

Daniel's prophecy about the Messiah being presented to the nation

I. Background to the Exile

[Slide 1: Title] Jeremiah 29.17-20 NET: The LORD who rules over all says, "I will bring war, starvation, and disease on them [the people of Israel]. I will treat them like figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten. ¹⁸ I will chase after them with war, starvation, and disease. I will make all the kingdoms of the earth horrified at what happens to them. I will make them examples of those who are cursed, objects of horror, hissing scorn, and ridicule among all the nations where I exile them. ¹⁹ For they have not paid attention to what I said to them through my servants the prophets whom I sent to them over and over again," says the LORD. "And you exiles have not paid any attention to them either," says the LORD. ²⁰ "So pay attention to what I, the LORD, have said, all you exiles whom I have sent to Babylon from Jerusalem."

† God exiled the nation for not listening to his prophets, as they exhorted the nation to honor the Mosaic Covenant they had with God.

2 Chronicles 36.21 NET: This [exile] took place to fulfill the LORD's message delivered through Jeremiah. The land experienced its sabbatical years; it remained desolate for seventy years, as prophesied.

† Let's see what the chronicler meant by sabbatical years...

Leviticus 25.3-4 NET: "Six years you may sow your field, and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather the produce, ⁴ but in the seventh year the land must have a Sabbath of complete rest— a Sabbath to the LORD. You must not sow your field or prune your vineyard."

† The Israelites were not to be greedy and they were to care for the long-term health of the land. So every seven years they were not to work the land.

Leviticus 26.33-34 NET: "I will scatter you among the nations and unsheathe the sword after you, so your land will become desolate and your cities will become a waste. ³⁴ Then the land will make up for its Sabbaths all the days it lies desolate while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land will rest and make up its Sabbaths."

† Back in Moses' day, God predicted the exile hundreds of years later. Part of God's plan for this exile was for the land to rest to make up for the fact that the Israelites never honored this Sabbath year provision.

II. Daniel's Vision

Jeremiah 25.11-12 NET: "This whole area will become a desolate wasteland. These nations will be subject to the king of Babylon for seventy years. ¹² But when the seventy years are over [the same seventy years the chronicler mentioned], I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation for their sins. I will make the land of Babylon an everlasting ruin. I, the LORD, affirm it!"

- † Daniel went with many others in the first group of Judeans deported into Babylonian exile in 605BC. In 539BC, he realized that the seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah were about to end. He sought guidance from God and offered repentance for his people. God answered Daniel in an unexpected way.

Daniel 9.20-27 NET: While I was still speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my request before the LORD my God concerning his holy mountain—²¹ yes, while I was still praying, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen previously in a vision, was approaching me in my state of extreme weariness, around the time of the evening offering.²² He spoke with me, instructing me as follows: "Daniel, I have now come to impart understanding to you.²³ At the beginning of your requests a message went out, and I have come to convey it to you, for you are of great value in God's sight. Therefore consider the message and understand the vision:²⁴ Seventy weeks have been determined concerning your people and your holy city to put an end to rebellion, to bring sin to completion, to atone for iniquity, to bring in perpetual righteousness, to seal up the prophetic vision, and to anoint a most holy place.²⁵ So know and understand: From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince arrives, there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will again be built, with plaza and moat, but in distressful times.²⁶ Now after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one [Christ] will be cut off and have nothing. As for the city and the sanctuary, the people of the coming prince [an evil prince] will destroy them. But his end will come speedily like a flood. Until the end of the war that has been decreed there will be destruction.²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of that week he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt. On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys."

- † **[Slide 2: weeks]** The Hebrew word we translate as "weeks" [שָׁבוּעַ] actually means a unit or period of seven. We interpret these "weeks" to be periods of seven years, instead of seven days.
- **[Slide 3: captivity basis]** One reason for that is we know Daniel had been considering Jeremiah's prophecy of a seventy-year captivity. As we have seen, that captivity was related to the nation violating the seventh-year sabbatical year provision, and now the land was supposedly getting the rest it needed. It seems likely that Daniel was thinking in terms of periods of seven years.
 - **[Slide 4: lost Sabbath theory]** Another theory in support of this is that every year of the exile represented a Sabbath year not honored, dating back 490 years [70*7] to sometime when Samuel was the final judge of Israel.
 - **[Slide 5: vv.25-27 = 70 weeks]** So while it was true that the physical exile would last only seventy years, the Jews were not yet spiritually ready for God and God was not yet ready to fulfill his plans for fully restoring them. He told Daniel it would actually be seventy sevens of years for that to be true.
- † **[Slide 6: v.25]** What is important for today's study is the timing of the first sixty-nine "weeks" of Daniel's vision. $7+62 = 69$ of these seven year periods = 483 years.
- We have to recognize that the calendars of ancient Persia, Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt – and even those of ancient India, China, and the civilizations in Central and South America – all were based on a 360 day year.
 - **[Slide 7: 173,880 days]** $483 \text{ years} * 360 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$ from the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah – the anointed prince – would arrive.

- † **[Slide 8: decrees]** In 538BC Persian king Cyrus decreed Zerubbabel could rebuild the temple
 - In 521BC Persian king Artaxerxes decreed Ezra could lead more people to settle Jerusalem
 - In 444BC Artaxerxes decreed Nehemiah could rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
 - **[Slide 9: decrees]** Which decree is the relevant one? Daniel talked about a restoration of Israel to its former state, including streets and some sort of protective trench, with the work done during stressful times. Part of Jerusalem's natural defenses consisted of a great cutting in the rock along the northern wall, for the purposes of building the wall for defense. Since it was the decree to Nehemiah that led to this restoration, we start with that date, 444BC.

- † **[Slide 10: entry day]** I am convinced by the scholarship of former DTS NT department chair Harold Hoehner and others that Jesus was crucified on Friday, Nissan 14, which would be April 3 by our calendar, in AD33. Thus Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday occurred on March 29, AD33.
 - **[Slide 11: 476yrs]** So from 444BC to AD33 = 476 years [444+33-1, because there is no year 0]
 - **[Slide 12: 173,855 days]** 476 years * 365.24219879 actual scientific days = 173,855 days
 - That's 25 days off from Daniel's prediction.
 - **[Slide 13: 25 days]** The decree by Artaxerxes was in their month of Nisan, let's assume the first day of the month, which in 444BC would have been our March 4. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday occurred on March 29, AD33, so we add 25 days... = 173,880!
 - Jesus – God's anointed princely Messiah – entered Jerusalem riding the donkey's colt, on the very day Daniel predicted.

- † Ask for response, application...

- † Other discussion points: Luke 19; Jesus offering the kingdom; God's plans set in stone [and how that works with Jesus' offer]; us coming back to God and walking in faith...