

## ***Seventy ‘Weeks of Years’***

### **Daniel Chapter 9**

#### **Introduction**

This is one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible. Not only does it contain Daniel’s prayer of repentance, but it concludes with the amazing ‘Seventy Weeks’ prophecy, which maps out the prophetic role of Israel – past, present and future. The accuracy with which the (now) historical events are predicted is astounding – see Mathematical Miracle below. Quoted by Jesus in Matthew 24 and with links to the Book of Revelation, it foreshadows the future destiny not just of Israel but of the world...

#### **Daniel’s Prayer (Daniel 9 v 1 to 19)**

- Daniel read his Bible! Reading Jeremiah (e.g. Chapter 25 v 10 to 12), he understood that the Jewish exile in Babylon would last 70 years, and was a punishment for ignoring the Sabbath laws (not letting the land rest for 1 year every 7 years for the past 490 years). Daniel was now old, and the 70 years was almost up... How did Daniel prepare himself for prayer (v 3)?

The prayer can be divided into three sections: (a) confession of sins (v 4 to 6); (b) the prayer of a broken heart (v 7 to 14); and (c) prayer for forgiveness and restoration (v 15 to 19).

- What does Daniel’s prayer tell us about God’s character and actions? How do you think Daniel felt?
- Why did Israel suffer exile and disaster?
- Do you think Daniel personally had sinned? Why does he use the word “we” (v 5 etc.)? Do you think we should identify with the sins of our ‘fathers’ and the sins of our fellow citizens?
- Note the change of pace in verses 17 to 19 – count the imperatives!

#### **The Seventy “Sevens” or Weeks of Years (Daniel 9 v 20 to 27)**

Daniel never finished his prayer. He was interrupted by Gabriel, who came with the answer (and much more besides)!

The 70 “weeks of years” (Hebrew: שבועים *shivu'im*), i.e. 490 years, are divided into three periods:

- (a) 7 weeks of years (49 years); immediately followed by
- (b) 62 weeks of years (434 years); followed some time later by
- (c) the final 70<sup>th</sup> week (final 7 year period).

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- verse 24 sets out an overview of the prophecy. To whom is the prophecy addressed? Based on this verse, do you think the prophecy has already been fulfilled, or does its fulfilment still lie in the future?
- verse 25 refers to the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2), and to the coming of the ‘anointed king’ (Hebrew: משיח נגיד *Mesiah negid*), Jesus Christ.
- verse 26 predicts that the Christ will be ‘cut off’ (Hebrew: כרת *karat*) or executed, but not for his own crimes. The “ruler who will come” (v 26) refers to the Antichrist, and the “people of the ruler who will come” probably refers to the Romans who under Titus Vespasian destroyed both the city and the temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- “The end will come like a flood...” and the following words refer to future events, and the phrase “abomination that causes desolation” is used by Jesus to describe the end times in Matthew 24 (v 15 to 27).
- The “one seven” (v 27) refers to the last ‘week’ of Daniel’s prophecy, and the last half of that week (3½ years) is described in detail in Revelation (the 42 month period in Chapter 13), and is often referred to as the Great Tribulation.
- If the final ‘week’ of Daniel’s 70 weeks still lies in the future, then what happens between the end of Week 69 and the beginning of Week 70? What is the significance of the ‘gap’?

*Mathematical Miracle –*

*Sir Robert Anderson in his book *The Coming Prince* (published in 1894) showed that the two historical events described in verses 25 and 26 took place on the following dates:*

*Event A (the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem): 14 March 445 BC;*

*Event B (Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem): 6 April 32 AD.*

*The intervening period was 476 years and 24 days; i.e.  $476 \times 365 = 173,740 + 24 + 116$  days for leap years = 173,880 days.*

*Given that the Jewish Prophetic year was 360 days, we have the prophesied time interval between Events A and B as 69 weeks of years =  $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$  days!*

*So what was Gabriel’s margin of error?*

*Zero...*