

Study of the 8th chapter of Daniel usually focuses on the prophecy of the seventy weeks in verses 24-27 and for good reason: This prophecy is the road map for understanding all end time prophecy.

But there is much food for our souls in the impassioned prayer of contrition and confession that begins the book. From his study of scripture Daniel realizes the imminence of God's promised restoration of the Jews to their land. His response to this revelation is not celebration of triumph but acknowledgment of failure. Reread the section and note these features of the prayer.

1. Daniel prepares for the prayer with fasting and sackcloth, suppressing the flesh.
2. He knows and believes that God will fulfill His promises. Daniel does not presume on those promises but delivers a heartfelt and humble petition for his people. This is pleasing to God, as when we pray for our daily bread even though we have confidence in God's provision.
3. Daniel was taken from Jerusalem as a boy so had little personal part in the grievous sins of the Jews. But he does not set himself apart from them or take a superior position; he fully identifies with them, using "we" instead of "they." Every Christian likewise partakes to some degree in failure anywhere in the body of Christ.
4. His confession of sins is thorough and specific. He says "we have done wrong" then details the exact ways the Jews have done wrong: disobeying God's commandments, ignoring God's messengers, failing to seek God's favor, and rejecting His truth.
5. He ascribes all righteousness to God alone.
6. He establishes God's justice by acknowledging that the calamity that fell upon Israel had been warned by God and deserved by the Jews.

7. He appeals to God to act for the Jews not for any merit of theirs but because of His mercy and that they bear God's name.
8. He pours his heart into the plea: *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.*

Study of prophecy can lead to intellectual pride and an unhealthy appetite for controversy. We should approach it as Daniel read Jeremiah, humbling ourselves before God so that more of His mind may be made known to us.

Notes on Daniel 9

9:1 Daniel's previous two visions had taken place during the reign of Belshazzar, the last Babylonian (Chaldean) king. This one comes after the conquest of Babylon by Darius the Mede. Darius's victory alone told Daniel the seventy years were reaching their end: "*Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation*" (Jer. 25:12).

9:2 The lifespans of Jeremiah and Daniel overlapped but Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem and Daniel in Babylon and Persia. Jeremiah's prophesy of the seventy year exile appears twice:

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer. 25:11)

For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place (Jer. 29:10).

9:3-19 See notes above.

9:20-21 The response of God to Daniel's prayer is swift and splendid. Gabriel brings a message of deliverance, just as he does to the virgin Mary 500 years later.

9:24-27 The understanding of this vision is critical to interpretation of scripture. The Lord

Himself includes it in His warnings to the Jews in Matthew 24. Christians differ in their views of the prophecy. We take the dispensational position as summarized below. (Note: The ESV translation of this section differs from most other versions, so the quotes below are from the NKJV.)

Seventy weeks are determined ...

Each week is seven years.

... For your people and for your holy city ...

The prophesy that follows specifically concerns the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

...To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

Some maintain that the seventy weeks ended with Antiochus or with the Lord's crucifixion, but neither of these fully accomplished the ends listed above. They clearly await some future time.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks ... and after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;

In the book of Ezra, Cyrus commands for the temple to be built, not the city of Jerusalem. That command comes later, in Nehemiah chapter 2 under Artaxerxes in the year **454 BC**. Sixty-nine "weeks" from 454 BC is:

$$69 \times 7 = 483 \text{ years}$$

In Revelation 11:3 and 12:6, 1260 days represents three and a half years.

$$1260 / 3.5 = 360 \text{ days}$$

This implies a "prophetic year" of 360 days, or twelve 30-day months. Using the prophetic year,

$$483 \text{ years} \times 360 = 173,880 \text{ days}$$

To convert these days back to regular calendar years (with reasonable accuracy):

$$173,880 / 365.25 = 476 \text{ years}$$

476 years from 454 BC is

$$476 - 445 = 31 \text{ AD}$$

What happened in 31 AD (give or take a couple of years)? The Messiah was cut off, but not for himself. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sake. Prophecy was confirmed, just as godly students of scripture like Simeon expected (Luke 2).

And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

It is not the prince who destroys the city; it is his people. In AD 70 the Romans leveled Jerusalem in a flood of destruction. Out of that people – the Romans – will arise a prince in some future time.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

This is the account of the final 70th week. Nothing resembling the events depicted here occurred seven years after the Lord's crucifixion.

Remember, the prophecy concerns Israel. Having cut off her Messiah, Israel has broken the link in the prophetic chain between the 69th and 70th link. The church period has filled that space between the links for 2000 years as the Jews have been preserved but not experiencing God's hand as a people.

But "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." The book of the Revelation tells how He fulfills the purposes regarding the Jews of verse 24 in the tribulation and millennium, and brings blessings or judgment for all mankind for eternity.

From this passage we understand that the Antichrist, the new Roman prince, will negotiate a treaty with Israel, then break it after three and half years and desecrate the temple, thus bringing in the terrible time of the great tribulation.