

This chapter deals with a number of profound issues. There is the personal guilt which the prophet Daniel expressed about the sins of the nation of Israel. There is the promise of the future Nahzi, the prince or Messiah. There is the strong echo and restatement of the day for a year principle in prophetic interpretation. There is the method of the acquiring of the knowledge about previously revealed information. There is the way the prophet besought his God in prayer. There is the central involvement of mercy and forgiveness. There is the central role of Jerusalem in God's plan and purpose.

Daniel is one of the great prophets. Together with Noah and Job he is singled out as one of three men who spoke on behalf of God, as the contemporary prophet Ezekiel of his earlier years testified, 14v14&20. Only the prince of Tyre, a highly successful politician of the ancient world, was deemed wiser than he was, 28v3.

This knowledge and wisdom came from his personal application to the Word of God. He searched the books (scrolls – books came later) and read in the writings of Jeremiah that God had indicated a limit of seventy years to accomplish the desolations of Jerusalem. See Jeremiah 29v10 *“For thus saith the LORD that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you and perform my good word towards you in causing you to return to this place”*. This links the captivity of Judah and the carrying away into Babylon with the 70 years.

There were three captivities which affected the nation as each time they rebelled;

First under Jehoiakim	2 Chron 36v4	3420AM	Daniel carried away
Second under Jehoiachin	2 Chron 36v10	3427AM	Ezekiel carried away
Third under Zedekiah	2 Chron 36v18	3438AM	Jeremiah taken to Egypt

There is some dispute over the actual BC dates, the commonly accepted chronology gives this as 606BCE to 588BCE, others revise this to 532BC.

The 70 year period has three starting points and therefore three ending points. The first of these is the seizure of Babylon itself in 536BCE then after that the actual return of the Jews themselves.

The prophecy of the seventy weeks follows after the seventy years. This period is divided into three, 7 62 and 1. It starts at the “going forth of the commandment to retore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah the prince. Cyrus King of Persia made that commandment, and it is that event that concludes the Second book of Chronicles. This was in 536BCE, however 490 years after that gives 46BCE when Julius Caesar was still alive. Another 18 years does not help as that takes us to 28BCE at the time Octavian is entitled as Augustus. Neither of these events has anything to do with the Messiah who is still years away from being born let alone completing his mission. The alternative BC dating pushes this forward to 480BCE for Babylon's capture by Darius, with Cyrus reigning after that.

The first period of seven weeks (49 years) takes it forward to *“the street shall be built again and the wall even in troublous times”*. Ezra and then Nehemiah were used by God to effect this return and this took several years.

Another 62 weeks (434 years) after that takes it on to the crucifixion of Christ. The alternative way to understand this period in chronology is to accept the Jewish accounts that the Persian period was about 80 years shorter than most modern historians believe and we return to the dates given by scripture.

Daniel's understanding was twofold. He was inspired to understand "*Gabriel make this man understand the vision*" 8v16 and he also was empowered by "*the man Gabriel.....and he informed me.... I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding*". Daniel also "*understood by books*". We have no Gabriel to enable us to understand but we do have access to the same books that Daniel had in the Hebrew prophets which allows us to understand as he did in the second of those mechanisms. He also referred to the requirement of the Law of Moses to be maintained see verse 13.

Daniel set his "*face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes*". How far are we prepared to go in seeking an answer from God? Do we go as far as Daniel? If not, why not? Do we think that is not necessary, that God just listens to us on his iPad whenever we call him, (if we do ask Him much)?

What was the basis of his appeal "*O Lord the great and dreadful God keeping covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep his commandments*". How many today seek God in prayer on the same basis as Daniel did? Do we first show our love of God before we ask Him something? Do we strive to keep His commandments or just sidestep that issue because we know how bad we actually are at keeping them?

Daniel included himself in the national transgression. He did not say, it had nothing to do with him. That others were sinners, but he was not. He knew that he had also transgressed and let himself and God down. Every person except Christ, has sinned and come short of the glory of God. Daniel was no exception. Four times Daniel said the fateful words – "*we have sinned*". Verse 5,8,11,15 and he otherwise speaks of my sin and the sin of my people, and rebellion and not obeying God. He was not trying to hide himself from the responsibility of such actions. He sinned by association; he had been guilty of failure like so many before and after him.

Only after expressing his personal involvement in such matters and petitioning the Almighty for clemency, was the vision of hope for a better future granted. However, the details of the vision indicated that the path to glory required a fearful price.

What were the things that Daniel prophesied would be done to and by this Prince?

To finish the transgression	Israel as a nation's greatest sin rejected him
To make an end of sins	Not sin offerings but sins were ended in him
To make reconciliation for iniquity	Hebrew kaphporeth to cover or atone for sins
To bring in everlasting righteousness	Immortal glorification can alone do this
To seal up the vision and prophecy	Divine provision
To anoint the most Holy.	Jesus christed by the Spirit

Nothing so significant had ever been done before. It is the culmination of the purpose of God in an individual. Only once this was done for him as the first fruits, could these blessings be given to others also. First for himself then for the people.

The last week of the seventy was for the confirmation of the covenant.

These seventy weeks are not literal weeks. If it was meant to be understood as literal weeks, then the Messiah had to appear during the time of the Persians when the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was given. This is manifestly not true.

Even Jews who reject Jesus as their Messiah, accept that the time he came was the time that all the nation were expecting such an individual to appear. This is a contemporary historical fact and drove other issues like the claims of Bar-Kokhba which were supported at the time by the highest Rabbinical sources. They were desperate to see this prophecy of seventy weeks fulfilled in some way, even though they rejected the actual fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth.

The indictment that *"The people of the prince that shall come and destroy the city and sanctuary"* was brutally fulfilled at the time of AD70 when multitudes of Jews died of disease starvation or by the sword when the Roman legions sacked Jerusalem to break the first Jewish rebellion. That an heathen army can be described in advance by the Holy Spirit as the people of the prince is in anticipation of passages such as that in Ephesians 1v20-22 *"Which He wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet"*.

The fate of Israel was sealed. Their continuing rejection of God, first in his prophets then in his son (see the parable of Jesus in Matthew 21v33-41) was to be sealed in blood. *"And for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate"*. This is a terrible indictment against a nation that was national covenanted to God. *"Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thong and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace"* Hebrews 10v29.

Daniel appealed to his God on the basis, not on any righteousness he claimed he had, verse 18, *"but for Thy great mercies"*. It seems strange perhaps to us, that in the midst of such a calamitous prophecy for Israel, that forgiveness and mercy are emphasised so much! He wanted to see Jerusalem, the city he would not see again until he was raised again from the dead, restored to its position of glory and respect.

God's standards are paramount and our failure to rise up to that is something that should make us more circumspect and like Daniel, we should not shy away from our personal responsibilities.