

Daniel 9 – Daniel’s Seventy Weeks

Read Daniel 9

Vs 1 What is the timing of this Chapter? During the first year of Darius. That puts it after Chapter 5, when Darius defeats Belshazzar.

Vs 2 What was on Daniel’s mind? Daniel understood something from reading the words of God’s prophets. He was referring to Jeremiah 25:11-13 and 29:10. His knowledge of the times led him to know those passages applied to his time. He knew he was at the end of the 70 years of Jewish captivity.

Vs 3 What was Daniel’s response to this understanding? He set his face (determination) toward the Lord God, prayed and fasted in sackcloth and ashes (humbly, in mourning). Daniel knew that effective prayer comes out of knowing and praying both God’s word and our present circumstances. It is important to note that Daniel regarded these as real, literal years. Daniel was undoubtedly also familiar with Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28-45:4). He must have been encouraged to see a man named Cyrus rise in power over Persia. Daniel believed that God would accomplish seventy years of captivity, yet he prayed passionately that God would do what He promised to do. Daniel knew that God’s promises invite our prayers and participation.

There were three waves of captivity:

- 605 B.C. – Jerusalem was attacked and Daniel and other captives were taken to Babylon.
- 597 B.C. – Jerusalem was attacked and treasure was taken from the temple.
- 587 B.C. – Jerusalem falls and the nation was exiled.

So when did the 70 years start? Daniel asked God, in His mercy, to take the earliest of all possible starting points (Daniel’s abduction) for determining the beginning of the 70 years.

Vs 4 – 19 Outline Daniel’s prayer.

Daniel confesses the sin of his people, and glorifies the goodness and righteousness of God.

Daniel asks God to forgive and to restore Jerusalem.

Vs 20 This verse is a nice summary of Daniel’s position (supplication) before the Lord.

Vs 21 When did the answer come to his prayer? While he was praying! Is this the first time Daniel saw Gabriel? No, Dan 8:16 Gabriel explained the vision of the ram and the goat. This dramatic answer to prayer came even as Daniel prayed. Jesus said, your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him (Matthew 6:8). Whenever there seems to be a delay in answer to prayer, there is reason for the delay. When it is right to do it, God can answer prayer immediately. Sometimes God answers prayer even before we pray (Isa 65:24). Being caused to fly swiftly: This is one of the few places in the Bible where we are told that angels fly. Gabriel came quickly because there is no great distance between heaven and earth. What time of the day did the answer come? The time of the evening offering: This was a special time of day, when Moses offered the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:6) and when Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27:45).

Vs 22 – 23 What did Gabriel tell Daniel? That he would give him understanding. In his prayer, Daniel didn’t ask for understanding. His prayer demonstrated that his heart was close to God’s heart, so as a friend, God revealed many things to Daniel (John 15:15). What adjective did Gabriel use to describe Daniel? He was greatly loved. Both Daniel and the Apostle John (John 13:23) were noted for their love-relationship with God. Both Daniel and John were also noted for receiving amazing prophetic messages. Daniel had just considered a set of “sevens” upon the nation of Israel – the 70 years of promised captivity prophesied by Jeremiah. It was as if God said through Gabriel, “Now I will show you some ‘sevens’ that will really amaze you.” Daniel illustrated the principle that when we seek God diligently, we often receive even more than we ask for.

Vs 24 – 27 – See “Daniel’s 70th Week – A “7-Year Tribulation”?

Daniel's 70th Week – A “7 year Tribulation”?

Daniel 9:24-27 (commonly known as the 70 weeks of Daniel) is a detailed and complex prophecy that accurately dated the first coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ) and discusses the establishing of the New Covenant and implications of events that will occur leading up to the time of Christ's second coming.

What and when?

Verse 24 lists six things that are to be accomplished by the end of the 70 weeks of Daniel:

1. Finish the transgression.
2. Make an end of sins.
3. Make reconciliation (atonement) for iniquity.
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness.
5. Seal up vision and prophecy.
6. Anoint the “Most Holy.”

By the end of His ministry Jesus at least partially fulfilled the first three items. By His sacrifice Jesus provided a way for sin to be forgiven and became the atonement for our sins, reconciling us to God (Colossians 1:19-20). He will finish completing these first three and fulfill the final three after His return.

Verse 25 introduces the timing of the fulfillment of the prophecy. The 70 weeks of this prophecy represent a period of 490 years, based on the biblical principle that prophetic Scripture often uses a day to represent a year (Ezekiel 4:4-6; Numbers 14:33-34). In verses 25 and 27, the period of 70 weeks is divided into three time periods: seven weeks (49 years), 62 weeks (434 years) and 1 week (7 years).

The 70 weeks of Daniel were to begin “from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem” (verse 25). In 457 B.C., in the seventh year of his reign, King Artaxerxes issued a decree giving Ezra permission to return to Jerusalem to complete the efforts to rebuild the city (Ezra 7:6-10; Ezra 9:9).

Using 457 B.C. as the starting point, we see that during the first seven prophetic weeks (49 years) the Jews who returned rebuilt the walls and city of Jerusalem despite the efforts of their enemies to thwart their work (457 to 408 B.C.). Messiah was to come after another 62 weeks (434 years). Counting 434 years from 408 B.C. brings us to A.D. 27—the year during which Jesus Christ was baptized and started His work as the Messiah. (To calculate, subtract 408 from 434 and add 1 since there is no year 0.)

The first phrase in verse 26 says that the Messiah would be “cut off” after the 62 prophetic weeks (counting the first seven, a total of 69 prophetic weeks or 483 years).

Sorting out the pronouns in the prophecy of the 70 weeks of Daniel

Verse 26 introduces an evil prince who will destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (where sacrifices are offered).

Verse 27 then says that “he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.” One question is, to whom does the pronoun “he” refer? Many believe that “he” refers to the prince mentioned in verse 26. This prince, it is believed, will establish some kind of covenant, which will be broken “in the middle of the week” (after 3½ years).

But a careful reading shows that “he” does not refer to the prince, but rather to the Messiah.

Notice the phrase in verse 26 “the people of the prince.” It is not grammatically correct to assign the singular pronoun “he” in verse 27 to the plural “people” in verse 26. If “he” were to refer to the prince, the phrase should have been stated differently: “the prince of the people.” “Messiah” is the only person mentioned in verse 26 that can be the word pointing to the pronoun he. So the phrase “he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week” refers to the Messiah.

There is another pronoun in verse 27 that also requires an explanation. In the New King James translation, we see the phrase “one who makes desolate.” Who or what is this “one”?

According to the Masoretic (Jewish) text of verse 27, the “one who makes desolate” is not a reference to a person, but rather to the cause of the desolation of the holy place.

Obviously the one who is responsible for the desolation is the evil prince referred to in verse 26. However, based on the Masoretic text, the word “one” does not refer to him specifically, but rather to something (presumably in or near the temple where sacrifices take place) that causes the desolation.

There is an alternating pattern in verses 26-27 that is a common Hebrew usage. The first half of verse 26 refers to the Messiah, the second half to an evil prince. The first half of verse 27 refers to the Messiah and the second half refers to the abomination in the temple introduced by the evil prince.

The Messiah “confirms a covenant with many”

Verse 27 states that “he” (the Messiah) confirms a covenant with many for one week, and then, in the middle of that week, He brings an end to sacrifice and offering.

The phrase “confirm a covenant” is rendered “make a firm covenant” in the Masoretic text and in the New American Standard Bible. The Hebrew word translated “confirm” (or “make a firm”) is *gabar*, which means “to be strong, to prevail, … to bind up anything broken, to make firm, … to make strong, robust, to strengthen”.

In other words, to “confirm the covenant” means to further establish and strengthen a covenant that already exists, as is described in Isaiah 42:21. To “magnify” means to strengthen or enlarge.

The covenant that is made firm or strong is the New Covenant, a binding and strengthening of God’s law. Consider how Jesus magnified the law in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7. Jesus emphasized the “new” or “strengthened” (“firm”) covenant for 3½ years and then was crucified.

The Messiah puts an end to the sacrifice and offerings

After Jesus died, the Levitical sacrifices were no longer necessary as a representation of His atoning sacrifice for sin, meaning that He brought “an end to sacrifice and offering.” Even though the Jews continued to offer sacrifices until the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, they were no longer required. One of the reasons the epistle to the Hebrews was written was to convince the Jews that because of Jesus’ sacrifice and the introduction of the New Covenant, the sacrificial system was no longer necessary (Hebrews 10:14-18).

In Daniel 9:26-27 it says that the Messiah would be “cut off” following a total of 69 weeks (seven weeks plus 62 weeks). Isaiah 53:8 the Messiah would be cut-off. The prophetic 70th week (seven years) started with Jesus’ ministry. He was “cut off” (crucified) after 3½ years (“in the middle of the week”).

Thus it is clear that the work of the Messiah that was to be accomplished in the 70th week has not yet been completed. As noted earlier, the first three of the six items listed in verse 24 that were to be accomplished by the end of the 70 weeks of Daniel have been partially completed, and the last three remain. All will be completely fulfilled in the future, when the Messiah finishes the last half of the 70th week.

The Great Tribulation is 3 ½ years (nowhere in the Bible does it say the tribulation is 7 years)

The Great Tribulation is three and one-half years in length. It is distinguished as a period where the Beast, or Antichrist, will be revealed, and the wrath of God will greatly intensify during this time. In Matthew 24:21 Jesus is referring to the event of Matthew 24:15, which describes the revealing of the abomination of desolation, the man also known as the Antichrist. Also, Jesus in Matthew 24:29-30 states, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” In this passage, Jesus defines the Great Tribulation (v.21) as beginning with the revealing of the abomination of desolation (v.15) and ending with Christ’s second coming (v.30). Revelation 13:1-10 gives even more detail concerning the Beast’s actions, and just as important, it also verifies the length of time he will be in power. Revelation 13:5 says he will be in power for 42 months, which is three and one-half years, the length of the Great Tribulation.

Let’s now look at Daniel 9:25-27, inserting what we learned;

25 "Know therefore and understand,
 That from the going forth of the command
 To restore and build Jerusalem **[457 B.C.]**
 Until Messiah the Prince **[Jesus starts His ministry 27 A.D.]**,
 There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks **[483 years]**;
 The street shall be built again, and the wall,
 Even in troublesome times **[during the first 7 weeks of years – 49 years it took to finish, see Ezra, Nehemiah]**.

26 "And after the sixty-two weeks
 Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself **[Jesus crucified, not for Himself but for us]**;
 And the people of the prince who is to come **[antichrist]**
 Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

The end of it shall be with a flood,
 And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 Then he **[referring to vs 26, Messiah]** shall confirm **[make better]** a covenant with many for one week;
 But in the middle of the week **[3.5 years]**
 He **[Messiah]** shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering **[which He did at the cross]**.
 And on the wing of abominations shall be one **[antichrist]** who makes desolate,
 Even until the consummation, which is determined,
 Is poured out on the desolate."

The "pause button" was hit after Jesus died and will restart on the wing of abomination, followed by the 3.5 year great tribulation, which will finish the 70th week. The "pause" is the Church age.

