

STUDY III

THE FULFILMENT OF TIME PROPHECY AT THE FIRST ADVENT OF CHRIST

Dan. 9:23-27

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel's Prophecy—Events Foretold to Transpire Within that Time—The Time of Messiah's Advent Indicated, and a Principle Established by the Manner in which It is Indicated—A Key to Other Time Prophecies—The Time of Messiah's Crucifixion Indicated—The Special Favor to Israel as a Nation Cut Short in Righteousness, but Continued Individually—Anointing the Most Holy—Trouble Poured upon the Desolate One.

“UNDERSTAND the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [7 and 60 and 2 = 69 weeks]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. (And the people of the prince that shall come [the Roman prince—Titus’ army] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.) And he [Messiah] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [the seventieth, or last week of the covenant of favor]. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for [or because of] the overspreading of abominations, he [Messiah] shall make it desolate—even until the consummation [or completion] and that [which is] determined [in God’s plan] shall be poured upon the desolate” [people—represented by Jerusalem]. Dan. 9:23-27

While this prophecy marks the beginning of the “harvest” of the Jewish age and our Lord’s presence there as the chief reaper, there are several prophecies which much more clearly mark the beginning of the “harvest” of the Gospel age, in which also our Lord is, at his second advent, to be the chief reaper. The fulfilment of this prophecy illustrates prophetic fulfillments in general, as well as establishes a point marked in another prophecy, yet to be shown.

Do prophecies verify Biblical times?

While many prophecies combine to fix and confirm the date of the second coming of Christ,

this one alone marked the date of the first advent. If its fulfilment is clearly established, it will aid us in calculating and judging of those relating to the second advent. For this reason we here give place to this fulfilled prophecy, as well as because some of the dates established in this will be needful to be understood in connection with prophecies relating to the second advent, considered farther along.

Daniel had been shown many visions, as recorded in chapters 2, 4, 7 and 8 of this prophecy, all of which showed great prosperity and exaltation to heathen or gentile kingdoms; but

HOW TO INTERPRET PROPHECIES

1. Decide on the meaning or idea of the prophecy; its intent, purpose and what's to be accomplished.
2. Check on spurious words and mistranslations.
3. Study and understand words and expressions for history, religion and chronology in context of scripture.
4. Decide if literal, symbolic, or both.
5. Decide on chronological time as specifically as possible.
6. List several possible fulfillments, select the best.
7. Compare your selection to harmonize with others.
8. Seek the guidance of the holy spirit.
9. Consult and discuss with others.

Figure 3.1 – Guidelines to deal with prophecies.

his special interest was in Israel, and he had not been informed concerning Israel's future. He knew, however, from Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 29:10; 2 Chron. 36:20-23), that the desolation of Judea would continue seventy years; and knowing that period to be nearly complete (Dan. 9:2), he prayed earnestly for the return of God's favor to Israel (verses 17-19), and the foregoing was God's answer to him through an angel.

The marked off ("cut off," or "determined") period of Israel's history here shown is "seventy weeks" from a given starting point—viz., from the going forth of a decree "to restore and to build Jerusalem." (Mark! not the Temple.) During the period great things were to be accomplished: The city would be rebuilt under unfavorable circumstances (Neh. 4), in troublous times; sin would be finished by a reconciliation being made for iniquity; and righteousness (justification) would be established—not like that accomplished year by year with the blood of bulls and goats, but the true and "everlasting righteousness," brought about by the sacrifice of Christ. Daniel was also informed that he who would introduce the better sacrifice would thereby cause the typical sacrifices and oblations of the Law to cease.

What does 'Messiah' mean?

In this period, Messiah, the long-looked-for Savior of Israel, would come, and seven weeks and threescore and two weeks, or sixty-nine weeks, are stated as the measure of the time to Messiah's presence. And after that he would

be cut off, but not for himself. There would therefore remain, after Messiah's coming, one week, the last, the seventieth of this promised favor; and in the midst or middle of that week it was foretold that he would cause the typical sacrifices to cease, by making "his soul an offering for sin." Isa. 53:10-12

These seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety days, represented four hundred and ninety years, each symbolic day representing a year. And being so fulfilled in this, the only time prophecy directly relating to the first advent, it furnishes a key to some other prophecies which will hereafter be shown to have been thus hidden in symbolic numbers—a day for a year—until their due time had come for solution. This prophecy was so worded that Daniel and other Jews might, if they chose, think it incredible, and in time forget it; or it might be remembered by those who "waited for the consolation of Israel," and who might infer the time to be symbolic, as in the case of Ezekiel. (Chap. 4:6) Certain it is that faithful ones knew to expect Messiah; and it is even written that all men were in expectation of him (Luke 3:15), even if they were not all able to receive him in the way he came.

It should be noticed that the sixty-nine symbolic weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years, reach unto Messiah the Prince, and not to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The Hebrew word Messiah, corresponding to the Greek word Christ, signifies The Anointed, and is a title rather than a name. Jesus was not the Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ, until after his baptism.

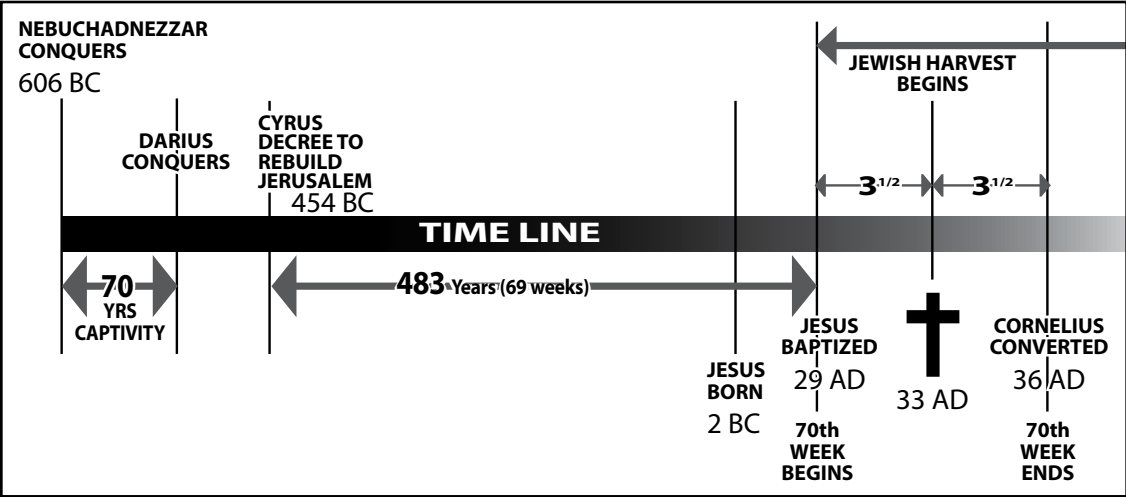


Figure 3.2 – Seventy symbolic weeks from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to Cornelius' conversion.

Compare Acts 10:37, 38 and Matt. 3:16. He was anointed with the holy Spirit immediately on coming out of the water. This was when he had attained manhood's estate, which was at thirty years according to the Law, under which he was born, and to which he and every Jew was subject until he ended its dominion by fulfilling its conditions—"nailing it to his cross." Therefore the sixty-nine weeks of this prophecy reach to the time of his baptism and anointing, from which time, and not before, he was the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed. Hence the sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years, ended in the autumn of A.D. 29. And there that portion of the prophecy was fulfilled which says: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25), unto Messiah [the Anointed] the Prince, shall be seven weeks and three-score and two [sixty-nine] weeks." Beginning there, we find the seventieth week fulfilled like the rest—a year for a day.

Most writers on this subject have commenced to count this period from the seventh year of Artaxerxes, when a commission was given to Ezra (Ezra 7:7-14), supposed to be the enforcement of the decree of Cyrus.

(Ezra 1:3; 5:13; 6:1-12) It should be noted, however, that Cyrus' order was to build the house of the Lord—the Temple and its court wall. But there was another decree granted to Nehemiah in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which at that time were still unrepaired. (Neh. 2:3-8; 6:15; 7:1) And it is from this decree "to restore and to build Jerusalem" that this prophecy of Daniel should be dated. The entire account harmonizes with this, there being but one seeming objection, in a prophecy concerning it by Isaiah, which had said of Cyrus, not only, "He shall let go my captives," but also, "He shall build my city." (Isa. 45:13) This apparent objection we answer thus: The word here translated city is *ir*, and signifies a walled place. We understand the court walls of the Temple to be referred to here; and with this the facts above referred to agree. The same word *ir* is rendered court in 2 Kings 20:4.

The date of Nehemiah's commission is ordinarily stated to be B.C. 445. But Dr. Hale's work on chronology (pages 449 and 531) and Dr. Priestlie's treatise on the "Harmony of the Evangelists" (pages 24-38) show this common view to be nine years short, which would give B.C. 454 as the true date of Nehemiah's

commission; and with this date Daniel's prediction (Chapter 9:25), concerning the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem, agrees.

Since sixty-nine weeks (7 and 62), or four hundred and eighty-three years, reach unto Messiah (the Anointed) the Prince, therefore from this period of sixty-nine symbolic weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three (483) years, we deduct four hundred and fifty-four (454) years B.C. as the true date of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem; and the remainder—29 A.D.—should be the year in which the Anointed (Messiah) would be manifested. This is in exact accord with what we have already shown, viz.:

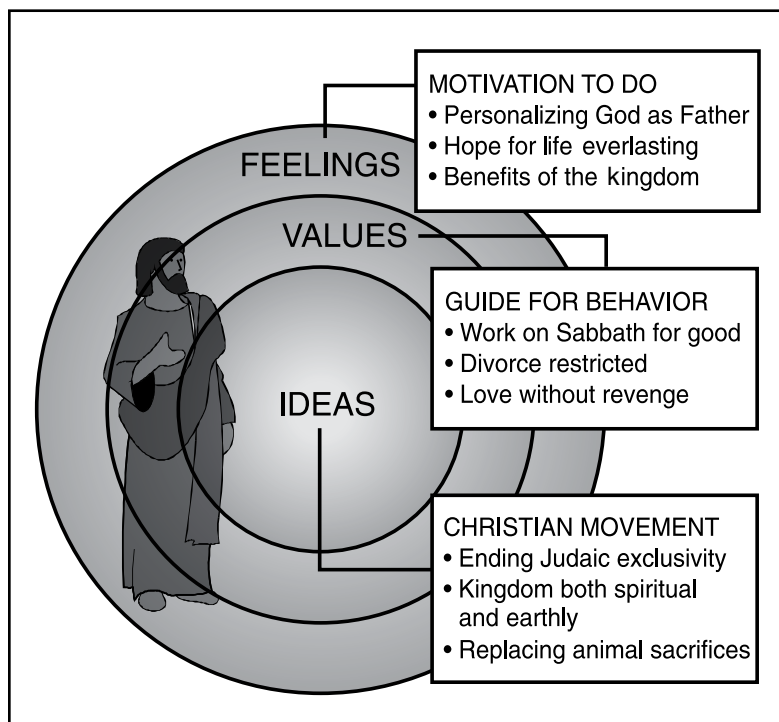


Figure 3.3 – Jesus as a leader made adjustments to Judaism.

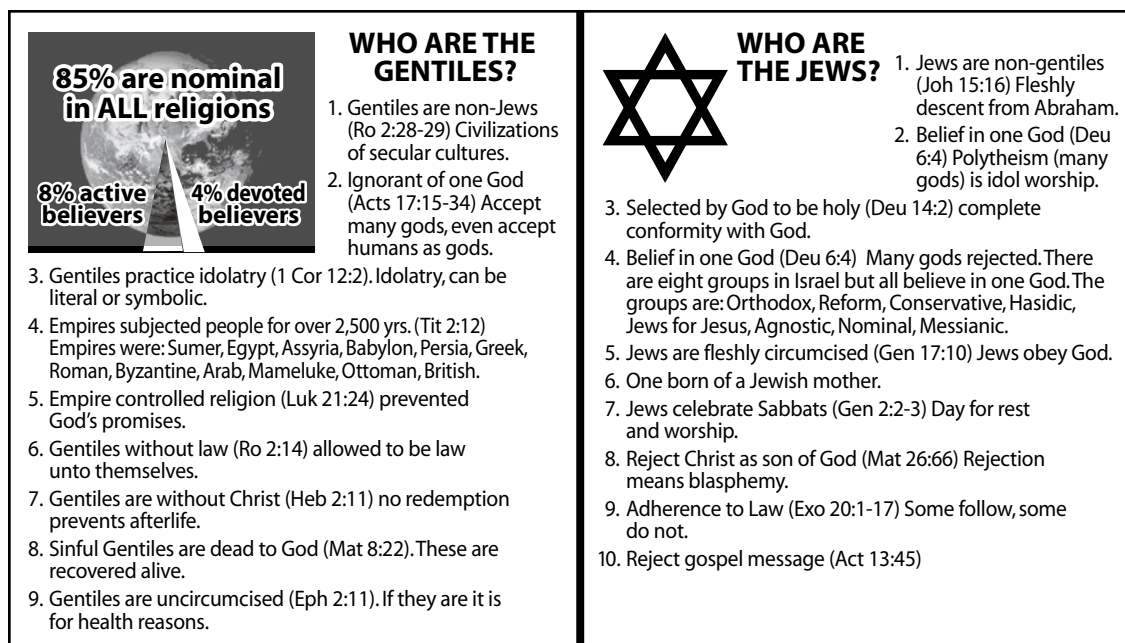


Figure 3.4 – Comparing Jews and Gentiles.

that Jesus was baptized by John and received the anointing of the Spirit A.D. 29, about October 3rd, at which time he was thirty years of age, according to the true date of his birth as shown in the preceding chapter.

Our Lord's ministry covered three and a half years, ending with his crucifixion, at the time of the Passover, in the spring of A.D. 33. In this he exactly fulfilled the prophecy concerning the remaining or last week (seven years) of promised favor, which says: "After (7 and 62) sixty-nine weeks shall Messiah be cut off [Douay translation, "be slain"] but not for himself"^⑦ "in the midst of the week [remaining—the 70th] he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease."

When did the Tabernacle sacrifices end?

The sacrifices which were offered according to the Law there ceased; not that animals, incense, etc., were not offered thereafter by the priests, for they continued to be offered year by year, but that they were not accepted by Jehovah, and were in no sense sacrifices for sin. The true sacrifice having come, our Lord Jesus having "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26),

^⑦This expression, "but not for himself," is variously rendered in other translations, several of which are before us; but in our opinion this, of our common version, is the clearest and best rendering.

Jehovah could no longer recognize other offerings as sacrifices, nor any necessity for them.

There, at the cross, Messiah, who had been sacrificing himself for three and a half years, finished the work (John 19:30) and thus "made an end of sin," made full and complete reconciliation toward God for the iniquity of men, thus bringing to all mankind an everlasting justification from sin, instead of the typical yearly justification, accomplished by the types for the typical people, Israel. The death of Messiah was also the "seal"—the guarantee of the fulfilment—of all the visions and prophecies of coming blessings, and "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21) Those promises, both the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant, were secured, made sure, with "his own precious blood" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), which speaketh better things for us than the blood of bulls and goats—even everlasting justification and putting away of sin, to all those who receive him. And in the remainder or latter half of this seventieth or last week of Jewish favor—the three and a half years, beginning with Pentecost—his followers, "the most holy" of that nation, were anointed with the holy Spirit of God, as Messiah had been at the close of the sixty-ninth week.

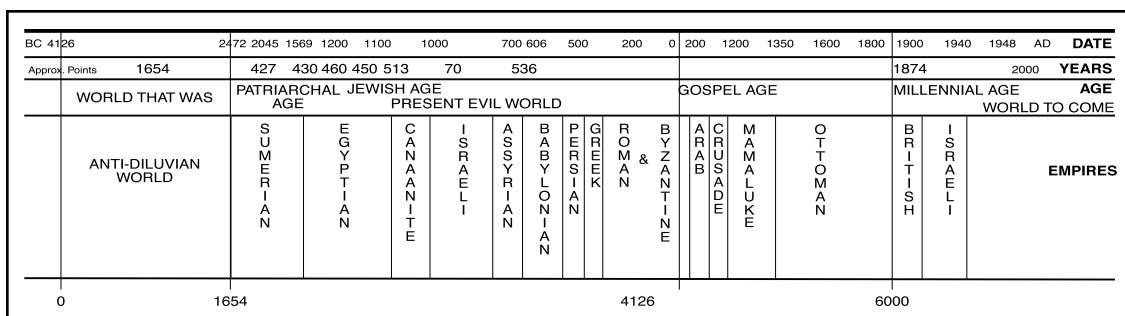


Figure 3.5 – Estimated world and Jewish empires over the years with fluctuations during different Gentile dominions.

Thus were fulfilled the statements of verse 24 of this prophecy: “Seventy weeks are determined [set apart] upon THY PEOPLE and upon thy holy city—(a) to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness—(b) and to seal up the vision and prophecy—(c) and to anoint the most holy.” The prophecy did not show that this entire work would be deferred until the last “week,” when Messiah would be present; and doubtless they understood it to imply great moral reform on their part which would prepare them for Messiah, and the anointing under him of their nation as the “most holy” people, to bless the world in general. They had not learned by centuries of experience that they were powerless to put away sin and make reconciliation for iniquity, and that it would require a perfect ransom-sacrifice to accomplish this great work of blotting out sin and justifying the condemned.

On the other hand, Daniel’s prophecy, while showing that Messiah would be cut off [die] in the midst of the last week, did not show that the mass of his people would be unholy and therefore cast off, as they were, in the midst of that week. (Matt. 23:38) Another prophet had said, “He shall finish the work and cut it short in righteousness [justly]”; and all was finished in the half-week (three and a half years) of Jesus’ ministry, except the anointing of the most holy.

But what of the balance of the seventieth week, the three and a half years of it which extended beyond the cross? Did Jehovah promise to set aside seventy weeks of favor upon Israel, and really give them but sixty-nine and a half? At first glance it has this appearance, especially when we recall that it was just five days before his death “in the midst of the week” that Jesus

wept over their city and gave them up, saying, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” But not so: Jehovah knew the end from the beginning; and when he promised seventy weeks, he meant it. Hence we must look for favor upon that people for three and a half years after the crucifixion, notwithstanding they were then left desolate nationally.

What is the biggest reason for Israel’s rejection?

That the Israelites as a nation were not fit to be the recipients of the chief or spiritual favor (nor of the earthly favor either) was demonstrated by their rejection of Messiah, as God had foreseen and foretold; hence it was profitless to them to continue their national testing beyond the midst of their seventieth week, and it was cut short there, when they were left “desolate”—rejected from favor. During the remaining portion (three and a half years) of their period, the favor was increased, though confined to the “remnant,” the most holy, the purest or fittest, whom alone it could benefit. (Isa. 10:22,23. Compare Rom. 9:28.) The increase of favor consisted in the fact that it gave to that remnant three and a half years of exclusive attention and ministration, under the increased advantages of the spirit dispensation, which, beginning with the disciples at Pentecost, reached probably all the ripe wheat of that nation, during that period of special favor. See Acts 2:41 and 4:4 for the results of the first few days.

It was for this reason that, though Jesus had tasted death for all, and the Gospel was to be proclaimed to all, yet his instructions to his disciples were, that they begin at Jerusalem. Nor were they to leave that special work, or offer the favor of the new dispensation to any others,

until the three and a half years of promised favor to Israel were fulfilled—until God specially sent it to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Acts 10

The exact date of the conversion of Cornelius, chronologers can only guess at; and hence it is variously estimated as having occurred from A.D. 37 to 40; but in view of this marked prophecy which we are now considering, we doubt not that it was in the autumn of A.D. 36; for there the seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, of favor upon Israel ended. Since their exclusive favor ended there, most appropriately should it be marked by sending the gospel to the Gentiles. Israelites were not deprived of the gospel after that, but were treated the same as the Gentiles, though prejudice no doubt placed the remainder in a less favorable position. The “most holy” being already chosen out, the gospel was no longer confined to them exclusively, but was open to every creature having an ear to hear.

After the seventy weeks came the distress and trouble mentioned in the latter clauses of verses 26 and 27. The Roman prince came, and did destroy the city and the Temple, and, like a flood, he left behind him terrible waste and destruction. And Messiah, whom they rejected,

has permitted various evils to befall that people since, and will continue to permit them “until the consummation,” until they shall have had enough, until he shall say, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her appointed time is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” (Isa. 40:2) Meantime that that is determined shall be poured upon that desolate one (or cast off people) till her cup be full of sorrow—until that day when they shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” That day of Israel’s deliverance is now dawning, thank God; and though their desolation and distress are not yet at an end, each hour hastens the time when their prejudice-blinded minds shall see out of obscurity him whom they have pierced, and when they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son. Zech. 12:10

Since many, in reading the passage here examined, have fallen into great confusion and error through a failure to understand rightly the arrangement of the Prophet’s words, confounding Messiah the Prince with the Roman prince, etc., we suggest a careful study of the passage as arranged at the beginning of this chapter, noting the parenthesis and the explanatory remarks in brackets.

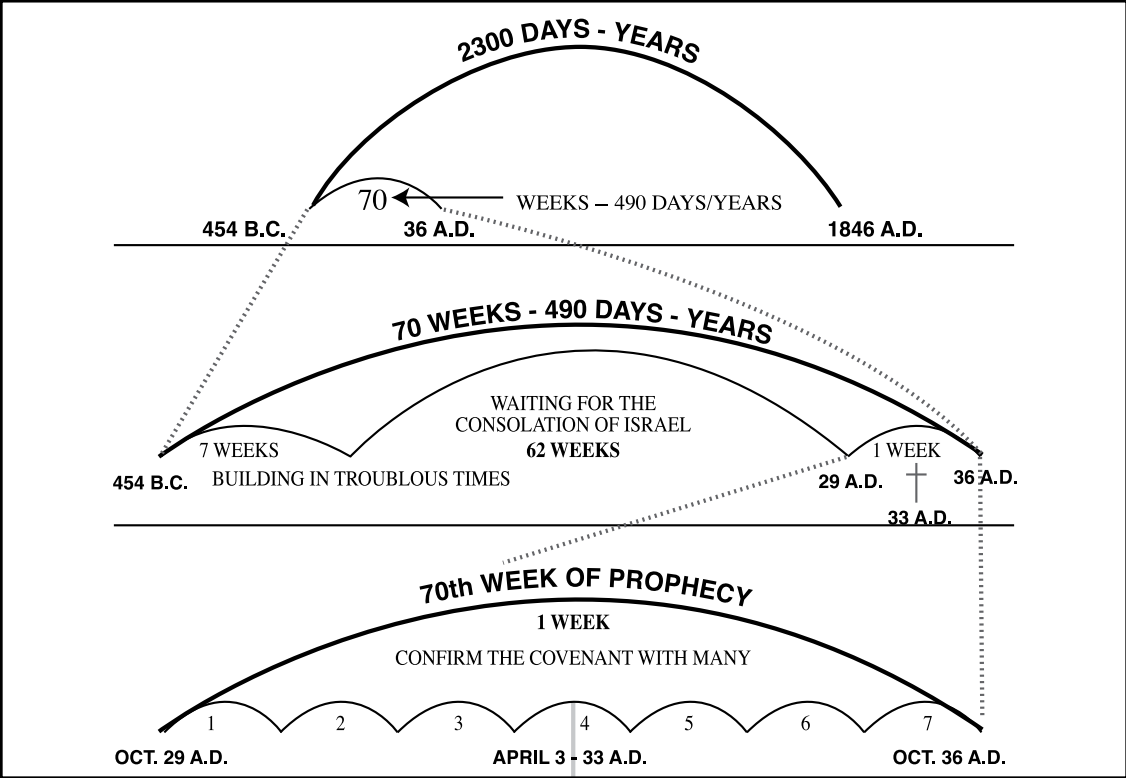


Figure 3.6 – The angel’s answer to Daniel’s prayer (Dan 9:23-27).