

Daniel 9 and a Long Exile

I. A promise that exile will end

- Jer 25:11–12: Judah and all the nations will serve the king of Babylon 70 years.
- Jer 29:10–14: at the end of the seventy years, God will restore Israel and end the exile.

II. An initial, partial fulfillment

- After about 70 years, Babylon is conquered by the Persians under Cyrus (2 Chr 36:20–21)
- The people have come back (as we saw in Ezra-Nehemiah), but it is hardly the “whole-hearted” seeking after God that Jer 29:13 speaks of, nor does God restore them back to their former glory. No sign of the great restoration promises of Jeremiah.

III. A surprising ultimate fulfillment

- At about exactly the time when the initial fulfillment is happening, in the days of Darius (Dan 9:1; here, Darius = Cyrus), Daniel prays a prayer of repentance and asks for the fulfillment of the end of exile (Dan 9:1–19).
 - o Daniel confesses his sin and the sin of his people.
 - o Daniel urges God to restore the people on the basis of:
 1. God’s glory (vv. 15, 17, 19; cf. Exod 32:11–14; Num 14:13)
 2. God’s compassion (vv. 16, 18; cf. Neh 9:17, 19, 27, 28, 31!)
 3. God’s past mighty acts (vv. 15, 16)
 4. God’s people are still called by his name (vv. 16, 19)
 5. Daniel’s confession of sin, in keeping with Deut 30:1–3; Jer 29:10–14.
- In response, God says that “seventy *sevens*” have been decreed. The key idea is that exile will be *long*. Much longer than originally expected.
 - o Lev 26:18 supports this: “If also after these things [i.e., the judgment of exile] you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.”
 - o Jeremiah’s 70 years were unsuccessful in producing repentance, so a seven-fold longer penitential period is decreed. The point of this whole elongated period is to produce repentance.¹

¹ Bergsma, John S., “The Persian Period as Penitential Era: The ‘Exegetical Logic’ of Daniel 9.1–27,” in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers et al.; London: T & T Clark, 2009), 60–61.

- One way of understanding the seventy sevens:
 - o Basic point: “seven” does not always mean a literal “week” (cf. Gen 29:27–28, where “week” is used for the 7 years for Rachel). “Seven” is a symbolic unit of time and should not be understood as referring to a literal seven year period.
 - o In 1 Enoch, a non-inspired book of a similar genre to Daniel, the unit “week” or “seven” is used to describe long ages of human history (1 Enoch 93:1–10; 91:11–17)

Unit of “time”	Verses in Daniel 9	Description	Fulfillment
7 sevens	v. 25	Begins with the word to restore Jerusalem	The prophet of Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 29:10–14)
		Ends with the coming of an anointed one, a prince	Cyrus (cf. Isa 45:1)
62 sevens	v. 25	Jerusalem is rebuilt, but in times of distress	The rebuilding in Ezra-Nehemiah amid lots of opposition
1 seven	v. 26	Begins with an anointed one being cut off and having nothing.	The death of Christ.
	v. 26	Throughout the week: war	The constant tribulations of the people of God between Christ’s first and second coming.
	vv. 26, 27	“Midway” through sacrifice and offering will be ended.	The destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 AD
	v. 27	Toward the end: a desolator comes	An especially intense trial for the church before the second coming of Christ.
	v. 27	At the end: the desolator destroyed	The second coming of Christ and the judgment of Satan
The conclusion of the seventy sevens	v. 24	Transgression is finished, sin is ended, iniquity is atoned for, everlasting righteousness is brought in, vision and prophet are sealed, a most holy place is anointed.	The inauguration and consummation of the kingdom of God in the death, resurrection, and second coming of Christ.

IV. Pastoral conclusion

- Daniel 9 shares many of the pastoral concerns of Ezra-Nehemiah. It was written not only for that time, but for *us*.
- Why does this matter to us?
 1. This is a story *you are in*. You are in the midst of the great end-of-exile story. The seventy weeks for completing the exile are not yet completed!
 2. God does not want us to lose heart in the midst of a long exile. He wants us to see that he has a good plan, and everything is going according to plan.
 3. Just because we are suffering does not mean that God has given up on us, or that we are hated by him. Rather, Daniel (and we!) are “greatly loved” (v. 23).
 4. This is a period dedicated to *repentance*. God desires truth in our hearts and obedience. Do you see repentance and godliness as the great goal of your life?