

The Book of Daniel

Chapter Nine



The bulk of Daniel's life was spent in captivity to the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires. Even after the passage of time and the great success he enjoyed, his heart still yearned for the end of Israel's captivity and their return to the Promised Land. In this chapter, the Lord reveals not only the end of Israel's captivity to Daniel, but also many other events that would forever alter the world in which we live.

9:1-3 – The End in Sight

"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:"

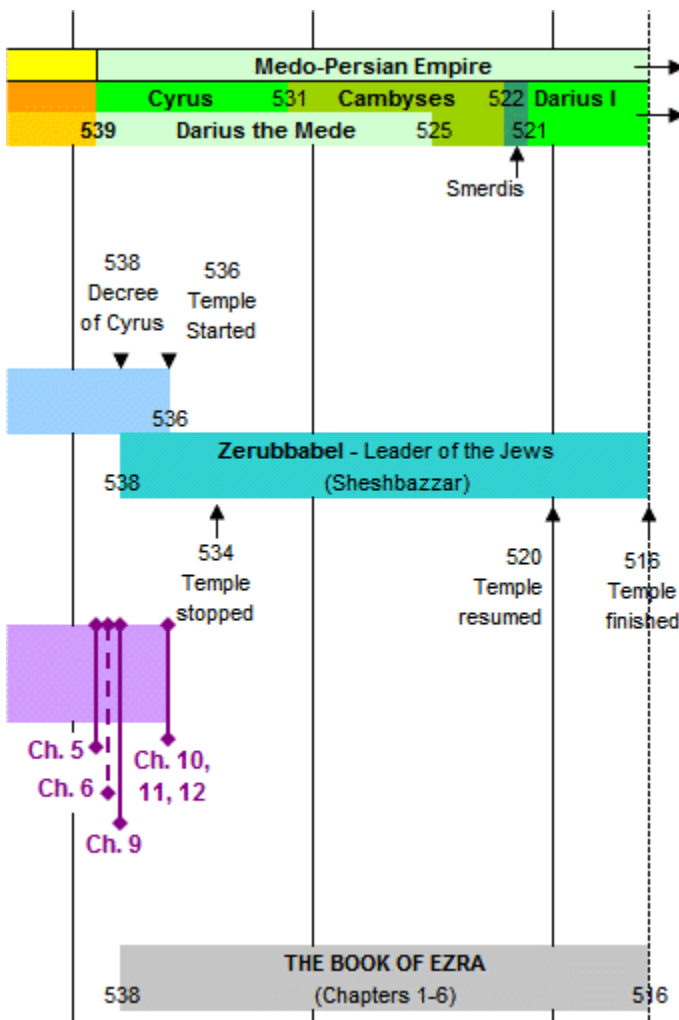


Figure 1: Timeline of Chapter Nine

The Reign of Darius

If you recall from our study in Chapter 5, Cyrus, the Persian was the one who finally conquered Babylon. Remember, though that the army he used to capture Babylon was made up of both Medes and Persians. This empire was represented in prophecy by the Bear that leaned to one side (Chapter 7) and the ram with two horns: one longer than the other (Chapter 8). This represents the Persian dominance in the alliance between the two nations.

It appears that after the Medo-Persian army, led by Cyrus, conquered Babylon, Darius the Mede was "made king". This was perhaps an attempt by Cyrus, the key leader of the joined empire, to maintain the harmony between the Medes and Persians by promoting one of the Median leaders as a local ruler over the important former Empire's headquarters. We know from the book of Daniel that Cyrus eventually resided and ruled over Babylon. Even during the reign of Darius, Cyrus remained the ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire as a whole.

The prayer and subsequent prophecy recorded in Daniel 9 occurred during the first year of Darius' reign, placing it within a year after the feast held by Belshazzar. Figure 1, to the left, shows the timing of Chapter 9 in relation to the succession of world empires, the Jews, and other Biblical writers. As the world transitioned, Daniel sought to know the will of the Lord towards the Israelites.

The Prophecy of Jeremiah

Jeremiah the prophet was a contemporary of Daniel, living through the first half of the Jewish captivity. He foretold of the coming captivity before it happened and also foretold its duration. As a prophet of God, the written prophecy of God was recognized as part of the inspired Word of God, still being compiled at this time. As Daniel poured over the prophecies given by Jeremiah, he saw one in particular that interested him. It foretold the length of the Jewish captivity. Let's look at this prophecy:

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Jeremiah 29:10 – *“For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.”*

What specifically prompted Daniel to pray at this time?

A Special Prayer

We know that Daniel was a man given to prayer. In Daniel 6:10, we read that he went into his chamber, opened his window toward Jerusalem, and prayed three times each day. This prayer was different though. Daniel set his face unto the Lord, offered prayer and supplications, fasted, and put on sackcloth and ashes. Let's look at each of these components and understand what they mean

Set face unto the Lord –

Prayer and Supplications –

Fasting –

Sackcloth and Ashes –

Looking at the four elements discussed above, what type of prayer is Daniel offering to God?

In Zechariah 7:1-7, the Lord gives a revelation to Zechariah about the fasting of Israel during the time of the captivity. This occurred in the fourth year of the reign of Darius I, another Darius that reigned after the time of Darius the Mede. What does the passage from Zechariah reveal about the nature of the Israelite's heart?

Knowing that Daniel's prayer was pleasing to God, what distinguishes his prayer from the other Israelites?

The Intersection between Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

God made a decree through Jeremiah that Israel's captivity would last 70 years and then He would return them to Israel. We also know that Israel's captivity was the result of their rebellion against God. Yet, Daniel prays to God for forgiveness and mercy upon Israel. If God made a decree, and that decree is immutable, why should Daniel pray for what God has already promised? See Acts 27:21-31 for a similar circumstance.

God decrees both the ends and the means

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9:4-6 – The Confession

“And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

Daniel attributes the following qualities to God. What is their significance in this prayer?

Great and Dreadful – Daniel is recognizing the Lord's holiness and His great power. He is one to be feared and respected. Therefore, sinning against Him is no light matter, but one that should be taken very seriously.

Keeping Covenant and Mercy – God is not the offending party. He is holy in all ways and has kept His end of the covenant toward Israel. He also has mercy to offer those who have sinned against Him, but who have the heart desire to serve Him, as manifested in their life. This is the reason Daniel prayed to God for forgiveness.

According to Daniel, what was Israel's primary sin? (See also Luke 11:50-51)

Israel's primary sin was a continued rejection of the voice of God, despite numerous opportunities. They rejected the Word given by God. They also rejected those sent to speak to them on behalf of God. In Luke 11:50-51, the Lord chastises Israel because they repeatedly killed the prophets/messengers He sent to them. Their rejection was one of rebellion against God and His will for their life.

9:7-10 – Contrasting God and Israel

“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.”

In this section of prayer, Daniel compares and contrasts God and Israel. The Lord was righteous, holy and perfect in all of His ways. He kept His word toward Israel. Israel was the one who failed. Daniel twice uses the term “confusion of faces” in this passage. It means “open shame” or “shame of face”. Daniel is saying that the Lord may keep His head high because He has done all things perfectly, but to Israel, their head should be bowed low in great shame for their sins.

Daniel attributes the sins committed to all of Israel. Clearly, there were some righteous in Israel, Daniel being one of them. What parallels can be drawn between Daniel's assignment of sin to Israel and the way the Lord treats the New Testament Church? (see also 1 Corinthians 5:6)

Israel was blessed as a nation, sinned as a nation, and suffered as a nation. So it is with the New Testament Church in many ways. The Lord said that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. We as a body are affected by the spiritual health of each member. We need to do our utmost to maintain the purity of the body, not in a Pharisaical way, but in a loving spiritual way. We will be blessed and will suffer as a body.

As Daniel recited Israel's sin, where did he assign the blame?

Daniel placed blame on their leadership for their failure to obey the voice of God. From the level of the king down to the leader of each home, each had responsibility for their failure towards God.

9:11-14 – The Curse

“Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as

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hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice."

Israel's captivity did not come by surprise to those who were studied in Old Testament Scripture. Daniel mentions in his prayer that the Lord was performing an oath written in the law of Moses. The law of Moses constitutes the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We find this oath in Leviticus 26:14-46. The Lord promised Israel exile for disobedience. In fact, the Lord even predicted the duration of Israel's captivity in this passage. Before we discuss this, read Leviticus 25:1-7, concerning the land Sabbath.

The land Sabbath was to occur every seven years. On the seventh year, the Israelites were to let their fields lie dormant, neither sowing nor tending to their crops. It was a year of rest. They were to eat from the food that grew wild there, sharing with others as well as they had need. They were not to gather the food for the purpose of selling it or making gain from it.

As the Israelite's faith began to grow weak, this command would be one of the first jettisoned because of covetousness. The Bible states that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10) The Lord used the missed land Sabbaths to set a bounds for Israel's captivity in Leviticus 26:32-35. Read 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 and discuss the application of this principle to the Babylonian captivity.

The Lord stated through the prophet Jeremiah, as recorded in this passage, that Israel's captivity would last 70 years to make up for all the land Sabbaths that she did not observe. Knowing that the land Sabbaths occurred every 7 years, this means that there was a span of 490 years of disobedience. Though we may not see the Lord repay all sin in our lifetime, He is faithful and will require punishment for transgressions.

9:15-19 – The Plea

"And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

This last portion of Daniel's prayer that is recorded for us shows his plea for God's mercy in the form of forgiveness and restoration to the holy city: Jerusalem, and to the temple: the sanctuary that is desolate. As Daniel recounts a brief history of Israel, he doesn't highlight Israel's obedience, but rather God's mercy. He doesn't attempt to bring any of Israel's obedience or righteousness to the forefront in asking God to show mercy. He doesn't say, "we tried our best" or "we'll do better next time" or "don't you remember how great we were when we...". He has one position that he consistently pleads to the Lord as a motivation for mercy. What is it and why does it turn the Lord's heart?

He begs the Lord to turn His hand for His sake and for the sake of His name. Israel, despite their sin, was called by the name of the Lord. They were His people. The nations looked at their plight and despised the name of their God, Jehovah. Daniel begs the Lord for restoration so that the Lord would be shown as righteous and all powerful in the midst of the nations. There is no greater plea that a man can offer God, than that the Lord's name be glorified. That was the sole purpose of Christ's ministry and we know that He pleased the Father. If that becomes the true desire of our heart, we will see God move in a great way!

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9:20-23 – The Visitation

“And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.”

The Occasion of Gabriel’s visitation

Daniel was making a prayer concerning the “holy mountain of my God”. What is this? (see also Daniel 9:16)

Daniel saw Gabriel in the vision “at the beginning”. What does he mean? (see Daniel 8:15-19)

As Daniel prayed, he said that Gabriel was “caused to fly swiftly”. This can also be translated as “came to me in my extreme weariness”, meaning that Gabriel came just as Daniel was about worn out from praying. This occurred at the time of the evening oblation (time of the evening sacrifice). This is the ninth hour of the Hebrew day or 3:00 pm. It appears that Daniel arose early in the morning, and spent the greater part of the day in prayer. It is significant to note the time that Gabriel came to Daniel because it has much to do with the fulfillment of the prophecy about to be delivered to him. What else occurred at this time in Biblical history? (see Matthew 27:46-51)

In Time, On Time, Every Time

Gabriel came to Daniel not only to provide the vision, but to give him an understanding of the vision. He begins by stating that the Lord sent Gabriel at the beginning of his prayers that day. What does this teach us about the Lord and prayer? (see Isaiah 65:24)

Gabriel tells Daniel that he is “greatly beloved”. In the Hebrew this is literally, “a man of desires”, which means that the Lord was greatly concerned about Daniel’s happiness. Why was the Lord so concerned about Daniel’s happiness? (see Psalm 37:4)

9:24 –The Seventy Weeks: An Overview

“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.”

The vision we are about to study is one which has perplexed many good Christians and has a wide range of interpretations within the different schools of prophetic interpretation. My hope is that we can lay a foundation for an accurate interpretation.

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The first thing we need to establish in this vision is the time period we are studying. We are told that seventy “weeks” are determined by God. The word, “weeks” in Hebrew literally means “sevens”. This prophecy is for seventy sevens, or 490 units.¹ What are these units? Almost every conservative scholar recognizes these units as years: 490 years. Notice the symbolic tie to the seventy years of the Jewish captivity. The Jews would endure captivity for 70 years because of 490 years of disobedience. In roughly another 490 years, the Lord would bring to pass some amazing things.

To whom does Gabriel tell Daniel this vision is directed? Does this make sense?

Gabriel now tells Daniel that by the end of the 490 years of this vision, six major milestones will be accomplished. They are each listed below along with discussion on their possible interpretations.

1.) Finish the Transgression –

What was the subject of Daniel’s prayer? It was repentance for the rebellion of Israel and a plea for mercy. This appears to be the very first thing addressed by the Lord. How would this be accomplished?

2.) Make an End of Sins –

It is here that the Lord begins to broaden Daniel’s mind to the scope of this vision. The Lord is going to give him more than he bargained for when he began to pray. Read Hebrews 9:26, 10:14,18 and discuss the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus Christ.

3.) Make Reconciliation for Iniquity –

The very concept of reconciliation is that of atonement: to bring us back into good fellowship with God. Read Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:20 and discuss the fulfillment of this passage in Jesus Christ.

4.) Bring in Everlasting Righteousness

The life and death of Jesus Christ confirmed the righteousness of God for all time. It also made possible the eternal righteousness of others. Read Isaiah 53:11, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Hebrews 9:12 and discuss the fulfillment of this passage in Jesus Christ.

5.) Seal up the Vision and Prophecy

The term “seal up” means to “close up”, or “make an end”. This passage is pointing to specific vision and prophecy. It could be a reference to the visions and prophecy Daniel received. It could also be the whole of Old Testament vision and prophecy. Finally, it could be all vision and prophecy. The term “seal up” could refer to the cessation of additional revelation, or to the fulfillment of the revelation.

¹ 70 x 7 = 490

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From the sense that “seal up” means to end, I tend to believe it refers to the completion of Old Testament vision and prophecy. We read in Matthew 11:13, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” John was the last Old Testament prophet. Jesus began a new ministry, the ministry of the New Covenant. He provided prophecy to His disciples and later sent the Spirit, Who gave additional visions and prophecy to the New Testament church until the completion of the canon of Scriptures.

In the sense that “seal up” may tie to fulfillment, the sum of much Old Testament prophecy concerned the coming of Jesus Christ. In John 5:39, Jesus states, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” During His ministry, Jesus kept a constant eye upon the requirements of Old Testament prophecy, making sure that He fulfilled each one pertaining to Him. Read the following passage and discuss how it may tie into the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy.

John 19:28-30 - After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

6.) Anoint the Most Holy –

The word, “anoint” means to “consecrate, set aside as wholly God’s... pure and dedicated”. Due to the possible interpretation of the Most Holy as a place, there are three potential interpretations of this passage: the Earthly Temple located in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ Himself, and Heaven. Let’s look at each possibility:

The Earthly Temple

Twice during the 490 years, we read in both Scripture and in other historical literature of the temple being rededicated. The first occurred shortly after Daniel’s vision in 516 BC and is addressed in Ezra 6:15-16

The second rededication occurred after the Antiochus Epiphanes ended the daily sacrifice and caused a swine to be offered in the temple. We can read about the rededication in the following excerpt:

1 Maccabees 4:52-58 – “Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-eighth year, ⁵³they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built. ⁵⁴At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. ⁵⁵All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. ⁵⁶So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and joyfully offered burnt offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving offering. ⁵⁷They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and fitted them with doors. ⁵⁸There was very great joy among the people, and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed.”

Jesus Christ

The words, “Christ” or “Messiah” mean “the anointed One”. Jesus had a three-fold anointed office: prophet, priest, and king. Each was a distinct Old Testament office foreshadowing the work of Christ. Jesus began to fulfill these offices during His earthly ministry. The anointing of an Old Testament prophet, priest, or king was accomplished by pouring oil over their heads, signifying enablement from the Spirit of God to accomplish their task. When would this have occurred with Jesus (see Matthew 3:13-17)

Heaven

The cleansing or consecrating of Heaven itself is addressed in the book of Hebrews. Read Hebrews 9:11-12, and 9:18-24. According to these passages, the most holy place in the very presence of God was cleansed by the sprinkling of the precious blood of Jesus. One obvious question to ask is how would the

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most holy place in heaven become polluted? Why would it need to be cleansed? Read Job 1:6, Luke 10:18, and Revelation 12:7-9 and discuss.

Overall, I believe the fulfillment of this passage revolves around Jesus Christ and the work He accomplished by His death, burial, and resurrection. Daniel's love for Jerusalem and especially the temple was tied to his love for the Lord. He knew that the temple was where the presence of the Lord dwelt and he longed to worship the Lord there. The Lord is revealing to Daniel that He would not only restore the building, but would do something even greater to obviate the need for the earthly temple. Man would be able to enjoy a great fellowship with God without traveling to Jerusalem.

Read Hebrews 10:19-22 and discuss whether the realization of this promise would appeal to Daniel's heart.

9:25-27 The Seventy Weeks: The Timing

"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. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Commandment to Restore & Build Jerusalem

Now that we have established a background, we need to identify the starting point of the prophecy so that we can look at its fulfillment in Biblical history. What makes this process interesting is that there are four separate events recorded in Scripture, that could be interpreted as the "going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem". Read the following passages and describe each event briefly.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4 (538 BC) –

Ezra 6:1-12 (519 BC) -

Ezra 7:11-26 (457 BC) -

Nehemiah 2:7-8 (444 BC) -

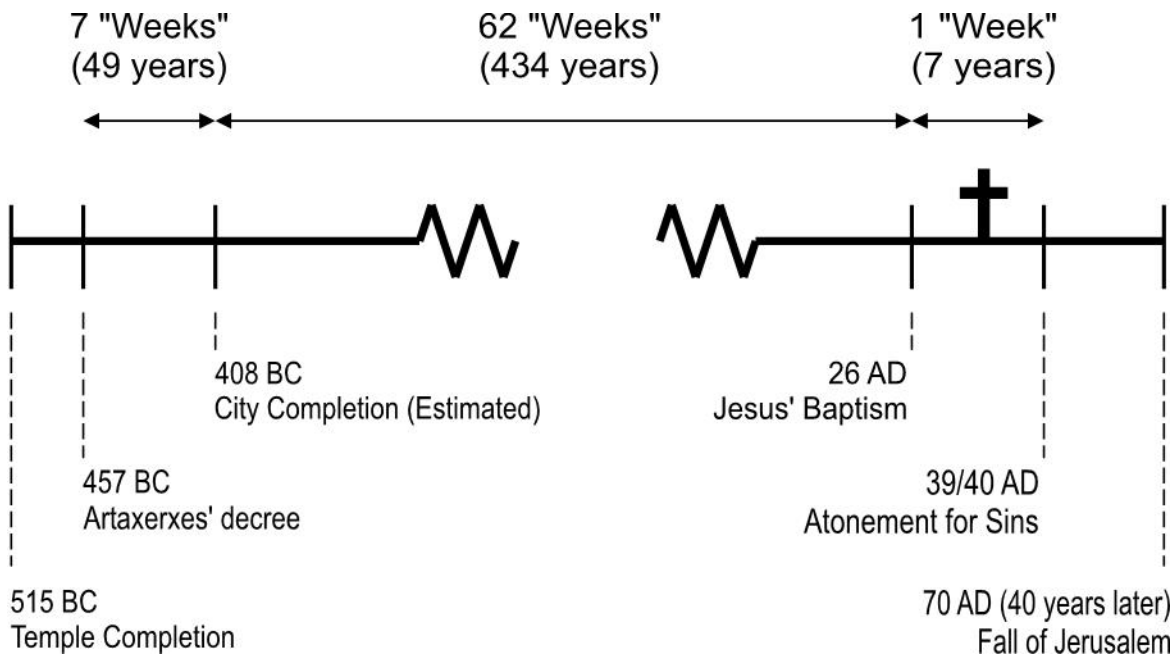
Based on your review of the above dates, which do you feel may be the beginning of the 490 years?

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The 69 Years to Messiah the Prince

There are two methods proposed to calculate the years from the giving of the command to Messiah the Prince. The first is a year for year calculation using the Babylonian calendar, which is similar to ours. The second is a "solar year" calendar corresponding to the ancient Hebrew system of using 12, 30 day months. Both methods are used by scholars with varying success. Based upon my brief study, it appears that the first method yields more reasonable results.

The figure below shows the use of the year for year calculation method, starting at Artaxerxes' decree in 457 BC. Using this method, we see a good fit with the historical estimation of events in the Old and New Testament. This timeline represents the interpretation of this passage that I found most plausible. However, this is by no means the only interpretation.



One of the most common interpretations of this passage today, the premillennial, inserts a gap of unspecified duration between the end of the 69th week and the 70th week, which they believe is yet to begin. We will consider some of their points as we continue through this passage.

The prophecy states that there will be 69 "weeks" to the coming of Messiah the Prince. Again, the word, "Messiah" means "the anointed One". The figure above shows the end of the 69 weeks occurring at the approximate date for Jesus' anointing, which was His baptism.

The Street and the Wall are Built Again

Remember that the focus of this prophecy is the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which was laid waste by the Babylonians. Does the Bible tell us of the rebuilding of Jerusalem?

The word, "wall" here means "trench" and is likely a reference to the moat inside the city walls. Therefore, this prophecy sets out a timetable for the complete reconstruction of Jerusalem, not just the wall. This prophecy even mentions that the construction was completed during "troubulous times". What does this mean?

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Messiah is cut off, but not for himself:

We begin now with verse 28. We are told that after 62 weeks (the middle 62, after the initial seven), the Anointed One would be cut off, but not for Himself. The phrase, “cut off”, is again important for us to define. Below is the definition from Strong’s Bible Dictionary:

“3772. karath - a primitive root; to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication, to destroy or consume; specifically, to covenant (i.e. make an alliance or bargain, originally by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces)…”

As you can see, this word is tied to the formation of a covenant by sacrifice. It is also, “not for Himself”, meaning perhaps that His death was not for His own sins. Do we see fulfillment of these principles in Jesus? See also Isaiah 53:5-6, Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 9:15, and Hebrews 12:24.

When we look at the timing of this event, we are told that it will occur “after the 62 weeks” (after the 69th “week”). We see this event occurring right in the middle of the seventh “week”, according to the figure above. The premillennial position on this is that it occurred during the gap between the 69th and 70th week, along with the events we are about to discuss.

The People of the Prince that Shall Come

We are next told the people of the prince that shall come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. In a holistic sense, Daniel’s vision covers both the rebuilding and future destruction of Jerusalem. Without controversy, this destruction occurred in 70 AD when Titus, the Roman general, marched on Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the temple (sanctuary). Titus later became a Roman Emperor. Titus breached the middle wall of Jerusalem on June 5, 70 AD and killed or dispersed most of the population. The Jewish historian, Josephus, was an eyewitness to this event and described the massacre of Jews in great detail in his *Antiquities*. It can truly be said to have been with “a flood” and a “desolation” (laying waste or destruction) upon Jerusalem, the sanctuary, and the Jewish nation.

We know that 70 AD did not occur with the 70 “weeks” of Daniel, so how can it fit?

Confirming the Covenant with Many

We now enter the 27th and final verse of this chapter. We are first told that “he” shall confirm “the covenant” with many for one week. There are two possibilities for the identity of “he”. The first option is that it refers to The Messiah. The second option is that it refers to the prince that shall come. If you go back through this sentence grammatically, I believe the better option is that it is a reference to Christ. We are told about the people of the prince that shall come destroying Jerusalem, but not of any singular actions taken by this prince. The last individual spoken of was The Messiah, who was cut off, but not for Himself.

Also, the passage says that “he” will confirm the covenant. This is a specific covenant. The covenant most recently referred to in this passage was back in verse 26. We saw that the Hebrew word for “cut off” referred to the establishment of a covenant. We recognized this as the New Covenant instituted by the shedding of His blood.

Finally, we are told that the covenant will be confirmed with “many”. The same Hebrew word for “many” is used in Isaiah 53:11 and the same concept is applied in Mark 14:24. Read these passages and comment on this interpretation of the confirmed covenant.

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It is the premillennial position that “he” is the “prince that shall come” from verse 26, otherwise known as the Antichrist. They believe the covenant spoken of here is a future covenant to be entered into between the Antichrist and the nation of Israel.

The End of Sacrifice and Offering

We are now told that in the midst of the week, implying the 70th week, “he” shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease. In the last section, I identified, “he” as being Jesus Christ. If you again look at the timetable set forth earlier in the lesson, you will find that the crucifixion of Jesus occurred in the midst of the 70th week. His ministry is estimated to have lasted a little over three years by many sources, placing His death in the midst of the week. Read Matthew 27:50-54 and discuss the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus Christ.

The premillennial position on this passage is that The Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews after three and a half years and require that all offerings and sacrifice cease.

The Overspreading of Abominations

The final portion of this passage states that for the overspreading of abominations, “he” shall make it desolate, even until the consummation. The word, “consummation” means, “the end” and also “total destruction”. This is foretelling the total destruction of the Jewish temple. Depending on your interpretation of this passage, it could be implying that it will remain in its destroyed state until “the end”. Again, the “he” spoken of, who made the temple desolate, can be interpreted as Jesus Christ. Because of Israel’s rejection of Him, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple in graphic detail. As we harmonize Jesus’ prophecy with Josephus’ account of the destruction of Jerusalem, we find amazing harmony.

Read Matthew 24:15-22 and outline Jesus’ prophecy.

We also read in Matthew 10:23 – “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.” A likely interpretation of this passage is that Jesus would bring judgment upon Israel before the disciples completed their spreading of the gospel to every city of Israel.

We will close this chapter with the following excerpt from Eye Witness to History.com,² which summarizes Josephus’ account of the destruction of the Jewish temple.

“In the year 66 AD the Jews of Judea rebelled against their Roman masters. In response, the Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the generalship of Vespasian to restore order. By the year 68, resistance in the northern part of the province had been eradicated and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem. That same year, the Emperor Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared Emperor and returned to the Imperial City. It fell to his son, Titus, to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem.

The Roman legions surrounded the city and began to slowly squeeze the life out of the Jewish stronghold. By the year 70, the attackers had breached Jerusalem’s outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city. The assault culminated in the burning and destruction of the Temple that served as the center of Judaism.

In victory, the Romans slaughtered thousands. Of those spared from death: thousands more were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt, others were dispersed to arenas throughout the Empire to

² From www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfjewishtemple.htm as of December 31, 2006

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be butchered for the amusement of the public. The Temple's sacred relics were taken to Rome where they were displayed in celebration of the victory.

The rebellion sputtered on for another three years and was finally extinguished in 73 AD with the fall of the various pockets of resistance including the stronghold at Masada.

"...the Jews let out a shout of dismay that matched the tragedy."

Our only first-hand account of the Roman assault on the Temple comes from the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. Josephus was a former leader of the Jewish Revolt who had surrendered to the Romans and had won favor from Vespasian. In gratitude, Josephus took on Vespasian's family name - Flavius - as his own. We join his account as the Romans fight their way into the inner sanctum of the Temple:

"...the rebels shortly after attacked the Romans again, and a clash followed between the guards of the sanctuary and the troops who were putting out the fire inside the inner court; the latter routed the Jews and followed in hot pursuit right up to the Temple itself. Then one of the soldiers, without awaiting any orders and with no dread of so momentous a deed, but urged on by some supernatural force, snatched a blazing piece of wood and, climbing on another soldier's back, hurled the flaming brand through a low golden window that gave access, on the north side, to the rooms that surrounded the sanctuary. As the flames shot up, the Jews let out a shout of dismay that matched the tragedy; they flocked to the rescue, with no thought of sparing their lives or husbanding their strength; for the sacred structure that they had constantly guarded with such devotion was vanishing before their very eyes.

...No exhortation or threat could now restrain the impetuosity of the legions; for passion was in supreme command. Crowded together around the entrances, many were trampled down by their companions; others, stumbling on the smoldering and smoked-filled ruins of the porticoes, died as miserably as the defeated. As they drew closer to the Temple, they pretended not even to hear Caesar's orders, but urged the men in front to throw in more firebrands. The rebels were powerless to help; carnage and flight spread throughout.

Most of the slain were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, and they were butchered where they were caught. The heap of corpses mounted higher and higher about the altar; a stream of blood flowed down the Temple's steps, and the bodies of those slain at the top slipped to the bottom.

When Caesar failed to restrain the fury of his frenzied soldiers, and the fire could not be checked, he entered the building with his generals and looked at the holy place of the sanctuary and all its furnishings, which exceeded by far the accounts current in foreign lands and fully justified their splendid repute in our own.

As the flames had not yet penetrated to the inner sanctum, but were consuming the chambers that surrounded the sanctuary, Titus assumed correctly that there was still time to save the structure; he ran out and by personal appeals he endeavored to persuade his men to put out the fire, instructing Liberalius, a centurion of his bodyguard of lancers, to club any of the men who disobeyed his orders. But their respect for Caesar and their fear of the centurion's staff who was trying to check them were overpowered by their rage, their detestation of the Jews, and an utterly uncontrolled lust for battle.

Most of them were spurred on, moreover, by the expectation of loot, convinced that the interior was full of money and dazzled by observing that everything around them was made of gold. But they were forestalled by one of those who had entered into the building, and who, when Caesar dashed out to restrain the troops, pushed a firebrand, in the darkness, into the hinges of the gate. Then, when the flames suddenly shot up from the interior, Caesar and his generals withdrew, and no one was left to prevent those outside from kindling the blaze. Thus, in defiance of Caesar's wishes, the Temple was set on fire.

While the Temple was ablaze, the attackers plundered it, and countless people who were caught by them were slaughtered. There was no pity for age and no regard was accorded rank; children and old men, laymen and priests, alike were butchered; every class was pursued and crushed in the grip of war, whether they cried out for mercy or offered resistance.

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Through the roar of the flames streaming far and wide, the groans of the falling victims were heard; such was the height of the hill and the magnitude of the blazing pile that the entire city seemed to be ablaze; and the noise - nothing more deafening and frightening could be imagined.

There were the war cries of the Roman legions as they swept onwards en masse, the yells of the rebels encircled by fire and sword, the panic of the people who, cut off above, fled into the arms of the enemy, and their shrieks as they met their fate. The cries on the hill blended with those of the multitudes in the city below; and now many people who were exhausted and tongue-tied as a result of hunger, when they beheld the Temple on fire, found strength once more to lament and wail. Peraea and the surrounding hills, added their echoes to the deafening din. But more horrifying than the din were the sufferings.

The Temple Mount, everywhere enveloped in flames, seemed to be boiling over from its base; yet the blood seemed more abundant than the flames and the numbers of the slain greater than those of the slayers. The soldiers climbed over heaps of bodies as they chased the fugitives." "