

“The Skill to Understand” 2

Daniel 9:20-27

Hello friend and welcome to *Hope for Today*. My name is J. Mark Horst; I’m your friend and Bible teacher. The program you’re listening to is produced by Heralds of Hope, an international Gospel radio and literature ministry.

Each week the Bible teaching broadcasts of *Heralds of Hope* circle the globe in English and 16 other major languages. And our Bible teaching programs in several languages are available all the time and any time at the website, twr360.org. That’s twr360.org. Thousands are logging on to the site for spiritual nourishment and blessing. You can join them and be blessed too!

Last week on *Hope for Today* we began studying from the closing verses of Daniel chapter nine. Our study is titled “The Skill to Understand.” We really only had time for the introduction to this text, so we’ll be studying from it for the next few programs.

As we begin today’s study, I will read the text, **Daniel 9:20 to 27**.

Scripture

In verse 24, Gabriel tells Daniel that “*seventy weeks* (literally, seventy sevens) *are determined for your people and for your holy city.*” The first challenge of interpretation is right here. What are the *seventy sevens* that Gabriel is talking about?

Seventh Day Adventists, Russellites, and some Protestants calculate the weeks as “weeks of days.” So that would be 490 days. They then multiply the days into years. This is called “the Year-Day theory.” But 490 days is just over a year, and the tremendous events foretold in these verses can’t possibly be squeezed into that short a time frame. This calculation also doesn’t work out when you get to the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6. So, the context demands weeks of years.

Outside this prophecy, the Hebrew word, *shabua*, is used only in Daniel 10:2 and 3. In that text it says that Daniel fasted *three full weeks*, literally, *three sevens of days*. So, the context demands days, that is, Daniel fasted for 21 days.

Jewish calendars had a “seven of days” (Sabbath), and a “seven of years” (Sabbath year). The first mention of the Sabbath Day is in Exodus 16 immediately following the exit from Egypt. Later, the law stated in Leviticus 25:3 and 4 that the people of Israel were to plant and harvest for

six years, and then allow the land to rest in the seventh year. After seven Sabbath years (49 years), the year of Jubilee was to be observed.

Leviticus 26: 33 to 35 prescribes the penalty for violating the Sabbath year. God said, *“I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies’ land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall rest, for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.”* Second Chronicles 36:21 confirms the duration of captivity.

In the beginning of this chapter, Daniel is clearly thinking in weeks of years; 7 times 10 equals 70 years. He knew from reading the prophet Jeremiah that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years; one year of captivity for each Sabbath year missed. This means that for 490 years, Israel hadn’t properly observed the Sabbath year! And Daniel knew those years of discipline were coming to an end. That’s why he was praying, fasting, and confessing the sins of the nation. Into this setting comes Gabriel, informing Daniel of a “new” 490-year period of time!

Another question that arises in interpreting this text has to do with the length of a biblical year. How many days are in a biblical year? If we compare Genesis 7:11 with Genesis 8:4, we learn from the Scripture that the flood lasted **exactly five months**. Genesis 7:24 and 8:3 both describe this same time period as **150 days**. So, in the earliest known biblical history, the length of a month was 30 days. Twelve months of 30 days makes a year with a total of **360 days**.

This conclusion is absolutely confirmed by prophecy. Daniel 9:27 mentions the persecution of God’s people in the middle of the 70th week, and 7:24 and 25 speak of “time, times, and dividing of time.” These both equal three and one-half years. This same time period is defined in Revelation 13 as “forty-two months,” and in Revelation 12 as “1,260 days.” As we progress through the text you see this conclusion reaffirmed.

Another important question that arises in this text is when did the first 69 weeks begin? We don’t need to wonder about this because Gabriel gives a very specific answer in verse 25. Here is the quote. *““Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [our sixty-nine weeks]; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.”*

If we can locate this command or decree “to restore and build Jerusalem” then we have a starting point for the sixty-nine weeks of years, and we can accurately determine the specific time

announced by Gabriel. Some interpreters point to the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes recorded in the book of Ezra. But if you read them carefully there is no reference to rebuilding the city, only the Temple. And even this building was stopped for a time because the Jews were accused of rebuilding the city (you can read about that in Ezra 4).

Without going into all the varied interpretations of when this decree was given, there is one decree in the entire Old Testament that fits Gabriel's words. Carefully read the opening verses of Nehemiah chapters one and two. As you may recall, Nehemiah was serving as the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes. The report that came to him from his brethren, on the condition of the walls of the city, aroused in him a deep concern. It moved him so much that he spent time in prayer and fasting. This is recorded in chapter one.

In chapter two, his sad countenance alerts the king that something is wrong. When the king inquires the reason for his sadness, Nehemiah shares his reasons, and he makes a request. He "said to the king, *"May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?"* Then the king said to me, *"What do you request?"* So, I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, *"If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it. Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?"* So, it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time."

Now, let's notice when this decree was issued. Nehemiah records precisely (chapter 2 verse 1), that it was *"in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes."* Encyclopedia Britannica sets the date of Artaxerxes accession to the throne as 465 B.C. That means his twentieth year would be 445 B.C. According to Jewish custom, since no day/date is specified, it was the first day of the month. In our Roman calendar the date would be March 14, 445 B.C. Here we have the beginning of the seventy weeks spoken of by Gabriel.

CLOSING

My friend, I hate to interrupt, but we're almost out of time for today's broadcast. Lord willing, we'll be back in one week to continue this study. If you'd like an audio CD or a printed copy of this complete teaching, just request it by its title, "The Skill to Understand."

The quickest way for you to contact me is to send an e-mail to mail@heraldsofhope.org. That e-mail address is mail@heraldsofhope.org. Or you may write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember, you can request a printed manuscript or an audio CD of this teaching, “The Skill to Understand.” I’d be happy to send one to you.

Once again, the quickest way for you to contact me is to send an e-mail to mail@heraldsofhope.org. Or you may write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember; you can request a free copy of this teaching, “The Skill to Understand.” It’s available in print or on an audio CD.

And don’t forget our Bible teaching programs are available to you all the time and any time at the website, twr360.org. That’s twr360.org. Thousands are logging on to the site for spiritual nourishment and blessing. You can join them and be blessed too!

Now friend, I urge you to tune in next week as we continue our study, “The Skill to Understand” from closing verses of Daniel chapter nine. And until then, keep looking for that blessed HOPE.