

OVERTONES OF THE JUBILEE IN THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL 9:24-27

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The study of the prophecy of Dan 9:24–27 has usually focused on the grammatical, historical and chronological elements associated with the text. While affirming the importance of these elements, the article attempts to show how the Sabbatical and the Jubilee provide a major theological and numerical foundation for the chapter. This messianic prophecy finds its fulfillment in the anointed ministry of Jesus who comes as the kinsmen redeemer to release the captives as recorded in Luke 4:16–30.

Key Words: Daniel, Daniel 9, Luke 4, prophecy, 70 weeks, sabbatical, jubilee

1. The Historical and Chronological Swamp of Daniel 9

The Advent movement of the 19th century focused on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation for its mission and self-understanding.¹ Grown out of this 'prophetic' past, current Seventh-day Adventist ministry such as public evangelistic and personal Bible study series include among others the prophetic texts of Daniel and Revelation.² In an attempt to explain these texts many historical³ and chronological⁴ complexities arise, which

¹ See especially Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1911), 409. "The scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration: 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed'. Daniel 8:14." For a thorough study of the historical and theological foundation for the mission of the Adventist Church see F. Gerald Darmsteegt, *The Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977).

² For a sample of a Seventh-day Adventist study in this area please see an online study of Dan 8 and 9: <http://www.amazingfacts.org/free-stuff/bible-studies/study-guides/ct/viewmedia/mid/453/tid/2-18/lng/en/sc/r.aspx?7=right-on-time!-prophetic-appointments-revealed>, accessed, November 25, 2011.

³ The historical complexity includes the beginning and ending of the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24, the details surrounding the last week of the prophecy of Dan 9:25, its

may leave one rather bewildered than illuminated.⁵ This attempt is not restricted to popular preaching and teaching but is also demonstrated in some of the writings of biblical and historical theologians.⁶ The Adventist interest in this area was especially evident in the 1980s in response to several challenges to the traditional viewpoint of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment.⁷ The Adventist church at this time attempted to reaffirm the historical and chronological veracity of the prophecies with such articles as "Interpretation of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks" by Gerhard F. Hasel,⁸ "Commencement Date for the Seventy Week

connection with the longer 2300 evening-morning prophecy of Dan 8:14 and the events of October 22, 1844 as related to the experience of the Advent people pictured in Rev 10.

- 4 The chronological complexity includes explaining the literal year/prophetic time language of Dan 8:14; 9:24–27, the various mathematical computations needed to arrive at the right historical date and the necessity to explain the addition of one year when transitioning from the B.C. to the A.D. time frame because of no "0" year.
- 5 I have personally witnessed this several times when the efforts of our best evangelists to explain the many complexities of these texts has at times overwhelmed the audience so they do not grasp the significance of the important truths explained. In my opinion, the explanation of these prophecies either needs to be greatly simplified or given more time so their proper significance can be understood.
- 6 Just one example of the complexity can be found in the published dissertation of Owusu-Antwi Brempong from Andrews University. In the second chapter entitled "Chronological Data in Daniel 9:24–27" he has 80 pages of endnotes with 792 references. Owusu-Antwi Brempong, *The Chronology of Daniel 9:24–27* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1995).
- 7 This challenge was especially made by Desmond Ford who was a professor at Pacific Union College in California one year after I graduated as a theology student there. As a result of a forum presentation entitled "The Investigative Judgment: Theological Milestone or Historical Necessity?" on October 27, 1979, Ford was given an opportunity to write his views and present them at Glacier View, Colorado, before church officials. In response to the questions he had raised, the Theological Seminary at Andrews University revamped its MDiv program (which I took from 1982–1984) to focus more on the sanctuary and salvation issues. In addition, the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference published seven influential volumes in a Daniel and Revelation Series to clarify the teachings of the church.
- 8 Gerhard F. Hasel, "Interpretation of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks," in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1990).

Prophecy"⁹ by Arthur J. Ferch, and the "Year-Day Principle–Part 1" and "Year-Day Principle–Part 2" by William H. Shea.¹⁰

Note however, that Adventists have not been alone in their attempt to explain the meaning of the complex passage of Dan 9:24–27. James A. Montgomery, in his magisterial commentary on Daniel in 1927, called Dan 9:24–27 "the dismal swamp of Old Testament criticism"¹¹ and a "most vexed passage."¹² Montgomery notes that "Calvin, who claimed 'not usually to refer to conflicting opinions,' regretted the fact that he could not 'escape the necessity of confuting various views of the present passage.'¹³ In his *New American Commentary* on Daniel, Miller observes that Dan 9:24–27 contains "four of the most controversial texts in the Bible."¹⁴

It is with a bit of foreboding then that this article attempts to wade into the swamp. The intent is not so much to restudy or evaluate all the arguments that have been set forth for the various positions but to go beyond the historical and chronological aspects of the text and attempt to uncover additional theological insights. This article assumes the historicist view of the messianic fulfillment of Dan 9:24–27.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ William H. Shea, "Year-Day Principle–Part 1" and "Year-Day Principle–Part 2," in *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1992).

¹¹ James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927), 386.

¹² Ibid., 400.

¹³ J. Calvin, *Daniel* (ed. and trans. T. Myers; London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 2:195–96. As quoted in Tim Meadowcroft, "Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Anointed One of Daniel 9:24–27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120/3 (2001): 429–449.

¹⁴ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (The New American Commentary; vol. 18; E. Ray Clendenen, ed.; Nashville, TN; Broadman and Holman, 1994), 252.

¹⁵ For a good recent overview of the messianic position based on a survey of the historicist position from the early church onward see J. Paul Tanner, "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166/662 (2009): 181–200 and "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166/663 (2009): 319–335. For an Adventist perspective of the amillennial, dispensationalist, historical-critical and historicist interpretations see Hasel, "Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks," 3–63.

2. Daniel 9 and the Sabbatical and Jubilee Legislation

The focus of this section is an attempt to link the Sabbatical and Jubilee components found in Lev 25–26 with its counterparts in Dan 9. It will be shown that 2 Chr 36:21 is an important passage that links both the numerical and theological concepts of the levitical legislation with its historic and prophetic counterparts in Daniel.

2.1 The 70-Year Captivity and the Sabbatical Legislation

“In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (Dan 9:1–2). Here Daniel is focused on the seventy-year Babylonian captivity, which had been predicted by Jeremiah. Because the people had not listened to Jeremiah’s preaching for “twenty-three years” (Jer 25:3) and had not heeded the warnings of “all his servants the prophets” (v. 4), “this whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (v. 11).¹⁶

A critical text for discussion is 2 Chr 36:20–21 providing additional insight into both the chronological and theological aspects of the exile.¹⁷ According to v. 21, Israel was to be in exile “until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate, it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.” This text is linked with the violation of the levitical legislation through the common word desolate:¹⁸ “Then the land shall

¹⁶ Jeremiah links the exile of the people with their disregard of the messages delivered by God through His servants the prophets for many years. Because of their persistent disobedience, the threatened curse of Deut 28:36–68, which warned that a persistently disobedient people would go into exile, was finally executed.

¹⁷ There is a very clear linkage between 2 Chr 36:20–21; Jer 25:11 and Dan 9:2. All three of these passages have clear historical figures or events, which speak of a similar time period. Jeremiah’s prophecy was given at the beginning of the exile: “The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah (that was the first year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon)” (Jer 25:1). Daniel 9 is written at the end of the captivity: “In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans” (v. 1). And 2 Chr 36:20 mentions the entire period: “He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia.”

¹⁸ “Grelot bases his interpretation upon 2 Chr 36:20–22, where the 70 year prophecy of Jeremiah is interpreted in terms of the levitical principle of the sabbatical year. This passage quotes Lev 26:33, 43, the common theme word being שָׁמָּה, “desolate.”

enjoy its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate (שמם), while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its sabbath years. As long as it lies desolate (שמם), it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it. For the land shall be deserted by them, and enjoy its sabbath years by lying desolate (שמם), without them, while they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they dared to spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred my statutes (Lev 26:34–35, 43).¹⁹

There has been some discussion as to whether Israel had kept the Sabbatical in either the first or second Temple era.²⁰ The NRSV translation of 2 Chr 36:21 seems to point to unfaithfulness in keeping the Sabbatical because it states that the land would lay desolate “until the land had ‘made up’ for its sabbaths.”²¹ Since Israel had not allowed the land to rest voluntarily, the exile allowed it to rest involuntarily.²² In the legislation found in Lev 25:1–7, the Israelites were to work the land for six years and rest the seventh year: “The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land

Jacques Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9: An Exegetical Study,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 17 (1979): 7.

- ¹⁹ Doukhan notes (p. 7): “It is also significant that this word is one of the key words of Dan 9, appearing five times in the chapter (once each in vv. 17, 18, 26; twice in v. 27).”
- ²⁰ Yehuda Feliks notes that there was evidence from Lev 26:34–35, Jer 29:10 and 2 Chr 36:21, “that it was not observed during the period of the first temple” in “Jewish Farmers and the Sabbatical Year,” in *The Jubilee Challenge: Utopia or Possibility?* (ed. Hans Ucko; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 165. See the unpublished paper of S. Douglas Waterhouse, “Is it Possible to Date the Sabbatical-Jubilee Years?” Citing evidences from both biblical and extra-biblical sources this former professor of Old Testament of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. states that Isa 37:30 (“This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit;” cf. 2 Kings 19:29) points to a Sabbatical-Jubilee sequence of events in the time of Hezekiah in 701 BC. For a discussion of the second temple and the early rabbinic period see the article by Ben Zion Wacholder, “The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973): 153–196.
- ²¹ The word translated here as “made up” is from the Hebrew רצה, which means “to restore, make amends.” In the levitical legislation it can mean either the acceptance (Lev 1:4; 7:18) or the rejection of an offering (Lev 19:7; 22:23) by the Lord. In this particular instance it carries the meaning of restoration.
- ²² Similar to their forefathers who had not kept the Sabbath day by gathering manna and were rebuked by Moses (Exod 16:27–29) Israel was now rebuked by the Lord through the exile.

that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.”

There is an obvious and strong parallel relationship between the seventh-day Sabbath legislation found in Exod 20:8–11, Deut 5:12–15, and the seventh year Sabbatical of Lev 25:1–7. Both specify the six days/years work–seventh day/year rest paradigm. “It is clearly implied in Lev 25:1–7 that the Sabbatical year is modeled after the Sabbath day, that is, the weekly Sabbath.”²³ The Sabbatical year not only looked back to the seventh-day Sabbath but also looked forward to the celebration of the Jubilee.

2.2 The Sabbatical and Jubilee Legislation

The provisions marking out the observance of the Jubilee, which is built upon the Sabbatical both numerically and theologically, are outlined in Lev 25:8–12. The Jubilee was to occur at the end of the “seven weeks of years” (Lev 25:8) after the loud blast of the trumpet²⁴ at the conclusion of “the Day of Atonement” (v. 9), which would proclaim “liberty” (ἄφεσις, LXX) throughout the land (v. 10).²⁵ The Jubilee is not only linked to the Sabbatical numerically in the “seven weeks of years” at the beginning of its legislation (v. 8), but also conceptually at the end of its terms of reference by words, which echo those found in vv. 5–6. Notice the parallelism between the Sabbatical legislation and the Jubilee legislation:

Sabbatical legislation: “You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine. . . . You may eat what the land yields” (Lev 25:5–6).

²³ Shea, “Year-Day Principle—Part 1,” 84.

²⁴ The Hebrew word for Jubilee is יָבֵיבָה (Lev 25:10) and refers to the blowing of a ram’s horn.

²⁵ The Jubilee was to be celebrated after the Day of Atonement, which occurred on the “tenth day of the seventh month” (Lev 25:9) after the seventh “sabbaths of years” (Lev 25:8) in “the fiftieth year” (v. 10). For a detailed discussion of this point see *The Sabbath and Jubilee Cycle* (Garden Grove, CA: Qadesh La Yahweh Press, 1992), 19–26.

Jubilee legislation: "You shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. . . . You shall eat only what the field itself produces" (Lev 25:11-12).

The Lord was gracious enough to answer the unspoken question in Lev 25:20: "Should you ask, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?'," the Lord had promised to miraculously bless the sixth year so it would provide "for three years" (Lev 25:21). These three years would span the Sabbatical year as well as the subsequent time when the new crops would be planted and reaped in the eighth and ninth year (v. 22).²⁶ Leviticus 25:20-22, which deals with the question of adequate provisions, is itself sandwiched between the question of the compensation for property (vv. 13-19) and redemption (v. 55) as it related to the Jubilee. As it is not the purpose of this article to give a detailed account of the legislation given here, a brief overview of the parallelism will suffice:

- A *Sabbatical* (Lev 25:1-7):
 - Every seven years
 - Begins at the end of the sixth year
 - A year of Sabbath rest
 - Eat what grows on its own
- B *Jubilee* (Lev 25: 8-12):
 - Every seven weeks of years
 - Begins at end of the forty-ninth year
 - Proclamation of liberty
 - Eat what grows on its own
- B' *Jubilee* (Lev 25:13-19):
 - Compensation of property
- A' *Sabbatical* (Lev 25:20-22):
 - God's provision for food during the seventh and eighth year
- B'' *Jubilee* (Lev 25:23-55):
 - Redemption of property/people

From the above brief overview, it is apparent that the legislation and the provisions for the Sabbatical and Jubilee are closely intertwined both numerically and theologically. The Sabbatical-Jubilee cycle was to be kept once Israel would "enter the land" (Lev 25:1). Just as in the Deuteronomic legislation the promised blessing was conditional upon obedience.

²⁶ The manna that fell in abundance on the sixth day and did not rot on the seventh (Exod 16:22-30) is perhaps echoed here in the merciful provision by the Lord to provide enough for the Sabbatical.

2.3 Theological Observations of the 70 Years

The text in 2 Chr 36:21 and its relationship to the Sabbatical legislation in Lev 25–26 is often overlooked in even the most careful study of Dan 9:2 and Jer 25:11.²⁷ Although 2 Chr 36:21 does not provide any additional insight into the length of the seventy year captivity, it does shed light into the theological meaning behind the number 70 as predicted by Jeremiah and reflected on by Daniel. Some scholars, however, although seeing the numbers used in Dan 9:24–27 as symbolic with some historical fulfillment recognize that the numbers are not arbitrary but “are intentionally used, in line with theological and schematic understandings current at the time.”²⁸

The tendency of the biblical and extra-biblical writers in the exilic and post-exilic period was to take the number 7, which stood for the Sabbatical year, and make it cyclical in nature. This had already been done with the Sabbatical years itself as it related to the longer Jubilee period. One seven-year Sabbatical period had been multiplied by 7 to make “seven weeks of years” (Lev 25:8). Just as there was a close connection between the seven years (week) of the Sabbatical and the seven weeks of years of the Jubilee in Lev 25, there may be a strong relationship between the seventy years of captivity mentioned in Jer 25:11 and Dan 9:2 and the seventy weeks prophesied in Dan 9:24. According to Shea, “since the land rested every seventh year, it is evident that the inspired writer viewed the 70 years of captivity as the sum of ten sabbatical-year periods.”²⁹ Collins cites several sources from the second century B.C., which used Jubilees and Sabbaticals to construct a

²⁷ See Brempong, on pages 80–81, he does not mention 2 Chr 36:21 in his brief introductory remarks to the chapter.

²⁸ Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp,” 433. Note also the following remarks: “The applicability of Lev 25–26 with its jubilee theology and 2 Chro 36:18–21 with its schematic reinterpretation has been amply demonstrated. Devora Dimant also notes the Second Temple habit of calculating time in sabbatical cycles, in the light of which her argument is a convincing one that the periods of time should be read sequentially and that the proportions of time also have some meaning,” 433. Although I disagree with how Meadowcroft views the fulfillment of the prophecy related to the anointed One as non-messianic, I do concur with his observation and others that the numbers used in the pericope have a theological meaning.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 93. See also Richard Davidson’s article, which agrees with Shea’s point when he states, “The four hundred and ninety years decreed upon Daniel’s people are ten jubilee periods of 49 years each,” in “In Confirmation of the Sanctuary Message,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2/1 (1991): 103.

“chronological framework for historical chronologies.”³⁰ In addition, Collins states that, “periodization of history is a standard feature of the ‘historical’ apocalypses and often uses ten as the schematic number.”³¹

As the table below illustrates, Shea sees a dynamic connection between the Sabbatical period of seven years of Lev 25:1–7 and the seventy years (7 x 10) of Dan 9:2 with the Jubilee period of seven weeks in Lev 25:8–17 and the seven weeks x 7 x 10 years of Dan 9:24.³² The relationship between the Sabbatical/Jubilee in both numeric and theological constructs, which had been closely established in Lev 25, now appears to be echoed in Dan 9 (see Table 1).³³

| Sabbatical Period | | Jubilee Period | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lev 25:1–7 | 7 years | Lev 25:8–17 | 7 weeks of years x 7 = 49 |
| Dan 9:2 | 7 years x 10 = 70 years | Dan 9:24 | 7 weeks of days x 7 x 10 = 490 |

Table 1: *Time in Leviticus 25 compared to Time in Daniel 9*

Besides the numerical relationship between Sabbatical-Jubilee of Lev 25 and prophecy of Dan 9, Shea also sees meaning between the actual structure of the Sabbatical (Lev 25:1–7) and Jubilee (Lev 25:8–10) legislation and the seventy years (Dan 9:2) and seventy weeks (Dan 9:24) prophecy.

³⁰ John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; vol. 27; ed. Frank Moore Cross; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 352.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 352–353. He shows this from the Book of Enoch and other historical apocalypses.

³² Shea, “Year-Day Principle–Part 1,” 93.

³³ An extended quotation by Collins who has written extensively on Daniel links the Sabbatical number 7 to both biblical and extra biblical accounting of historical events: “That the period of Seventy Weeks probably forms part of the larger sequence of history is suggested also by the nature of the Sabbatical cycles. An attentive reader of the Torah, as was the author of Dan 9, would assume that the counting of sabbatical years and jubilees was as old as the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. The author of the *Book of Jubilees* believed that it was initiated with the creation of the world” (see p. 353). Although I would not agree with the second century authorship of Daniel, this principle is well worth noting.

Insomuch as the 70-year period (referred to by Daniel in verse 2 just prior to his prayer) was understood to relate to the sabbatical-year legislation (Lev 25:1–7), it may be expected that the 70-week period (at the close of the prayer) would be related to the jubilee period. This is the sequence in Lev 25:1–17 (sabbatical year-jubilee). Thus the 70 weeks, or 490 years (on the year-day principle), may be seen as ten jubilee periods even as the 70 years were seen as ten sabbatical year periods.³⁴

What might be added to the above relationship between Lev 25 and Dan 9 is that the prayer of confession of Daniel on behalf of the nation in Dan 9:3–19 could function as a Day of Atonement-type of prayer that has its foundation in Lev 25:9. For just as the people were instructed to “practice self denial” (Lev 23:27) during that Day of Atonement, Daniel seeks the Lord “by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes (Dan 9:3). Just as this solemn day of convocation immediately preceded the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:10), Daniel’s heartfelt prayer is uttered just prior to the revelation of the 70 weeks.³⁵ Table 2 brings out these possible relationships in an abbreviated form.³⁶

³⁴ Shea, “Year-Day Principle–Part 1,” 93–94. Shea tells us that Lev 25:1–7, “is the earliest biblical text which the year-day principle is reflected.” *Ibid.*, 83. He points out that the parallelism in Lev 25:4–5 which first uses the phrase “a sabbath of solemn rest for the land” in v. 4 is echoed by the phrase “a year of solemn rest for the land” in v. 5. So the Sabbatical year, which is based on the weekly Sabbath can stand for both the seventh year and a seven-year time period.

³⁵ Gerald H. Wilson, “The Prayer of Daniel 9: Reflection of Jeremiah 29,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 48 (1990): 91–99. “The prayer of Dan. 9.5–19 has long presented a puzzle to readers of Daniel. Most have considered the passage a secondary insertion that makes an imperfect fit with its larger literary context” (p. 91).

³⁶ Furthermore, note the close correlation between the prayer found in Dan 9 and the promised restoration connected to the Sabbatical law in Lev 26:40–43: “But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them.”

| Leviticus 25 | | Daniel 9 | |
|--------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Lev 25:1-7 | The Sabbatical Law | Dan 9:2 | The Sabbatical Broken (2 Chr 36:11) |
| Lev 25:8 | The Day of Atonement | Dan 9:3-19 | The Atonement Prayer |
| Lev 25:9-10 | The Jubilee | Dan 9:24 | The Jubilee |

Table 2: *Leviticus 25 Structure and Daniel 9 Structure*

In addition to the above discussion, there are several commentators who allude to the fact that Dan 9 might be based on the Jubilee. As already noted, one modern Jewish scholar sees a relationship between the seventy year exile prophesied in Jer 25 (cf. 2 Chr 36:21) and the breaking of the Sabbatical law of Lev 26:34–35.³⁷ This remark is made in the context of his discussion on how Jewish farmers kept the Sabbatical in ancient times.

Jacques Doukhan has shown how the French exegete P. Grelot recognized that the use of the number 70 in Dan 9:2 and the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24 referred “to the sabbatical year (7 x 10) and to the Jubilee (7 x 7 x 10), respectively.”³⁸ Citing both Montgomerie and Grelot, van der Woude states that, “the influence of the sabbatical theology of Lev 25–26 has been widely noted.”³⁹ He makes a further observation that, “Daniel 9 extends the duration of the desolation to seventy weeks of years, or ten jubilees.”⁴⁰ In discussing Lev 25:8 Shea states that, “the Sabbath day and the six days that preceded it came to be used as the model by which the occurrence of the jubilee year was calculated.”⁴¹ He finally links the Jubilee found in Lev 25:8 with Dan 9:24–27 and states, “one could almost say that the time period involved in Dan 9:24–27 was modeled after the jubilee legislation.”⁴²

³⁷ Feliks, “Jewish Farmers and the Sabbatical Year,” 165.

³⁸ Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9,” 6–7.

³⁹ A. S. van der Woude, *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 106; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 352.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 352. Although I concur with the concept that the seventy weeks can be seen as 10 Jubilees as already discussed by Shea and others, I do not agree that this was an extension of the 70 years of exile. The seventy weeks can be seen as a blessing and a direct contrast to the curse of the Jewish people, its land and temple during the seventy-year exile.

⁴¹ Shea, “Year-Day Principle—Part 1,” 85.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 86.

Doukhan is even more direct in his affirmation that Dan 9 is based on the Sabbatical-Jubilee theology when he states, "the association of 70 years with 70 weeks makes clear that our text points to the levitical principle of the Jubilee."⁴³ In addition,

Daniel sets forth his prophecy from the perspective of the Jubilee. Moreover, since Daniel places his prophecy in the perspective of Jeremiah's historical prophecy, it means that Daniel also sets forth an historical event. . . . The event to which the 70 weeks point receives a *theological* dimension; it has something to do with the Jubilee, just as the prophecy of Jeremiah had something to do with the sabbatical year.⁴⁴

3. Jubilee Overtones in the Nazareth Pericope of Luke 4

The focus of this section is an attempt to link the chronological and theological components of the Jubilee to the inauguration of the ministry of Jesus in Luke 4:16–30. There are four areas that will be studied. The first will briefly discuss the messianic fulfillment of Dan 9:25–27. Next, a relationship will be drawn between the "Anointed" of Dan 9:25–26 and the Christ of Luke 4:16–30. Third, the word ἄφεσις, "release," will be studied as it is used in the Jubilee legislation and the Nazareth pericope. Finally, the law of the kinsman-redeemer will be discussed as it applies both to the Jubilee and the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth. Throughout the study our aim is to show how themes of the Jubilee legislation permeate the prophecy of Dan 9 and its fulfillment in Luke 4:16–30.

⁴³ Doukhan, 21.

⁴⁴ Doukhan, 8. A further evidence of the influence of the Jubilee in the prophecy is the rather singular dividing of the sixty-nine weeks into seven "weeks" and sixty-two "weeks" found in Dan 9:25. Could it be that the seven "weeks" or 49 years were meant to not only to delineate the chronological time between the command to restore the temple and the messiah but also to invest that time with Jubilee overtones as well?

3.1 The Messianic Fulfillment of Daniel 9:25–27

As was noted in the introduction, this paper assumes the messianic fulfillment of the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24–27. In a recent overview of the view of the early church fathers, Tanner observes that, “there was a strong consensus among the early church fathers (a near unanimous position, in fact) that Daniel’s seventy-weeks prophecy was fulfilled in Christ, that is, they held a generally messianic interpretation of the passage.”⁴⁵

According to Hasel, the historical messianic view was held by ancient sources such as the Septuagint and the Essenes. Although this view “has been eclipsed almost completely by the historical-critical scholarship . . . there are still stout supporters of the Messianic interpretation to the present among both Catholic and Protestant scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.”⁴⁶ Adventist scholarship has made extensive efforts to establish 457 B.C. as the beginning of the seventy weeks prophecy of Dan 9:24.⁴⁷ According to this view, “the seven weeks and sixty two weeks” of Dan 9:25 extends down to A.D. 27 and applies to the baptism or anointing of Jesus as the Messiah. “In the midst of the week” Jesus is “cut off” by His sacrificial death in 31 A.D.⁴⁸ The seventy weeks end with the martyrdom of Stephen in A.D. 34 as described in Acts 7.⁴⁹

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to give a detailed analysis of the chronological debate that has swirled around Dan 9:24–27, a few remarks regarding the Anointed One (מָשִׁיחַ) found in Dan 9:25–26 might prove helpful in providing a possible link between that prophetic passage and Luke’s writing about Christ. The masculine noun מָשִׁיחַ is

⁴⁵ Tanner, “Is Daniel’s seventy-weeks prophecy messianic? Part 1,” 200.

⁴⁶ Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks,” 47–48. Of course it is noted here that, “they varied greatly in how they understood the details and how they based their calculations.” Cf. Tanner, “Is Daniel’s seventy-weeks prophecy messianic? Part 1,” 200.

⁴⁷ See for instance, Brempong, *The Chronology of Daniel 9:24–27*, 290–299. Arthur J. Ferch, “The Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy,” in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 64–74; Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks,” 47–63.

⁴⁸ For an overview of the dates and justification that the anointing of Jesus at His baptism in A.D. 27 fulfilled Dan 9:25 and the death of Jesus in A.D. 31 fulfilled Dan 9:27 see Brempong, *The Chronology of Dan 9:24–27*, 305–325.

⁴⁹ For an overview of the terminus ad quem of the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24 at the stoning of Stephen in A.D. 34 see Brempong, 330–332.

used 38 times in the Old Testament, mostly to designate kings such as Saul, David, Cyrus and others. The term appears twice in the book of Daniel, once with מַלְאָךְ, "prince" in Dan 9:25 and once in v. 26. Only in Daniel is the term in the absolute, without article or suffix and may be considered a proper name.⁵⁰ Brempong cites the analysis by Doukhan, Shea and Hasel and shows how the tight poetic structure of Dan 9:25–26 argues strongly that these two verses focus on the close interrelation between the one historical figure, "Messiah Prince," and the rebuilding and destruction of Jerusalem. He further shows the close thematic and terminological connection between Dan 9 and the Suffering Servant figure of Isa 52:13–53:12.⁵¹

3.2 Jesus as the Anointed

Although recently questioned⁵² there has been a general consensus that Luke 4:16–30 is of programmatic significance in Luke-Acts.⁵³ This pericope has attracted a great deal of attention because of the major themes Luke encapsulates in the story and repeats elsewhere.⁵⁴ Thus Luke 4:16–30 has been seen as a "preface"⁵⁵ and a "condensed version"⁵⁶ of Luke-Acts. After His baptism (Luke 3:21–22) and temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–13), "Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 162–163.

⁵¹ Ibid., 164–166.

⁵² Verheyden reports disagreement over the exact nature of the programmatic discourse by scholars in the late 1980s has resulted in "skepticism about the programmatic status of the discourse." J. Verheyden, "The Unity of Luke-Acts: What are we up to?" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; Lueven-Louvain, Belgium: Lueven University Press, 1999), 55.

⁵³ The basis for the next two sections comes from a prior article entitled, James Park, "The Proclamation of Release in Luke 4:16–30," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 7 (2004): 27–37.

⁵⁴ In a major article Neiryneck states that "there are a number of good reasons to justify the choice of Lk 4:16–30, widely held to be programmatic for Luke-Acts." F. Neiryneck, "Luke 4:16–30 and the Unity of Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; Lueven-Louvain, Belgium: Lueven University Press, 1999), 357. The major reason given by Neiryneck is that a number of themes introduced in Luke 4:16–30 reappear a number of times throughout Acts.

⁵⁵ Hugh Anderson, "Broadening Horizons: The Rejection of Nazareth Pericope of Luke 4:16–30 in Light of Recent Critical Trends," *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 260.

⁵⁶ Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 20.

returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone" (Luke 4:14–15). Jesus then travels to his hometown of Nazareth on the Sabbath and reads from Isaiah. "When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me'" (Luke 4:16–18a).

In an article entitled, "Does Luke Also Portray Jesus as the Christ in Luke 4,16–30?" Robert O'Toole addresses an ongoing discussion of whether Jesus was portrayed as a prophet or the Christ in the Nazareth pericope.⁵⁷ O'Toole states that, "any claim that Luke also views Jesus as the Christ in Luke 4,16–30 will naturally have to attend to the meaning of "anointing" in Luke 4,18."⁵⁸ After showing that the Nazareth pericope is bracketed by a summary of Jesus' teaching and healing in Luke 4:14, 44, he points out that v. 41 clearly states that Jesus as the Son of God is Christ, the Messiah: "Demons also came out of many, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah."

The words of the demons in Luke 4:41 are an echo of the words of the Father including the presence of the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus: "The Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:22). O'Toole states that, "most scholars grant a connection between Luke 3,21–22 and Luke 4,18–19."⁵⁹ He further says that the aorist verb ἐχρίσεν found in Luke 4:18, "comes from the verb χρίω, from which also derives the title, χριστός, and so it could very naturally point to Jesus as the Christ. Already in the OT we find this relation between 'anointing' and 'Spirit', precisely with reference to kings (1 Sam 10,1–7,10; 16,13)."⁶⁰

It is of interest to the current study that O'Toole cites the references relating to the kingly anointing of Saul and David. There is a harmony in the Hebrew root (מָשַׁח) and the Greek LXX (χρίω) terms in these two

⁵⁷ Robert F. O'Toole, "Does Luke Also Portray Jesus As the Christ in Luke 4,16–30," *Biblica* 76/4 (1995): 498–522. While our study is not focused on that particular debate, the article does speak directly to the topic of the anointed in Dan 9 and Luke 4:16–30.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 506.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 509.

passages and the words which relate to the "anointed" of Dan 9:26.⁶¹ Thus it could be said that the anointing of Jesus as the Messiah by the Spirit not only points back historically to the christening of kings but also prophetically fulfills the expectations sounded from Dan 9:24–27.

From the very beginning of his gospel Luke has highlighted the theme that Jesus is the Christ. The first time the word "Christ" is used in Luke it is connected with the announcement of the angel to the poor shepherds, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).⁶² This attestation that Jesus is indeed the Christ is immediately challenged by the devil in the wilderness (Luke 4:3).

Christ's conquering of the devil in the wilderness invests His preaching and ministry with authority. These divine testimonies and events are clearly connected with the Spirit (Luke 1:17, 35; 2:27; 3:16; 3:22; 4:1, 14) and the themes of the good news of redemption (Luke 1:68; 1:77; 2:10, 14; 2:30–32, 38; 3:6).⁶³ The proclamation of the Spirit-filled Messiah is thus woven into the very fabric of Luke until it rises to a wonderful crescendo in Luke 4:18–19. Sloan's description is quite appropriate here:

Since the time of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the Holy Spirit was believed to have departed from Israel, silencing the prophetic voice. Not until the Messianic time of the end, when the eschatological prophet would appear with the anointing of the Spirit, would Scripture again be fulfilled, the voice of revelation once more speak, and the Spirit return to Israel. Therefore, when Luke writes that Jesus 'returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee' (4:14), and then immediately proceeds to the incident in which 'he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up' the crescendo of Messianic anticipation has by Luke's skillful hand reached its finest swell.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Note the remarks from the end of the previous section which dealt with the anointed of Dan 9:25–26.

⁶² Note the use of the terms "today" and "Christ" which are echoed again in Luke 4:18, 21.

⁶³ The theme of redemption itself has overtones of the Jubilee.

⁶⁴ Robert E. Sloan, "The Favorable Year of the Lord" (M.A. thesis; Abilene, Tex.: Hardin-Simmons University Library, 1977), 53. Sloan, initially points out that Judaism placed more an emphasis on Messianic functions "than it did upon either the person or the proper noun title therewith associated," *ibid.*, 45. Although the word itself as used in later Jewish literature and the OT link the anointing of the Spirit with the Messiah, it "is most clearly seen precisely in relation to kings," *ibid.*, 5. Furthermore, a Judaic tradition in the first century encapsulated in 11Q Melchizedek, ascribed to the Messiah the task of proclaiming the glad tidings of the new eschatological age.

3.3 Luke 4:16–30 and the Theme of Release

The underlying theme of Luke 4:16–30 is release, which had its roots in the feast of the Jubilee and has already been discussed in connection with Dan 9. In one of the few extended studies of the Jubilee theology in the gospel of Luke, Robert Sloan has noted that “though not universally noticed, or, at best, not often pointed out by commentators of recent years, the jubiliary background of this passage was widely recognized by commentators of bygone years.”⁶⁵ Further, the Jubilee theme in Luke 4:16–30 has been studied from a variety of different aspects such as the theological aspects of the Sabbath,⁶⁶ Jesus’ role as a liberator,⁶⁷ and His ministry for the poor.⁶⁸ Although most commentators affirm that Jubilee themes are present in Luke 4:16–30, some question whether Luke was speaking literally about the Jubilee.⁶⁹

Probably the most important term in the whole pericope is the catchword ἀφεσις, “release,” which Luke has underscored by the insertion of Isa 58:6 and 61:1–2. This insertion has been discussed in several places⁷⁰ including Tannehill who observes that the insertion of Isa 58:6 could not

⁶⁵ Ibid., 19. Sloan cites a number works which have noted the connection between Luke 4:16ff with the Jubilee including Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to S. Luke* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896); George B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (Pelican Gospel Commentary; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963); John Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 5.

⁶⁶ Samuele Bacchiochi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1980). Bacchiochi incorporates and broadens Sloan’s research by including a more foundational OT understanding of the Jubilee’s relationship with the Sabbath.

⁶⁷ See Michael Prior, *Jesus the Liberator* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 139–140. Prior devotes an insightful section to the Jubilee aspect of Jesus’ proclamation and ministry in Luke 4.

⁶⁸ Paul Hertig, “The Mission of the Messiah and the Year of Jubilee: A Comparison of Luke 4 and Isaiah 61” (Th.M. thesis; Pasadena, Cal.: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989). Hertig builds on a portion of Sloan’s research, especially as it relates to Jesus’ ministry to the poor.

⁶⁹ While Tannehill observes that it “seems clear” there are themes from the Jubilee in Isa 61:1–2, “it is not so clear that the author of Luke-Acts was aware of the connection between the passage and the Law of Jubilee. This remains a possibility but has not yet been proved.” Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 68. Robert O’Toole also notes that although not many have been convinced that Luke was speaking literally of the Jubilee, “most would grant that themes associated with the Jubilee appear in Luke 4:16–30.” Robert F. O’Toole, “Jesus as the Christ in Luke 4:16–30,” *Biblica* 76 (1995): 512–513.

⁷⁰ See Bacchiochi, 142; Hertig, 73–77; Sloan, 36–38; 177–194 and Tannehill, 66–71.

have come from an accidental reading of the LXX.⁷¹ Hertig maintains that the insertion is intentional and is placed here to highlight the significant OT theological meaning of ἄφεσις and make it “an important theme in the book of Luke.”⁷² The term ἄφεσις is used seventeen times in the gospels, primarily by Luke⁷³ for the concept of forgiveness (Luke 1:77; 7:47; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).⁷⁴

The term ἄφεσις is also used in the LXX of the OT and is “certainly related to the Jubilee year.”⁷⁵ At the heart of that legislation is the proclamation to “proclaim ‘liberty’ (ἄφεσις) throughout the land” (Lev 25:10). The Hebrew word for Jubilee (יובל) is based on the word for “ram’s horn”⁷⁶ and is probably associated with the blowing of the trumpet (שופר) on the Day of Atonement, which inaugurated the Jubilee (Lev 25:9).⁷⁷ Except in Lev 25:15 where the word Jubilee does not appear, the LXX uses the word ἄφεσις every time to translate יובל which stood for the Jubilee.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Tannehill, 67.

⁷² Hertig, 73. Of the approximately fifty times ἄφεσις appears in the LXX, twenty-two are found in Lev 25 and 27 where it translates in most cases as “year of Jubilee” and in other cases it translates as “release” (cf. Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1). ἄφεσις also translates the complex of Sabbath-year passages (Exod 23:11; Deut 15:1ff; 31:10). In a unique sense, it is used in the “sending away” of Azazel on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:22).

⁷³ ἄφεσις is used ten times in Luke-Acts, twice in Matthew, once in Mark and never in John.

⁷⁴ According to Sloan, ἄφεσις is the key word that “ties together the quotation of Isa 61:1–2a and 58:6 in Luke 4:18–19, “the programmatic Lukan rendering of the ministry of release,” (p. 178). Patrick D. Miller concurs with this idea when he writes: “The tie that binds Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6 together in Luke 4 is the small word ἄφεσις, the word translated ‘release’ for the captives and ‘liberty’ for the oppressed. . . . It is the catchword binding the two quotations together.” Patrick D. Miller, “Luke 4:16–21,” *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 419.

⁷⁵ O’Toole, “Jesus as the Christ in Luke 4:16–30,” 511.

⁷⁶ The Hebrew word “yovel” means “ram” and “ram’s horn.” Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (The JPS Torah Commentary; ed. Naham N. Sarna and Chaim Potok; Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 3:172.

⁷⁷ The term “yovel” also denotes the literal function of blowing a horn in Exod 19:13, which summoned the tribes to Sinai and the blast of the trumpets connected with the conquest of Jericho (Josh 6:4, 5, 6, 8, 13) perhaps had its roots in Gen 4:21 where it is mentioned that Jubal (Hebrew “yuvval”) “was the father of all who play the harp and flute.”

⁷⁸ Leviticus 25:10, 11, 12, 28 (two times), 30, 31, 33, 40, 50, 52, 54; 27:17, 18, 31, 23, 24 and Num 36:4.

ἄφεσις not only translates the word Jubilee but the Hebrew word דָּרוֹר used in Lev 25:10 that has “conventionally been rendered ‘freedom, liberty’.”⁷⁹ Baruch A. Levine, comments that “Hebrew דָּרוֹר is cognate with Akkadian *anduraru*, which designates an edict of release issued by the Old Babylonian kings and some of their successors. . . . The biblical laws of the Jubilee year thus incorporate Near Eastern legal institutions of great antiquity.”⁸⁰ Thus the usage of ἄφεσις in the LXX has a very strong etymological, theological and historical link with the Jubilee legislation.

Forgiveness or release (ἄφεσις) was an integral part of the mission of Jesus as well as His disciples.⁸¹ Just as Jesus predicted that the repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47), Peter stood up in front of the nations on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed, “repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness (ἄφεσις) of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The influence of the Spirit is clearly mentioned in both the promise of Jesus and the ongoing proclamations of Peter to the Jews (Acts 5:31) and the Gentiles (Acts 10:43). In addition, Paul in his missionary work echoes Peter by saying, “that through Jesus the forgiveness (ἄφεσις) of sins is proclaimed” (Acts 13:38). This forgiveness or release is accomplished only through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is constantly mentioned alongside this theme in almost every instance in Luke-Acts (cf. Luke 4:18–19; 24:47–49; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43 and 26:17).

According to Sloan, the central concept of ἄφεσις is rooted in the Sabbath and Jubilee and represents “in the Old Testament virtually every aspect of that particular legislation.”⁸² Sloan notes that the twice-repeated verb “to proclaim” in Luke 4:18–19 also has clear “jubiliary connections.”⁸³ This strongly connects the heralding concept of the Jubilee year in Luke 4:19⁸⁴ with the proclamation to the prisoners and the oppressed that they have been released from their bondage.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Levine, 171.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:171–172.

⁸¹ Hertig, 73–74.

⁸² Sloan, 177.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁴ Cf. Lev 25:10, “proclaim throughout the land.” Sloan (p. 36), further notes that although three different Greek words underlie the word “proclaim” in the LXX of Lev 25:10 and Isa 61:1–2a, they all translate the same basic root which in itself has clear Jubilee overtones.

⁸⁵ While the word for prisoner literally means “prisoners of war” it can also have a broader meaning (cf. 2 Cor 10:5; 2 Tim 3:6) such as “those shackled by pauperizing

Thus the theologically rich term “release” is closely linked with the mission of Jesus and His disciples. Robert Tannehill states in his summary: “All this material demonstrates the fulfillment of the commission which Jesus announced in Nazareth, the commission to preach good news to the poor and proclaim release to the captives and oppressed.”⁸⁶ The good news of salvation must be proclaimed.⁸⁷ This divine message of release does not occur in a historical vacuum but is closely linked in Luke 4:16–22 to a very specific time.

3.4 The Time of the Kinsman Redeemer

Christ’s announcement of messianic fulfillment through the reading of the texts in Isaiah echoed the contemporary sectarian and mainstream Jewish expectation that such an event would soon take place. David E. Aune states that an early first century fragment from Qumran, 11Q Melchizedek, “provides the first piece of conclusive evidence before A.D. 70 that the proclamation of glad tidings could be considered a significant aspect of the messianic task.”⁸⁸ A. Strobel argues that behind Christ’s proclamation lay an actual historical jubilee year, which is dated in A.D. 26–27.⁸⁹ Writing contrary to this view is Prior, who regards any literal or liturgical reckoning of years to account for the Jubilee as “indulging in interesting speculation.”⁹⁰ Shea, who has researched about ancient calendars,⁹¹ cites a Jewish source that maintained that “the years 457 B.C. and A.D. 27 and 34 were sabbatical years.”⁹²

economic and social condition” (ibid., 38). The somewhat parallel expression is taken from Isa 58:6, a chapter which itself contains strong Jubilee/Sabbath motifs. Although Sloan notes that Isa 58:6 has both a Jubilee history of interpretation in Judaism and a thematic connection with Isa 61, its particular character is manifested in “the jubilee charged term aphesis” (ibid., 40).

⁸⁶ Tannehill, 139. It is most important to note that once “released” individuals did not go their separate ways but were “released” from their sins and old ways of life in order to follow Jesus in the way of discipleship

⁸⁷ A good case in point is given in Acts 3 where Peter not only heals the beggar, but then uses the occasion to proclaim the good news of Christ’s resurrection.

⁸⁸ David E. Aune, “A Note on Jesus’ Messianic Consciousness and 11Q Melchizedek,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 45 (1973): 165.

⁸⁹ August Strobel, *Kerygma und Apokalyptic* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 105–111.

⁹⁰ Prior, 141.

⁹¹ See Shea’s rather complicated but insightful reckoning of the Oct. 22, 1844 date as the end of the 2300 evenings and mornings of Dan 8:14 in William H. Shea, “Day of Atonement and October 22, 1844,” in *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (ed.

While it is not essential to the theological import of the passage to know whether it was a Sabbatical or Jubilee year, we do know that it was the Sabbath day that Jesus visited his kinfolk in Nazareth. As we have alluded to earlier, both the Sabbatical and Jubilee legislation was built numerically and theologically on the seventh-day Sabbath. By applying the Jubilee text of Isa 61:1–2 to Himself on the Sabbath, Jesus has brought the prophetic future of the messianic ministry of release into the theologically rich foundation of the Sabbath-Jubilee.

While Jesus ends his reading of Isa 61:2 by announcing “the year of the Lord’s favor,” the OT text actually ends with the negative phrase, “the day of vengeance of our God.” The fact that Jesus ends the reading from Isaiah proclaiming the Lord’s favor instead of His wrath has “evoked varied explanations from the scholarly community.”⁹³ The main focus of

Frank B. Holbrook; Biblical Research Institute; Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1990), 165–171. For an alternative reckoning of the Sabbath and Jubilee cycle, which favors the dates of A.D. 28 and A.D. 35 see Chart A, *The Sabbath and Jubilee Cycle*, 49. While a chronological reckoning of the years more be somewhat tentative, I believe the theological foundation of the linking of the Jubilee with the Nazareth pericope to be sound, despite the remarks of Tannehill (and others) that “this remains a possibility but has not been proved.” Tannehill, 68.

- ⁹² Shea, “Year-Day Principle,” 94 cites Ben Zion Wacholder, “The Calendar of the Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973): 153–196. See also Davidson’s article cited earlier in which he states, “The 490 years decreed upon Daniel’s people are ten jubilee periods of 49 years each. If indeed this period is counted with reference to the Jubilee, it is natural to expect the beginning and ending dates to be jubilee years. Recent analysis of literary evidence has now made it possible to determine the precise sabbatical and jubilee dates in Biblical times. Strikingly, the date of the decree of 457 B.C. alone, not of the other possible dates is a jubilee year,” (p. 103). Davidson bases this comment on an unpublished article by Daniel Waterhouse who argues that the Jubilee occurred at the beginning of the exile (604–603 B.C.), the return from the exile/beginning of the 70 weeks of years prophecy (457–456 B.C.) and the end of that same prophecy in (33–34 A.D.). See the unpublished paper of Waterhouse, “Is it Possible to Date the Sabbatical-Jubilee Years?”
- ⁹³ Sloan, 32. Sloan reports that B. Reicke “puts forward the two elements of significance relative to the omission: (1) the reference in 61:2b to God’s wrath was not in keeping with the primary theme of the reading (i.e., the year of God’s grace) as applied by Jesus and hence was abandoned; and, (2) it was out of his sense of prophetic authority—that Jesus was free to effect both the omission of 61:2b and the addition of 58:6.” Bo Reicke, “Jesus in Nazareth,” in *Das Wort und die Wörter: A Festschrift in Honor of Gerhard Friedrich* (Stuttgart, 1973), as quoted in Sloan, 93. See also Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise to the Nations* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 44–46.

the closing part of Christ's citation of the text focuses on announcing the apparent sudden and immediate historical reality of God's favor.

This positive and climatic nature of Luke 4:19 is defined by the terms "favorable"⁹⁴ and "year." The word "year" (ἐνιαυτός) is a term that captures "the desired verbal flavor of a celebrative era, season, or anniversary, and thereby indicates a time of special note."⁹⁵ It is a definite time used here in Luke 4:19 (as well as Isa 61:2 and Lev 25:10–11) in order to convey the special Jubilee time of release. Through the structuring of the key time elements in the pericope, Christ's proclamation is not only grounded on the year of the Lord's favor but even more specifically on the Sabbath day. "Today" on "the Sabbath day" the reality of Jubilee rest and redemption has come.⁹⁶

Although the kinsmen initially speak well of Jesus, their rhetorical question about His mysterious past can be seen as the first hint of hostility, which would lead to driving Him out of the town "to the brow of the hill . . . so that they might hurl Him off the cliff" (Luke 4:29). Jesus' pronouncement of salvation to His kinsmen has in itself obvious Jubilee overtones. For according to the law the redemption of the land could only happen by "the nearest relative" (Lev 25:24–25). The question in Luke 4:22, "Is not this Joseph's son?" is perhaps meant to stifle the startling conviction that they had been depicted as in bondage and in need of release. "Who does he think *He* is?" catches the flavor of the Nazarenes who reject the message by casting doubt on his familial connection with them. Just like Elijah raised the widow's son (Luke 4:25–26; cf. 1 Kings 17:17–24) and Elisha healed Naaman the leper (Luke 4:27; cf. 2 Kings 5), Jesus is sent to release the widow's son from the grave (Luke 7:11–15) and the leper from his disease (Luke 5:12).⁹⁷

The proclamation of release or forgiveness on the day of Pentecost by the apostles (Acts 2:38) also has Jubilee connotations. Pentecost, which is also called the Feast of Weeks (Exod 23:16; 34:22; Deut 16:9–10, 16; 2 Chr

⁹⁴ This term is again repeated in Christ's important rejoinder in Luke 4:24: "no prophet is accepted in his hometown."

⁹⁵ Sloan, 34.

⁹⁶ For an extended discussion of the chiasmic structure of Luke 4:16–20 see again my article, "The Proclamation of Release in Luke 4:16–30," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 7 (2004): 27–37. There I attempt to show that the unique structure of the chiasm highlights both anointing of Jesus and the time element within the chiasm which could then be linked to the prophecy of the Anointed One coming at a certain time in Dan 9:24–27.

⁹⁷ Stephen would follow in the footsteps of Jesus by caring for the widows and face the same rejection.

8:13), occurred fifty days after the Passover and was associated with the end of the harvest. It was significant because "on it the Jews celebrated the gifts of the grain harvest, thanking God for the blessings so received."⁹⁸ With the very name Pentecost meaning "fifty" it could also be said to carry a Jubilee motif as well.

It appears that Luke intentionally constructed this closely knit pericope in order to highlight time as a major component in Christ's and the disciple's mission of release. Although it might be said that the opportunity for God to bring about redemption is always present, these verses seem to point to a specific time when the Messiah's salvation will especially be exercised.⁹⁹ During this last week of the seventy weeks prophecy of Dan 9:24 it might be said that, "in the coming of Jesus Christ, who lived among us and who was called Immanuel—'God with us'—we find a re-Sabbatization. . . . The time Christ lived on earth represents a kind of long Sabbath day."¹⁰⁰

4. Conclusion

This study has attempted to wade through the historical and chronological swamp of Dan 9 by showing the influence of the key text found in 2 Chr 36:21 that links the seventy years of punishment predicted in Jer 25:11 and contemplated in Dan 9:1–2 to the Sabbatical and Jubilee legislation found in Lev 26:34–35, 43 and Lev 25:1–55. Possible overtones of the Jubilee have been linked to the historical, theological, and prophetic elements of Dan 9 to its messianic fulfillment in the baptism and ministry of Jesus.

We have noted the central importance that Luke gives to Christ's proclamation of release on the Sabbath day in the synagogue in Nazareth. While it is true that the catchword ἀφεςις, "release," is often translated in terms of forgiveness in Luke, the term is also connected to the Old Testament Jubilee legislation of release, which itself rests upon the concept of liberty of the seventh-day Sabbath. Further, the concept of release forms a nexus with the Jubilee material found in Lev 25:10; Isa 58:6; 61:1–2 and Luke 4:18–19.

⁹⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 233.

⁹⁹ This apparent emphasis of time in Luke 4:16–22 gives added support to the hypothesis that the divinely appointed times of the Sabbath and Jubilee are an integral part of the Messiah's mission.

¹⁰⁰ Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1978), 17.

As such, Luke 4:16–30 provides a number of important themes for Luke's understanding of the disciples and their mission. The Nazareth pericope shows both the profound christological and universal character of their community. Their ministry was to be imbued with the same Spirit that prompted Christ to proclaim the release of the prisoners of all nations and ages. The theological themes of the Sabbath and Jubilee informed and directed the understanding and practice of redemptive release and forgiveness in the life and ministry of the discipleship community.

Thus it could be argued that the highly recognized programmatic discourse in Luke 4:16–30 not only has strong prospective elements but retrospective characteristics as well. As such, the Nazareth pericope may well be grounded not only in the Jubilee of Lev 25 but more foundationally in the Sabbath commandments of Deut 5:12–15; Exod 20:8–11; the story of the manna in Exod 16 and ultimately point back to the creation story itself in Gen 1–2.