

Daniel 9:25-27 – The Seventy Weeks

As the end of the seventy years of exile drew near, Daniel prayed to God and confessed his sins and the sins of God's people. According to God's promise, Daniel prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. God sent Gabriel to answer Daniel's prayer. Daniel got more than he asked for. Daniel was praying about the 70 years spoken of by God through Jeremiah. Instead, God told Daniel about 70 weeks. The 70 weeks in Daniel is one of the most difficult passages in the Old Testament. Much has been written about the 70 weeks and there are many interpretations. Taking one session on three verses may seem like a snail's pace, but we will just scratch the surface.

Read Daniel 9:24-27.

We looked at verse 24 last time. It determines the scope of the seventy weeks. The three negative clauses of verse 24 deal with sin. How these clauses are understood will help determine the endpoint of the seventy weeks. Is the transgression finished, sin put to an end, and iniquity atoned for before Christ's ascension in the first century AD or will they be accomplished after the second coming of Christ? From Hebrews, 10:14, and other passages we know for sure that sin was once for all atoned for by Christ's death on the cross. But when is transgression finished and sin put to an end? The three positive clauses say that everlasting righteousness will be brought in, both vision and prophet will be sealed, and a most holy place will be anointed. Were these all accomplished at the end of Christ's first coming or will they happen with Christ's second coming? Those who take a "Messianic View", like Calvin and Edward J. Young believe all six phrases were accomplished during Christ's first coming. Dale Ralph Davis believes that finishing the transgression, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and sealing both vision and prophet will not occur until Christ's Second Advent? Have all six clauses been completed during Christ's First Advent? (9:24)

In verse 25, what was "the word to restore and build Jerusalem"? Was it the word of God through Jeremiah in chapter 29 which occurred in 597 or 594 BC? Was it the proclamation of Cyrus for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and build the temple in 538 BC? See Ezra 1:1-3. Was it the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BC when Ezra and others went to Jerusalem? See Ezra chapter 7. Was it the letter of Artaxerxes in 445 BC which sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls? See Nehemiah 2:1-8. Is it another word? If so, which word? Is it safe to assume that whatever "word" you land on is the start of the seventy weeks? (9:25)

In verse 25, should the seven weeks and the 62 weeks be viewed as one combined 69 weeks? ESV has a period after "seven weeks" which indicates that it is not to be lumped together with the 62 weeks. NKJV, NASB and NIV all translate the two periods of weeks as one combined period. NKJV and NASB have "seven weeks and 62 weeks". One main significance of treating the 7 and 62 as one combined 69 weeks is that the "anointed one" of verse 25 can be the same "anointed one" in verse 26. Who is the "anointed one" in verse 25? NKJV and NASB both translate "anointed one" as "Messiah". That removes the need of an interpretation. Those versions have already made the interpretation for you. NIV has "the Anointed One". The capitalization tips their hand indicating that the reference is to the Messiah. (9:25)

If a week is understood to be 7 years, then the 7 weeks + 62 weeks = 483 years. If the start of the seventy weeks was 445 BC (Nehemiah going to Jerusalem), then 483 years later was about 39 AD. If the start was 458 (Ezra going to Jerusalem), then 483 years later was about 26 AD (the coming of the Messiah, understood as his baptism and the beginning of his ministry). Of the two, the second one seems to fit better. Some use a 360 day year to make the math work better. No one asked me, but taking the weeks to be 7 literal years leads to forcing and manipulating timelines. Maybe we are being too Western and want things to be exact to the millisecond. Trying to create an exact 483 year timeline goes away if the “sevens/weeks” are symbolic. Which timeline do you think best fits the passage? (9:25)

In verse 26, is the “anointed one” the same as the “anointed one” of verse 25? Once again, NKJV, NASB and NIV all make this interpretive decision for you. Their answer is that both verses refer to the Messiah. What does “an anointed one shall be cut off” mean? NIV once again makes the interpretation for you by translating “cut off” by “put to death”. (9:26)

When does the 70th week start? According to Edward J. Young and others, the 70th week starts in verse 26 with the cutting off, that is death, of the Messiah. If there is no gap in the seventy weeks, then the 70th week would be right “after the sixty-two weeks”. (9:26-27)

In 70 AD, the Romans under Titus, destroyed much of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Does this fit the text of verse 26b? If not, what is referred to by the destruction of the city and sanctuary? What are the desolations which are decreed? (9:26)

Verse 27 mentions one week / seven. Is this a reference to the seventieth week? Who will “make a strong covenant with many”? NKJV, NASB and NIV all have “confirm a covenant”. Edward J. Young was emphatic that the meaning could only be “confirm”. Dale Ralph Davis believes the meaning is “make” with the sense of forcing a covenant on a people. The answer depends on two decisions. Is this a new covenant (make) or is it a covenant which already existed (confirm)? Is there a gap between the 69 weeks and the 70th week? If you believe that the meaning of the passage is “confirm” and that there is no “gap” before the 70th week, then the one confirming the covenant is naturally the Messiah. (9:27)

In verse 27, is the end of sacrifice and offerings a good thing or a bad thing? If it is a good thing, who made an end of sacrifices and offerings? See Hebrews 10:11-14. If it is a bad thing, who will make an end of sacrifices and offerings? Dale Ralph Davis understands the end of sacrifices and offerings in the symbolic sense of ending or suppressing true worship. (9:27)

If the seventieth week is the final week, the end of days, then the one who makes desolate on the wing of abominations could be the antichrist (1 John 2:18), the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This seems to be the view of Dale Ralph Davis. There is nothing in Daniel that mentions or requires a literal one thousand year reign of Christ on earth. Who is the one who comes/came and “makes desolate” “on the wing of abominations”? (9:27)

In verse 27, there is a decreed end to the desolator. When is the desolator terminated? (9:27)

The word sent to Daniel was meant to encourage him. What items of encouragement would Daniel have taken from this message? What encouragement can we take from this passage?