

Daniel 9b: The Missing Link

INTRODUCTION

The prayer of Daniel in this chapter was so urgent because he believed that it was the end of the 70 years of captivity (see below in the section on Daniel 10). As a result, he put a lot of emphasis on what was happening to the people of God, the city of God, and the sanctuary of God. But while he was praying, the angel Gabriel came again to explain to him the meaning of the part of the dream which he could not understand in Daniel 8. At long last, the missing piece had arrived so that he could have hope for understanding the vision.

THEOLOGICAL TOOLS

Daniel 9:23 indicates that Gabriel came back to take care of some unfinished business. He had come to explain the meaning of the **מראה** [mareh] *appearance*. This was the one part which Daniel did not understand at the end of the previous vision (Daniel 8). He had gotten sick due to the fact that it was so important, but he could not understand it. And now he had hope. The **מראה** [mareh] *appearance* had included a time element--2300 days. Daniel probably feared that this time period was being added to the 70 years of captivity which were nearing completion. But now he could find out the truth of the matter. And it could bring him courage.

Daniel 9:24 states that seventy weeks of years are decreed (KJV determined) concerning your people. This translation is a good one so far as this word is concerned, but it is not necessarily the best one for this particular passage. The word is another one of those words which is only used in this form in this one particular verse in Daniel. **חתך** [chatak] is used here in its nifal form¹. As was mentioned in the study of Daniel 8, the nifal form is used for passive or for reflexive meanings of a particular word stem. In this case, the word **נכתך** [nechtak] comes from the root word, **חתך** [chatak]. The late use of the word had to do with the idea of *decree* or *determine*. But it seems to come from a root which means to cut.

¹Actually, this is the only use of the word **חתך** [chatak] in any form in the entire Bible. It is never used outside Daniel 9:24 (in active or passive forms).

Sometimes it is easier to understand the way a word can have a range of meaning by looking at a near synonym. In this case there is such a word. גָּזַר [gazar] is a similar verb with a similar range of meanings. In its normal (qal) form, it can have the meaning of *cut* (Genesis 15:17 where it is translated, "pieces" [i.e. things which were cut]). But in the time of the exile, it had a derived meaning as well. It could mean to *decide* (Esther 2:1). It is not hard to see how such a shift in meaning can come about. This happens in many languages. The original idea has to do with cutting. But over time, another meaning is added.

This becomes very clear in an English example which is actually a cognate equivalent of the Hebrew words חָתַךְ [chatak] or גָּזַר [gazar]. That is the English word, or actually a portion of a word, *cis* or *cide*. The original meaning of this root had to do with cutting. By extension, it came to contain the idea of killing. We can see this word with its original literal meaning in such forms as *homicide* (the killing of a human), *infanticide* (the killing of babies), *genocide* (the killing of a generation), etc. And yet this root is also used with its derived meaning in the examples, *decide* and *decision*. In these two words, the idea is that one option is cut away from the remaining options. It is the one which is chosen. As a result, the root idea of cutting is still latent in the expression, but it has come to mean something more abstract.

And so, the KJV translators did a decent job of translating the word according to one of its normal meanings. But it does not seem to be the most helpful translation for this passage. What would happen if we were to look at the more primitive or more original meaning? Then we would find that the 70 weeks were *cut off*. But from what were they cut off? And then it suddenly comes together. There was one thing that Daniel did not understand at the end of the vision in Daniel 8. It was the מְרֵאָה [mar'eh] *appearance* and the 2300 days that were a part of it. Now, he was hearing about a period of 70 weeks that was cut off from the longer period. And the 70 weeks had a clear starting point. At long last, Daniel would have the tools which were needed to bring meaning to the *appearance*. There would be a way to recognize when the time period started.

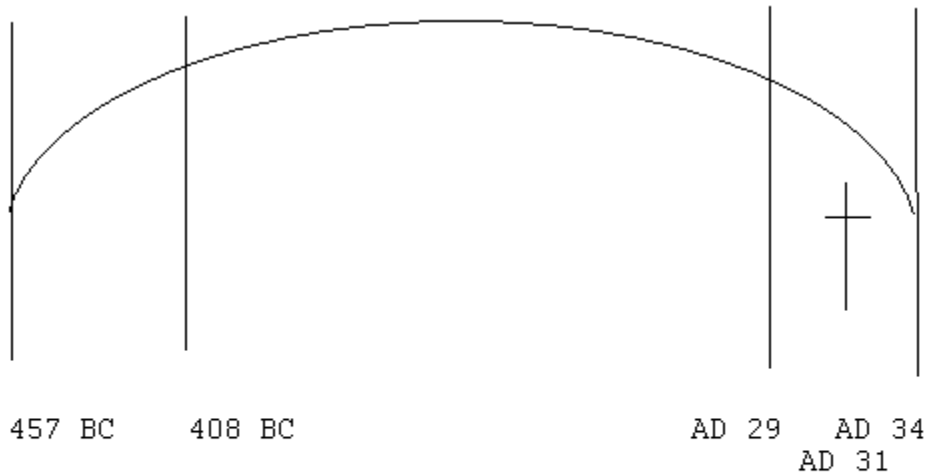
It would start at the time of a decree to rebuild the city (Jerusalem) and would extend until the time of the Messiah. And the starting time is mentioned in greater detail in the verses which follow.

First, let's take a look at some of the parts of the message. Daniel 9:24 starts with the good news about the end of sin. The three major words for sin which are used in Hebrew throughout the Old Testament all appear in rapid succession. It will be finished, sealed (ended), and atoned for. The verse continues to state that this time will also bring in everlasting righteousness and it will seal two things: the חֲזוֹן [chazon] *vision* and the prophet. For some strange reason, most English translations state that the second thing sealed is the *prophecy*. But this is a very strange translation of the Hebrew word. The actual word is נְבִיאָה [nab'ia]. Throughout the Old Testament, this word is translated as,

prophet. Why do the translators choose to translate the word as, *prophecy* only in this one place in scripture? The Hebrew word for *prophecy* is נְבוּאָה [n^ebu'a]. To my simple mind, it seems dishonest to insert the word, *prophecy* into Daniel 9:24.

In short, the prophecy is broken up into 7 weeks, 62 weeks and one week. There is nothing in the text to permit separating the last week from the previous 69 weeks. Though many evangelicals do this in their interpretation of Daniel 9, it is a form of wresting scripture.

The time period could be depicted as follows:



The seventy weeks or 490 years
of Daniel 9

We come to this understanding by noting the beginning point. Everything was to begin at the time of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Several commands were given to that effect, but the third command was the one that actually brought about results. This command came in 457 B.C. Numbering forward 70 weeks or 490 years, we come to the year A.D. 34. At this time the *prophet* and the *vision* were sealed up. The 490 years would be complete. Indeed, Stephen, the deacon who became a prophet, was killed in AD 34.² Some people have become confused as they add 490 years to the date 457 B.C. Simple math shows that this should take a person to the year A.D. 33. But there is one important detail to keep in mind. In moving from B.C. dates to A.D. dates, there is no

²Due to a lack of sufficient time, I will not develop this point in this preliminary syllabus. William Shea does write about the matter with persuasive detail.

zero year in between. This means that we have to account for the fact by moving forward one year to make up for the missing zero. This takes us to A.D. 34 which would become the end of the second chance for the Jewish nation. They would either accept or reject the Messiah.³

The time period is listed as 70 weeks, which would be 490 days. There is reason to believe that it refers to a much longer time period for a number of reasons. The events are too big to be contained by a time period of just over a year. Rebuilding a city and the coming of the Messiah, were events that stretched out over centuries, not literal weeks.

Another reason is through a few examples from the past where a day was used to represent a year. Though a day can stand for a literal day in prophecy,⁴ at other times it can stand for a literal year. We need to look for internal evidence as to which kind of time is intended. Two examples of days that represented years are in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4-6. In the first example, Israel was struggling against the idea of entering Canaan. The time the spies had been in the land was 40 days. And so God extended this to a 40 year period of time of wandering in the wilderness. Since the people had refused to enter the land after 40 days, they would have to wait another 40 years.

In the second example, the prophet Ezekiel was to lie on one side for a specified number of days and then on the other side for a specified number of days. These days of lying on one side were a kind of acted prophecy. And the literal fulfillment was to have a literal year fulfilling each of the prophetic days. These examples give us hints at the actual possibilities. Notice also the explanation in the section below on Daniel 10 how there Daniel speaks of *weeks of days* in contrast to the *weeks* of Daniel 9.

In Daniel 7, we could see that 1260 days of persecution would come during the time of the rule of Christian Rome. Since pagan Rome lost its power around A.D. 476, we know that the persecution would start after this and continue for 1260 prophetic days. Later, it was possible to fine tune this understanding after seeing the specific beginning of the 1260 day prophecy in the establishment of Christian Rome in A.D. 538. But the beginning of the persecution in A.D. 538 had no bearing on the beginning or ending of the 2300 day time prophecy of Daniel 8:14. In order to know the beginning of that time period, we would have to see the beginning of the 70 week time prophecy of Daniel 9 since it was a period cut off from the longer time period. Since the 490 years (70 weeks) began in 457 B.C. we can see that the 2300 days would also begin at that time. If we move forward from 457 B.C. another 2300 years, we come to the year A.D. 1843. But

³As a kind of side note, the Jewish people of our day do not use the title B.C. or A.D. in referring to dates. These titles point to Jesus as the Messiah and that is offensive to them. They use the terms C.E. (common era) and B.C.E. (before the common era) to refer to the same time periods.

⁴An example of this would be Genesis 40 (Joseph interpreting two prisoners' dreams).

then we remember that there was no year zero between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1. This means that we have to move forward one more year and we come to the year 1844. At long last, after the extra information of Daniel 9, it is possible to find the very year that things would be צדק [tsedeq] *made clean, restored, made right, vindicated*.

There has been some misunderstanding of what is happening in Daniel 9:25,26. Some people think that there are two different princes referred to in this section. They think that the first one is the Messiah and that the second one is another prince that brings in destruction. But notice how the pieces fit together:

Coming to the time of Messiah we cover a time period of 69 weeks (seven weeks followed by 62 weeks). He is called משיח נגיד [mashiach nagid] *Messiah the Prince* in Daniel 9:25. Then it says that משיח [mashiach] *Messiah* will be cut off. This was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross for us in the middle of the last prophetic week of the 70 weeks, namely, A.D. 31 (Daniel 9:26). Then it adds that the people of the נגיד [nagid] *Prince* that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Some think that this refers to the attacking general. But I do not believe this fits the language of Daniel 9:26. Notice the terms used. First, it talks about משיח נגיד [mashiach nagid] *Messiah the Prince*. Then it talks about משיח [mashiach] *Messiah*. Then it talks about נגיד [nagid] *the Prince*. I believe that these all refer to the same person. First His full title is used. Then the first part of His title is used. Then the second part of His title is used. But He is one person.

How could the people of the *Messiah* destroy the city and the sanctuary? It was not their very hands that did the work. But they were responsible. As Jesus noted in Matthew 23:38, their house was left to them desolate. In the same way that Joseph was responsible for the actions that were done by others under his responsibility (Genesis 39:22) the people of the *Messiah* were responsible for the actions done by others done as a result of their own choices. They had freely accepted this responsibility at the time they asked for Jesus to be crucified (Matthew 27:25).

In order to better understand what is going on in the last part of Daniel 9, it is also helpful to break up the last few verses into their basic elements. The message keeps going back and forth between the city and the Messiah. It may be easier to see in chart form:⁵

⁵The chart itself has been bumped onto the following page in order to keep its details in one place.

THE CITY

Daniel 9:25

command to rebuild Jerusalem
seven weeks
the building of the city

Daniel 9:26

Messiah's people destroy the city
and the sanctuary. Its end
comes with a flood. . .
desolations are decreed.

Daniel 9:27

The desolator shall come.

A careful look at the above information on the left side indicates that there is a command to build Jerusalem and it is actually built under difficult circumstances. But the city is later destroyed due to the choices of the people of the *Messiah*. Finally a desolator comes who does the actual work of destruction (Titus in A.D. 70).

A look at the right side shows that *Messiah the Prince* would come another 62 weeks after the temple was rebuilt. Later he would be cut off alone. The last week of the prophecy was for the purpose of confirming the covenant. The sacrifice system would also be stopped. Actually, the death of Jesus made the sacrifice system come to an end. It had no more purpose. The great Anti-type had come and had fulfilled the meaning of the types which had pointed forward to Him.

It is amazing to me how accurately fulfilled these prophecies have been. A look at history will confirm exactly what was stated above.

Here is one more quick note. The KJV translates part of Daniel 9:26 as ". . . and that not for Himself . . ." The RSV translates it as ". . . and shall have nothing . . ." The phrase being translated is the Hebrew, וְאִין לוֹ [w^eein lo]. This could be translated as, ". . . and no one shall be for Him . . ." That would certainly be a more literal translation rather than an interpretation of the text. If were to be translated in that way, we could understand that Jesus would die alone for His people. And that is exactly what happened.

THE MESSIAH

the coming of *Messiah the Prince*
plus 62 weeks

the *Messiah* is cut off alone

He shall confirm the covenant for
one week and cause the
sacrifice to stop.

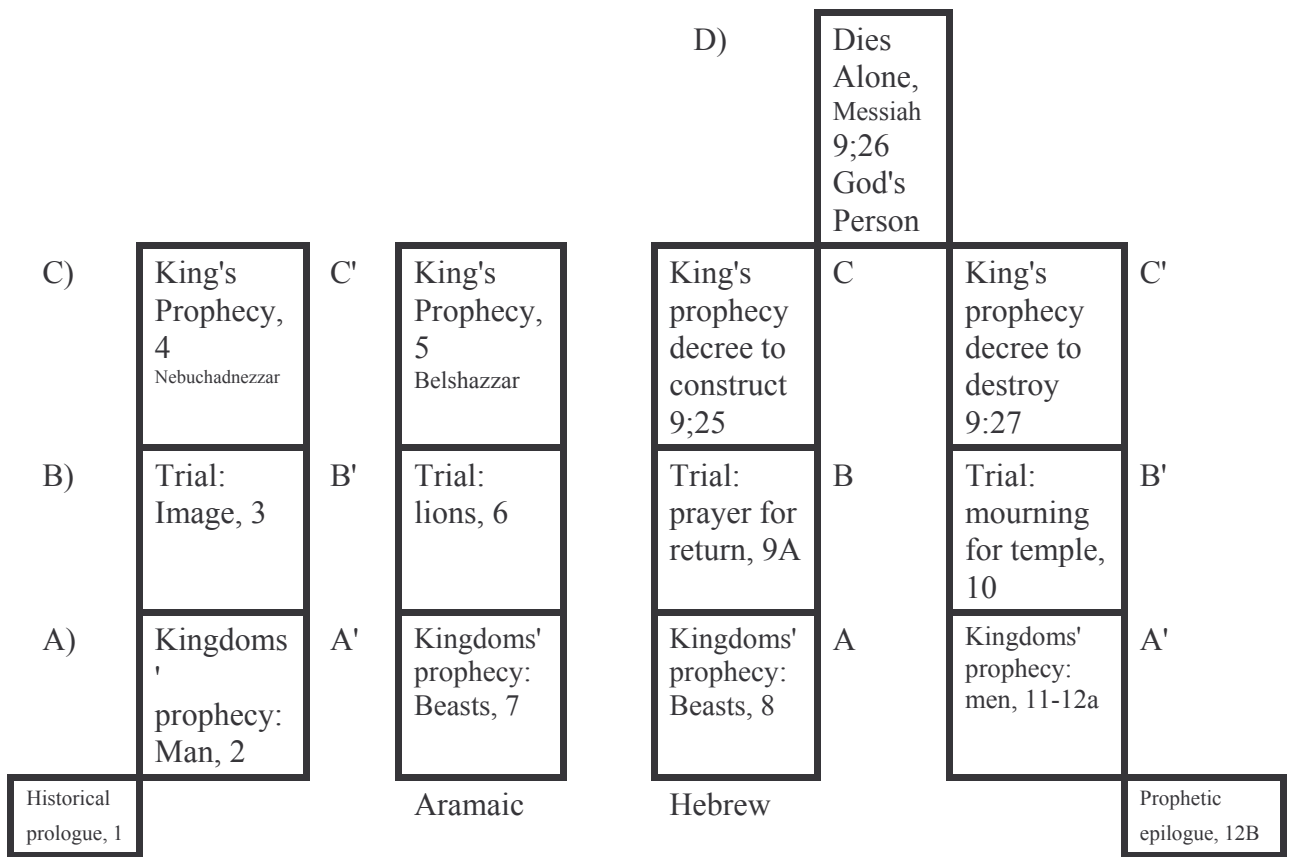
THE CHIASTIC HEART OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

At the beginning of the syllabus there is a section dealing with the way the book of Daniel is laid out in the form of a chiasm. (see that section for more information) This is rather like climbing a mountain where what you see going up one side of the mountain mirrors (reveals in reverse) what you see going down the other side of the mountain. The first section of the book had an obvious chiasm that is recognized by many. But the second part has a not-so-obvious chiasm which reveals the thematic heart of the book. It shows the main idea of the whole book.

In the first layer of both sections of the book, there is a section on prophecies concerning kingdoms. Daniel 2 has the metal man; Daniel 7 has wild animals, Daniel 8 has domestic animals, and Daniel 11,12 has living men. These all show the future concerning the kingdoms. The next layer is obvious in the beginning of Daniel but it is not so obvious in the second part of Daniel. There is an obvious trial of God's people in Daniel 3 and Daniel 6. This trial includes persecution (a furnace in Daniel 3 and lions in Daniel 6). But where is this trial of God's people in the second part of the book? It is less visible because it does not have the persecution from humans. Instead, it is a trial as God's person struggles in serious prayer over issues that are earthshaking in their outcome (see the section above on Daniel 9a and the section below on Daniel 10). Prayer makes a difference. God responds to the voice of His servant. But it is a kind of trial. Will Daniel be faithful? Will he persevere with God in prayer? Or will he let history take its course? Fortunately, he does stay faithful to the end.

In the first section of the book, the next level up deals with kings. Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 4, is warned by God, and then corrected by God in relation to a decree (that he would go mad for 7 years). Belshazzar, in Daniel 5, is warned by God that he will die because of his choices. The decree is written on the wall. But what is there on the other side of the book to match this picture? Again, it is less obvious, but it seems to be there. In Daniel 9:25 there is a decree to rebuild the city. This decree comes from a king. In the first section, decrees were about kings. In the second section, the decrees come from kings. In Daniel 9:27, there is mention of the incoming abomination that makes desolate. This points forward to the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Though no decree is explicitly mentioned here, such a decree went out.

In between these two decrees is the heart of the book. Daniel 9:26 shows that the messiah dies alone for His people. What a wonderful testimony that is. At the heart of one of the more challenging books of the Bible is a prophecy that Jesus would die alone for you and for me. This gives me courage.



Literary structure of the book of Daniel Diagramed⁶

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT / PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The spiritual insights are not separated at this point. They are mixed together with the theological section (see above). It is so thrilling to know that Jesus died alone for me. He brought in everlasting righteousness. He atoned for my sin. The book of Daniel is indeed a book of hope.

⁶William H. Shea, "Unity of Daniel," in *Symposium on Daniel, Daniel and Revelation* Committee series, vol. 2, Frank B. Holbrook, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of SDA, 1986), 248.