

The 70 Weeks Prophecy – Part 1

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Brethren, in the book of Daniel, it records a story for us where Daniel prays a prayer to God basically appealing for the return of the Israelite people to the area of Israel and Jerusalem, and specifically for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. In response to this prayer, God sends the angel Gabriel to appear to Daniel and to reveal to him what we typically refer to today as the 70 Weeks Prophecy. Now in my experience in the Church of God, typically when we talk about the 70 Weeks Prophecy, we jump right into the 70 weeks and how the math plays out and we particularly spend some time speculating about that last week and how that's going to be fulfilled and speculating on the details there. But what I'd like to do today -- before we get into all those types of details -- is spend some time actually looking at the historical context of what caused Daniel to make this prayer in the first place. Because to really understand that and to understand the details of what he's thinking and why he's even making the request that he is, we need to understand the history around it and place it in its full historical context. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon today, it's:

The 70 Weeks Prophecy - Part 1

Because this will actually be a two part series. Today we're mainly going to focus on placing this story in the greater context of all the history around it. Again, this explains for us why Daniel was making this prayer in the first place. Then next time we'll actually get into the exact details of the 70 weeks and how that plays out. So, to start off with, let's turn over to Daniel 9. It's Daniel 9 and we'll start here in verse 1.

Dan 9:1 *"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— 2) in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."* (NKJV)

Now again, understanding what he's referring to there is really important because this sets the entire context as to why what he states in the rest of the chapter even takes place. Because as we're going to see here later today, a lot of the first half of this chapter is a prayer that Daniel is making to God basically appealing for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. But first we need to understand what he is referring to here regarding Jeremiah and the 70 years of desolation. Well, this refers to a prophecy that's in Jeremiah 25. So, turn over to Jeremiah 25 and we'll see here a prophecy that Jeremiah gives basically prophesying about the Babylonian captivity that was going to take place with the southern kingdom of Judah. This is Jeremiah 25:1.

Jer 25:1 *"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first*

year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2) which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: 3) "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. 4) And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. 5) They said, "Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever." (NKJV)

In other words, he's telling them if they repented, they could stay in the land, but as we know that's not what they did.

"6) Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.' 7) Yet you have not listened to Me," says the LORD, "that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. 8) "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you have not heard My words, 9) behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, "and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10) Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11) And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (NKJV)

Notice Daniel mentioned the years mentioned by Jeremiah. Well, this is what he was referring to here.

"12) "Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.'" (NKJV)

And notice he's saying that Judah is going to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians. That's going to last 70 years and then the Babylonians, they're going to be punished. We're going to see they get conquered by the Persian Empire is what happens. Then picking up in verse 13.

"13) So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations. 14) (For many nations and great kings shall be served by them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the works of their own hands.)' " (NKJV)

Now this is basically prophesying in advance what would take place with Nebuchadnezzar conquering the kingdom of Judah. Now historically, the fulfillment of this is recorded in 2 Chronicles. So, turn over to the book of 2 Chronicles and we'll see here this book ends with basically telling the story of how this actually got fulfilled. This is 2 Chronicles 36, and we'll start reading in verse 11.

2 Chr 36:11 *"Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12) He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. 13) And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. 14) Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. 15) And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16) But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy."* (NKJV)

So, this is exactly how Jeremiah described it because they've not listened, and they were warned numerous times and refused to repent. Then Nebuchadnezzar was brought upon them to destroy them.

"17) Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. 18) And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. 19) Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. 20) And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia," (NKJV)

Now see as it mentioned here, when the Babylonians were punished for their actions, that was being conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire.

"21) to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." (NKJV)

So again, we have that 70 years mentioned here. But notice it's referring to the land Sabbath. Now we're going to take a little bit of a diversion here to understand this comment, but what we're going to see is a pretty interesting number of years that's

going to essentially parallel that this 70 Weeks Prophecy when we understand it. Because notice this here just to read verse 21 again, just notice the wording.

“21) to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.” (NKJV)

What it's getting at is 70 land Sabbaths. Basically, the people would be removed from the area for 70 years before anyone would be able to return and the land is enjoying its land Sabbath. Now if we turn over to Leviticus 26. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are oftentimes referred to as the “blessings and cursings chapters”. The reason being is in both cases the first half of the chapter refers to all the wonderful blessings that the Israelites would receive living in the land if they consistently obeyed God and how wonderful life would be. Typically, the second half of both of these chapters is all the curses and all the things that would go very badly for them if they consistently disobeyed. Well, some of these curses specifically speak to them disobeying the land Sabbath. Now this is in Leviticus 26:32.

Lev 26:32 *“I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. 33) I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. 34) Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. 35) As long as it lies desolate it shall rest— for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.” (NKJV)*

Again, the statement made here is the time that they're away from the land is making up for the land Sabbaths that they didn't observe. Now let's notice the Biblical instructions for the land Sabbath and then just do a little math here and we're going to find a very interesting number. So, turn over to Leviticus 25:1. We're just going to read the Biblical instructions for the land Sabbath that they should have been obeying.

Lev 25:1 *“And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 2) “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. 3) Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; 4) but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5) What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. 6) And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, 7) for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.” (NKJV)*

Notice it was a cycle of seven years. Six years they would farm and harvest as normal and then year seven they're supposed to let the land rest. Now let's do a little math and we're going to see a very interesting number here. We won't get into all the details of the 70 weeks of the prophecy today. We'll do that next time. But what we're going to find when we do that is, it's talking about a period of 490 years. Now if we look at this, the land is going to rest for 70 years while they're in Babylonian captivity and no one's allowed to return to the land, and this is making up for the time that they didn't keep the land Sabbath before. Well, what is 70 times 7? It's 490. It's basically a parallel number. So, what this suggests is -- and again the Bible doesn't explicitly state that they ignored the land Sabbath for 490 years -- but when we put these scriptures together, it would certainly imply that that was the case and that's connected with why there were 70 years they're not allowed to be in the land.

We're going to see later when we lay out all the details of the 70 Weeks Prophecy. What it's really about is that Daniel prays to God and he's requesting God to restore Jerusalem. To send the people back into the land. Now as we're going to see when we study the details, the 490 years of the 70 Weeks Prophecy. That math doesn't start immediately after the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity. But what you have is it suggests that they were ignoring the land Sabbath for a 490 year period. They wind up with no one in the land for 70 years, making up for the land Sabbaths for that whole time. Then there is the restoration coming back to the promised land, being able to come back to Jerusalem and restore it. Again, we'll get next time into the exact math of how the 490 years of the 70 Weeks Prophecy plays out, but it's kind of on the other end of this. I just thought that was kind of an interesting parallel, how all that played out.

But now as I mentioned before, the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied the Babylonian captivity. Israel would be basically removed from the land for a period of 70 years. But he didn't just prophesy them being removed from the land, he also prophesied that after the 70 years there would be a plan to bring them back. This is in Jeremiah 29. So, turn over to Jeremiah 29. We're going to see here that Jeremiah sends a letter to all the people that are in captivity in Babylon. Basically letting them know, get comfortable, it's going to be a while. You're going to be here for 70 years. Don't listen to people that try to tell you otherwise because God has determined it's going to be 70 years. But after that you're going to be allowed to start coming back to the land. But notice this in Jeremiah 29:1.

Jer 29:1 *"Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon."* (NKJV)

See, he's writing to all those who are in captivity in Babylon. As we're going to see here, he's giving them expectations for what's going to happen, but he's also prophesying their return.

"2) (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed

from Jerusalem.) 3) The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying, 4) Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5) Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6) Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. 7) And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. 8) For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. 9) For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD. 10) For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. 11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12) Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13) And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14) I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.” (NKJV)

See, Jeremiah not only prophesied their captivity and they're being removed from the land. He also let them know you're going to return to the land. That there's going to be this 70 year period and then there's going to be a plan for you to start returning to the land. And see this is what Daniel understood when he made this prayer because as we noticed before when we were reading the first couple of verses there, it referred to the fact that he's aware of the years of what Jeremiah prophesied. Daniel has watched a lot of this play out. The earlier parts of the book of Daniel described how Daniel is taken to Babylon. How he interacted with Nebuchadnezzar through the Babylonian captivity. He has seen all of this take place. He also witnesses the punishment of the Babylonians when the Persian Empire then makes a conquest and conquers them. He's watched all of this play out and this is actually recorded in Daniel 5. So, turn over to Daniel 5 and we'll see here this mentioned. We'll just pick up here in verse 30.

Dan 5:30 *“That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. 31) And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”* (NKJV)

Now see it's within a year of this happening that Daniel 9 is recorded, and it directly tells us this. So, if we turn back over to Daniel 9, we're just going to reread here the first two verses that we read a moment ago. But just notice the timing here. This helps us get into Daniel's head and what he's thinking and why he made the prayer that we're about to read here. This prayer that results in the angel Gabriel coming to him and revealing the 70 Weeks Prophecy. Again, starting again in Daniel 9 and verse 1.

Dan 9:1 *"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— 2) in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."* (NKJV)

Well see now we can understand the context of what he's talking about because he's aware that Jeremiah prophesied the Babylonian captivity and Daniel has experienced it. He got carried away into captivity into Babylon. He's worked directly with Nebuchadnezzar. He's fully aware of all this and he has watched the 70 years play out and now he has also seen the Medo-Persian Empire come in and conquer the Babylonians. So now he's seen the punishment of the Babylonian Empire, and he knows that that 70 year period has expired.

Well, you can imagine what he's thinking now. It's like we can check that box off. Well now we get a chance to return. You can imagine he's feeling very hopeful about this because he realizes this is what Jeremiah prophesied and now, we're past that. So, hopefully now we can get on with being restored and going back to the land. That's really what he's thinking and hoping for here. With that in mind, we can continue on now in verse 3 and see the prayer that he prays to God here that again results in Gabriel coming to him and revealing the 70 Weeks Prophecy. So, pick up now in verse 3.

"3) Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. 4) And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, 5) we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. 6) Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. 7) O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. 8) "O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9) To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. 10) We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. 11) Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him." (NKJV)

See, he's thoroughly confessing their sins. He's thoroughly admitting throughout this whole prayer our troubles were self-inflicted. We brought this upon ourselves because we just knowingly disobeyed, and You sent the prophets to warn us, and we refused to listen, and we got what we deserved. But as we're going to see, as we keep reading

through this, his appeal is for God's forgiveness. It is for God's forgiveness and mercy and restoring them to the land because he knows the people don't deserve it. It is not because of their righteousness. He's just appealing to God's forgiveness and mercy.

Also notice as we read through this -- and we'll kind of see this more in detail next time - the prophecy that's revealed to him here very much ties to the coming of the Messiah. Because that's a lot of the math of how the 70 weeks plays out is counting the time from a decree that's issued that we're going to talk about here in a moment and then it counts down to the coming of the Messiah. But notice as we read through his prayer, Daniel doesn't make any reference to the Messiah. He's not asking about the Messiah at all. He is asking about forgiveness and mercy and forgiving the sins of Israel.

So, the answer that he gets from the prophecy through the angel Gabriel really speaks to a much bigger picture than what he was really asking in the first place. But again, he's asking about forgiveness of sin and mercy and that ultimately comes through the sacrifice of Christ. But I just thought it was interesting, as you notice, as you read through this prayer, he never asks about the Messiah. The answer he gets addresses the Messiah, but he's really just asking about the restoration of the city of Jerusalem and the people being able to return. Because you can imagine what's on his mind. He's a captive in Babylon. He's really hoping that he can return and get out of this and get back to Jerusalem. But pick up now in verse 12.

"12) And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. 13) "As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. 14) Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. 15) And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly! 16) "O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. 17) Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18) O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. 19) O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name." (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned before, notice here his focus is on the people and the city of Jerusalem. Basically, forgiving the sins that caused them to go into captivity and

restoring them back to the land. Because again, you can imagine from Daniel's perspective, he's lived through the Babylonian captivity. The earlier parts of the book of Daniel record this and his interactions directly with Nebuchadnezzar, who was the King of Babylon. And now he's witnessed the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire with the Medo-Persian Empire. But Daniel is very realistic in that the troubles that have been brought upon Judah -- it was their own fault. It was just the result of their own sins. Notice in his prayer, he's thoroughly admitting that and he's directly admitting we have no right to ask for Your forgiveness. We haven't earned it as a result of our actions. We're just appealing to Your mercy.

The reason I point that out is as we'll see later when we dig into the details of the 70 Weeks Prophecy, it's very much tied to the coming of the Messiah and the ending of sin. Notice that Daniel's prayer didn't specifically talk about the Messiah at all, but that is the ultimate answer to all of this. That is the picture we have to realize with the sacrifice of Christ that we don't have any right to ask for it. We can't claim this forgiveness because we did anything right or that we earned it at all. It's really just God's mercy. It's just His love sending Christ here and Christ's willingness to die for us to be the sacrifice that covers our sins. It's all about Their love and mercy and it's not about us being able to beat our chest and say, "Well, we deserve it" and we're claiming what we deserve because that's not the case.

I just think that ties into Daniel's prayer here again, even though he's not asking anything specifically about the Messiah or when would the Messiah come? That's not a part of what he's talking about here. But now notice here picking up in verse 20. What we're going to see here is the angel Gabriel is then sent to him as a response to this prayer and this is what results in the 70 Weeks Prophecy being revealed to him. Now pick up in verse 20,

"20) 'Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, 21) yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. 22) And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. 23) At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:'" (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned previously, today we're only going to kind of briefly get into some of the details of the 70 Weeks Prophecy. We're going to dig in more in part 2 into the details and how the math exactly plays out. But today we're just going to look at the first two verses and specifically the command or decree that this is tied to. Because what we're going to see here in a minute is the whole story of Israel being able to go back to the area of Jerusalem and that whole area and rebuilding the temple and reestablishing the city and such, this plays out over a number of years. The story is basically told in detail through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

If you look at the history that's described in those two books, it's multiple decades of history that play out over the whole story. Probably close to 100 years or better there of the entire story that plays out. Just as an interesting side note, today in our Bibles the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are two separate books. Now, historically they were recorded as basically one single long book. That is how they typically were preserved in the Old Testament historically. Today we see them as two books.

But if you go through those books, particularly the book of Ezra, you can't just go back and look for a command or decree that's from a Persian king that's recorded there and do the math from that decree because there's multiple to pick from. So, you have to kind of dig into the details of what decree are we talking about here? You have to first understand what Daniel describes. He gives us the clues to understand what decree we're talking about. Then you can look at the various decrees and also look at the math of historically when they're dated. Then we can count the first 69 weeks of the prophecy forward. Because we're going to see that that has to tie us to Christ. It has to tie us to the ministry of Jesus Christ in one way or another and in several of these options, it's not really going to work out.

We're going to see with several of these options specifically focus on rebuilding the temple and they're really solely about constructing a building. Again, understanding some of these details is important to knowing which decree to tie this to. Because if you study into this subject, what you'll see -- particularly if you look online and look at various sources that talk about this prophecy -- is different sources will argue which decree to attach it to. And they'll have different formulas for how to interpret this prophecy as a result. So, let's just look at the first two verses here and look at the clues of what Daniel 9 gives us as to what kind of decree that we're looking for. Then we're going to look at several of the decrees in the book of Ezra so we can kind of solve this particular part of the puzzle. So that next time we can then dig into the details of the 70 weeks and how they play out. So, let's start reading here in verse 24 of Daniel 9.

"24) 'Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city,...'"
(NKJV)

In other words, for the city of Jerusalem.

"...To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. 25) 'Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.'" (NKJV)

Now, as we can see here from verse 25, and again, we'll get into all the details of how the math plays out next time and kind of dig into that in much more detail. But it tells us basically a period here of 69 weeks. As we're going to see next time, that adds up to 483 years and it's from the going forth of a command and it's supposed to connect us with the Messiah or with Christ's ministry. Now that's going to be an important clue right

there because we've got a 483 period and one of the clues we have to look for is the math has to work out for us. But there's some other details we need to look at as well. If you notice here in the middle of the verse, it says "to restore and build Jerusalem". Now if you look at the Hebrew words involved here, the Hebrew word there for "build", it means kind of what you would expect it to mean. It is like constructing something.

But the word "restore" is what we need to focus on here. The Hebrew word here that's translated as "restore" in English. Now this word is transliterated into English as "sub". It's Strong's # 7725. The definition I'm going to give you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker in Eugene Carpenter and they define it as:

"A verb meaning to turn, to return, to go back, to do again, to change, to withdraw, to bring back, to reestablish, to be returned, to bring back, to take, to restore, to recompense, to answer, to hinder."

So, notice here we're referring to Jerusalem. So, what we're going to need to look for is a decree that speaks to something broader than just constructing the temple. More than just building a building because we're talking about restoring Jerusalem. In other words, making it some meaningful semblance of what it was historically prior to this timeframe. That's one of the clues that we're going to be looking for.

The other is, if you look down a little further in verse 25, it says, "The street shall be built again and the wall." Now the reference to "the wall" there is pretty straightforward. That's really a lot of the focus of the book of Nehemiah. You've probably heard of Nehemiah's Wall because the focus of that book is Nehemiah going back to Jerusalem to reconstruct the wall that was around the city. But the word "street" there to really understand what that's getting at, we have to dig into the Hebrew in a little more detail because when we use the word "street" in English today, what comes to mind for most of us in our modern-day society is, "Well, I know what a street is. That's the paved strip I drive my car on." Well, this word can have that meaning, but it has a much broader meaning as well. Now the Hebrew here is transliterated into English as "rehob". It's Strong's # 7339. Again, the definition I'm going to give you comes again from Baker & Carpenter and they define it as:

"A feminine noun referring to a street, a public square, an open place. It uniformly indicates an open area, a plaza, a public square of a town or village where most people met. Nearly all cities had such an area. Wisdom cries out to people in the town square, a public place. It refers to the entire network of open areas and streets in some cases. It would be a feature included in a rebuilt Jerusalem."

That last statement is specifically referring to this verse. Again, what we're getting at here is a restoration of the city. Again, bringing it back with the infrastructure and to a meaningful semblance of what it was historically. We're talking a much broader scope than just rebuilding the temple. You'll see in a moment here why I am emphasizing that particular detail here. Because as I mentioned, if you read through the book of Ezra, that really tells a lot of the story. Again, it's throughout Ezra and Nehemiah, but particularly in the book of Ezra. There are multiple decrees that are described, that are

laid out and even quoted in detail that are made by Persian kings that are directly related to Israelites being sent back to the area of Jerusalem for a variety of purposes. But a couple of them we can eliminate because they're just specifically focused on rebuilding the temple. We will see that particular detail. We'll also notice a problem with the math, because this 483 year period has got to connect us from the going out of this command in some meaningful way to Christ's ministry.

So, turn back over to 2 Chronicles because as we saw previously in the book of Chronicles, the ending was telling us about the Babylonian captivity that took place. But the very end of the book tells us this about one of the first decrees that's also described in the book of Ezra. But just pick up here in 2 Chronicles 36:22.

2 Chr 36:22 *"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 23) Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!" (NKJV)*

Now, if we turn over just across the page here to the beginning of the book of Ezra, we'll see this again. This same decree is mentioned here in a little bit more detail. But I want you to notice as you read through this again, it's very specifically referring to rebuilding the temple. Notice here in verse 1.

Ezra 1:1 *"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 2) Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3) Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4) And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem." (NKJV)*

Now again, notice here that this decree is specifically about rebuilding the temple. We're talking about basically reconstructing a building that's been destroyed is what this is referring to here. It doesn't give us any reason to believe it's speaking to anything on a broader scale of reestablishing Jerusalem in a meaningful manner close to what it was previously or building up any infrastructure or anything about a wall or anything of that nature. That's just not mentioned here.

We also have a mathematical challenge as well, as I mentioned before. Now again, we're going to go into how to interpret what the 70 weeks mean in a lot more detail next time. But you're probably familiar with the fact that the first 69 weeks equals a period of 483 years. Now this decree that we just mentioned here from Cyrus is typically dated at 537 BC. Now I say it is "typically dated" because if you research this subject, what you'll find is there's general agreement on when these particular decrees are issued. But you'll find various sources that maybe go one year in this direction or another year in another direction and maybe they have a one year difference. But again, they tend to agree in general about when they happened. But this is approximately dated at 537 BC. Now if you take 483 years from 537 BC, you're not even going to get to Christ's birth. You can't get to anything associated with Christ's physical life at all. So, see not only do we have a scope problem in terms of what this decree speaks to, we have a mathematical problem to get it to work as well.

Now if you look through the next several chapters in the book of Ezra -- and we're just going to kind of summarize some of the details here and not read through everything -- but between chapter 1 and chapter 6 there's a little over a 20 year period that gets addressed here. If you read through the chapters in between, what you'll see is the people that return to Jerusalem to try to build the temple experience a lot of roadblocks and resistance and there's lot of issues that they have to deal with that basically sabotages their progress and stops them from going forward. There's even a point where there's a decree made that they have to stop, and they can't go forward anymore without the king of Persia giving them the green light to do so.

Well, then this decision is appealed, and it ultimately results in a decree that's recorded in chapter 6. This is Darius who basically reinstates Cyrus's original decree. This occurs in approximately 515 BC. So, we're about 22 years later. But let's just start reading here in Ezra 6:1. Again, notice as we go through this that once again this is solely focused on rebuilding the temple. It is sending some of the people back again to the area of Jerusalem. But again, there's nothing stated here of a broader nature of reestablishing the city to any semblance of what it formally was. It's just rebuilding the temple that was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. This is Ezra 6:1.

Ezra 6:1 *"Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. 2) And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus: 3) In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem:..."* (NKJV)

Now again, notice it's specifically about the temple.

"...Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits, 4) with three rows of heavy stones and one row of new timber. Let the expenses be paid from the king's treasury. 5) Also let the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple which is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and taken back to the temple which is in

Jerusalem, each to its place; and deposit them in the house of God”— 6) Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and your companions the Persians who are beyond the River, keep yourselves far from there. 7) Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site. 8) Moreover I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: Let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. 9) And whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem—let it be given them day by day without fail, 10) that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons. 11) Also I issue a decree that whoever alters this edict, let a timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this. 12) And may the God who causes His name to dwell there destroy any king or people who put their hand to alter it, or to destroy this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently.” (NKJV)

Now again, as I mentioned before, notice here again how kind of laser focused this is on just rebuilding the temple. There's nothing stated here that hints at a broader perspective of reestablishing Jerusalem as a city to a former state that would qualify as restoring it and making it what it was historically prior to the Babylonian captivity. We also have a mathematical problem, just like with Cyrus's decree. This one is a little bit later, as I mentioned, this is 22 years later. This is in 515 BC. But again, if we take 483 years and we subtract it from 515 BC, we don't get to Christ's life. We don't even get to Christ's birth, let alone anything associated with His ministry. So, this one doesn't really add up either.

However, if we look in Ezra 7, now we do find a decree that again does speak to a broader focus on the city of Jerusalem and reestablishing the area to a state similar to what it was previously. We also find that the math is going to match up for us as well. Now start off with here in Ezra 7:1.

Ezra 7:1 *“Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,” (NKJV)*

Now jump down to verse 6. We're going to skip over the genealogy listing here.

“6) this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. 7) Some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. 8) And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9) On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon,

and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10) For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. 11) This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of His statutes to Israel.” (NKJV)

Now as we read through this, you'll notice that there's a lot of details here for things that pertain to the temple itself. Basically, supplies to be used in it. But if we pay close attention to the wording of the details here, there are several statements here that show us that it's speaking to much broader things here that pertain to the city itself. Again, more than just simply rebuilding the temple. Then if we read a statement that Ezra makes in chapter 9 -- kind of referring to the marching orders that he's been given here - - you can obviously see what he thinks this includes and it's much more than just the reestablishment of the temple. Because by the time that this is happening here and Ezra is returning to Jerusalem, the temple has already been rebuilt. That's already been rebuilt and dedicated and now he's bringing additional supplies, you might say, and things that would also be used in the temple. But this speaks to a greater purpose as well. So, pick up now in verse 12.

“12) Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: Perfect peace, and so forth. 13) I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. 14) And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem,...” (NKJV)

Again, he's inquiring about Judah and Jerusalem. We're talking about a bigger scope here.

“...with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand; 15) and whereas you are to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem; 16) and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem— 17) now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.” (NKJV)

So again, this decree does address things pertaining to the temple itself, but let's notice it's a little broader than that.

“18) And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God.” (NKJV)

He says, "Whatever seems good to you, you can do that too." Now we're going to notice here later in chapter 9, Ezra makes a statement about building a wall. We're going to see, obviously he thinks he's authorized to do that too. So, pick up in verse 19.

“19) Also the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem. 20) And whatever more may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king’s treasury. 21) And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently, 22) up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred kors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribed limit. 23) Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? 24) Also we inform you that it shall not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or custom on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God.” (NKJV)

Notice these last two verses.

“25) And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach those who do not know them. 26) Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily on him, whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.” (NKJV)

So, notice here he's telling Ezra to set up a governmental structure for the region, for this area. So, basically this is building an infrastructure around the area because notice not only is he giving him authority to again reestablish the law of God in this area but to have an organizational structure like this you kind of need an infrastructure built as far as buildings and such to be able to support this. So, obviously we're talking about a bigger scope here. Now as we noticed before, there was also mention of a wall in Daniel 9 and that's talked about in a lot more detail in the book of Nehemiah.

But turn over to Ezra 9 because I want you to notice here in Ezra 9 that he makes a reference to this. Now again, this doesn't get constructed in the book of Ezra. It's not until the book of Nehemiah, but obviously Ezra is already thinking this is part of the scope that he was sent there to do because of a comment that he makes. Now we're going to jump into a context here in Ezra 9. What he's actually addressing here is a problem with intermarriage among the people because there had been marriages among the people with the pagan people of the area around them and he was basically trying to address this problem. But just notice here in verse 9, a comment that he makes.

Ezra 9:9 *“For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.” (NKJV)*

See, he's already talking about a wall. Nehemiah doesn't get sent until the next book to come down and he actually constructs this wall. But notice Ezra already has in his mind that this is part of what they're there for. See, this tells us that the decree that Ezra was given here in Ezra 7, this is really the "going out of the command to restore Jerusalem". It's not just about the temple. The temple had already been built by the time that he shows up. This is establishing a governmental structure in the area and even includes plans to eventually build a wall in the area. This speaks to what we read in Daniel 9 for the type of decree we should be looking for.

But in addition to that, the math works out for us because this decree is dated at 457 BC. Now again, we have a 483 period, and again, we'll get into that in more detail next time. That was from the going out of the command until the Messiah. Well, if you subtract 483 years from 457 BC and you account for the fact that there's not a year zero when you go from BC to AD, where you land is 27 AD. Which just happens to be the year that Christ's ministry started. So, what we have is from the going out of the command until Messiah the Prince and the math works out for us.

Well, brethren, as I mentioned when we started off this sermon, I wanted to start off with just establishing the whole historical context around the 70 Weeks Prophecy. Because what we typically do, at least in my experience as I've experienced growing up in the Church of God, is often times when we talk about the 70 Weeks Prophecy, we just jump straight to the 70 weeks. We kind of plot that out and then we spend most of our time speculating about how that last week might be fulfilled. Now we're going to talk about that last week next time as well and get to all those details. But what I wanted to do today is establish this whole context, so we understand really where Daniel was coming from. What he was experiencing. What he's thinking and the whole historical context of why he made that particular prayer that resulted in the angel Gabriel coming to him to reveal the 70 Weeks Prophecy.

So, that'll wrap us up for today and next time we're going to dig more again into the specific details of the 70 Weeks Prophecy, how we know that that is a 490 year period and how to apply that 490 year period. And, again, specifically what that last week tells us and how that will actually be fulfilled. So that'll wrap us up for today, and I'll just say tune in next time for part 2.