



[Daniel 9:2](#)

(2) in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years *specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

New King James Version

The prophet Daniel was by this time an old man. He had been taken as a captive to Babylon when he was a young teenager, probably made a eunuch, and trained to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Now, with the defeat of the Babylonians by the Medo-Persians, Daniel was in service to a new king and a new empire, Darius the Mede of the Persian Empire. If the prophet was removed from Jerusalem in 604 BC, the year of Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion, and assuming he was, say, 12 years old at the time, he was now approaching 80 years old (Darius' first year would be c. 537 BC).

And the 70 years of the prophecy were just about up—in fact, they would expire in the next year or so. The prophecy, which Daniel found in "the books" (more correctly, "letters"), had been penned many years before by Jeremiah the prophet. It is found in [Jeremiah 29:10](#): "For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place."

[Daniel 9:2](#) can be read as if Daniel was just coming to the understanding of the seventy years, but that may not be the case. He had probably had access to the letter from Jeremiah for several decades, and he had probably understood that the Jews' exile in Babylon would be only seventy years. However, he may not have known *when* to commence the count of years, since the Babylonian invasions had been successive and had not finished until about 586 BC. Should he count from 604 BC, from 586 BC, or one of the other incursions?

It is likely that, with his access to the halls of power, Daniel had come to know that Cyrus planned to announce that the Jews could return to the land of their fathers in the

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Daniel 9:2 (<http://www.theberean.org>) next year or two. A little simple math told him that the 604 BC date was the one to begin with. The seventy years was almost complete.

But that brought him up short. He realized that the Jews in Babylon were little better for their captivity than when they left Judah in chains. They were still full of [sin](#). They had not repented of their idolatrous ways. So he falls on his knees to utter his great [prayer](#) of confession, of which [Daniel 9:10-11](#) is a sample:

We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our [God](#), to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the [prophets](#). Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of [Moses](#) the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.

He ends with the well-known supplication: "O LORD, hear! O LORD, forgive! O LORD, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name" ([Daniel 9:19](#)).

The obvious lesson for us is that we know that the [return of Jesus Christ](#) is not far off. Do we have a similar repentant attitude as Daniel had?

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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