

UNDERSTANDING THE NUMBERS – Dan.9

- (i) Are the numbers to be taken literally or symbolically?
- (ii) If literally when do the 490 years begin? (70 x 7)
Is the “*beginning of the command*” (v.25) to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to be dated from
- The word of Jeremiah in 594 BC (Jer. 29:10)
 - The decree of Cyrus in 538 BC (Ezra 1:1-4)
 - The 1st decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC (Ezra 7)
 - The 2nd decree of Artaxerxes in 444 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8)

Note Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be rebuilt; Cyrus King of Persia made an edict and the temple began to be built. However due to opposition and lies the work stopped (Ezra 4:11-13,21). The new Persian King Artaxerxes eventually became favourable & the work restarted, but it was not until a 2nd decree by Artaxerxes, giving permission to Nehemiah to rebuild, that the actual city walls were reconstructed.

THREE DIFFERENT VIEWS

1. John Lennox

The 490 years begin at 444 BC for this was when permission was given to rebuild “*the streets and the walls*” (v.25) So,

First period of 49 years (7 x 7) = period of reconstruction

Second period of 434 years (62 x 7) = the intertestamental period until Christ

TOTAL TIME FROM START POINT TO CHRIST= 69 x 7 ie 483 years

Lennox argues that these 483 years are to be considered as lunar years, and not solar years (ie years of 30 day months as in Revelation 11 where 42 months = 1260 days)

483 lunar years, then become 476 and 1 month of solar years

So from the month of Nissan 444 BC pass 476 years and 1 month which takes us to APRIL 33 AD

In other words after the second period of 62 x 7 we are taken to the **CROSS** where the Messiah was “cut off” (v.26 – see also Isaiah 53:8)

Third Period – (1x7) or 70th week. Lennox says this cannot refer to the period from the cross to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 when all sacrifices finished. He believes that the language of “abominations” and “desolations” must refer to the same thing referred to in Daniel 8:11-14, 24-25 and Daniel 11:31 where not only Antioch Epiphanese is identified but also the Antichrist who will appear at the end of time. The 70th week is for the final days

2. Paul Mallard

The 490 years begin at 457 BC when Artaxerxes first gave the command to rebuild (v.25)

First period of 49 years (7 x 7) = period of reconstruction which finished in 408 BC

Second period of 434 years (62 x 7) = 408 BC to 26AD

If we accept that Jesus was born in 4BC then the end of the second period takes us the beginning of Christ's ministry at age 30 when he was baptised and anointed

Third period is to be split into two 3 ½ year periods for "*in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.*"(v. 27) **So after 3 ½ years of Christ's ministry from his baptism to the cross God's people would no longer need to make sacrifices** – for by the offering of Himself on the cross all future sacrifices are rendered useless. This also fits the fact that the "cutting off" of the Messiah is said to take place after the second period of 62 x 7..... which would lie sometime in the 70th week

Mallard, like Lennox takes the view that the 70th week refers to the last of the last days. For Mallard this period is covered by the final 3 ½ years where the Antichrist will be revealed.

(Stuart Olyott take a similar view to Paul Mallard, but does not see the final 3 ½ years as referring to the Antichrist, but rather the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Titus. Olyott warns against being too exact about the numbers)

3. Dale Ralph Davies

Holds to a "symbolic view" where the numbers are not to be taken literally

1st Period a **relatively restricted time** where the command goes forth from Jeremiah in 594 BC and where Cyrus is anointed to bring the Jews back (note Messiah of v.25 is translated "anointed one" which Cyrus is called in Isaiah 45:1)

2nd Period a **relatively extended time** which includes the rebuilding period and take us to the time when the Messiah is "cut off" for His people and onto the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, and then onto further tumultuous times until the "end of the war" (v.26)

3rd Period a **clearly climatic time** when the enemy of God seeks to impose idolatrous worship and a final ruler exalts himself against God. But a covenant has been made in heaven to save God's people and to destroy the one who causes desolations

COMMON THREADS

- ALL SEE THREE STAGES
- ALL SEE THAT THE CROSS IS CENTRAL IN HISTORY
- ALL SEE GREAT EVIL ARISING AT THE END OF TIME, BUT GOD AS VICTOR