

7th Day Rest E9 Final

Seventy Times Seven - Prophetic Math

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Tim: Hey, this is Tim at The Bible Project. Today's episode we're going to be carrying forward a conversation between Jon and myself about the seventh-day rest. We're multiple episodes in. We've been tracing these patterns of the number seven in the storyline of the Bible. We camped out for quite a while on page one in Genesis. We saw there that the number seven, there's seven days of creation in the Genesis 1 account, and we go from a place of darkness and disorder. God creates a world of complete order and beauty in a pattern of seven. Then we just started tracing that through so many stories of the Bible that are riffing off of that basic theme. In fact, the whole story of the Bible in a way is working out this gigantic storyline of darkness and disorder to the seventh-day rest.

At this point in the story of the Bible, we've tracked through up to Israel's exile, how God brought them into the Promised Land, they blew it, and they are exiled in what Leviticus presented as this inverted pattern of seven.

In this episode, it's our last stop in the Hebrew Scriptures. We're going to focus in on a puzzling and fascinating story in the book of the prophet Daniel. And lo and behold, it all revolves around the number seven. This is in Daniel 9. Daniel is praying for the restoration of Jerusalem and his people from exile. And the answer that he gets is not what he expected. It all revolves around the meaning and symbolism of the number seven. This story, maybe you're familiar with it, maybe you're not, it has been controversial in interpretation in Jewish communities in all spreads of the Christian tradition. People have really wondered what is going on in this chapter of the Hebrew prophets.

It turns out that Daniel himself is riffing off of a theme in the book of Jeremiah, the prophet before him, and that chapter is itself built off of patterns of symbolism and the Numbers 7:2. This is, I think, a really fascinating and exciting chapter in the Old Testament. Jesus was really into this chapter because he mentioned it himself. So let's dive in. Here we go.

Jon: Five-minute overview. Want to time me?

Tim: Yes. Go.

Jon: God created the world in six days and on the seventh day, He stopped and He settled into creation. He appointed humans to rest with Him and to rule with Him. This was the human ideal and abundance and its rest. Humans are exiled, and instead of abundance, ground back down to the dust. But there's still this desire for rest for this final state of completeness. Shabbat (what God did on the seventh day) means to stop

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in order to rest, and it's connected to the seven, the cycle of sevens. And seven has the same kind of...what's the word?

Tim: It's the same letters.

Jon: Basically it's the same word as "complete." It's the idea of completeness. So seven becomes super important. As we continue the narrative, God chooses Abraham and he says, "I'm going to give you that kind of rest, that Eden blessing, your family." Well, the problem is, is Abraham's family is actually enslaved to a violent kingdom, Egypt, and so God has to rescue them from Egypt. And that rescuing from Egypt mirrors the same kind of pattern of God liberating creation out of chaos and disorder. And so you've got this connection between God creating Earth or creation so that we can rest in it is connected to this idea of humans being liberated from death, and slavery, and violence and the powers.

As He liberates His people, He gives them blueprints for a temple. And part of the blueprints of the temple is also this Sabbath cycle of rest, and how the temple was even dedicated and built. They're told in the covenant commandments of what it means to be God's people, that one of them is on the seventh day—stop working. And so the question is like, why is this so important? Seventh-day stop. It's all pointing towards this hope that creation will be fulfilled again and complete.

Actually, we shouldn't just wait for it, we should I practice it now. Practice it on the seventh day or you stop from your work. But then there's all these festivals. There are seven types of holy days or appointed times and they're all built around sevens and this anticipation for the renewal of creation. Not only that, but on the seventh year, it's the Year of Release. Debts are forgiven. And it's like, we just want creation to just be renewed. It's like, let's make it happen. And not only that, but then on the seventh cycle of the seventh year, everything is reset. It's the year of jubilee.

Israel is wandering in the wilderness. It's a new type of slavery. It's a slavery not to some other powers, but slavery to their own disobedience. Wilderness is also connected to testing. Like, "Are we going to get this right? Are we going to choose faithfulness and trust? They go into the land, they celebrate Passover. The land is in abundance. And we see that this theme of trusting is all connected to this idea of stopping and resting. It's how this was to take down Jericho.

Tim: Yeah, Jericho was taken down in the Sabbath cycle.

Jon: March for six days. On the seventh day, don't battle; stop and shout, and God will do it. What was that verse in Isaiah that you ended with?

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Tim: Isaiah 30:15 "In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your power."

Jon: Quietness and trust is your power.

Tim: That's a theological core of the meaning of the seventh day.

Jon: In quietness and trust is your power.

Tim: Sabbath is a foretaste of salvation. Therefore, your rest is your power. Your trust, faith is your power.

Jon: How do we get back to this completeness? Do we work for it? Do we fight for it or do we stop?

Tim: ...and trust the God will give it to us?

Jon: Israel doesn't fulfill the covenant. Their exile from the land is a mirror of Adam and Eve being exiled from the garden. Now, the question remains, how will we get to the state of completeness?

Tim: Yeah, now that we've been exiled from the land. That was five minutes and four seconds.

Jon: All right.

Tim: That might be as long as the video is going to be. Hopefully, the video will be...

Jon: But we still got some ground to cover in the video.

Tim: Oh, we do. A lot of ground. Yeah, totally. That's good. Awesome. Good job. That's good. And it was entertaining.

For this part of the conversation, which is going to be how Israel's prophets, the books of the prophets process this Sabbath Eden rest, seventh day hope for the restoration of Eden in the ultimate seventh day. Let's turn to the last page of the Jewish ordering of the Hebrew Scriptures, which is the last chapter of 2 Chronicles.

[00:08:40]

Tim: In the most ancient form of the organization of the Hebrew Scriptures is organization that Jesus called the Torah, the prophets, and then the Psalms, which names the book that heads the third collection, which is also called The Writings. The Writings is a diverse collection and it appears that Chronicles was composed as a kind of conclusion to the whole Hebrew Bible. The last chapter is 2 Chronicles 36, it retells the

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story of the last king of Judah, who Nebuchadnezzar takes out and the story of the sacking of Jerusalem.

Jon: This is the story going into exile.

Tim: Totally. Starting in Vs. 11 of 2 Chronicles 36, we're introduced to Zedekiah who's installed as a puppet King by Nebuchadnezzar. Vs. 13 "He too rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar..."

Jon: That didn't work out.

Tim: Vs. 15 "Yahweh was sending, again and again, his messengers." Namely the prophets.

Jon: Which verse is this?

Tim: Vs. 15.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "Yahweh was sending, again and again, his messengers because he loves his people and he had compassion on his dwelling place. He loves his people and he loves..."

Jon: And he loves his land.

Tim: He loves his land. "But Israel continually mocked the messengers of God despise the prophets. And so the anger of Yahweh rose against his people. There was no turning back. He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans. Chaldeans is another synonym for the Babylonians. The Babylonians killed their young men with the sword in the temple. They had no compassion on young men, young women, old men or the sick. All were given into the Babylonians' hands. All the articles of the temple, great and small, and treasures of the temple and the treasures of the king were all brought to Babylon. They burned the house of God, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burned its buildings." This is bad news.

Vs 20 "Those who escaped from the sword, basically, the people that survived the onslaught were carried away to Babylon, and they were slaves to him and his sons until the rule of the Kingdom of Persia." Remember, Chronicles is written towards way late. The restoration of Jerusalem has already happened. The return from exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem has already happened from this author's point of view.

Jon: It's crushing through a lot of history real fast.

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Tim: That's right. Notice what he says here. The authors already back in Jerusalem.

Jon: Babylonian exile is over.

Jon: The Second Temple is rebuilt, it's not working out. According to Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, it's not awesome. This author ends the story here saying...Remember, he carried those away to Babylon. Vs. 21 "In order to fulfill the word of the Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, the prophet, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation, the land kept the Sabbath until the seventy years were complete."

Jon: That's back in Deuteronomy, right?

Tim: Leviticus 26.

Jon: Leviticus 26. We're building up this rest that's needed. The land needs to rest.

Tim: So make sure you release the land every seventh year and then every Jubilee cycle. Remember the land will have its rest along with you. The author of Chronicles in Hebrew Bible terminology, Hebrew Bibles scholarship is called the chronicler. Which I like.

Jon: Chronicler.

Tim: Chronicler concludes the story by saying that the exile fulfilled the seventy years of Jeremiah. We'll talk about that. Jeremiah said exile would last seventy years, but when the chronicler read the book of Jeremiah and took a long walk with a cup of tea, he saw, "Oh, seventy. That's about the Sabbath." And remember the upside-down Sabbath of Leviticus 26...

Jon: Yeah, there's compounding of events. If you don't obey, exiled. You continue to not obey, it's going to be seven times in exile.

Tim: Correct. It's like the anti-release, anti-Jubilee. He sees the exile as the chance for the land to finally get the Sabbath that Israelites did not give it. Why does he think that? What led him to that conclusion?

Jon: Leviticus 26.

Tim: A bunch of things did. Leviticus 26 is for sure on his brain. He's quoting from it, though he doesn't say. The only text he says he's quoting from is Jeremiah. So let's pause and go back to Jeremiah. Because how Jeremiah thinks about and talks about the exile will help us understand both the

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meaning of the exile and the prophets, but also the hope for what lies on the other side of exile.

Jeremiah 25. This is the chapter where Jeremiah says, "All the nations are corrupt and violent. I'm going to make them all drink a cup of foaming wine." We've talked about this.

Jon: Foaming wine?

Tim: It's the cup of God's anger.

Jon: God's wrath.

Tim: God's wrath. The cup is Babylon. To drink the cup means becoming subject to Babylon. He says to the kings of Israel, Jeremiah 25:11, "This whole land will be a desolation and a horror. All these nations around, not just Israel, all their neighbors will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will take place when the seventy years are filled full, completed, then I'll punish the king of Babylon and his nation," declares Yahweh, "for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, the Babylonians all make an everlasting devastation."

In other words, he's going to use Babylon to be an instrument of justice on the nation's but then Babylon itself is going to overstep its bounds, and then God's gonna reduce it to nothing. This is what the book of Habakkuk is about. Habakkuk, his first complaint is "look how horrible Israel is." So God says, "Yes, I'm going to raise up the Babylonians. Then he says, "No, wait, they're even worse? Wait, you're going to use..." Then it becomes this cycle that God will even use nasty empires of the world as instruments of His judgment. Not to endorse them but because they're on the scene and He'll work with what He finds. He works with humans as He finds them.

This seventy-year theme gets repeated in Jeremiah 29 where Jeremiah says, "When seventy years are completed for Babylon—there's seven years again—I'm going to visit you and fulfill my good word to you and bring you back to this place." Babylon will get what's coming to them and you'll get back to the land. "For I know the plans I have for you. Plans for good, plans for welfare, not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope." I think that's a famous Bible verse.

Jon: That is a famous Bible verse.

Tim: You know what, I can think of a family member who has it on their wall.

Jon: Oh, that's hanged in a lot of walls.

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Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It's a classic one.

Tim: Good calendar verse. It's beautiful to hear that word from God.

Jon: I know the plans I have for you.

Tim: It's a good summary of the not optimistic but hopeful art of the biblical story. Although optimistic depends on your definition. But here it's specifically about your sitting in Babylon. That's the context. "...I know the plans I have for you. Vs. 12 Then you will call upon me and pray to me, and I'll listen to you." Remember this was in Leviticus. When you're sitting there in exile...

Jon: And you're going to repent and...

Tim: Circumcised heart, heart change.

Jon: Call unto the Lord.

Tim: And then God says, "Then I'll remember my covenant with my people and I'll remember the land." The same thing here. When seven years are complete, I've got good plans for you, so just ask me. Just ask me for them when the seven years are up. "Then you'll seek me and find me. When you search for me with all your heart, I will be found."

Jon: That's another classic Bible verse.

Tim: Totally. Jeremiah 29 is coming out.

Jon: Bringing the hits.

Tim: "I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations where I've driven you. I'll bring you back to this place where..." You get the idea. Jeremiah is pretty seventy years.

Jon: He put a stake in the ground at seventy years.

Tim: The whole question is, what did Jeremiah have in mind? Not necessarily the author of Jeremiah or of Chronicles as he thought about, but what of Jeremiah when he...

Jon: The prophet?

Tim: Yeah. When he's on the street corner, what does seventy mean? People ponder these things. Is seventy just a symbolic round number?

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Jon: Seven is definitely a number full of symbolism but at the same time, it's a very concrete number on the seventh day stop. Not like some symbolic seventh day. On the seventh day. On the seventh year. It also could be very literal.

Tim: Yeah, a literal day can have symbolic meaning. What else is the meaning of Sabbath? It's an actual day. Seventy is seven times ten. And ten has also been a repeated symbolic number in...

Jon: In the creation story.

Tim: ...in Genesis 1, in Exodus, in the Day of Atonement, which is tenth day. There's a lot of sevens and tens in the Sabbath motif—design pattern in the biblical story.

Jon: "So let's put them together into a power symbol."

Tim: It is also an average lifetime for the biblical authors.

Jon: Seventy years?

Tim: Yeah. Psalm 90 "All our days pass away under your anger. Seventy years or eighty. We read Psalm 90 earlier in this conversation. He's reflecting on Genesis 3—returning to the dust. He sees that our mortality is a sign of being exiled. And so what do you get here? Seventy years.

Jon: You got seventy years. What is the average life expectancy nowadays?

Tim: I don't know the answer.

Jon: In the US, it's 78 years.

Tim: Wow.

Jon: 78.6.

Tim: It's coming.

Jon: It's coming. It's around the corner. Worldwide it's 71.

Tim: You know who has the highest? Japan.

Tim: Fascinating.

Jon: Then Switzerland, Singapore, Australia, Spain, Iceland, Italy.

Tim: Are they up in the 80s or high 70s?

Jon: Low 80s.

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- Tim: Wow, fascinating.
- Jon: You don't break out of the 80s until Costa Rica, 79.6.
- Tim: Wow.
- Jon: Man, you live longer in Costa Rica in the US. I love Costa Rica.
- Tim: You've got some positive association with Costa Rica. You have some good memories there. Being exiled to Costa Rica wouldn't be all bad. I don't know. I've never been there.
- Jon: It sounds like a Jubilee.
- Tim: If you were going to think of a number that is the upside-down version of the Genesis 1 and 2 Eden ideal, seventy would be a good candidate.
- Jon: The upside down?
- Tim: Yeah. Ten acts of speech in seven days to generate this Eden ideal of the seventh day. Seventy as a period of exile as an anti-seventh day ideal. Seventy is a great candidate for a symbolic number of an inverted Genesis 1. That's all. I can live it with that. I can't prove it. What's also interesting is it's about on target for how long Israel was actually exiled.
- Jon: Interesting.
- Tim: So if the fall of Jerusalem...Remember the city was destroyed in 586 and then Babylon was overturned by Cyrus and 539.
- Jon: This is Persia?
- Tim: Yeah. That gets you fifty-something years. But remember, the sacking and destruction of Jerusalem was the third visit of Nebuchadnezzar. He had been there two times in the decade before.
- Jon: And he put the puppet king, Zedekiah.
- Tim: Correct. If you go from the first time Nebuchadnezzar visited Jerusalem, you're up into sixty-something years. You know, close to seventy. Then it was a couple of year for the Israelites to put together the operation to go back. That's pretty remarkable. You're right on the ballpark of seventy years from people first getting exiled from Jerusalem to the exiles coming back. All of that comes together where the seven years became extremely meaningful. As the people came back in Jerusalem, they're studying their scriptures, prophets and priests are in Jerusalem now really intensely studying their scriptures, forming them into the shape of

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the text that we are familiar with. And you can see why Jeremiah's seventy years would be a big deal.

We come back to Chronicles, and we can understand why the author of Chronicles would represent the exile of seventy years as Jeremiah seventy years as a kind of inverted Sabbath.

Jon: The amount of time that's compounded, the land needs to rest from Leviticus 26.

Tim: Correct. Here's something really interesting. It'll kick us into another important work, book of Daniel. This is a comment by Hugh Williamson, his commentary on Chronicles. He's commenting on the last paragraph of Chronicles here. He says, "This phrase about the land keeping the Sabbath for seventy years has clearly been given a reference backwards by its association with the land enjoying it Sabbath." Remember in Leviticus 26, the land will get the Sabbath that you didn't give it. And then Chronicle says, "Yeah, seventy years of Jeremiah were all the Sabbath. The land got its Sabbath." "...this suggests that the chronicler has a period of not just seventy but 490 years in mind."

Jon: Because there was seventy seven year cycles.

Tim: When does the land get a year of rest?

Jon: On the seventh year.

Tim: On the Jubilee.

Jon: Oh, on the Jubilee?

Tim: Well, it gets it every seven, and then it gets the supersized rest on the Year of Jubilee. Do the math here. If seventy years of Jeremiah...

Jon: If they needed seventy years of rest, that means they've missed seven times seventy.

Tim: Correct. For the chronicler, the seventy years of Jeremiah is connected to the number of missed Jubilee years that the land did not get.

Jon: So there's 490 years of history.

Tim: Yeah. Here's what Williamson notes. He says, "On the basis of the links of the rain, which the chronicler himself gives for kings of Judah, it seems clear he intends this as a reference to cover the whole period of the monarchy which is more or less coextensive with the years from Saul." The chronicler begins his story after the genealogies. He has nine chapters or genealogies. Thrilling stuff.

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Jon: Starting with?

Tim: The first king that he starts with is Saul. His narrative from Saul all the way up to Zedekiah that we just read about, William says, "Just pay attention to the chronology it gives. It's 490 years." He framed the history of Israel on the land as seven times seventy, and then making seventy missed Jubilee years. That's brilliant, I think. In terms of theological symbolism, theological chronology, it's a powerful theological statement about the whole history of Israel.

Jon: It's not a modern way to do history.

Tim: Oh, we do this all the time.

Jon: Do we?

Tim: We talk about time in round numbers for symbolic purposes. Help me think of something. Sure.

Jon: When you talk about decades, that's the thing. The 90s, 80s.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Like something happened in 1980 that ended in 1989.

Tim: That made the 80s. But there really was a thing that you can call the 80s.

Jon: There is.

Tim: Technically and symbolically. This is totally normal. We're importing our culture's concept of numbers in history and chronology, we're imposing it on the biblical authors when we expect that they would do it the way we would do it. I think this is brilliant on the chronicler's part. He's framed the whole history of the monarchy as examples of seven years that didn't get observed or flip it over, seven Jubilee cycles.

Jon: No.

Tim: Oh, that's not right. That would be every fiftieth year. That's right. So seventy sevens. That's it. Do we see this anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible? We do in Daniel 9. In Daniel 9, in fact, it takes it a step further. So fascinating.

[00:27:44]

Jon: Daniel is in Babylon; it's still exile. This seventy years of exile is still happening right now. We're somewhere in the thick of that.

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Tim: That's right. They'll look at the first sentence of Daniel 9. "In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus from Mede who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans." In other words, Darius was not a Babylonian. He's a Mede and he just took over the Babylonian kingdom. Remember Jeremiah said, "On seventy years you'll serve Babylon, and then I'm taking Babylon down." This is a little hyperlink to say, "Dear reader, this is the seventieth year."

Jon: Oh, really?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Wasn't it a Persian that was supposed to take them there?

Tim: Medes and the Persians were a cooperative kingdom. Darius was the first, then Cyrus was right after. The first sentence of Daniel 9 tells you it's the seventieth year.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: Which makes sense of what follows next. "I Daniel was observing in books in the scriptures the number of the years revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet to complete the desolations of Jerusalem. Namely seventy years.

Jon: Here we are. It's Christmas morning.

Tim: Yeah, totally. This is Christmas morning. You've been waiting for it. You knew it was coming.

Jon: Yeah, you knew it was coming. You've been counting down.

Tim: All of a sudden, on the seventieth year, Daniels had a little Bible study of Jeremiah. Do you remember Jeremiah said? He said..

Jon: It feels like Y2K. And everyone's, "Wait, what's going to happen?"

Tim: Yeah, totally. Remember Jeremiah said, "When the seventy years are up, if my people call out to me..." Remember? "If they call to me, and seek me with all their hearts... so I Daniel gave my attention to the Yahweh God to seek Him by prayer and supplication." What follows Vs. 4-20 is one of the most beautiful prayers of confession in the Hebrew Bible.

Remember Daniel's character in the book of Daniel. He passes every test. He stands out in the story. But you read Daniel 9, and you would think he's the worst sinner in Israel's history. It's really fascinating. He personally owns the sins of his ancestors.

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Jon: Wow, it's like humility.

Tim: It's a beautiful prayer. I didn't include it here because it would derail us. But it's an amazing prayer. "While I was still praying, a man, Gabriele came to me—a spiritual being who looks like a human—and he gave me some instruction. He spoke to me and said, 'Daniel, I've come to give you some insight here.'"

Jon: A message.

Tim: What he says is, "Seventy sevens have been determined concerning your people and concerning your holy city." Let's pause there. The first seventy just passed, and he thought, "Oh, by Jeremiah's count, that's the end." But what if those seventy years of Jeremiah were just the first seventy of...

Jon: Seven.

Tim: Yeah, seven seventies. That's the idea.

Jon: Oh, man.

Tim: And when you sit with a Leviticus 26, it said, "I'll visit seven times punishment to exile or seven time..."

Jon: That was compounding.

Tim: Yeah, compounding. Gabriel shows up and says, "Sorry, dude, we're just getting started."

Jon: That's a tough message.

Tim: So it's not that the seventy years is being reinterpreted here. It's rather that the seventy years is just beginning, a much longer cycle of seventy.

Jon: But didn't you just says that Israel got to go back after seventy years?

Tim: Ah, that's interesting. What's that about? Some Israelites returned and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

Jon: The Second Temple?

Tim: The Second Temple. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. In theory, that should be the end of the exile. That's when the prophets...hopes of the restored Eden would happen. And it didn't happen. Then it's as if Daniel's being given insight here: "Dear reader, the return from exile was not the real ultimate return from exile."

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- Jon: This is one of seven.
- Tim: Yeah, the ultimate restoration. It's as if the return from exile to actual Jerusalem becomes just itself another symbol in the pattern pointing to the ultimate restoration from exile.
- Jon: It just keeps getting pushed back.
- Tim: It keeps getting pushed back and it keeps getting bigger. Because all of a sudden like, "Oh, Jerusalem's not the thing? I thought Jerusalem was the thing."
- Jon: The temple in Jerusalem.
- Tim: Then as we're going to see, the temple and the land in Isaiah and Ezekiel get a cosmic upgrade to what their ultimate symbolism was always about, which is the whole of creation. That the temple is a microcosm of the whole world and the land is a symbol of the temple, which is the symbol of all creation. The return under Ezra, Nehemiah is here being portrayed as not the ultimate...
- Jon: It's been downplayed.
- Tim: Yeah. But it's as significant as was the exodus from Egypt. That wasn't the ultimate liberation, but it was a foretaste of it. Daniel's told four hundred and more, which is symbolically...
- [crosstalk 00:33:44]
- Jon: Wait. Four hundred and twenty more.
- Tim: Four hundred and seventy sevens. Well, hold on. Four hundred and ninety was the years that the kings were...
- [crosstalk 00:33:56]
- Tim: Now, it's four hundred and ninety on the other side. Four hundred and ninety but they were on the land not giving the land Sabbath. They just went through a seventy. And then here he is now at that point, and then he's learning seventy sevens are appointed.
- Jon: So this isn't like you're you did the first cycle of what's going to be even six more?
- Tim: Correct.
- Jon: It's like there's a whole new thing happening.

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Tim: There's another seventy times seven ahead.

Jon: Oh, my goodness.

Tim: Here's what's going to happen in those seventy sevens. Finishing the rebellion. In English that doesn't help you get the idea. Because "finish" means to put it into—for the rebellion to come to its completion. So Israel's rebellion is not over. You're praying to be Daniel, but the rest of your people are like...I mean, you got Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They're cool. But the point is, is Israel as a whole is still in a state of rebellion.

Here's the second thing that needs to happen that's not finished yet. Sealing up sins. Israel's sins have not been brought to an end. They're still continuing. Atonement for evil. Israel's evil has still yet to be fully dealt with. Here's another thing that needs to take place within these seventy sevens. Bringing eternal righteousness to seal up vision and prophecy. So if you thought, Daniel, that the seventieth year was going to be heaven on earth becoming one, I'm sorry. I mean, you get the idea.

Jon: Look around. There's still some work to do.

Tim: He gets sick and he can't sleep after this. I mean, just imagine.

Jon: I mean, he's been waiting. He's been counting down.

Tim: Just like you would wait for the Year of Jubilee, he's been waiting for this.

Jon: Imagine coming to like your kid on Christmas morning and he's ready to go and you're like, "Sorry, buddy. We're going to wait till you're 14 and then we'll do Christmas."

Tim: That's right. "Daniel, let me tell you this for the seventy sevens when these seventy sevens will start, let me tell you when they're going to start - the new seven times seven day. From the issuing of the declaration to return and rebuild Jerusalem until the anointed one, which is the Hebrew word "Mašíaḥ." There will be seven sevens and sixty-nine sevens." And then I have dot, dot, do. The passage goes on and becomes extremely complex in Hebrew and in a diversity of interpretations. But from the declaration to return and rebuild Jerusalem, when does that happen?

Jon: The king of Persia let them go do that, right?

Tim: Yeah, totally. In fact, that's the last sentences of 2 Chronicles.

Jon: And they shall go up?

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Tim: Yeah, exactly. Is the king saying, "Return to Jerusalem and rebuild Jerusalem, whoever God is with him and let him go up..." And it ends with an incomplete sentence. It seems like the chronicler wants to coordinate the ending of his book with counting down of this clock right here.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: In other words, the book of Chronicles ends by big setting a timer.

Jon: With the moment that God said or... No, well, Gabriel is talking there, right?

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: Yahweh's messenger says that the next set of seventy sevens begins with this declaration.

Tim: To return and rebuild Jerusalem.

Jon: The Hebrew scriptures ends with that declaration.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: Wow.

Tim: Intelligent life in the shaping of these books. I mean, it actually is a perfect metaphor to say the Hebrew Bible concludes by setting a timer that starts ticking the moment you close the book.

Jon: What are we supposed to be thinking about this type of timer at this point?

Tim: What do you mean? Because these are symbolic numbers?

Jon: Is this a symbolic number? Daniel waited to the seventieth year, and to him and was not just...I mean, it was a year that was sort of symbolism, but it was a real year.

Tim: Correct. It was a real year. Welcome to a fascinating little industry in biblical scholarship. Because what we know is that almost every Jewish group that left a literary record in history, whether it's the Qumran crew, Greek-speaking Jews, Pharisees, the zealots who launched multiple ways of rebellion against Rome, and the early Christians, everybody's talking about Daniel 9. And you can see why. It sets the clock. It sets the clock.

What you have in Second Temple literature is all this interest in the meaning of the 490 years. And what you find is that diversity of

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interpretations. One, you can just say, first there's diversity in when exactly did the clock start. Some started with King Cyrus giving his declaration, which would be in 539 BC. So 490. I always forget this on my calculator.

Jon: 539 minus 490.

Tim: I think it gives you 63 BC. I'm doing that from memory here. I got it.

Jon: What was the number again?

Tim: 539 minus...

Jon: 539 minus 490.

Tim: 49 BC. What happened in 49 BC, nothing that seems to fit these circumstances. There are some people who saw what was going on with the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus in the 160s BC. There were people that pull Daniel 9's fulfillment in towards that. Okay. Well, in that case, it's a symbolic reading of the numbers.

Jon: Sure. It's not exactly there but it's close.

Tim: It's within a century. Early Christians were really keen on aligning Jesus' birth with this or is his execution.

Jon: You just got to get about 40 years.

Tim: Totally. If anyone's interested, there's scholar Roger Beckwith has done this study here. "Daniel 9 and the date of Messiah's coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and early Christian computation."

Jon: Wow.

Tim: It's exhaustive. But it's helpful to just see the early Christians weren't the only ones interested. Everybody was interested in Daniel 9, because everybody understood it was setting some kind of clock for the ultimate restoration from exile, which depending on your view of what happened with Jesus did or did not happen. Right?

Jon: Yeah. What were those things again? The rebellion coming completion, sins being sealed up atonement for evil, bringing eternal righteousness.

Tim: And bringing to fulfillment, vision, and prophecy. The full package deal is anticipated at the end of this 490. And what is the 490? It's the inverted Jubilee. It's the anti-Jubilee that is exile.

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Jon: But it's also, according to the chronicler, a very exact number of how many Sabbath cycles release years were missed.

Tim: Well, it's an exact number that hasn't meant symbolic significance. Seventy sevens. Usually, it's people's approaches that they already have coming to the Bible that will determine the outcome here. For somebody who's really see that numbers can be symbolic, even literal numbers can be symbolic, will create more comfort with ambiguity in what we would call actual chronology, and to say you can have symbolic periods of time. So I'm cool with Jesus's birth in 4 BC being 45 years off of that actual chronology. That's where some people end. Other people will not be comfortable with that, and so they'll find...Well, maybe there was a later declaration to rebuild Jerusalem, maybe there was something else that actually starts the clock, ends with different people line up.

Jon: In the church I grew up in, there was a season of obsession with Daniel and Revelation. I never was involved in any of those. It got really geeky. I think they must fit some calculations.

Tim: Oh, yes. That's right. In the heyday of the popularity of American dispensationalism which is still a very influential popular Christian movement, but it does seem to have had a peak of influence in the 80s, these dates become really important. Then they get coordinated with patterns of seven, then the book of Revelation. And then people were looking at different wars in Iraq and George Bush and all this kinds of things. It all got brought together.

Then people start predicting the dates of the return of Christ or the war of Armageddon, and so on. Then you have other Christians who just think all of that is fundamentally misguided. And everybody is appealing to the Bible. That begins to make you think, "Oh, this is really a debate about our preloaded assumptions that we bring to the Bible." Because the Bible can apparently be made to say many things depending on the assumptions that you come to it with. That's a really important conversation. I meant to lead us right to the brink of it, but not to actually have it.

Jon: I don't think we can. We can't do justice.

Tim: That's right. Joyce Baldwin has written a commentary on Daniel in the Tyndale Old Testament commentary series that's so helpful. It's very accessible. You don't have to know Greek or Hebrew or anything. She does probably the best place that I've seen in laying out the different views, how different groups in our day, approach these dates in Daniel 9, reasons for holding different views and problems with each view. She has her own view, but she puts it on the list of a number of others. It's just a

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helpful survey. It just helps you respect why people hold the different views that they do.

Jon: How do modern-day Jewish communities think about this?

Tim: There's as much diversity as there is in the Christian tradition.

Jon: Did something happen?

Tim: It depends on your group. There are some that see the Messianic era as a symbolic hope. There are others that have done a more secular job on all of this, maybe on analogy to some of the modern mainline denominations in America. That turned it into a symbol of when humans get their act together and God graces us with the ability to love each other, so let's do that now. To other Jewish groups, they're very much still waiting for a coming Messiah.

Jon: 490's become a very long period of time.

Tim: There's thousands of years now. That's right. And different ways of accounting for that. Personally, I'm comfortable with it being a round symbolic number. One, because of the way that sevens and tens have already accumulated a symbolic significance in the story. Another one is the next passage to talk about, which is Isaiah 61, which is doing similar symbolic theology of the Jubilee Year but doesn't attach it to a number as such, but attaches it to a future hope—independent of number calendar schemes. So even within the Hebrew Bible, sometimes numbers can be a way of anticipating this hope. Other times, it's the hope itself and not the numbers. To me, that's at least made me chill out about trying to figure out how the numbers actually work out. Beckwith's article is a great place to start if you want to nerd out on the numbers.

[00:47:13]

Tim: Last stop in the prophets.

Jon: This was supposed to be the whirlwind tour. We got a little bit stuck there in Daniel 9.

Tim: Everybody gets trapped in Daniel 9.

Jon: Daniel 9:4 text. Isaiah 61. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Should I say Lord or Yahweh?

Tim: Your choice.

Jon: Okay. "The spirits of Yahweh God is upon me because Yahweh has anointed me, Isaiah, to bring good news to the afflicted." Is it Isaiah?

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Tim: We'll talk about the "me."

Jon: The "me."

Tim: The me is identified explicitly.

Jon: "The Lord has anointed me (someone) to bring good news (Gospel) to the afflicted and he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the year of the favor of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting so they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified."

Tim: We've got a "me."

Jon: We've got a "me. The spirits of Yahweh God has appointed me."

Tim: One who's empowered by the Spirit and anointed. Mashach.

Jon: Which means Messiah, the anointed one.

Tim: Two figures are anointed in Hebrew Bible: priests and kings. The person who anoints priests and kings are prophets, who does the anointing. This is big thing. Section of Isaiah 49 up through into the 60s, there's been a persona developing in the drama of the poetry. And it's a "me." The "me" is introduced in Isaiah 48 and 49. And the "me" is somebody whom God calls Israel.

Jon: He calls the "me" Israel?

Tim: At least the "me" tells us that God called me, Israel, and then gave me a mission to go restore Israel to himself. So it's the individual...

Jon: Who is somehow himself Israel.

Tim: ...being given the mantle of the whole nation to go on a mission to his nation and restore them back to covenant loyalty. It's some kind of representative. The only other spirit empowered person in Isaiah we met back in chapter 11 is the little sprout that comes up from the stump of Jesse. The new David.

Jon: Sevenfold.

Tim: Yes. And he's given sevenfold spirit. The book of Isaiah is forming a mosaic portrait of the coming deliverer. He's the king from the line of David. He's a new prophet. He's a new Moses.

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Jon: A new David.

Tim: Isaiah 53. He plays a priestly role by giving himself to die for the sins of his people. Isaiah 61 is "me" speaks up. He's an anointed one, and he's announcing the deror, which is a release. This the word from Leviticus 25 —The Jubilee Year. So announcing the Jubilee Year. The seventh seven. And look at the images. Good news for the suffering, the broken-hearted. People grieved are having their hearts bandaged. Good metaphor. Prisoners, captives. This is liberation, which is the Sabbath seventh day image. That's what the Jubilee is about. Remember debts are canceled, slaves are freed, land is restored to its Eden-like condition.

Notice also in Vs. 3 you notice something about the trees.

Jon: The people are going to be these pretty mighty trees. Be planted.

Tim: People are trees.

Jon: People are trees. That's a metaphor in the Bible. People as trees.

Tim: That sounds like Psalm 1. The person who meditates on Torah.

Jon: Where did we see this before though, too, in the Torah somewhere, that they were planted in the Promised Land? Was it the word used.

Tim: On the first worship song after the rescue in Exodus 15. The rescue from the waters. God said He's going to plant the people in the mountain of His inheritance, where He will reign forever and ever as king. Same thing. Same thing. So the people will become right oak trees that are planted in the New Eden

Jon: Here Isaiah is prophesied about this Jubilee release back into the Eden ideal.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: The Jubilee happens every 50 years, but this one seems really special that not only is it doing what the Jubilee supposed to do in anticipating new creation. It seems to actually to be bringing new creation. Here's a question for you. The Jubilee is seven times seven years. In Daniel, it's seventy times seven years, and that's another kind of Jubilee. Right?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Because after seven times seventy years is like a type of liberation out of exile.

Tim: Yes, that's right.

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- Jon: So we've got two separate sets of numbers both representing...
- Tim: Both representing the same reality.
- Jon: The same idea.
- Tim: The hope for return from exile. This is what I meant when I said Isaiah 61 is using the 50th year Jubilee concept. Jeremiah, Daniel 9, Chronicles is working with the seven seventies or seventy sevens.
- Jon: They're really overlapping symbols.
- Tim: Correct. Again, this is why I have become more comfortable with the numbers being symbols that point to the same... different numbers can point to the same reality. Because here it's the fiftieth year of release. We have a messianic figure, literally. In Hebrew, the word is mashach. We have a messiah announcing Gospel to the suffering who are still awaiting the ultimate restoration from exile.
- Jon: And what does it mean to be? Like on one level it's we want to go back. There was an awesome temple, and we were our own people. That on one level. But you read the Hebrew Scriptures, at what point was that actually Eden? With the temple and with the land. There was maybe little tastes of it, but in general, it wasn't working.
- Jon: No, it ambiguous. Just like Solomon, he's presented as a new Adam who asked for God's wisdom but he ends up making some bad choices along the way.
- Jon: What are we really hoping for its, well, everyone who mourns is comforted, and it's looking to something even bigger.
- Tim: Correct. In other words, these texts after the exile are looking back and rereading their whole history in the land as a shadow and a pointer forward to an ultimate reality. In fact, here. This is good. This is an essay by Bradley Gregory. It's an essay on this passage in Isaiah. It's called "The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah". In other words, after the first return from the exile, the Hebrew Bible's being shaped to tell you we're still waiting for an ultimate returned from exile even though they're geographically back in the land. This is a helpful distinction.
- "Some have returned to the land and found that the restoration hasn't happened. The Hebrew Bible makes a distinction between the returned to the land in Ezra, Nehemiah, and the ultimate restoration promised by the prophets. Here's how Bradley puts it. He says, "In Isaiah 42-55, the Babylonian exile is understood as an image of the Egyptian captivity."

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Jon: They're slaves in Egypt and being exiled to Babylon.

Tim: Totally. There's all these hyperlinks in these chapters of Isaiah to the slavery in Egypt and liberation from Egypt as the image for now we're in Babylon waiting a new Exodus. "In the last 10 chapters of Isaiah, the oppressive situation in Jerusalem after the exile has become another symbol." In other words, Isaiah 56-66 imagines that we're back in the land and things are horrible here. So we're back in Jerusalem awaiting another restoration.

"One gets the impression that the author doesn't see the situation after the exile as any better than the situation in Babylon or enslaved in ancient Egypt. In all cases, Israel is shackled because of sin, awaiting deliverance by Yahweh. The prescriptions for the Jubilee Year have been eschatologized." In other words, the Jubilee Year...

Jon: Is pushed into future hope.

Tim: ...is being read by biblical authors after the exile as a map for future hope, not just like, "Here's something our ancestors did that was interesting."

Jon: Or "here's something we need to do every fifty years." It's like, "Here's something that's pointing towards this ultimate."

Tim: That's right. By seeing a typological portrayal of the enslaved Israelites in Leviticus 25, the Jubilee Year slaves are released. The biblical authors are going back to their ancient texts and being like, "Whoa, the slaves that get released in the Jubilee Year, that's a way to imagine our whole history and a way to imagine exile. It's a way to imagine us right now sitting in Jerusalem. And we're still just as bad as we were before the exile. We're still enslaved, awaiting the Jubilee." That's what he's saying. Biblical authors reading early biblical text about...

Jon: They are still slaves.

Tim: Isaiah has moved the concept of Jubilee from a law to an image of future deliverance. This is the same move we find in all other Second Temple Jewish texts that talk about the Jubilee. The Jubilee becomes an image of future hope because that's how the biblical authors themselves are presenting it. The Hebrew Bible man, what an amazing document. You can see why precisely around the time of Jesus there was this fever pitch of anticipation of the coming Kingdom of God. You got Rome, the new Babylon, and you're just waiting for some kind of renewal restoration movement. And Jesus comes onto the scene activating all of this. I mean, intentionally activating all this stuff.

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Jon: It's not like you can maybe try to read it into what he's doing. It's literally what he's doing.

Tim: He's literally activating the metaphorical symbols.

Jon: He's saying, "This is happening. The year of jubilee is happening."

Tim: It's here. The humble will inherit the land. Think of the Beatitudes.

Jon: Those who mourn will...

Tim: The real winners who will inherit the land are the people getting stomped on right now and who follow me. The people who really get planted in the real renewed creation, the New Eden are those who follow me. And don't go the way of the zealots or the Pharisees. So Jesus was announcing the arrival of this ultimate Seventh Day, which is why he quoted from all these texts that we just spent so much time surveying.

For me, there's just so much payoff to come back to the Gospels then and to see he thought about... Jesus grew up on all these texts that we just... And he thought and prayed and saying all these texts. They filled his mind and heart. For him to stand up in Nazareth this will read and say like today starts today. Just imagine that.

Jon: I'm excited.

Tim: Thank you guys for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. Real-time, this episode is coming out in December 2019. For this whole month, at The Bible Project, we have been saying thank you to all of you who are getting behind what we're doing and supporting what we're doing. Specifically, we want to share right now a cool story about what one family has been doing with the podcast. You should hear the story from the Petersons.

Josh: I'm Josh Peterson.

Neils: I am Niels Peterson. Josh is dad and he's got three brothers. Dan is the oldest, then Josh, and Zach, and Thomas.

Josh: With the boys all living in different areas of the West Coast and not seeing each other often, I wanted a way to stay connected, have commonality. And I thought, "What better way to have good discussion than with the podcast?" I proposed the idea of listening to an episode a week and having text discussions.

Neils: We started listening to Bible Project as a group about a year and a half ago, and it's been fun to have it become more than what I was hoping it

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would be. I was hoping just to maintain relationship and commonality that when we do get to, it's not good to see ya...

Josh: That's the last six months then.

Niels: Right, right. But there's actually more depth.

Josh: I think that's been totally true. I've seen that, especially just when we do get together, we have a lot more to talk about. We haven't necessarily had anything like that, I don't think.

Niels: Short of dirt biking.

Josh: Right, right. I think, well, at least in our adult lives as a family, we haven't had anything where it's like, "Yeah, this is something that we use like the boys, the Peterson boys get to do. It's like just our thing."

Niels: A couple of my son's that weren't able to be here with Josh and I wrote a couple of thoughts that they wanted to share. This is what Dan says: "Listening and discussing The Bible Project with my brothers and dad has helped solidify some of my beliefs and stretched others. It has also helped me grow closer to my family as we discussed the truth that we have discovered." Thomas doesn't always engage, but I know he's listening. When he does let something out, it's like, "Oh, you were paying attention."

Thomas' thoughts: "My thoughts in The Bible Project podcast. It's been a great tool for a guided open discussion between us as a family on the more grand story of the Bible. I've found them incredibly approachable and the vernacular they use very applicable to us by creating a bridge between old Hebrew meanings in today's world. Doing that together has also given me a chance to know my brothers better because of the perspectives they bring. There's a deepened sense of togetherness and new appreciation for how the story of the Bible affects us all differently in our own journeys. Totally free to include or not include or not include any of this. Just my immediate thoughts." Thomas that's a little deep for immediate thoughts.

Josh: I'd encourage people doing something like this. People that you don't come in contact often, but they're close. Today's world, today's digital world brings everybody so much closer than ever before. And taking advantage of the tools like texting to do a podcast together and talk about it, it just makes sense to me. It's just a texting discussion, but it's still diving into the Scripture and learning from each other.

Tim: It's really amazing to hear stories like that. I had to have my head in a pile of books through a lot of the week and then Jon come up and have

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these conversations. And it's so amazing to hear how these conversations can be helpful for other people and people like the Petersons to help their families connect in kind of new and creative ways. So thank you all for supporting The Bible Project and being excited about what we're doing so that we can share.

If you want to find out more about what we're up to that The Bible Project or some kind of like big picture dreams that we have for the project as a whole, check out our website at thebibleproject.com or thebibleproject.com/vision. This episode of The Bible Project podcast was produced by Dan Gummel. The theme music is from the band Tents.

We, as always are collecting your listener questions about this series we've been on, the seventh-day rest. So if you have questions about the series, feel free to email them to info@jointhebibleproject.com. You can do audio-video recording, keep it around 20 or 30 seconds. And we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you guys and we'll see you next week.