

## **The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27**

### **The Context of Daniel 9**

**9:1-3 Daniel studies Jeremiah's seventy weeks and seeks God by prayer**

**9:1-2** It the first year of Darius' kingdom- c. 539-538 BC

He is studying the book of Jeremiah

It is rare for one prophet to refer to another in this way; compare **Micah 3:12 & Jer. 26:17-19.**

Jeremiah's words were already viewed as words of the LORD- **I Peter 1:10-12.**

70 years- **Jeremiah 25:10-11; 29:10**

### **How are we to view these 70 years?**

Are they taken literally or figuratively?

Literally- "Neither did Daniel 'symbolize' these seventy years but took the prophecy literally. This is the safest procedure for believers today as they study the prophecies of the future" (Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, 242).

Figurative- "Considering that the seventy years is a round number, the sixty-eight or so years of the exile is an amazing fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy" (Miller, 241).

Do these two statements seem contradictory to you?

Isaiah spoke of a seventy-year time in which Tyre will be forgotten: **Isa. 23:15, 15, 17.** "There is some evidence that 70 years was the accepted period during which the gods decreed ruin upon a city which had incurred divine displeasure." (Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale, 1978). These points suggest that a figurative interpretation of the 70 years of Babylonian captivity may be the best approach.

**9:3** Daniel responds to the prophecy with prayer and fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. In **Jonah 3:5-8** all the people of Nineveh from the greatest to the least engage in this kind of action, but in Daniel, the prophet himself is the only one that we see do this.

### **9:4-19 The prayer of Daniel confessing the sin of his people**

His prayer fulfills the conditions of **Lev. 26:40-45; I Kings 8:46-53.** These prayers foresee a time after the nation has experienced captivity and is humbled by the process so that they turn back to God.

The prayer focuses on the history of God's goodness and mercy to Israel and Israel's sin and rebellion against God- We find similar prayers and records of Israel's history in **Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9; Psalms 78, 105, 106.**

### **What the prayer says of God?**

**9:4** God is great and awesome.

**9:4** God keeps His covenant with those who love Him and keep His commandments.

**9:7, 14** Righteousness belongs to God and God is righteous.

**9:9** To the LORD belong compassion and forgiveness.

**9:11-13** God fulfilled His words in bringing the judgment mentioned in the law of Moses. Even in God's judgments, He was keeping His word to His people.

**9:15** God saved His people from the land of Egypt.

**9:16** "Your righteous acts."

**9:18** Daniel can pray because of God's great compassion.

### **What the prayer says of Israel?**

**9:5** They sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled- **I Kings 8:47**.

**9:6, 10** They did not listen to Moses and the prophets.

**9:7, 8** Open shame belongs to Israel.

**9:7** They are driven to other nations because of their sin.

**9:8** "Because we have sinned against You"

**9:11** "All Israel transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice." The curse has been poured on them for not listening to God's voice.

**9:13** Despite the calamity they faced, the people have not sought the favor of the LORD by turning from their iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. They have not learned from their failure.

**9:14** God has brought calamity on them because they have not obeyed God's voice.

**9:15-16** We have sinned, we have been wicked...because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers"

### **Daniel's requests to God in the prayer**

**9:16** Jerusalem has become a reproach, but please turn Your anger away from Your city and Your holy mountain in accordance with all Your righteous acts.

**9:17** Let Your face shine upon Your desolate sanctuary.

**9:18-19** Daniel pleads with God to open His eyes and see and His ears to hear and to answer prayer for His city for His name's sake.

### **9:20-27 Gabriel gives Daniel the vision of the Seventy weeks**

**9:20** Now while I was speaking and praying (**Gen. 24:12-13; Isaiah 65:24**); this reveals a God who is anxious to answer our prayers.

Confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel- **Lev. 26:40**

**9:21** Gabriel is mentioned elsewhere **Dan. 8:16; Luke 1:19, 26**.

At the time of evening sacrifice- **Dan. 8:14, 26; I Kings 18:36; Ezra 9:4**

**9:22-23** Gabriel was sent from the very beginning of Daniel's request to give him understanding.

### **9:24-27 Different views of the seventy weeks of Daniel**

**1. Liberal view-** The prophecy begins with the decree of Jeremiah that the people would go into captivity and ends with the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. He prophesied that the Messiah is about to appear in the Maccabean period and that this will end history. These writers deny inspiration and believe the writer simply failed in his predictions and that is why the prophecies did not come true. Examples of this are J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the book of Daniel*, ICC Commentary, 393; Louis E. Hartman and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible, 250-253; John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermenia, 352-360.

**2. Dispensational view-** The prophecy refers to a literal sixty-nine week time period from Nehemiah (or Ezra) to the death of Christ and then the last week refers to those events just before the return of the Lord. This final week is how the number of seven years is arrived at

between the rapture and the final coming of the LORD. Good examples of this viewpoint are Stephen R. Miller in *Daniel* in the New American Commentary, 252-273, and J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel" in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1361-1365. The good thing to compliment these writers for is that there are no theological liberals among dispensationalists; therefore, some have written some good Biblical defenses of the date of Daniel.

**3. Church Age view-** The first seven weeks are from the decree of Cyrus to the first coming of Christ. The next 62 weeks refer to the present church age, and the 70<sup>th</sup> week is the period at the end of human history and final judgment. C.F. Keil, 336, 373, and H. C. Leupold, *Daniel*, 417-425, are good examples of this view.

**4. Traditional Messianic view-** The 490 years are symbolic and not literal, but they generally correspond with the period from Cyrus to the first coming of Christ. The first seven weeks cover the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The sixty-nine weeks ends with the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The seventy week ends with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

There are good summaries of these view by Phil Roberts, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel" in *The Doctrine of Last Things*, Florida College Lecture Book, 1986, pgs. 98-100; Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary, 252-257; Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale, 172-178 gives views of the Seventy Weeks throughout history. These summaries come from people who differ greatly on their view of this passage.

### **The Starting Date of the 70 weeks**

I believe dispensationalists are wrong about the beginning point of fulfillment of the vision.

Pentecost, 1362, states there were four decrees by Persian kings about the Jews: First, Cyrus' decree in 538 BC that all the Jews return to build the temple (**II Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 5:13**).

Second, The decree of Darius in 520 BC to support that the enemies of the Jews should support their building the temple (**Ezra 6:1-12**).

He omits the decrees of the book of Esther in the days of Xerxes from 486-464 BC.

Third, Artaxerxes sends Ezra back in 458/457 BC to teach the law and tells them to provide him what he needs for animal sacrifice (**Ezra 7:11-26**).

He says, "These three say nothing about the rebuilding of the city itself," Pentecost, 1362.

Fourth, the decree of Artaxerxes on March 5, 444 BC to rebuild the city walls (**Nehemiah 2**).

Clearly, there are distinctions among dispensationalists on this question. Miller, 262-264, believes the return of Ezra in 458 BC is the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

**What is wrong with this view of the beginning of the seventy weeks?**

First, in **Daniel 9:19** Daniel prays that the LORD hear and forgive and, “Do not delay.” The angel assures him that he was sent to provide Daniel an answer to this prayer in **9:20-23**. While Daniel begs for an immediate answer, does this answer demand a wait of 94 or so years before anything happens?

Second, notice Daniel has prayed for the city (**9:16, 18, 19**) the temple (**9:16, 17, 20**) and Your people (**9:16, 19**). Cyrus decreed that the temple be rebuilt (**II Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4**). These same verses allow any of the Jewish people who so desire to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. What about the building of the city of Jerusalem? Cyrus is mentioned long before birth in **Isaiah 44:28; 45:1** in a stunning prophecy. “And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’” **Isaiah 44:28**. Cyrus’ decree does have something to do with the rebuilding of the city itself. In Cyrus’ decree God begins to answer Daniel’s prayer for the people, the temple, and the city.

Third, “Interpretations that postpone the beginning of the seventy weeks to a point in time almost 100 years later create a situation in which some of the most important elements of the restoration- the return to the land, the rebuilding of the temple, and the inhabiting of the city of Jerusalem...- had already happened even before the seventy weeks began” (Roberts, 102). The same type of argument appears in Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary, 470.

### **What are the Accomplishments of the 70 weeks?**

Six infinitive phrases are used to in **9:24** to describe this.

1. To finish transgression- *transgression* in **8:12, 13**; while **9:11** uses a different Hebrew word that has the idea of crossing a boundary or transgressing.
2. To make an end of sin- *Sin* as a noun in **9:16, 9:20, 20** and the verb form in **9:5, 8, 11**.
3. To make atonement for iniquity- *Iniquity* is used as a verb in **9:5** and as a noun in **9:13, 16**.
4. To bring in everlasting righteousness- This same root for *righteousness* is used to describe God (**9:7, 14**) and His deeds (**9:16**).
5. To seal up vision and prophecy- The verb *seal up* is used in **12:4, 9** to seal up the book until the time of the end. This word is also used in **I Kings 21:8** and **Jer. 32:10, 11, 14, 44**. “A seal not only witnesses to the authenticity of the words on a scroll, but it also prevents further words from being written on it. Thus the sealing ‘of vision and prophet’ is an affirmation that no further prophecy will be needed once the seventy weeks are ended” (Steinmann, 465).
6. To anoint the most holy- Is this a reference to the most holy place of a person? The same root word for *anoint* is used of the Messiah in **9:25, 26**.

The accomplishments of the vision of the seventy weeks answer concerns raised by Daniel in his prayer earlier in the chapter. *Cutting off* the Messiah in **9:26** would be the means by which sin, transgression, and iniquity is forgiven.

“These six accomplishments, then, anticipate the establishment of Israel’s covenanted millennial kingdom under the authority of her promised King. The six summarize God’s whole program to bring the nation Israel the blessings He promises through His covenants (**Gen. 15:18-21; 2 Sam. 7:16; Jer. 31:31-34**)” Pentecost, 1362. “These six goals will not all be fulfilled until of the arrival of the future kingdom of God” (Miller, 259).

I think this is a mistake to look for fulfillment of these in the second coming of Christ instead of His first coming. “These infinitives point to the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the purpose and goal of the seventy weeks” (Steinmann, 465).

“The inevitable conclusion seems to be that Jesus presented his ministry as the fulfilment of the whole future hope of the Old Testament, the day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah” (R. T. France, “Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 26, 1975, 58).

### **The Division the Seventy Weeks into 7, 62, and 1**

“They are literal years ending with Christ’s second coming. This view agrees with the first that the sevens are literal seven-year periods totaling 490 years. The first seven sevens (forty-nine years) commence with a command to rebuild Jerusalem (either the decree to Ezra in 458 BC or the decree to Nehemiah in 445 BC) and terminate with the completion of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah *about* (emphasis mine, is this literal???) forty-nine years later (either ca. 409 BC or ca. 396 BC)” (Miller, 257).

“The next sixty-two sevens (434 years) extend from the end of the first group of sevens to Christ’s first coming (either his baptism in A.D. 26 or Christ’s presentation of himself to the people as Messiah on Palm Sunday in A.D. 32/ 33” (Miller, 257).

If the 70 weeks are literal years, then why are the first seven years *about* forty-nine years. How can the rest be literal if the first is not? If being *about* forty-nine years works for the first week, then why not *about* 490 years working for the total of seventy weeks?

**The Final Week According to Dispensationalists:** The prophetic clock on this vision stopped until the final seven years of human history. “During the last seven, which immediately precedes Christ’s second advent, there will a terrible time of tribulation for Israel and the world. God will use this trial to bring Israel and countless others to saving faith. At that time the majority of the people in Israel will acknowledge Jesus as the promised Messiah, repent, and be saved (**cf. Rom. 11:25-29; Zech 12:10-13:1**). The final seven (seven years) will be terminated by Christ’s second coming and the establishment of his earthly kingdom, which will last a thousand years. Christ’s reign will, of course, continue beyond the millennium into the eternal state” (Miller, 257).

Pentecost, 1363-1364, makes the same kind of arguments. He adds that the 69 weeks “totaled 483 years and extended from March 5, 444 B.C. to March 30, A.D 33.

If you do the math, that is actually 476 years and not 483 years. Pentecost argues that the prophecy was made on the basis of the Jewish calendar which contained 360 days; our calendars are Gregorian with 365 days in a year. He charts this to show that both have 173,880 years (Pentecost, 1363).

What would be the proof that the 70 weeks cease to be counted with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus?

What is the evidence that we have a gap of at least 2,000 between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week?

**Daniel 9:27** “unveils what will occur in the 70<sup>th</sup> seven years. This seven-year period will begin after the rapture of the church (which will consummate God’s program in the present age). The 70<sup>th</sup> ‘seven’ will continue till the return of Jesus Christ to the earth” (Pentecost, 1364). While the weeks are divided into 7+62+1, the 62 weeks picked up where the 7<sup>th</sup> week left off. Why is there this gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week?

Miller, 269-273, seeks to explain this difficulty. The main answer that he gives is “Christ’s crucifixion and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. (**v. 26**) would occur after the sixty-ninth seven, but not during the seventieth seven (**v. 27**), revealing a gap between these sevens” (Miller, 269).

“If we accept that the work of Christ concluded the sixty-ninth week, what of the seventieth? Many would see a prophetic ‘gap’ here, during which the age in which we lived would be placed. Dispensationalists see the ‘Church age’, which forms a ‘parenthesis’ between the first coming of Christ and the revived Roman empire whose prince would be the antichrist. According to this view, **Daniel 9:24** is a programme for the future, not a summary of what took place in the work of Christ. Since the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of Jewish worship is envisaged according to this view, the official establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 has been greeted as heralding the events of the final week” (Baldwin, 176-177).

“But I have found no instance where Jesus expects a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy other than through his own ministry, and certainly no suggestion of a future restoration of the Jewish nation independent of him- self. He himself is the fulfilment to which Old Testament prophecy points, the ultimate horizon of the prophetic vision” (R. T. France, “Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 26, 1975, 58).

The “he” of **Daniel 9:27** seems to refer to the people of the prince in **9:26**. While the Prince is the Messiah in **9:25**, the prince seems to be “A vague reference to enemies who are to destroy Jerusalem and the temple for a second time, as happened in 70 AD...” (Baldwin, 171). These conflicts will continue till the end- the end of the vision of the 70 weeks.

“If we feel some hesitation at not being able to identify some precise NT event as marking the end of the seventy weeks, we should remember that the vision itself does not specify any particular event as marking the end of the seventy weeks. It is apparently not the precise date of the end of the seventy weeks that the vision is intended to communicate, but the objectives to be accomplished within the seventy weeks” (Roberts, 104).

### **What is the Symbolism of the 70 weeks?**

Dispensationalists says that the years “are literal years ending with Christ’s second coming” Miller, 257. Dispensationalist would not stress the symbolic importance of the numbers since

they believe the value of the numbers are in their literal number. Numbers have been used figuratively before in the book of **Daniel- 1:20; 3:19.**

What is the symbolism of the 70 weeks? I think that symbolism is tied to the weekly Sabbath, the Sabbath year, and the year of Jubilee.

**Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15** The weekly Sabbath a foundation of Israelite law.

**Exodus 31:12-17** The Sabbath is the sign of the covenant between God and Israel.

**Exodus 34:21; 35:1-3** Even during the busiest times of the year and during the most important projects like the building of the tabernacle, the Sabbath must be kept.

**Exodus 23:10-13; Lev. 25:1-7** The Sabbath day is closely tied to the Sabbath year.

**Lev. 25** The Seventh or Sabbatical year is closely tied to the Jubilee year. **Daniel 9:24-27** seems to assume a Jubilee every 49 years, or the seventh Sabbath year. The Jubilee is, in effect, the Sabbath of all Sabbaths.

The Jubilee is mentioned 14 times in **Leviticus 25** and 6 times in **Leviticus 27**; elsewhere it is mentioned only in **Num. 36:4.**

In the Sabbatical years debts were forgiven (**Deut. 15:1-18**) and slaves were freed (**Jer. 34:8-22**).

The Jubilee year stresses these same things, forgiveness of debt and slaves being freed- **Lev. 25:23-28, 39-55.** The word used in the Greek translation in **Lev. 25:10** *to proclaim release* is also the word used in the LXX for the year of Jubilee- **25:10, 11, 12, 13, 28, 30, 31, 33, 40, 50.** This is the word for *forgiveness*, and is used 17 times in the New Testament- **Matt. 26:28; Mark 1:4; 3:29; Luke 1:77; 3:3; 4:18, 18; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:22; 10:18.**

**Jeremiah 17:19-27; Nehemiah 13:15-22** Babylonian captivity was because of the people's failure to keep the Sabbath day (and related Sabbath laws).

**Leviticus 26:34-35, 43** It is assumed that in times of unfaithfulness Sabbath days, years would be the first commandments to go. When the people are in captivity, the land will make up for all the Sabbath years it failed to keep when the people were in the land.

**Jeremiah 34:12-14** reveals that in Israel's history "Your forefathers did not obey Me or incline their ear to Me."

**II Chronicles 36:20-21** "...The land enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete."

How long would the people have failed to observe the Sabbath years to have a captivity in which the land kept Sabbath 70 years- **9:2**? 490 years of unfaithfulness would result in 70 unkept Sabbath years.

While that period of 490 years resulted in bondage and slavery, God would initiate a new period of 490 years which by His provision and grace would result in deliverance and salvation from sin.