



Daniel

דניאל

Chapter 9

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

Daniel's beloved capital city of Jerusalem lay in ruins. The fertile fields of Israel and Judah had remained neglected and unplowed for decades, sifted by desolate winds. Daniel -- just a teen when he was taken prisoner by the Babylonians -- was now an old man. He had endured and witnessed persecution for his faith. After almost 70 years of bondage in a foreign land, Daniel read a prophecy by Jeremiah, who had foretold Israel's captivity in Babylon, and had pinned down an exact time period of 70 years.

This specific mention by Jeremiah happened in two places. One occurrence often referred to is the letter that Jeremiah sent to the Jews in Babylon, which eventually became part of the canon of Scripture:

“This is what the LORD says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

-- Jeremiah 29:10-14

While Daniel would certainly have been familiar with the letter of Jeremiah, it was probably not yet part of the complete book of Jeremiah at this point. It is more likely that Daniel was reading the scroll (book) that Jeremiah had already written before the captivity took place. The text mentions a book or scroll. This also contains a reference to the seventy years.

“This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

-- Jeremiah 25:11

Daniel realized that Israel's time of judgement was almost over! This discovery caused him to confess his sins and those of his people. He began to pray and worship God with an unusually deep intensity. Towards the end of the day, during a lengthy prayer which probably lasted most of the day, the angel Gabriel came to him with a message. What followed was one of the most astonishing promises in the entire Bible.



Chapter 9

DANIEL 9:1-2

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus [or Xerxes], a Mede by descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans --

in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from books the number of years given by the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

- Daniel records that this took place during the first year that Darius was made ruler by Cyrus over Babylon. Cyrus had not yet taken the throne, so the Jews were still in captivity.

DANIEL 9:3

So I turned to the Lord God, pleading with him by prayer and petition, with fasting, in sackcloth and ashes.

- Daniel goes into a long prayer with fasting. This occupied the entire day and the reference to fasting suggests that it may have covered an even longer period of time. His prayer is rich and beautiful in its scope, humility and emotion. Notice how his pace quickens as he continues:

DANIEL 9:4-19

⁴ And I prayed to the LORD my God, and confessed, and said, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of loving mercy to all who love him keep his commandments;

⁵ We have sinned, and have done wrong and have been wicked and have rebelled, even by turning away from your commands and laws.

⁶ Neither have we listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

⁷ O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but our faces are covered with shame as on this day; to the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem and to all Israel, near and far, through all the countries where you scattered them, because of their unfaithfulness to you.

⁸ O Lord, the shame of our faces belongs to us, to our kings, to our rulers, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.



Chapter 9

⁹ The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving even though we have rebelled against him;

¹⁰ We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God; we have not walked in his laws, which he gave us through his servants the prophets.

¹¹ Yes, all Israel has transgressed your law and turned away from it, refusing to obey your voice. Therefore the curse and the sworn judgment that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, are poured onto us, because we have sinned against him.

¹² And he has confirmed his words spoken against us, and against our rulers that ruled over us, by bringing disaster upon us. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done as has been done to Jerusalem.

¹³ Just as it is written in the law of Moses, all this trouble has come upon us, yet we have not come in prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our perversions and focus on knowing your truth.

¹⁴ Therefore the LORD looked on this evil, and brought it onto us. For the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does, yet we did not obey his voice.

¹⁵ Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made for yourself a name that extends to this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

¹⁶ O Lord, in keeping with all your righteousness, I beg of you, let your anger and your fury be turned away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. Our sins and the sins of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all that are around us.

¹⁷ Now, our God, hear the prayer of your servant, and his petitions. Look with favor on your desolate sanctuary, for the Lord's sake.

¹⁸ O my God, incline your ear and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city called by your name. We do not present our requests before you because of our righteousnesses, but because of your great mercies.

¹⁹ O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, O my God, do not delay, for your city and your people are called by your name.”



Chapter 9

- Notice how his pace quickens as he becomes more and more passionate in his pleas.
- Even though God himself has described Daniel as one of the three most righteous men ever, Daniel takes upon himself the sins of his people. He includes his own sinfulness in this prayer. How humble of this man of God!

DANIEL 9:20-21

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my requests before the LORD my God for his holy mountain --

Yes, while I was speaking in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the vision at the beginning, flying swiftly, came and touched me about the time of the evening sacrifice.

- Gabriel comes in “flight” (some Bibles leave out this reference but it is implied in the Hebrew). Notice that Daniel immediately recognizes Gabriel. This is evidence that angels have physical characteristics just like people have. They are not “clones.”
- Daniel records that the angel Gabriel appeared to him “about the time of the evening sacrifice.” How remarkable! Almost 70 years after he was removed from the observance of the sacrifice, he still records time by those events. What a contrast to our modern weakness in honoring our commitment to church. We go on a two week vacation and forget what time church service starts!
- Each time Gabriel is mentioned in Scripture, he is shown as a messenger angel.

DANIEL 9:22-23

And he informed me and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding.

As soon as you began to pray, the answer came forth which I have come to show you; for you are greatly loved. Therefore, understand the message, and carefully consider the vision.

- Gabriel was sent as soon Daniel began to pray. More accurately, an answer was assigned to Gabriel at that time. Chapter 10 shows the spiritual forces at work which can hinder the deliverance of answers to prayer. It is possible that Gabriel was somehow tied up in this way and that this delay was the reason he was in “swift flight” when arriving.



Chapter 9

DANIEL 9:24

Seventy weeks [or ‘sevens’] are decreed for your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sins, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most Holy.

- This relates very specifically to the Jewish people. The seventy weeks of years (shabuim) represent a period of 490 years decreed for Israel and Jerusalem. It does not refer to the Gentile world.
- There is much misunderstanding about this because of earlier teachings by some before the restoration of Israel in 1948. It was inconceivable to many in the late 1800’s and the early 20th century that Israel could once again become a nation. A number of teachers contorted Galatians 6:16 to turn the Christian church into the “new Israel,” claiming that the Jews had now forfeited their right to the promises God had made and these were now passed on to the church. Not so. God did not replace His plan for Israel with the church, he merely interrupts his plan for a time then goes back to it. Like a chess clock, he stops the clock while working with the church, then at the appointed time will start the clock again as his attention goes back to His chosen people, the Jews.
- Notice all the things that must yet happen before the seventy weeks of years are complete. To put an end to sin? That certainly hasn’t happened yet. To anoint the most holy? This is a reference to restoring a broken temple. At the time of this message the temple is in ruins, so this may refer to the rebuilding of the temple, but most scholars suggest it refers to the final millennial temple described in Ezekiel 40-44. That’s because the statement follows “to bring in everlasting righteousness” which comes only after the return of Christ.

DANIEL 9:25

Know therefore and understand, that from the issuing of the decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem to Messiah the king, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street shall be rebuilt, and the wall, but in times of trouble.

- The seventy weeks of years begins with a decree or announcement that the city of Jerusalem will be restored and rebuilt. Although one decree by Artaxerxes did include an oblique reference to the wall, the decree meant here is certainly the one talked about by Nehemiah. It was issued by Artaxerxes Longemanis on March 14, 445BC according to calculations by the British Royal Observatory.



Daniel

דניאל

Chapter 9

- This is a reference to when the Messiah will be revealed as a king. The Hebrew uses the word “nagid” which doesn’t have to mean king (it can mean prince, ruler or even leader) but it is used throughout the Old Testament for “king,” beginning with king Saul. Thus this refers to a time when the Messiah will be declared a king. This event would happen at the end of 483 years (69 weeks of years)
- There were several times in the life of Jesus that he was about to be made a king by force, but always rejected that or slipped away. Then, on the 10th of Nisan in AD32, he arranged it. He rode over the brow of the Mount of Olives on the foal of a donkey, as had been predicted in Zechariah 9:9, and people threw coats and palm branches on the road as they declared him both Messiah and King. When asked by the pharisees to rebuke the people for blasphemy, Jesus responded that if the people didn’t declare him king then the stones would cry out the proclamation.
- The triumphal entry took place exactly 483 biblical years after the decree by Artaxerxes. The time period measures 173,880 days which is 69 weeks of years in length. Note that the Bible always refers to years in terms of 12 months of 30 days each.

DANIEL 9:26

After the sixty-two weeks, Messiah will be cut off, but not for himself. And the people of the prince that shall come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it will be with a flood. War will continue to the end, and desolations have been decreed.

- The events take place “after” the 69 weeks of years but the 70th week has not yet started. This demonstrates that God has stopped the clock for an undetermined length. The church takes place during this time. Christ’s death on the cross begins the age of the church. When the church is taken out of the way by the event we call the “rapture” then God will restart the clock, ushering in the final week of years decreed for the Jewish people.
- The people of the ruler or prince who is to come is a remarkable double reference. It refers both to Titus who will enter Jerusalem after a siege in AD70, and to the coming one-world leader we often refer to as the antiChrist. Note how accurate this is, as even when the temple was destroyed it was not by an order of Titus but by a random act of one soldier (the people of the coming ruler) who threw a torch into the temple. It burned to the ground and Titus ordered the temple torn down to get at the gold that had melted within. Not one stone was left upon another, just as Jesus had told his disciples in the Olivet sermon.



Chapter 9

DANIEL 9:27

And he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week. In the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering, and on a corner of the altar [or wing of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that has been decreed is poured out upon him.

- The final ruler will first be peaceful and will enforce some kind of treaty to give the Jews the right to carry on their sacrificial requirements, then after 3-1/2 years he will turn on them, stop the sacrifice, stop any allowance of religious observance except to him, and will desecrate the temple by placing his image in the Holy of Holies. Naturally, a temple will have to exist in Jerusalem before this seven year time period can begin.
- Centuries after this was written, and almost 200 years after Antiochus IV placed an image of Zeus in the Holy of Holies, Jesus made a reference to “the abomination that causes desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel.” Since the similar event by Antiochus IV had already happened, this refers to something yet in the future.