

## **Israel's Future, Part 2**

Scripture: Daniel 9:24–25

Code: 27-25

### **INTRODUCTION**

The prophet Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He lived before the people of Judah went into captivity and His ministry was to warn them of coming judgment by God. The Jewish people cherished their national identity and independence, as well as their identification as God's chosen people. As a result Jeremiah's message was not well received--though he warned them for years, he was ignored, shoved aside, and finally thrown into a pit (Jer. 38:1-6).

Jeremiah lived to see his prophecies of destruction fulfilled. He watched the siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and saw his people taken captive. Jeremiah wrote of that captivity, and his prophecies concerning its duration provide a meaningful setting for the ninth chapter of Daniel: "Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an horror, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an horror; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. 25:9-11).

That very prophecy may be what caused Daniel to pray as he did in Daniel 9 since he says in verse 2, "In the first year of [Darius's] reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, concerning which the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel was led to pray not because he had just discovered Jeremiah's prophecy, but because he had been in captivity for almost seventy years. He was probably also aware that Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus (the proper name of the man identified by the title Darius in Daniel 9:1) would decree a return of the Jewish people to their homeland (Isa. 44:28). Jeremiah prophesied that the restoration of Israel would be preceded by spiritual renewal (Jer. 29:10-14), so Daniel turned "unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan. 9:3), confessing his sin and the sins of his people. Like Daniel we also study prophecy to understand God's purposes in history. And Daniel 9 is a good perspective on how to understand and apply prophecy.

### **REVIEW**

**I. THE PRAYER PRECEDING THE REVELATION (v. 20)**

**II. THE MESSENGER OF THE REVELATION (vv. 21-23)**

**III. THE CONTENT OF THE REVELATION (vv. 24-27)**

**A. God's Purpose in History (v. 24)**

### **LESSON**

**B. God's Timing in History (vv. 24-25)**

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know, therefore,

and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. "

The key to understanding God's purpose in history is in determining God's timing in history--in this case the duration of the seventy weeks mentioned here.

## 1. Defining the terms

a) "Weeks""Weeks" translates the Hebrew word shabuwa, which literally means "sevens. " The word doesn't by itself indicate whether it is speaking of days, weeks, months, or years, so it must be interpreted in its context. I think it refers to weeks of years, as do many evangelical Bible scholars. There are a number of reasons for interpreting shabuwa that way. (1) According to immediate context Daniel was already thinking in sevens of years. By reading Jeremiah's prophecy he may have thought that all God's purposes would be accomplished in seventy years. But in a possible play on words, God is telling him in verse 24 that His purposes would not be accomplished in seventy years, but in seven times seventy years. Restoration to the land would occur at the end of Jeremiah's seventy years, but there was more to come in God's plans for Israel. (2) According to a familiar concept The concept of weeks of years was familiar to the Jewish people. The land was to have a rest from farming every seven years and the poor were to be allowed to take whatever it produced (Lev. 25:3-4). After seven weeks of seven years (a total of forty-nine years) came a time known as the year of jubilee (vv. 8-10). In that year the land was to rest, all estates returned to their original owners, all debts forgiven, and slaves freed (vv. 11-13, 39-43). (3) According to extended context The only other time Daniel used the term shabuwa was in Daniel 10:2-3. In both verses Daniel refers to three whole or full weeks, with the important addition that in the Hebrew text he added the word "days" (unlike the Hebrew text of Daniel 9:24). It's as though Daniel was pointing out his readers to distinguish between the weeks of years in Daniel 9:24 and weeks of days in Daniel 10:2-3. (4) According to prophetic reckoning Daniel knew one of the reasons the Jewish people were taken into captivity was their constant violation of the seven-year Sabbath. Instead of allowing the land a year of rest their greed and materialism caused them to plow and plant the seventh year. This violation was repeated over an extended period of time and God determined that the land belonging to Him would have its rest. The Jewish people were taken captive "to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years" (2 Chron. 36:21). They had violated seventy sabbath years, which means they had disobeyed the sabbath commandment for 490 of their 800-year history as a nation. God exacted one year of captivity for each sabbath year violated. In Daniel 9:24 Daniel is being told that 490 years beyond that would fulfill the history of his people. b) "Year" In Daniel's day some used 365-day years and others 360-day years. Those who used 360-day years would occasionally add an extra month to catch up. There are two compelling reasons to believe the years of Daniel 9 are 360-day years. (1) According to the Flood record According to Genesis 7:11 and 8:4 the Flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month and ended on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (a total of five months). According to Genesis 7:24 and 8:3 the Flood lasted 150 days. That indicates the Jewish people were using months of thirty days, of which twelve made a year of 360 days. (2) According to tribulation prophecy Daniel 7:25 indicates that the Great Tribulation (the last half of the seven-year tribulation) will last "a time, times and half a time" (NIV) , or three and a half years. "Time" equals one year. Revelation 13:5 says that the same period will last forty-two months, while Revelation 12:6 says that period will last 1,260 days. A comparison of the three time frames indicates usage of thirty-day months: three-and-a-half years equals forty-two thirty-day months, just as 1,260 equals forty-two thirty-day months. An examination of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation indicates usage of thirty-day months. Thus the time period indicated in Daniel 9:24 is a period of 490 years (seventy weeks of years) of 360 days each.

## 2. Determining the Messiah's arrival

Daniel 9:25 says, "[The time] unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. " The sixty-nine weeks leading to the coming of the Messiah are divided into two time periods of seven and sixty-two weeks. Verse 27 indicates that the seventieth week is separated from the other sixty-nine, so only 483 years of the total 490 involved in Daniel's prophecy span the time between the command and the coming of the Messiah. That is the time period we will consider here.

a) The first seven weeks(1) When they commenceVerse 25 indicates that they begin with "the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem"--but history records several such commands given on different dates. It's important to know which one is right since a different starting date would result in a different ending date. Bible scholars have suggested three possibilities. (a) At the decree of Cyrus?Ezra 1:1-4 records a decree made by Cyrus in 536 B. C. Some scholars think that must be the decree mentioned in Daniel's prophecy because God said of Cyrus through Isaiah, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (44:28). But 483 years subtracted from 536 B. C. takes us to 53 B. C. , many years before the birth of Christ and still more from the inception of His ministry--a discrepancy of over eighty years. Over the span of hundreds of years eighty years or so may seem close, but our God isn't close--He's exact! Some have proposed a revision of the Ptolemaic calendar (commonly used before the time of Copernicus) to account for the discrepancy, but that seems an inadequate solution because we can't prove a discrepancy. Also, the actual decree of Cyrus provided only for building the Temple in Jerusalem--not for rebuilding Jerusalem's walls (a necessary part of restoring the city). Thus Cyrus's decree is an unlikely candidate for the command of Daniel 9:25. (b) At the first decree of Artaxerxes?The first decree of Artaxerxes in 458 B. C. (Ezra 7:11-26) is considered a possibility. However, 483 years from 458 B. C. takes us to A. D. 26. But the only event of significance in the life of Christ remotely close to A. D. 26 is His baptism. However that wasn't His presentation to the nation as the Messiah, but to the Father for approval. It was a transaction between the Son and the Father, and there's no indication that the people at large understood what happened at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:13-17). Also, the first decree of Artaxerxes did not provide for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. (c) At the second degree of Artaxerxes?This is the best candidate for the decree spoken of in Daniel 9:25. Two scholars have convincingly researched this view: Sir Robert Anderson of Scotland Yard, who over hundred years ago wrote the classic book The Coming Prince (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1954) , and Dr. Harold Hoehner of Dallas Theological Seminary, who wrote Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977). Dr. Hoehner confirmed Anderson's precise computations, differing with him only concerning the proper year of the accession of Artaxerxes to his throne. Ezra 4 records that the restoration of the Temple was temporarily suspended because the builders were accused of also rebuilding the city without authorization. Permission for rebuilding the city came only with the second decree of Artaxerxes "in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes" (Neh. 2:1). Artaxerxes's reign started in 465 B. C. , so the date referred to in Nehemiah 2:1 was the month of Nisan in the year 445 B. C. Because a king's reign was dated from the first of the month of his reign, Sir Robert Anderson thought that since no other date was mentioned in Nehemiah 2, the date Nehemiah spoke of was probably the first of Nisan, 445 B. C. --or March 14, 445 B. C. according to our calendar. During the seven weeks indicated in Daniel 9:25 the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt "even in troublous times. " The books of Ezra and Nehemiah reveal that's precisely what happened (Ezra 9 and 10; Neh. 4, 6, 9, and 13). Yet during that forty-nine year period crucial events occurred in the history of Israel: the city was rebuilt, the Temple established, and the canon of the Old Testament was completed. From the close of that time to the advent of John the Baptist there was no prophet in Israel. The prophecy that the street and wall of Jerusalem would be rebuilt is best understood to refer to its internal structures and external fortifications (the Hebrew words used literally refer to the marketplace and surrounding moat of the city). The prophecy required the complete restoration of

Jerusalem take place in forty-nine years. Since it was during the half century after the second decree of Artaxerxes that history records Jerusalem was rebuilt and completed, it seems that decree must be the one that started the seventy weeks prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27. (2) When they conclude The seven weeks of years concluded in 396 B. C. , forty-nine years after the second decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B. C. b) The sixty-two weeks (1) When they commence In 396 B. C. , following the forty-nine years of rebuilding Jerusalem, a period of sixty-two weeks of years (434 years) commenced. Simple addition shows that the total number of years between the second decree of Artaxerxes and the coming of the Messiah is 483 years. Each of those years consisted of 360 days. Thus the total number of days involved is 173,880 days. (2) When they conclude The phrase "the Messiah, the Prince" (Heb., mashiach nagid) is formal terminology that means "the Anointed One, the Ruler. " The Hebrew word translated "prince" (nagid) was first used of King Saul and then of other kings. It is a title associated with kingly authority and is applied here to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ as a prince and ruler. But what particular event in Christ's life marks the end of the sixty-two weeks? Two popular views are His baptism and triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (a) At Christ's baptism? Some think the appearance spoken of in Daniel 9:25 refers to His baptism. But as we already discussed, that appearance was a presentation to the Father. Those present were unaware of what was occurring, and the Father's declaration was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17) --not a declaration of Christ's kingly authority. (b) At Christ's triumphal entry? The interpretation that makes the most sense is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem since that was when He was presented to the Jewish people as the Messianic Prince. The test of this theory is whether the triumphal entry occurred 173,880 days after the second decree of Artaxerxes. Working from March 14, 445 B. C. (the date of Artaxerxes' second decree according to our calendar) , Sir Robert Anderson calculated by the use of astronomical calendars and charts that the day of the coming of the Messiah was April 6, A. D. 32. Such calendars and charts helped him determine the timing of the Jewish new moons by which the Passovers were determined. One of the problems Anderson had to resolve in his calculations was that between the decree of Artaxerxes and the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is a period of 477 years and 24 days. After deducting one year to account for the fact that 1 B. C. and A. D. 1 are not two years but one, that left Anderson with a total of 476 years 24 days or a total of 173,764 days--not the necessary 173,880 days. That's close--but our God is precise! Anderson next added 119 days to his figure for the 119 leap years represented by 476 years. That results in a figure of 173,883 days--three days too many! But realizing that the Julian calendar on which our 365 day year is based is slightly inaccurate compared to an actual solar year, Anderson checked with the Royal Observatory in London and found that a 365 day year exceeds a solar year by 1/128th of a day. That fraction of 476 years is three days, which when subtracted from 173,883 yields a difference of 173,880 days--precisely the number of days predicted in Daniel 9:25! More recently Dr. Harold Hoehner used modern astronomical charts and computers to confirm the work of Sir Robert Anderson. However, he used a different starting date than Anderson. That's because he knew that Medo-Persian kings didn't include the year of their accession to the throne to reckon the length of their reigns. That meant Artaxerxes wasn't considered king until 464 B. C. , and thus rather than using 445 B. C. as the year of Artaxerxes's second decree (as Anderson did) , Hoehner used 444 B. C. (twenty years after Artaxerxes was first recognized as king--Neh. 2:1). It also meant that the first of Nisan fell on March 30 (according to the new moons of 444 B. C. ) rather than March 5. Using the same adjustments as Anderson, Hoehner multiplied 476 (the number of years between the second decree of Artaxerxes and the presentation of the Messiah in Jerusalem) by 365. 24219879 (the decimal equivalent of 365 days, five hours, forty-eight minutes, and forty-four seconds--which accounts for the 1/128 difference between calendar and solar days observed by Anderson) and obtained a product of 173,855. 28662404 days (173,855 days, six hours, fifty-two minutes, and forty-four seconds). That's twenty-five days longer than the 173,880 that ought to exist from the time of the decree to the time of the Messiah's

appearance. But Hoehner was able to adjust that amount by the difference between the starting dates of Anderson (March 5) and himself (March 30) --a period of exactly twenty-five days! Thus regardless of the starting date used, both Anderson and Hoehner were able to show the precision with which God predicted and fulfilled the presentation of Jesus Christ as Messiah and Ruler.

## **CONCLUSION**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph it wasn't on a whim. When He said, "Mine hour is not yet come," He knew what He was talking about: God has declared "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isa. 46:10). God told Daniel precisely when the Messiah would enter Jerusalem and be acknowledged as King with shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matt. 21:9).

## **Focusing on the Facts**

1. Describe Jeremiah's ministry to the Jewish people. What was his message? How did they respond?
2. How did Daniel learn of the length the Jewish people would be in captivity?
3. What did Daniel know about the restoration of Israel that prompted him to pray for his people?
4. What does the Hebrew word for "weeks" (Dan. 9:24) mean? What do the "weeks" in Daniel 9 represent?
5. How many days does the time period predicted in Daniel 9:25 represent? What two biblical events support that?
6. What command marks the beginning of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:25 (Neh. 2:1)?
7. What is the date of the decree that best corresponds to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the presentation of the Messiah? What are the problems with the two early dates?
8. When does history record the rebuilding of Jerusalem took place? Under what conditions was it rebuilt (Dan. 9:25)?
9. What event marked the end of the sixty-nine "week" period?
10. On what date does Harold Hoehner believe the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem took place? Why does he differ by approximately one year from the date used by Robert Anderson?

## **Pondering the Principles**

1. Second Chronicles 36:21 says that the captivity of Judah took place "to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years. " God announced through Jeremiah that Judah would go into captivity for seventy years because for 490 years the nation had violated God's command to give the land its seven-year sabbath rest. Yet despite Jeremiah's warning, the nation of Judah refused to face the consequences of its actions. Have you faced the consequences of your present actions on your future? Do your actions glorify God--or yourself? Have you ignored the warnings of Scripture and its promises of blessing to the obedient? Meditate on Galatians 6:7-10 and ask God to direct you in proper obedience to Him.
2. Prophecy is an effective means of demonstrating the accuracy of Scripture. Daniel 9 is a prophecy of amazing accuracy when compared to its clear fulfillment in history. Familiarize yourself with the dates and calculations involved in Daniel's sixty-nine weeks. Ask God to give you an opportunity share that information with others. It shows the purpose of the life and death of Jesus, and that the God who makes "known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come" (Isa. 46:10, NIV) has indeed planned history.

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