

Daniel 9:24-27

Seventy Weeks and 2300 Evenings and Mornings - Supplement for Sanctuary #10

1. During the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, Daniel prayed for his people and to find out how and when the prophecy of 70 years as recorded in Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10 would be fulfilled. (Daniel 9:1-19)
2. Daniel recognized that the Jews had sinned and misrepresented God down through the years, but he pleaded with *Yahweh*-God to do something to preserve God's own reputation. (Daniel 9:15-19)

Daniel 9:15-19 [Daniel prayed to God]:

¹⁵ "O Lord our God, **you showed your power by bringing your people out of Egypt, and your power is still remembered.** We have sinned; we have done wrong.
¹⁶ You have defended us in the past, so do not be angry with Jerusalem any longer. **It is your city, your sacred hill.** All the people in the neighboring countries look down on Jerusalem and on your people because of our sins and the evil our ancestors did.
¹⁷ O God, hear my prayer and pleading. **Restore your Temple, which has been destroyed; restore it so that everyone will know that you are God.** ¹⁸ Listen to us, O God; look at us, and see the trouble we are in and the suffering of **the city that bears your name.** We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done right. ¹⁹ Lord, hear us. Lord, forgive us. **Lord, listen to us, and act! In order that everyone will know that you are God, do not delay! This city and these people are yours.**" (GNB)

3. God heard Daniel's prayer and sent Gabriel to answer it. (Daniel 9:20-22)
4. God really loved Daniel, and He cared enough about Daniel that He went to the effort of explaining many things to him. (Daniel 9:23; compare Daniel 10:11,18)
5. Daniel had been praying for an immediate restoration of Jerusalem and the Jews to return to Palestine, but what God told him was that it would take 490 more years before the "holy city" would be freed from "sin and evil." All commentators agree that the 70 weeks mentioned in these verses refer to 490 years. This requires the application of the day-for-a-year principle. (Numbers 14:34; Daniel 9:24-26; 12:11-12; Ezekiel 4:6; Revelation 11:2-3)
6. The 490 years are to be "determined," "decreed," or more literally "cut off" (Daniel 9:26) for the Jewish people. The only prophecy and time period of sufficient length from which it could be cut off is the 2300 "evenings and mornings" described in Daniel 8:14.
7. Six different things were supposed to happen during those 490 years: Two were the responsibility of the Jewish people, two were God's responsibility, and the final two would be the result of the first four. (Daniel 9:24)
8. God's people were "to shut up the transgression, and to seal up sins." (*Young's Literal Translation*) They were to stop their rebellion against God ("shut up the transgression") and cleanse the nation of the sins that had plagued them for so long, making way for the development of a truly righteous society.
9. God was "to cover iniquity, and to bring in righteousness age-enduring [meaning *forever*]." (*Young's Literal Translation*) [Word in brackets is supplied.] God would send the Messiah to provide the complete and final atonement for sin and establish an everlasting righteousness.
10. As a result of this combination of things, two more things would happen: "To seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the holy of holies." (*Young's Literal Translation*) No further prophecy would come to the Jewish people. Stephen, the deacon-preacher-prophet, gave the final warning to the Sanhedrin in his speech to them as recorded in Acts 7. They rejected him, stoned him, and began an intense persecution of the early Christian church that resulted in the scattering of missionaries (apostles) who took the gospel to the Gentiles.
11. **The focus of God's work would no longer be the temple in Jerusalem but rather the temple in**

heaven, and God's message would be spread to every possible person in our world.

12. Next, God gave Daniel the keys to determining when these things would take place: "From the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem till Messiah the Leader *is* seven weeks, and sixty and two weeks." (Daniel 9:25, *Young's Literal Translation*). Four decrees have been identified as relating to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. They are all found in the book of Ezra:
- a. The first decree (535 B.C.) was the decree of Cyrus allowing Zerubbabel and Joshua to lead nearly 50,000 Jews back home to Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; **6:3-5**) They arrived in Jerusalem and worked toward reconstruction of the temple for a while—until they became discouraged and stopped building. (Ezra 4:1-5,24)
 - b. The second decree (520 B.C.) was given by Darius I (Ezra 6:6-12) and provided the impetus and assistance needed for Haggai and Zechariah to lead the people to finish the building of the temple in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15-18)
 - c. The third decree came many years later (457 B.C.) when Ezra asked King Artaxerxes to give permission and funding for Ezra to return to Jerusalem with a group of a few thousand people. (Ezra 7:11-26, **18**) The decree (Ezra 7:11-26) specifically called for a restoration of the temple services under Ezra as priest, but added: ¹⁸ **"And that which to thee and to thy brethren is good to do with the rest of the silver and gold, according to the will of your God ye do."** (*Young's Literal Translation*) Furthermore, Ezra 4:9-16 says clearly that Israel's enemies complained to Artaxerxes that the Jews were rebuilding the wall and the city of Jerusalem. Later, Ezra prayed (Ezra 9:5-15) for conditions in Jerusalem and stated that God reached out "to give to us a quickening to lift up the house of our God, and to cause its wastes to cease, and **to give to us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.**" (Ezra 9:9) These two passages make it clear that the restoration of the wall and the city began under Ezra under this third decree from Artaxerxes. But, the "western governors" who ruled the surrounding areas wrote a letter to Artaxerxes spelling out how much trouble the Jews and their city of Jerusalem had been in the past. (Ezra 4:7-16) Those governors received permission from Artaxerxes to force a stop to the building at Jerusalem. (Ezra 4:17-23)
 - d. The fourth decree came thirteen years later (444 B.C.) when Nehemiah the king's cupbearer received permission to go to Jerusalem. In a very short period of time—52 days (Nehemiah 6:15)—he managed to finish the rebuilding of the wall despite terrible opposition. (Nehemiah 1-6)
13. The next question is: How do we date the decree of Artaxerxes which was carried out by Ezra?

Dating the Decree

Two more questions remain about this decree. When was it given, and according to which calendar should it be figured?

Because the seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 begins with the issuing of Artaxerxes' decree as recorded in Ezra 7, the date of that decree becomes important. The key to the date of the decree is tied to Artaxerxes' seventh year. Ezra 7:8 tells us that "Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king." Under conditions of a forced march, the Babylonian army could cover the 400 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem in one month. Ezra had a large body of slow-moving people with him, and it took them five months to cover the same distance.

Fortunately, the dates for Artaxerxes' reign are well known and historically secure. They are based on several sources. **First**, Greek historians such as Herodotus preserved some of these dates in terms of their own dating system of Olympiads. **Second**, the astronomer Ptolemy who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, in the second century A.D. provided a table correlating the regnal years of certain rulers of the ancient world (the years that they reigned) with astronomical eclipses. This list is called Ptolemy's Canon, and it goes all the way back to the eighth century B.C. Some of those eclipses occurred during the reign of Artaxerxes and help to fix his dates.

More recent archaeological discoveries have helped to refine the system provided by the Greek historians and the astronomer Ptolemy.

Third, the highest regnal dates on business tablets from Babylonia have been compiled from cuneiform texts; these extend from the seventh century B.C. to the first century A.D. Dates for the reign of Artaxerxes can be located in these tablets. **Finally**, a series of papyri have been found in Egypt which bear two sets of dates—one using the Egyptian calendar and the other the Persian-Babylonian calendar. These papyri are letters and business documents written in Aramaic by Jews serving in the Persian army on the island of Elephantine in the Nile where they manned a Persian fort on Egypt's southern border. Since the Egyptian and the Persian-Babylonian calendars operated in different ways, these double dates serve as a check on each other and help to fix the regnal years of the kings during whose reigns they were written. Some of these documents come from the time Artaxerxes reigned and are an aid to confirming his regnal dates.

Thus there are four main lines of evidence which guide us in establishing the dates for Artaxerxes' reign—**(1) the Greek historians, (2) Ptolemy's Canon, (3) the Babylonian business tablets, and (4) the Elephantine papyri from Egypt. All four lines of evidence point to the same chronological conclusion: Xerxes died in 465 B.C., and Artaxerxes came to the throne in the latter part of that same year.** Under the Persian and Babylonian system of counting regnal years, the remainder of the year in which a king died was considered to be year 0 of the new king who succeeded him. It was called his "accession year." The new king's first official year began with the next new year which commenced in the spring. According to this reckoning, Artaxerxes' seventh year began in the spring of 458 B.C. and ended in the spring of 457 B.C. Thus by the Persian calendar, Ezra would have begun his journey from Babylon in the spring of 458 B.C. and arrived in Jerusalem in the summer of that same year.

The Jews, however, considered the new year to begin in the fall, according to the civil calendar by which they kept track of the reigns of their kings and those of other nations. (The Jews also used a religious calendar which began the year at a different time, much like our modern fiscal year often begins in July, while the regular calendar year begins in January.) Thus by the Jewish civil calendar, Artaxerxes' seventh year would have begun in the fall of 458 B.C. and ended in the fall of 457 B.C. By this reckoning, Ezra would have begun his journey to Jerusalem in the spring of 457 B.C., arriving there in the summer of the same year. Since Ezra used the Jewish civil calendar, not the Persian calendar, we should apply his date— 457 B.C.—to the decree Artaxerxes made regarding the rebuilding of Jerusalem rather than 458 B.C. as the Persians would have considered it. This date, 457 B.C., gives us the starting point for the prophecy of the seventy weeks given in Daniel 9:24.

To recap, this is how we arrive at the starting date for Daniel's seventy weeks which was to begin with a decree to rebuild Jerusalem:

- Of the four decrees mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah regarding the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, the third one, the one Artaxerxes gave to Ezra, is the one that fulfills most closely the specification of the prophecy in Daniel.
- Ezra 7:8 ties this decree to Artaxerxes' seventh year.
- From a variety of ancient documents, we can date Artaxerxes' seventh year to the year that overlaps what we know as 458 and 457 B.C.

We then apply the Jewish calendar to that date and see that Ezra's journey occurred in 457 B.C. This process gives us the date of 457 B.C. for the commencement of the seventy prophetic weeks of Daniel 9. —*Daniel 7-12, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series*, pp. 64-66

14. Having established the beginning date of this prophecy, to what concluding date does it take us?

In Daniel 9:25 we find mentioned two periods: the first is for seven “weeks” (49 years) and the next for 62 “weeks” (434 years) making a total of 69 “weeks” or 483 years. This takes us down to 27 A.D. (remember that there was no 0 year between B.C. and A.D.) But what is to happen at the end of this period? The prophecy is to take us “till Messiah the Leader.” (*Young’s Literal Translation*)

What does it mean for the Messiah—the Anointed One—to come? What event are we to look for in A.D. 27? Messiah’s birth? His death? Something else?

When did Jesus of Nazareth become the Messiah? Since Messiah means “the Anointed One,” Jesus became the Messiah, technically speaking, when He was “anointed”. When was this? He did not have oil poured over His head like the Old Testament kings and priests in Jerusalem. But was there a specific occasion when He was anointed and formally began His public ministry? Yes. This occurred at His baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:13-17). God the Father was present on that occasion and marked it by His own pronouncement, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’ (vs. 17). [The Holy Spirit also came down as a dove. (Matthew 3:16)]

Luke tells us that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1). Augustus, Tiberius’ adoptive father, died in A.D. 14. Adding fifteen years to this date, we arrive at A.D. 29, not A.D. 27—two years too late for Daniel’s prophecy. But there is a further factor here. Two years before Augustus died, the Roman Senate voted Tiberius co-ruler of the provinces with his father Augustus. Such an arrangement is called a co-regency and is similar to the situation when King David put Solomon on the throne with him before his own death (1 Kings 1).

Judea was among the provinces that came under the joint rule of Tiberius with Augustus in A.D. 12. Thus the events involving Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, which occurred in the Roman province of Judea, can reasonably be dated according to this arrangement by which Tiberius began to rule with his father in A.D. 12. Adding Luke’s fifteen years of Tiberius’ reign to this date brings us to the year A.D. 27 for the Messiah’s public inauguration as Daniel’s prophecy predicted. —*Daniel 7-12, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series*, p. 67. [Content in brackets is added.]

15. What is the date for the end of the seventy “weeks”? What happened at that time?

If the 69th week ended in 27 A.D., then the 70th week of the 70-week prophecy would end 7 years later. In A.D. 34, Stephen gave his speech before the Sanhedrin, he was stoned, and Paul was there. (Acts 7) The gospel went to the Gentiles. (Acts 8:1-4) A year later, Paul was converted.

This can be dated also by Paul’s history: In A.D. 51, Gallio occupied the proconsulship in Corinth. (Acts 18:12-17) Seventeen years earlier (3 [Gal. 1:18] plus 14 [Gal. 2:1]) takes us back to A.D. 34.

16. We see that 2300 years minus 490 years (70 weeks of years: 70 X 7 days per week = 490) leaves 1810 years still to go after the end of the 70 weeks. That takes us to 1844, the end of the prophecy of 2300 days/years and the beginning of “the time of the end” and the “pre-advent judgment.”

17. What does all of this mean to us?

The God who is in charge of the entire universe and can predict precisely what is going to happen hundreds of years in advance had a personal and very friendly relationship with Daniel. (Daniel 9:23; 10:11,18) Even though He is so much superior to us and has powers and abilities that we cannot even comprehend, He listens to our prayers, (Daniel 9) responds promptly (in some cases), and explains as much as we can bear to hear. He does not want us groveling with our faces in the dirt; so, He always asks us to stand up and talk to Him as a friend would. (Daniel 8:17; 10:9-11,15-19) Are we ready to act like God’s friends? Is that the way we pray?

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