

## **The Anointing of the Messiah**

### **Daniel 9:24-25**

#### **Background-**

Daniel is writing this in 538 BC, the first year of Darius the Mede. Daniel had just prayed concerning the fulfillment of the prophecy that Jeremiah made concerning the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem (Jer. 25:11-12: the return of the Israelites from captivity). The captivity was to last seventy years and began with the first round of deportations on 605 BC after Nebuchadnezzar (in a coalition with the Medes, Persians, and Scythians) had defeated a coalition of the Assyrians and Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish and became the world power. This was because Jehoiakim, King of Judah, had allied himself with Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:34-24:6). There were 3 waves of captivity/destruction: 1- 605 BC when members of the royal family, including Daniel were taken in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Jehoiakim - Dan 1:1-2; 2- 10,000 were taken (including Ezekiel) in 597 BC during the reign of Coniah (Jehoiachin) when he had reigned three months- 2 Kings 24:6-16; and 3- in 587/6 during the reign of Zedekiah, the final destruction of Jerusalem was completed and the city left in ruins- 2 Kings 25:1-7.

The counting for Daniels prayer in 9:2 begins from 605 and is the reason for his urgency. As the seventy years were coming to an end, Daniel set his attention to praying for the fulfillment of the promise God had made through Jeremiah. This also lets us know that the scroll of Jeremiah was in some form complete and circulating in Babylon during this time. Daniel lists the sins of the nation and confesses them before the Lord. He ends his prayer by begging the Lord to hear and forgive His people as well as take action on fulfilling the prophecy made by Jeremiah seventy years earlier (9:19).

Gabriel had been dispatched to answer Daniel's prayer as soon as Daniel started praying (9:23) and showed up while Daniel was still speaking (9:20). Daniel's prayer was responded to in such manner because he was highly esteemed (or greatly desired: he had the character traits that God greatly desires) in the sight of God.

Gabriel then proceeds to give Daniel the answer to his prayer, however Gabriel goes much further than just the restoration of Jerusalem from captivity. He proceeds to lay out the exact year of the anointing of the Messiah (baptism of Jesus into His Messianic ministry). This is the most exact, and possibly the greatest Messianic prophecy in the Bible.

The Hebrew bible has 3 sections: The Law, The Prophets, and the Writings, corresponding to the types of literature found in each section. There is also a descending level of authority with the Law being the pinnacle. One would expect to find Daniel in the "prophets" section. The Dead Sea Scrolls list Daniel as a prophet in 4Q174 1-3 ii 3-4; Jesus calls him one in Matt 24:15-16 and Josephus gives him that title in Antiquities 10.11.4 [249] and 10.11.7 [266,268]. Daniel is also in the section of the Prophets in the Septuagint. However, after AD 400, it was listed in the

writings in order to diminish the authority of the book. With the accuracy of this prophecy, it is easy to understand why.

## **Vs. 24-**

Gabriel begins by stating that “seventy weeks”- lit. sevens, have been decreed for the holy people and city. The term for “weeks” is the Hebrew word (shabhu'im). It is derived from the word “sheba” which simply means seven. Context will determine whether it is a period of seven days, weeks, months, or years. Due to the nature and scope of the things foretold (complete rebuilding of Jerusalem including plaza and wall- 9:25), seventy years would be an appropriate time frame bringing us to a total of 490 years.

Gabriel tells Daniel what will take place during this restoration period:

1. finish (fill up, shut up) transgression (emphasizing breach of trust and rebellion);
2. make an end (seal up) of sins (emphasizing the offense against God);
3. make atonement (propitiation, reconciliation) for iniquity (guilt toward God);
4. bring in everlasting righteousness;
5. seal up (make an end of) vision (revelation) and prophecy (literally “prophet”);
6. anoint the most holy (some versions inserts “place” but that is not in the text).

Gabriel lets Daniel know that at the end of 490 years several things will take place. One will be that the physical Israelites will commit their last sin against God (finish transgression). This will be the last breach of trust that the nation will make. The crucifying of the Messiah is in view here (Matt 23:32).

The second event that will take place is making an end (sealing up) of sins. Sin will be dealt with by God providing a means to deal with it (Heb 2:3; 9:11-14; 10:12-18). All of the offenses against God's holiness will finally be dealt with.

The third thing Gabriel says will be accomplished is that iniquity will be atoned for. The blood of Christ, which is our propitiation (1 John 2:1-2), allows the guilt we have before God to be satisfied. Interestingly, there are three different words used for sin in this verse which all deal with different aspects of it. The individual nuance of each one is listed in the numbered list above.

Fourthly, everlasting righteousness will be brought in (Rom 3:21-26). With sin removed, righteousness will be the status for the people of God. Many of the Old Testament prophets spoke of this day as well.

The fifth thing would be to make an end of vision (direct revelation from God) and prophecy (literally prophet). During this messianic age, the final revelation will be brought and there will be no need for revelation nor the prophet. We see this happening in the days of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. Since the miraculous gifts (including prophecy) were only bestowed through the laying

on of the apostles hands, this gift had an automatic expiration date and was replaced by the completed revelation of God: the Scriptures (1 Cor 13:8-13).

Lastly, Gabriel mentions that during this time, there would be an anointing of the most holy. Many versions add the word “place” here. This is not in the text and it elucidates the pre-millennial bias of translator. This *could* refer to a most holy place but also the most holy *one*. The latter seems to be a much better understanding especially considering that Gabriel goes directly into the appearance of the Messiah, who would fit the description of the most holy one perfectly.

What Gabriel is describing is the complete fulfillment of the old covenant and the ushering in of a completely new era and system. He then turns his attention to the One who will bring all of this to pass: the Messiah.

### **Vs. 25-**

Gabriel begins by letting Daniel know that the prophecy he is about to utter is able to be known and discerned. The word for discern also can be translated as being prudent or wise and it is used in Genesis 3:6 describing the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This prophecy is meant to be understood, which is good news for students of the Word.

Gabriel marks the starting point of the prophecy: “the issuing of a decree (literally “word”) to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”. There is much debate on when this “word” went out and usually it is understood to be one of the royal decrees:

1- Decree of Cyrus in 538 BC. This command listed in Ezra 1:2-4 only gave the command to rebuild the temple. This decree was also the one in question when Artaxerxes issued the command to stop the work in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:17-22). One of the foundations of Persian law was that a decree could not be undone (Dan 6:8). So, if Cyrus had issued the command for Jerusalem to be completely rebuilt, then Artaxerxes could not undo it. This command is not the starting point of Daniel 9:25.

2- Decree of King Darius in 520 BC- This command is listed in Ezra 6:1-12. It also only refers to the temple.

3- Decree of Artaxerxes in 458/457 BC- Ezra 7:11-26. This command authorized Ezra to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people and priests. Also this gave Ezra the authority to teach the Law and enforce it. This command was not to rebuild Jerusalem.

4- Second decree of Artaxerxes in 445 BC- Nehemiah 2:1-8. This authorized Nehemiah to rebuild the city and the walls. This would be a proper date to begin counting unless there was a word that went forth before this one.

This brings us to the command to rebuild Jerusalem which should be our starting point: The decree which was most likely from Ezra himself in 457 BC. The important thing to realize is that the Hebrew does not demand that it be a royal decree. As mentioned already, the literal translation is “a word” which should be understood as the first attempt to rebuild the city. The grammar here is one of the most generic ways this could be written so that it would not have to be tied to a royal decree. Plus, since the Pharisees traced their beginning to Ezra, his command to rebuild the city would carry more weight than a Gentile king. When was this first “word” issued?

In Ezra 4:8-24 a letter is sent to Artaxerxes from the commanders and governors of the province beyond the River Euphrates which includes Jerusalem. In this letter, a complaint is made against the Jews that they are rebuilding the city. Furthermore, they mention that Jerusalem has a history of being a rebellious city and that if the wall is rebuilt, then they will rebel against the king. In response to this, Artaxerxes makes careful search and inquiry and finds that the city indeed has a history of rebellion and orders “a decree to make these men stop work, that this city may not be rebuilt until a decree is issued by me”, Ezra 4:21. It is clear that the word had gone forth to rebuild the city and that the work was stopped until Artaxerxes restarted it. This should be the date that the prophecy starts as it is the first “word” to rebuild the city.

Gabriel then states that from 457 BC until the appearing of the Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks (49 years) and sixty-two weeks (434 years). Therefore, there is a total of 483 years that will elapse from the issuing of the word to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah is anointed. The first 49 years is probably a reference to how long it would take Jerusalem to be completely rebuilt with “plaza and moat”. The remaining 434 years would simply reference the remaining time from then until the Messiah appears.

Subtracting 483 years from 457 you get A.D. 27 (since the year 457 needs to be included). Since there is no year 0, we must subtract one year which makes A.D. 26 the end point. This should be the year that we see the Messiah anointed.

To pin down the year of Jesus’ immersion, Luke 3:1 is especially helpful. It reads that John was immersing in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius started his co-regency with Augustus in October of A.D. 12. Therefore the fifteenth year of Tiberius was from October A.D. 26-September of A.D. 27 which coincides perfectly with the date prophesied by Daniel over 560 years earlier.

Some critics state that Daniel was written in the second century BC due to the historical prophecies found in Daniel 2, 7, 8, 11, and 12. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest a date of writing so late. However, even if Daniel was written this late, it does nothing to negate this prophecy whatsoever since the writer would still be prophesying the date of the Messiah with pinpoint accuracy 150-200 years before it took place.