

made a great prayer which God answered by sending the angel Gabriel to give him a message.

In verse 2 Daniel says that he "understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years" (cf. pp. 175-177). Feeling that the seventy-year period was about to reach its end, he prayed that God would fulfill the promise that Jerusalem would be rebuilt.

We find in Daniel's prayer no evidence that he was sure the period of wrath would soon come to an end, and we might wonder whether he would be greatly encouraged when he received the message that God gave in answer to his prayer. If one were simply to read from the middle of verse 26 to the end of the chapter he might feel that God's answer was only a prediction of further trouble.

Daniel was assured that he himself was "highly esteemed" (v. 23), but was told that "seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city" (v. 24). There is no definite statement to show whether this newly-revealed period would follow the seventy years, would include it, or would overlap with it.

The Length of the 70 Sevens

Gabriel's message begins with a word that can be interpreted in various ways. This word, which the KJV translates as "weeks," is rendered in the NIV as "sevens." It is quite evident in the context that it does not refer to sevens of days, weeks, or months. There would seem to be only two possible interpretations: that it means a period of seven years, or that it means a period of indefinite length. It is a very common error in interpreting Scripture to attempt to make a decision at once about words or phrases that could be taken in more than one way and then to force other statements into conformity with the possibility that has been selected. It is far better to go through a passage carefully, noticing the various possible interpretations, but taking particular pains to see what elements in the passage