The Day-Year Principle
in Dan 9:24-27

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(24) "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 right-eousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

(25) "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. (26) After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. (27) He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven,' but in the middle of that 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (Dan 9:24-27, NIV)[1]

Two Suggested Translations
for *šbᶜym*

Of special interest in Dan 9:24 is the word translated "sevens." There is a footnote to that word which reads, "Or '*weeks*.' Also in verses 25 and 26." The Hebrew form rendered alternatively as "sevens" or "weeks" has the consonant letters *šbᶜym*. When vocalized *šābūᶜîm*, as in published copies of the Masoretic text, the meaning is unambiguous. It is "weeks" and not "sevens." But in Hebrew one set of consonants can often take more than one set of vowels. So it would seem that in order to account for the primary reading "sevens" suggested by NIV one merely needs to supply the existing consonants with a different set of vowels.[2]

In their oldest form the various Old Testament documents were written with nothing but consonant letters.[3] Vowels markings were not added until centuries after the text had become standardized.[4] So considering a nontraditional vowel pointing which can be used with letters of comparable phonological value[5] and which gives results that make sense in terms of Hebrew number syntax would do no violence to the text. Below we consider each of the ways in which *šbᶜym* has been vocalized in the Old Testament and evaluate the impact of each vocalization on the passage in terms of both syntax and meaning.

Three Attested Vocalizations
for *šbᶜym*

There are three ways attested in the Old Testament to vocalize the letters *šbᶜym*. Two of these are in fact already present in Dan 9:24. Thus, taking the Hebrew as it now reads (NIV margin), "Seventy 'weeks' [*šābūᶜîm šibᶜîm*] are decreed for your people and your holy city . . . ." the word "weeks" (*šābūᶜîm*) and the word "seventy" (*šibᶜîm*) are identical except for the vowels which indicate how to pronounce them. Both words have the same consonant letters. The unpointed text simply reads *šbᶜym šbᶜym*. The only other possible vocalization means specifically "(two) weeks" (*šᵉbūᶜáyim*), and that is found only in Lev 12:5. Each of the three attested vowel patterns is now considered in turn, starting with the last.

"(Two) weeks": *šᵉbūᶜáyim*

Hebrew has three grammatical numbers--singular, dual, and plural--unlike English which has only singular and plural. In English the word "seeds" and the word "eyes" both have the same morphological shape ("seed"+"s", "eye"+"s"), even though seeds generally come in large numbers and eyes, among mammals, come in pairs. In Hebrew the same consonant letters are used for both masculine plural (-*ym*) and dual (-*ym*) but the vocalization is different--masculine plural -*îm*, dual -*áyim*.[6] Thus, "seeds" would be *zērōᶜîm* (with the ending -*îm*) while "eyes" would be *ᶜēnáyim* (with the ending -*áyim*). But if only the consonants were written the forms would appear to be comparable (*zrᶜym = zrᶜ+ym*; *ᶜynym = ᶜyn+ym*).

A similar situation obtains in the case of the dual form *šᵉbūᶜáyim* "(two) weeks." When vocalized it is clearly different from *šibᶜîm* "seventy" and from *šābūᶜîm* "weeks," but spelled only with consonants the letters are identical in all three words. The numeral "two" is not required with the dual and no other numberal would be semantically appropriate. The idea of duality is part of the meaning of the word when vocalized in this manner. Thus, the total number of "days" in seventy "two-week periods" would be 980 instead of 490. Substituting "two-weeks" in the following syntactic frames makes little sense and so the first of the three attested vocalizations for *šbᶜym* need not be considered further.

(24) *Seventy "two-weeks" are decreed for your people and your holy city . . .

(25) *From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven "two-weeks," and sixty-two "two-weeks".

(26)*After the sixty-two "two-weeks," the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.

"Seventy": *šibᶜîm*

The second attested vocalization is the plural of "seven"—*šibᶜîm* "seventy."[7] H. C. Leupold makes the following suggestion regarding the translation of this passage:

> Now the singular means "a period of seven," "a heptad" (BDB) or "*Siebend*" (K. W.) or, as some prefer to state it, "Siebenheit." Since there is nothing in our chapter that indicates a

"heptad of days" as a meaning for *shabhuᶜîm* or a "heptad of years," the only safe translation, if we do not want to resort to farfetched guesses, of this fundamental expression is seventy "heptads"–seventy "sevens"–seventy *Siebenheiten*.

Leupold begins with the number "seven." The simple fact that the spelling *šbᶜym* is plural, however, raises a point of grammar that must be understood before going further. In Hebrew number syntax the plural of any numeral between 3 and 9 is ten times greater than its corresponding singular. Thus, the plural of 3 is 30, the plural of 4 is 40, the plural of 5 is 50, the plural of 6 is 60, the plural of 8 is 80, the plural of 9 is 90--and the plural of 7 is 70. Not "sevens." See table 1.

Table 1
Singular and Plural of Hebrew
Numerals from Three to Nine

Singular		Plural	
English	Hebrew	English	Hebrew
Three	šālōš	Thirty	šᵉlōšîm
Four	ᵓarbaᶜ	Four	ᵓarbāᶜîm
Five	ḥāmēš	Fifty	ḥᵃmiššîm
Six	šēš	Sixty	šiššîm
Seven	šébaᶜ	Seventy	šibᶜîm
Eight	šᵉmōneh	Eighty	šᵉmōnîm
Nine	tḗšaᶜ	Ninety	tišᶜîm

The information in table 1 is not controversial; it represents commonly available (and rudimentary) information about Hebrew grammar. Consider the following passage from Gesenius (§97f):

The tens from 30 to 90 are expressed by the plural forms of the units (so that the plural here always stands for *ten times* the unit), thus, *šᵉlōšîm* 30, *ᵓarbāᶜîm* 40, *ḥᵃmiššîm* 50, *šiššîm* 60, *šibᶜîm* 70, *šᵉmōnîm* 80, *tišᶜîm* 90. But *twenty* is expressed by *ᶜeśrîm*, plur. of *ten*. These numerals are all of common gender, and do not admit of the *construct state*.[8]

The above quotation should alert us to the possibility of a serious grammatical flaw in NIV's text reading "seventy 'sevens'." If the word on which this form is built proves to be "seven," as they assert, then the plural, according to Gesenius, cannot be "sevens" but would have to be "seventy." In light of the widespread availability of such basic information it is curious that scholars of excellent reputation would translate the plural of "seven" (assuming this is the word being pluralized) as "sevens" in Dan 9:24-26.

There is no good reason for this lapse, but a partial explanation is available. The word spelled *šbᶜym* consists of a substantive *šbᶜ* and a plural ending *-ym*, thus *šbᶜ+ym*. Since *šbᶜ* is the way "seven" is spelled it would appear to follow that Hebrew *šbᶜ+ym* is equivalent to English "seven"+"s." Such reasoning makes good English but bad Hebrew. The plural of "seven" in English is indeed "sevens," but the plural of "seven" in Hebrew is not. In context, with a numeral

that tells how many of this unit are referred to, one would translate "seventies," as in the sentences below.[9]

(24) ?Seventy "seventies" are decreed for your people and your holy city . . .

(25) ?From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven "seventies," and sixty-two "seventies".

(26) ?After the sixty-two "seventies," the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.

It follows from what has been said that the second attested vocalization for *šbᶜym* offers no more support for the NIV text reading than the first. The closest we can come, in vs. 24 for example, is to translate "seventy 'seventies'"--assuming that the word being pluralized is "seven"--but what the meaning of the passage might be under these circumstances is unclear. The total number of single time units under this model would 4900 instead the expected 490.

"Weeks": *šābūᶜîm*

The third vowel pattern to be considered is the plural of "week"-- *šābūᶜîm* "weeks." This vocalization is the one found in published copies of the Masoretic text.

There is more than one reason to accept this third vocalization, besides the fact that it is the only one left. We begin by asking what word is being pluralized. This is not a rhetorical question. It has an unequivocal textual answer. The form *šébaᶜ* "seven" has different vowels from *šābūaᶜ* "week," but without the vowels can be spelled in only one way--*šbᶜ*. The word "week," on the other hand, can be spelled in two ways—*šbᶜ* without *waw* (*šābūaᶜ*) and *šbwᶜ* with *waw* (*šābûaᶜ*). Thus, it is possible for "seven" and "week" to be spelled in the same way (*šbᶜ*, without *waw*), but it is also possible for "week" to be spelled in a way that eliminates all doubt (*šbwᶜ*, with *waw*). If the word is spelled with a waw (*šbᶜym*), it means "week." Period.

Note that the plural form *šbᶜym* occurs in vss. 24-26. In vs. 27, however, we find two examples of the corresponding singular, and it is spelled *šbwᶜ* with *waw*. The importance of this fact can hardly be overstated. NIV gives a footnote to the text reading "seven" in vs. 27 that reads "Or *'week'*." Thus, *šbwᶜ* primarily means "seven," but can also mean "week." If whoever wrote that footnote were grading first year Hebrew papers and got that answer on a test, he would fail the student for such an answer. It is simply not correct. As a check through any Hebrew lexicon will quickly demonstrate, *šbwᶜ* does not mean "seven." It means "week" and can only mean "week." Verse 27 should therefore be translated,

> "He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'week,' [*šbwᶜ*] but in the middle of that 'week' [*šbwᶜ*] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering." (NIV, margin)

With the meaning of vs. 27 well in hand we can now meaningfully evaluate the rest of the passage. On the evidence supplied by vs. 27 it is clear that the NIV text reading "seventy 'sevens'" in vss. 24-26 is an anglicism--an interpretation of Hebrew words in terms of English grammar. Dan 9:24 should be translated,

"Seventy 'weeks' are decreed for your people and your holy city . . . ." (margin)

And Dan 9:25-26 should be translated,

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'weeks,' and sixty-two 'weeks.' . . . After the sixty-two 'weeks," the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing." (margin)

Three Interpretations
for *šbᶜym*

There are three primary alternatives in regard to interpreting *šbᶜym*, just as previously there were three alternatives in regard to vocalizing the word.[10] Under the first, the time units of Dan 9:24-27 represent literal time ("week" = seven days) and occupy a short period of history. Under the second, they are again literal ("seven" = seven years) but this time occupy a long period of history. Under the third alternative the time units represent symbolic time ("week" = seven years) and occupy a long period of history. Each of the above possibilities is now discussed.

Literal time, short duration

Since no believing exegete that I know of proposes an interpretation of Dan 9 where a "week" is equal to seven literal days, this section can be brief. Seventy weeks of literal time would be equal to one solar year of 52 weeks plus an additional 18 weeks, or a little over a year and four months. During this period we must find time for the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Jews' return from exile,[11] the activity of a notable leader (an "Anointed One"), and a second destruction of the city.[12] This is remarkably fast. Bear in mind that Herod took forty-six years beautifying and remodeling an existing temple in Jesus' day (see John 2:20). So now Daniel learns that this whole series of amazing events would take place in less than two and he's depressed? If he thought the angel were speaking literally he should have been overjoyed. The fact that he wasn't shows that something is wrong with the literal time, short duration model.

Literal time, long duration

The second model depends crucially on our ability to justify translating the Hebrew as "seventy 'sevens'," "seventy 'heptads'," or the like, avoiding the word "weeks" and thus avoiding any time symbolism that might derive from the word "weeks." In my view this interpretation is grammatical unavailable, but many accept it so we discuss it here.

In this model each "seven" refers directly to a period of literal years, making a total of 490 years. Since the word "weeks" is not used, no time symbolism is invoked. The end result is the same (since in either case the angel is describing events that occupy almost half a millennium of time), but the way it is achieved is different. Units of seven years are referred to directly, rather than units of seven days which stand for years. The most serious problem with applying the seventy "sevens" to a long period of time while avoiding time symbolism is, as stated, the untenable translation on which the application is based. No vocalization is attested in Old Testament Hebrew which could legitimately support the translation "seventy 'sevens'" with

the letters we find in the text. There is a way to convey that meaning, but not with those letters. For "sevens" to be the meaning we would need a singular *šbᶜ* ("seven") and with a following numeral, in context, that could possibly mean "sevens" (thus *šbᶜ sbᶜym* > *šébaᶜ šibᶜîm*). But all of this is hypothetical since *šébaᶜ šibᶜîm* is not what the text says.

Symbolic time, long duration

Only one alternative remains and this is a good alternative because it's what the text actually says (*šābūᶜîm šibᶜîm* "seventy weeks"). Since seventy literal weeks are not enough time to include all the activities described in the passage, it follows that the time units are being used symbolically. In the model I propose each "week" stands for seven literal years, or a day for a year. This is the day-year principle. The total length of time in the seventy weeks prophecy is 490 literal years. The period begins with "'the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem'" (vs. 25) and extends to the time when "'the Anointed One will be cut off'" (vs. 26). If this is the correct interpretation, I conclude--because of the way the words "week" and "weeks" are used--that the day-year principle is part of the fabric of the Hebrew text of Dan 9:24-27 and cannot be dissociated from it. It is impossible to take the text as it reads without in some way acknowledging the day-year principle.

When the seventy "weeks" of Dan 9 are allowed to begin with the decree of Ezra 7 they end in the timeframe of the first advent of Christ. The early fathers of the church were all agreed on this point, while differing on certain details. For a summary of the views of church fathers cited by Jerome in his commentary on Daniel see the Appendix.

Summary

Three vowel patterns are attested in the Old Testament for the consonant letters *šbᶜym*--*šᵉbūᶜáyim* "two-weeks," *šibᶜîm* "seventy," and *šābūᶜîm* "weeks." Two of these terms make no sense in the present context, as one can readily confirm by substituing them in the following syntactic frames. This is one reason for accepting the third vocalization.

(24) Seventy ___ are decreed for your people and your holy city . . .

(25) From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ___, and sixty-two ___.

(26) After the sixty-two ___, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.

Another reason for accepting the vowels of the Masoretic text as they stand in published Hebrew Bibles is that the singular form is twice spelled *šbwᶜ* in vs. 27, with waw, which can only mean "week." If the singular means "week," then the corresponding plural *šbᶜym* in vss. 24-26 can only mean "weeks."

Three types of interpretation have been considered. In the first *šbᶜym* means "weeks" (*šābūᶜîm*) and the time periods referred to are interpreted literally. Thus "seventy 'weeks'" = 490 literal days or approximately a year and a half. In the second *šbᶜym* means "sevens" or "heptads" (*šibᶜîm*? [="seventy"]) and each group of "seven" is that many years of literal time. Thus, "seventy 'sevens'" = 490 years. In the third *šbᶜym* means "weeks" (*šāb'uᶜîm*) and each week represents seven years. Thus once more "seventy 'weeks'" = 490 years. No one supports

the first possibility and if *šbwʿ* in vs. 27 is translated correctly the second possibility is excluded. This leaves us with the third possibility as the only viable one. The interpretation that follows from taking the text as vocalized is grammatically straightforward and supports the classic position of Christian expositors in all ages that the seventy weeks prophecy points forward to, and correctly identifies the timeframe for, the first coming of Christ.

Discussion

If the interpretation of Dan 9:24-27 suggested above is so simple and clear, why is it so hard for people to see? There is a reason, but it does not have to do with Dan 9; it has to do with Dan 8.

Daniel 8 and 9 are closely related chapters. In Dan 8 the prophet is shown a symbolic representation that includes a ram, a goat, a little horn, and a time period. Later on in the same vision an explanation is given for the meaning of the ram and the goat. Thus, in vs. 20 an angel tells Daniel, "'The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia.'" And in vs. 21 he goes on to say that, "'The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, . . . Next, three verses are set aside for comments on the little horn.

> (23) "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. (24) He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. (25) He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power."

When we come to the time period of Dan 8:14, however, no explanation is given. It is only alluded to in passing: "'The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.'" Daniel had heard all he could bear at one sitting. In vs. 27 he writes, "I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding."

The whole purpose of the angel's coming in Dan 9 was to finish his earlier explanation of the vision in Dan 8. This is why in 9:23 the angel tells Daniel,

> "'As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:'"

The discussion is then immediately brought to the matter of time. In chap. 8 the time period of 2300 "evening-mornings" (or days) is the only part that had remained unclear. Putting these two facts together, it would follow that the time period of seventy "weeks" now introduced by the angel is the missing explanation of the 2300 "evening-mornings." If day-year symbolism is present in Dan 9 then similar time units are used in both cases--days ("evening-mornings") in chap. 8, "weeks" in chap. 9.

In the same connection, if 2300 literal days were intended--a period of less than six and a half years--Daniel should have been delighted at the speed with which the sanctuary in

Jerusalem was to be restored. Instead he writes, "I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding."[13] I conclude that Daniel correctly understood the magnitude of the prophecy, even if he didn't understand all its details. The 2300 "evening-mornings" in Dan 8 were 2300 years and the seventy "weeks" in Dan 9 were 490 years. The seventy weeks were to extend to a point just after the first coming of Christ[14] and the 2300 days to a point just before the second coming of Christ.

If the term "weeks" is not used in Dan 9 then no time symbolism is invoked and the closeness of the connection between chaps. 8 and 9 is lost. The reason the day-year principle is so important in Dan 9 is because of the link it provides with Dan 8. The very thing that makes this principle important, therefore, is what makes people want to avoid it. The day-year symbolism of the later chapter shows us how to interpret the day-year symbolism of the earlier one. Both lead us to the general timeframe of an advent of Christ (first coming, Dan 9; second coming, Dan 8), and this has always been the Seventh-day Adventist position.

Conclusion

The term *šbʿym* in Dan 9:24-26 is best interpreted as a symbolic reference to time, in which one day of the prophecy equals one year of history. To avoid the above principle one would have to change the textual or grammatical bases on which it rests. Thus, one would either have to propose emendations to the text or supply a fourth, as yet unattested, vocalization for *šbʿym* in vss. 24-26 by which the consonant letters we actually have could be legitimately translated "sevens."

If rejecting the day-year principle is grammatically impossible and if accepting it makes available a unified and highly significant interpretation of two closely related chapters of Daniel, then I submit that it makes good sense to accept the day-year principle. When this is done the time periods of both chapters point to Christ at one of his advents and both His death on the cross and later coming in glory receive prominent attention.

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[1]*The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978). All quotations are from NIV unless stated otherwise.

[2]The letters *šbʿym* are found in Dan 9:24, 25; 10:2, 3. The same form with *waw* ("and") is also found in Dan 9:25, and with *he* ("the") in Dan 9:26. Elsewhere in Scripture the plural of "week" is not masculine *šābūʿîm* but feminine *šābūʿōt*. The feminine examples will not be discussed here because of the difference in spelling. Examples of feminine *šābūʿôt* with no prefix are found in Exod 34:22, Deut 16:9, 10, and with prefixed *he* ("the") in Deut 16:16; 2 Chron 8:13. The construct "weeks [of]" is spelled defectivum (*šābūʿōt*) in Jer 5:24 and plene (*šābūʿôt*) in Exod 45:21. The above information was gathered from Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris testamenti concordantiae: Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (Leipzig, 1896; reprint edition), p. 1143.

[3]See Frank Moore Cross, Jr. and David Noel Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence*, American Oriental Series, vol. 36 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1952), pp. 10, 58-60.

[4]See Ernest Würthwein, *The Test of the Old Testament*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 21-22.

[5]The gutteral consonants ʾ, *h*, ʿ, and *ḥ* have an influence on the way in which preceding vowels are pronounced in Biblical Hebrew. For a brief discussion see Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. xx-xxi (6).

[6]The feminine plural ending is *-wt* (*-ôt*).

[7]The Hebrew form *šbʿm* "seventy" occurs sixty-five times by itself (Gen 4:24; 5:12; 11:26; 46:27; 50:3; Exod 1:5; 38:29; Num 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79; 11:16, 24, 25; Judg 1:7; 8:14, 30; 9:2, 4, 5, 18, 24, 56; 12:14; 1 Sam 6:19; 24:15; 1 Kgs 5:29; 2 Kgs 10:1, 6, 7; Isa 23:15, 17; 25:11, 12; 29:10; Ezek 41:12; Zech 1:12; 7:5; Ps 90:10; Dan 9:2, 24; Ezra 2:3, 4, 36, 40; 8:7, 14, 35; Neh 7:9, 39, 43; 11:19; 1 Chron 21:14; 2 Chron 2:1, 17; 29:32; 36:21). With the prefix *wᵉ-* "and" it occurs an additional 23 times (Gen 5:31; 12:4; 25:7; Exod 15:27; 24:1, 9; 38:25, 28; Num 1:27; 2:4; 3:43; 7:85; 26:22; 31:32, 33, 37, 28; 33:9; Ezek 8:11; Esth 9:16; Ezra 2:5; Neh 7:8; 1 Chron 21:5), with the prefix combination *wᵉha*(C)- "and the" it occurs one time (Num 3:46), and with the preposition *bᵉ-* "with" (Deut 10:22) it also occurs one time.

[8]E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd Engl. ed., A. E. Cowley, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 290.

[9]There would be no problem translating "seventy 'sevens'" in vs. 24 for example if the word were written as a singular. If the text read *šébaʿ šibʿîm* one could indeed translate "seventy 'sevens'." (The Hebrew text of course does not read *šébaʿ šibʿîm*.) If the text were vocalized *šibʿîm šibʿîm*, however, the meaning would be "seventies seventy" in Hebrew (substantive first), or "seventy seventies" in English (numeral first). Plurality, therefore, can be contextually established under appropriate conditions. The problem is that putting a plural ending on the word for "seven" removes the rendering "sevens" from the list of possibilities, as documented above.

[10]For a discussion of other views see James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927; reprint edition, 1979), pp. 390-401.

[11]Under the leadership of Nehemiah, ". . . the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days." This, of course, was only one part of the work of reconstruction. Consider also John 2:20, "The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?'"

[12]The siege of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. took approximately two months. "The Babylonian Chronicle gives but a brief reference to operations in this year against Judah. It simply states that Nebuchadrezzar, after marching to Hatti-territory (Syria-Palestine), 'besieged Jerusalem (literally: the city of Judah) and seized it on the second day of the month Adar. He then captured its king and appointed a king of his own choice, having received heavy tribute from the city, which he sent back to Babylon.' It is thus clear that Judah was the primary objective for this year's expedition, which was led by Nebuchadrezzar in person. The date of this conquest of Jerusalem is now known precisely for the first time, namely, the second of Adar (15/16th March 597 B.C.). The siege cannot have lasted more than two months, for it is unlikely that it began earlier than a month after the main Babylonian forces had left their homes in Kislev [December 598 B.C.]" (D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* [London: British Museum, 1956], p. 33; see also pp. 48, 72-73).

The siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. took five months. "While a part of the army received orders to push on to meet him before Jerusalem, Titus himself advanced with the main body of his forces from Caesarea, and a few days before the Passover, 14th Nisan or April, of A.D. 70, arrived before the walls of the Holy City. . . . After a five months' siege, after having been obliged laboriously to press on step by step, gaining one position after another, the whole city at last, on 8th Gorpiaeus (Elul, September), fell into the hands of the conquerors" (Emil Schürer, *A*

History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer [New York: Schocken Books, 1961], pp. 264-65, 272).

[13]Dan 8:27.

[14]The Anointed One was to be cut off in the middle of the last week, not at its end.

Appendix
Introductory Comments

The series of quotations reproduced below are taken from Gleason L. Archer, Jr., trans., *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel* (Grand rapids: Baker Book House, 1958; paperback edition, 1977), with page numbers indicated after each quote. (Minor editorial notes have been omitted.)

Jerome wrote his commentary on the book of Daniel in approximately A.D. 400. Fortunately he was both widely read and broad minded enough to quote extensively from writers with whom he may or may not have agreed. In his comments on Dan 9:24-27 Jerome preserves a veritable catalogue of earlier opinion for us, which has great value for studying the history of the church's teaching on this passage.

The various fathers' comments are quoted without comment below. Both the person who is drawn to unusual doctrinal positions and the one who is able to deal with differences of opinion and keep all sides of a question in perspective will find something of interest in the following statements. If one reads to find how the various writers disagree, there are any number of differences to be found and not a few unusual positions. Of greater interest, however, is the broader fact that each one without exception assumes the validity of the day-year principle, by which a day in this particular example of apocalyptic prophecy stands for a literal year.

There are some variations on this theme. For example, Eusebius Pamphili suggests that the seventieth week be made of seven 10-day units instead of seven 1-day units as in all the other sixty-nine weeks of the prophecy. The important thing to notice is what each commentator assumes as he writes. Eusebius' remarks show that taking a day for a year was the starting point for his exegesis.

Another point, dependent on the first, is that the seventy weeks of Dan 9 lead each of the fathers cited up to the first coming of Christ. Some had a better understanding of this matter than others. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (trans. Isaac Boyle [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966] 1:6, p. 31) the same Eusebius writes:

> It may suffice then, to have said thus much, in proof of another prophecy, which has terminated in the appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Most clearly indeed does the book of Daniel, expressly embracing a number of certain weeks, until the government of Christ, concerning which we have treated in another work, predict that after the termination of these, the sacred unction amongst the Jews should be totally abolished. And this is evidently proved to have been fulfilled at the time of our Saviour's birth.

To be more accurate the seventy weeks extend to our Saviour's death rather than His birth. But this is a small difference in the present context. Eusebius had seen the essential thing; he had seen that the prophecy points the reader to Christ. In this he was correct regardless of any secondary matters that he might have profited from seeing more clearly.

The fact that among the various writers quoted there is diversity on matters of detail is not surprising and, entirely to the contrary, is expected. However, to draw from these quotations as one's primary point that such diversity existed would be to miss the essential point. All the

varieties and shades of exegesis documented above are messianic in nature and each one presupposes some form of the day-year principle. A theme must exist before there can be variations on it; the similarities among these ancient interpretations far outweigh their differences. It is clear that the day-year principle was universally accepted as a valid basis for exegesis in Dan 9 by the early Christian church. It is not by any means a nineteenth century innovation.

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Quotations from Early
Church Fathers

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Jerome (paraphrasing the passage)

And so, because thou dost supplicate for Jerusalem and prayest for the people of the Jews, hearken unto that which shall befall thy people in seventy weeks of years, and those things which will happen to thy city. (p. 95)

Africanus

"There is no doubt but what it constitutes a prediction of Christ's advent, for He appeared to the world at the end of seventy weeks. . . . These fifty-nine plus eight-year periods produce enough intercalary months to make up fifteen years, more or less; and if you will add these fifteen years to the four hundred seventy-five years, you will come out to seventy weeks of years, that is, a total of four hundred and ninety years." (pp. 95, 97-98)

Eusebius Pamphili

"That is to say, the purpose is that seven weeks be counted off, and then afterward sixty-two weeks, which come to a total of four hundred and eighty-three years after the time of Cyrus." (p. 99)

This same Eusebius reports another view as well, which I do not entirely reject, that most authorities extend the one [last] week of years to the sum of seventy years, reckoning each year as a ten-year period [reading the corrupt *upputatio* as *supputatio*]. They also claim that thirty-five years intervened between the passion of the Lord and the reign of Nero, and that it was at this latter date when the weapons of Rome were first lifted up against the Jews, this being the half-way point of the week of seventy years. After that, indeed, from the time of Vespasian and Titus (and it was right after their accession to power that Jerusalem and the temple were burned) up to the reign of Trajan another thirty-five years elapsed. And this, they assert, was the week of which the angel said to Daniel: 'And he shall establish a compact with many for one week.' For the Gospel was preached by the Apostles all over the world, since they survived even unto that late date. According to the tradition of the church historians, John the Evangelist lived up to the time of Trajan. Yet I am at a loss to know how we can understand the earlier seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks to involve seven years each, and just this last one to involve ten years for each unit of the seven, or seventy years in all." (pp.

102-3)

Apollinarius of Laodicea

"For from the coming forth of the Word, when Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, to the forty-ninth year, that is, the end of the seven weeks [God] waited for Israel to repent." (p. 104)

Origen

When Origen came to deal with [reading *praefuisset* instead of *profuisset*] this chapter, . . . he made this brief observation in the tenth volume of the Stromata: "We must quite carefully ascertain the amount of time between the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, and the advent of Christ, and discover how many years were involved, and what events are said to have occurred during them. Then we must see whether we can fit these data in with the time of the Lord's coming." (pp. 105-6)

Tertullian

"How, then are we to show that Christ came within the sixty-two weeks? . . . Let us see, then, how the years are fulfilled up to the advent of Christ." (p. 106)