

The Seventy Weeks

Daniel 9

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Daniel Chapter 9 is one of the most important chapters in all of prophecy. It foretells the exact time the Messiah would be officially present Himself to the world and that He would be “cut off”. It gives the time-frame for God working through Israel until they would be established as the preeminent nation on earth during the Millennial Kingdom along with many other important details. These amazing prophecies of the Messiah’s two advents came to Daniel in response to His praying fervently for his people Israel.

This chapter is pretty long so I’m not going to read Daniel’s prayer to allow time to focus on the last eight verses which is God’s answer to the prayer. And as you’d expect, it is full of interesting information. But I will summarize and comment on Daniel’s prayer because it is what prompted God to reveal some pretty amazing prophecies.

v1-2 – We see why Daniel felt the need to pray... Daniel apparently had access to the writings of Jeremiah who was a prophet to Judah. He had read Jeremiah 28:11 that said Israel would be in captivity 70 years and realized they were coming up on that time. Daniel saw the captivity of the Jewish Nation coming to its end and was no-doubt homesick for the land of Israel.

v3 – Daniel prayed writing, “*I set my face toward the Lord*” which may mean he turned his face toward Jerusalem, the place where God had dwelt; but more appropriately it means he went to God in a special, earnest prayer.

This prayer of Daniel was probably special, not one of his regular, 3-times-a-day prayers because he fasted and wore sackcloth and ashes.

- Daniel’s prayer would put into motion something that God had already stated that He would do (Daniel was one man who knew how to pray so that God would answer)

The fact that Daniel prayed along with fasting in sackcloth and ashes reflected the seriousness of his concern. Since Daniel fasted, he would have prepared for this prayer no doubt spending time reflecting on what he would pray.

Fasting aids in prayer because it helps us cast off the distractions of this world and focus on the spiritual issue at hand. Recall that Jesus started his ministry by fasting for 40 days.

Notice that Daniel came to God in both *prayer and supplications*... These terms are mostly synonymous, but supplication is a form of prayer in which a more humble petition is made than for more routine prayer.

v4 – Daniel started out his prayer by praising God for His mercy and faithfulness in keeping His promises with those who love Him and keep His commandments.

v5 – Daniel confessed how God’s people Israel (of which he was part) had sinned against God by being wicked, rebelling against Him, and by neglecting the principles in the Law.

It is easy to consider iniquity to be synonymous with sin but it is mentioned here for a reason...

- Iniquity is a special type of sin... the Hebrew word is “avon” and means “to bend, twist, distort” so iniquities are a bending, twisting, or distorting of God’s Word.
- Even in Daniel’s day, the legalists were twisting God’s Law making it oppressive in an attempt to keep the letter of the Law while totally missing the spirit of the Law.

We see iniquity today when people take Scripture out of context to cause it to mean what it doesn’t say... When you do this, you can use the Bible to support anything.

The wickedness of Israel that Daniel probably had in mind was their compromising with the world around them by worshipping other gods.

- Also, Israel had not listened to or believed God’s prophets who warned them of judgment.
- They were also not keeping the Law of God by not observing the sabbath for the land: working it 6 years and letting it lie fallow for the 7th. And this had been going on since the beginning of Saul’s reign, or 490 years. That is where the 70 years of captivity came in... $490 \text{ years} / 7 = 70 \text{ years}$

In Deuteronomy 28, the Land Covenant given to Moses promised that Israel would become the prime nation of the world if the Jews were obedient to God. But the covenant also warned that they'd suffer many curses if they were disobedient, including exile from the land. The covenant warned further that if temporary exile did not restore the Jews to obedience, they would be dispersed and persecuted worldwide. But nowhere are they told that their disobedience would lead to a loss of their title to the land.

v7-8 – Daniel referred to Israel's unfaithfulness as "*shame of face*" before the Lord...

- The term "shame of face" implies more than just normal shame... it was shame so bad that they couldn't even face God.

v9 – The hope that Daniel had for his people was in the mercy and forgiveness of God even though His people had a terrible habit of rebelling against Him.

This merciful characteristic of God is important for us today because we too live in a nation that has rebelled against God. Thank God that He has made provision for us as individuals in Jesus Christ.

v10 – Daniel included himself in with his people Israel who had rebelled against God by not obeying Him in applying His Law.

v11 – Daniel recognized that all Israel had transgressed God's Law. Daniel himself was faithful but that doesn't mean he was perfect. Daniel knew that even he fell short of the perfection God demanded...

Isaiah 64:6 – *But we are all like an unclean thing,
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags*

The Apostle Paul put it this way...

Romans 3:23 – *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

The curse Daniel probably had in mind was... from the Land Covenant of Deuteronomy 28 as previously mentioned.

v12 – Daniel points out that God had confirmed His words that proclaimed judgment against Jerusalem by multiple prophets who had warned about what would happen to the Jews if they did not repent and turn back to Him.

- The judges mentioned here were the rulers and leaders who ignored the prophets misleading the people by telling them that all would be well when that would not be the case.

- The great disaster that came to Jerusalem was when the Babylonians attacked them, sacked the city and destroyed the temple.

v13 – Daniel lamented that Israel as a nation had not turned back to God despite realizing that they were experiencing the curses described in the Law of Moses.

- There had always been a faithful remnant of which Daniel was part but the nation of Israel as a whole was still on the wrong side of God even in captivity.

v14 – Says the reason for the disaster that came to Israel was that the righteousness of the Lord demanded the rebellion of Israel to be corrected... sin always has consequences despite the patience of God.

v15 – God had made a name for Himself by bringing Israel out of Egypt, demonstrating faithfulness to His Word and, more recently, working in the life of Daniel in such a way that it even made an impact on those who had conquered Israel.

v16-17 – Daniel appealed to God to deliver Israel... Specifically, that Jerusalem, the Temple and God's people would be restored so that they would not be a reproach to Him. The appeal was for the mercy of God. And that God's own reputation was suffering due to the suffering of His people.

v18 – Daniel based his appeal to God not because Israel had earned God's favor but because of God's merciful character.

The *desolations* mentioned here refer to a state of complete emptiness or destruction... which was certainly the case in Jerusalem and other parts of Judah.

- This is plural which indicates that there is another kind of desolation Daniel might have had in mind: a desolation of the spirit on the part of God's people.

v19 – Daniel wrapped up his prayer asking God to intervene on Israel's behalf by hearing him and forgiving their sins.

Daniel appealed to God's reputation...

- That His intervention should not be delayed for the sake of His own reputation given the prophecy of Jeremiah.
- And the reputation of God was also at stake because people knew that Jerusalem was God's city and that the Jews were God's people.

God answers Daniel – Daniel 9:20-23

²⁰ Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. ²² And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:

v20 – Daniel was visited by the angel Gabriel when he was praying and he was interrupted at the “evening sacrifice” ...I take it that the “evening Sacrifice” referred to his evening prayer time. There was no temple for sacrifices so prayer is what substituted for animal sacrifices.

- Gabriel had previously helped Daniel understand the interpretation of his vision of the ram and goat, Chapter 8.
- God used Gabriel to reveal important messages to His people... It was this same Gabriel who told Mary she’d be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1)

v22 – Gabriel’s purpose in coming to Daniel this time was on behalf of God to help him understand the vision God was giving him of the future.

v23 – Daniel was chosen to receive this vision of the future because he was highly esteemed by God... Daniel’s life, integrity, honesty and faithfulness, had not gone unnoticed by God.

Gabriel did not directly answer Daniel’s question about letting Israel go back to Jerusalem...

- Daniel knew the seventy years of their captivity was about to be completed so he already knew that they could go back to Jerusalem soon.
- Instead, Gabriel gives Daniel a bigger picture of the future.

The Seventy Weeks Prophecy – Daniel 9:24-27

²⁴ “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. ²⁵ “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;

The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. ²⁶ “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”

The bigger picture of the future Gabriel revealed was that there would be seventy weeks from the end of their captivity, commencing from the edict to rebuild Jerusalem. These 70 weeks would include the coming and the death of the Messiah and end with the Tribulation.

The Babylonian captivity was a turning point in the history of Israel because...

- It ended the Old Testament theocratic form of Israel’s government where their rulers sought and received divine guidance
- Following the Babylonian Captivity, the theocracy never returned to Israel
- The time of Israel’s subjection to the Gentiles would continue until the return of the Messiah when Israel will be restored as head of the global Millennial Kingdom theocracy that Jesus will establish

v24 – The term 70 weeks refers to Sabbatical years or “weeks” of years per Leviticus 25:8... each “week” consisting of 7 years.

- So, the 70 weeks amount to 490 years (70 weeks x 7 years/week = 490 years)

During these 490 years six major developments would happen:

1. *To finish the transgression* (the nations rebelling against God) – This was certainly the rebellion of Israel but also the Gentile nations. There will be the establishment of an entirely new order on earth where Jesus Christ rules on earth over the nations during the Millennial Kingdom. (FUTURE)
2. *To make an end of sins* – the worst consequence of sin is the second death which results from not having our sins forgiven... the cross made it possible for our sins to be forgiven. (DONE)
3. *To make reconciliation for iniquity* – This was clearly fulfilled at the cross (DONE)

4. *To bring in everlasting righteousness* – also accomplished at the cross (DONE for Christians)
5. *To seal up vision and prophecy* – Bringing to a close the final stage of human history when Jesus rules (FUTURE)
6. *To anoint the Most Holy* – Jesus will physically rule the nations as King of kings during the Millennial Kingdom (FUTURE)

v25 – The event that would trigger the beginning of the 490 years is the command to restore and build Jerusalem.

The number of years between of *"the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince"* is 7 plus 62 which means there would be 69 weeks of years between the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince would come. This corresponds to 483 Jewish lunar calendar years.

These 483 Jewish lunar calendar years represents 173,880 days (483 years x 360 days/year). Converting this to our current Georgian solar calendar...

$$173,880 \text{ days} / 365 \text{ days/year} = 476 \text{ years}$$

The command to restore and build Jerusalem is documented in Nehemiah 2:1-8... the Persian king Artaxerxes issued a command which permitted Jerusalem to be rebuilt in the 20th year of his reign.

- We know from archeology and historians that King Artaxerxes came to power in 464 BC, so the 20th year of his reign would be 444 BC.

We can then determine when "Messiah the Prince" would come by adding 476 years to 444 BC... this means that Messiah officially presented Himself to Israel as their king in 33 AD (accounting for 1 BC to 1 AD as one year).

33 AD is significant, it is when most scholars say Jesus Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, a few days before He was crucified...

- I understand this math works out to the very day Bible scholars determined that Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

The *"troublesome times"* in the restoration of Jerusalem refers to the wall of Jerusalem being built as recorded in Nehemiah 6. The Jews built the wall in 52 days because they needed it for protection and the people near them felt threatened by their fortification efforts.

Notice that the 69 weeks of years is broken up into 7 plus 62 weeks, or 49 plus 434 years because...

- It took some period of time for Jerusalem to be actually established once the wall was built... maybe 49 years?
- More likely, these 49 years related to the period of time that God would be speaking to Israel through the prophets. After Malachi, God was silent for about 400 years until John the Baptist.

v26 – Says *"the Messiah is cut off"* meaning the nation of Israel would reject Jesus as the Messiah and crucified Him.

After *"the Messiah is cut off"* The city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24. It is a matter of historical record that this happened in 70 AD.

- It is the people of the prince who is to come who would destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

The prince who is to come cannot be the Messiah because He was "cut off" so it has to be the one who would confirm a covenant with the many and bring an end to temple sacrifice... it is the Antichrist who would do this.

So, the people of the prince who is to come refers to the Roman army in Israel was made up of four legions and was led by the future Roman Emperor Titus. It was the Roman 10th legion that sacked Jerusalem and the Temple. While the top officers were Roman, the soldiers were regional conscripts mostly from Syria.

I think this sheds light on from where the Antichrist might come... The Islamic region around Israel and especially Syria. This idea is reinforced by the "type" of the Abomination of Desolation" being committed by Antiochus Epiphanes who was the Greek ruler over Syria that Bo told us about last Sunday in his message on Chapter 8.

- This idea that the Antichrist might come from an Islamic nation is also reinforced by Micah 5:5 which refers to the Antichrist as the Assyrian which is the same geographical area.

The "it" in "the end of it" is a veiled reference to the Church Age, our current period of time between the end of the 69 weeks and the beginning of the 70th week (verse 27).

Gabriel described the time leading up to the 70th week as coming with a flood, in other words, it would overwhelm people rapidly. Also, the time leading up to Messiah's return would be a spiritual war opposing Him and there would be desolations, events causing places to be devoid of people and hope.

- These calamities serve as wake-up calls to draw people to God reminding them to trust in Him rather than in themselves, their bank accounts, their governments, or anything else they are trusting in for deliverance.

We've had a lot of wake-up calls in our day...

Both world wars were wake-up calls because they effected the whole world. The 9-11-01 terrorist attacks on the U.S. was a world-shaking event because it was not just an attack on the U.S., it was an attack on Western values. All the world has rallied around the idea that we need to work together to stamp out terrorism. And more recently we have had the corona virus pandemic which put the whole world in lock-down.

v27 – Addresses the 70th week: It begins with the prince who is to come confirming a covenant with the many. He will also bring an end to the offering sacrifice at the mid-point of the 70th Week and make people desolate, which means devoid of hope. We know the Antichrist murders a lot of people which will only add to the desolation.

The sacrifice being referred to here is the Jewish sacrifices as ordained by the Mosaic Law.

- For the sacrifice to be ended, they must have first started. And since the sacrifices have to be done at the temple, there must be a new temple in Jerusalem.

Besides the fact that God says there will be a third temple in Jerusalem, the modern secular nation of Israel wants it as part of their heritage as a people. The religious Jews also want a temple in order to please God and bring on the Messiah. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem already has the instruments they need to resume the sacrifices; they also have the red heifers needed for purification ceremonies per Numbers 19... all they need now is the temple.

- It seems impossible that there would be a Jewish temple in Jerusalem given today's politics. But God does the impossible all the time!

Notice the prince will "***CONFIRM** a covenant with many*"... It is likely that there will already be a peace agreement with multiple parties in place, the prince just affirms it. And it is this covenant that will allow the Jews to build a temple in Jerusalem.

In the middle of the 70th week... The Antichrist will break the "covenant" with the Jews and commit the "*Abomination that causes Desolation*" that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24.

The 70th week is separated from the previous 69 weeks of years because the clock stopped when the Messiah was "cut off" ...so, the 70th week is yet future. This temporary "stoppage" happened because Israel did not receive her Messiah during His first coming and consequently were scattered among the nations of the world.

- God has been working through the church since then; but the Church Age will end at the rapture.
- And then God will resume working through Israel as his representatives on earth.

Israel will be restored to the covenant blessing when they as a nation receives Jesus as their Messiah and Savior during the 70th Week of Daniel.

- The 70th Week of Daniel clock for the Jews will start when the Antichrist "confirms" a seven-year treaty for Israel

In Daniel 9, the timing of the Messiah's first and second comings are revealed. What isn't revealed is the timing of the end of the Church Age. This timing is a mystery as the fact that there would even be a Church Age was a mystery during Old Testament times. The timing of the end of the Church Age is a mystery by design so that we would live ready. But we can be certain that those of us in the church today will not have to go through the 70th Week of Daniel: Revelation 3:10 – *Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

What comments, applications or other take-aways do you have from Daniel 9?

- As Daniel prayed for his nation, we too should pray for our nation to turn back to God...
- God is in control of history... He is executing His plan for mankind and His will be done.
- Since prophecies of the first coming of the Messiah were fulfilled exactly, we can expect the prophecies related to His return will likewise be fulfilled exactly.
- Since Israel is back in the land, we can see the stage being set for the 70th Week of Daniel... So, it behooves us to be ready for the return of Jesus and get on with what He is calling us to do.