

Daniel's Prayer And Prophecy Of 70 Weeks: Part 2

(Daniel 9:20-27)

Intro: This morning we return to the ninth chapter of Daniel to examine God's gracious response to Daniel's prayer. You will recall from the message last Sunday that Daniel had observed from the writings of the prophet Jeremiah that the predicted seventy-year captivity of the Jews was nearly over (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25:1-11; 29:10-14). God promised Jeremiah that after seventy years He would end His peoples' captivity and restore them to their homeland. Daniel noticed that the key to the fulfillment of this marvelous prophecy—that Israel would return to her homeland—was the prayers of the people (Jer. 29:10-14). Daniel immediately fell to his knees in prayer. He confessed his sin and the sins of the people, and asked God to act in accordance with His mercy and compassion. He asked Him to restore His people, His city, Jerusalem, and His holy sanctuary.

This brings us to this morning's message: God's response to Daniel's prayer in verses 20-27. God dispatched the angel Gabriel to answer Daniel's prayer. Gabriel provided Daniel with a revelation of seventy weeks in verses 24-27. This prophecy of seventy weeks outlines events that would carry the Jewish nation 490 years into the future. As promised, the nation of Israel would be restored, Jerusalem and the Temple would be rebuilt, and their Messiah would come. Tragically, 483 years after Jerusalem's restoration, Messiah would appear and be cut off, and Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed once again. The final seven years of the predicted 490 years would see the coming of an evil persecutor, more wicked than anything the world has ever seen. This wicked personage is Antichrist, previously introduced in 7:8, and 24-26, as the blasphemous "little horn." Antichrist will inflict horrific suffering on the redeemed people of God, until the glorious appearing of Messiah, who will throw him alive into the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). **Look with me at:**

II. God's Response To Daniel's Prayer (9:20-27)

A. Gabriel's appearance (9:20-23)

20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, **21** while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the

vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. **22** And he gave me instruction and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.”

While Daniel was still speaking and praying to God, he was startled by the sudden appearance of the angel Gabriel. He recognized Gabriel from his previous visitation 13 years earlier in connection with the vision of the Ram and the Shaggy He-goat in chapter 8:15-16. Gabriel came to Daniel, notice in his extreme weariness, about the time of the evening offering.

Daniel lets us know that he was physically exhausted from his time of prayer. This is due to the fact that he had been fasting and praying, which left him feeling drained. Spending time before God in unrelenting intercessory prayer will leave you feeling exhausted. Notice secondly, that Gabriel came to Daniel around the time of the evening offering. This would have been around 3:00 p.m. It is significant to note that even though the Temple had been destroyed and sacrifices had not been offered for over 50 years, yet Daniel continued observing this time spent before God daily. He knew that God accepts sinful people on the basis of a sacrifice offered on their behalf.

Gabriel lets Daniel know in verse 22 that he had been sent forth by God to give Daniel insight and understanding concerning Israel’s restoration. Daniel’s previous visions in chapters 7 and 8 dealt primarily with Gentile nations beginning with Babylon. The prophetic program revealed here by Gabriel concerns God’s program for His Jewish people until its consummation in the promised covenanted kingdom under Messiah.

What is more, according to verse 23 Gabriel lets Daniel know that because he was highly esteemed by God, he had been dispatched as soon as Daniel began praying,

23 “At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

B. Gabriel’s message: The prophecy of Seventy Weeks and the Messiah (vv. 24-27)

Daniel 9:24-27 record God's answer to Daniel's petition. Let's read verses 24-27,

24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. **25** “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. **26** “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. **27** “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The first thing we observe in verse 24 is that a specific time period of seventy weeks have been decreed for Daniel's people, and the holy city, Jerusalem. It must be noted that this prophecy is concerned specifically with Daniel's people, the Jews, and with his holy city, Jerusalem. This prophecy has nothing to do with Gentile world history or the church, but refers only to the history of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

1. What do the “seventy weeks” mean?

The first question that confronts us is the meaning of the phrase “seventy weeks.” The Hebrew term translated weeks (*shabua*) refers to a “unit of sevens.” The consensus among conservative biblical scholars is that the “seventy sevens” here in Daniel 9:24 refers to seventy units of seven, or a period of 490 years.

Once again, this prophecy refers to Daniel's people, the Jews, and Daniel's city, Jerusalem. It is imperative that you understand this.

The angel Gabriel goes on to explain that by the time these 490 years have run their course, God will have completed six objectives for

Israel. The first three have to do with sin, and the second three with the establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. The basis for the first three was provided in the work of Christ on the cross, but all six will be realized by the people of Israel at the second advent of Christ.

2. Six objectives to be completed during the 490 years (9:24)

First, to finish the transgression—For all who believe in Christ, our transgressions were dealt with at Calvary. But for the people of Israel, who rejected and crucified Christ, their transgressions will not be removed until they repent and receive Christ as their Messiah and Savior at the end of the seventy weeks when He returns to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

Second, to make an end of sin—the second objective looks forward to the day when sin will be eliminated, not merely in principal, but more importantly in practice. At Christ's second coming, He will remove Israel's sin forever.

Third, to make atonement for iniquity—Once again, Christ provided atonement for iniquity at Calvary. However, as far as the people of Israel are concerned, the benefits provided by Christ's death for sin will not be realized until He returns at the end of the seventy weeks.

Fourth, to bring in everlasting righteousness—Christ's death at Calvary not only provided atonement for all sin, He also provided perfect righteousness to be granted for all who believe in Him. The people of Israel will receive everlasting righteousness when they receive the gift of Christ's righteousness when He returns to establish His Millennial Kingdom at the conclusion of the 490 years.

It should also be noted that there are many Messianic passages which view righteousness as being applied to the earth at the time of the Christ's second coming. Jeremiah 23:5-6 for instance, states, "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 'In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'"

The righteous character of Messiah's kingdom is pictured in Isaiah 11:2-5; 53:11; and Jeremiah 33:15-18.

Fifth, to seal up vision and prophecy—this is understood to mean the termination of supernatural direct revelation by means of vision and oral prophecy. The expression *to seal up* indicates that no more is to be added and that what has been predicted will have received divine confirmation and recognition in the form of actual fulfillment. All of God's prophetic promises to Israel will be fully realized when Christ returns and establishes His Millennial Kingdom on this earth.

Sixth, to anoint the most Holy—this is generally believed to refer to the anointing of the most holy place in the Millennial Temple, described in Ezekiel chapters 41–46 (read 43:1-12 that describes Christ's return to His Millennial Temple. Others believe that this refers to the anointing of the Holy One, the Lord Jesus Christ. It should be noted that this phrase "the Most Holy" is never used as a designation for a person in Scripture. It is best therefore to take this as referring to the new holy of holies that shall be anointed by Christ during His Millennial reign.

It may be concluded that all six of these predicted objectives will be fulfilled and experienced by the people of Israel by the end of the 490 years predicted by the angel Gabriel.

3. The division of the seventy sevens or 490 years (vv. 25-27)

Gabriel next explained that the seventy sevens or 490 years would be divisible into three distinct periods:

- 7 weeks of years (49 years)
- 62 weeks of years (434 years)
- 1 week of years (7 years)

The first segment (v. 25), which would mark the beginning of the seventy sevens or 490 years would be the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, v. 25

25 So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza

and moat, even in times of distress.

The key to arriving at the proper interpretation of this passage is to be found in the phrase “from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.” The interpretation rests on the date that this decree “to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was issued.

There are at least four decrees concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem recorded in Scripture:

- (1) Cyrus’s decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-5);
- (2) Darius’ decree confirming the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:6-12);
- (3) Artaxerxes’ decree (Ezra 7:11-26);
- (4) Artaxerxes’ decree authorizing Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh 2:1-8).

The only decree that permitted the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem was the one issued by the Persian king Artaxerxes I on March 5 of 444 BC. (Neh. 2:1-8). Nehemiah you recall, in spite of tremendous opposition, built the walls in an astonishing 52 days. The rebuilding of the entire city, as predicted, was not completed until 49 years later in 396 BC.

The second major division of 62 weeks (434 years), plus the initial 7 weeks (49 years) totaling 483 years, marks the day that Messiah the Prince, Jesus Christ, rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey and presented Himself to the nation of Israel as the King of the Jews (Luke 19:36-40; Zech. 9:9). New Testament scholar Harold Hoehner, using the Jewish calendar, which measures time by the 360 day—lunar year cycle, calculates that the 483 years (173,880 days) terminated on March 30, AD. 33. This is the precise date that Jesus Christ made His Triumphal entry into Jerusalem and presented Himself to the nation as their Messianic King. The Lord Jesus was cut off, crucified, four days later, v. 26

26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy

the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

The natural interpretation of verse 26 is that it refers to the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. Just as predicted, Jesus Christ was cut off, crucified, four days after His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Christ's death on April 3, 33 AD., terminated the 69 weeks or 483 years exactly as Gabriel predicted in Daniel 9:26.

Dr. John Walvoord writes, "The prominence of the Messiah in Old Testament prophecy and the mention of Him in both verses 25 and 26 make the cutting off of the Messiah one of the important events in the prophetic unfolding of God's plan for Israel and the world. How tragic that, when the promised King came, He was "cut off." The adulation of the crowd at the triumphal entry and the devotion of those who had been touched by His previous ministry were all to no avail. The unbelief of Israel and the calloused indifference of religious leaders when confronted with the claims of Christ combined with the hardness of heart of Gentile rulers to make this the greatest of tragedies. Christ was indeed not only "cut off" from man and from life, but in His cry on the cross indicated that He was forsaken of God. The plaintive cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" reveals not only the awfulness of separation from God but points also to the answer—the *redemptive purpose*. Although the additional explanation *but not for himself* is probably best translated, "There is nothing for him," it is nevertheless true that He died for others. Nothing that rightly belonged to Him as Messiah the Prince was given to Him at that time. He had not come into His full reward nor the exercise of His regal authority. He was the sacrificial lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the world. Outwardly it appeared that evil had triumphed.

Following the completion of the 69 weeks or 483 years, and prior to the final week or seven years several important events would transpire.

Gabriel informed Daniel in the last half of verse 26 that "the people of the prince who is to come would destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

The same people who crucified Christ, the Romans, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple forty years later in AD. 70. History records that the Roman general Titus Vespasian besieged and captured Jerusalem on August 6, A.D. 70. Although Titus had ordered his troop to leave the temple intact, Jesus had told His disciple that not one stone would be left upon another (Matt. 24:2). It is reported that a Roman soldier, for no apparent reason, threw a flaming torch into an archway in the temple, causing the lavish tapestries to catch fire. The temple became a raging inferno, which caused the decorative gold to melt. The gold ran down into the crevices of the stone floors. The greedy soldiers had to literally overturn every stone to recover the gold. The prophecy of Christ was literally fulfilled.

As predicted, history notes that the Jews have continued to suffer intense periods of persecution, and even to the end there will be war, and desolations are determined.

The third major division of Daniel's 490 years, namely the final seven year segment, is explained in verse 27

27 And he [the Antichrist] will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

After an indeterminate period of time, presently nearly 2,000 years, the final week, seven years of Daniel's prophecy will begin. The final seven year period will begin after the Rapture of the church, which will consummate God's program with the church in this present Age. This seven year period, commonly referred to as the Tribulation, begins when Antichrist makes a seven-year covenant to provide peace and stability to the people of Israel. This yet-future ruler will be the little horn of the fourth beast (Dan. 7:8), who rises to take control of the 10 nation federation, the revived Roman Empire. But in the midst of the week, after three and one-half years, Antichrist will turn against Israel and attempt to utterly destroy her.

The seventieth week, final 7 years of Daniel's prophecy, will terminate when Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord, returns to this earth in power

and great glory, and casts Antichrist and his false prophet into the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). This event will mark both the end of Daniel's 490 years determined for Israel, and the establishment of Christ's glorious Millennial Kingdom.

Conclusion:

The fact that the first 69 weeks, 483 years of Daniel's tremendous prophecy have already been fulfilled, should serve as a reminder that the remaining week, seven years will soon come to pass. This should cause every one of us to live every day in anticipation of Christ's coming to take us home.

This reminds me of a story I heard about President Dwight D. Eisenhower. While he was vacationing in Colorado, he learned about a six-year-old boy named Paul Haley, a Denver resident, who was dying of cancer. The boy's greatest ambition was to meet his hero, the current President.

President Eisenhower instructed one of his aides to find out where the boy lived. The next Sunday, he was driven in the presidential limousine for an unannounced visit to the dying boy's home. He made his way to the front door and knocked, and was greeted by Paul's stunned father, Donald Haley. Donald was mortified because he was unshaven and dressed in old jeans and a dirty shirt.