

EXILIC & POST-EXILIC PROPHETS OF THE BIBLE

Senior Adults & Friends Bible Study — Summit View Church of Christ
Winter 2022-2023

PART 6, SECTION 2

DANIEL'S PRAYER FOR JERUSALEM • CYRUS PERMITS JEWS TO RETURN HOME

DANIEL 9

Date: 539-538 BC — Cyrus, king of Persia, had ruled Persia since 559 BC, but he took control of the Babylonian Empire in October 539 BC; this is his "first year" referenced in Ezra 1:1, his first year ruling his enlarged kingdom. Darius the Mede was probably appointed by Cyrus to rule Babylon for him (see Daniel 5:30, 9:1). Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 was offered sometime during Darius's first year, in 539-538 BC. It had been nearly 70 years (9:2) since Babylon had become the dominant power in the Middle East and the Near East in 609 BC, the year that Judah's King Jehoaiah (and perhaps others) had been taken into exile to Egypt (2 Kings 23:31-34; Daniel and other Jews were taken into Babylonian exile a few years later, in 605 BC— Daniel 1:1-6). Babylon became the dominant power in the region when the Babylonians and Medes defeated Assyria and Egypt in a major battle at Carchemish. Jeremiah had earlier prophesied that Babylonian dominion would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12, dated to 605 BC; and 29:10, dated to during or after 597 BC); this 70-year period was 609-539 BC. (Thinking of Daniel 9:2, there is also another sense in which "the desolation of Jerusalem" lasted 70 years: The temple of God was destroyed in 586 BC, and its rebuilding was not completed until 516 BC.)

Daniel 9:1-19

9:2 — Daniel understood from the Scriptures, through Jeremiah the prophet (in Jeremiah 25:11-12 & 29:10), that the desolation of Jerusalem would last _____ years.

9:2 — In light of this prophecy and how the time for its fulfillment was near, what did Daniel do?

9:4-19 — List a few terms Daniel uses in this prayer to describe God:

9:4-19 — List a few terms Daniel uses in this prayer to describe the people of Judah and Israel:

9:11-14 — Daniel's phrase, "the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses," refers especially to Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Read Deuteronomy 28:45-52 and 28:63-68. What are 2 or 3 punishments Moses predicted for disobeying God that now, in Daniel's time, had been fulfilled?

• Also read Deuteronomy 30:1-10. What hope might Daniel have drawn from this passage?

9:15 — Daniel recalls that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt several centuries earlier. How might that history give Daniel and the Jewish people hope as Daniel offers this prayer?

Daniel 9:20-27

9:21-22 — Who came to instruct Daniel in response to his prayer? _____

9:24 — How long did the Jews have to put an end to sin, etc.? _____

THE PROPHECY

- the Jews & Jerusalem will experience spiritual purification and fulfillment of prophecy (9:24)
- Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but during a time of difficulty (9:25)
- the Anointed One will be killed, Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed, an abomination that causes desolation will be set up in the temple—and then the wicked ruler doing these wicked things will meet his end (9:26-27)
- the timeline for these events is set: it will take 70 "sevens" (in sets of 7, 62, and 1) (9:24-27)

Difficulties in Interpreting the "Seventy Sevens"

1) Is this a literal 70-times-7, or symbolic?

a) If literal, it's hard to know which period of 490 years it refers to, if "sevens" means periods of 7 years (which is likely but not certain). There are 2 key options. See below.

b) If symbolic, it probably refers to...

...7 "sevens" = a certain period of time

...62 "sevens" = a much longer period of time

...1 more "seven" = a short period of time, in the middle of which an abomination will be set up

2) Both the symbolic and the literal interpretations seem to point to one of two events:

- **167-164 BC, Antiochus IV's assault on the Jewish faith and the temple** — In support of this theory is the theme of Antiochus's war on Judaism in Daniel 8 and 10-12. It makes sense that Daniel 9 would focus on the same theme as the chapters before and after it. Also, the events foretold in 9:25-27 (especially verse 27) sound like the events from 539-164 BC that culminated in Antiochus's defiling of the temple, ending of the daily sacrifices, and sudden death.

- **about 4 BC to AD 30, the coming of the Messiah** — In support of this theory is the theme of the Messiah's coming in Daniel 7:13-14 and of the coming of God's eternal kingdom in 2:44-45, 7:14, 7:27. Also, the theme of a solution for sin and a restoration of righteousness in Daniel 9:24 sounds like God's work through Jesus.

- The problem: Despite many efforts and theories, these dates simply don't fit well into any literal 490-year arrangement. No one has come up with a chronological arrangement that has proved convincing to most people.

3) The bottom line:

- The symbolic interpretation may be the intended interpretation. In some ways the prophecy seems best fulfilled in Antiochus IV. In other ways, it seems best fulfilled in Jesus. It is possible that God, in his wisdom, intended for this prophecy to be fulfilled in both ways (dual fulfillment).

Ezra 1

1:1 — In the first year of _____ king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by _____, the Lord moved the _____ of Cyrus to make a proclamation.

1:2-4 — What did Cyrus's proclamation permit the Jews to do?

1:5-7 — Every Jew whose heart God moved prepared to go up and build the _____ in Jerusalem. Their neighbors assisted them with gifts. What did Cyrus himself give them?

1:8, 11 — Who was the "prince of Judah" who went to Jerusalem with the Jewish exiles?