

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For December 2:

Daniel 9:1-11:1:

In 9:1-19, in the year 539 B.C., we discover that Daniel was reading in the book of Jeremiah where it was said the captivity would be 70 years (9:1-2; Jeremiah 25:12). Knowing this meant the end was near, Daniel was moved to pray. In the prayer he confesses the sins of Israel (including himself in the confession), he asks that the wrath of God be turned away from His people, he pleads for forgiveness based upon God's mercy, not their righteousness. In this prayer we see a pattern set which is carried over into the New Testament: The true believer is one who, in humility (1 Peter 5:5), recognizes his sin (Matthew 5:3-4) and trusts in Jesus Christ based upon God's mercy, not his own righteousness (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Peter 3:18).

It will also help you in your understanding to know that "Darius" was most likely a second name for Cyrus and "Ahasuerus" was a royal title, much like "Pharaoh" in Egypt.

On 9:21-27 we read that the angel Gabriel brought to Daniel (described as "very precious" to God [v. 23]) an answer from God. In essence, this answer tells Daniel that the Babylonian captivity will come to an end, however, the ultimate promised freedom for the people of God awaits many necessary divinely decreed events, but it will certainly come. Let's turn our attention to see how this is communicated.

Though many understand the "weeks" in Gabriel's answer to refer to literal years, it is probably best to take the "seventy weeks" more figuratively as a completed time decreed by God. The number 7 is a number of completion in Scripture. The 62 sevens + the 7 sevens is probably meant to be roughly a period of 69 x 7 years (483 years). If it is taken more literally, the commencement of the 483 years would start somewhere around the time Ezra went to Jerusalem (Ezra 7 [458 B.C.]). Again, given the use of 7, it is probably not meant to be exact, but a long period of time around 500 years. Yet, the text tells us when it terminates: with an anointed one (Messiah) who is cut off just before the city and sanctuary are destroyed. Most commentators believe the anointed one is Jesus Christ (Christ is Greek for Messiah) who died and was resurrected probably in A.D. 30. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in A.D. 70. So, at the end of roughly 500 years this complex of events would take place. Then there would be one more period of time, "one week". In this week we are told "Desolations are decreed" and a prince "shall make a strong covenant with many and "for half of that week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering." Additionally, "on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." Though all these references would have been very hard to understand for Daniel, as they unfold they are not as obscure.

Historical references to Antiochus Epiphanes who desecrated the Jewish temple in 167 B.C. use the same kind of language as found here in Daniel 9. He stopped worship and persecuted Jews for 3.5 years—ending in the Maccabean revolt. From that time on, Jews came to associate 3.5 years with tribulation and persecution. To have two 3.5 year periods or "7 years" would be to have a long and complete time of suffering and

persecution. What is most likely referenced here, then, is a time of tribulation for the people of God that is of undetermined length which will end at the time decreed by God when the end is poured out on the desolator (9:27 [desolator is the ultimate evil one, Satan, cf. Revelation 20:1-15]). This fits with further revelation where we find that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 is spoken of in terms similar to the years of Antiochus Epiphanes (and with similar language found here in Daniel 9) and it prefigures events at the very close of the last days (Matthew 24:15-17). It also fits with further revelation which speaks of the time of persecution by the New Testament Church at the hands of Satan (Revelation 7:14-17; 12:1-17) which is meant to be taken as the entire age of the New Testament Church in which Satan rages, believers are persecuted, yet, there will come an end to it all.

So, the point of Gabriel's answer to Daniel is that the ultimate hope for the people of God is in the Messiah and His once-for-all, complete defeat of Satan which will bring in an eternal end to any captivity for God's people! May this certain future bring us great comfort and courage!

Commentators Duguid and Wegner explain chapters 10-12 in this way: "Chapters 10-12 form a single vision, received in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia (536 B.C.). Two years earlier, the first party of Jewish exiles had returned to Jerusalem in response to Cyrus's decree, but they faced severe opposition and by this point had ceased their rebuilding work. During this time of discouragement, Daniel received his vision of a great conflict, which exposed the ongoing spiritual warfare in the heavenly realm. Conflicts on earth reflect conflicts in the heavens, and this will continue to the end, when God will ultimately triumph." They then add on 10:1-11:1: "A heavenly visitor overawes Daniel and explains that he has met resistance from other spiritual powers. He arrives to tell Daniel what is to come."

1 John 2:18-3:6:

In 2:18-29 John reminds his readers that there will not only be an ultimate anti-Christ figure in the future, but many who are anti-Christ have already arisen, including those who have spread false teaching among them that only belief matters and how a person behaves is not really significant. John teaches that these false teachers did not remain with them, i.e. they did not remain in the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus did not remain in the fellowship of true believers. This showed they were not really of the true people of God. The reality that some had professed faith in Christ and walked away from Him leads John to exhort his readers to persevere, to abide in the true gospel (which is the way of salvation in Jesus Christ alone and it also teaches that true salvation leads to transformation) that they might have the reward of eternal life. Those who display their transformation, they practice righteousness, these are the ones who belong to the righteous one, Jesus Christ. As such, we know we are ready to meet Him, if we are practicing righteousness as an outflow of our eternal life.

In 3:1-6 John reminds these Christian readers what a blessing it is that God has adopted them into His family and called them "children of God". Though the world does not agree with this assessment of Christians, nevertheless, someday it will be revealed for all

just who we are in Christ for we will be like Him. Since this is the case and we are currently children of God with a certain future, we should purify ourselves. In fact, those who continue in sin without any transformation or regard for holiness show they do not belong to Christ.

Psalm 121:1-8:

In this second entry of the Psalms of Ascent we learn a similar principle as in the first one (120). When facing enemies and hardships (most likely meant by looking to the hills where enemies would emerge, 1), we must realize our help comes from the LORD, the covenant loyal God who has always existed and who is the Creator of all! He will help us stand and not fall, He will be our keeper and protector in all areas of life and He does this moment by moment since He never sleeps. The all-powerful God is always on duty! Therefore, we can trust in Him always!

Proverbs 28:27-28:

Here are reminders of two truths already covered many times: The importance of helping the poor and the benefit of having the righteous as leaders (on this last point see 28:12, 15-16).