

Daniel 9:20–27 (ESV)

20 While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, **21** while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. **22** He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. **23** At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision. **24** “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. **25** Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. **26** And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. **27** And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

Daniel’s Seventy Weeks or

Why pastors sometimes especially earn their pay.

My title for the sermon is a little light hearted this morning. But as we get further into our text you will **see how many options there are** in interpreting this text. I am thankful you are a loving church. You certainly are not going to get to the end of this text confident that you know **exactly** what everything means. Or if you do you, will have received that information miraculously. I think it would take another visit from Gabriel for us to completely understand this text.

So let’s jump right in where we left off last week.

The first 3 verses actually tell us some interesting things.

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God, 21 while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. 23 At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

First we see here for sure that Daniel knew the difference between **his** sin and **the sin of his people**. He was praying for **both**. We know that Daniel was aware of his own personal sin and was praying for God's specific forgiveness for him. He also prayed for the forgiveness of his countrymen.

I have been thinking since the last sermon about Daniel's prayer. The more I have thought about what scripture says about forgiveness, the more I believe that when we pray for the forgiveness of those who have not yet asked God for forgiveness, God's **answer** to that prayer is going to be in **2 steps**. First He will move on those people's hearts to **repent**. Then second God will respond to their **repentance** with **forgiveness**. Otherwise we would have a God who forgives sin without people coming to Christ. That creates all kinds of theological problems. Even the two examples of both Christ and Steven praying for the forgiveness of the people who were about to kill them could be explained in this way.

Thousands of Jews came to Christ in just a short time after they crucified Christ. They were, at that time, forgiven for time and eternity of what they had done to Christ. As for Stephen, we know that Paul was eventually saved. We don't know who else. But at this point I believe that when Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do", the Father answered that prayer when massive numbers of Jews came to Christ. I believe Stephen's prayer was answered the same way. I believe when we pray for the forgiveness of someone else, we are praying also for the process that will lead them to be able to receive that forgiveness. If God forgives any other way, it would give us the idea that Christ really did not need to die. Christ could have forgiven the sins by another process where he just pronounces forgiveness with no need of confession.

Ok, so while Daniel was praying Gabriel came in swift flight. Now look at verse 23. It says **At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you.**

It looks like as soon as Daniel started praying a word went out. It looks to me like God sent a word to have Gabriel tell Daniel some information. Now think about this. Gabriel did not arrive at the beginning of Daniel's pleas. He got there some time **later** during his prayers. And he got there in **swift flight**. Now we cannot

make too much of this. But is it possible that Angels are subject to **some kinds** of time and space restrictions? We would think that teleportation would be instant. We wouldn't think that **swiftness** would be required. And why the **time delay** from when the word went out and when the angel arrived?

This does not prove anything. But it is food for thought.

Now this is the important part. **O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.**

How the angel came is not nearly as important as **why** the angel came. Daniel was praying for forgiveness. But Daniel was praying for forgiveness in anticipation of God fulfilling His promise to send the Jews back to their homeland. We don't know if Daniel included in His prayer a request for **understanding**. But that is what Gabriel is there to deliver. When we pray, we often get more than we bargain for. God is so gracious to those who call upon Him. He reveals what we need to know, even when we are not smart enough to ask for it.

And why did Daniel get this special bonus?

for you are greatly loved.

Does God have favorites? I suspect that He does. Certainly there are those in scripture who are singled out by God. And we know that our obedience toward God matters. Those who obey the most devotedly will be rewarded the most. There are treasures associated with faithfulness. Some of us will be happy to just get the cheap seats in eternity. But those who most love God devote their lives **more fully** to the glory of God. And God rewards that with **deeper fellowship** in this life and **greater reward** in the next.

I suspect that Daniel is being told that he has been singled out. Daniel is not just loved by God. Daniel is **greatly** loved.

Do we want to be singled out like that? This is more motivation to be faithful to God when everything in us wants to do something else. God rewards those who love Him and are most faithful to Him. And His rewards are the **kind that last** and the **kind that matter most**.

OK

Now we go into the Seventy Weeks of Daniel.

24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

We are told right off the bat what will be accomplished during the seventy weeks. Actually the wording is seventy sevens.

As I was studying I was going to say that most scholars agree on one thing. These are **weeks of years**. Then I stumbled on one that did not. He mentioned the fact that Jesus said we are to forgive 70 times 7. No one takes that literally. So why would we take this literally? This scholar believes our text should be understood the same way we understand Jesus's command to forgive. It stretches way out there.

But most scholars do believe the 70 7's are a reference to literal years.

So let's assume we are talking about 70x7 years or 490 total years.

This passage regards the **Holy City Jerusalem** and the **Holy people**.

It regards a **finish of the transgressions**

It will put an **end to sin**

It will atone for **iniquity**

It will bring in everlasting **righteousness**

It will seal both vision and **prophet**

And it will anoint the **most holy place**.

Think of all these things as check points on a list. However we assign these references in the weeks to past or future events, it must include them all.

Naturally, how these phrases get interpreted decides how we apply the weeks.

So they are a pivotal point in the understanding of our prophecy.

Any interpretation we make has to include all these things.

25 Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks.

OK so the first thing we start with is **49 years** after the **Jews return to Jerusalem**.

Now what exactly is this talking about? Again, no one is absolutely sure but a whole lot of people are very dogmatic, none the less.

We should understand that from the going out of the word,(which naturally there are several theories about what that means), to the restoration of Jerusalem, there will be 49 years. Basically that fits in with a general restoration of the city of Jerusalem, no matter how it is calculated. There are a whole bunch of theories as to when the beginning and the end is. I like 407 BC as I will show you in a moment. About 49 year later the walls were up and the temple restored. We move to the next passage.

Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

Now we calculate 49 years plus 62 times 7 which is 434 years. That amounts to 483 years. This is the amount of time from the beginning of the restoration of

Israel to the second restoration of Israel. Most scholars agree that this is the time between the call to build the city during Artaxerxes's reign and the second temple being built leading to the arrival of Christ on the earth. I particularly like James Montgomery Boyce's calculations.

Artaxerxes made a decree in 407 BC for the temple to be rebuilt. We read about that in Ezra. 434 years later would be AD 27. That is when a lot of people believe Christ began his ministry.

26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

OK. This is where it gets tricky, that is if we don't think it was tricky already. Most scholars think that the anointed one is Christ. He showed up after the 62 weeks. And He was cut off.

Some think that the anointed one may not be Christ but actually be an enemy of the people, a bad guy.

Then the Roman prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary. There will be desolations. This was all true. When Rome under Titus took the city, they desolated it. Many scholars agree that this is what Daniel was talking about. Futurist have a tendency to place all of the 7 weeks in the future.

But now this is where most of the problems are.

27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

OK, the million dollar question is, who is the He in verse 27?

Before I go on I want to lay out what I have been dealing with. I am trying to get your sympathy here. Here are 5 commentators and their views.

Seven Weeks- 49 years

James Hamilton- From Daniel's revelation to the end of Malachi's ministry

Iain Duguid- Just like no one takes the number of times that Jesus told the apostles to forgive as literal (70x7), so we should not take these numbers as prophetic. Essentially he says it will take a long period to change people's hearts.

Frank Gaebelin- He thinks that the 7 weeks involves Israel rebuilding the temple the first time.

James Montgomery Boyce- He believes the 70 years starts at the decree issued by Artaxerxes as recorded in Ezra 7:12-26. This would have been in 457 BC.

Allister Begg- From Daniel's revelation to the end of Malachi's ministry

Sixty two weeks- 433 years

James Hamilton- A period of time with a lack of prophetic guidance

Iain Duguid- Slow progress in sanctification. Then the Messiah is cut off.

Frank Gaebelin- This is the period from the temple being built to the Messiah coming. Then Jerusalem will be sacked afterward.

James Montgomery Boyce- He believes that AD 27 would be 433 years after the decree of Artaxerxes and he believes that would be exactly when Christ would have begun His ministry. After this Christ's atonement is completed.

Allister Begg- From a Decree until the arrival of Christ

First half of the last week 3 ½ years

James Hamilton- The 4th kingdom in Daniel 7 is actually the wicked world system (not given an actual name by Daniel in chapter 8) The little horn will have a reign of terror. So he believes that it already happened.

Iain Duguid- Slow progress in sanctification. There will be lots of trials. This is leading to the end of time.

Frank Gaebelin- He believes this is a future time in the 7 years prior to Christ returning in the future. The first 3 and ½ will be peaceful

James Montgomery Boyce- He sees a break in the prophecy here that jumps into the future into the last 7 years before Christ returns. This is where massive evangelism happens.

Allister Begg- He believes this is the 3 ½ years of Christ's ministry. So it is in the past.

Second half of the last week 3 ½ years

James Hamilton- a blessing will be pronounced on the one who keeps the faith through the time when the Antichrist will do his worst.

Iain Duguid- The culmination of Christ's plan

Frank Gaebelin- He believes this is a future time in the 7 years prior to Christ returning in the future. The last 3 ½ will involve worship being prohibited.

James Montgomery Boyce- Now a severe persecution happens to the Jewish nation.

Allister Begg- He believes this is when Paul began his ministry to the gentiles. So it is in the past.

The best I can figure, agreement is greatest regarding the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks. The biggest break is the last week that is divided in two 3 ½ year periods. Futurists, naturally, believe all these events in the last week will happen in the future immediately prior to the return of Christ. The first 3 ½ will be under the reign of the AntiChrist where he is gaining the world's support and initiating peace all over the world. The last 3 ½ years is when hell breaks loose, literally, on all believers with a horrible persecution. Most of the futurists believe Christ will return after the end of this period and this will usher in the Millennial kingdom where Christ will reign for a literal thousand years in a world consisting of believers and unbelievers, where Satan is chained and sin will be kept under check. There will be a literal temple rebuilt at some point prior to the Millennial reign.

Those who lean to a Historicist approach where prophesy is continually being fulfilled take a different slant. It is good to keep in mind that the Historicist approach is the oldest approach to applying scriptures. I think it was not until the 1600's that other views arose. Historicists try to match various events described in prophesy to various periods of history. Historicists may place the last week in the past or in the future. Or they may break it in half with the first 3 ½ years already completed and the last 3 ½ years to come right before Christ returns.

Our Idealist brothers usually say that the weeks are all symbolic. The numbers have meaning but we do not need to try to fit them into a specific history. 3 ½ is unfinished. 7 is finished and complete. 7 is a Sabbath. A week of Sabbaths is symbolic. Etc. You get the point.

Let's jump back to that list in verse 24.

24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

Let's relook at the list of things that need to happen.

First- This passage regards the Holy City Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

We know that 7 weeks and 62 weeks are most likely about the Jewish people and Jerusalem up to the time of Christ. So that is covered in most of the view. I think I can prove even in Romans that Christ will bring many Jews back into the fold in

the later days. So this could mean that the whole passage from beginning to end is referring to either just Jews **or** God's **holy people** Jew and Gentile after Christ. **It regards a finish of the transgressions** – That might mean the eternity after the final judgment, but most believe it refers to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

It will put an end to sin – again it could be either of the above.

It will atone for iniquity- most everyone agrees that this is about Christ's work. Although some say atonement can also be done for someone paying the penalty for their own sin by receiving the just penalty.

It will bring in everlasting righteousness- again either in eternity or to the finished work of Christ.

It will seal both vision and prophet- Some say this is when the Canon of scripture is closed. It could be when the work of Christ is completed. There have been no prophets writing scripture since the time of Christ. When the last person who knew Christ died, no one else has written scripture since then. Except for Paul and his case was unusual and remarked as such.

To anoint a Holy Place- Evidently this doesn't really need to be translated as Place. It could be to anoint someone to a position. This could mean Christ was appointed as Prophet and Priest and King. This passage does not really require a physical temple.

I have already spent a great deal of time on this sermon and feel I have little to show for it.

Wally Weeks and I were discussing our approach to prophesy this week. It was refreshing to speak to him. We are agreed that we become even more **unsure**, the more we study. Every position is based on **valid reasons**. They are all held by **solid scholars**. All are trying to understand scripture based on its context. Wally and I both conclude that understanding everything right now must not be a core issue in our faith. Our pursuit of understanding end times prophesy fits into the Romans 14 arena where we have differences in what we believe, but we continue to love one another who believe differently than we do. Wally and I both believe that as we come closer to Christ's second return, things will become more clear and prophesy will hold a more crucial role in our Christian lives. It is important that we continue to read it, and we cannot allow our frustration in understanding it to keep us from knowing it.

At this point I believe that the whole list of things needing accomplished in Daniel 9 is about Christ.

This is the list:

This passage regards the **Holy City Jerusalem** and the **Holy people**.

It regards a **finish of the transgressions**

It will put an **end to sin**

It will atone for **iniquity**

It will bring in everlasting **righteousness**

It will seal both vision and **prophet**

And it will anoint the **most holy place**.

I think it is describing the things that Christ's life, death and resurrection fulfilled. If that is true, all these weeks are intended as a **show case** to glorify what Christ **intended to do** and **accomplished** through the process of time from where Daniel stood to either shortly after Christ's death, or until the end of time and the judgment. If it is to display the work of Christ from **Daniel's time** until the **end of time**, then the futurists might be barking up the right tree. If it is only to display Christ's work until **after His resurrection**, then the historicists and idealists may be right.

If I were to study this passage all over again, I would **begin** the study with the assumption that the list is about **Christ's completed work** and see how it shakes out best from that perspective.

This much I am sure of. We must expect that Christ came to perform the things mentioned in the list we just went over. We do very well not to expect that He came to do anything to improve our life situations on this earth. Those who try to appeal to Jesus because **He will improve your life situation** are preaching a false message. We do not know what our life situations will be like. But we can know that over history, and over all the world, there will be great turmoil. There will be political upheavals. The church will be singled out for the world's hatred. Not everywhere. Not all the time. But we absolutely KNOW this is the plan for human history.

So when Christ tells us to **set our minds on things in heaven**, not the things on the earth, this is not sentimental positive thinking. This is **survival mode** on planet earth. And when we set our minds on things above, what comes to the forefront? Our **wonderful Savior** saved us from our lost condition. He put an end to the **consequences of our transgressions** and **the power of sin** over us. He did it by **at-one-ment**. He made us **one with God** by removing our sin. This He did, not by ignoring it, but by taking the full penalty for it upon Himself. And what we have in store for us is **everlasting righteousness**. We will live forever **with Christ** and **without sin**. Praise Jesus. That work is **sealed**, both in a **completed**

scriptural canon and a heart that is **sealed with the Holy Spirit**. And now we are to seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. He has already been crowned King. He **has** His throne.

Daniels vision accounted for 70 weeks of years. History has shown us thousands of years and they are all telling us the same thing. Daniel's vision was correct. Life is happening just like Daniel described in whatever years it was that he was describing. It all proves that we can trust our God in the greatest of upheavals because none of the things that Christ accomplished will be **undone**. Everything prescribed **has happened** or **will happen** just as He says. Maybe there will be a literal temple rebuilt. Maybe not. Maybe there will be a thousand year reign. Maybe not. But God will bring together His holy people under Christ just as Ephesians tells us, one people under Christ with no preference. There will be a huge influx of Jewish believers in the end. And the crowd that will cheer when Christ appears will be made up of people from every people group in the world. That is what we **can count on**. That is what we **should** rely upon. And that is where our heads and hearts should be directed. Glory be to Christ.