

**Daniel 9:24–27**

<sup>24</sup> "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. <sup>25</sup> "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. <sup>26</sup> "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. <sup>27</sup> "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

Daniel 9:24–27 is the most difficult passage in the OT to interpret correctly because of the number of exegetical decisions that need to be made. We will go through much of this material in great detail. These items will be numbered along the way for clarity and structure. There are some preliminary items that need to be considered. Let's get started ...

**Item 1:** Are the numbers/time periods in Daniel 9:24–27 to be taken literally?

Factors that indicate that we should take the numbers/time periods literally:

- A. Daniel was contemplating the end to a literal 70–year exile.
- B. Specific numbers are used in the prophecy, for example, 1, 7, 62; it seems unreasonable that specific and definite numbers would be used for indefinite time periods.
- C. There is nothing in the context that suggests a non-literal use of the numbers.

**Item 2:** Where in Jeremiah was Daniel reading from?

- A. Jeremiah 25:11–12
- B. Jeremiah 29:10–14

Both passages clearly speak of a literal 70–year captivity in Babylon; Jer. 29 also speaks of a restoration. Though Daniel was correct in his understanding of what would happen after the exile (Jews would return home), and when it would end (soon), that return would not yet involve the full restoration predicted by the OT prophets in the coming kingdom. Gabriel was sent to give him insight into the correct **timing** of God's plan. This plan was a plan of **delayed** restoration; the proper theological term for this kind of delayed fulfillment is called "prophetic postponement." God has specifically postponed the full restoration of Israel until another period of time is completed. Gabriel came to elaborate on the nature of that time period.

**Item 3:** What is the meaning of "seventy weeks?"

The Hebrew text literally says "seventy sevens" have been decreed. That these should refer to groups of seven years is suggested by Daniel's contemplating the reason for the exile, to allow 70 Sabbath resting years for the land. As we saw above, one of the purposes of the Babylonian exile was to allow the Sabbath rest for the land, which had been violated 70 times during Jewish history. Since the Sabbath years occurred in groups of 7 (six years to plant crops, one year for Sabbath rest of the land) the total number of years would be  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years total.

The terminology "seventy weeks/seventy weeks of years" refers to seventy sevens of years. The translators of the NASB choose "seventy weeks" to allow us to get a better picture of what is meant. Just about every commentator and scholar agrees that the seventy sevens refers to 490 years. Sabbath violations over 490 years ... now another 490 time period has been decreed.

**Item 4:** What is the meaning of the verb in vs. 24 that is translated "have been decreed?"

This is a unique word that appears only here in the entire OT. It has the basic meaning of "cut" or "sliced off" and it came to mean "divide" or "determine." It appears that Gabriel chose this unique word to say that God was carefully choosing or determining the length of Israel's remaining prophetic history.

**Item 5:** What does the prophecy pertain to, i.e., who is it for?

This is perhaps the most significant point in the entire prophecy. Since Daniel was praying specifically for his people and his holy city, Gabriel informs him that the prophecy pertains to exactly what Daniel was praying for. The prophecy is “for your people and your holy city.” This is such an obvious statement that it is stunning that many expositors and scholars try to make it fit within the context of the NT church.

In the time of Daniel, who were Daniels people and his holy city? There can only be one unique answer to this question that makes sense to Daniel. The prophecy pertains to the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem only. Any attempt to make this include the church in some way misses the mark totally. One of my favorite quotes from a snarly dispensationalist on this topic comes from Robert Culver:

“Let the postmillennial and amillennial commentators look long and steadily at this fact. This prophecy is a prophecy for Daniel’s people and Daniel’s city. No alchemy of Origenistic spiritualizing interpretation can change that.”

**Item 6:** What is the meaning of each infinitive in verse 24?

- to finish the transgression
- to make an end of sin
- to make atonement for iniquity
- to bring in everlasting righteousness
- to seal up vision and prophecy
- to anoint the most holy place

Gabriel specifically states that the 490 years will conclude with the fulfillment of these six things, again, which pertain to Israel and Jerusalem.

- a) **to finish the transgression** – The noun translated “transgression” is derived from a Hebrew root word meaning “rebel or revolt.” The addition of the article suggests that a particular transgression was in mind. The most likely explanation is that the particular sin the Lord had in mind was Jewish rebellion against the rule of God throughout their entire history. The word “finish” here has the idea of the forcible cessation of an activity. It points to a complete stop, not to a mere hindrance of activity. Gabriel was saying that Israel will not finally stop its rebellion against the rule of God until the 490 future years have ended.
- b) **to make an end of sin** – the word sin here is plural and refers to the actual daily sins of life. The word for “make an end” was regularly used to indicate the closing of a letter or an official document. When the scribe had finished his work, the king placed his royal seal upon it, thus showing that the communication was brought to a close, there was nothing left to say. The combined statement looks to an end of the daily sins that have been committed because of Israel’s rebellion and certainly will not have its fulfillment until Israel repents. From last weeks discussion of Daniel 7:13, that will not happen until the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- c) **to make atonement for iniquity** – “iniquity” here is one of the most common words in the Hebrew language for sin. This word looks to the fact that the reason why one commits iniquity is due to the perverted sinful nature inherited from Adam’s fall. The word “atone” takes a prominent place in OT theology. The sacrificial system had as its purpose the purifying of object contaminated by sin or uncleanness. Jesus atoned for the sin of Israel when He died on the cross, however that atonement will not be appropriated to the nation of Israel until it repents ... which will not happen until the second coming.
- d) **to bring in everlasting righteousness** – the literal translation of this phrase is “to bring in the righteousness of the ages.” It could refer to the righteous rule of Christ during the millennial kingdom. Unlike the righteousness rule that occasionally existed when Israel had a good king, this righteousness will last forever and looks forward to the everlasting kingdom of God that was mentioned in Daniel 2 and 7.
- e) **to seal up vision and prophecy** – “to seal up” is the same Hebrew word as used above in “to make an end of sin” in the second infinitive. Some expositors see a relationship between this purpose and the second one. That relationship would be as follows: when Israel repents of its sin as a people, then all the revelation that came through visions and prophecy concerning their future will no longer be required ... it will come to an end.

At the second coming and the events that transpire shortly after ... ALL the OT prophecy given about the nation of Israel and their relationship to God will then be fulfilled, though the practical outworking of that relationship will develop during the coming kingdom.

- f) **to anoint the most holy place** – Literally, “to anoint a holy of holies.” When this phrase is used without the article, it refers to either the holy articles of the temple or the whole temple complex area. In the well know prophecy of Ezekiel 40-48, there is a description of the temple complex used during the millennial kingdom. In light of this, it appears that when the 490 years are completed, the temple complex area in Jerusalem will be anointed for service to God during the millennial reign of Christ.

### **Summary Thoughts on the Six Infinitives:**

First, if we take an honest look at all the six purpose clauses, we must conclude that none of them have been fulfilled entirely in history at this present time. Certainly, the work of Christ on the cross has set the table for Israel’s future restoration, but we certainly cannot claim that Daniels people as a whole have appropriated all these purpose clauses as a nation, though some individual Jews have turned to Christ as their Messiah.

Second, last weeks’ discussion involving Daniel 7:13 provide some interesting and important correlations with this weeks’ lesson. Since national repentance for Israel occurs at the second coming of Christ (last weeks’ lesson), and national repentance is required to complete the 490 years (by this weeks’ lesson) we can conclude that the second coming of Christ is required to complete the six purposes of the 490 years. Since most reasonable Christians would say the second coming is still future (yes, there ARE some unreasonable ones), the 490 years CANNOT have had their conclusion up until this present day.

Third, though the 490 years cannot have had their conclusion up until this present day, it does not mean that SOME of the years may have had their conclusion in history up till this point in time. Indeed, next week we will show that some of the 490 years have already been fulfilled in the first coming of Christ.

### **Summary Review of Daniel 9:1-9:24**

1. Israel was exiled in Babylon for their disobedience (Jer. 29:17-19) and to give the land its Sabbath rest (2 Chron. 36:21).
2. Daniel observes the exile would last 70 years from two passages, Jer. 25:11-12, Jer. 29:10-14.
3. Seeing that repentance was required for the nation prior to restoration (Lev. 26:40-46), Daniel begins to pray ...
4. Gabriel comes to provide instruction that Daniel would understand what God has planned.
5. Gabriel tells Daniel that God has decreed a future 490 year time period for the nation and Jerusalem to complete the 6 infinitives in Dan. 9:24.

#### **Item 7:** Are the years implied in the 490 years literal?

Yes, but ... there is ample evidence that we should use a 360–day year.

1. Jewish calendar is 360 days/year
2. Prophetic timetable of Daniel 10–11 (42 months = 3 ½ years = 1260 days)
3. Genesis Flood account, Gen. 7–8 shows 150 days = 5 months.

#### **Item 8:** When will (from Daniel’s perspective) the 490 years begin?

Daniel 9:25 – “from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem ... with plaza and moat”

Three important details to help us ascertain this timing of this decree:

1. “restore and rebuild” suggests that the city will be restored to its former state. It is not a partial rebuilding but a complete restoration.

2. "with plaza and moat" also lend support to 1 above. Plaza and moat were specifically items used in the defense of the city; again, complete restoration is in mind.
3. The rebuilding would be done in times of distress.

Gabriel thus describes the rebuilding of Jerusalem as being a complete restoration during times of distress.

**Item 9:** When was this decree issued?

From the text of Daniel 9:25, the decree would begin the 490 years. The text says that after 483 years (seven and sixty two) there would be some event involving "Messiah the Prince." This is a major clue to help us determine which decree is being referenced.

### 1. The decree of Cyrus

**Passages:** 2 Chron. 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4

This decree was most likely given on Oct. 29, 539 BC. Almost ALL liberal scholars hold the view that the 490 years started here.

**Problems with this view:** This decree specifically mentions that it is the **temple** that is to be rebuilt, not the city of Jerusalem. Building the temple is an incomplete subset of restoring Jerusalem to its former state.

### 2. The decree of Darius

**Passages:** Ezra 6:1-12

This decree was given by Darius to **confirm** the original decree of Cyrus. It was given in the 519/518 BC timeframe.

**Problems with this view:** This decree, being a confirmation of an already existing decree, again mentions that it is the **temple** that is to be rebuilt, not the city of Jerusalem. On similar grounds as the decree of Cyrus, this view is rejected.

### 3. The decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra

**Passages:** Ezra 7:11-26

This decree was given in 458/457 BC. But again, it does not deal with the rebuilding of the city but a further refinement of the temple decrees above.

### 4. The decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah

**Passages:** Nehemiah 2:1-8

Several factors dictate that this is the decree that Gabriel is referencing.

1. Direct reference to the restoration of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:3, 5)
2. Direct reference to rebuilding the city gates and wall (Neh. 2:3, 8)
3. Artaxerxes letter to Asaph specifying materials for the wall (Neh. 2:8)
4. Nehemiah and Ezra indicate the restoration of the walls was done in distressing circumstances.
5. No other decrees issued concerning the rebuilding Jerusalem.

The date of the decree is given in Neh. 2:1. Through lots of "computation" that date was Nisan 1, 444 BC (**March 5, 444 BC**).

Next time we will do the exact computation for the end date of the first 483 years of the seventy weeks.