

are so stated that there is clearly only one way to understand them, and then using these as solid points from which to proceed. Then one should examine various possibilities for the interpretation of the passage as a whole, being especially careful not to force into a preconceived mold any word or statement that is not clear. Therefore we shall make no attempt at this point to decide whether a "seven" here means a period of seven years or whether it is a period of indefinite length, but shall leave final decision on this matter until later, and shall use the terms "sevens" and "weeks" interchangeably in our discussion.

The Purpose of the 70 Sevens

The first verse of Gabriel's prophecy (v. 24) reads as follows:

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."

The verse lists six purposes for which 70 'sevens' have been decreed. The first three refer to doing away with transgression, sin and wickedness; the fourth purpose is "to bring in everlasting righteousness." Thus we can definitely say that the end of sin and the establishment of "everlasting righteousness" are vital elements in the purpose of the 70 weeks. Several of these purposes have been interpreted in various ways, sometimes depending on the interpreter's presuppositions as to the meaning of the passage as a whole. In line with our desire to determine what is definite and certain before trying to decide matters on which differences of opinion are possible, interpretation of the last two purposes will be left to a special note, along with a more detailed consideration of the first, second, and fourth purposes (See p. 179ff).