

Stephen P. Bohr's Notes on Daniel 9

Overview of Daniel 9 and its Historical Context (538 B. C.)

As chapter 9 begins, Jerusalem was in ruins and the prophet was diligently studying the seventy year prophecy of Jeremiah 25:9-13. There was a specific reason why Daniel was studying this particular prophecy. Through Jeremiah, God had promised that the captivity of Israel would last only seventy years. But eleven years earlier, God had seemed to indicate that the sanctuary and the people would be trampled under foot for 2300 years (Daniel 8:14). This apparent discrepancy perplexed Daniel. He could not comprehend how the prophecy of Jeremiah 25 could be reconciled with the one in Daniel 8:14.

Daniel then uttered one of the most deeply spiritual prayers in the Bible. He first **confessed** his sin and that of his people (verses 4-11a). Next he described the **results** of his sin and that of his people (verses 11b-14), and finally he **interceded** before God, asking Him to restore Israel to its land (verses 15-19). The urgency of Daniel's prayer was directly related to the vision he had received eleven years earlier (Daniel 8). He seemed to surmise that perhaps God now intended to prolong the seventy years to 2300 because of the covenant unfaithfulness of Israel. Obviously, Daniel did not want the seventy years to be extended to 2300, so he poured out his heart to God, pleading for forgiveness.

In response to Daniel's plea, God sent Gabriel to inform him that his prayer had been accepted and that an explanation would be given (9:20-23). The desolation of Jerusalem in Daniel 9:2 **motivated** Daniel's prayer and the promise of Jerusalem's restoration and rebuilding was the **answer** to his prayer.

In verses 24-27 Gabriel explained that the city of Jerusalem and its people would be given another opportunity. The city, temple and walls would be rebuilt according to the schedule of Jeremiah's prophecy. Seventy weeks (490 years) would be given Israel to redeem her past failures. At the very end of this period, God would even send Messiah the Prince who would make a final urgent appeal to Israel. But this appeal would fall upon deaf ears and as a result the theocracy would come to an end, Jerusalem would be destroyed, the temple demolished and the people scattered among the nations.

Links Between Daniel 8 and 9

Almost all Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars fail to link Daniel 8 with Daniel 9. This is puzzling in that there are multiple textual and contextual reasons to link the two chapters. Let's take a look at several reasons why these two chapters must be connected:

1. In Daniel 8 contains a **vision** (*chazon*) in verses 1-12 and an **audition** (that is, two angels speaking to each other) in verses 13-14. Gabriel then explains the vision in verses 19-26. A close examination of this chapter reveals that while all the elements of the **vision** proper were explained, the **audition** was left unexplained. This was presumably due to the fact that Daniel got ill and Gabriel was not able to finish his explanation (Daniel 8:27). It appears that Daniel's illness was caused by his inability to reconcile the meaning of Jeremiah's seventy year prophecy with the prophecy of the 2300 days. After all, how could God's people be restored to their land after seventy years, if their city and temple were to be trampled upon by the little horn for 2300 years?

When Daniel received the vision of chapter 8 in 550 B. C., Babylon had not yet fallen. On the other hand, when the events of Daniel 9 transpired in 538 B. C., Babylon had just fallen and Medo-Persia had taken over the kingdom (see, Daniel 5). Daniel knew that the fall of Babylon was the harbinger that Israel would soon be released from bondage. And yet nothing could be seen on the horizon to indicate that such a release was imminent. Daniel knew that Jeremiah's seventy years had begun in 605 B. C., when he and his three friends had been taken to Babylon. Therefore he also understood that the release of Israel must take place around the year 536 B. C.

There can be little doubt that the prophecy of the 2300 days/years haunted Daniel at this point in time. He surmised that Israel's unfaithfulness was so great, that God had decided to prolong Israel's captivity from seventy years to 2300. This is the reason why, at the start of chapter 9, Daniel was studying Jeremiah's seventy year prophecy (Daniel 9:1-2). He wanted to know how this prophecy was related to the 2300 days/years.

Daniel's prayer, which immediately follows his study of Jeremiah's prophecy, includes a confession of Israel's sin and an appeal to God's mercy. The word "defer" at the climax of his prayer has profound significance (verse 19). The Hebrew *achar* is variously translated in the Old Testament. It can mean "to loiter, to delay, to procrastinate, to hinder, to tarry, to slacken." In Exodus 22:29 it is translated "delay." In Genesis 24:56 it is rendered "hinder." In Deuteronomy 23:21 uses "slack." Judges 5:28 translates "tarry" as does Habakkuk 2:3 and Proverbs 23:30. Daniel feared that God would delay the release of Israel beyond the seventy years and so he poured out his heart in prayer appealing to God's covenant loyalty and faithfulness.

2. The **very same angel** who had explained the vision of Daniel 8 came back to explain the time element which had been left unexplained (Daniel 8:16-17, 26; 9:21-23)). To put it differently, the angel came back to finish in Daniel 9 what he had started in Daniel 8. Thus these two chapters are linked by the very same angel, Gabriel!

Furthermore, it is of more than passing interest that the unexplained time element of Daniel 8 was later explained in Daniel 9 by the **same angel** who began his explanation with a time prophecy!! That is to say, the unexplained **time element** of Daniel 8 was explained with a **time prophecy** in Daniel 9.

3. Gabriel told Daniel: “Seventy weeks are **determined** upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” (Daniel 9:24, KJV). The word “determined” in the Hebrew is *chatak*. It can mean “to cut, to decide, to decree, to ordain, to appoint.” The New English Bible translates it “marked out.” The word appears only this time in the Hebrew Bible but in Mishnaic Hebrew it is frequently used in a literal sense to describe the act of **cutting off** parts of animals for the sacrificial service, the **cutting off** of the foreskin in circumcision, the **cutting off** of a lamp wick and a miner **cutting out** ore from a mountain. Figuratively, the word is also used to describe the act of cutting or dividing a Bible verse into two parts for study.

The root meaning of this word, then, appears to be “cut off.” Now, when something is cut off, it must be cut off from something! For example, if you are going to cut a branch off a tree there must be a tree to cut it off from!! This being the case, we must ask: “From what are the seventy weeks cut off?” The answer is simple: It must have been cut off from the larger prophecy of the 2300 days/years.

4. A close inspection of Daniel 8 and 9 shows that they both deal with the same central themes. They both speak of the trampling of the city, the people, the sanctuary and the Prince (compare Daniel 8:11-14, 25 with Daniel 9:3-19, 25-26). However, (we shall study this in more detail when we deal with Daniel 11) while Daniel 8 focuses primarily on the trampling of spiritual Israel by the papacy (see, Daniel 8:13; Revelation 11:2; Daniel 11:31; Revelation 17:1-5; Matthew 24:15), Daniel 9 has to do with the trampling of literal Israel by Rome (see, Daniel 9:26-27; Luke 21:20; Matthew 24:15).

It is obvious that Daniel did not clearly comprehend the shift from literal Israel to spiritual Israel. If he had understood this, he would have realized that the seventy weeks apply to the literal Jews in literal Jerusalem with a literal temple while the 2300 days have to do with spiritual Israel in spiritual Jerusalem with a spiritual temple. Daniel’s failure to comprehend this distinction led him to believe that the 2300 days applied to literal Israel, an idea he could not reconcile with Jeremiah’s seventy year prophecy.

Succinctly, Daniel 8 refers to both pagan and papal Rome. Daniel 9 then picks up on the destruction of literal Jerusalem by pagan Rome and Daniel 10-12 take us further ahead to the destruction of spiritual Jerusalem by papal Rome. Perhaps this is the reason why Daniel 8 provides only one little horn to represent both Romes. Daniel 9 then explains the role of

pagan Rome in the desolation of literal Israel while Daniel 10-12 expounds upon the role of papal Rome in the trampling of spiritual Israel.

5. After God gave Daniel the vision of chapter 8, Gabriel was commanded (the verb is imperative) to help Daniel understand (*bin*) it (8:16; see also 8:15-17, 23). Gabriel then undertook the task of explaining the meaning of the ram, the he-goat and the little horn (8:19-25). Yet at the end of chapter 8 we are informed that Daniel was “astonished at the vision, but none understood (*bin*)” (8:27). It becomes obvious that if Daniel did not understand the vision at the end of the chapter, then Gabriel had not completed his commanded mission! We would therefore expect Gabriel to come back at some time to complete his mission. Did he come back?

In Daniel 9:2 we are told that Daniel understood (*bin*) that Jeremiah’s prophecy was to be fulfilled at the end of the seventy years. But, as we have seen, there were many things which Daniel still did not understand. Therefore, in Daniel 9:22-23 we find Gabriel returning to speak with Daniel. He told Daniel that he had come to give him understanding (verse 22, *bin*) and then, in the imperative, he commands Daniel: “understand (*bin*) the matter, and consider (*bin*) the vision (*mareh*).” The question which begs to be asked at this point is: “Understand **which** vision?” To this point in Daniel 9 there has been no vision, only a prayer. This must mean that Gabriel returned to explain the vision of the previous chapter. Significantly, after Gabriel gave his added explanation in Daniel 9 we are told that Daniel “understood (*bin*) the thing, and had understanding (*bin*) in the vision” (Daniel 10:1; *mareh*). Obviously, the further explanation of Daniel 9 cleared up many misconceptions which Daniel had entertained after the vision of Daniel 8.

6. Another clear link between the two chapters is Daniel’s remark: “Yea, while 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.” (Daniel 9:21). The expression “whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning” clearly echoes back to Daniel 8:16. It bears repeating that there was no new vision in Daniel 9 so Daniel must be referring to the vision given in Daniel 8. This is irrefutable evidence that the vision spoken of by Gabriel in Daniel 9 is the same as the one which had given in Daniel 8.
7. Even though the vision of Daniel 8 was given during the reign of Babylon (8:1), Daniel was already in Shusan, the capital of the Medo-Persian kingdom. It is noteworthy that God began the vision with Medo-Persia and not with Babylon! The prayer and explanation in Daniel 9 also occur within the time frame of the Medo-Persian kingdom (Daniel 8:2, 20; 9:1). Though Media will be dropped in chapters 10-12 and only Persia will be referred to, the fact still remains that all the visions and explanations of Daniel 8-12 are given within the time frame of the Medo-Persian kingdom. This would seem to indicate that all these chapters deal with the same subject matter.

8. A structural matter will also help us discern the relationship between the two chapters. A close look at the great chain prophecies of the book of Daniel reveals that each has a vision and its corresponding explanation, except for Daniel 11. Notice the following:

Daniel 2: Has a dream or vision and an auditory explanation

Daniel 7: Has a dream and an auditory explanation

Daniel 8: Has a vision and an auditory explanation

Daniel 9: Has only an auditory explanation

Daniel 10-12: Have only auditory explanations but no new vision

The fact that the last vision of Daniel is in chapter 8 (with the exception of the personal theophany of Jesus in chapter 10) would seem to indicate that the rest of the book is simply an auditory explanation of this chapter. This means that there is no new material of substance given after Daniel 8. Chapters 9-12 simply explain and amplify the vision and audition already given in chapter 8. This would seem to prove that Daniel 8-12 is a book within a book, that is to say, the sealed book of Daniel 12:4.

Comments on Verse 23

In response to Daniel's prayer (verses 3-19), Gabriel arrived to **further explain** the vision of Daniel 8. It is significant that he not only came to explain the *mareh* or audition, but also the *chazon* or vision. In other words, he began his explanation in Daniel 9 at the very same point where he had begun his explanation of Daniel 8, that is, with Persia. This he must do in order to indicate that the 2300 days would begin within the historical time frame of Persia. Gabriel said: "I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand (*bin*) the matter; and consider (*bin*) the vision (*chazon*). Then Gabriel undertook the task of explaining the seventy weeks. To this we must now turn our attention.

Remarks on the Literary Structure of Daniel 9:24-27

The prophecy of the 70 weeks appears to be, in a literary sense, a disorganized mumbo jumbo. Yet a careful study of the literary structure reveals a beautiful symmetry. Notice in the following chart that the description alternates between the city and people on the one hand and Messiah the Prince on the other:

Introduction: "Going Forth of the Word"

City and People	Messiah the Prince
"Restore and build Jerusalem"	"Messiah the Prince"
"seven weeks"	"threescore and two Weeks"
"the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times"	"after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off"
"the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary and the end thereof shall be with a flood"	"He [the Prince] 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"

Conclusion: "and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate"

The Accomplishments of the Seventy Weeks

According to Daniel 9:24 six major accomplishments would be completed within the Seventy Week period. Let's take a look at them.

- 1. "Finish the transgression."** The word "transgression" here is the strongest word for sin in the Old Testament. It literally means "rebellion" or "revolt." This was not rebellion in general terms. The use of the definite article indicates that this was a specific rebellion. In other words, the Seventy Weeks would bring an end to the revolt of the Jewish nation. As we shall see in our detailed study of the Seventy Weeks which follows, their rebellion against God could come to an end in one of two ways: **1)** They could receive the Messiah and thus bring their constant rebellion to an end, or, **2)** they could irrevocably revolt against the Messiah and thus bring the theocracy to an end. This prophecy clearly indicates that they would choose the second option.
- 2. "To make an end of sins."** Notice that we are not told that the seventy weeks would bring *sinning* to an end but rather *sins* to an end! Jesus made an end of sins by bearing them on the cross. Jesus, legally, took away the *sin* of the world (John 1:29). Hebrews 1:3 tells us that when Jesus 'had by Himself purged our *sins*, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." In Hebrews 9:28 we are told that "Christ was once offered to bear the *sins* of many. . ." In Hebrews 9:26 we are unequivocally told that Jesus, "once in the end of the world hath appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself." And in Hebrews 10:12 we are told

that “this man, [Jesus] after he had offered one sacrifice *for sins* forever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

3. **“To make reconciliation for iniquity.”** Jesus reconciled man to God by His sacrifice. In the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53 we are told that the Messiah would bring peace through His work: “But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our **iniquities**: the chastisement of our **peace** was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed.” In Romans 5:10 we are told why man needed peace: “For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God by the death of his Son, much more, being **reconciled**, we shall be saved by his life.” In II Corinthians 5:18-21 the apostle Paul amplifies the idea of reconciliation through Christ: “To wit, that God was in Christ, **reconciling** the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . For he [the Father] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”
4. **“To bring in everlasting righteousness.”** In Jeremiah 23:6 we are told that one of the names of Jesus is, “The Lord our Righteousness.” And in the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53:11 we are told: “by his knowledge shall my **righteous** servant **justify** many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” This thought is developed in the New Testament on repeated occasions. For example, in Romans 3 and 4 the apostle Paul fully expounds this idea of Christ our righteousness. By living a sinless life, Jesus wove a perfect robe of His righteousness which He is willing to impute to all who believe. This righteousness is available right now in Jesus. When we receive Jesus we have His life now (I John 5:11-12), we are citizens of heaven (Phillipians 3:20), we are accepted in the beloved and seated in heaven with Him (Ephesians 1:6; 2:6). Of course, there is an **already** and a **not yet**. We can have his imputed and imparted righteousness even now but to live in a world where only righteousness dwells empirically is still future: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (II Peter 3:13).
5. **“To seal up the vision and prophecy.”** At this point we will not say much about this phrase because we will deal with it extensively later. Suffice it to say now, that by rejecting the Messiah, the Jewish nation brought the vision and prophecy of the 70 weeks to an end. God would no longer communicate with Israel through prophets and visions. When they stoned Stephen, as he was having a vision of Christ and was fulfilling his role as a prophet, God’s communications to Israel came to a final end. That is to say, Stephen received the last vision and was the last prophet which God sent to Israel.
6. **“To anoint the most Holy.”** The phrase literally reads: “to anoint the holy of holies.” This phrase can be understood in one of two ways: 1) the “most Holy” is a reference to the Messiah as a person (see Hebrews 7:26), or, 2) the “most Holy” refers to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. How must we understand this anointing of the most Holy?

When the Old Testament tabernacle services were inaugurated, the **high priest** as well as the **sanctuary** in its totality (including the most holy place) were anointed. In harmony with the

type, when Jesus ascended to heaven to begin His heavenly ministry, the whole heavenly sanctuary was to be anointed as well (including the most holy place).

But not only was the sanctuary anointed. Jesus was also anointed as priest/king to begin His work in the holy place (Acts 2:32-36 in the light of the background given in Leviticus 8:1-12 LOOK UP ALSO THE QUOTATION OF EGW ON THE ANOINTING OF JESUS IN THE HOLY PLACE UPON HIS ASCENSION.)

We must conclude, therefore, that the anointing of the most Holy must refer to Jesus as a person as well as to the most holy place of the sanctuary. This means that the seventy week prophecy refers to all the highlights of Jesus' mission— His baptism, death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God to begin His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

“From the Going Forth of the Word”

We find the following words at the beginning of Gabriel's explanation of the seventy weeks: “from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem. . . .” (Daniel 9:25). There are two issues we wish to settle as we study the meaning of this expression: 1) How should “word” (*dabar*) be translated, and, 2) When was this “word” given?

Regarding the first issue, the word *dabar* is very common in the Old Testament. Its usual and proper translation is “word”. But is this the best translation in the context of Daniel 9? There are several instances in the Old Testament where *dabar* should be translated in the sense of a royal “decree” or “command. For instance, in Isaiah 45:23 the word *dabar* is used in conjunction with an oath. A word with an oath takes on the form of a royal decree. In Esther 1:19 the word is used in the sense of a royal commandment to be incorporated into the law code of the Medes and Persians to the effect that Vashti would never again appear before the king. In Ezra 7:13 Artaxerxes Longanimus gives a royal decree (*dabar*) which authorizes the Jews to return to Jerusalem. These two references in Esther and Ezra are particularly significant because, as we shall see, they are found in sources which are directly related to the historical context of Daniel 9.

Besides Daniel 9:25, the word *dabar* also appears two verses earlier in 9:23. There, Gabriel is given a command (*dabar*) by God to explain the 70 weeks to Daniel. Thus, in Daniel 9:25 we have a horizontal royal command (Artaxerxes to the Jews) and in Daniel 9:23 we have a vertical command or decree (God to Gabriel).

The formula “from. . . . unto” in verse 25 also proves that the 70 weeks time period is not merely some general, unspecific time period. This formula clearly indicates that the 70 weeks have a specific, discernable, starting and ending point.

Four Possible Decrees

Four dates have been suggested as the fulfillment of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem. Notice the following chart:

	536	520	515	457	445	408
70 years	+	+	+	+	+	+
Plaza and	Cyrus' Decree	Darius I Decree	Temple	Decree of Artaxerxes	Artaxerxes'	
—	Ezra 1:2-4 Ezra 4:1-3:	Ezra 6:1-13 Haggai	Finished	Ezra 7:12-26 Ezra 4:7-23	Permission to	Decision Continue
Making	Samaritans Opposed	Zechariah Joshua			Rebuilding Neh. 2:1-4,	Finally 17,
Established		Zerubbabel		20; 6:1-15; PK 609, 628-29, 635-80	Daniel 9:25	

The four dates which have been suggested as the fulfillment of the “decree to restore and build Jerusalem are: 536, 520, 457 and 445. Which of these is the correct date? Let’s examine each of them.

1. **The decree of Cyrus the Great in 536:** This cannot be the date for the beginning of the 70 weeks for two reasons:

First of all, a beginning date of 536 makes it impossible for the 70 weeks to be fulfilled in the Messiah. Four hundred and eighty three years after 536 B. C., would take us to the year 53 B. C., a date far to early for the coming of the Messiah.

Secondly, both Ezra 1:2-4 and II Chronicles 36:23 make it crystal clear that Cyrus’ decree did not authorize the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem. It only gave permission to rebuild the temple. But what about Isaiah 44:28; 45:13? Don’t these texts say that Cyrus would give a decree to rebuild the city? These verses in Isaiah are to be understood as Cyrus beginning the process which would ultimately lead to the rebuilding of the city. They are not to be taken to mean that he would give a command to rebuild the city.

Both Ezra and II Chronicles give us the actual decree and nothing is said there about the rebuilding of the city. Finally, for the sake of argument, even if Cyrus had given a decree to rebuild the city (which he clearly did not) this would still not fulfill the specifications of the prophecy of Daniel 9:25. This prophecy requires a decree not only to **rebuild** Jerusalem but also to **restore** it. As we shall see later, restoring and building are two separate, though related, ideas.

2. **The Confirmatory Decree of Darius I (Darius the Persian) in 520:** This decree does not fulfill the specifications of Daniel 9:25 either.

The extant Biblical evidence indicates that when Cyrus gave his decree, many of God's people returned to Jerusalem with great enthusiasm to rebuild the temple (Ezra 2). The foundation of the temple was quickly laid but then Samaritan opposition halted the work. As a result of this Samaritan opposition (Ezra 4:1-5), the people ceased building the temple and focused on their own personal affairs. This sad condition is described in Haggai 1:1-11. For over 15 years the temple remained with only the foundation laid. But then, in 520, Darius I reaffirmed the decree which had been given in 536 by Cyrus (Ezra 6:1-13). Even a cursory reading of this decree reveals that it was simply a reconfirmation of the decree which had been given previously by Cyrus. It gave only permission to rebuild the temple, not the city.

This decree led Zerubbabel, Joshua, Zechariah and Haggai to encourage the people to awaken from their slumber and continue the work of rebuilding the temple. The book of Haggai describes the renewed enthusiasm of the people. As a result of Darius' decree and the leadership of Zerubbabel, Joshua, Zechariah and Haggai, the temple was finished in only five years (Nehemiah 6:15)!

3. **The Decree of Artaxerxes I in 457:** The Biblical evidence indicates that this is the only decree which fulfills the specifications of Daniel 9:25. As we have already seen, neither of the previous two decrees gave permission for the Jews to rebuild and restore the city. On the other hand, this decree of Artaxerxes says nothing about the actual rebuilding of the temple, only that Artaxerxes gave gifts for the temple which had already been rebuilt! The book of Ezra leaves no doubt that this was the third decree given by Persian kings (Ezra 6:14-15. We have noted previously that the first two do not meet the specifications of Daniel 9:25 so we must take a closer look at this third decree which is found in Ezra 7:11-26 (see also, Prophets and Kings, p. 610).

But before we scrutinize the decree as such, it would be well to underline that Artaxerxes' decree was given in the year 457 B. C. This date can be derived from Ezra 7:7-8 where we are told that the decree was given in the fall of the seventh year of Artaxerxes. The year 457 B. C., as the seventh year of king Artaxerxes, is one of the most firmly rooted dates in ancient history. The work of Siegfried Horn and Kenneth Wood, The Chronology of Ezra 7, is definitive in settling the reliability of this date.

Now to the decree. It will be noticed that Daniel 9:25 requires a decree to both **restore** and **build** Jerusalem. Nothing short of this can fulfill the specifications of the prophecy. As we shall see below, **restore** and **build**, though related, do not mean the same thing. We shall find that "build" refers to the actual physical construction of the city, while "restore" is a reference to the reestablishment of the governance of the city according to the specifications of the Hebrew theocracy. It is clear that the decree of Artaxerxes gave Ezra the right to reestablish the theocratic governance of Israel by appointing magistrates and judges to judge the people according to the law of God (Ezra 7:25). It also gave the judges and magistrates the right to punish violations of the law of God even to the point of imposing the death penalty (Ezra 7:26). But what about permission to build?

In Ezra 4:7-23 (the passage, for some unexplainable reason, was inserted at this point in the book of Ezra though it is out of chronological order with what comes before and after) we are told that in the **early reign** of Artaxerxes, the returned exiles were in the process of rebuilding the city, when their enemies—Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of their Samaritan companions—sent a letter to King Artaxerxes complaining that the Jews were “building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.” (Ezra 4:12). They then requested that the king put a halt to the endeavor for his own good (Ezra 4:13-16). As a result, Artaxerxes sent a letter to the enemies of the Jews commanding them to compel the Jews to halt their work (Ezra 4:18-23). This they did, *pronto!* (Ezra 4:23). But notice that Artaxerxes left the door open because he said: “cause these men to cease, and that this city shall not be builded, until *another* commandment shall be given from me.” (Ezra 4:21). Though the word “another” is not part of the Hebrew text, it is interesting the KJV translators believed that a decree had already been given once before by Artaxerxes authorizing the city to be rebuilt!

It is highly unlikely that the Jews would have begun building the city without permission from the king. I believe that the scenario is as follows: The decree of 457 B. C., was the original decree given by Artaxerxes authorizing the rebuilding of the city by the Jews. But after he gave this decree, the enemies of the Jews, alarmed by the idea that the Jews would soon function as a theocracy again, sent a slanderous letter to the king which led him to suspend the decree he had given until the matter could be further reviewed. The building project was suspended and remained so until several years latter. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes we find that Jerusalem was still in ruins. In fact, Nehemiah describes the situation to king Artaxerxes: “. . . the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire. . . .” (Nehemiah 2:3). The significant point here is that the city was still in ruins in 445 B. C. even though Artaxerxes had given the decree to build and restore the city in 457 B. C. And why was it still in ruins? The best explanation is that Artaxerxes had suspended his first decree because of the slanderous accusations of the Samaritans.

We shall have much more to say about this decree when we analyze the meaning of the word “street” and “wall” in Daniel 9:25. But now let’s turn to the fourth “decree.”

4. **Permission Given to Nehemiah to Rebuild the City and Walls in 445:** Why have I put the word “decree” in quotation marks? Simply because this was not a decree at all. It simply gave Nehemiah **personal permission** to go to Jerusalem and to lead out in the task of rebuilding the city and the walls. This was not a new decree, but rather a reinstatement of the suspended decree which was given in 457 B. C.

In Nehemiah 2-6 we find the fascinating story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The narration begins with Nehemiah downcast because the city of Jerusalem “lies waste and the gates are burned with fire” (Nehemiah 2:3). When Artaxerxes sees Nehemiah’s grief he asks why he is so downcast. Nehemiah explains that it is because of the condition of his beloved city. The

king then says to Nehemiah: “For what dost thou make request?” (Nehemiah 2:4). This was the moment Nehemiah had been waiting for. He said to the king: “. . . send me unto Judah, unto **the city** of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may **build it**.” (Nehemiah 2:5). In response, the king gave Nehemiah letters of permission to return to Jerusalem to undertake the task of rebuilding and provided an escort (Nehemiah 2:7-9).

Chapters 2-6 describe the rebuilding of the walls and the gate in the midst of tremendous opposition from Sanballat, Tobias and Geshem. These men and their sympathizers used every stratagem in their arsenal to try and impede the work of rebuilding, but their every plot was disarmed. The result was extraordinary– the wall and gates were finished in only 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15; for more on this period of trial, read Prophets and Kings, pp. 609, 628-29, 635-680).

But what took place after the rebuilding was finished is as important as the building itself. When the construction was finished, genealogical records were set straight (chapter 7), the book of the law was read at the feast of booths–the captivity had ended and they now dwelt in their own land (chapter 8), the history of Israel was reviewed and the covenant renewed (chapter 9, especially verse 38), the covenant ritual was restored (chapter 10), the land was restored to those who had returned (chapter 11), and various violations of the book of the law were corrected (chapter 13). All of these actions in Nehemiah 7-13 constitute a restoration of the Hebrew theocracy in harmony with the laws of God.

No doubt there were still many things which needed to be corrected (the book of Malachi describes some of these) and no doubt the enemies of Israel continued to offer opposition. But by the year 408, the city had been fully rebuilt and the theocracy’s civil and religious system was in full force. The forty nine years between the giving of Artaxerxes’ decree and the completion of the building and restoring of Jerusalem were certainly turbulent and troublous times.

One further point. The permission given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah cannot fulfill the decree of Daniel 9:25 for chronological reasons. As we shall see, the “anointed one” was to come 483 years after the decree was given. If we begin the 483 years in 445 B. C., the Messiah would have to have been baptized in 37 A. D. No scholar that I know of ever suggests that Jesus began his public ministry in 37 A. D. This would mean that Jesus was crucified in the year 41 A. D. and Stephen was stoned in the year 44. This simply does not fit the historical data.

In conclusion, we have seen that there were four “decrees” having to do with the Jews after the exile. Two of these decrees were “original” and the other two were simply “confirmatory.” Notice:

536: **Original** decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple –Suspended by Cambyses in 522.

520: Decree of Darius I – **Confirmed** Cyrus’ decree and revoked Cambyses’ suspension.

- 457: **Original** Decree of Artaxerxes I to restore and build Jerusalem – Suspended by Artaxerxes himself early in his reign when the Samaritans complained.
- 445: “Decree” of Artaxerxes I – Revoked his previous suspension and **confirmed** his original decree to Nehemiah.

“To Restore and Build Jerusalem”

Many have overlooked the fact that in order for Daniel 9:25 to be fulfilled, a decree must be given to both **restore** and **build** Jerusalem, in that order. Some commentators have simply assumed that both of these words mean basically the same thing. But is this the case?

In order to understand what it means to restore and build Jerusalem we must first comprehend what “Jerusalem” means. Frequently, when the Bible speaks of “Jerusalem” it is not merely referring to the physical city but rather to the city as a *polis*, that is, as a living social, religious and political entity composed of people, commerce, rulers, magistrates, judges and civil and religious laws. In order for the city to function as a *polis* it must have self-governance as well as legal sovereignty over the land.

The captivity of Jerusalem involved far more than the destruction of the physical city. In fact, Jerusalem lost its governance before the city was destroyed. In Daniel 1:1-3 we are told that Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem in 605 and besieged it. He took king Jehoiakim captive as well as the royal seed and the princes. Thus Jerusalem lost her political autonomy or right to self-governance. She became subservient to Babylon. Even though the physical city of Jerusalem was not destroyed at this time, the seventy year captivity of Jerusalem did begin.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the captivity of Jerusalem began 19 years before the physical city was actually destroyed! Of course we know that in 586, the city itself was finally destroyed (II Chronicles 36:17-20). At that time the land was laid waste, the religious cultus came to an end, and the remaining political and military leaders were removed. Now Jerusalem had a double whammy: She had lost her political/religious autonomy and the physical city was in ruins. This two-fold idea is expressed clearly in Jeremiah 25:11 where we are told that the whole **land** was to be a desolation and astonishment and the nations [including Israel] would **serve** the king of Babylon for 70 years. II Kings 24 describes the actual destruction of the city and the temple. We are told in II Kings 24:14-15:

“And he [Nebuchadnezzar] **carried away all Jerusalem**, and all the **princes**, and all the **mighty men** of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the **craftsmen** and **smiths**: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away **Jehoiachin** to Babylon. . . .”

Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar did not carry away the physical city of Jerusalem. "Jerusalem" here refers to a socio/political entity composed of king, officers, military men and craftsmen (in actual fact, Daniel himself attributes the loss of self-governance and the destruction of the city to the apostasy of the kings, princes, fathers and judges [Daniel 9:6, 8, 12]).

Now, in order for Jerusalem to be reestablished in her previous position after the captivity, two things must happen: Her political/religious self-determination must be **restored** and the physical city must be **built**. These two tasks, though related, are not identical. The word "build" refers to the reconstruction of the physical city. But what does the word "restore" mean? The word "restore" means "to give back to" or "to return to a condition which existed before."

In Judges 11:13 the king of the children of Ammon complains to Jephthah: "Israel **took away** my land, when they came out of Egypt." He then makes the appeal: "now therefore **restore** those lands again peaceably." In II Samuel 9:7, David promised Mephibosheth: "I will **restore** thee all the land of Saul thy father." In both of these texts the emphasis falls on legally giving back land to an original owner.

In II Kings 14:22 we have the same two words which appear in Daniel 9:25. There we are told that Azariah "**built** Elath and **restored** it to Judah." This text makes it clear that "build" and "restore," though related, are not identical. What the text means is that the physical city of Elath was built and then governance over it was given to Judah.

In I Kings 12:21 we are told that Rehoboam came to Jerusalem and laid plans to "fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again [literally, to **restore** the kingdom] to Rehoboam the son of Solomon." In II Samuel 8:3 we are informed that David went on a military campaign to "recover [**restore**] his border at the river Euphrates."

None of the examples presented above have to do with the physical rebuilding of a city. The central idea is to legally restore land, to legally restore political governance or to restore the legitimate borders of the kingdom. We therefore must conclude that "restore" in Daniel 9:25 does not have to do so much with the physical rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem as such, but rather with the legal restoration of the land to its original owner and a giving back of the right to political self-governance according to the laws of God. The actual building of the city then follows. As we have previously seen, only the decree of Artaxerxes meets the criteria necessary to fulfill Daniel 9:25. Only the decree of Artaxerxes officially authorized the restoration of the Hebrew civil order and the right of Israel to govern herself according to the law of God (see, Ezra 7:25-26; also Nehemiah 8-13). And only the decree of Artaxerxes authorized the physical rebuilding of the city (review pages 9-11 above). Below we will provide further corroborating evidence for this.

"Unto the Messiah the Prince"

There is almost universal agreement among conservative Bible scholars that the Messiah the Prince is Jesus Christ. There are four issues we wish to deal with in this section: **1)** What does the word “Messiah” mean? **2)** Which event marked the anointing of Jesus? **3)** In what season of the year was Jesus anointed? **4)** Is the Prince of verse 26 the same person as the Messiah the Prince of verse 25??

- 1) The word “messiah” is relatively common in the Old Testament. It means, “to anoint” or “to smear.” It is used, for example, to describe the act of anointing David (I Samuel 16:13: Significantly, David received the Holy Spirit at the same moment) and Aaron (Exodus 29:7), among others. The emphasis in Daniel 9:25, however, is not on the **act** of anointing but rather on the **person** who is anointed. The phrase can be translated “unto the Anointed One, the Prince.”
- 2) An examination of the Biblical testimony clearly reveals that Jesus was anointed at the moment of His baptism. Let us examine the evidence from John’s Gospel first. In John 1:19 we informed that a group of Pharisees were sent to John with the purpose of asking him who he was. John was quick in his response: “I am not the Christ.” It would be well to remember that the word “Christ” in Greek (we still use the word “christened” to refer to an anointing) means the same thing as the word “Messiah” in Hebrew. In other words, John the Baptist was saying: “I am not the Messiah.”

A little later in the chapter we are told that John baptized Jesus and introduced Him as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). At the moment of the baptism the Holy Spirit fell upon Jesus (John 1:32-33). And just a short while later, Andrew told his brother Simon Peter: “We have found the **Messias**, which is, being interpreted, the **Christ**.” (John 1:41). And the following day, Nathanael said to Jesus: “thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” (John 1:49)

The gospel of Mark adds details which are not found in John. Mark 1:9-11 describes the baptism of Jesus. We are told that as He came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit fell upon Him. After being tempted of the devil, Jesus then began His public ministry in Galilee (Mark 1:14) with the words: “**The time is fulfilled** and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15; see also, Galatians 4:4). To which time prophecy was Jesus referring when He said, “The **time** is fulfilled?” The only Old Testament prophecy which pinpoints the time for the beginning of Christ’s ministry is the prophecy of the seventy weeks.

The same scenario is found in Luke. There we are told that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the moment of His baptism. Next He went to the wilderness to be tempted (Luke 4:1-13) Finally He returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14) to officially begin His public ministry. Significantly, he began His preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth with the words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He **hath anointed** me to preach the gospel. . . .” (Luke 4:18). In the light of Luke’s testimony, can there be any doubt that Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism?

In Acts 10:37, 38 we are distinctly told that Jesus was **anointed** with the Holy Spirit. As we have seen previously, the Holy Spirit fell upon Jesus at the moment of His baptism. Notice the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost:

“That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God **anointed** Jesus of Nazareth **with the Holy Ghost** and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

Furthermore, we are told in Daniel 9 that the seventy weeks were cut off specifically for the Jewish nation. This is the reason why Jesus told His disciples: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 10:5-6). Before the seventy weeks came to an end, the mission of Jesus as Messiah was confined to Israel.

- 3) As to the date of Messiah’s anointing, Luke 3:1-2 provides many chronological clues:

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate [26-36 A. D.] being governor of Judaea, and Herod [Antipas: 4 B. C. – 39 A. D.] being tetrarch in Galilee, and his brother Philip [4 B. C. – 33/34 A. D.] tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias [dates not known] the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas [A. D. 6-14] and Caiphas being high priests, the Word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”

The prophecy of the 70 weeks specifies that Messiah was to come “seven weeks and threescore and two weeks” after the decree of Artaxerxes. Beginning in 457 B. C. and going forward 483 years we arrive at 27 A. D. as the date for the manifestation of the Messiah (remember that there is no year “0” so only one year transpires between 1 B. C. and 1 A. D.). We know that Christ was cut off or killed in the middle of the last week, at springtime (Passover). This must mean that Messiah was manifested to Israel three and a half years earlier, in the fall (incidentally, this also means that Artaxerxes’ decree was given in the fall).

- 4) Notice that the Messiah is also called the Prince. No serious Bible scholar questions the fact that the Prince of verse 25 is the same person as the Messiah. This same person is called “the Prince of the Host” in Daniel 8:11 (see Joshua 5:13-15 for the only other occurrence of this title in the Old Testament), the “Prince of the Covenant” in Daniel 11:22, and “Michael that Great Prince” in Daniel 12:1. There can be no doubt that this title belongs to Jesus. In the great messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is called “the Prince of Peace.” And Peter calls Jesus “Prince” twice in the book of Acts (Acts 3:15; 5:31).

“Seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks”

Why does Gabriel refer to this period as “seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks” when he could have simply said, “sixty nine weeks”? In other words, why did he separate the seven weeks from the other sixty two weeks? As we look at the literary structure (see page 5) the answer becomes obvious. The seven weeks have to do with the city and people at the beginning of the seventy weeks, while the sixty two weeks take us to the time of Messiah the Prince at the end of the seventy weeks.

“The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times”

There are several issues we must address under this heading, among them, What is the meaning of “street” and “wall”? The diverse translations of these words into our English versions indicates that they are not easy to translate. Among the renditions are:

New International Version: “streets and trench”
Revised Standard Version: “squares and moat”
New American Standard: “plaza and moat”
New English Bible: “streets and conduits”
Jerusalem Bible: “squares and ramparts”
King James: “street and wall”

Let’s examine the meaning of the word “street”. The question suggests itself, What would be so significant about the rebuilding of one street (in singular) in Jerusalem after the captivity? No doubt there were many streets in Jerusalem after the rebuilding was finished. Why does Gabriel refer to just one street being rebuilt in troublous times?

The simple fact is that the Hebrew word *rachab* literally means “broaden, make room, broad expanse, broad roomy place.” The word simply means “a broad, open space in a town or village.” The evidence from the Old Testament seems to indicate that it could just as well have been translated “town square” or “plaza.”

The first time this word is used in the Bible is Genesis 19:2. In this text, Lot invited two angels to lodge in his house for the night but one of the angels replied: “Nay, but we will abide in **the street** all night.” In Deuteronomy 13:16 Moses told the Israelites that when they conquered a city, they were to “gather all the spoil of it into the midst of **the street** thereof” and to “burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit. . . .” Here the town plaza would seem to fit far better than a particular street. In Esther 4:6 we are informed that the street of the city was in front of the king’s gate and in Esther 6:9, 11 we are told that Mordecai was paraded through the street of the city on the king’s horse and in royal apparel. Once again, the town square seems to be a more likely place for this to occur than on a singular street.

There are two references in II Chronicles which bear a direct relationship to our study. In II Chronicles 29:4 we are told that Hezekiah gathered the priests and Levites in the east street to give them special instructions. II Chronicles 32:6 explains that Hezekiah “set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate

of the city.” We see here military leaders gathering in the town square for a pep talk. Once again, in both of these texts from Chronicles, the town square is a more likely meeting place than the street.

But the two references which are of signal interest are found in Ezra and Nehemiah, the very books which describe the restoring and building of Jerusalem after the captivity. Ezra 10:9-10 describes a general assembly of the people of Jerusalem at the **street** to receive instructions on the danger of mixed marriages. It is inconceivable that everyone in the city was able to gather in one particular street. It is more likely that they gathered at the town square. In Nehemiah 8:1-3 we are told that as soon as the wall of the city was finished, the whole city gathered “as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.” Here in **the street**, the covenant between God and Israel was renewed. The theocracy was officially restored by the reading of the Book of the Covenant.

Having lived in Latin America, I can understand the critical importance of the town square or plaza. Even though modernization has diluted many traditions, small towns can still be found where official proclamations are made at the plaza or town square. It is there that city hall is found. The town cathedral is there. It is there that parades begin and end. It is there that people gather for social events and to hear civic announcements. In the past, even judicial decisions were reached there. In short, the city square is the center of public civil, social and religious life.

What Daniel 9:25 is telling us, then, is that the town square was rebuilt in order to facilitate the establishment of social, political and religious life. This is precisely what is contemplated in the command to “restore” Jerusalem. By rebuilding the town square, God’s people were able to use it once again for civil and religious governance.

What about the word “wall”? As we have seen, this word is variously translated in modern versions as, “wall,” “trench,” “moat,” “rampart,” and “conduit.” But is this what the word really means?

The Hebrew word *harus* literally means “to cut,” “to sharpen,” or “to decide.” Except for Daniel 9:25 it is never translated “wall.” Why, then, is the word translated “wall” in this solitary instance? It seems there are two reasons. First of all, the building of the wall by Nehemiah after the captivity seems to have influenced the translators. Secondly, the LXX translates the Hebrew *harus* with *teichos* which clearly means “wall” in Greek. And Jerome’s Latin Vulgate picked up on the Greek translation by rendering the word *muri* (“walls”). Notice that Jerome changed the Hebrew singular to a plural to better fit the work of Nehemiah.

Let’s take a closer look at the meaning of the word in the Old Testament. In I Kings 20:40 king Ahab tells a certain prophet: “So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast **decided** (*harus*) it.” Here the word *harus* is properly translated “decided”. Significant is the fact that the concept of decision is coupled with the idea of judgment. In Job 14:5, the patriarch tells us

how man's existence is under God's control: "his days are **determined** (*harus*), the number of his months are with thee, thou hast **appointed** his bounds that he cannot pass." The idea here is that God **decides** how long man shall live. In Isaiah 10:22, 23 God promises that a remnant of Israel would return after the captivity. This had been "**decreed**" (*harus*) or "**determined**" (*harus*) beforehand. In Isaiah 28:22 we are told that God had "**determined**" (*harus*) a consumption upon the whole earth. Again, God makes a decision before it is implemented. In Joel 3:14 we are told that the nations are gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and there God will make His **decision** regarding them. The decision is clearly linked with the idea of judgment (Joel 3:9-13).

Significantly, the word *harus* is used in two other places in Daniel 9, and in both the basic idea is that of an execution of a judgment which had previously been decreed or decided by God. In verse 26 we are told that the desolations of Jerusalem had previously been **determined**, a thought which is repeated in verse 27. The key question is, Why is *harus* translated "wall" in verse 25 while it is translated "determined" in verses 26 and 27? Would it not be more consistent to translate it "decision" in all three instances? In short, Why is the word *harus* translated "wall" only in this one instance?

The simple answer to this question is that the word "decision" does not seem to fit in verse 25. What sense can be made out of a translation which reads: "the **decision** shall be built again?" How can a decision be built again? In order to answer this question, we must ask another: What does the town square have to do with the making of decisions? That is to say, if the expression "the street shall be built again, and the wall" should be translated "the square shall be built again and the decision," How does the building of the **square** relate to the ability to make **decisions**? The answer to this question is found in the fact that the **city gate** which led to the **square** was the place where judicial, military, civic and religious **decisions** were made. In order for decisions to be made at the gate of the square, the square had to be rebuilt. Let's notice several texts on the importance of the gate of the square.

The book of Lamentations describes the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. One of the results was that the elders had "**ceased from the gate**," where they were accustomed to meet to counsel the people and to render judicial decisions (Lamentations 5:14). We know that in antiquity every city had a council of elders whose task was to hear cases which were brought before them at the gate of the town square. We find an example of this in Jeremiah 26:8-24 where we are told that the trial of Jeremiah took place "in the **entry of the new gate** of the Lord's house" where the princes of Judah had gathered to render their decision (verse 10).

In II Samuel 15:1-3 we are told the fascinating story of how Absalom, David's son, "rose up early, and stood beside **the way of the gate**; and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said: 'Of what city art thou,' and he said: "Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel." And Absalom said unto him: "See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king

to hear thee.” (Verses 2-3). Significant here is the fact that Absalom usurped the king’s position **at the gate** to render judicial decisions.

In the days of Amos, we are told that the judges had become so corrupt that they had turned “judgment to wormwood” and left “off righteousness in the earth.” (Amos 5:7). This total lack of justice was reflected in the fact that the judges afflicted the just and took bribes and turned “aside the poor **in the gate** from their right” (Amos 5:12). Once again we find that justice was to be dispensed **at the gate**.

As we have already noted, immediately after the wall was finished in the days of Nehemiah, the people “gathered themselves together as one man into the **street** [city square?] that was before the water **gate**” (Nehemiah 8:13). There Nehemiah renewed the Covenant and the theocracy was restored. Among other things, the Book of the Law was read, the benevolent acts of God were recited, the Feast of Tabernacles was kept, the Levitical priesthood was reorganized, and the laws of marriage, tithing and Sabbath observance were renewed. Even a cursory reading of Nehemiah 8-13 reveals that Israel was reestablishing self-governance according to the laws of God at the water gate in the street [city square].

Let us summarize, then, the meaning of Daniel 9:25:

1. The decree in this verse must meet two specifications: It must be a decree to **restore** and **build** Jerusalem. While the restoration refers primarily to the reestablishment of self-governance in harmony with the laws of the theocracy, the building has to do with the actual reconstruction of the physical city: Its walls, its gates, its city square, etc.
2. The physical rebuilding of the **city square** (*rachab*) is of prime importance because there judicial, religious, civic and military **decisions** will be made in the reestablished theocracy. This is the reason why the square (*rachab*) and decision making (*harus*) are paired together in Daniel 9:25.
3. Because the KJV translators mistranslated the word *rachab* (as “street”), they also mistranslated the word *harus* (as “wall”). Once we realize that *rachab* means the “city square” and *harus* means “the ability to make decisions,” the sense of Daniel 9:25 becomes crystal clear!
4. Especially significant is the fact that Artaxerxes’ decree of 457 B. C. gave Israel the right to appoint judges and magistrates and to decide cases which were brought to them in harmony with the laws of God (see, Ezra 7:25-26).
5. The “troublesome times” were due to the fact that the Samaritans and other people of the land did not want Israel to rebuild the city and reestablish self-governance. They did all in their power to prevent the rebuilding and restoration, even to the point of accusing Israel of

sedition against the Persian government. The period between 457 and 408 B.C. can certainly be described as “troublous times.”

“after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself”

All the events we have described in the previous section take place within the time frame of the first 7 weeks (49 years). But then, 62 weeks (434 years) later, the Messiah was to be cut off. What is meant by the “cutting off” of the Messiah? And for whom was he cut off? The clearest answer to these questions is found in the parallel messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53. There are several parallel terms in Daniel 9 and Isaiah 53 among which are the following:

Transgression (Daniel 9:24; Isaiah 53:5, 8)
Sin (Daniel 9:5, 8, 11, 15, 20, 24; Isaiah 53:12)
Iniquity (Daniel 9:24; Isaiah 53:5, 6)
People (Daniel 9:6, 24, 26; Isaiah 53:8)
Righteousness (Daniel 9:7, 14, 18, 24; Isaiah 53:11)
Cut off (Daniel 9:26; Isaiah 53:8)

More specifically, let’s notice verse 8: “He [the suffering servant] was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was **cut off** [notice that in Daniel and Isaiah the verb is passive. This means that someone else cut him off] out of the land of the living: **for the transgression of my people** was he stricken.” It is clear here that the expression “cut off” means killed. And the prophecy makes it clear that he did this for his people and not for himself. This second fact is underlined in several other verses of Isaiah 53 as well: “he hath borne **our** griefs and carried **our** sorrows,” “he was wounded for **our** transgressions, he was bruised for **our** iniquities; the chastisement of **our** peace was upon him; and with his stripes **we** are healed,” “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of **us all**,” “he shall bear their iniquities,” “he was numbered with transgressors and he bare the sin of many” (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12). Isaiah 53 makes it crystal clear that the Messiah would be **killed** and that his death would be **vicarious**.

“And the people of the prince that shall come”

Who is this “prince who is to come” and who are his people? There seem to be three main views: **1)** The people are the Romans and the prince is Titus; **2)** The prince is the future Antichrist and the people will be his wicked followers; **3)** The people are the Jews and the prince is Jesus Christ. Which of these views is correct?

We will concern ourselves here only with options one and three because, as we shall see, when we understand these, the second option takes care of itself. Historicists in general and Seventh-day Adventists in particular, have traditionally taught that the prince was Titus and the people of the prince were the Romans who attacked and destroyed Jerusalem in

the year 70 A. D. Though this view is tempting, it does not really fit the literary structure of Daniel 9:24-27. Notice the following structural consideration:

Messiah (verse 25) Prince
+
Messiah (verse 26) Prince

There is no reason to believe that the Messiah the Prince of verse 25 is not the same Messiah and Prince of verse 26. In fact, the reference to Messiah and Prince in verse 26 provides a literary balance with the reference to Messiah the Prince in verse 25.

Another problem with the view that the prince is Titus and the people are the Romans is the fact that it is incongruous with the three personal pronouns in verse 27. In verse 27 we are told: "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. . . ." The context clearly indicates that the three "hes" of verse 27 are the same as the "he" of verse 26. In other words the prince of the people of verse 26 is the same person who confirms the covenant for one week, causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease and makes the city and sanctuary desolate.

It is true that Titus literally caused the sacrificial system to come to an end when he and his armies destroyed the Jerusalem temple. But it is not true that Titus made a strong covenant with Israel for one week. Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally believed that it was Jesus who brought the sacrificial system to an end when he died on the cross (as we shall see later, this view is corroborated by Matthew 27:51 as well as the book of Hebrews). Seventh-day Adventists have also believed that Jesus confirmed the covenant with Israel for one week, that is, during the last of the seventy weeks. It is clear that the antecedent to all three "hes" in verse 27 is the prince of verse 26. Let us put it this way: "the people of the **prince** that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. . . . and **he** [the prince] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week **he** [the prince] shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations **he** [the prince] shall make desolate. . . ."

Of course, if the prince of verse 26 is Jesus, then the **people** of the prince must be the Jews (remember that the word "people" throughout Daniel 9 always denotes Israel—see verses 15, 16, 19, 20, 24). The million dollar question then becomes: Did the Jews destroy their own city and sanctuary? At first sight this possibility would seem absurd. The Jews did not destroy their own city and sanctuary (Titus and the Romans did!!), or did they? In order to answer this question we must take a look at the reason for the first destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Who destroyed Jerusalem the first time? Was it **God** or **Nebuchadnezzar** or **Israel**? Daniel 9:14 explicitly states that **God** destroyed Jerusalem. II Chronicles 36:17-20 states that **Nebuchadnezzar** (whom God calls “my servant”—Jeremiah 27:6) destroyed the city and the temple. But Daniel 9:11, 14, 15 explains that **Israel’s sins** brought about the destruction of the city and the temple. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah told Israel: If you do not submit to the king of Babylon “**thou shalt cause** this city to be burned with fire.” (Jeremiah 38:23; notice also verses 17-18). We can put it this way: Because of Israel’s sins, God employed His servant Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the city and the temple. But God would not have used Nebuchadnezzar to destroy had it not been for the sins of the people. In other words, Israel, because of her own sinful choices, brought destruction upon herself. Now let’s take a look at the second destruction of Jerusalem.

One thing becomes absolutely clear in Daniel 9 and it is this: The destiny of Jerusalem is inseparably linked with what happened to Messiah the Prince. Twice in the literary structure what happened to the Messiah is followed by the destruction of Jerusalem. In verse 26, after Messiah was cut off, Jerusalem was destroyed. And in verse 27, Jerusalem was destroyed after the Prince caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease! The critical question at this juncture is, does the New Testament shed any light on how the destiny of the Messiah is linked to the fate of the second city and temple? The answer is a resounding yes!

On the Sunday before the crucifixion, Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly on a donkey. At the conclusion of this majestic event, Jesus entered the temple and cast out the money changers. At this point the temple was referred to by Matthew as the “temple of God” and Jesus called it “My house” (Matthew 21:12-13). Jesus then told a series of parables in which He underlined that the Jewish nation was about to make the terrible mistake of rejecting him (see, for example, Matthew 21:33-45; 22:1-14; 23:29-39).

Of particular significance is the parable of Matthew 21:33-44 where Jesus reviewed the history of Israel in five stages:

Stage # 1: God sent servants to Israel to gather fruit in harvest season but Israel rejected God’s messengers (verses 34-35).

Stage # 2: God then sent more servants and Israel did the same with them (verse 36).

Stage # 3: God then sent them His own Son and they killed Him (verses 37-39).

Stage # 4: The wicked men who killed the Son were destroyed (verse 41)

Stage # 5: The kingdom was taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles (verse 43; Acts 13:46-47).

These five stages of Israel’s history as described in Matthew 21:33-44 parallel very closely the same stages of Israel’s history as described in Daniel 9:

Stage # 1: After God released Israel from Egypt, he sent them messengers but they mocked and rejected them (Daniel 9:6; II Chronicles 36:15, 16)

Stage # 2: After the Babylonian captivity God gave Israel another chance. The city and temple were rebuilt and God gave Israel another opportunity to bear fruit (Daniel 9:24). In order to help, God sent Israel many messengers: Haggai, Zechariah, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi, John the Baptist, etc. But they rejected these messengers as well.

Stage # 3: At the very end of the seventy weeks, God even sent Messiah the Prince; but instead of receiving Him, they cut Him off (Daniel 9:26).

Stage # 4: As a result Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies (Daniel 9:26-27).

Stage # 5: The Gentiles now became God's new nation (this is implicit in the fact that probation was to last only 70 weeks for the Jewish nation. We shall also find that when Stephen was stoned, the theocracy came to an end and the gospel went to the Gentiles).

The striking parallel between Daniel 9:26-27 and Matthew 21:33-44 clearly reveals that the rejection of the Son by Israel resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the ingrafting of the Gentiles as God's chosen nation. When Jesus left the temple He pronounced the ominous words: "Behold, **your** house is left unto you **desolate**" (Matthew 23:38). Two words immediately arrest our attention. First of all, the temple was no longer the "temple of **God**." Jesus now referred to it as "**your** house." Secondly, notice the key word, "desolate." This is the very word which is used in Daniel 9 to describe the fate of Jerusalem. Three times we are told there that Jerusalem would be left desolate (verses 26, 27). Significantly, as soon as Jesus pronounced these chilling words, He left the temple and spoke about the destruction of the city and the temple (Matthew 24:1-3). Certainly no one can miss the connection between the rejection of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem! Only a willful and unexplainable blindness could fail to see how the rejection of Messiah the Prince led to the destruction of the city and temple!!

This link can also be discerned in Luke 19:41-44: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying: 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in **this thy day**, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that **thine enemies** shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; **because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation**.'" Can there be any doubt in this passage that the fate of Jerusalem is linked with the rejection of the Messiah? (For further information on the role the Jews played in the death of the Messiah, see, Acts 3:14, 15; 7:52; Acts 2:22, 23).

To end this section, I would like to make a few remarks about the parable of Matthew 22 because it explains why Jerusalem was destroyed the second time. Like in the parable of Matthew 21:33-46 God sent servants to Israel in order to prepare them for the marriage of his son (verses 2-3). This stage represents the Old Testament period when God sent prophets to prepare Israel for the coming of the Messiah. These messages were rejected. Then, after Christ was sacrificed (verse 4), further servants (Peter, Stephen, Paul, etc.) were sent to the same people (Israel) but these messages were also rejected (verses 5-6). In verse 7 we are told the king's reaction: "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth **his** armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up **their** city." Notice how three ideas coalesce in this verse. **God** used the **Roman armies** (spoken of as his armies) to destroy **those** murderers and to burn their city. Once again we clearly see that the people, by rejecting the Messiah, brought destruction upon their own city (see also, Hosea 13:9). Though the destruction was carried out by God through the instrumentality of Titus and the Roman armies, it was the choice of the Jewish nation which really determined its fate. Ellen White concurs with this scenario:

"The Jews had forged **their own fetters**; they had filled for **themselves** the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which **their own hands** had sown. Says the prophet: 'O Israel, **thou hast destroyed thyself**;' 'for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.' Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, **the Jews had caused** the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will." The Great Controversy, pp. 35-36.

We must now make a few remarks about the phrase, "the prince **that shall come**." The question suggests itself: When, in the chronology of the 70 weeks, was this prince to come? The context clearly indicates that he was to come at the conclusion of the first 69 weeks. Both futurists and historicists agree on this point. But while historicists believe, as we have seen, that the prince that shall come was fulfilled in Jesus or Titus, futurists teach that the prince will be a future world dictator. Which view is correct?

Once again, as in the case of the vicarious death of the Messiah, the key which unlocks the true meaning of this phrase is found in a messianic prophecy, Psalm 118. Psalm 118:26 reads: "Blessed is **he that cometh** in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord."

In Luke 13:35 Jesus applied to Himself (at His second coming) the phrase, "**blessed is he that cometh** in the name of the Lord." But this messianic prophecy was also fulfilled at triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Notice how Luke 19:37-44 presents three events in chronological sequence:

1) Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt, and the multitudes sang: “ **Blessed** be the King **that cometh** in the name of the Lord. . . .” (Verses 37-38).

2) Jesus then spoke about **his rejection** by the Jewish nation (verses 39-42; see also Matthew 23:29-39).

3) Finally Jesus spoke about the **destruction of Jerusalem** (verses 43-44; see also Matthew 24:1-3)

One cannot help but notice how this same threefold sequence is found in Daniel 9:26:

1) The prince comes.

2) He is cut off.

3) The city and temple are destroyed.

Psalms 118:22 makes it abundantly clear that the one who comes in the name of the Lord is also “the stone which the builders refused [and] is become the head of the corner.” Jesus identified Himself as this Stone (see Matthew 21:42 and the context in which it appears). Thus, after announcing that not one stone would be left upon another in the literal Jerusalem temple, Jesus affirmed that He was about to become the head cornerstone of a new spiritual temple, the church (see also, Ephesians 2:19-22). It is worthy of note that the word “head” in the Old Testament is used interchangeably with the word “prince”. (Isaiah 19:13; Judges 20:2; I Samuel 14:38 where the word *pinnah* (head) is used in the sense of “chief, ruler or leader.”)

“Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary”

The **temple**, which had been rebuilt as a result of the decrees of Cyrus the Great and Darius the Persian, and the **city**, which had been restored and rebuilt as a result of the decrees of Artaxerxes, were to be destroyed once again due to the unfaithfulness of the people in rejecting the Messiah.

“The end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the **war** desolations are determined”

The word “thereof” has the city and the sanctuary as antecedents. That is, the end of the city and the sanctuary would be with a flood. In the Bible, a military invasion is occasionally compared to an overwhelming flood (see Isaiah 8:7-8; Jeremiah 46:6-7; Revelation 12:15-16; Daniel 11:22, 40; Revelation 16:12 compared with Revelation 17:1-5, 15). We have here a vivid description of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by Titus and the Roman armies. Anyone who has read Josephus’ description of the destruction of Jerusalem in Wars of the Jews (notice that this event is called “the war” in Daniel 9:26) will concur that the invasion of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was as an overwhelming and

devastating flood. A vivid description of the destruction of Jerusalem is given by Ellen G. White in the first chapter of The Great Controversy.

Significant is the word “desolations”. One is reminded of the words of Jesus to the Jewish leaders: “Behold, your house is left unto you **desolate**” (Matthew 23:38) immediately after which Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (Matthew 24:1-3). We shall have occasion to say more about this word when we study the last half of Daniel 9:27.

It is of the utmost importance to realize that even though the destruction of Jerusalem falls outside the chronological time period of the seventy weeks (because the seventy weeks ended in the year 34 A. D. but Jerusalem was not destroyed until the year 70 A. D.) yet it is inseparably linked with events which occurred within that time period. This is reflected in the last phrase of Daniel 9:26 (as well as in the last phrase of Daniel 9:27): “desolations are determined.” As we have previously noted, the word “determined” refers to an event which has been decreed or decided before it actually occurs (see pp. 17-18 above). That is to say, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple had already been determined by events which took place during the time frame of the seventy weeks—particularly the last week!

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week”

Several questions must be asked at this point. Who is the “he” in this verse? What does the word “confirm” mean and which “covenant” is being spoken of? Who are the “many” with whom the covenant is confirmed? Is this week the last of the seventy?

The entire meaning of verse 27 revolves around the identity of the person who confirms the covenant for one week. The all important question therefore becomes, Who is this person?

Futurists believe this person is a future Roman Antichrist who will make a seven year pact of peace with the literal Jews only to break it in the middle of the week. According to this view, this vile person will halt the sacrificial system in a rebuilt Jerusalem temple and impose a reign of terror for three and a half literal years.

There are ample reasons, however, to believe that this person is the same as the Messiah who was cut off in verse 26. There is no contextual or syntactical reason to insert the Antichrist into this verse. As we have seen in our discussion above (pages 20-23), Jesus Christ fits this prophecy perfectly. This will become even clearer as we answer the other questions at the beginning of this section.

What does the expression “he shall confirm **the** covenant with many for one week” mean? It is a matter of record that every single time the word “covenant” is used in the book of Daniel, it refers to God’s covenant with His people. In other words, the word “covenant” in Daniel is never employed to describe a secular political covenant. For instance, Daniel 9:4 speaks of God who keeps “the covenant and mercy to them that love him”; Daniel 11:22 refers to Jesus as “the prince of the covenant” [notice how prince and covenant are linked in this verse just like in Daniel 9:27]; Daniel 11:28, 30 speaks of the “holy covenant;” and Daniel 11:32 describes those who “do wickedly against the covenant.” It should be noted

that the word covenant in Daniel 9:27 has the definite article. In other words, it is not **a** covenant but **the** covenant which is confirmed. Significant also is the fact that Daniel 9 is the only chapter where the covenant name “Yahweh” appears. This name is God’s covenant name throughout the Old Testament.

The expression “he shall **confirm** the covenant” is better translated “he shall **make strong** the covenant.” The Hebrew word *gabar* is used some 328 times in the Old Testament and the basic meaning is “strong,” “mighty” (for example, in Isaiah 9:6 *gabar* is translated “mighty”) The sense here seems to be the act of putting the covenant on a firm footing or ratifying it. The question is, Why did the covenant need to be made strong? Was it weak in the first place?

The answer to these queries lies in the fact that the old covenant was ratified with the blood of animals which could not take away sin. On the other hand, the new covenant is better and stronger because it is based on better blood, a better priesthood, a better covenant, better promises and a better sanctuary. The old covenant could not truly remove sin but the new covenant does. (see, John 1:29; Hebrews 7:22; 8:6, 13; 9:12-27; 10:1-4). That is to say, the old covenant was weak because it could not save; it could only reveal the Savior who was to come.

And who are the “many” with whom this covenant is made strong? In our analysis of verse 26 we saw that the “cutting off” of the Messiah was a vicarious sacrifice. This fact is underlined also in the meaning of the word “many”. In the parallel messianic passage of Isaiah 53 we find the following declaration: “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify **many**; for he shall **bear** their iniquities.” This prophecy is picked up in the New Testament as well.

In Mark 10:45 we are told that Jesus came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for **many**.” Once again the word “many” is linked with the idea of a vicarious sacrifice. In Hebrews 9:28 we find the same idea: “So Christ was once offered **to bear** the sins of **many**. . . .” But by far the most important verse for our understanding of the word “many” is found in Matthew 26:28 (see also, I Corinthians 11:25). When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper in the Upper Room to commemorate His death until He comes, He stated: “this is the blood of the new **testament** [the word “testament” here is the Greek word which is also translated “covenant” in the New Testament—*diatheke*], which is shed **for many** for the remission of sins.”

All of the above texts are linked by a common idea: A vicarious sacrifice for “many.” It can hardly be coincidental that the statement in Daniel 9:26 to the effect that the Messiah was **cut off but not for himself** was picked up by three New Testament writers and applied to Jesus! And the fact that Jesus Himself, in Matthew 26:28 not only connected His vicarious sacrifice with the word “many” but also with the word “covenant” is compelling evidence that the New Testament holds the key which unlocks the meaning of the prophecy of the seventy weeks.

We must now move on to one final consideration in this section: To which “week” is Gabriel referring when he states: “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one **week**? The context makes it very clear that this is the last week of the seventy. No scholar I know of has questioned this. Yet an important fact has escaped many commentators and that is that the chronological progression of Messiah’s career is repeated in chiastic fashion twice in Daniel 9:25-27 ending each time with the destruction of Jerusalem. Notice the progression in verses 25-26:

A. Anointing of the Messiah begins **70th week**>>>

B. Messiah “cut off” (at some unspecified point **during the 70th week**)>>>

C. Messiah’s death leads to **Jerusalem’s destruction** in 70 A. D..

A similar sequence of events is repeated in verse 27:

A. Messiah makes the covenant strong for **70th week**>>>

B. Messiah causes the sacrifice to cease in the **middle of the 70th week** >>>

C. Jerusalem destroyed because Messiah was killed in the middle of the week.

A comparison of the structure of verses 25-26 with verse 27 reveals that verses 25-27 cannot be read in a linear fashion as if one event followed the other in a neat chronological sequence. The fact is that the same material is repeated twice in chiastic fashion. The “A” in verse 25 pinpoints the date for the initiation of Messiah’s ministry during the 70th week while the “A” in verse 27 emphasizes that Messiah made strong the covenant during the 70th week. The “B” in verse 26 describes the death of the Messiah at some point during the 70th week but does not specify the exact time. The corresponding “B” in verse 27 pinpoints the precise time of Messiah’s death—it was in the middle of the 70th week. The “C” of verse 26 describes the destruction of Jerusalem as does the “C” of verse 27. This beautiful literary symmetry is further evidence that the Messiah the Prince of verse 25 is the same person as the Messiah and the Prince of verse 26.

“And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”

This sentence answers three questions: Question: **What** was to cease? Answer: The sacrifice and the oblation. Question: **Who** was to cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease? Answer: The prince. Question: **When** were they to cease? Answer: In the middle of the last week.

First of all, what is the sacrifice and the oblation? The word “sacrifice” (*zebach*) is a common one in the Old Testament and is used to describe the animal sacrifices performed

in the sanctuary (Leviticus 7:11-20, etc). The word “oblation” (*minchah*) is used to describe the drink and meal offerings which accompanied these sacrifices (Numbers 28:5, 7, etc).

Notice that it was the prince (who is the subject of the sentence) who caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. The literary structure of Daniel 9:25-27 clearly indicates that the cutting off of the Messiah would lead to the cessation of the sacrifice and the oblation. Synonyms for “cease” are, “bring to an end,” “stop,” and “discontinue.” Thus Daniel 9 not only explains that the prince would cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease but it also tells us **how this would happen**: The Messiah would be cut off from the land of the living! The Gospels strikingly reveal how Daniel 9:25-27 was fulfilled in Jesus. Let’s see.

In John 19:31 we are told that the last words of Jesus on the cross were: “It is finished.” As soon as these words were pronounced, Matthew explains that “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the **top to the bottom**; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent.” (Matthew 27:51). Not only was the veil torn from top to bottom, but something else happened which has profound significance. Ellen White vividly describes what happened at the very moment the priest was about to offer the sacrifice and the oblation:

“When the loud cry, ‘**It is finished**,’ came from the lips of Christ, the priests were officiating in the temple. It was the hour of the evening sacrifice. The lamb representing Christ had been brought to be slain. Clothed in his significant and beautiful dress, the priest stood with lifted knife, as did Abraham when he was about to slay his son. With intense interest the people were looking on. But the earth trembles and quakes; for the Lord Himself draws near. With a rending noise the inner veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand, throwing open to the gaze of the multitude a place once filled with the presence of God. In this place the Shekinah had dwelt. . . .

“All is terror and confusion. The priest is about to slay the victim; but the knife drops from his nerveless hand, and **the lamb escapes**. Type has met antitype in the death of God’s Son. The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens.” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 756-757).

Notice that there was no sacrifice or oblation the day Jesus died. Christ literally made these ceremonies cease on the day of His crucifixion!! If the Jews had understood what this meant, they would have shut down the sacrifices and the oblations on that very day once and for all! So, in three ways God indicated that the sacrifice and the oblation had come to an end: **1)** By Jesus crying out: ‘It is finished,’ **2)** By the rending of the veil, **3)** By the lamb’s escape from the hands of the priest.

Yes, someone might object, but the sacrifices and oblations were resumed shortly thereafter and continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. True enough. But these ceremonies no longer had any significance. The shadows had given way to the substance (see, Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 10:1-9, 11-12, 18).

Notice that the prince caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease in the **middle of the 70th week**. This would be three and one half years after Messiah's baptism. Now, if we can determine in which season of the year the death of the Messiah took place, then we will also be able to specify in which season Messiah was baptized and also in which season the 70th week ended. We know for a fact that Jesus was crucified during the Passover season in the spring of the year (I Corinthians 5:7-8). But if he was crucified in the spring of the year 31, then he must have been baptized in the fall of the year 27, three and one half years earlier. This also means that probation must have closed for the Jewish nation in the fall of the year 34. Furthermore, Artaxerxes' decree must also have been given in the fall. Thus when we have the central pillar of the 70th week in the proper place, all the other dates also fall into line.

“And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate”

It must be noted that the prince is still the subject. It is the prince who makes Jerusalem desolate. But didn't we say above that the Jews destroyed their own city and temple? Yes, but as we saw in Jeremiah, God destroyed Jerusalem by the peoples choice.

We are now told what would happen as a result of the death of the Messiah: Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The word “overspreading” is often translated “wings” in the Old Testament. It is used, for example, to describe the invasion of Assyria into Israel (Isaiah 8:7-8). The picture is of a river which is at flood stage. When the river goes over its banks, it spreads out its wings (see also, Nahum 1:8).

The word “abominations” here merits special attention because of its connection with Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20. In Matthew 24:15-16 Jesus warned His disciples: “When ye therefore shall see the **abomination of desolation**, spoken of by **Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judaea flee to the mountains. . . .” Extremely important here is the appeal Jesus made to the prophecy of Daniel 9:26-27. He explicitly tells us that the **abomination of desolation** was spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

And what was this abomination of desolation? First let's talk about the **abomination**. When the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem, they put their standards into the ground and worshiped them. The Roman standards had an eagle surrounded by a golden wreath. Under the eagle and the wreath was a solar disk, which represented the sun-god Mithra. Says Josephus about the order in which the Roman armies marched:

“Then came the ensigns encompassing the eagle, which is at the head of every Roman legion, the king and the strongest of birds, which seems to them a signal of domination, and an omen that they shall conquer all against whom they march.” (Wars of the Jews, 3:6:2)

Ellen White concurs with the view of Josephus:

“When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight.” (The Great Controversy, p. 26).

Both Josephus (Wars of the Jews 2:19:7: “. . . without having received any disgrace, he [Cestius] retired from the city, without any reason in the world.”) and Ellen White (The Great Controversy, p. 30: “After the Romans under Cestius had surrounded the city, they unexpectedly abandoned the siege when everything seemed favorable for an immediate attack.”) explain that when Cestius unexpectedly withdrew the Roman armies, the Christians within the city saw this as a sign to flee, and as a result, “not one Christian perished in the destruction of the Jerusalem.” (The Great Controversy, p. 30). Luke 21:20, in unequivocal language, offers an explanation of what the abomination was: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem **compassed by armies**. . . .” A comparison of Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20 clearly indicates that the abomination consisted in the incursion of the Roman armies onto the holy ground which surrounded Jerusalem.

But what about the desolation? It is noteworthy that Daniel 9:27 employs the word “desolate” two times. Jesus picked up on this when he said to the Jewish leaders as He left the temple: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matthew 23:38). Luke 21:20 explains that the abomination was an omen that the desolation of Jerusalem was near. In other words, the best translation of Matthew 24:15 is: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination which **maketh desolate**.” That is to say, the abominable standards of the Romans were a sign that the desolation of Jerusalem was at the doors.

As we compare Daniel 9:25-27 with the Gospels we can reach the following conclusions:

1. The abomination of desolation of Daniel 9:25-27 represents the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in the year 70 A. D. This can be seen by the similarity in terminology between the Gospels and Daniel 9:26-27 (Matthew 23:28; Luke 21:20 compared with Matthew 24:15).
2. The reason for the destruction of Jerusalem was the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish nation. This is true in Daniel 9:26-27 where twice the destruction of Jerusalem is spoken of as coming after the death of the Messiah. It is also true in Luke 19:41-44 (as well as other passages) where the destruction of Jerusalem is linked with the rejection of Jesus.

The expression “until the consummation” means “until the full end”. We have already found this word once before in verse 26. The root meaning of the Hebrew word *kala* (“consummation”) means “to bring a process to completion” or “to finish a process.” This means that when Jerusalem was destroyed, God was finished with the Jewish theocracy. Coupled with this idea of consummation is the expression “poured out.” The question is, What was poured out upon the desolate until the end? The answer is, the wrath of God.

One cannot help but think of the analogous events of the book of Revelation. There, we are told that because of the iniquity in the world in the last days, God will **pour out** seven last plagues for in them the wrath of God is **filled up**. The expression “filled up” could very well be translated “consummated” or “complete.” In fact the Reina-Valera Spanish version uses the word “*consumada*.” Significantly, as soon as all the cups have been poured out, the words are heard from the heavenly temple, “It is **done**.” (Revelation 15:1; 17:17). Putting all these concepts together we have: The cup of the iniquity of the wicked will be filled to the brim (see Genesis 15:16) and then God will pour out upon them the plagues and these will bring to an end the wrath of God.

Noteworthy is the fact that in his indictment of the Jewish leaders, Jesus employed the symbolism of the cup: “**Fill ye up** then the measure of your fathers.” (Matthew 23:32). In other words, there was no longer any room for mercy. When God poured out His wrath upon them He was finished with them. they drank the dregs of the wrath of God. For this reason the apostle Paul says that the wrath of God had fallen upon the Jews “to the uttermost.” (I Thessalonians 2:16).

At the end of verse 27 we find once again that this outpouring of the unmitigated wrath of God had already been determined beforehand. This is clearly indicated by the expression: “**that determined** shall be poured out upon the desolate.” This is clear evidence that even though the city and temple were destroyed in the year 70 A. D., the sentence had already been determined previously, in the year 34 A. D. It is common in the Bible for the door of mercy to close sometime before destruction falls. Two monumental examples are: The flood where the door of mercy closed seven days before the destruction of the world and the end of the world when the door of probation will close before the Second coming (Revelation 22:11-12).

The Ending Date of the 70 Weeks

This brings us to our last point and it is this: Why do we choose 34 A. D. as the ending point of the seventy week prophecy? Didn't Jesus say that probation closed when He left the temple for the last time in the middle of the last week? (Matthew 23:38). It would seem so. However, several things must be taken into consideration:

1. In the prophecy of Daniel 9 God promised Israel seventy full weeks of probation. If their probation ended in the year 31 A. D., then they did not get the full 70 weeks as God had promised.
2. More than once during His ministry, Jesus stated that He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That is to say, His mission was limited to the Jewish nation. At first sight

this appears to be a rather calloused statement but upon closer scrutiny we can understand what Jesus meant. His mission involved only the Jews at this point because the probationary period of the Jewish nation had not yet come to an end.

Though the Jews cried out at His trial: “We have no king but Cesar,” “His blood be upon us and our children” and “release unto us Barabbas,” probation did not close for the Jewish nation at that time. After the ascension, Peter explained that Jesus sat down at the right hand of God in order “to give repentance unto Israel.” (Acts 5:31). Furthermore, in the first seven chapters of the book of Acts the gospel was preached only to the Jews. It was not till chapter 10 that the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. This indicates that the door of mercy was still open to the Jewish nation even after the ascension of Jesus.

3. In Matthew 23:32-38 we find further evidence that probation did not close for the Jewish nation when Jesus was crucified. In these verses Jesus reached the climax of his indictment against the Jewish leaders. In verses 34-36 Jesus stated:

“Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you **will** kill and crucify, and some of them you **will** scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, **that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth**, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”

Don't miss the point of this passage. Even though these words were spoken by Jesus three days before his crucifixion, He still promised to send (the verbs are in the future tense) Israel prophets, wise men, and scribes. And who were these prophets, wise men and scribes? We can glean some clues from what Jesus said would be done to them. According to Jesus, some would be **killed**, others **scourged** in the synagogues and still others persecuted from **city to city**. Acts 5:40-41 tells us that Peter and John were scourged in the synagogue. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of killing many, the most notable of which was Stephen (Acts 26:10-11; 7:58). Noteworthy also is the fact that Saul of Tarsus later recounted that he persecuted many from city to city (Acts 8:3; 26:11). Acts 6:3 explains that the seven deacons were wise men. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was a prophetic sermon and his ability to read the hearts of Ananias and Saphira also reveals that he possessed the prophetic gift. And we shall see shortly that Stephen was the last prophet who ever spoke to literal Israel.

Jesus also made it crystal clear in this passage that the cup of Israel's iniquity did not fill up until they rejected the messengers which were sent by Jesus to them after His crucifixion. Only then was the blood of all the martyrs demanded of that generation (verse 35).

Matthew 22:1-10 also provides evidence that probation did not close for the Jewish nation when Jesus was crucified. In this parable, after the oxen and fatted cattle had been killed (symbolizing the death of Jesus), God sent out messengers to invite the Jews to His Son's

wedding supper (verse 4). But the messengers were ignored, seized, treated spitefully and killed (verse 6). As a result, God sent out His armies to destroy those murderers and their city (verse 7). The gospel then went to those in the highways and byways, that is to say, to the Gentiles (verses 8-10). Particularly important here is the fact that the Father sent out messengers to the Jewish nation even after the death of Jesus. It was only after the Jews rejected the calls of these messengers, that the Father decided to destroy them and their city.

4. In Ezekiel 11:22-23 we find a picture of God's lingering mercy for Old Testament Jerusalem. Even though at this point, Jerusalem had been judged and Nebuchadnezzar was on his way to destroy the city, we are told that the Shekinah left the temple and lingered on the Mount of Olives, as if loath to leave! In the same way, when Jesus left the temple, and pronounced the awesome words: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," he was loath to leave. We can almost hear Him say: "How can I give you up, oh Israel?" Mercy lingered on for three and a half years.
5. Ellen White concurs with our assessment of the Biblical evidence:

"Through the preaching of the **apostles and their associates**, God would cause light to shine upon them; they would be permitted to see how prophecy had been fulfilled, not only in the birth and life of Christ, but in His death and resurrection. The children were not condemned for the sins of the parents; but when, with a knowledge of all the light given to their parents, the children rejected the additional light granted to themselves, they became partakers of the parents' sins, and filled up the measure of their iniquity." The Great Controversy, p. 28.

Many have been perplexed by the apparent absence of a clearly defined ending event for the prophecy of the seventy weeks. But, is an ending event really missing in Daniel 9? Seventh-day Adventists have consistently believed that the stoning of Stephen marked the conclusion of the seventy weeks. But, are we justified in believing this? I believe the Biblical evidence fully vindicates the Adventist point of view. And why is this?

In our study of Daniel 9:24 we saw that six things would be accomplished during the time period of the seventy weeks. One of these was "to seal up vision and prophecy." What does this expression mean? The same expression, "to seal up" (*hatam*), is used earlier in this verse and is translated, "to **make an end** of sins." In other words, one of the accomplishments of the seventy weeks was to bring prophecy and vision to an end for the Jewish nation. How and when did this happen?

A careful examination of Acts 6 and 7 reveals that Stephen was the last prophet who was given a vision for Israel. Let's take a look at the evidence.

1. In order to comprehend the significance of the events in Acts 6-7 we must first understand the covenant pattern in the Old Testament. Due principally to the studies of George Mendenhall and Meredith Kline scholars now know that God's covenant with Israel in the Old Testament follows the same basic pattern as the secular suzerainty treaties of the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B. C.). We will use Joshua 24 (which was the covenant renewal

before Israel entered the promised land) to exemplify the basic elements of the Old Testament covenant between God and Israel:

Preamble (24:a)

Historical Prologue (24:2b-13)

Covenant Stipulations (24:15b)

Covenant Blessings and Curses (24:16-20)

Oath of Obedience (24:21)

Witnesses (24:22)

Covenant Ratification (24:23-25)

Arrangements for Covenant Perpetuation (24:26)

Covenant Notarized (24:27)

When Israel broke the covenant, God sent them prophets to bring legal proceedings against them. It is important to keep in mind that the prophets were God's lawyers bringing a lawsuit against Israel. The proceeding has come to be known as a covenant lawsuit (*rib*). Though there are several examples of this in the Old Testament, we will take Micah 6 as our example (the word *rib* is there translated "contend" and "controversy").

Call to the Witnesses to Give Ear to the Proceedings (6:1-2a)

Introductory Statement of the Case at Issue (6:2b)

Recital of God's Benevolent Acts (6:3-5)

The Indictment (6:6-7)

The Sentence (6:8)

As will be noticed above, the **recital of God's benevolent acts** toward Israel was fundamental both to the establishment of the covenant and to the covenant lawsuit. Something which has perplexed scholars is the inordinately long historical discourse which Stephen gave before the Sanhedrin. The members of the Sanhedrin were the *intelligentsia* of Israel. Why would Stephen presumably waste his time and theirs with a history they knew all too well? The answer lies in the fact that Stephen was God's prophet bringing God's covenant lawsuit against Israel. And as we shall see below, this would be God's final lawsuit.

2. There is an amazing parallel between the trial of Christ and the trial of Stephen. Let's notice a few similarities:

****Both were taken before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:55ff; Acts 6:12, 15).**

****Both were accused by false witnesses (Mark 14:55ff; Acts 6:11, 13-14).**

****Both reviewed the history of the Jewish nation. Both spoke about God sending the prophets and finally sending His own son (Matthew 23:32ff; 21:33-44; Acts 7).**

****In both, money was paid as a bribe to the false witnesses (Matthew 26:60; Acts 6:11).**

****Both were accused of speaking against Moses and the temple (Matthew 27:40; John 11:50-52 Acts 6:13-14).**

****Both accused the Jewish leaders of shutting their ears to the truth about the Messiah (Matthew 23:29-36; Acts 7:51-54).**

****Both prayed for God to forgive the sin of their enemies (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)**

****Both were killed outside the city (Hebrews 13:12; Acts 7:58).**

****The innocence of both could be seen on their face (John 19:4, 6; Acts 6:15).**

****In both there was a “mob mentality” (Matthew 27:24ff; Acts 7:57-58).**

These parallels suggest that Stephen was repeating the experience of Jesus. That is to say, what the Jewish leaders had done with Jesus they were now doing to Stephen.

3. Now we must examine more closely the trial and condemnation of Stephen. As we have already seen, God undertook many covenant lawsuits against Israel in the Old Testament. A close examination of these lawsuits reveals that they were not final and irrevocable. In fact, the prophets usually called Israel to repentance so that God, in mercy, could “drop” his lawsuit against them. But the case of Stephen is different. There is a sense of finality in the experience of Stephen which is lacking in the previous lawsuits.

Stephen was taken before the Sanhedrin, the highest earthly authority of the Jewish nation. It was the final court of appeal, the Supreme Court, if you please. There, in fine **prophetic fashion**, and in harmony with the covenant lawsuit pattern, Stephen presented his defense by appealing to the history of Israel from the time of Abraham till the coming of the Just One (Acts 7:2-53). But at the end of his discourse, the accused became the accuser. The Sanhedrin presumed to indict Stephen but he ended up indicting them!! Notice the denunciation:

“**Ye** stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye** do always resist the Holy Ghost; as **your** fathers did, so do **ye**. Which of the prophets have not **your** fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom **ye** have been now become the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.” (Acts 7:51-53).

Significantly, up to this point in his discourse, Stephen has spoken of the fathers in terms of “**our** fathers” (Acts 7:11, 19, 38, 44, 45). In good **prophetic fashion**, he includes himself as part of the historical patrimony of Israel (as did Daniel when he repeatedly said in Daniel 9, “we have sinned”). But at the conclusion of his speech

he dissociates himself from them by saying, “**your** fathers” (notice that Jesus also made reference to “**your** fathers” in His indictment of the Jewish leaders; Matthew 23:32). He could no longer in good conscience be in solidarity with literal Israel. In other words, he was distancing himself from the patrimony of literal Israel because he knew that after they killed him, they would no longer be God’s people—the theocracy would have come to an ignominious end!

Also of great importance is the fact that Stephen, unlike the prophets before him, did not make a call to repentance. This would seem to indicate that the Jewish leaders were beyond the point of repentance, they had made their final and irrevocable decision to reject the Messiah. This is indicated by the expressions Stephen used in his indictment as well as by the reaction of the Sanhedrin to his words. Notice that he called them stiff-necked and uncircumcised in hearts and ears and accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit. He also accused them of betraying and murdering Jesus and breaking the covenant. There is no mention of future messengers or opportunities.

The reaction of the leaders of the Sanhedrin is important because it reveals their incurable rejection of the Messiah. Instead of receiving the message of Stephen who spoke with the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55), with untempered hatred they “gnashed on him with their teeth. . . . and cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him. . . .” (Acts 7:54, 57-58). Notice that the verdict was unanimous—they were all of one accord. The apostles were of one accord on the side of Christ and the Sanhedrin was of one accord against Christ. Thus the Jewish Sanhedrin made its choice. By stoning Stephen, they silenced **the last prophet** who would ever be sent to them. Truly, prophecy came to an end for literal Israel at this time!!

4. But the prophecy of the seventy weeks indicated that vision (*chazon*) would also come to an end at the conclusion of the last week. Did this happen as predicted? The answer is a resounding yes!! Acts chapter seven not only indicates that Stephen was the last prophet sent to Israel but it also leaves no doubt that he received the last vision as well.

It seems that what particularly incensed the members of the Sanhedrin was the vision Stephen had of Jesus in heaven standing on the right hand of God. This was a vision for there is no evidence that anyone other than Stephen saw it! The critical question is, Did Stephen see Jesus **as** He was and **where** He was at that very moment or was he transported in vision to the future to see Jesus as He will appear when He comes again? The evidence seems to indicate that this was a **prophetic** vision where Stephen was carried to the future to see Jesus coming as the Son of Man

5. As we have previously studied, Jesus taught in His parables (Matthew 21:33-45; Matthew 22:1-10; Matthew 23:32-39) that when the kingdom should be taken

from the Jews, it would be given to the Gentiles. This being the case, we should find an event to mark the end of the seventy weeks which not only closes the door of probation for the Jewish theocracy but also opens the door for the gospel to go to the Gentiles. Does the stoning of Stephen fulfill this specification? Once again, the answer is a resounding yes!

It can hardly be a coincidence that the ringleader in the stoning of Stephen was a champion of orthodox Judaism, Saul of Tarsus (see Philippians 3:3-9). At the precise moment probation was closing for the Jewish theocracy, God—irony of ironies—had already chosen His champion to the Gentiles and he was present at the stoning of Stephen! Paul later reminisced about this experience with the following words:

“And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” (Acts 22:20-21).

The sequence of events in Acts 1-11 clearly reveals that the stoning of Stephen was a watershed event. In Acts 1:8 Jesus had said to His disciples:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judaea**, and in **Samaria**, and unto the **uttermost part** of the earth.”

Notice the ever broadening concentric circles in this verse:

Jerusalem and Judaea-----Acts 1-6
Stoning of Stephen-----Acts 7
Samaria-----Acts 8 (verse 25)
Saul’s Conversion-----Acts 9
Gospel to Gentiles (Uttermost Part of the Earth)-----Acts 10-28

It will be noticed that the gospel went to the uttermost part of the earth only after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. In fact, it was Paul who took the gospel to every region of the Roman Empire through his missionary journeys. Thus in Acts 7 probation closes for the Jewish theocracy and in chapter 9 the champion to the Gentiles is converted. That is to say, one door closed and shortly thereafter the other opened.

6. The official beginning of Paul’s ministry is described in Acts 13:1-2. There Paul and Barnabas were ordained to the gospel ministry. Paul and Barnabas then traveled to Antioch of Pisidia where Paul preached a long gospel sermon to the Jews in the synagogue (13:16-41). The Gentiles then begged Paul to preach to them (13:42-43). The next Sabbath almost the whole city came out to hear the word of God (13:44).

This provoked the jealousy of the Jews and they contradicted and blasphemed (13:45). This led Paul to say some very significant words:

“It was necessary that the word of God should **first** have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and **judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles**. For so hath the **Lord commanded us**, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” (13:46-47).

Notice that the gospel was to be preached to the Jews first. And why was this? Because seventy weeks had been apportioned to the Jewish nation. But when the Jewish nation rejected the Messiah, by divine command, Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles. Notice that the door of mercy did not close for individual Jews after 34 A. D. This can be seen in the fact that Saul of Tarsus was converted after the year 34 A. D.

