

The Prophetic

Seventy Weeks

In Daniel 9:24-27

PART 1 OF 2

We are introduced to one of the most outstanding “prophetic miracles” found in the Book of Daniel (9:24-27). Daniel gives information about forgiveness and the date of God’s activity in doing away with sin. Within this unique prophecy of Daniel, he enumerates six transactions that will occur with the coming of the Messiah: (1) to **finish transgression**, (2) to **put and end to sin**, (3) to **atone for wickedness**, (4) to **bring in everlasting righteousness**, (5) to **seal up vision and prophecy**, and (6) to **anoint the most holy**. When will these six things occur? He discloses his answer with the following key to an understanding of God’s redemptive acts “in” and “through” His Anointed One. Listen to Daniel once more:

Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to **restore and rebuild Jerusalem** until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be **seven ‘sevens,’** and **sixty-two ‘sevens.’** It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. **After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.** The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ²⁷ **He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’** he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Daniel 9:25-27)

In 9:24, He spoke of “seventy ‘sevens’” as determined for the events to transpire “from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler comes” (9:25). The issuing of this decree occurred in **454 BC** under **Artaxerxes** (ār-tā-zûrk’sēz, Nehemiah 2:1-8). Daniel speaks of “**seven sevens**” (7 x 7 = 49 years), **sixty-two sevens**” (62 x 7 = 434 years), and “**one seven**” (7 years + 49 + 434), which adds up to **a total of four hundred and ninety years** (490). The seven weeks plus the sixty-two weeks equal four hundred and eighty three years (49 + 434 = 483). The end of the four hundred and eighty three years marks the appearance of the Messiah (AD 30). What date should we assign for the decree

to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem”? We have pointed out that this date is **454 BC**. Fortunately, we have biblical data upon which to try to arrive at a correct date.¹

There are a number of dates that have been assigned in order to work out the mathematical calculations. Ezra (1:1-4) gives a **decree by Cyrus, king of Persia (539-530 BC)**² in 538 BC. **Ezra (440 BC) identifies the date as 538 BC:**

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia **to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:** ² “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me **to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.** ³ Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’ ” (Ezra 1:1-4)

If we should start with 538 BC, this would fall far short for the time of the Messiah by several years (**490 years – 538 BC = 48 BC**). **48 BC would be about fifty years short of Christ’s birth and seventy-eight years short of the beginning of His ministry**, which ministry actually began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius’ reign (**AD 29**). Apparently, Cyrus’ work consisted in rebuilding the Temple, not the restoration of Jerusalem itself. **We have another date associated with Darius I** (dā-rī’ūs, 522-486 BC)³ that is generally dated around 520/518 BC (Ezra 6:8-12). Even in this decree, there is nothing that relates to the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, only the Temple (6:8-9):

Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God: The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop. ⁹ Whatever is needed— young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail, ¹⁰ so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons. ¹¹ Furthermore, I decree that if anyone changes this edict, a beam is to be pulled from his house and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it. And for this crime his house is to be made a pile of rubble. ¹² May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem. I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence. (Ezra 6:8-12)

A third choice is one that most scholars choose as the beginning of the decree that Daniel wrote about. This decree is generally associated with Artaxerxes I Longimanus (ār-tā-zûrk’ sēz,

¹I am deeply indebted to Kurt Simmons, *Adumbrations: The Kingdom & Coming of Christ in the Book of Daniel* (Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Co., 2009), 201-238, for his analysis of Daniel 9:24-27. I highly recommend his commentary.

²Marsha A. Ellis Smith, General Editor, *Holman Book of Biblical Charts, Maps, and Reconstructions* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 45.

³Ibid.

474-423 BC) around **457 BC**.⁴ **This date is appealing to numerous commentators, but this date could not be the starting date of the “seventy weeks” (490 years) for an accurate date for the beginning ministry of Jesus.** For example, 490 years minus BC 457 = AD 33 (end of Christ earthly ministry), which date for the issuing of the decree that Daniel mentions does not coincide with the actual date of Christ beginning His ministry when He was about 30 years old. Luke reports that Jesus was baptized in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (AD 14-37) [Luke 3:1]. If we add 14 (beginning of Tiberius reign) + 15 years later, we reach a total of 29 years. Again, Luke gives us the age of Jesus at the time of His baptism:

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”²³ **Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.** (Luke 3:21-23)

There is another date (454 BC) that is in harmony with Luke’s account of Christ’s baptism. Nehemiah (2:1-8) gives an excellent key for setting the correct date to begin the count of the 490 years. He writes: “In the month of Nisan (‘ni-sʰn, nē-‘sān) in the twentieth year King Artaxerxes” (Nehemiah 2:1). This data sets the date for the beginning of his reign as 474 BC (474 BC minus 20 years = **454 BC**). Many scholars base their dating system upon Ptolemy’s Cannon, which calculation did not take into account “viceroy (‘vīs- ,ròì), governor of a country, province, or colony] relationships” as the starting point of their reign. The following comments are from James Ussher’s *Classic Survey of World History*:

3531a AM, 4240 JP, 474 BC

1177. **Artaxerxes was made viceroy with his father Xerxes** in the twelfth year of Xerxes’ [zürk’sēz] reign. This time marks the first year of Artaxerxes’ reign. Ptolemy’s Cannon does not record viceroy relationships hence starts Artaxerxes’ reign nine years later when his father died. (Since the time when Ussher wrote his document, this new information has come to light from archaeology. We are thankful for Dr. Floyd Jones for finding the exact source of this information. Editor.) Savile wrote the following: {*B. W. Savile, “Revelation and Science”, Journal of Sacred Literature & Biblical Record, Series 4 (London: Williams and Norgate Pub. April 1863) p. 156*}

“It is satisfactory to know that the idea entertained by Archbishop Ussher of dating the commencement of Artaxerxes’ reign nine years earlier than the canon of Ptolemy allows, grounded upon what Thucydides says of Themistocles’ flight to Persia, has been confirmed by hieroglyphic inscriptions in Egypt, showing that Artaxerxes was associated with his father in the twelfth year of Xerxes’ reign, so that there ought to be no longer any doubt respecting that famous prophecy of Daniel, so far as at least regards the crucifixion.⁵ (Emphasis mine—**BOLD AND UNDERLINING**)

⁴See John Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World* (Indianapolis, IN: Prophecy Reformation Institute, 2010), 126, for the 457 BC date. I recommend this book, which I recently read. This book is informative. I also, suggest another book for reading—John Noe, *Beyond End Times* (Bradford, PA: Preterist Resources, 1999). His 457 BC chronology, in my judgment, is not the correct date. Jesus’ ministry began in AD 29, not AD 33.

⁵James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, Third Revised Edition (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2003, 2010), 146

According to Ptolemy’s Cannon, Artaxerxes became king in 465 BC, not 474 BC.

After the first seven ($7 \times 7 = 49$ years), we begin with the sixty-two sevens ($62 \times 7 = 434$ years), which totals equal 483 years ($49 + 434 = 483$ years). Artaxerxes began his reign in 474 BC, not 465 BC. Twenty years after Artaxerxes’ reign ($474 \text{ BC} \text{ minus } 20 \text{ years} = \mathbf{454 \text{ BC}}$),⁶ at which time he issued his decree to rebuild Jerusalem. If we start with 445 BC (Ptolemy’s Cannon— $465 \text{ BC} \text{ minus } 20 \text{ years} = 445 \text{ BC}$), then $483 \text{ minus } 445 \text{ BC} = \text{AD } 38$. This calculation would take us beyond the earthly life of Christ by about five years (Jesus was crucified in AD 33, not AD 38). On the other hand, if we take $483 \text{ minus } 454 \text{ BC} = \text{AD } 29$, we arrive at the date that Luke gives for the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of His ministry [three and one-half years] (Luke 3:1, 29).

Daniel begins his “seventy weeks” with seven weeks ($7 \times 7 = 49$ years) and then calls attention to sixty-two weeks ($62 \times 7 = 483$ years). **The 483 years would expire in AD 29 at Jesus’ baptism and His anointing.** If we subtract the date of the issuing of the decree by Artaxerxes to rebuild and restore Jerusalem, we have a termination date of the 483 years ($483 \text{ minus } 454 = \text{AD } 29$), which means that Jesus was born in 2 BC and was one year old in 1 BC. The end of the 483 years brings us to the appearance of Christ and His ministry of three and one-half years. In spite of the scholarly world of theologians, the traditional date for the birth of Christ from 6 BC to 4 BC does not coincide with Luke’s chronology in his Gospel (Luke 3:1, 23).⁷ The following chart from Simmons is presented in order for one to see the correlation of the counting system of dates associated with the birth of Christ:⁸

Year	Regnal Year	Year	Regnal Year
2 B.C. Christ born	42 nd of Augustus	15 A. D.	1 st of Tiberius
1 B.C. 1 st birthday	43 rd	16 A. D.	2 nd
1 A.D.	44 th	17 A. D.	3 rd
2 A.D	45 th	18 A. D.	4 th
3 A.D	46 th	19 A. D.	5 th
4 A.D	47 th	20 A. D.	6 th
5 A.D	48 th	21 A. D.	7 th
6 A.D	49 th	22 A. D.	8 th

⁶See also Paton J. Gloag (1823-1906), *Messianic Prophecies: The Baird Lectures for 1879*, Delivered at the University of Glasgow (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1879, republished by Klock & Klock in the USA, 1983), 253. I recently read this book and found it extremely informative.

⁷See Kurt Simmons, *Adumbrations: The Kingdom & Coming of Christ in the Book of Daniel* (Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Co., 2009), “Appendix C,” 345-366, for a detailed account of Christ’s birth. Also, see Grant R. Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (Toronto, Ontario: Frontier Research Publications, 1990), “The Date of Christ’s Nativity, Ministry and Crucifixion,” 225-230, for a carefully documentary defense of Christ’s birth as AD 1 (Simmons—2 BC). In spite of the differences between Simmons and Jeffrey, the data is still excellent. Nevertheless, I do not recommend Jeffrey’s book as a whole. Unfortunately, he does not adhere to the same objective facts in the whole of his book as he does in his analysis of the birth of Christ.

⁸Simmons, *Ibid.*, 346.

7 A.D	50 th	23 A. D.	9 th
8 A.D	51 st	24 A. D.	10 th
9 A.D	52 nd	25 A. D.	11 th
10 A.D	53 rd	26A. D.	12 th
11 A.D.	54 th	27 A. D.	13 th
12 A.D.	55 th	28 A. D.	14 th
13 A.D.	56 th	29 A. D. 30 th birthday of Christ	15 th Baptism of Christ
14 A.D.	57 th Death of Augustus		

Last of the Seventy Weeks

Once more, we need to remember that Daniel writes about 490 years as the timetable that God ordained (49 + 434 + 7 = 490 years). **But in the middle of the last seven, Jesus would die upon the Cross. The first half consisted of three and one-half years. The second half of the seven deals with “abomination of desolation” (see Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15) which desolation would encompass three and one-half years.** From the Gospels, we observe that Jesus’ ministry lasted three and one-half years, which is the time that Daniel said that He would be cut off in the middle of the final seven years (Jesus died at the approximate age of thirty three and one-half years). Again, the remaining half of the final seven is reserved for the **“abomination that causes desolation”** (Daniel 12:7-11) by the Romans, which event, too, transpired over a three and one-half years, which is equivalent to forty-two months or one thousand and two-hundred and sixty days or a time, times, and half a time (3 ½ years) [Daniel 12:7; Revelation 11:1-3; 12:6; 14].

Even though Daniel does write about Jesus’ Crucifixion (“cut off”), he does not give the date for the last half of the seven to occur other than the amount of time for the desolation by the Romans (3½ years). Apparently, Daniel was not allowed to disclose this datum. In fact, one of the angels said to him: “Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll **until the time of the end**” (Daniel 12:4, not THE END OF TIME. Jesus’ ministry of three and one-half years **plus** three and one-half years for the desolation equals the last seven years within which the Old Covenant world of Judaism would cease to exist. Once more, we need to reread the time frame for the coming of the Anointed One and the complete desolation of the holy city, which had turned harlot:

Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing [see also Isaiah 53:8]. **The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.** ²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Daniel 9:25-27)

In addition to the time frame concerning the date of the coming Messiah, Daniel also foretold the destruction of the holy city and the Temple. He writes, “The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the **end**, and **desolations** have been decreed” (9:26). Remember, Jesus referred to this prophecy in His Olivet Discourse: “So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel” (Matthew 24:15, Daniel 12:11). Jesus warned that the Roman government’s atrocities would be like “eagles” gathering together (Matthew 24:28).

The NIV renders this verse: “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures (**ἄετοί**, *aetoi*, “eagles”) will gather.” The KJV renders the Greek word **ἄετοί** (*aetoi*) as “eagles.” It is significant that Jesus uses the Greek word for eagle (**ἄετός**, *aetos*). He uses a term that would have reminded His disciples of Rome. The following citation from Josephus gives a description of the procedures of the marching orders of the Roman soldiers with their ensigns—the symbol of the eagle:

(115) But as Vespasian had a great mind to fall upon Galilee, he marched out from Ptolemais, having put his army into that order wherein the Romans used to march. (116) He ordered those auxiliaries which were lightly armed, and the archers, to march first, that they might prevent any sudden insults from the enemy, and might search out the woods that looked suspiciously, and were capable of ambuscades [*'am-bə-,skād*, “ambush”]. Next to these followed that part of the Romans who were most completely armed, both footmen and horsemen. (117) Next to these followed ten out of every hundred, carrying along with them their arms, and what was necessary to measure out a camp withal; (118) and after them, such as were to make the road even and straight, and if it were anywhere rough and hard to be passed over, to plane it, and to cut down the woods that hindered their march, that the army might not be in distress, or tired with their march. (119) Behind these he set such carriages of the army as belonged both to himself and to the other commanders, with a considerable number of their horsemen for their security.

(120) After these he marched himself, having with him a select body of footmen, and horsemen, and pikemen. After these came the peculiar cavalry of his own legion, for there were an hundred and twenty horsemen that peculiarly belonged to every legion. (121) Next to these came the mules that carried the engines for sieges, and the other warlike machines of that nature. (122) After these came the commanders of the cohorts, and tribunes, having about them soldiers chosen out of the rest. (123) **Then came the ensigns encompassing the eagle** [**τὸν ἄετόν**, *ton aeton*], which is at the head of every Roman legion, the king, and the strongest of all birds, which seems to them a signal of dominion, and an omen that they shall conquer all against whom they march; (124) these sacred ensigns are followed by the trumpeters. Then came the main army in their squadrons and battalions, with six men in depth, which were followed at last by a centurion, who, according to custom, observed the rest. ⁹ (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

⁹Flavius Josephus, “War of the Jews,” in *The Works of Josephus*, Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition, Translated by William Whiston (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), [Book 3, Chapter 6, Paragraphs 2], 645.