

Thomas J. Short Translation of Daniel 9:24-27^A

^{9:24} Seventy ‘sevens’^B have been allocated for your people and your holy city to terminate the rebellion, to stop sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in perpetual righteousness, to put a seal on vision and prophecy, and to anoint *The Most Holy One*.^C

^{9:25} You should know and understand that from the issuance of an order for Jerusalem to be restored and built until *the Anointed*^D leader, *there will be* seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be restored and built, *both* streets and wall,^E and the times will be poured out.^F

^{9:26} After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed will be executed^G without any *basis for* condemnation in him. The city and the holy place will be ruined, along with^H the coming leader.^I They will be cut off in a flood^J and until the end, desolating war is determined.

^{9:27} He^K will strengthen a covenant with many *for* one ‘seven.’^L Within half of the ‘seven’ my sacrifice and drink-offering will be removed. Upon the Temple *will come* an abomination of desolations. Until the end, the pouring out of desolation is determined.

^A My translation is based on the Aramaic/Hebrew, but takes into consideration some of the fine points of meaning brought out by Jewish scholars in the most ancient Greek translation (c. 280 BC) and within a later one by the Christian scholar Theodotion (c. AD 150), whose translation of Daniel was extremely popular within the 2nd/3rd Century Church.

^B God had given the Israelis a calendar which mandated six years of work followed by a seventh year of rest. I expected these seventy “weeks” of years to correspond to the Sabbatical cycle and believe that they do.

^C Contrary to what some English versions indicate, this “anointing” of the “most holy” (a masculine noun in both the Hebrew & Greek translations of the Old Testament) is much more likely a reference to the “Anointed” holy leader (i.e., “Messiah the Prince”) whose coming is prophesied in the very next verse rather than the holy “sanctuary” which doesn’t come up until verse 26.

^D Anointing with scented olive oil was part of the ancient Israeli coronation ceremony. The Hebrew title, מָשִׁיחַ [*mashiyach* /maw·shee·akh/], came into the Greek as Μεσσίας [*Messias* /mes·see·as/] and eventually into English as “Messiah.” The parallel Greek title, Χριστός [*Christos* /khris·tos/], came into English as “Christ.”

^E We know that Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem’s wall in 444 BC, during the 20th Year of King Artaxerxes of Persia (Nehemiah 2:1-6:15). However, this same Artaxerxes stopped an earlier wall-building effort (Ezra 4:7-23). That abbreviated work must have been that of Ezra, about which he had specifically prayed during the late fall of 457 BC (Ezra 9:9). I believe this is the better starting point for Daniel 9’s “countdown to the Messiah.”

^F Like sand pours out in an hour glass, thus, having a meaning of “time will pass.”

^G While the literal meaning of this word is “cut off” I’ve chosen to use the judicial term “execution” because of its close connection to the judicial term “condemnation” that follows closely after it.

^H This is where a problem with a Hebrew homograph (words with the same spelling but different meanings) comes into play. In ancient Hebrew there were no written vowels; therefore, the preposition, “with” ׀ַם [‘im /eem/], looked exactly like the noun, “people” ׀ַם [‘am /am/]. Though I end up disagreeing with every English Bible version, I believe that the preposition was the intended word and that it makes the most sense grammatically and contextually. This understanding ties the fate of the city & the Temple to that of the “Messiah,” exactly as Jesus himself indicated elsewhere, making Him the key player of verses 26 & 27. And lest you think my translation is unique, Theodotion’s 2nd Century Greek version of Daniel followed this exact same translation track. That was how I first became aware of this variant understanding.

^I This is the exact same word for “leader” that was applied to the Messiah in verse 25; yet another reason to believe that the person being talked about in verses 26 & 27 is the Messiah.

^J Swiftly, as in a flash flood.

^K For the reasons already given, I believe this pronoun refers to the Messiah.

^L Given the widely-circulated teaching that this “final week of Daniel” is “the final seven years” immediately prior to the Second Coming of Jesus, you might want to take note of the following fact: While there are many “sevens” listed within the Book of Revelation (stars, churches, seals, angels, bowls, trumpets, etc.) not once is there a mention of “seven years.” I personally think that this is because, properly counted, “the 70th week of Daniel” was fulfilled in connection with the First Coming of Jesus and has nothing to do with the Book of Revelation and Christ’s Second Coming.

The Countdown to the Messiah's Coming & Death

The “countdown” began in the Fall of 457 BC, when Ezra made the first declaration that the walls of Jerusalem should be rebuilt. Not surprisingly to me, this was the start of a Sabbatical Cycle.

The first series of 7 Sabbatical cycles (49 years) ended in the Fall of 408 BC. By this time Jerusalem was completely rebuilt and repopulated.

The second series of 62 Sabbatical cycles (434 years) ended in the Fall of AD 27. By this time the religious Jews were waiting in eager expectation for their Messiah.

The final Sabbatical cycle began in the fall of AD 27. The 15th Year of Tiberius Caesar (AD 28) occurred during the first year of this 70th cycle, which means that John the Immerser's ministry marked the beginning of “the final week of Daniel 9.”^M John immersed Jesus just a few months before Christ began his three-year public ministry at Passover in AD 30, during the third year of the final cycle. Like John, Jesus also called the people to repent, strengthening their covenant relationship with God.

Jesus was crucified during Passover, AD 33, during the sixth year of the cycle. Thus, the Messiah was unfairly executed after the sixty-two “sevens,” during the seventieth “seven,” exactly as Daniel Chapter 9 predicted. Jesus was also resurrected in AD 33, completing the atonement and putting an end to any further need for sacrifices in the Jewish Temple, as Daniel was told would be the case.

By the time the 70th cycle ended in the Fall of AD 34, even young Saul had been commissioned by God to preach the gospel of the resurrected Christ to the whole world.

In AD 70, within a generation of Jesus' Olivet Discourse, because a majority of Jews had rejected the prophesied “new covenant” of God (extended in the blood of the Son), the Temple was destroyed by “the abomination of desolation,” without one stone being left upon another, exactly as Jesus had said.

The Certain Identity of the Abomination of Desolation

In his gospel, Dr. Luke often explained exactly what Jesus meant rather than just providing the exact wording of what was said. In his record of the Olivet Discourse, he provided a very clear understanding of what Jesus meant by the phrase “abomination of desolation” (Luke 21:20):

“But when you see Jerusalem [i.e., “the holy place”] surrounded by armies [i.e., “the abominable” Roman army encampments], then recognize that her desolation is near.”

Josephus, a 1st Century Jewish priest and a key source for broadening our understanding of Jewish history, including the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem, also testified that Daniel had accurately prophesied both the Greek & the Roman desolations the Temple.

“And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel's vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them.”^N

Eusebius claimed in his Church History, Book 3, Chapter 5, (AD 325) that Jewish Christians escaped Jerusalem prior to its AD 70 destruction specifically because they had heeded Jesus' Olivet Discourse warning about Daniel's “abomination of desolation.”

^M Luke 3:1-3.

^N Antiquities of the Jews 10.11.7 (or 10.11.276). Josephus, F. (1996, c1987). *The works of Josephus: Complete and unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson.