

Daniel 9:25

Last week we reviewed a framework for understanding Dan 9:24-27. For review there are six parts to the passage:

- a. The Decree of the Seventy Sevens, vs 24a.
- b. The Purpose of the Seventy Sevens, vs 24b.
- c. The Start of the Seventy Sevens, vs 25a.
- d. The First 69 Sevens, vs 25b.
- e. The Events between the 69th and 70th Seven, vs 26.
- f. The Seventieth Seven, vs 27.

We reviewed the Decree of the Seventy Sevens and looked at their purpose last week. Again, for review:

The Decree of the Seventy Sevens.

There will be a 490-year period marked out for the Jewish people and their city, Jerusalem, within the times of the Gentiles divided into three subsections: a Seven Seventy-week period (49 years), a 62 Sevens week period (434 years), and a 1 week Seven-year period (7 years).

The Purpose of the Seventy Sevens.

We then reviewed the Purpose of the Seventy Sevens.

- a. To put an end to the Transgression: there will be forgiveness for the transgression of rejecting Messiah (Zech 12:10).
- b. To put an end to Sin: The sins of the people will be put in box and sealed away (Ezk 35:24-27).
- c. To put an end to Wickedness: The sin nature of the people will be removed (Ps 51:5).
- d. To bring in Everlasting Righteousness: a Righteous age will come about (Is 1:26, 11:2-5, 32:17).
- e. To seal up Vision and Prophecy: there will be no need for vision or prophecy for the Lord will be in their midst (Jer 33:14-18).
- f. To anoint the most Holy Place: Most likely an anointing of the New Millennial Temple.

The Start of the Seventy Sevens, vs 9:25a.

Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One,^[1] 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.

The verse has three component parts.

- a. The first part notes the beginning of the Seventy Sevens will start with a decree or a *word that will go out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.*
- b. Second, we note *until the Anointed One, the ruler comes, there will be seven-sevens and sixty-two sevens.*
- c. Third, the verse ends with some qualifying statements regarding the rebuild: *it will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.*

Let us look at the first phrase. *Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One,^[1] the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'*

The beginning of the Seventy Sevens is a subject that has been extensively studied and there are several views as to its meaning. I want this explanation to be as clear and as simple as possible so I will give you the view that makes the most sense to me.

Biblically there are four decrees mentioned in the Bible that pertain to Jerusalem's reconstruction following the Babylonian destruction of 586 BC.

- a. Cyrus to the Babylonian Exiles, 538/537 BC in which he gave permission to rebuild the temple as noted in 2 Chron 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4, Ezra 6:1-5.
- b. Darius I to Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, 521 BC, which was a reaffirmation of Cyrus's decree as noted in Ezra 6:6-12.
- c. Artaxerxes to Ezra 458/457 BC which granted permission to continue the Temple services, Ezra 7:11-26.
- d. Artaxerxes to Nehemiah 445/444 BC, which granted permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Neh 1-2:8.

The question is which decree was Gabriel referring to? Since the decrees of Darius, (in b) concerned a reaffirmation of Cyrus's decree, and the decree of Artaxerxes (in c) was for permission to proceed with the temple service, these are not in consideration regarding the start time of the Seventy Sevens since they don't fulfill the criteria of Gabriel's statement (I.e. to rebuild the temple and city).

Many scholars (most notably Robert Anderson and Harold Hoehner) have suggested Artaxerxes decree to Nehemiah in 445/ 444 was the starting point and both developed compelling calculations to show it was a period of 173,880 days (69 weeks of years –each year being 360 days) from the time of the decree to the date of Christ's triumphal entry. The two differ on the exact year of the decree but otherwise they have similar views.

However, there are four problems with this interpretation. The first is there is nothing in Dan 9:25 that requires the end of this 69-week period to be Christ's triumphal entry. Some scholars have viewed Christ's triumphal entry as the formal offer of the Messianic Kingdom to Israel while others see it as the final offer. Neither view is right. As Fructenbaum notes, "the Jewish calendar date was the tenth of Nisan, the day of the month on which the Jewish people were to set aside the Passover lamb according to Ex 12:1-6. From the 10 to the 14th day of Nisan, the lamb was evaluated to ensure it was spotless and without blemish. Yeshua's ride into Jerusalem occurred on the same day that the Passover lamb was set aside. Herin lies the theological significance of this event. Yeshua the Messiah was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Just as the Jews set aside the literal lamb on the tenth day of Nisan, Yeshua rode into Jerusalem and was set aside as the Passover lamb on this same day."

The second problem is the decree in Neh 2:1-8 is not really a decree as such. In reading the passage, Nehemiah did not receive written permission, sealed with the King's ring, as a normal decree would require. Rather he received verbal permission to rebuild a part of the wall as the city had already been re-established.

The third problem is that in Dan 9:25 Gabriel speaks of rebuilding the city as well as the temple. Nehemiah only rebuilt a part of the wall.

The fourth problem is that the Talmud places the date of the crucifixion in AD 30, while Anderson places it in 32 AD and Hoehner in 33 AD. Since neither Anderson or Hoehner's theories reconcile with the Talmudic record, and with the other three objections noted above, Gabriel was most likely referencing the decree Cyrus issued in 538/537 BC. There are good reasons to believe this is the case.

- a. First, the decree of Cyrus was issued as a standard decree with his seal, 2 Chron 36:22.
- b. It was a decree contemporary to Daniel. He received Gabriel's message at about the same time Cyrus made the decree.
- c. Third, the decree of Cyrus is mentioned prophetically in Is 44:28 and Is 45:1-13, in which Isaiah predicts Cyrus will command both the rebuilding of the temple and the city. It is also spoken of in fulfillment in Ezra 1:1-4 and Ezra 6:1-5 as well as 2 Chron 36:22-23 (note, other passages confirm when the exiles came back, they worked on both the temple and the city-see Ezra 4:12 and Haggai 1:1-4).

The Anointed one and the First 69 Sevens, vs 25b

Note the second part of vs 25, *until the Anointed One, the ruler comes, there will be seven-sevens and sixty-two sevens*. The Anointed one is a reference to the Messiah (see 1 Sam 2:10). Note there will be seven sevens and 62 sevens till the ruler comes. What does it mean *till the ruler comes*? Does it mean his birth? His productive life? His death? Verse 26 gives us a more definite time. After the 62 weeks, the anointed one will be cut off or killed. So, the 69 weeks extends from the decree to rebuild the city and temple till the Anointed one's death.

If we accept the point of The Seventy Sevens with Cyrus' proclamation, we now run into a timing difficulty. Calculating 69 weeks of 7 years gives us 483 years. But if we take 538 or 537 (or even 536 as some scholars advocate) as the starting year and starting proceed in time another 483 years we end up at 55 BC (or 54 BC if we choose 537 as our starting point, or 53 BC if 536 is the starting point) as the year of Christ's death. What is going on?

The difficulty is our understanding of the historical record of the Persian Empire. The question is how many years did they reign? Our present knowledge is based largely on the record of Claudius Ptolemy, a Greek who lived from AD 100 to 170 AD. Primarily known for his astronomical theory that the earth was the center of the universe, Ptolemy also attempted to make a chronology of the Persian Kings which he did in his work "the List of Reigns". Here is the problem. We know from verse 26 that after the 69-week period the anointed one will be cut off. The anointed one is a reference to Christ. Cutoff means to die. We will assume Christ's crucifixion occurred in 30 AD (although some advocate 33 AD). We know the end of the Persian empire can be dated to 331 BC when Alexander the Great defeated the Persians at

Gaugamela (note to get the year 331 BC means we must go back from AD 1=331 years.). If the crucifixion was in 30 AD, then we know it was 360 years from the start of the Greek empire to the crucifixion, i.e., 331 plus 29 = 360). If we take the 483 years that Gabriel predicted and subtract 360, that means the decree of Cyrus was issued 123 yrs before 331 BC (or 454 BC). Ptolemy, however, adds an additional 82 yrs to the Persian reign to get to 536 BC. Graphically the differences appear as follows:

	Daniel	Ptolemy
Persian Empire (Cyrus to Alexander).	123 years	205 years
Greek Empire (Alexander to AD 1).	<u>331 years</u>	<u>331 years</u>
Total	454 years	536 years
AD 1 to the Crucifixion, AD 30.	29 years	29 years
A difference of 82 years.	483 years	565 years

The long and the short of it is its complicated! But here is the important part. Who are we to trust? The WOG or man's attempt to historically record the past. I will choose Daniel here and let research and the archeological record at some point confirm what Gabriel predicted.

In summary:

- a. The decree of Cyrus begins this Seventy-week period.
- b. The duration of the Persian Empire is debatable. Conventional wisdom holds to a 205-year period from Cyrus to Alexander, while the Biblical account is shorter, 123 years.
- c. It will all become clear when we get to Glory!

The First 69 Sevens, and the rebuilding of the city, vs 25b

Gabriel then states there will be *seven sevens*, then *62 sevens*, and he adds a qualifying statement, *it will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble*. This is the third part of the verse we had mentioned earlier.

The first Seven weeks.

Gabriel first describes a period of seven sets of seven which equals 49 years. This subdivision refers to the time it took to rebuild the city. This period specifically cover the third part of the verse which reads, *it will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble*. Note Gabriel states it will be rebuilt with *streets and a trench*. The word *street* refers to a plaza or forum while the word *trench* refers to a moat or fortification. Taken together, both terms refer to the city; one to the inside (street) and one to the perimeter (moat or trench). What Gabriel is saying is the city will be rebuilt with an internal plaza or open area and be bounded again by a fortification. It will also be rebuilt in *times of trouble*. We know this to be the case as the exiles encountered lots of opposition and intrigue during their work (see Ezra 4, Neh 4-6:14).

Note however, the timing issue remains. Assuming Cyrus's decree was issued in 536, it means most of this opposition occurred until 487 BC. Conventional wisdom holds that Nehemiah was written in 445 BC, which is outside the boundary of the troubled events of Gabriel's prediction. (Note the opposition Nehemiah describes does not necessarily mean it should be within this 49-year period, but it would seem in context that it should be).

The 62 Weeks.

Following the seven weeks of seven (49 years), another 62 weeks of seven follow (this is equivalent to 434 years, $62 \times 7 = 434$). Verse 26 tells us that after this 62 week of sevens, the Anointed one will be killed, thus the termination of this 69-week period is the crucifixion now thought to be either 30 or 33 AD.

In Summary:

- a. The starting point for the 70 weeks of seven most likely starts with the decree of Cyrus in 538/537/ 536 BC.
- b. If we assume this starting point, there is an unresolved timing issue as to the duration of the Persian Empire.
- c. The timing issue is also unresolved as it pertains to our understanding of the first seven sevens (49 yrs) and the opposition the exiles faced. Gabriel notes the first 49 years of the rebuild would be tumultuous. Historically this is corroborated by the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah, although by conventional wisdom this opposition period is at odds with the Biblical account.
- d. The end of the 69-week period is noted in verse 26 and is the crucifixion of the Messiah.