

Daniel is praying to the LORD about the 70 year captivity of the Jews when the angel Gabriel is sent to inform him that the LORD has a bigger picture in view. Gabriel describes 70 weeks of years during which the LORD will accomplish His purposes with the Jews. Today, 69 of those weeks have transpired and the 70th week, the Great Tribulation, is still to come.

¹ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; ² In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Verse 1 sets the time when Daniel experienced the events he recounts in this chapter as being the first year after king Darius, ruler of the Medo-Persian empire had conquered Babylon. Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah and as he studied the prophecies concerning the duration of the Jews' captivity, he came to understand that the LORD intended for the captivity to last for 70 years before they would be allowed to return and rebuild the city of Jerusalem which had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

³ And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

Having studied Jeremiah's prophecy, Daniel also understood the reason for the 70 years and why the LORD allowed Jerusalem to be conquered. He recognized that the sins of his people had caused the LORD to forsake them and as a punishment for their sins the LORD had caused the Babylonians to conquer the Jews. The proper response when faced with sin is repentance, and Daniel proceeds to seek the LORD in a prayer of repentance in behalf of his people. At this time the 70 years were almost complete, so likely Daniel wanted to intercede for his people lest their sins should provoke the LORD to extend their captivity or perhaps punish them more severely.

Verses 4-18: Daniel prays to the LORD, confessing the sins of Israel and acknowledging that the suffering of the Jews were their own fault and that the LORD was just in bringing about their captivity. He appeals to the LORD's mercies and asks forgiveness so that the LORD might again bless them and bring them into a right relationship with their God. Daniel's prayer is that the LORD would reconcile the Jews with Himself.

¹⁹ O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do” - Daniel is appealing to the LORD to hear his prayer, forgive Israel's sins, and to do as he has asked – allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild.

“defer [delay; hesitate] not, for thine own sake, O my God” - Daniel says its will benefit the LORD if He does not hesitate in restoring the Jews to their homeland.

“for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” - The benefit is the LORD's glory. Both Jerusalem and the Jews are identified with the LORD therefore the LORD is glorified when the Jews are in the land and prospering.

²⁰ And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; ²¹ Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

“And whiles I was speaking, and praying...” - Daniel had not yet finished his prayer of confession and supplication when something happens. Notice he says that the supplication was “for the holy mountain of my God” (the temple mount). It seems Daniel's focus was on seeing the temple rebuilt so the worship of the LORD could be restored and the name of the LORD glorified.

“Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning [beginning; at the first]” - Daniel's prayer is interrupted by “the man Gabriel,” the same angel he had seen years earlier in the vision recorded in Dan. 7.

“being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation [offering]” - The LORD had sent Gabriel in response to Daniel's prayer and arrived about the time of the evening offering to the LORD (about 3:00 pm). This was also a common time of prayer.

²² And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. ²³ At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

“And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill [insight] and understanding” - The purpose of Gabriel's visit was to bring Daniel information and understanding of certain things the LORD wanted known. No doubt this wasn't done merely for Daniel's sake, because Daniel records what was said so that centuries later we could read and benefit from it.

“At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment [word] came forth, and I am come to shew thee” - The moment Daniel began to pray, the LORD was already responding by sending Gabriel with the answer to Daniel's prayer. This should be an encouragement to us that God always instantly hears our prayers although the circumstances governing how quickly the answer comes can vary from case to case.

“for thou art greatly beloved” - The LORD loves all of His children but those that are faithful and obedient like Daniel have a special place in His heart.

“therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision” - Gabriel wants Daniel to prepare to understand what he is about to be told.

²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

“Seventy weeks are determined [decreed; planned; laid out] upon thy people and upon thy holy city” - Daniel had been praying about the 70 years of captivity but the LORD wants Daniel to know that He has planned for the Jews to go through 70 weeks before He has accomplished His purposes. The word “weeks” literally means “sevens” and can refer to either 7 days or 7 years. In the context of the next verses it becomes obvious that 70 weeks of years (70 x 7 or 490 years) are meant. During these 70 weeks God intends to accomplish six things:

- **“to finish [to restrict or restrain] the transgression”** - The LORD will not allow Israel’s long history of transgressing His laws to continue but will bring it to an end.
- **“and to make an end [to bring to completion] of sins”** - To bring an end to the sins of Israel so that they will sin no more.
- **“and to make reconciliation [to cover or atone] for iniquity”** - Even after we have stopped committing new sins, the old sins still have to be dealt with. During the 70 weeks the LORD will provide the means through which we can be reconciled to Him (Christ dying on the cross for our sins). Israel’s sins will have an atonement so that they can be reconciled to the LORD.
- **“and to bring in everlasting righteousness”** - The LORD will cause Israel to live in everlasting righteousness, the state that He has always intended for them.
- **“and to seal up the vision and prophecy”** - The LORD will cause all visions and prophecies to be fulfilled. Everything the LORD has promised will be accomplished just as He said.
- **“and to anoint the most Holy”** - Most commentators interpret this phrase as referring to a place and not a person. If so, then the intent is the re-establishment of the temple as the holy place where the LORD resides. The worship of the LORD at the temple will once again take place.

The LORD’s plans for the reconciliation of Israel were much larger than the 70 years that Daniel was concerned with.

²⁵ Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

Gabriel establishes the starting point of the 70 weeks as being when the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem, which happened when the king of Persia gives Nehemiah permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls. Gabriel mentions that “the street” (the city) and the wall would be rebuilt and the “troublous times” is an apt description of Nehemiah’s challenges during the construction. Gabriel also gives us a historical landmark: the coming of “the Messiah the Prince” (Jesus Christ). The span of time between the command to rebuild and Christ is broken into two periods: 7 weeks and 62 weeks (49 and 434 years, respectively). The end of the first 7 weeks may coincide with the end of the ministry of Malachi and the close of the OT. The next 62 week span covers the “silent years” between the OT and the NT and the life of Jesus.

²⁶ And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself” - At the end of the 62 week period is when Christ will die on the cross (“cut off” is an expression that usually refers to death). The phrase “not for himself” in the Hebrew is literally “there is not (*or nothing*) for him.” It may refer to the fact that even though Jesus is the Christ, He did not immediately establish His kingdom after the cross (Acts 1:6) but is waiting until His Father gives it to Him (Heb. 1:13).

“and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” - The Messiah is called a “Prince” but “the prince that shall come” is another person. This person is the Antichrist who will lead the revived Roman empire before Christ’s return. Here it says that, not the prince himself, but “the people of” that prince will come and destroy the city and sanctuary. This refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD by the Romans under the leadership of Titus.

“and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined” - This phrasing refers not to a literal flood, but the flood of destruction that will cover the city. Because of their rejection of the Messiah, the LORD will ordain that the Romans would leave Jerusalem a desolate place. This is why Christ wept over the city at His triumphal entry (Luke 19:41-44).

²⁷ And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

“And he shall confirm [to make strong] the covenant with many for one week” - Thus far only 69 of the 70 weeks have been accounted for. The LORD apparently paused the prophetic stopwatch when the Jews rejected their Messiah after the resurrection and will resume it with the 70th week when the Antichrist comes to power and will make a strong 7-year covenant with Israel. The original Hebrew says “with the many.” **“and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”** - In the middle of this 7-year period the Antichrist will betray Israel and forbid the offering of sacrifices in the temple.

“and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation [completion; end]” - The Antichrist will stop the sacrifices because he will enter the temple and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:4). This is the “abomination of desolation” that Jesus warned the Jews about (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). The Antichrist’s defilement of the temple will last until “the end” or the completion of the 70th week, at which point Christ will return and destroy the Antichrist and his kingdom.

“and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” - “That determined” (or “that which has been determined”) refers everything that the LORD had determined to accomplish during the 70 weeks (v. 24) will be poured out on Jerusalem, which was at that time still laying desolate. God will always accomplish His purposes and His will is sovereign.