

The Prophecy of Daniel Chapter 9:20-27 (ESVCE) Daniel means God is my Judge

Revised 3/28/26

On Wednesday, March 25, we celebrated the Feast of the Visitation. On this day, nine months to the day until Christmas Day, the angel Gabriel came to the young virgin Mary, asking if she would be the mother of the Messiah. Her great “Yes!” began the greatest event in the history of mankind.

In homilies and elsewhere, we sometimes hear that the Jews of first-century Israel were living in a time of great expectation, knowing that the coming of a Savior who would rescue Israel was near. On what did they base this expectation? They come from the prophet Daniel, who was living in exile in Persia during the Babylonian exile. Though living in a pagan land, Daniel still adhered to the practices of his Jewish faith as much as possible.

If you want to understand the New Testament, you must first understand the Old Testament!

The Book of the Prophet Daniel was one of the most popular, widely read books in Judaism at the time of Jesus. The reference to the Messiah as “The Son of Man” comes from the book of Daniel. Jesus refers to himself using this title, which causes difficulties with the Judean authorities, since they know what the term means.

For us, Daniel is perhaps the most important book to understand the New Testament.

Daniel is about **keeping the faith in exile**. It's hard to keep the faith in exile because:

- o There's no temple
- o There are hardly any Jews around
- o You're surrounded by pagan rulers.
- o It was easy to have a kind of pessimistic view of life. See Psalm 1:37
- o It's was easy to give into depression.

Daniel is living in exile, and yet he's keeping faith. He's totally faithful and prospering in the midst of this pagan world that he's living in. Daniel prays multiple times a day and seeks the Lord regularly. His connection to God is through prayer rather than the through the official temple cult.

He is exiled as a very young person in the year 605 in the first wave of exiles to leave Jerusalem, and then he lives an exceedingly long life. So if you do the math, he had to have been exiled as a teenager and maybe died in his eighties.

The traditional view of both Jews and Christians is that Daniel was written (by Daniel) during the Persian period in the seventh and sixth centuries BC.

Daniel had a vision that is important for understanding who Jesus claimed to be. The vision ends with the victorious coming of a heavenly “son of man” (Daniel 7:9, 13-14):

As I looked, thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire....

...Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a *son of man*, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

A main point to highlight in order to understand who the *son of man* is, he is the king of a “fifth kingdom” — the everlasting kingdom of God.

The four kingdoms are: 1. Babylon, 2. Meadean-Persian, 3. Greeks, 4. Rome.

The implications of this prophecy are that the long-awaited kingdom of God and the heavenly “son of man”—who will reign over the kingdom of God—will come sometime during the reign of the Roman Empire. A first-century Jew would have realized that if the “son of man” in Daniel will be the ruler of the kingdom of God, then he must also be the long-awaited messiah. The one seated on a heavenly “throne” (Daniel 7:9-14).

For a Jew at that time, it would have been clear that if Jesus of Nazareth went around proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand and referring to himself as the *Son of Man*, then he was saying, in effect:

“The time for the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel is at hand. The time for the coming of the Messiah is now.”

Every Jew in Jesus’s audience who knew the book of Daniel (and they all did) would have known that he might be right, since the long-awaited kingdom of God and the messianic Son of Man were supposed to come during the time of the Roman Empire. And that, of course, is precisely when Jesus began his public ministry: during “the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (Luke 3:1). In other words, it is the book of Daniel’s kingdom of God that Jesus proclaims. But why do we think this?

Not to go into every issue raised by this (difficult) passage, there are three reasons it has been interpreted since ancient times as not only saying that the Messiah *would* come, but also when the Messiah would come.

- o First, the prophecy declares that there will be 490 years (“seventy weeks of years”) between the restoration of the city of Jerusalem and the coming of a “messiah”. In other words, this passage gives a remarkably specific timeline for the arrival of a future king of Israel. Because kings were “anointed” with oil, they were sometimes referred to as “messiahs”.
- o Second, and equally important, the prophecy also declares that this future Messiah will be “cut off”—a common Hebrew expression for being put to death. This is why Jesus says that the Son of Man must be put to death.
- o Third and finally, the prophecy links the death of the future Messiah to the destruction of the “city” of Jerusalem and the Temple “sanctuary,” resulting in the end of sacrifice and a mysterious “abomination” that “makes desolate” (Daniel 9:27).

It is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of Daniel’s prophecy of the death of the Messiah for understanding Jesus. According to the book of Daniel, the Messiah will not just come in glory; he will also suffer and die.

Gabriel Brings an Answer: Daniel Chapter 9:20-27 (ESVCE)

²⁰ While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, ²¹ while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. ²² He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. ²³ **At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved.** Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

The book of Daniel, a part of what is known as apocalyptic literature, is considered controversial by some. The essence of the controversy centers on chapter 9. In Daniel, the timeline runs from 605 BC to the third year of King Cyrus, which is 536 BC. The traditional view of the book, held by both Jews and Christians, is that Daniel was written during the period that's described in the book, the 6th century BC.

Daniel is composed of visions not read in the lectionary, and those passages are the most controversial.

The Seventy Weeks Daniel Chapter 9:24-27

²⁴ “**Seventy weeks** are decreed about your people and your holy city, **to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness,** to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then **for sixty-two weeks** it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

The weeks are weeks of years. So, seven weeks of years is 49 years, and 62 weeks of years is 434 years. And so, from the beginning of this period to the end of it would be $49 + 434 = 483$ years, or the 69 weeks followed by the one week of years.

The defeat of the Babylonian Empire by the Persians is a historical event for which scholars can assign timestamps. The meaning of Daniel's prophecy depends on the date chosen for the decree to go out to restore Jerusalem. If the starting date is the conquest of Babylon by King Cyrus, who then grants permission to rebuild the temple, the dates don't work out well, and the prophecy isn't very interesting. It dates to the first century BC, somewhere in the Roman period.

But scholars often date the decree of Artaxerxes I to Ezra to 457 BC, ordering the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Ezra Chapter 7 (The Restoration of Jerusalem after the exile):

1 Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra ... went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him. ... 7 And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. 8 And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. 10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

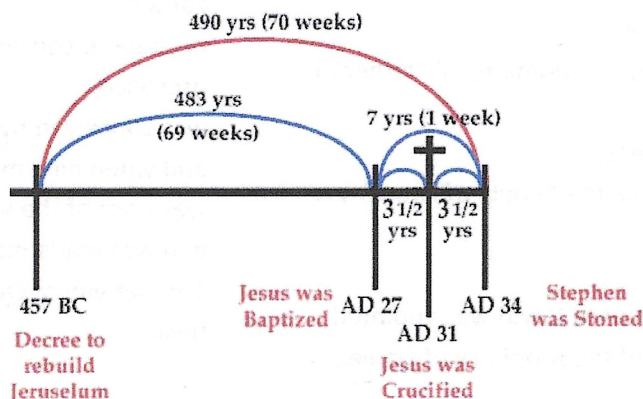
11 This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel:

12 "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. And now 13 I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you ...

Doing the math, after 69 weeks of years, we are in A.D. 26. And then the 70th week ($26 + 7 = 33$), when an anointed one appears, where half of the week is going to be putting an end to sacrifice. Then there will be desolation poured out on the "abomination of desolation," which would correspond with Jesus's public ministry in the years somewhere between 26 and 33 A.D. Daniel's prophecy appears to predict the coming of Jesus with almost mathematical precision.

Using a Jewish year of 360 days per year (Jews use a lunar calendar, not the solar one we use) and then counting 69 weeks of years takes you to 173,880 days. Then, transposing that into the Gregorian calendar takes one from March 14, 445, to April 6, A.D. 32, when Jesus comes into the temple in the triumphal entry and puts an end to sacrifice.

The beauty of this prophecy is that *it appears* that Daniel 9:24 through 27 predicts the coming of Christ with accuracy.



The angel Gabriel appears twice in sacred Scripture. The first is in Daniel Chapter 9, where he provides the timeline for **to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness.** The second is in Luke's Gospel, when Holy Gabriel appears to Zechari'ah, the father of John the Baptist, the herald of the Messiah, and to the virgin Mary, asking is she would consent to be the mother on that anointed One who would save Israel, because the time that salvation had come has begun.

Luke 1:13-19 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechari'ah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Eli'jah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." And Zechari'ah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am **Gabriel**, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news.

Luke 1:26-33 In the sixth month the angel **Gabriel** was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Who remembers this? The Church remembers.

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Roman Martyrology

(The Christmas Proclamation. Read at the beginning of the Mass at Midnight)

The Twenty-fifth Day of December,
when ages beyond number had run their course
from the creation of the world,
when God in the beginning created heaven and earth,
and formed man in his own likeness;
when century upon century had passed
since the Almighty set his bow in the clouds after the
Great Flood,
as a sign of covenant and peace;
in the twenty-first century since Abraham, our father in
faith,
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;
in the thirteenth century since the People of Israel were
led by Moses
in the Exodus from Egypt;
around the thousandth year since David was anointed
King; **in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;**

in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;
in the year seven hundred and fifty-two
since the foundation of the City of Rome;
in the forty-second year of the reign of Caesar Octavian
Augustus,
the whole world being at peace,
JESUS CHRIST, eternal God and Son of the eternal
Father,
desiring to consecrate the world by his most loving
presence,
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and when nine months had passed since his conception,
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah,
and was made man:
The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the
flesh.

This year, Good Friday is on April 3. Scholars tell us that Jesus died at 3 pm on April 3, A.D. 33. See:

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/7-clues-tell-us-precisely-when-jesus-died-the-year-month-day-and-hour-revealed>