future even if just one day of it is in sequence with the 69th week.

The rest of verse 26 (26b) describes events that occur after the 69 weeks as well. I believe it is talking about the destruction of the Temple by Titus in 70AD. I think v26b is parenthetical, meaning it is stated as a side-comment. In other words, we should read it like this:

26a *"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself (and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.)"*

I view v27 as picking up from 26a:

"And he [Messiah] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week [He] shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease..."

This was precisely what Jesus came to do. He came to confirm the covenant made by Yahweh to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and in the midst of the week he was "cut off" by the Jewish and Roman authorities who crucified Him. In that "cutting off" He voluntarily became the Passover "lamb" whose sacrifice ended/fulfilled the purpose of that ritual. It's a perfect logical fit.

The rest of v27 reads (with my annotations in brackets):

"and for [because of] the overspreading of abominations he [Messiah] shall make desolate, even until the consummation [of the end of the age], [when] that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. [i.e., those or him whose abominations have caused the desolation]."

This is precisely the curse that Jesus pronounced in Matt 23:38-39:

"Behold, your house [House/Kingdom of Judah] is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see

me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Just before His arrest, Jesus pronounced this curse on the Jews (which was partially fulfilled in 70AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and fully so in 135AD following the Simon bar Kokhba revolt which caused the Roman authorities to permanently banish all Jews from the land -- a ban/desolation that endured until the Balfour Declaration of the British Empire in 1917). HE is the one who makes desolate. This is the same desolation enacted by God to cleanse the land of Hebrew sin when He sent them into exile in Babylon for 70 years.

GOD, NOT ANTICHRIST, IS THE ONE WHO “MAKES DESOLATE”

Abominations cause desolations, but God is the one who enacts the desolations.

Leviticus 26: 27 *“And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me...I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation...32And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. 33And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. 34Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. 35As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.”*

Isaiah 24:1 *“Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.”*

Ezekiel 33:28 *“For I [Yahweh] will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.”*

SEVEN YEARS OR THREE AND ONE HALF?

In the mainstream view, Daniel’s 70th week is unfulfilled and projected some 2,000 years into the future, soon to begin in these last days. As I’ve said, it is a plausible theory, and one that is NOT defeated by the gap of two millennia. There are other Biblical examples of a time lapse in the fulfillment of prophecy, most importantly the gap implied by Jesus Himself in His reading of Isaiah 6 1-2 in the synagogue:

“1The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God...”

As recorded in Luke 4:16-21, Jesus read only through the verse 2a and closed the book because He

was literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 6:1-2a, but not yet fulfilling 2b, "*the day of vengeance of our God*" which would not occur for 2,000 years until His second coming.

Importantly, this reading was an announcement of the Jubilee Year and (by some accounts) His first act of ministry (immediately following His testing by Satan in the wilderness). Look for the Antichrist, the counterfeit messiah, to possibly follow this pattern of declaring a Jubilee at the start of his reign.

Getting back to our question in this section, it does not necessarily follow, however, that the full seven years of the 70th "week" are waiting to be fulfilled. It may be that only the "half week" (3 ½ years) is unfulfilled. As we have conjectured above "*after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...and in the midst of the [70th] week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.*" If this alternative view is correct, and the projecting of an unfulfilled portion of the prophecy into the future is also correct, the reign of the Antichrist could be just three and one half years, not seven years.

Interestingly, there is no mention of a seven-year reign of the Antichrist in Revelation, only three and one half years (see Revelation 11:2, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5).

That having been said, I tend to believe that the Antichrist probably *will* reign a full seven years, and his reign may very well begin with a peace treaty. However, I don't expect it to comport with the details of Daniel 9:24-27 as closely as other prophecy teachers do, because I believe the Daniel 9 iteration of the Daniel pattern (all 70 weeks of it) was finished in sequence with no gap.

THE COMPLETION OF THE 70TH WEEK

After Jesus was "cut off" in the "middle of the week," the Apostles, whom Jesus trained to "do even greater works" than He, picked up the mantle of His authority and went out to continue the mission of Christ *to the Hebrews only*. For the remainder of that 70th week they made their best effort, but the Jews then hired Saul to stop the advance of the church. At the end of the "week" the first martyr of the church, Stephen, is killed by a mob as young Saul looked on, but not before Stephen delivers a final indictment of the Jews (Acts 7). He is essentially closing the door to the corporate House of Judah in fulfillment of the curse of Jesus in Matthew 23.

Saul then becomes Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles, and at the close of the 70th week the primary mission of the church shifts as the Age of the Gentiles begins (Romans 11), and the curse of Jesus unfolds upon the Jews, culminating in the near term with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and eventually (135AD) in their banishment from the Holy Land for more than 17 centuries.

In this way, Daniel's 70th week can be considered to have been concluded, yet I believe it may soon be repeated prior to the return of Christ.

THE REPEATING PATTERN OF THE DESOLATION OF JERUSALEM

How can Daniel 9:27 be fulfilled and unfulfilled at the same time -- both things be true?

The flaw in the traditional view is that it attempts to compress three separate versions of the Daniel prophecy into one, rather than recognizing they are intended to describe three iterations of the same pattern, with three distinct Antichrist figures, three distinct “deliverer” figures, three distinct historical settings of the City of Jerusalem, and three distinct abominations that cause desolation.

Daniel 9:24-27

This is actually the second iteration of the Desecration of Jerusalem Pattern, chronologically, though first in order in the text.

In this iteration, the Antichrist figure is the Roman General Titus, later to become Emperor Titus. The deliverer figure is Yeshua Hamashiach (Jesus Christ). And the setting is the City of Jerusalem in the last generation before the destruction of the Second Temple (which could arguably be called the Third Temple because it had been so dramatically enlarged by the wicked King Herod -- a descendant of Edomite converts to Judaism). The abomination that causes desolation (A of D) could be the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish religious authorities despite His personal presence and appeal to them through signs and wonders, and through reasoning from the Scriptures. If so, the desolation was decreed by Christ in Matthew 23: 37-38, and (in relation to the temple) was carried out by Titus in 70AD. According to Philostratus, Titus refused to accept a wreath of victory for that campaign, saying he was merely the instrument of God's wrath on the Jews.¹

Alternately, and perhaps more likely, the A of D could have been the erection of a statue of Roman Emperor Caligula in the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 40.² Caligula was a definite Antichrist figure who, like Antiochus IV Epiphanes, claimed to be a god and hated the Jews for their monotheism.

Daniel 11:29-45

This iteration was the first in order of fulfillment, but second in order in the text. The Antichrist figure is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, King of the Seleucid Empire, headquartered in Babylon. The deliverer figure is Judah Maccabee (Judah the Hammer), founder of the Hasmonean Dynasty of Hebrew Kings (which ended a century later with a slaughter of the royal family by the Roman-backed usurper Herod the Great). The setting is the City of Jerusalem in 167BC and the Second Temple.

Antiochus corrupted the priests with flattery and the Jewish youths with homosexuality then defiled

the temple with pigs' blood in an attempt to force the Jews to abandon their exclusive worship of Yahweh and embrace the polytheism of his empire in which he declared himself to be the "Epiphanes," "The Manifest God."

It is believed by scholars that the Abomination of Desolation of Daniel 11:31 was a bust of Antiochus himself, placed on the Altar of God. The brief period of desolation lasted until the Temple was cleansed in a ritual which is today commemorated as Hannukah. (Regarding these events, the historical record of Daniel 11 is supplemented by the Apocryphal books of 1 & 2 Maccabees, which do not have the authority of Scripture but nonetheless offer a highly reliable account).

Daniel 12:1-4

The third iteration of the Desecration of Jerusalem Pattern is yet to come. The Antichrist figure will be the end-time Antichrist. The deliverer will again be Jesus Christ. The setting will be the City of Jerusalem during the reign of the Antichrist, and either a rebuilt Third Temple, or possibly just the altar (for which we see a precedent in Ezra 3:1-6). The Abomination of Desolation is not clearly identified, but could very well be some artifact that depicts the Antichrist as God, set up on the altar.

Importantly, there are numerous elements of the prior two iterations of the pattern which may or not be present in the end-time iteration. For example, much attention is given by prior prophecy teachers to the actions of the "King of the North" and "King of the South" in their predictions about the end-times Antichrist. They may be correct, but it is also possible that those elements were unique to the first iteration, as indeed they precisely describe the people and events of Antiochus' time. Might they be repeated identically in the third iteration? Yes. Must they be? Not in my opinion.

Unique to the Daniel 12 iteration is the reference to "*a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time*" (v. 1), a warning restated and expanded upon by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse: "*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened*" (Matthew 24:21-22). That time is clearly still in the future.

THE REPEATING PATTERN OF PASSOVER

By way of reinforcing my hypothesis about God's use of repeating patterns with common elements but with varying contexts and manifestations, let's look at a second more familiar example, that of the Passover story. Again, there are three iterations, and several common elements in each: a father, a first-born son, the sacrifice of a lamb, and an object on which the sacrifice was given effect.

Genesis 22:1-13. The first iteration of this Biblical pattern was the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Abraham was the father ready to sacrifice his first-born son on the command of God. At the last moment God Himself provided a substitutionary sacrifice in the form of a sheep. The sheep, instead of Isaac, had his blood shed upon an altar. *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac on the altar. He who had received the promises was ready to offer his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'Through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and in a sense, he did receive Isaac back from death"* (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Exodus 12:1-13. The second iteration of the Passover Pattern is found in Exodus 12. All the firstborn males of the land were to be killed by God as punishment for Pharaoh's slaughter of the firstborn of the Hebrews during the infancy of Moses. *"Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well"* (Exodus 11:5). Only those households displaying the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the lintels and doorposts of their homes were spared.

The father figure is Pharaoh, and his firstborn son is the first to suffer God's wrath. The sheep is a one-year-old male. The object on which the sacrificial blood is given effect is the doorframe of the house.

The Gospels. The third iteration is found in each of the four gospels, in the story of the crucifixion of Christ, which occurred, literally, on Passover, immediately preceding the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4-6). *"Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed"* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Passover Pattern was completed in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. God the Father gave His Only Son (John 3:16). The Father is God. The son is Christ. The lamb is Christ. The object on which His shed blood was given effect was the cross.

So we can see that God uses thematic patterns in the Bible to describe actual events of history, and that the iterations of these patterns, though they share common thematic elements, are each unique. This fact informs my view that Daniel's 70th Week was completed at the first coming of Christ, but will likely be repeated in a similar but unique manner at His second coming.

ENDNOTES

¹ Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 6.29

² Philo of Alexandria, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, XXX, 203.