



DANIEL 9:20-27 ESV

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. 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. And 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."

STRUCTURE:

- I. **Gabriel's arrival: God answers Daniel's prayer at the hour of sacrifice (20–21)**
- II. **Gabriel's assurance: God grants understanding to his beloved servant (22–23)**
- III. **Gabriel's revelation: God promises a mega-jubilee through the Messiah (24–27)**
 - a. *The promise:* A mega-jubilee to atone for sin and establish righteousness (24)
 - b. *The chronology:* Seventy weeks unfolding in three stages (25–27)
 - i. Seven weeks: Jerusalem restored, but sin remains (25)
 - ii. Sixty-two weeks: Jerusalem troubled, but Messiah awaited (25)
 - iii. One week: Messiah cut off, covenant confirmed, and judgment on Jerusalem decreed (26–27)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

The final section of Daniel 9 is one of the most difficult passages in Scripture to interpret. Most of the debate relates to the chronology of Daniel's "seventy weeks" of years, but the big picture is largely agreed upon. This passage is about Jesus, salvation, and the kingdom of God.

Daniel 9 begins with a prophet reading the Bible. He comes across Jeremiah 25 and 29, where God promises to restore Jerusalem and judge Babylon after seventy years of Jewish exile. At the sixty-six year mark, Daniel prays. He confesses his sin and the sins of his people, and this brings us to the present section.

Gabriel arrives in "swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice" (v. 21). The angel's haste reveals heaven's eagerness. And his timing is not incidental. The "evening sacrifice" had ceased decades prior, thanks to Nebuchadnezzar's razing of the temple. Yet Gabriel arrives at the moment these sacrifices *would have* occurred. The timing accentuates not only the need for a restored temple, but something far more significant than Daniel could have imagined: a "mega-jubilee" that would finally atone for sin, establish everlasting righteousness, and break Israel's painful cycle of violating the covenant and suffering its consequences.

The "jubilee" harkens back to Leviticus 25. God measured seven weeks of seven years—forty-nine years—after which a year of jubilee would commence. Slaves would be released, lands would be returned, and the land would rest. Gabriel deliberately measures time in jubilees—ten of them. Like the "ten commandments" or "ten plagues on Pharaoh," the number marks completion. When these ten jubilees are fulfilled, Israel can expect a form of liberation that far surpasses a ticket home and a rebuilt temple.

God does "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

The debate about chronology is addressed below, but Christian interpreters generally agree that this "mega-jubilee" is fulfilled because of an "anointed one" who is "cut off" (9:26). Christ's crucifixion made possible this great liberation. It is no coincidence that Jesus initiates his ministry by reading a prophetic passage about an eschatological jubilee (Isa. 61; Luke 4).

Jesus is our jubilee. He sets the captives free and gives us rest. Just as jubilee returned ancestral lands to their original owners, Jesus will return the earth to us, but it will resemble its original form. The paradise we lost in Eden will be regained and even surpassed. The whole cosmos will be renewed. Evil will be judged. And we will finally be home.

Daniel prayed for a trip back to Jerusalem.

God said, "I'll do you one better."

****This study guide is more technical than normal because the text demanded it.***

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

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.

— "While I was speaking... praying, confessing... presenting my plea...": Gabriel came in direct response to Daniel's prayer, with no interval. Confession moves the heart of God. It might move an angel too.

— "for the holy hill of my God":

- Daniel was praying for the temple, which had rested upon a hill before being razed—thus, "the temple mount."
- Daniel passionately prayed for a devastated temple; we must passionately pray for the church, which is in disrepair throughout our land.

— "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first":

- Though angelic, Gabriel revealed himself in human form. This happens throughout Scripture.
- Gabriel is first mentioned in 8:16, where he likewise had "the appearance of a man." In response to a heavenly voice, Gabriel interpreted the vision of 8:1-14.
- When Daniel describes "the vision at the first," he might be referring to the vision of Daniel 8 where Gabriel is named. Alternatively, he might be alluding to the unnamed figure of 7:16, who appeared to belong to the heavenly court.
- Either way, it is common in the book of Daniel for angels to provide interpretations. Where wise men of Babylon cannot discern God's mysteries, Daniel can—often with the help of these heavenly beings.

— "swift flight": Gabriel did not waste time responding to Daniel's confession and plea.

— "the time of the evening sacrifice":

- The evening sacrifice no longer existed. The temple lay in ruins, but its memory remains, etched in Daniel's soul. He still measures time by the rituals performed there. God does too. While Daniel prays for sin to be forgiven, Gabriel appears at the hour when Israel once offered sacrifice for sin.
- Gabriel's arrival at the time of sacrifice foreshadows what God will do. He will deal with sin more fully than Daniel could have possibly imagined. Interestingly, the Hebrew word translated "evening sacrifice" in 9:21, reappears in 9:27, where Gabriel announces that sacrifice and offering will cease. Daniel prays at the hour when Israel once offered sacrifices, longing for the restoration of the temple. But Gabriel reveals something far greater: a Messiah who will accomplish atonement and bring the entire sacrificial system to its intended fulfillment. The connection becomes even more striking when we remember that Jesus died around the ninth hour—the time associated with the evening sacrifice—and that the temple curtain was torn in two at his death (Mark 15:34–38). Daniel prayed for the restoration of sacrifice; Gabriel announced the sacrifice that would ultimately supersede it.

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.

— "He made me understand": If we tried to commend Daniel for wisdom, he would resist. Whatever wisdom he possessed came to him from God, who "made me understand."

— "I have now come out to give you insight and understanding... understand the vision":

- The theme of wisdom, understanding, and insight pervades the book of Daniel.
- The angel did not come to forgive Israel's sin or reestablish the temple. He came to give Daniel wisdom. Full restoration would occur generations beyond him.

— "At the beginning of your pleas for mercy": As soon as Daniel bowed low, heaven acted. God watches our prayer lives. He is not reluctant, but ready. Swift angels wait in their stalls like thoroughbreds for a starting pistol—your prayers.

- “a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you”: Verses 24-27 will detail the “word” that “went out” from God to Gabriel to Daniel. Heaven releases the revelation, but an angel delivers it to the prophet, and the prophet records it for us.
- “for you are greatly loved”:
 - Similar in Dan. 10:
 - 10:11: “O Daniel, man greatly loved...”
 - 10:19: “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you...”
 - Daniel is not simply heard because of his confession; he is heard because God loves him. Prayer is not about twisting God’s arm through passionate prayers or displays of humility. It is about coming before God as his beloved children, trusting he will answer us from his own deep well of goodness, not ours.
 - The Hebrew for “greatly loved” means “desirableness” or “preciousness.” Other translations: “you are very precious to God” (NLT); “you are treasured by God” (CSB); “you are highly esteemed” (NASB, NIV); “you are of great value in God’s sight” (NET).
- “Therefore consider the word and understand the vision”:
 - What follows sounds more like a “word” than a “vision”—yet Gabriel uses both words to describe the revelation.
 - Hamilton: “The wording of Daniel 9:23 indicates that a revelatory “word” (דָּבָר, *dābār*) is tantamount to beholding a vision (מַרְאֵה, *mar’eh*). The overlap between word and vision can also be seen in Amos 1:1, ‘The words [דִּבְרֵי, *dibrē*] of Amos . . . which he saw [חָזַק, *hāzā*].’”

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.

- “seventy weeks”:
 - Literally, “seventy sevens.”
 - We are reminded of Daniel 4, where “seven periods of time” passed over Nebuchadnezzar. This is usually interpreted as seven years of decreed judgment.
 - Like the pagan king, Israel will experience a period of judgment that precedes relief.
 - That judgment is assigned a duration of “seventy sevens”—probably 490 years.
 - This would have felt like a gut punch. Daniel reads in Jeremiah that seventy years of exile are decreed (Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2). He realizes it’s been 66 years (comparing Dan. 1:1 with 9:1), so he confesses his and Israel’s sin (9:3–19, 20). Gabriel visits him in swift flight (9:21). Surely this means that Israel’s full restoration is around the corner, right? Wrong. Daniel won’t live to see it.
- How should we interpret the 490 years, considering that the 70 years were historically fulfilled when Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild the temple the year after Daniel prayed?
 - The terms describing Israel’s restoration (explained below) reach far beyond the immediate restoration Daniel sought. He prayed for God’s “holy hill” and desolate temple to be restored (Dan. 9:16–20). Second Chronicles connects the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s seventy years with the end of Babylonian rule and Cyrus’s decree to rebuild the temple, dated to 538 BC (2 Chron. 36:20–23). Counting from Daniel’s deportation around 605 BC, this amounts to approximately sixty-seven years of exile, with Cyrus’ decree making temple restoration possible. But Gabriel promises more than a rebuilt temple. Israel’s fuller restoration will involve atonement for iniquity and everlasting righteousness, among other things (Dan. 9:24).
 - Therefore, the 70 years of Jeremiah is distinct from the 490 years of Daniel. The former was approximately fulfilled in the span between Daniel’s deportation to Babylon and the decree of Babylon’s conqueror, Cyrus. The latter envisions a far greater fulfillment, showing that Israel’s true restoration could never be reduced to a trip back home or a brick-and-mortar temple.
 - The chapter began by answering the question of how God will deal with sin in his own covenant people. Surrounding chapters reveal how he will destroy sinful beasts and wicked tyrants that arise from them. This chapter shows God dealing with Israel’s sin in two stages: first, by judging Israel with seventy years of exile; second, by providing a deeper remedy—one that requires more time but also endures.
 - We cannot ignore the Jubilee pattern: the seventy weeks comprise ten periods of forty-nine years—the count that leads to Jubilee.
 - Lev. 25:8-12: “You shall count **seven weeks of years, seven times seven years**, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you **forty-nine years**. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On **the Day of Atonement** you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall **consecrate the fiftieth year**, and **proclaim liberty throughout the land** to all its inhabitants. It shall be a **jubilee for you**, when

each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.

- Gabriel describes this “seventy weeks” with the same vocabulary as the jubilee depicted above. After seven weeks of years (49 years), in the fiftieth year, a year of jubilee began. It would be announced on the Day of Atonement, and it would result in liberty for slaves, a return of ancestral lands, and rest from harvesting.
- Since Leviticus numbers jubilee years by counting seven sevens, it would seem that Gabriel is revealing a “mega jubilee” of sorts: a jubilee-times-ten.
- This aligns also with the “Day of Atonement” connection. Atonement is explicitly mentioned in 9:24. The point seems to be that even though God will return Israel to the land in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy, the deeper sin problem requires a greater work of God: one that fulfills the six purposes outlined in 9:24, including atonement for sin.
- The 490 years has been interpreted in the following ways:
 - *Chronologically exact*: The prophecy describes precisely 490 years. Interpreters seek to match its divisions with specific historical dates and events. Some understand the years as consecutive; dispensationalists (think, pre-tribulation rapture) place a multi-millennial gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, leaving the final seven years still future.
 - *Chronologically approximate*: The prophecy describes roughly 490 years, arranged in a rounded or schematic pattern. The number indicates a real historical duration, but its fulfillment does not depend on calculations precise to the year or day.
 - *Primarily symbolic*: The seventy sevens emphasize the fullness of God’s appointed time for dealing with sin and bringing restoration. The number draws significance from biblical patterns of seven, sabbatical rest, and Jubilee, without requiring a historical duration of approximately 490 years.

— *“to finish the transgression... to put an end to sin”... to atone for iniquity”:*

- These first three actions speak about negative realities brought to an end. The next three actions will focus on positive realities brought into existence.
- Some have understood a distinction between “finish the transgression” and “put an end to sin.” They interpret the former as if it parallels Daniel 8:23—“when transgressors have reached their limit.” In this case, “to finish transgression” would mean, “to place a boundary on rebellion before it is finally judged.”
- I disagree with that interpretation. First, “to finish” is not the same as “to place a boundary upon.” It rather suggests that transgression will be, in some real way, ended—not just bounded or restrained. Second, the subject of 8:23 is wicked tyrants who reach the full measure of their sinfulness before God judges them. But the subject of 9:24 is Israel. In a sense, Israel had already paid for its transgressions with the seventy years of exile. But Gabriel speaks beyond that to a greater finishing of transgressions. Third, this verse uses the three primary words for sin, which Charles Spurgeon labels “the three-headed dog of hell”: transgression, sin, and iniquity. Although each of these “heads” can be nuanced, they are generally synonymous. Naturally, we can interpret “to finish... to put an end... to atone” as generally synonymous. Gabriel is speaking beyond Israel’s physical restoration to answer Daniel’s prayer more fully: a spiritual jubilee is coming whereby Israel’s “transgression... sin... [and] iniquity” will be finished, ended, atoned for.
- These first three actions lead one to expect God to somehow intervene in history to remove Israel’s sins once and for all. We are reminded of the decisive interventions of Daniel 2 and 7. Could these all be parallel? More on that in a moment.

— *“to bring in everlasting righteousness”:*

- There is a thematic connection between the “everlasting righteousness” of 9:24 and certain phrases in Daniel 2 and 7:
 - God’s kingdom “shall stand forever” (2:44).
 - The Son of Man receives “an everlasting dominion” (7:14).
 - The saints possess the kingdom “forever, forever and ever” (7:18).
 - “his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom” (7:27).
- Daniel 2 and 7 emphasize the enduring kingdom of God, as well as the overthrow of wicked kings and kingdoms. Daniel 9 focuses on the enduring righteousness that emerges after Daniel’s prayer is ultimately answered and sin is finally atoned for. The focus of Daniel 9 is Israel’s sin, but Daniel 2 and 7 highlight the world’s sin.

- A synthesis of these revelations points toward the establishment of God's enduring kingdom, which includes judgment for the wicked and forgiveness for God's people. The wicked will not endure, but the righteous will—in God's enduring kingdom.
- *"to seal both vision and prophet":*
- In Dan. 12:4, 9, Daniel is told to "seal" the words of this book until the time of the end. There, "seal" means "preserve for future fulfillment."
 - My first interpretive instinct would be to maintain that clear meaning from Daniel 12 wherever it appears in an unclear way in the rest of the book. However, the evidence points in another direction. I don't think "seal" in 9:24 can possibly mean "preserve for future fulfillment" as it does in 12:4, 9. Why? Because the seventy weeks are about FULFILLMENT—not preserving for future fulfillment. At seventy weeks, the ten-fold mega-jubilee has arrived! This is not something to "preserve for future fulfillment." It is something already here at the seventy-week mark.
 - Despite being my first instinct to assume authors of Scripture use key words in the same way throughout the book, it is also clear that authors—like everybody—often use the same word in different ways. I believe that to be the case here.
 - "seal" can also mean "authenticate"—much like our idiom, "seal of approval." At seventy weeks, sin will be dealt with, everlasting righteousness will be established, AND the visions of the prophets will be authenticated or confirmed.
 - When God decisively intervenes in history to atone for sin and establish his kingdom, the prophecies of the Old Testament will have been realized.
- *"to anoint a most holy place":*
- List of interpretations:
 - *Jesus' personal anointing.* The "most holy" refers to Christ himself, anointed by the Holy Spirit for his messianic mission at his baptism.
 - *A future millennial temple.* The phrase anticipates the consecration of a literal sanctuary in Jerusalem associated with Christ's thousand-year reign, viewed in this framework as occurring after Christ returns.
 - *The restored Jerusalem sanctuary.* The phrase refers to the dedication of the rebuilt temple following the return from Babylonian exile.
 - *The sanctuary's rededication after Antiochus.* The phrase describes the restoration of sacred worship after Antiochus IV desecrated the temple.
 - *An ultimate sanctuary.* Gabriel promises the consecration of God's final dwelling with his people, without specifying its precise form.
 - Identifying the "most holy" directly with Jesus' personal anointing might be relevant, but it might move too quickly past the sanctuary language and Daniel's prayer for the temple's restoration. A future millennial temple, particularly one with renewed animal sacrifices, seems difficult to reconcile with Hebrews' presentation of Christ's final sacrifice, even if those sacrifices are understood as memorials (Heb. 9:11–14; 10:1–18). Neither the temple's rebuilding after exile nor its rededication after Antiochus adequately accounts for the full scope of atonement and everlasting righteousness promised here; the Antiochene interpretation also conflicts with the fourth-kingdom setting argued for above. An ultimate sanctuary fits that larger horizon, but still leaves us asking what this sanctuary is and how God establishes it.
 - Relevant language in Daniel for "a most holy place" (literally "most holy"):
 - 8:14: "the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state"—the closest parallel concerning sanctuary restoration.
 - 9:17: "your sanctuary, which is desolate"—the subject of Daniel's prayer.
 - 9:26: "destroy the city and the sanctuary"—renewed destruction within the seventy-weeks prophecy.
 - 11:31: "profane the temple"—the desecration of sacred space.
 - Daniel 8 reveals a pattern whereby God allows his temple (including its "most holy" place) to be trampled, for a time, before finally restoring it.
 - Daniel 9:17 shows that the subject of Daniel's prayer is the restoration of the temple. Gabriel's answer must be relevant to that prayer, while also extending beyond it, given the ten-fold jubilee and atonement for sin he brings up.
 - Daniel 9:26 shows that even after Jeremiah's word is fulfilled, and the temple is rebuilt, it will be destroyed once again! So the "rebuilding of the temple" following Cyrus' decree cannot represent the fullness of this promise. Daniel's ultimate hope must be larger than a restored building.
 - Putting these observations together:
 - Daniel reveals a pattern of temple-destruction and temple-restoration.

- Daniel directly prays for temple restoration.
 - Gabriel's answer points beyond a mere physical building.
 - These observations point toward a careful Christological reading, which accounts for Daniel's temple imagery, yet without limiting God's promise to architecture.
 - Synthesizing all these data points: I agree with the Christological reading (defended at length below), and I find it compelling to view the "anointing of the most holy" as Christ's anointing by the Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3:21–22; Acts 10:38). I do not believe this ignores the temple imagery throughout Daniel, however. Christ himself is the true temple (John 2:19–21), and he was anointed as the chief cornerstone of God's eschatological temple, which is now being built as a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Pet. 2:4–6).
- Now that we have explored each of the six phrases, we can conclude that the promise of a mega-jubilee points toward Christ. But how? Christian interpreters generally take one of three approaches:
- *Fulfilled in the first century.* All six promises reached their intended fulfillment through Christ's first coming and the events surrounding it. On this reading, everlasting righteousness and the ending of sin describe the decisive salvation Christ established, without requiring that all sinful behavior immediately ceased. This approach often accompanies a preterist reading of the seventy weeks.
 - *Awaiting their full realization for Israel at Christ's return.* Dispensational interpreters typically understand these promises as a program specifically concerning ethnic Israel and Jerusalem. Although Christ provided atonement at the cross, Israel's corporate reception of its benefits, the establishment of the promised righteous kingdom, and the consecration of a future sanctuary await the completion of the seventieth week. These interpreters view the "most holy place" as a temple erected after Christ returns, where animal sacrifices are made by Levite priests (viewed by these interpreters as non-atoning "memorials" of Christ's sacrifice).
 - *Inaugurated at Christ's first coming, consummated at his return.* Christ decisively accomplished atonement and established the promised restoration through his death and resurrection, but its full effects await his return. Believers already receive forgiveness and participate in God's holy dwelling, while awaiting freedom from sin and unhindered fellowship with God in the new creation. This is the "already/not yet" approach. The kingdom is already here in Christ; it is not yet consummated.
- I take the final approach.
- I think each of the six promises of 9:24 can meaningfully claim fulfillment in the first advent. Christ really did deal with sin in a final way when he said, "It is finished" on the Cross. In other words, he truly did "finish the transgression... put an end to sin, and atone for iniquity." Furthermore, Christ truly did "bring in everlasting righteousness" by establishing his kingdom; he did "seal both vision and prophet" by fulfilling the Old Testament; his sacrifice did "anoint a most holy" too. I take this latter phrase to mean that Christ established the new temple for the people of God—not brick-and-mortar, but flesh-and-blood. Jesus became our new temple, torn down and rebuilt in three days. Currently, he is the cornerstone of a temple—the multi-ethnic church—that is still being built. Finally, he will dwell with us in the new creation, which is shaped like the Most Holy Place (Rev. 21:16; cf. 1 Kgs. 6:20).
 - I have begun touching on how the seventy weeks attains its consummate fulfillment. While it's true that Jesus dealt with sin (first three promises) and established our new spiritual reality (last three promises), we await Christ's return before: sin is fully removed; the kingdom is fully established; prophecies are fully realized; and God's temple is fully replaced by a renewed cosmos (Rev. 21:22).
 - Some articulate this "already/not yet" interpretation as if the seventy weeks were fulfilled in the first century, but their full benefits are realized at Christ's return. Others say that the seventy weeks extend all the way from Daniel's reception of the revelation until they are consummately fulfilled at Christ's return. I prefer the former. I think Christ legitimately fulfilled all six promises, fulfilling the seventy weeks, even though the benefits of that fulfillment are not finally realized until the end of the age.
- Now, let's synthesize everything concluded thus far: Daniel 2 and 7 about the kingdom of man versus the kingdom of God; Daniel 9 about Israel's sin and the mega-jubilee in Christ.
- Daniel 2, 7, and 9 all relate how God will decisively intervene in history. The first two passages reveal God's intervention to overthrow wicked empires and tyrants and establish his own kingdom. The last passage shows God's intervention to remove the stain of sin from his people and liberate them both fully and finally.
 - The interlocking of these three passages shows how the atonement of Daniel 9 occurs in concert with the kingdom story of Daniel 2 and 7, culminating during the reign and desecration of the fourth kingdom.
 - After Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece fall, Rome will rise. It will dominate the known world and subjugate Israel. However, during Rome's tyrannical rule, one like a son of man will rise far above Rome. He will judge the kingdom of man and establish his own enduring kingdom. Not only will God's

kingdom endure but also his righteousness—through an answer to Daniel’s prayer, a decisive intervention, whereby sin is atoned for and God’s kingdom purposes are realized. Israel will be restored, wicked powers will be overthrown, and all nations will serve the Son of Man. These purposes will be inaugurated at Christ’s first coming and completed at his return.

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. And 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.

— “Know therefore and understand”:

- The “therefore” indicates that what follows is based on what has been said. Gabriel has just announced six divine fulfillments belonging to the “mega-jubilee,” which we have concluded is ultimately realized in Christ. What follows is a breakdown of that mega-jubilee into periods of time—all, highlight debated.
- “therefore” intends something like this: “Given the future fulfillment of this seventy-week jubilee, let me now tell you how it will play out in history.”
- “know... understand”: Gabriel wants to impart divine wisdom to Daniel. Although the “seventy sevens” is complicated and difficult, it is important to study.

— “from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince”:

- Which “word” is Gabriel talking about? See options in the chart below:

View	Advantages	Difficulties
Cyrus / Divine Word — c. 539–538 BC “Word” = God’s word of restoration, especially the word that “went out” through Gabriel (9:23), roughly coinciding with Cyrus’s restoration decree.	Strongest contextual fit. Daniel is contemplating Jeremiah’s seventy years just as Babylon falls and restoration begins. Moreover, 9:23 says “a word went out,” closely anticipating 9:25, “from the going out of a word.” Cyrus is also God’s appointed agent for rebuilding Jerusalem (Isa. 44:28).	Weakest chronological fit. 483 literal years from c. 538 BC ends around 55 BC, well before Christ. This requires the seventy sevens to be symbolic/schematic chronology. The inherent significance of 70 × 7 and the symbolic prophetic chronology of Ezekiel 4 provide precedents for such a reading.
Artaxerxes / Ezra — 458/457 BC “Word” = Artaxerxes’ authorization associated with Ezra’s return (Ezra 7).	Strong chronological fit. 483 ordinary years from 458/457 BC reaches approximately AD 26/27, near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.	Weak contextual and verbal fit. Ezra 7 primarily concerns temple worship, Torah, and administration rather than an explicit command to rebuild Jerusalem. Nothing in Daniel 9 naturally points to a decree nearly eighty years later.
Artaxerxes / Nehemiah — 445/444 BC “Word” = Artaxerxes’ authorization to Nehemiah (Neh. 2:1–8).	Strong rebuilding fit. Nehemiah explicitly concerns rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls and gates amid opposition, fitting “built again ... in a troubled time” (9:25). Various calculations can also place the 69 sevens near Christ, especially using 360-day “prophetic years.”	Weak contextual fit. Daniel 9 occurs roughly a century earlier, at the climax of Jeremiah’s seventy years. Nothing in the chapter identifies a future decree under Artaxerxes. Chronological precision with Christ also depends, in the Nehemiah version, upon disputed calendrical assumptions.

- Theological humility forces us to admit that there are strengths and weaknesses to all positions. Interpreters must weigh each to decide. Let’s do just that (in greater detail than the chart above).
 - *Cyrus decree:* The greatest strength is it fits the context of Daniel’s prayer and Jeremiah’s prophecy, each mentioned in Daniel 9. The greatest weakness is that it requires us to ignore chronology and interpret 490 years as entirely symbolic. This is justifiable considering the symbolism of years in Ezekiel 4, the flexibility of “seventy years” in Zechariah 1 and 7 (both speak of “these seventy years” two decades after their technical completion), and the genre of apocalyptic literature. At the same time, the breakdown of the seventy weeks into seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week—each with details specific to that period—makes pure symbolism more difficult.
 - *Artaxerxes’ first decree:* The greatest strength is that it fits chronologically with the ministry of Jesus, who clearly fulfilled the “mega-jubilee.” The greatest weaknesses are that this decree

does not fit as well contextually with Daniel 9's allusion to Cyrus (not Artaxerxes), and it is debatable whether Artaxerxes' decree sufficiently matches Gabriel's description of a decree to "restore and build Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25).

- *Artaxerxes' second decree*: The greatest strength is that it fits chronologically with the ministry of Jesus, but this requires one to count with 360-day "prophetic years. While this can be defended, it also feels forced. Another strength is that this decree fits naturally with 9:25: "the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem."
 - Where I tentatively land: Having studied it now more deeply, I have modified my view. I used to favor the Cyrus decree as a starting point for 490 symbolic years, and I am still sympathetic to that. However, the breakdown of seventy weeks into three distinct periods (seven, sixty-two, one) seems to point to something that aligns chronologically—not necessarily precise, but approximately, like Daniel's "seventy years" was approximate. The additional breakdown of the final week into a "half of the week" also points toward a chronological fulfillment, since that same period appears throughout Daniel, always referring to a period of desolation, as here.
 - How do I answer the objection that the first Artaxerxes decree does not fit the context of Daniel 9, which alludes to a different decree—the one by Cyrus?
 - Ezra 6:14 says, "And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by **decree of the God of Israel** and by **decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes** king of Persia."
 - The inspired author seems to view all three of these royal decrees as belonging to the same fabric. They all derive from the same source: an original decree by "the God of Israel." And they achieve the same basic outcome: a restoration of Jerusalem and the temple.
 - Therefore, the decree of Cyrus was still relevant in that it got things moving, but it was not enough. Further decrees were needed. Behind them all was the decree of God to restore and build Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25 with Ezra 6:14).
 - How do I answer the objection that the first decree of Artaxerxes was more focused on restoring the temple and civic administration than rebuilding Jerusalem?
 - I think this is answered quite easily. The decree focuses on three main areas:
 - *Religious restoration* (Ezra 7:13–20): Permission to return to Jerusalem, investigate conditions according to God's law, and finance temple worship.
 - *Financial restoration* (7:21–24): Instructions to Persian treasurers to provide resources and exempt temple personnel from certain taxes.
 - *Judicial restoration* (7:25–26): Authority to appoint magistrates and judges, teach God's law, and enforce both divine and royal law.
 - A return to the law, worship in the temple, financial stability, and civic administration would absolutely "restore and build Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25). On top of that, more exiles were returning with this decree. Filling a city with people is a significant aspect of rebuilding it. A city without people is a ghost town, not a city.
- "to the coming of an anointed one, a prince":
- Some try to say this is Cyrus, whom Isaiah labels "anointed one" (Isa. 45:1), but it is awkward to say Cyrus both issued a decree to start the 70 weeks and also had a distinct "coming" as "an anointed one" after seven of those weeks. If we start with an even later decree (Artaxerxes decree #1 or #2), the problem only grows.
 - Some try to say this is Joshua the high priest. Even if we begin with the earliest decree (Cyrus), Joshua returns to Jerusalem within a year, and the temple is completed in about two decades. The chronology doesn't at all match "seven weeks" (49 years) for Joshua. The problem only grows with later decrees.
 - *An earlier starting point*: Interpreters who identify the first anointed prince with Cyrus or Joshua typically begin the seventy weeks with Jeremiah's prophecy rather than a Persian decree. Beginning around 587 BC produces a tidy chronology: forty-nine years later, Cyrus authorizes the return, and Joshua accompanies the returning exiles. However, this interpretation faces several difficulties. First, Daniel 9:25 seems to describe a word *authorizing* Jerusalem's restoration and rebuilding rather than merely *predicting* it. Second, the date of Jeremiah's relevant restoration prophecy is uncertain, making the forty-nine-year calculation difficult to establish. Third, the subsequent sixty-two weeks should span 434 years, yet only approximately 367 years separate Cyrus from the murder of Onias III around 171 BC. For those who believe this passage concerns the third kingdom under Antiochus IV and his murder of Onias, this presents a serious chronological problem. For those who agree with me that Daniel 9 concerns the fourth kingdom, the problem remains: sixty-nine weeks (483 years) after the

proposed starting point in 587 BC brings us to approximately 104 BC—still more than a century before Christ, who fulfills the promises of Daniel 9:24.

- I believe the “coming of an anointed one, a prince” (v. 25) is the same as “the anointed one” who is “cut off” (v. 26). While it’s true that “anointed one” can refer to kings and priests—not necessarily the messiah—this seems the most coherent. Gabriel is not giving us whiplash by using the same phrase twice in two verses, but in entirely different ways.
- A further explanation of the coherence of this perspective requires us to enter a new debate about how this verse should be translated. See below.

— *“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. And 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.”*

- This translation makes it sound as though “seven weeks” will transpire before “the coming of an anointed one.” Then after the next “sixty-two weeks” (for a total of 69 weeks, or 483 years), there will be another “anointed one” who is “cut off.”
- Under this reading, one has to identify two distinct anointed ones: one that appears after 7 weeks, or 49 years; one that appears after 69 total weeks, or 483 years. Traditional Christian interpreters usually view the one who is cut off at 69 weeks as Jesus. They struggle to identify a distinct anointed one just one verse prior.
- An alternative translation of this section seems to resolve the problem. This is not a weak or contrived translation, either. The NASB and NKJV are among two major translations that render it according to the alternative. Here it is: *“25 from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, [there will be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, [with] streets and moat, even in times of distress. 26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing”* (NASB).
 - The NASB translators clearly view the “anointed one” of both verses as a reference to Jesus the Messiah.
 - Notice how “seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” are still distinct—Gabriel doesn’t just say “sixty-nine weeks” for short-hand. This suggests that both periods carry significance.
 - However, this alternative translation does not require us to search in vain for distinct anointed ones at the 49-year mark and the 483-year mark.
 - Not just chronology, but narrative continuity, suggests that the “anointed one” of verse 25 is the same as that of 26. The first reference introduces him; the second reference tells what will happen to him. He will be cut off.
 - The difference comes down to where the punctuation places a pause in the sentence. The ESV follows the Masoretic Text—the traditional Hebrew text preserved by medieval Jewish scribes—which places a major pause after “seven weeks,” suggesting that the anointed prince appears after 49 years. The NASB follows an alternative reading supported by ancient Greek (Theodotion) and Latin (Vulgate) translations, which combine the seven and sixty-two weeks, placing the Messiah’s arrival after 483 years.
- By this reading, how would we interpret what occurs at each time interval, beginning with the decree of Ezra 7 in 458/457 BC?
 - **Seven weeks / 49 years / ending at about 409-408 BC:** *The restoration of Jerusalem.* During this period, Ezra reestablishes Jerusalem’s religious and covenantal life (Ezra 7–10), while Nehemiah rebuilds its walls and gates (Neh. 2–6), leads covenant renewal (Neh. 8–10), and helps repopulate the city (Neh. 11). By the end of these seven weeks, Jerusalem has been substantially restored as a functioning religious, civic, and political community, although no particular event can be identified in 409–408 BC marking the completion of that restoration.
 - **Sixty-two weeks / 434 years / ending at about 26-27 AD:** *The long wait for the Messiah.* Jerusalem remains inhabited through the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods, often experiencing the troubled times anticipated in Daniel 9:25. These sixty-two weeks culminate around the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, when he is baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21–23; Acts 10:38). The sixty-nine weeks thus lead to the coming of the Messiah, just as Gabriel foretold.
 - **Seventieth week / 7 years / ending at about 33-34 AD:** *The Messiah accomplishes redemption.* During this climactic period, Jesus announces the kingdom, inaugurates the new covenant, and is “cut off” through his crucifixion (Dan. 9:26). Through his death and resurrection, he accomplishes the redemptive promises of Daniel 9:24, including atonement for iniquity and the inauguration of everlasting righteousness. Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70,

foretold in verses 26–27, follows as a later consequence rather than occurring within the seventy weeks.

- “after the sixty-two weeks”:
 - Sixty-two weeks of years equals 434 years. Prior to that, seven weeks, or 49 years, had already been mentioned. The sum of these sixty-nine weeks of years is 483.
 - Since the verse says, “after the sixty-two weeks,” some interpreters locate Christ’s crucifixion—the “anointed one” who is “cut off”—in the grey space between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. Then they interpret the seventieth week futuristically, as referring to the final seven years (“week”) of history. They call this the Great Tribulation. On the front side of that final seven years, they believe Christians will be raptured to heaven, being spared the misery of the Great Tribulation. At the end, Christ will return in glory to establish his thousand-year reign on the earth.
 - Many wonderful Christians have held this view. It is fair to debate these ideas, but we should resist fighting and dividing over them.
 - I see no textual indication of a multi-thousand year gap (which they call a “parenthesis”) between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. It seems more natural to view Christ’s crucifixion as belonging to the seventieth week, which occurs sequentially after the prior weeks mentioned.

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.

— “people of the prince who is to come”:

- Common Christian interpretations:
 - *Jesus Christ*: The “prince who is to come” is the same Messiah called a prince in verse 25. On this interpretation, the Roman armies are his instruments of divine judgment against Jerusalem, much as God previously employed pagan nations to judge Israel. This preserves the same prince throughout the passage and is defended by some traditional Christian commentators.
 - *The Romans associated with a future Antichrist*: The “people” are still the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, but the “prince who is to come” is a future Antichrist arising from a revived Roman Empire. This is the classic dispensational interpretation, which separates the destruction of Jerusalem from the future seventieth week.
 - *The Romans under Titus or Vespasian*: The “people” are the Roman armies who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70. The “prince who is to come” is a Roman ruler, distinct from the Messiah described earlier. This is common among preterist and traditional Christian interpreters.
- My response to each:
 - *Jesus Christ*: I like the consistency, where the coming “prince” of verse 25 is the same as the coming “prince” of verse 26—namely, Jesus. But we have good reasons for interpreting them as distinct princes. First, the “prince” of verse 25 is called an “anointed one,” and then that “anointed one” is described in verse 26. But the “anointed one” label is dropped when describing the “prince” of verse 26. This points toward a distinct prince. Second, it is awkward to think of the Romans as Christ’s people. (Awkward, but not impossible: see Jer. 25:9 and Isa. 13:3, 17, where pagan persecutors are called “my servant... my consecrated ones... my mighty men.” Also see Matt. 22:7, where a king representing God sends his army to destroy.)
 - *The Romans associated with a future Antichrist*: See comments above on why I reject the futurist reading of Daniel’s seventy weeks.
 - *The Romans under Titus or Vespasian*: I think this is the most natural reading, and it aligns well with the idea that pagan rulers in Daniel bring desolation and war to God’s people, his temple, and his city.

— “destroy the city and sanctuary”:

- Daniel has just prayed for a restoration of the city and sanctuary. Cyrus’ decree will begin that process within a year of Daniel’s prayer. But it must be discouraging to hear that the rebuilt city and sanctuary will be crushed all over again.
- Despite the disappointment, the revelation shows how a restoration of the temple and the city never dealt with the actual problem. Israel keeps sinning, keeps getting exiled, keeps watching their city burn. A deeper remedy is needed, and that’s what Gabriel’s message supplies. A mega-jubilee is coming in Christ.

— “Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed”:

- Daniel has repeatedly used flood imagery to describe overwhelming military conquest (11:10, 22, 26, 40). Likewise, pagan rulers wage war against God's people (7:21, 25), desecrate the sanctuary (8:13; 11:31), and bring desolation. Yet their destruction is neither accidental nor unlimited. God has decreed its extent and appointed its end (9:27; 11:36). Daniel 9:26 thus employs familiar language for the devastating advance of a pagan army under God's sovereign judgment.
- Jesus seems to relate Jerusalem's impending judgment to Daniel's prophecy:
 - *Destruction of the sanctuary*: "There will not be left here one stone upon another" (Matt. 24:2; cf. Dan. 9:26).
 - *Military invasion*: "Jerusalem surrounded by armies"—a picture of the overwhelming conquest Daniel describes as a "flood" (Luke 21:20; cf. Dan. 9:26).
 - *Desolation*: "Its desolation has come near" (Luke 21:20; cf. Dan. 9:26).
 - *War and suffering*: "They will fall by the edge of the sword" (Luke 21:24; cf. Dan. 9:26).
 - *Divinely decreed judgment*: "These are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written" (Luke 21:22; cf. Dan. 9:26).
 - *Explicit reference to Daniel*: "The abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (Matt. 24:15; cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Note that where Matthew 24:15 says "when you see the abomination of desolation"—clear Danielic language—Luke seems to interpret it for us: "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies" (Luke 21:20). In other words, Jerusalem's devastation in 70 AD by Rome fulfilled Daniel's prophecy about an abomination of desolation (Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

◦
 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.

— Common Christian interpretations:

- *Jesus Christ establishes the new covenant*: Christ confirms God's covenant promises and inaugurates the new covenant through his blood, poured out "for many" (Matt. 26:28; cf. Isa. 53:11–12). His death at the midpoint of the seventieth week renders the temple sacrifices obsolete, since his once-for-all sacrifice accomplishes what the old sacrificial system could not (Heb. 10:11–18). The covenant lasts forever, while the final week represents the initial period of its confirmation.
- *A future Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel*: A future Antichrist establishes a seven-year political agreement with Israel, only to break it halfway through by stopping temple sacrifices and establishing the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27; cf. 11:31; 2 Thess. 2:3–4). This is the classic dispensational interpretation, which places the seventieth week in the future, separated from the first sixty-nine weeks by the present church age.
- *A Roman ruler makes a covenant with many*: The "he" refers to the Roman prince mentioned immediately beforehand (9:26), perhaps Titus or Vespasian, who establishes or strengthens an agreement with various parties. Roman military action subsequently brings Jewish sacrifices to an end during the war culminating in Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 (Luke 21:20–24).
- *Antiochus IV makes a covenant with apostate Jews*: Antiochus strengthens his political alliance with Hellenizing Jews who abandon God's covenant (1 Macc. 1:11–15; cf. Dan. 11:30–32). He subsequently abolishes regular temple sacrifices and establishes the abomination of desolation in 167 BC (Dan. 11:31; 1 Macc. 1:54). This interpretation locates the prophecy's initial fulfillment in the Antiochene crisis rather than the coming of Christ or Rome's destruction of Jerusalem.

— My response to each:

- *Jesus Christ establishes the new covenant*: I love how Christ-centered this interpretation is, but it faces real problems. First, it is awkward for Jesus to make a new covenant that appears to last for "one week." The new covenant does not last for seven years but for eternity. Second, this view suggests a conclusion date for the seventy weeks at about 34 AD, and it is difficult to explain why. Third, if the ESV is correct in rendering the phrase "for half the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering," this would not accurately reflect how Christ permanently ended sacrifice. It sounds like Christ only stopped sacrifices for three-and-a-half years.
- *A future Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel*: I think something like this could happen typologically as a recurring pattern. However, most people who hold this view are dispensationalists who believe in a multi-millennial gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week, which I have rejected above.
- *A Roman ruler makes a covenant with many*: This interpretation fits well with the broader pattern in Daniel, where pagan rulers form political alliances (Dan. 11:23, 30–32), put an end to temple sacrifices (Dan. 8:11–13; 11:31; 12:11), and bring about the abomination of desolation (Dan. 11:31; 12:11). These parallels suggest that the one who makes the covenant, stops the sacrifices, and brings desolation in Daniel 9:27 may be the same wicked ruler. The most formidable difficulty with this view, however, is

historical. We struggle to identify a specific “strong covenant” made by a Roman ruler with “many” for seven years in the first century.

- *Antiochus IV makes a covenant with apostate Jews*: I have already rejected the Antiochus interpretation of Daniel 9. See above.

— Where I land:

- No view is without difficulties. I narrowed it down to the “Jesus” and “Roman ruler” interpretations above. Here, I will narrow it further: I believe Jesus is the one who makes a strong covenant with the many for one week. This is the new covenant. By it he has “put an end to sacrifice and offering.”
- Why I reject the Roman ruler view:
 - *No identifiable covenant*. The greatest difficulty is historical. We have no clear evidence that Titus, Vespasian, or another Roman ruler made a covenant with “many” for seven years in the first century. Given the specificity of Daniel's prophecy, this is a significant problem. If Gabriel intends to identify a Roman political agreement, what agreement is he talking about?
 - *The chronology does not work*. I have argued above that the seventy weeks begin with Artaxerxes' decree around 457 BC and culminate in the ministry and death of Christ during the seventieth week (approximately AD 27–34). But the Romans did not bring Jerusalem's sacrifices to an end until AD 70—several decades after the seventieth week should have concluded. To make the Roman interpretation work, we must either introduce a gap into Daniel's chronology or stretch the final week far beyond its seven-year duration. While I can be comfortable with some approximation, this interpretation would not even make it into the ballpark.
 - *It fails to explain the ultimate jubilee*. Daniel 9:24 announces the purpose of the seventy weeks: to finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. This is the ultimate jubilee, the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. But on the Roman interpretation, Gabriel tells us that an anointed one will be cut off, followed by a Roman ruler who makes a political agreement, abolishes sacrifices, and destroys Jerusalem. How does that explain the extraordinary promises of verse 24? The Christological interpretation offers a much more satisfying answer: the Messiah is cut off precisely to establish the covenant, atone for sin, and bring the sacrificial system to its intended fulfillment.
 - *The Danielic parallels are not identical*. Admittedly, Daniel elsewhere describes pagan persecutors forming political alliances (11:23, 30–32), removing the regular offering (8:11–13; 11:31; 12:11), and establishing the abomination of desolation (11:31; 12:11). These parallels initially made the Roman interpretation attractive to me. However, there are important differences. Daniel 8, 11, and 12 describe the removal of the regular offering, whereas Daniel 9:27 more broadly speaks of causing sacrifice and offering to cease, and it uses different Hebrew words to depict it. Furthermore, Daniel 9:27a need not describe the same individual as the desolator in 27b. Christ could bring sacrifices to an end through his atoning death, while the Romans subsequently end them practically. The strongest verbal parallels to Daniel's wicked persecutors may therefore belong specifically to the desolation described in verse 27b. In other words, the Danielic pattern of wicked rulers bringing desolation is not lost; it finds its fulfillment in verse 27b, while verse 27a describes Christ bringing sacrifices to their theological fulfillment.
 - *Summary*: The Roman interpretation rightly recognizes the recurring pattern of pagan rulers who interrupt temple worship and bring desolation. However, it cannot identify a convincing seven-year Roman covenant, struggles to reconcile AD 70 with the chronology of the seventy weeks, and offers an inadequate explanation of how Gabriel's prophecy fulfills the ultimate jubilee announced in verse 24.
- Why I lean toward the Christological view:
 - *It fulfills the stated purpose of the seventy weeks*. Daniel 9:24 announces the ultimate jubilee, when God will atone for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness. The Messiah's death in verse 26 is the means by which these promises are accomplished. Verse 27 then explains the significance of that death: Christ establishes the covenant with many and brings the old sacrificial system to its intended end. This interpretation makes the Messiah's death central to Gabriel's explanation. If Gabriel never explained the Messiah's covenant with many, Daniel would be left wondering how a “mega-jubilee” can be explained with, essentially, “everyone and everything in Jerusalem will be destroyed, including the messiah.”
 - *It fits the biblical promises of covenant restoration*. Daniel begins his prayer by appealing to God's covenant faithfulness (9:4) and confessing the sins of all Israel, including those

scattered throughout the nations (9:7). Jeremiah promised a new covenant with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer. 31:31), while Ezekiel promised their reunification under one Davidic king through an everlasting covenant (Ezek. 37:15–28). Isaiah also foretold that the suffering servant would bear the sins of “many” (Isa. 53:11–12). Jesus draws these themes together when he describes his blood as the blood of the covenant, poured out “for many” (Matt. 26:28). The language and theology of Daniel 9:27 fit remarkably well with these promises.

- *It explains how sacrifices cease without identifying Christ as the desolator.* Elsewhere in Daniel, wicked rulers interrupt sacrifices by desecrating the sanctuary. Christ, however, brings sacrifices to an end by fulfilling their purpose. His once-for-all offering renders the old sacrifices theologically obsolete (Heb. 10:10–18). This fulfillment subsequently has a historical consequence: in AD 70, the Romans destroy the temple, bringing the sacrificial system to a literal end. Thus, the cessation of sacrifices can unfold in stages—decisively through Christ's death and subsequently through Jerusalem's destruction. Moreover, Daniel 9:26–27 may follow an A–B–A'–B' structure: the Messiah is cut off (A), Jerusalem is destroyed (B), the Messiah establishes the covenant and ends sacrifices (A'), and Jerusalem's desolation is described again (B'). The covenant-maker and the desolator need not be the same person. (I elaborate on the A–B–A'–B' pattern below.)
- *It preserves the chronology while giving meaning to the final week.* The seventieth week begins around the commencement of Jesus' ministry (approximately AD 27), with his sacrificial death occurring near its midpoint. The covenant itself is everlasting, but its confirmation unfolds through Christ's ministry and the apostles' initial proclamation of the gospel. The remaining years may culminate in the gospel's expansion into Samaria (Acts 8:4–25), plausibly in the mid-AD 30s. This is particularly significant because Daniel prayed for the restoration of all Israel (9:7), and the prophets envisioned the reunification of Judah and the northern tribes under the Messiah (Jer. 31:31; Ezek. 37:15–28). Luke introduces Acts with the disciples asking about the restoration of Israel, followed by Jesus' promise that the gospel will reach Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (Acts 1:6–8). The Samaritan mission may therefore represent an important stage in the promised restoration of Israel. Admittedly, we cannot securely date Acts 8 to AD 34 or prove that it marks the precise conclusion of the seventy weeks. Nevertheless, it provides a plausible theological setting for the final years without stretching the seventieth week across centuries or millennia.
- *Summary:* The Christological interpretation is not without difficulties, particularly the language of confirming the covenant “for one week” and causing sacrifices to cease at the midpoint. Nevertheless, it best explains the purpose of Daniel's prophecy, its covenantal language, the Messiah's atoning death, and the chronology of the seventy weeks.
- Remaining objections:
 - The “he” of verse 27 (“he shall make a strong covenant”) more naturally ties to the closest subject from verse 26 (“the [wicked] prince who is to come”).
 - *Response: The desolator in verse 27b appears to be separately introduced.* After describing someone who establishes a covenant and causes sacrifices to cease, Gabriel says, “And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate.” This sounds like the introduction of another figure, rather than a continuation of the covenant-maker's activities. If Gabriel intended the same wicked ruler throughout, we might expect him simply to continue describing what “he” does. Instead, he introduces “one who makes desolate.”
 - *Response: The immediate antecedent is not the only consideration.* The Roman prince is certainly the nearest named masculine individual, but he appears in the phrase “the people of the prince who is to come.” The grammatical subject of the destruction is actually “the people,” not the prince himself.
 - *Response: The literary structure of vv. 26–27 suggests discontinuity between the covenant-maker of v. 27a and the desolator of v. 27b.* Observe:
 - A: 9:26a (Christ's death)**—“An anointed one shall be cut off and have nothing”
 - B: 9:26b (Jerusalem's destruction)**—“The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”
 - A': 9:27a (Christ's death explained)**—“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.”

B': 9:27b (Jerusalem's destruction explained)— "On the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate..."

On this reading, A/A' point toward Christ's death and its significance, which answers how the mega-jubilee of 9:24 is fulfilled. B/B' focus on Jerusalem's desolation, showing that the mega-jubilee will not eliminate the need for judgment. The covenant requires faith.

The crucial point of this reading is that 9:27 does not continue chronologically from verse 26. It recapitulates verse 26, first explaining the theological significance of Christ's death, then returning to Jerusalem's desolation. This matters because: (1) The "he" in verse 27a can be Christ, even though the immediately preceding prince in verse 26b is Roman; (2) AD 70 need not fall within the seventieth week, because the destruction is announced alongside the Messiah's death rather than assigned to the same seven-year period.

- *The new covenant is everlasting, not merely one week.* Daniel 9:27 says that someone will make a strong covenant with many "for one week." But if this is the new covenant, why would Gabriel associate an everlasting covenant with a period of only seven years?
 - *Response:* The duration of the covenant is not necessarily the duration of its confirmation. Daniel does not explicitly say that the covenant expires after one week. He describes the making strong of a covenant during that period. There is a difference between a covenant lasting seven years and an everlasting covenant being established and confirmed during seven years.
 - *Response:* The Hebrew allows for the strengthening or establishment of a covenant. The unusual expression *higbir berit* can be understood as making a covenant strong, firm, or effective. It does not necessarily mean creating a covenant that previously did not exist, nor does it prove that only a previously existing covenant is in view. Christ fulfills God's covenant promises to the patriarchs while inaugurating the new covenant promised through Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31–34; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6–13).
 - *Response:* The final week may represent the initial confirmation of the covenant to Israel. Christ announces the kingdom, fulfills God's promises, and establishes the covenant through his death. His apostles then proclaim this accomplishment, initially to the Jews and subsequently to the Samaritans (Acts 1:8; 2:14–41; 8:4–25). This progression may represent the beginnings of the reunification of Israel and Judah promised by Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer. 31:31; Ezek. 37:15–28). While we can't conclude this definitively, Acts 8 seems to occur around 34 AD, which would provide a meaningful conclusion to the seventy weeks, whereby God fulfills the mega-jubilee for "all Israel," just as Daniel prayed (Dan. 9:7). After Acts 8, the new covenant spreads more decisively to the nations.
- *Jesus did not cause sacrifices to cease for only three and a half years.* The ESV translates Daniel 9:27, "for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering." Taken at face value, this sounds as though the cessation lasts only three and a half years. Christ's sacrifice, however, permanently rendered the temple sacrifices obsolete.
 - *Response: Other major translations locate the cessation at the midpoint.* The KJV reads "in the midst of the week," while the NKJV, NASB, NIV, and CSB use "in the middle of the week." The underlying Hebrew refers to the half of the week and can naturally identify the point at which the cessation occurs rather than limiting the cessation to a three-and-a-half-year duration.
 - Thus, Gabriel may be saying that Christ brings sacrifices to an end at the midpoint of the seventieth week, not that he suspends them for only its final three and a half years.
- *Conclusion:* Each view has problems, but I believe the Christological interpretation provides the best explanation of the whole. It preserves the chronology of the seventy weeks, accounts for Christ's covenant-making, explains how he fulfills the mega-jubilee, and reveals how Daniel's specific prayers will be answered.

And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

— "wing":

- This can be translated "edge" or "extremity."

- Ancient Greek translations connected it to the temple. This would agree with other passages in Daniel, where an abomination of desolation is set up in the temple (Dan. 8:11–13; 11:31; 12:11).
- The meaning is highly debated and does not necessarily refer to the temple, although I would favor that understanding due to parallels not only in Daniel but in Jesus' Olivet discourse. See comments above about Jesus equating Daniel's abomination of desolation with Rome's surrounding armies (Matt. 24:15; Luke 21:20). This suggests that Daniel's prophecy concerns the desecration and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, ultimately fulfilled in AD 70.

— This verse explains the desolation announced in 9:26b. There we observed that the city and sanctuary will be destroyed suddenly, in a military context, and by divine decree. Now in 9:27b, Gabriel returns to the same idea of decreed desolations.

— Josephus records that after Titus's armies burned the temple in AD 70, Roman soldiers brought their military standards into the temple precincts, placed them opposite the eastern gate, and offered sacrifices to them. They then hailed Titus as emperor (Jewish War 6.316). Elsewhere, Josephus explains that Roman legions carried standards featuring eagles, which symbolized Roman dominion and victory (Jewish War 3.123). This presents an interesting correspondence with Daniel's language of the "wing of abominations." Could the wings of the Roman eagles, accompanied by idolatrous sacrifices on the temple grounds, represent a literal fulfillment of Gabriel's prophecy? Possibly. While the connection is striking, we cannot establish conclusively that Daniel's "wing" refers to the Roman eagles. What is clear, however, is that Josephus describes the Romans celebrating Jerusalem's destruction with pagan religious worship on the very grounds of the sanctuary.

— "until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator":

- The desolator may refer to Rome. On the ESV's reading, Gabriel announces that God will eventually judge the very power he used to destroy Jerusalem. This fits a recurring theme in Daniel: pagan kingdoms rise, persecute God's people, and accomplish his purposes, only to be judged themselves (Dan. 2:44; 7:26–27). Rome's eventual downfall could represent the fulfillment of this prediction, with its ultimate consummation in God's final judgment upon the kingdoms of this world.
- The desolator may refer specifically to Titus. Interestingly, Titus died in AD 81, only eleven years after destroying Jerusalem, at approximately forty-one years old. Suetonius records that shortly before his death, a sacrificial animal escaped during a sacrifice, thunder sounded from a clear sky, and Titus subsequently developed a fatal fever (Life of Titus 10–11). Even more strikingly, the Babylonian Talmud describes Titus's death as divine judgment for his desecration of Jerusalem. According to this later Jewish tradition, God sent a gnat into Titus's nostril, where it tormented his brain for seven years before his death (Gittin 56b–57a). The supernatural details of this account are legendary, but they demonstrate that Jewish tradition explicitly associated Titus's death with God's judgment. Taken together, these accounts raise an intriguing possibility: Gabriel's prophecy may have received a personal fulfillment in Titus's relatively early death. We cannot establish this conclusively, but the historical correspondence is worth considering.
- The final expression may instead mean "the desolate." The ESV reads "desolator," while the NKJV reads "desolate." I think the context favors the latter. In the A-B-A'-B' structure I proposed above, verses 26b and 27b correspond to one another. The former says, "Desolations are decreed" for Jerusalem. Under the alternative translation, the latter suggests that these desolations will continue until God's decreed judgment upon Jerusalem is fully carried out. In this reading, the prophecy culminates in the destruction of Jerusalem and its sanctuary in AD 70, rather than requiring us to identify a subsequent judgment against Rome or Titus.