

70 Weeks and Counting....
Sunday 22nd February 2015

In my previous teaching entitled '70 Years and Counting....' we looked at how after 70 years of captivity in Babylon a remnant of Jews lead by Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

Cyrus the Persian king in his first year of reigning from Babylon issued a decree which made it possible for more than 42,000 Jews to return; a decree which was in direct fulfillment of a prophecy given by Jeremiah the prophet, that the captivity would last 70 years:

2Ch 36:18 And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. 19 Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. 20 And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. 22 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!

We also saw how Isaiah prophesied concerning Cyrus, naming him by name more than 100 years before he was born or the temple had been destroyed:
Isa 44:28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."' 45:1 ¶ "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: 2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in

pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you [Cyrus] have not known Me.

We also saw how Daniel a captive of Babylon those same 70 years began to fast and pray and seek the Lord because he knew from Jeremiah's prophecy that the time was almost up:

Da 9:1 ¶ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans- 2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

In line with the end of the 70 years of captivity Daniel was right there when the Babylonian Empire was taken from the Chaldeans and given to the Medes and Persians:

Da 5:26 "This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; 27 "TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; 28 "PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." 29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 ¶ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Darius the Mede ruled from Babylon in 539BC for about a year, whilst Cyrus had been king of the vast Persian Empire 20 years before he began to rule from Babylon in 538BC. Daniel would have been aware of the large Persian Empire on the doorstep of Babylon and along with Isaiah's prophecy concerning a character called Cyrus who would say to Jerusalem 'You shall be built and to the temple your foundation shall be laid' (Is.44:28), and along with the counting of time Daniel would have known that the time was near and according to Isaiah's prophecy Cyrus, king of the Persians, was the man who would make it happen.

So Daniel prays: *Da 9:7 "O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day-to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You...Da 9:12 "And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 "As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth...Da 9:15 "And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day-we have sinned, we have done wickedly! 16 "O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. 17 "Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 "O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. 19 "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."*

Realizing all this Daniel prayed that the Lord would hear, forgive, listen and act, for His name's sake and for the city and people who are called by His name. Daniel's prayer is very much inline with the prayer that Solomon prays on the occasion of the dedication of the first temple:

2Ch 6:36 "When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to a land far or near; 37 "yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, and have committed wickedness'; 38 "and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been carried captive, and pray toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and toward the temple which I have built for Your

name: 39 "then hear from heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You. 40 "Now, my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and let Your ears be attentive to the prayer made in this place.

And what is God's response to Solomon?

2Ch 7:14 "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 15 "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.

The interaction between God and Solomon is exactly what transpired- they did sin and rebel and were delivered into their enemy's hands and led away captive into other lands. True to His word in the Law of Moses, as Daniel mentions in 9:12-13 all that disaster did come upon Israel - the people, the land, the city. However as God tells Solomon and as Daniel knows and does - he humbles himself and seeks the Lord's face, imploring Him to 'incline His ear and open His eyes' to their plight and God's promise of deliverance and healing.

One can't help but think that in that future time towards the end of the Great Tribulation when Israel does cry out to God in the midst of their afflictions and persecutions at the hand of Antichrist, this time *'with all their heart and with all their soul'*, that the prayers of Daniel and Solomon would make excellent prayers. Daniel asks God to act not because of any righteous deeds they may have but because of God's great mercies and because of His name and the people called by His name (Dan.9:18, 19).

God does hear Daniel and He does act by sending Gabriel with this message: *Da 9:22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. 23 "At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision: 24 "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. 25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be **seven weeks** and **sixty-two weeks**; The street shall be built again, and*

*the wall, Even in troublesome times. 26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for **one week**; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."*

The angel Gabriel reveals to Daniel that the deliverance from captivity after 70 years that he sought the Lord concerning, as prophesied by Jeremiah, is only a temporary deliverance - although it is **a type** of the future Messianic deliverance which will culminate in the 'finishing of Israel's transgression and sins, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the sealing up of vision and prophecy and the anointing of the Most Holy' (v.24).

However in order to bring this to completion the number 70 must be multiplied or intensified by the number of Divine completion - 7. Gabriel reveals that which we have come to call Daniel's 70 'Weeks', literally 70 sets of seven years. This will be a final and complete deliverance, not temporary as it turned out to be after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

The 70 'weeks/sevens' are separated into three unequal parts: seven, sixty-two and one, with that final one being the goal or consummation of the previous 69 'weeks'/483 years. There will be:

- Seven 'weeks' equaling 49 years
- Sixty-two 'weeks' equaling 434 years
- One 'week' equaling 7 years
- Making a total of 490 years.

As we have looked at this scripture here this past year our focus has been on that final week, the 7 years of the Tribulation and as we read verses: 24-27 it's very obvious that the final week **is the focus and the goal** of the previous 69 weeks that will bring everything to its conclusion. The beginning 7 weeks are almost hurried over in order to arrive at the final week which is marked as beginning at the end of the 62 weeks when Messiah is cut off because that is where the main focus of the revelation rests. However the seven weeks are separated from the 62 weeks for a purpose! And the number 7 multiplied by itself has to be significant beyond the counting of time.

So we can see that there will be 49 years (7 'weeks') for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. There will then be 434 years (62 'weeks') until the Messiah will be cut-off (killed). And then a final 7 years in which the city and sanctuary are destroyed again after many of the Jewish people have made a covenant with 'the prince who is to come'; the fourth dreadful and terrible beast of Daniel chapter 7 - the Antichrist.

Gabriel reveals to Daniel the exact timing of when this prophecy would begin to unfold: *25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**;*

There was quite a break in time from when the prophecy was first given to Daniel before the prophecy was set in motion with the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and her walls. During this period of time a group of exiles had returned to Jerusalem and completed the rebuilding of the temple but Nehemiah, who is cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, gets word from Jerusalem that the captives who returned after the 70 years were in great distress as were the walls and gates of the city: *Ne 1:3 And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." 4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 ¶ And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, 6 "please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. 7 "We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 "Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 'but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' 10 "Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom*

You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. 11 "O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.

92 years had transpired since God stirred up Cyrus to issue an edict that allowed the first group of exiles to return to the land and rebuild the temple. The Book of Nehemiah clearly shows when we can begin to start counting the 70 'weeks'. The decree to rebuild Jerusalem is given in the 'month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' (2:1) which was 445BC according to historians, and approximately 92 years after Daniel is given the prophecy. *Ne 2:1 ¶ And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. 2 Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid, 3 and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?" 4 Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." 6 Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. 7 Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, 8 "and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.*

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he worked closely with Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem both physically and spiritually. 13 years prior to Nehemiah a second group of exiles led by Ezra the priest had also returned to Jerusalem under the authority of Artaxerxes to lead a spiritual renewal. It was under Nehemiah's drive and determination that the walls of Jerusalem were repaired and rebuilt in 52 days despite opposition from the mixed multitudes

living in the land: *Ne 4:1 ¶ But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish-stones that are burned?" ... 7 ¶ Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, 8 and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night... 13 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." 15 And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. 16 ¶ So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. 17 Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.*

As well as the physical rebuilding both Ezra and Nehemiah refused to compromise on God's word when they found that many of the people who had originally returned with Zerubbabel had married foreign wives, including some of the Levites. Due to the teaching of the Law and uncompromising stance of Ezra and Nehemiah those who had married foreign wives chose to put them aside and embarked upon the renewal of the covenant with God. You may recall from our study of Malachi, who was a contemporary of Nehemiah, he was quite condemning of the priests who had caused Israel to 'stumble at the law' (*Mal.2:8*).

Ne 8:2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. 3 Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the

Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.... 9 ¶ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law....13 ¶ Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwelt in booths during the feast of the seventh month.... 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness.

Then the people and priests in Jerusalem chose to renew the covenant with God in writing:

Ne 9:38 "And because of all this, We make a sure covenant, and write it; our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it." Ne 10:1 ¶ Now those who placed their seal on the document were: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah...

This renewal of the covenant was a foreshadowing or type of that day yet future when Christ will make a new covenant with Israel:

Mt 26:28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

There are some other interesting parallels that take place during those 49 years (the first 7 'weeks') but before that I want to go to the only other place I know of in Scripture that references 49 years:

Le 25:1 ¶ And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. 3 'Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; 4 'but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. ...8 ¶ 'And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. 9 'Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. 10 'And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

As part of the covenant with Israel made at Sinai God told them through Moses they were only to sow and reap the land 6 years and on the 7th it was to be allowed to rest. If they did this and obey the statutes and judgments of God then they would dwell in the land in safety and it would yield its fruit with a bumper crop in the 6th year to take them through to the 8th year when they can sow again and reap in the 9th year (Lev.25:18-22).

They were also to count out 7 lots of 7 Sabbaths - making 49 years and the 50th year would be the year of Jubilee. In the year of Jubilee any land or possessions automatically reverted back to its owner. Leviticus chapter 26 details the consequences for Israel of obedience or disobedience to God's commands with verses 33-35 showing the outcome of disobedience in this area: *Le 26:33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. 34 Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. 35 As long as it lies desolate it shall rest-for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.*

Not only do these verses show the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness but also why the physical land needed the 70 years of the captivity as prophesied

by Jeremiah. The land got to enjoy its Sabbaths and solemn rests (Le.25:4) which it failed to have whilst Israel was in the land in disobedience.

The 49 years culminating in the year of Jubilee to follow was a fore-shadowing of that future time at the end of Daniel's 70th week when Israel is restored to her land - when all land and property will revert back to its owner as in the year of Jubilee.

The end of the first period of time covered by Daniel's 70 'week' prophecy (397BC) is approximately 400 years before the birth of Christ. Malachi as a contemporary of Nehemiah and as the author of the last book of the OT has the last word, so to speak, before God begins to speak again through Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. This period of 400 years of silence overlaps with the 2nd period of time in Daniel's prophecy - the 62 weeks or 434 years after which Messiah is cut-off. 62 does not appear to be a number of significance and not surprisingly God was no longer raising up prophets to speak to Israel during this time until we hear the voice of one crying in the wilderness - John the Baptist - the one who came to prepare the way of the Lord, because there in Israel's midst is the very Prophet Moses told Israel to expect:

De 18:15 ¶ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,

The 7 x 7 years witness to the Divine perfection of that which is in view. The 49 years in Leviticus is significant because of what follows - the Year of Jubilee when all things are restored to their original owner.

When the first 7 'weeks' of Daniel ch.9 took place it was a foreshadowing of that period of time yet future when Israel having been exiled once again for the third and last time, (having also been exiled in 70AD) will, towards the end of the final 'week' be regathered and restored to her inheritance for all time. She will have a new written covenant but this time it will be written not on stones like the first covenant; not on paper like the renewal of the covenant; but on their hearts. Just like in Nehemiah's day and the 1st 7 weeks, Israel will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, the Year of Jubilee by entering into the 7th Day, the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Israel will also finally receive her full inheritance which she was never able to achieve under Joshua and subsequent generations - she will receive all the

land that was covenanted to her - all land reverting back to its original owner as in the Year of Jubilee!

The breaking up of the 70 'weeks' prophecy into 7, 62 and 1 week places an emphasis on the final week but it is through events during the 1st period of 7 weeks/49 years that God gives valuable information or confirmation of His future dealings with Israel during the final week and ensuing 75 days into the Millennial Kingdom.

In conclusion as we have looked at the 1st 7 x 7 years of Daniel's 70 Week Prophecy we can see that it is a truth that...

Isa 46:9 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'

Am 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.