

DANIEL 9:20-24

Study by Glenn Palmer

Introduction: Many commentators think this is perhaps the most difficult passage in the Old Testament. John Calvin writes that “This passage has been variously treated, and so distracted, and almost torn to pieces by various opinions of interpreters, that it might be considered nearly useless on account of its obscurity.” After having read and reread the passage and then the commentaries confusion reigns. Part of this is because the Hebrew is very difficult. Part of this is because there are some things that do not make sense. For example, in 9:25 Daniel talks about Jerusalem being built with a trench (NIV) or a moat(KJV). Moats are used when on flat ground and are built directly underneath a wall. To build a moat around Jerusalem is useless as the moat would be quite some distance from the wall on the west, south and east sides. On the north side of Jerusalem, a moat would have to be dug out of solid rock. Not impossible today, but exceptionally difficult. In verse 24 there is the expression “seventy ‘sevens.’ (KJV: “seventy weeks.”) What does that mean? Is that to be taken literally or figuratively? There are far more questions than answers, and each theory has problems to resolve.

Daniel 9:20

1. What was Daniel doing? *Praying and confessing*
2. Whose sins was he confessing?
 - a. *His sin*
 - b. *The sins of his people*
3. About what was his request? *His holy hill*

Practical Application:

1. *What percentage of our prayers are for us - our health and wealth, and what percentage of our prayers are for the church?*
2. *Even Daniel, who is never criticized for his sins, confesses to God his sins. How much more should we confess our sins!*
3. *Do we pray as fervently as Daniel?*
4. *Do we really believe that God will answer our prayers?*
5. *Calvin: “But in this way the Prophet teaches us how those who possess true faith and repentance, however slight, will never offer up their prayers to God in vain.”*

Daniel 9:21

4. God’s swift response:
 - a. Genesis 24:15
 - b. Daniel 9:21
 - c. Be careful that we do not confuse earth time with heavenly time. See C. S. Lewis’s tales of Narnia for examples of earth time and Narnia time.
 - d. Also, since God had already known what Daniel was going to pray, He could have pre-staged Gabriel.
5. Even though the temple was destroyed and the evening sacrifice was no longer being conducted, yet Daniel prayed at the set times.

Daniel 9:22

6. Note that even the interpreter of dreams needs help interpreting this vision. We need to proceed with caution.

Daniel 9:23

7. Why was Daniel's prayer answered so quickly? "*You are highly esteemed.*"
8. "Consider the message and understand the vision." Vision is a technical Hebrew term used in the Old Testament for prophets.
 - a. Isaiah 1:1
 - b. Ezekiel 1:1
 - c. Micah 1:1
 - d. Amos 1:1

Daniel 9:24

9. "Seventy 'sevens'"
 - a. What type of time "seven" is NOT specified
 - b. KJV: "seventy weeks" - most commentators say this is a poor translation
 - c. NIV: "Seventy sevens"
 - d. "are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression . . . ²⁵ Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree until the Anointed One, the ruler comes there will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'sevens.' After the sixty-two sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing."

10. Pre-millennialists' Interpretation

- a. The seven is a "year week." Thus, each week equals seven years, and 70 times seven years = 490 years.
- b. When did "are decreed for your people" occur?
 - 1.) Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC and sent the Jews back in 538 BC. Ezra 1:1 "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the Word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout the realm and to put it in writing."
 - a.) Problem: 538 BC - 490 years = 48 BC and nothing happened of importance. Christ did not come in 48 BC.
 - b.) In 9:25 it says that after 7 sevens and 62 sevens. Thus, after 69 sevens (483) years Christ will come, not after the 70 sevens.
 - 2.) Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah back in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1) and he rebuilt the temple.
 - a.) 445 BC - 483 years is 38 AD, way too late for Christ. So the following adjustment is made:
 - b.) By shortening the standard 365-day year to a prophetic year of 360 days (12 x 30-day months), then there would be 476 years.
 - c.) 444 BC (when Nehemiah leaves) - 476 prophetic years = 33 AD, when Christ died.
- c. Next there is at least a one thousand nine hundred and eighty year pause between the 69 sevens and the last week-year. The last seven years have been suspended till the beginning of the tribulation. This is called the gap theory.

- 2.) Adjust the length of year: To arrive at the right prophetic time, the pre-millennialists must make the years prophetic years (360 days), not a normal year (365 days + 366 days for leap year). But there is no evidence for a prophetic year in the Old Testament. The prophetic year is never defined.
- 3.) Adjust the start point: To make it work, most pre-millennialists have to adjust the start date. So they say that the decree (vs. 24) came from Artaxerxes (445 BC) to Nehemiah. But in fact the decree came from Cyrus (538 BC), not Artaxerxes. The decree (or proclamation) from Cyrus is recorded in the Bible (II Chronicles 36:23 & Ezra 1:1) and there is the famous Cyrus cylinder in the British museum with the same decree. *Nehemiah was sent with letters for safe conduct to the governors of the trans-Euphrates and a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest.* But these are letters, not an official decree (Nehemiah 2:7-9). If it was a decree, when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite accused Nehemiah, he could have easily produced the decree from Artaxerxes and that would have ended the matter (Nehemiah 4). But there is no decree. So he has to station guards and build at the same time. In Ezra 5:17 we read "Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a *decree* to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem." After a search was made, in Ezra 6:3 we read "In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a *decree* concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem." King Darius (522-485 BC) then decrees that the initial decree must be accomplished (Ezra 6:6, 8, 11-12).

Not once are Artaxerxes letters to Nehemiah in 445 BC called a decree nor did Nehemiah use them as a decree. But Cyrus's proclamation is called a decree.

- 4.) Adjust the end date. The only way for this to work is to accept that Christ died in 33 AD. But almost all scholars believe that Christ died in 30 AD, not 33 AD.

Bottom line: the chronology does not fit, even after making all the adjustments.

- c. Verse 24 states: "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophesy and to anoint the most holy." Jesus Christ has already accomplished these events on the cross and with his resurrection and ascension. But the 70 sevens is completed on the cross. The finishing of the transgression, putting an end to sin, and atoning for wickedness HAS happened. This is not a future event.
- d. As with the other prophecies of Daniel, the statue, the four beasts, the he-goat vs. the ram are all about events pointing to Christ's First Coming, not his Second Coming.
- e. The final seven years appear 2000 (?) years or later after Christ's coming. But there is nothing in the prophesy that would indicate such a large gap.
- f. The pre-millennialist theory is a relatively late theory and has come to the fore only in the last 200 years.