

# Daniel Chapter Nine (Part III)

*Sir Isaac Newton: We could stake the truth of Christianity on this prophecy alone, made five centuries before Christ.*

The prophecy of Daniel's Seventy Weeks is *critical* for a clear understanding of God's purpose for Judah in her holy city (not during her captivity or scattering). The prophecy does not concern the Gentiles or the church. Israel had neglected seventy sabbath years over a period of 490 years. Sadly, seventy years of captivity would be enough to give the land its rest, but another 490 years (seventy weeks) would be required to put a final end to the nation's rebellion and bring in everlasting righteousness. Daniel must learn that though there would be restoration, further trouble lay ahead for Israel. Note the 490 of Matthew 18.22. The forgiving grace of God *matches* His hand of chastening. Note. It *could* be that Daniel believed the kingdom of the 'God of heaven' (2.44) was soon to be established but Gabriel was sent to correct his misunderstanding. The prophecy has been variously described as the 'key to prophetic interpretation' (Walvoord) as well as the 'backbone' (Denny) and 'crown jewels' (Ford) of OT prophecy.

## An Answer to Prayer [vv.20-23]

**v.20:** Four verbs summarise Daniel's exercise in 'supplication', i.e. presenting a humble request for help (cf. vv.4-19): *speaking, praying, confessing* and *presenting*. It was 3pm, the time of the 'evening oblation' (v.21) and thus quite possible Daniel had been praying all day, at least since the time of the morning oblation (9am). The subject of his prayer was the 'holy mountain', referring to the site of the temple mount (Psalm 2.6; Zechariah 8.3). **v.21:** Incredibly, it was while Daniel was speaking Gabriel appeared with divine revelation. Understanding in the things of God is closely related to prayer, study and communion. Clearly God delights to respond immediately to the cry of His people (cf. Isaiah 65.24) and yet, in the next chapter, the answer takes *three weeks* to be revealed (10.3, 13). The reference to Gabriel as a 'man' does not deny his angelic status but identifies him with the vision of 8.15-16 (13 years previous). Evidently this was a high-priority delivery given Gabriel is God's official publicity messenger (MacArthur)! 'Being caused to fly swiftly' could refer to the speed with which Gabriel came from heaven *or* could be translated 'my state of extreme weariness' – referring to Daniel. The strenuous exertions of his intercession had left him prostrate on the floor, thus Gabriel is caused to alert him to his presence by 'touching'. Though Daniel lived in Babylon and the 'evening oblation' had not taken place for many years (cf. Lamentations 2.7), he still lived in the good of all it meant. No doubt his worship was accepted in the virtue and fragrance of the sweet savour that arose from the burnt offering (yearling lamb) with its accompanying meal and drink offerings. **v.22:** Gabriel instructs Daniel through plain 'talking'. At this stage there would be no more vision. Though Daniel had not prayed for 'understanding', God sought to further reveal the truth of Jeremiah's writings and His unwavering purpose to fulfil every promise to Israel through the coming Messiah. Daniel was thinking of a *present* restoration, but God revealed a final and *ultimate* deliverance. **v.23:** Even before he had finished praying, the divine decree was given to communicate the word of the Lord to Daniel. God is far more ready to hear and answer than we are to ask! Such revelation was given 'not only because he *prayed* as he *should pray*, but because he *was* what he *should be*' (MacArthur). Daniel was 'greatly beloved', i.e. very precious and highly esteemed – one *desired* and greatly *delighted* in as a very precious treasure (cf. Genesis 27.15; Ezra 8.27). Godly, spiritual, Christ-like character whilst living in the midst of such idolatry and wickedness is clearly precious to God (cf. Mark 1.11)! Gabriel commands Daniel to set his mind to 'consider' and 'understand' the prophetic revelation (vision) he was about to receive.

## The Aim of the Seventy Weeks [v.24]

This verse summarises the *six* objectives (goals) of divine purpose in relation to Daniel's people and 'holy city' (Jerusalem). Note. 'Thy people' not 'my people'. God could not publicly identify with His people during the time of their rebellion (Hosea 1.9; Haggai 1.2). The first three objectives concern the *removal of sin*. The second three describe conditions established by the *return of the Sovereign* to commence His millennial reign. 'Seventy weeks' have been 'determined' to accomplish these objectives. The word 'determined' means God has 'cut out' or 'isolated' a period of time from the course of history to effect His purpose. This is a sovereignly determined and executed plan! The word 'weeks' is better translated 'sevens' or 'heptads' – basically describing a unit of seven. The prophecy thus concerns *seventy sets of seven* – the context clearly showing that **years** rather than weeks are in view (cp. 10.2-3, lit. 'three sevens of days'). Not only has Daniel been thinking in terms of years (v.2) – and by implication the 490 years Israel had robbed the land and disobeyed God – but the 'one week' of v.27 is undoubtedly a period of seven years (tribulation), which is divided into two parts of 3.5 years each (cp. 7.25). The book of Revelation expresses this period as 42 months or 1260 days (Revelation 11.2-3; 12.6; 13.5). Again, a prophetic year in scripture amounts to 360 days with 30 days per month – a matter clearly established by comparing Genesis 7.11 (five months) with Genesis 7.24; 8.3-4 (150 days) as well as the verses in Revelation (above). Thus, the seventy weeks equate to a total period of 490 years or 176,400 days. The six objectives are as follows:

1. 'Finish (restrain completely) the **transgression**' (rebellion). 490 years would be required to put an end to Israel's apostasy and rebellion against God. Though the Babylonian exile was coming to an end, her rebellion would continue with the rejection of Messiah and climax in the abomination of desolation. 'Finish' can have the thought of 'shutting up' as a beast in a cage. The rebellious nature of the nation will never break out again – see Jeremiah 31.33-34 (Allen).
2. 'Make an end of **sins**' (to miss the mark). The sins of the nation will be 'securely sealed up' as in a prison, never to be opened again. The record of Israel's sins will be closed. They will sin no more (Jeremiah 31.34; Ezekiel 36.25-27; 37.23; Romans 11.27).
3. 'Make reconciliation (atonement) for **iniquity**'. Any removal of sin depends upon the work of Christ. God will therefore make good the blessings of Calvary to Israel at his appearing (Zechariah 13.1). 'Iniquity' describes the ruin (perverse crookedness) of human nature, the source of all transgression and sin. But Christ is the divinely appointed mercy seat – the debt is paid.
4. 'Bring in everlasting **righteousness**'. Literally, 'the righteousness of the ages'. An age of righteousness will be established on earth by the reigning King (Isaiah 1.26; 11.4-5; 32.1; Jeremiah 23.5-6).
5. 'Seal up the **vision** and **prophecy**'. The word 'seal' indicates 'authentication' (to certify) and 'to close up' (restrain from activity). *Allen: With the arrival of the Kingdom the visions and prophecies have all been fulfilled; the Kingdom stands as a record of their veracity and accuracy, but their function is no longer needed. Face to face communication belongs to this new realm, and the old indirect methods are obsolete.*
6. 'Anoint the **most holy**'. The words 'most holy' (or 'a holy of holies') usually refer to *things* or *places* rather than a *person* (cf. Exodus 29.37; 30.29), and even the sanctuary of the millennial temple (Ezekiel 45.3). The *anointing* or *consecration* of the millennial temple with the presence of the Lord's anointed is surely in view.

#### The Arrival of the Seven and Sixty-Two Weeks [v.25]

The seventy weeks are clearly divided into *three* periods: *seven* weeks (49 years or 17,640 days); *sixty-two* weeks (434 years or 156,240 days) and *one* week (seven years or 1,260 days). This verse gives the *terminus a quo* (point from which) the seventy weeks begin – the going forth of the commandment (word) to *restore* (bring to original function) and *build* Jerusalem. Scripture records *four* such commands.

- Decree of **Cyrus** (539BC). See 2 Chronicles 36.22-23; Ezra 1.1-4; 6.3-5. Cyrus' specific decree concerned the return of the captives and rebuilding of the 'house' of God, as preliminary to the ultimate restoration of the city (Isaiah 44.28; 45.13) decreed by his successors. The decree of Cyrus was to re-establish temple worship which, of necessity, would require some rebuilding and repopulation, though many of the people lived outside the city walls (Nehemiah 11.1). A later decree of **Darius Hystaspes** reaffirmed the decree of Cyrus in 520BC (Ezra 6.6-12) at the time of Haggai and Zechariah.
- Decree of **Artaxerxes Longimanus** (458BC). See Ezra 7.12-26. Issued to Ezra to lead a second group of captives back to Jerusalem and beatify the temple.
- Second decree of **Artaxerxes** (1 Nisan, 444BC). See Nehemiah 2.1-8. Nehemiah's specific request was to rebuild the city (v.5), which was done in most distressing circumstances, i.e. 'troubulous times' (Ezra 4.7-23).

In each of the first three decrees there is no mention of the rebuilding of the *city* of Jerusalem. This then favours the fourth decree as the *terminus a quo* especially as the word 'street' refers to an *internal* open square or market-place, i.e. the re-establishment of city life and 'wall' to something 'dug-out' like a moat or ditch, likely referring to *external* defensive fortifications. This was the express permission given to Nehemiah in 444BC.

From the second decree of *Artaxerxes Longimanus* to 'Messiah the Prince' would be 'seven weeks' and 'threescore and two weeks'. There is no doubt 'Messiah the Prince' refers to the Lord Jesus. He is God's pre-eminent Prophet, Priest and King. The word 'prince' signifies an officer of rank, or chief official, literally, one who 'stands before' or 'above the crowd'. He is a leader and ruler. The corresponding Greek word is only used four times in the NT, all of Christ (*archegos*, Acts 3.15; 5.31; Hebrews 2.10; 12.2). Such a title, then, relates very strongly to the official presentation of the Lord Jesus to the nation as **King** – at His triumphal entry (cf. Mark 11.9-10; John 12.13-15).

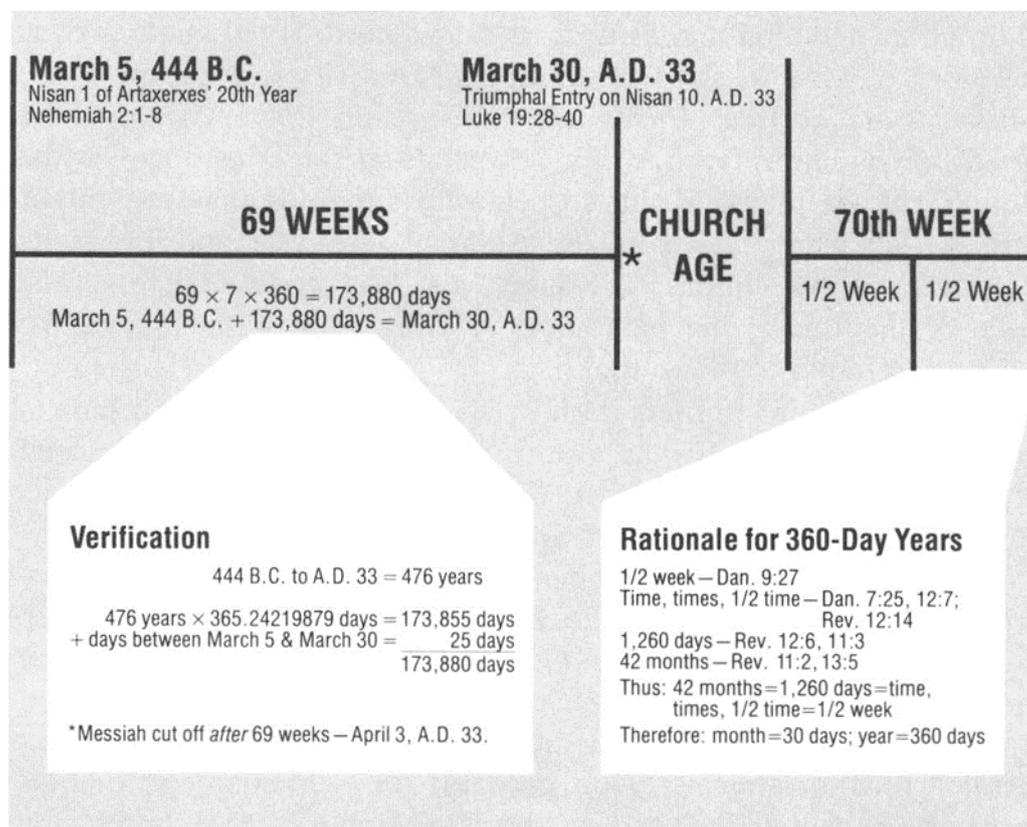
The **seven** weeks refers to the 49 years required to rebuild and restore Jerusalem to her former glory (and, incidentally, was around the time of the closing of OT scripture in the days of Malachi). God had re-established His people in the land, His city and temple, as well as His word. this would be followed by *four hundred* silent years

NISAN (Date of Decree, cf. Neh. 2:1)			
JULIAN (January New Year)	445		444
PERSIAN (Nisan New Year)	19th Year	20th Year	21st Year
JEWISH (Tishri New Year)	19th Year	20th Year	21st Year
CHISLEV (Date of Report, cf. Neh. 1:1)			

until the solitary voice of John the Baptist announcing and preparing the way of Messiah. The additional **sixty-two** weeks thus take us to the time of Christ. When exactly is the *terminus ad quem* (the end to which the timeline moves)? The total of 69 weeks from the commandment of Artaxerxes to Messiah the Prince = 173,880 days (69 x 360). *Tanner: In order to fit this into our current system based on solar years, we would need to convert this figure by dividing it by 365.242 days per solar year. This results in a total of 476 solar years plus 25 days. Adding this figure to March 5, 444 BC (Nehemiah 2.1), results in a terminal date of March 30, AD 33.* This is equivalent to 10 Nisan AD33, the very day the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt in answer to the great messianic prophecy of Zechariah (9.9). Much of the above calculation comes from the work of *Harold W Hoehner* which in turn was based on the earlier seminal work of *Sir Robert Anderson* (The Coming Prince) in conjunction with the astronomer royal (followed by *Jim Allen*, Daniel Reconsidered). These eminent scholars differ only by one year in relation to the exact time of the decree of Artaxerxes.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (the edict to rebuild Jerusalem) was 14 March, 445 BC.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> Nisan in Passion Week (Christ's entry into Jerusalem) was 6 April, AD 32.
- The intervening period was 476 years and 24 days (the days being reckoned inclusively, as required by the language of the prophecy, and in accordance with the Jewish practice).  
 But  $476 \times 365 = 173,740$  days.  
 Add (March 14 to April 6, both inclusive) 24 days.  
 Add for leap years 116 days.  
 Total 173,880 days
- But 69 weeks of prophetic years – each of 360 days is  $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$  days
- Thus 173,880 days commences on the 1<sup>st</sup> Nisan 445 BC and closes on the 10<sup>th</sup> Nisan AD 32.

*Sir Robert Anderson (The Coming Prince) re-produced in Jim Allen (Daniel Reconsidered)*



*Harold W Hoehner (Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ)*

### After Sixty-Nine Weeks [v.26]

This verse describes events that occurred in the undefined period after the close of the *sixty-ninth* week, but before the commencement of the *seventieth* week (v.27). It was only four days after the triumphal entry Messiah was 'cut off' at Calvary. The word translated 'cut off' refers to an unnatural violent death, often as the result of a judicial process (cf. Leviticus 7.20; Isaiah 53.8). 'But not for Himself' is variously translated 'and shall have nothing' (RV) or 'not for His own sake' (Spurrell). In relation to Israel, Messiah was left with nothing. Instead of the *crown*, they gave Him the *cross*. Instead of a *throne*, He occupied a *tomb*. Less than forty years after Calvary, the 'city' and 'sanctuary' were destroyed. This cannot refer to the tribulation as the seventieth week has not yet commenced (v.27), and even then, Jerusalem will not be *totally* demolished (Zechariah 14.1-3). The reference seems to be to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman legions in AD70 (cf. Matthew 22.7; Luke 19.42-44; 21.20-24). These are the 'people of the prince that shall come' not referring to the Roman general Titus, but the future ruler (prince) who will arise during the tribulation. He is surely synonymous with the 'little horn' (7.8, 24-25), 'king of fierce countenance' (8.23) and first beast of Revelation 13.1-8. This *coming prince* clearly has links with Rome (or Roman citizenship) and leads a future world empire which is Roman in character. Note. The Roman legions that destroyed Jerusalem may represent the people of the west (in general) and also had huge a Muslim conscript. The 'flood' refers symbolically to sudden destruction by military invasion (Isaiah 28.2; Amos 8.8; Daniel 11.22) and thus well describes the Roman army of four veteran legions under Titus sweeping through Judea culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem (Allen). What is the prophesied future for Jerusalem? *And unto the end, war, —the desolations determined* (JND). This is descriptive of the ongoing times of the Gentiles when Jerusalem will be 'trampled underfoot' of the Gentiles (Luke 21.24). Daniel was concerned about the *present* desolation of Jerusalem (9.18), but these desolations (ruins) would *continue* until the 'end' of the tribulation. *Allen: Down the ages since then (AD70) Jerusalem has been besieged 20 times, and totally destroyed by an invading army on 17 occasions.* Jerusalem even fell into Muslim hands in AD638, the Dome of the Rock being built (AD691) on the very site Muslims believe Muhammad ascended to heaven (AD632).

### Announcement of the Final Week [v.27]

Whilst v.26 describes the events of an undefined period in which we live, this verse describes the *final, seventieth* week of Daniel's prophecy. That there is a gap between the *sixty-ninth* and *seventieth* weeks of the prophecy is unsurprising (cf. Isaiah 9.6-7; Zechariah 9.9-10; Luke 4.18-19). In addition, the gap ensures the truth of Mark 13.32. Whilst it is a gap to us, there is a sense in which God does not reckon the years of the present age in the prophecy as He has suspended dealings with the nation. For example, the years of servitude in the book of Judges are not computed by God (cp. 1 Kings 6.1; Acts 13.20). In God's dealings with Israel, the *seventieth* week does follow the *sixty-ninth*.

The final week of Daniel's prophecy begins with the coming prince 'confirming' a 'covenant' (alliance or treaty) with 'the many' unbelieving Jews (in contrast to the 'little flock', 12.3). The agreement likely promises some degree of protection from their enemies (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5.3) and permission to resume temple sacrifices. This presupposes that Daniel's people must be back in the land of Israel, have rebuilt the temple and have political independence based on democratic principles ('the many'). Whilst the nation gladly enters into such a covenant, Isaiah shows it is a 'covenant with death' and an 'agreement' with 'hell' (Isaiah 28.15-18). At the midpoint of the week, the prince will remove the Jews' right to offer *sacrifices* (blood) and *oblations* (non-blood offerings). This coincides with his claim to deity, a claim which the apostate nation will accept (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2.4; Revelation 13.11-17; John 5.43). 'For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate' is better rendered 'and upon the battlements (or pinnacle) shall be the idols of the desolator' (AV margin). This is a clear reference to the 'abomination of desolation' (Matthew 24.15), i.e. a living, speaking idol which will be erected on the wing (pinnacle) of the temple (Revelation 13.15). The temple of God will become saturated with the filth of idolatry and, essentially, devil worship. This will last until the 'consummation', i.e. the full end of the last week (Great Tribulation). Then, finally, heaven will open to reveal the true and mighty King of kings and Lord of lords – Christ coming in conquest (Revelation 19). Ultimately, wrath shall be 'poured upon' the 'one who destroys' (NET), i.e. the 'desolator' (coming prince). He is so-called for the desolations of Jerusalem shall find their ultimate expression in him. His ultimate end is nothing less than the lake of fire (Revelation 19.20).