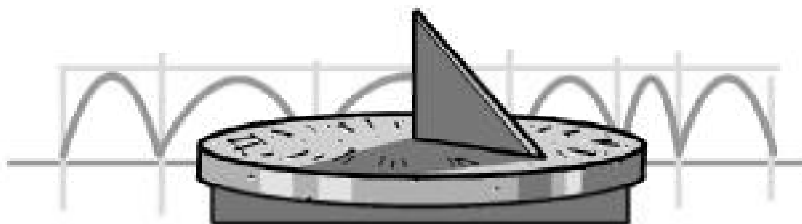


# God's Schedule



## SABBATH—DECEMBER 4

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 9.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And this whole land shall be a desolation [emptiness], and an astonishment [wonder]; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (Jeremiah 25:11).

**DANIEL 9 BEGINS WITH ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE.** Daniel is “greatly beloved” in heaven (Daniel 9:23). But he chooses to be on the side of his sinful people. He earnestly asks God to bless them. He prays to God for his people who are still in Babylon.

While Daniel is praying, Gabriel the angel appears to give Daniel what has been called “the crown jewels (the best)” of Old Testament prophecy. Sir Isaac Newton described Daniel 9:24-27 as “the foundation stone of the Christian religion.” This is because Daniel 9:24-27 predicted<sup>1</sup> almost five hundred years ahead of time when the Messiah would appear, how long Jesus’ public ministry (work) would last, and His death as payment for sin.

In studying Daniel 9, remember the connections between it and Daniel 8: (1) The same angel revisits Daniel (Daniel 9:21). (2) Daniel remembers the earlier vision (Daniel 9:21). (3) The command to Gabriel in Daniel 8:16 to give Daniel understanding of the vision is repeated in Daniel 9:23. (4) The time element was not explained in Daniel 8. But it is the topic of Daniel 9:24-27.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** What is the important message of Daniel's prayer? How does Gabriel connect what he says to Daniel with Daniel 8? Why is the year/day rule<sup>2</sup> used in Daniel 9? What is the starting date for the decree (law)? What is the 70-week prophecy all about? What did Jesus do for us at the Cross?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 11.

<sup>1</sup>predicted—told what would happen.

<sup>2</sup>year/day rule—a day in prophecy time equals one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6).

## SUNDAY—DECEMBER 5

**DANIEL'S PRAYER (Daniel 9:1-19).**

The first year of Darius was the year 539/538 B.C. Ten years had passed since the vision of Daniel 8. During those ten years, Babylon, the conqueror of Israel, had fallen to the Medo-Persians. But the Jews were still prisoners in Babylon.

**Read Daniel's prayer. Where in the prayer do you see the need for obedience? As you read, keep in mind James 2:9 and 1 John 3:4. What does this prayer tell us about the results of disobedience? Is disobedience less important today? Explain your answer.**

Daniel did not excuse or hide the sins of his people. He made a full confession<sup>3</sup> of the sins his people had done. Daniel 9 is filled with different Hebrew verbs.<sup>4</sup> These verbs show different kinds of sin and rebellion. There is an important lesson here for us about how we pray. When we pray, we must never try to cover up how serious our sin is.

**In his prayer, Daniel earnestly asked for God's mercy<sup>5</sup> for His people. Why did Daniel ask God to show mercy to His people?**

Daniel had nothing to offer God for His mercy and forgiveness. All he could do was plead for mercy and forgiveness "for

the Lord's sake" (Daniel 9:17), or because of the Lord's "righteousness" (holiness) (Daniel 9:16). This reminds us of Ellen White's words that "our great need is to pray for God's mercy."—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 317. As sinners we can do nothing to make ourselves look good to God. Our only hope is in mercy and grace, as shown to us at the Cross. The Cross alone is our only hope. Jesus is our hope because of His life and His death. If we could earn God's mercy in any way, then Jesus would not have had to die in order to save us. We could have worked our way out of eternal<sup>6</sup> death. Jesus' death shows proof that we cannot do anything to save ourselves.



**Pray for God's mercy.  
God showed His mercy on the cross.  
The Cross is our only hope.**

**Keeping in mind the above paragraph, go back through Daniel's**

<sup>3</sup>confession—to say that you have sinned.

<sup>4</sup>verbs—words that show action.

<sup>5</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

<sup>6</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

prayer. In what ways do you see the gospel shown there?

## MONDAY—DECEMBER 6

### A HEAVENLY VISITOR (Daniel 9:20-24).

Before Daniel finished his prayer, God sent the angel Gabriel, whom Daniel calls “the man Gabriel” (Daniel 9:21, NKJV). This is because Gabriel appeared to him in human form when he made a second visit to Daniel. Gabriel first appeared to him ten years earlier (Daniel 8:16).

#### What was Gabriel’s mission in Daniel 9:22, 23?

Gabriel said, “‘Consider [think about] the matter [the vision] and understand the vision’” (NKJV). At that time he did not use the general word *chazon*, which points to the vision as a whole, as in Daniel 8:1, 13, and in Daniel 9:21. Instead, Gabriel uses the verb *mareh*, which points to the vision of the 2,300 days in Daniel 8. This is the only part of Daniel 8 that Daniel did not understand. In Daniel 8, Gabriel tells Daniel that the vision (*mareh*) of the 2,300 days was “true” (Daniel 8:26). But Daniel says he did not understand the *mareh* (Daniel 8:27). The *mareh* is the 2,300 days. An Orthodox<sup>7</sup> Jewish com-

mentary, which speaks about Gabriel’s words in Daniel 9:23, points right back to Daniel 8:14, saying that “this speaks of the part of Daniel’s vision in Daniel 8 which disturbed Daniel so much. It is known in Daniel 8:16-26 as a *mareh*.” —Adapted from Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel* (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1979), p. 258.

**“Seventy weeks are determined for [given to] your people and for your holy city [Jerusalem]” (Daniel 9:24). How long a time period is shown through the 70 weeks? What does the wording “70 weeks are determined for your people” mean?**

What we have here is more proof of the year/day rule. The command to rebuild Jerusalem happened many hundreds of years before Jesus. If taken as real time, 70 weeks is just a year and a few months. A year and a few months do not reach to Jesus. But the year/day rule solves this problem. It covers the time period from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to Jesus’ first coming. Jesus proves that the year/day rule is the correct method of measuring prophetic time. Meanwhile, the meaning of the Hebrew word *chatak*, translated “determined,” is “to cut” or “divide.” The broad meaning is “to determine” or “allot [give] to.” This is the only time this is used in the Hebrew Bible. But it appears in later Jewish writings as “to cut off.”

<sup>7</sup>Orthodox—conservative; reform. Orthodox Jews strictly believe in the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and the Talmud (Jewish tradition).

**Some people deny the year/day rule. They claim that the phrase “70 weeks” really means “70 weeks of years.” This comes out to 490 years. But in the idea of “a week of years” seven days equals seven years. This is the same as the year/day rule. Even if 70 weeks meant “weeks of years,” it leads to the same conclusion as the year/day rule does. So the “70 weeks of years” argument gives more proof in favor of the year/day rule.**

## TUESDAY—DECEMBER 7

### THE 70 WEEKS (Daniel 9:24).

**What was to be done in the 70 weeks (490-year period)? Daniel 9:24.**

Six things were to be done during the 70 weeks. These things describe the results of Jesus' life and work on earth:

1. *To finish the transgression.* *Transgression* means the break in relationship between God and humankind.<sup>8</sup> Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus ended this broken relationship and brought us back to God.

2. *To make an end of sins.* Gabriel announced that the Messiah would take care of humankind's failures. The Messiah would take their sins on Himself and put an end to those sins.

3. *To make reconciliation (payment) for iniquity.* *Iniquity* is sin. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross took care of all sin.

4. *To bring in everlasting<sup>9</sup> righteous-*

*ness (holiness).* When Adam and Eve fell into temptation, people became unrighteous (unholy). Gabriel said that the Messiah would bring in a righteousness from God. That righteousness will last forever for people who make that righteousness their own through faith. This righteousness leads to obedience.

5. *To seal up the vision and prophecy.* The idea of sealing here does not mean “‘shutting up.’ It means ‘being supportive!’ The fulfillment of the prophecies about the first coming of the Messiah at the right time should give us faith that the other parts of the prophecy would be fulfilled, especially the prophecy about the 2,300 prophetic days.” —Adapted from *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 4, p. 852.

6. *To anoint (dedicate) the Most Holy.* Temples were anointed when their work began (Exodus 40:9). The anointing in Daniel 9:24 points to the beginning of Jesus' priestly ministry (work) in the heavenly temple (Hebrews 9:21).

Daniel 9:24 is a prophecy. It is about the time of Jesus and about what His work will do. Daniel 9:24 is a prophecy about His first coming. This prophecy is about the Jewish nation as a whole. This prophecy also gives us a look at the Second Coming. This is because all that Jesus did at the First Coming finds its complete fulfillment in the Second Coming. Perhaps that is also why this prophecy is so clearly tied to the cleansing of the sanctuary. The cleansing of the sanctuary leads directly to the Second Coming.

<sup>8</sup>humankind—all the people of the world.

<sup>9</sup>everlasting—lasting forever; eternal; without beginning or end.



Daniel 9:24 is about Jesus' first coming.

What do the following verses and Daniel 9:24 teach us about what Jesus has done for us on the cross? Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:11, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Philippians 3:9; Hebrews 2:9-11.



Jesus tasted death for us so He could make us holy.

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 8

### MESSIAH THE PRINCE (Daniel 9:25).

Daniel 9:25 says that from the “ ‘decree [law] to restore<sup>10</sup> and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince’ ” (NASB) would be 69 weeks, or 483 years. When was this decree given? Why?

Different dates have been given for this decree, including 538 B.C., 520 B.C., and 457 B.C. Let us look at all of these dates.

Suppose someone were to accept the 538 B.C. date as the starting point. From the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (538 B.C.) unto the Messiah the Prince (Jesus) would be 483 years. We are using the year/day rule because Daniel 9:25 demands it. Going 483 years from 538 B.C. reaches to 55 B.C., and 55 B.C. does not fit the time of Jesus' earthly ministry (work).

**If 520 B.C. was the starting point of the decree, and we go 483 years later, what year do we arrive at? Why is that date unworkable?**

If we go with the 457 B.C. date, the numbers bring us right to the time of Jesus. This decree was given by King Artaxerxes I. It gave complete authority (power) to the Jews in their homeland (Ezra 7:11-28).

<sup>10</sup>restore—to make something as it was in the beginning.

Both the Jews and their enemies understood that the decree gave the Jews the right to rebuild Jerusalem. In Ezra 4:7-13, a group of Persian officers wrote to King Artaxerxes. They complained about the Jews who were rebuilding Jerusalem. In the letter, they said two important things: First, the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem (Ezra 4:12, NIV). Second, the Jews who were rebuilding Jerusalem had come to Jerusalem because of the king. The letter said, "The Jews who *left you* [the king] and came up to us [the Persians] have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that evil city [Jerusalem]" (Ezra 4:12, NIV; italics given). The Jews who were rebuilding Jerusalem had come to Jerusalem because of King Artaxerxes. The only decree issued by King Artaxerxes that sent the Jews back to Jerusalem was made in the seventh year of his rule. This date is the date shown in Ezra 7. This date can be established as 457 B.C.

**Starting with the year 457 B.C., what date will you come to 483 years later? (Remember: There is no such thing as "A.D. Zero"! So when you reach zero in the time line, continue counting from A.D. 1.) Answer: A.D. 27.**

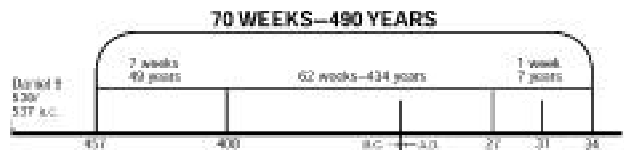
### THURSDAY—DECEMBER 9

**"IN THE MIDST [MIDDLE] OF THE [LAST] WEEK" (Daniel 9:24-27).**

**Review the 70-week prophecy of**

**Daniel 9:24-27 using the chart below.**

From the " 'command to restore and build Jerusalem,' " (457 B.C.) to " 'Messiah the Prince [Jesus]' " (Daniel 9:25, NKJV) was 483 years, or 69 weeks (7 weeks and 62 weeks). This comes to A.D. 27 (subtract the zero year,<sup>11</sup> which will extend the number one year later). The year A.D. 27 is when Jesus began His earthly ministry (work). This covers 69 of the 70 weeks. All that is left is the 70<sup>th</sup> week, the final seven years.

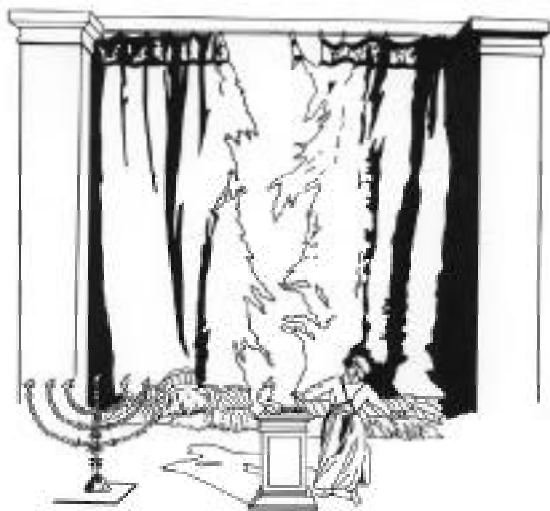


**What happens in the "midst of the week"? This is in the midst of the final seven years of the prophecy (Daniel 9:27).**

In A.D. 31, "in the midst of the week," Jesus died. The veil in the temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:50, 51). The torn veil shows the end of the earthly sanctuary services that pointed to Jesus. All those countless animal sacrifices for so many hundreds of years, from Adam and Eve onward, found their complete fulfillment in Him. Only Jesus' blood could atone (cleanse) for sin (Hebrews 10:4). In human flesh, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world,

<sup>11</sup>the zero year—the year after B.C. (before Christ [Jesus]) and before A.D. (*anno domini*—the year of our Lord).

so every human could find forgiveness, healing, and the promise of eternal life (Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:11). Because of what Jesus did on the cross, any human who comes to Him in faith can come to God as if he or she had never sinned. In Daniel 9:24-27, we find the only hope for a sinful world. This is the hope that this life, and all its sadness is not all there is. Because of Jesus, we can have joy and happiness throughout eternity.<sup>12</sup>



The torn veil symbolized the end of the earthly sanctuary services. Only Jesus' blood can cleanse us from sin.

**What does it mean that the Messiah will “confirm [seal] the covenant<sup>13</sup> with many [people] for one week”? When does the final week end?**

Our basic understanding of the end of the final week is the covenant rela-

tionship between God and national Israel. The end of that week comes to A.D. 34, with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. Afterward, the new covenant promises went to the church (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The church included Jews (the natural branch) and Gentiles (the wild branch). The church took Israel's place in teaching the world about the true God (Romans 11:17-21).

**Daniel 9:26 says that the Messiah shall be cut off, but “not for himself.” For whom was He “cut off”? How does the answer capture the important message of the gospel?**

#### FRIDAY—DECEMBER 10

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read the chapter entitled, “The Kingdom of God Is at Hand” in Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 231–235.

The only part of the vision that Daniel did not understand was the *mareh* of the 2,300 days (Daniel 8:26, 27). The same angel interpreter who appeared to him in Daniel 8:16 appears to him again in Daniel 9:21. The angel promises to give him “skill and understanding” (Daniel 9:22). The last time Daniel needed skill and understanding was about the *mareh* of the 2,300 days (Daniel 8:26, 27). In Daniel 9:23, the angel says to Daniel: “Consider the vision [*mareh*].” This is the *mareh* of the 2,300 days that Daniel did not understand. The *mareh* was a time

<sup>12</sup>eternity—life without end; forever.

<sup>13</sup>covenant—agreement; promise.

prophecy. The first thing the angel gives to Daniel is another time prophecy, one that is “cut off.” Cut off from what? From the larger time prophecy, the *mareh of the 2,300 days*.

Thus, we have two time prophecies close together. One prophecy is larger than the other. And the smaller prophecy is “cut off” from the larger.

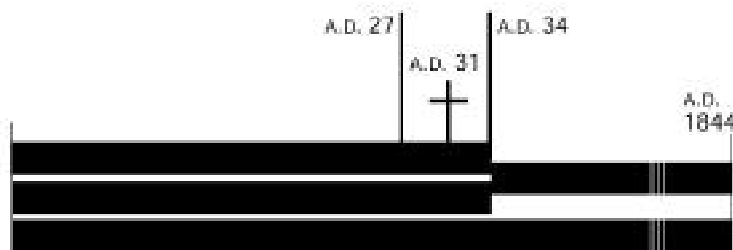
With the starting point given in the decree to rebuild Jerusalem at 457 B.C., we arrive 2,300 years later at 1844. Study the chart below.

### DISCUSSION QUESTION:

We saw in lesson 8 that the judgment scene in Daniel 7 (the same as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8) came after the 1,260-period of little-horn

persecution (attacks). Because the little horn first came to greatness in the sixth century, 1,260 years would come to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The judgment would begin after that. How do these numbers fit in with the year 1844, arrived at from Daniel 8 and 9? How does the answer help support our understanding of the prophecy?

**SUMMARY:** In his prayer, Daniel sided with his people and prayed to God for them. In answer, God sent the angel Gabriel. Gabriel explained to Daniel that the Messiah would come at a chosen time to bring humanity<sup>14</sup> back to God. It is interesting that the most important prophecy about Jesus is just part of the larger prophecy about the 2,300 years!



- 457 B.C. Persian king Artaxerxes commands rebuilding of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25; Ezra 7:11-16).
- A.D. 27 Baptism of Jesus; Jesus begins to preach and teach.
- A.D. 31 Messiah “cut off in the midst of the week” after 3 years of ministry (Daniel 9:26, 27; Matthew 27:60, 61; Mark 16:33-39).
- A.D. 34 Stoning of Stephen; gospel introduced to the Gentiles<sup>15</sup> (Daniel 9:34; Acts 7:54-60; 9:15).
- A.D. 1844 End of the 2,300-year prophecy; investigative judgment<sup>16</sup> begins.

<sup>14</sup>humanity—all the people of the world.

<sup>15</sup>Gentiles—people who are not Jews.

<sup>16</sup>investigative judgment—the judgment that will take place before Jesus’ second coming. Adventists believe that God’s judgment comes in three parts. The first part began in 1844, and is continuing until Jesus’ return to the earth. The investigative judgment is also called the pre-Advent judgment.