

Charts: Daniel's Seventy Weeks

PREFACE

We have a few more long-range considerations of The Tribulation before we open the door onto the period itself—not least a more detailed examination of the essential Daniel 9 passage, which, in itself, takes a long-range view.

Read Daniel 9:24-27.

v24

As I began a close examination of v24 I made a mistake that we should all guard against in our study of this period. I began interpreting the six achievements—either accomplished within, or brought about as a result of the seventy weeks—from a general, or even Christian viewpoint. But, I finally reminded myself, I have repeatedly said that the seventy weeks, and especially the seventieth week, are all about Israel. Gabriel in the text says that the seventy weeks with their achievements are all “about your people and your holy city.” Daniel was a Jew; his “people” was Israel, and his holy city was Jerusalem. The *overall* purpose of what follows is to bring about national and spiritual redemption for Israel. The first three relate to the removal of sin, and the second three to the restoration of righteousness. (Archer)

*finish the transgression**make an end of sin**make atonement for iniquity*

The first two are related, but not synonymous. The first (*pesa* [paysha]) implies a revolt against authority, while the second (*hataot*) speaks more of missing the mark, hence requiring some sort of expiation or sacrifice.

Neither of the first two would be possible without the sacrifice the Messiah made on the cross for the once-for-all atonement for our sins. The second three relate to the restoration of righteousness.

*bring in everlasting righteousness**seal up vision and prophecy**anoint the most holy place*

Because of the work done by the Messiah the ground will be laid for an eternal time of righteousness, and there will no longer be need for visions and prophecy, for

they all will find their fulfillment in the Christ—Israel’s long-awaited Messiah now acknowledged by Israel *as a nation, as a people*—enthroned. Finally, the most holy place in the millennial temple will be consecrated.

My reading of v24 is that these six goals, or *purposes* of the seventy weeks, do not see their fulfillment necessarily *within* those seventy weeks, but that the seventy weeks—and especially the seventieth week—represent the required trial by fire, as it were, for these to be accomplished in Israel as a people. The time of Tribulation will mean *both* for Israel: both trial by fire and ultimate redemption. [Turn please to Jeremiah 30](#). Here, as well as in other prophecies, Yahweh makes clear that He will keep His promise to restore Israel—but it will come at a price; they must pass through the refining furnace to get there.

(Jeremiah 30:1–3) The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. ‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.’ The LORD says, ‘I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.’”

All good news, but Israel must first receive its due punishment.

(Jeremiah 30:11) ‘For I am with you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to save you; For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, Only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly And will by no means leave you unpunished.’

(30:5-7) For thus says the LORD, ‘I have heard a sound of terror, Of dread, and there is no peace. ‘Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? ‘Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s distress, But he will be saved from it.’ [Now look at Jeremiah 31:31](#).

(Jeremiah 31:31) “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

(Jeremiah 31:33) “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Implied in v33 of Jeremiah’s prophecy is what the prophet Ezekiel states explicitly.

(Ezekiel 36:26–27) “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

Christ Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God, the Jewish *and* Gentile Messiah, book-ends it all. In Him sin is defeated and ultimately vanquished, and in Him righteousness will reign not just for the Jews, but for *all* who acknowledge Him as Lord.

v25

“So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.”

Gabriel announces to Daniel that the beginning point (*terminus a quo*) of the seventy weeks will be a decree issued to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem.”

Scholars, interpreters, commentators—and seemingly everyone else under the sun—have been and are still debating this. The logical options for the *terminus a quo* are typically reduced to three or four possibles. I have concluded that the only one that properly fits the definition *and timeline* is **the decree issued in 457 BC by Artaxerxes to Ezra**. (The only other decree remotely possible is the decree by the same king to Nehemiah, but that timeline does not harmonize with the accepted dates for the life of Jesus on earth.)

The common criticism of the Ezra decree is that it speaks only of the temple, not the city, being rebuilt. It does, however, if one looks deeper. [Please turn to Ezra 7](#). Ezra, the priest and scribe, was in exile in Babylon and, “because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him,” set out for Jerusalem with others, carrying with him a copy of the decree given him by the Persian king Artaxerxes.

Artaxerxes did not just give permission; he sent Ezra and his companions back to Jerusalem laden down with silver and gold, money from a freewill offering from Babylonians, the utensils that had been stolen from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, and essentially *carte blanche* to do whatever he wanted, no matter the cost—including make everyone involved exempt from taxes or tolls. Now note v25-26:

“You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River, even all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant of them. Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of goods or for imprisonment.”

And now listen to what Ezra includes in his prayer of confession in Ezra 9:8-9.

“But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, **to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem**” (emphasis added)

It seems clear that Ezra assumed his mandate from the king to be well beyond simply the repair and rebuilding of the temple, but to include the restoration of the city itself. More than that, we can see that Ezra—and Nehemiah, who would come later to address the situation with the wall—was there there to reestablish a Jewish *society* and culture in Jerusalem. He is told explicitly to “appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River, even all those who know the laws of your God.” This was not just reestablishing the temple system, but a *civic* system—which was begun by Ezra and Nehemiah, but only completed forty-nine years later, thus comprising the first seven weeks.

Why is this important? Because the Hebrew word translated “restore” in v25—literally, cause to return—here means to return (restore) Jerusalem to its former condition as a place of Yahweh worship. “It was evidently the purpose to cause it to return, as it were, to its former splendor; to reinstate it in its former condition as a holy city - the city where the worship of God would be celebrated, and it is this purpose which is referred to here” (Albert Barnes).

from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;

Taking 457 BC as our starting point, followed by 408 BC to mark the completion of the restoration of Jerusalem (seven weeks), we next look to a point 434 years later to mark the end of the sixty-nine weeks. We find that to be AD 27, when Jesus was baptized and began His ministry.

The NASB and ESV “Prince” is not the most helpful for the Hebrew *nagid* (nah-geed), which is better translated here “ruler” (NIV: “the Anointed One, the ruler”)—and, because of the Hebrew word order, points specifically to their use as a proper pronoun for a distinctive personage, i.e., “Messiah the Ruler.”

So what is it about that moment of His baptism that would designate it the end of the sixty-nine weeks? Well, it was the moment of His “anointing,” which is what the word “messiah” means: anointed one. If we consider the various milestones of Jesus’ time on earth—His incarnation, the inauguration of His public ministry, His transfiguration, His trial and death, resurrection and ascension—out of all these it is

the moment immediately after Jesus' baptism by John, when His heavenly Father declared Him to be His Son, that best fits "until Messiah the Ruler" ("unto," YLT; "coming of," ESV) during His life on earth: "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17). Having received public sanction from His heavenly Father, it was now time for Jesus to pass through His own furnace of testing, and begin His ministry.

it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Both of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah attest to the fact that Jerusalem in their time was encircled by those who were doing everything possible to bring its restoration and rebuilding to a grinding halt.

Thus the sixty-nine "weeks" (483 years) comes to a close at the baptism and public authorization of Jesus by God the Father in c. AD 27—which works well with the generally accepted year of his crucifixion, c. AD 30.

In our next session we will finish our examination of the Daniel 9 passage, using Chart #7 again.