

Daniel 9 “But Take Heart, I Have Overcome the World!” (Part 2) March 4, 2018

In this world you will have troubles,
but take heart, I have overcome the world!

You will have troubles.
You will be exiles in a foreign land.
You will face hostile enemies who want to destroy you.

Indeed, our Lord Jesus himself expounds on Daniel 9 in Mark 13.
Look over at Mark 13, and listen to what Jesus says to you!

Read Mark 13:1-27

You will be hated by all for my name’s sake.
But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Dale Ralph Davis says of our passage in Daniel 9:
“You are called to a long obedience;
your people will be sustained even in distressing times;
and the great hater of God’s people sits in the Lord’s cross-hairs
with the date of his demise clearly marked on God’s calendar.” (Davis, 138)

All you need to do is “endure to the end.”

In Daniel 9 we hear God’s promise that the day is coming
that will put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness,
to seal both vision and prophet,
and to anoint a most holy place.

I suggested last week that all of this shows us that a Day of Atonement is coming.
In Daniel 8 we saw Daniel’s vision of the ram and the male goat.
The ram was the Persian empire.
The goat was the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great.
Leviticus 16 is the only other passage in scripture that talks about a ram and a male goat.
Except Leviticus 16 talks about *two* male goats.
Where is the other goat?

Leviticus 16 says that Aaron shall offer the ram as a burnt offering for the people.
Then he shall take one of the male goats as a sin offering,
and the other one shall be “presented alive before the LORD
to make atonement over it,
that it may be sent away into the wilderness as a scapegoat.”
And Daniel 9 says that at the end of the 70 weeks, atonement will be made.

Jesus is the other male goat.

The end of chapter 9 explains the unfinished vision of chapter 8.

1. The Word of the LORD to Jeremiah – the 70 Years (v1-2)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

The first year of Darius coincides with the first year of Cyrus –
so Darius the son of Ahasuerus would appear to be Cyrus.

During Daniel's early years in Babylon,
the prophet Jeremiah sent at least two letters to the exiles
(one in the time of Jeconiah – Jer 29 –
and the other in the time of Zedekiah – Jer 51).

And now Daniel recognizes that the time is drawing near
when Jerusalem will be restored!

Perhaps we are so used to the heavenly Jerusalem
that we forget how important the earthly Jerusalem was to God's people!
After all – this was the city where God made his name to dwell on earth!
When Solomon dedicated the temple,
he had asked God to hear the prayers made *in that place* –
and the prayers made *toward* that place.
Indeed, in Daniel 6, we hear that Daniel prayed *toward Jerusalem*.

And we see, here in Daniel 9, how important Jerusalem was
as the place where earth and heaven met!

2. Daniel's Prayer as a Pattern for Us (v3-19)

a. Fasting, Sackcloth and Ashes – Seeking the Lord Includes the Body (v3)

³ *Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*

We saw last time the importance of seeking the Lord both body and soul –
seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.
Prayer is joined together with fasting in order to include both body and soul.

And then we heard Daniel's prayer –
a prayer that confessed God's greatness (v4)
a prayer that confessed *our sin* – and even the sins of our fathers (v5-10),
because we are implicated in their guilt –
and we suffer because of it!

b. Who Is God? We Confess God's Greatness (v4)

⁴ *I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome*

God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

c. Who Are We? We Confess Our Sins (v5-10)

⁵ *we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.* ⁶ *We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.* ⁷ *To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.* ⁸ *To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.*

We saw that Daniel was only a boy when he was exiled.

He didn't participate in the decision-making of the community.

But he *did* participate in the *shame* – the *open shame* – of the community.

⁹ *To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him* ¹⁰ *and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.*

Verse 9 shows us that our only hope is the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord our God.

Verse 7 had highlighted the righteousness of God.

God is just – but he is also merciful and forgiving –

to those who repent – to those who turn away from their sins!

And so in verses 11-15,

Daniel recounted what has happened.

He confesses the righteous judgment of God in the case of Israel:

d. What Has Happened? We Confess the Righteousness of God's Judgment (v11-15)

¹¹ *All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.* ¹² *He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, [a] by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.* ¹³ *As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.*

Daniel says that even in the midst of the exile,

Israel has not turned from their iniquities and gained insight by listening to God's truth.

And so Daniel concludes this review of Israel's history:

¹⁴ *Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our*

God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. ¹⁵ And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

God is righteous.

In all the works that he has done.

That doesn't mean that the Babylonians were righteous!

The Babylonians were *cruel* –

the siege and destruction of Jerusalem were horrific and barbaric.

Daniel is *not* saying that wicked people are justified in doing horrific things!

Rather, Daniel is saying that *God is righteous* in his judgments.

The wages of sin is death.

There is much innocent suffering in this world –

but all of that innocent suffering has come about *because of sin*.

If the innocent cannot suffer for the guilt of others,

then Jesus could not die for *our* sins.

And if God cannot declare Jesus guilty in our place –

then neither can he declare *us* innocent in him!

Indeed this is at the very heart of the conclusion of Daniel's prayer in verses 16-19:

e. What Next? We Beg God for Mercy (v16-19)

¹⁶ *“O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. ¹⁷ Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord,^[b] make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.*

Again, notice the centrality of Jerusalem –

“your city” “your holy hill” “your sanctuary, which is desolate”

If God acts on the basis of Jerusalem's actions,

then God's anger will burn forever.

Therefore, Daniel pleads with God to act *for your own sake*.

Why should God act?

Why should God save Jerusalem and restore her?

Because the LORD had spoken through the mouth of his servant, Jeremiah the prophet.

The LORD had *said* that Jerusalem would lie in ruins for 70 years –

but then the temple would be rebuilt.

And so Daniel prays that God would do what he had promised!

“Make your face to shine upon your sanctuary.”

In other words, all of this prayer is oriented toward asking God to do exactly what God had already said that he would do!

And notice the emphasis here at the end of Daniel's prayer on God:

*¹⁸ O my God, incline **your** ear and hear. Open **your** eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by **your** name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of **your** great mercy. ¹⁹ O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for **your** own sake, O my God, because **your** city and **your** people are called by **your** name."*

If you look at *us*, there is no reason for God to act.

Righteousness does not belong to *us*.

Righteousness belongs to the LORD.

The reason for God to act is *your* great mercy – *your* own sake – *your* name.

In Daniel's day, that was as far as they could understand it.

Only in the coming of our Lord Jesus would it become clear *how* God would do this.

Indeed, that is the *point* of Gabriel's answer in the second half of the chapter –

3. God's Answer through Gabriel – the 70 Weeks (v20-27)

a. "At the Time of the Evening Sacrifice" (v20-23)

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.

The first thing to note is that Gabriel comes "at the time of the evening sacrifice."

It has been 50 years since an evening sacrifice had been offered in Jerusalem!

It had been nearly 70 years since Daniel had been in Jerusalem...

but he still counts time based on the liturgical calendar of Israel.

It is time for the evening sacrifice!

And at that time, the man Gabriel came to Daniel in swift flight.

And the theme of these verses is the importance of *understanding*.

Verse 22 – "He made me *understand*..."

"I have now come out to give you insight and *understanding*..."

Verse 23 – "Therefore consider the word and *understand* the vision."

What vision?

There is no vision in chapter 9!

But verse 21 referred to "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first" –

namely, the vision of chapter 8!

The vision of chapter 8 had remained confused in Daniel's mind.

All he could understand was that the ram was Persia, the goat was Greece –
but if there was supposed to be some sort of Day of Atonement –
then there must be a second goat!

And Gabriel tells him that the word has gone out
“for you are greatly loved.”

God sends his word to his servants whom he loves!
And while I am a far feebler messenger than Gabriel –
I have been charged to give *you* the same message!

To you who have pled with God for mercy –
I have come to tell *you* the message – “for you are greatly loved”!

Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

Notice how the voice shifts.

Gabriel has come to *give* insight and understanding –
and yet Daniel must now *consider* and *understand*.

It is not enough to sit and listen to the preaching.

You must be *active* in considering and understanding the message that is preached!

Jeremiah had said that it would be 70 years of Exile –
70 years until the rebuilding of the temple.
And he was right.
But there is more:

b. Seventy Weeks Until Atonement, Righteousness, and Anointing (v24)

²⁴ “Seventy weeks^[e] 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.^[d]”

It's not just 70 years.

It's 70 sevens – 70 weeks.

Does that mean 490 years?

Or does it just mean *a really long time*.

The most important thing is to remember that Daniel was expecting 70 years.

In other words, maybe – just maybe – I will live to see the rebuilt temple!

Maybe I will live to see the restoration of the Kingdom of God!!

But now Gabriel dashes all those hopes.

Yes, the temple will be rebuilt –

but the kingdom will *not* be restored and fulfilled –

not yet.
Not for 70 sevens.

And notice what is promised:

to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity –
the first three things all focus negatively on dealing with sin;
to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet,
and to anoint a most holy place –
the second three things all focus positively on the coming of the Kingdom.

But all six of these things have a definitive aspect about them.

Transgression will be finished.
Sin will be ended.
Iniquity will be atoned for.

God will do something *definitively* to deal with sin forever.

And thus,

Everlasting righteousness will be brought in.

Vision and prophet will be sealed.

This is the most difficult line –

and there are two different possibilities here:

One is that after the 70 sevens, there will be no more visions –
no more prophets;

vision and prophet will be sealed.

(Hebrews 1:1 would tend toward this view –

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways,
God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”)

The other is that the seal *authenticates* the visions and prophets –
thus when these things come to pass,
everyone will see that Daniel is a true prophet.

And a most holy place will be anointed.

Yes, the temple will be rebuilt in the 6th century B.C.

But when the most holy place was anointed,

the glory of the LORD did *not* fill the most holy place!

In Moses’ day, the glory of the LORD had filled tabernacle when it was anointed.

In Solomon’s day, the glory of the LORD had filled the temple.

But when Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple,
there was no glory.

The second temple was *not* the most holy place that we needed!

We needed a better temple – a temple not made with hands!

We needed a better city – a city with foundations that would endure!

There have been lots of efforts to make the 70 sevens equal 490 years.

But they all require considerable “interpretive gerrymandering”
(as one commentator put it).

In your outline, I’ve given you the various parts of the message:
there is the first seven weeks until the coming of a prince,
then 62 weeks of “troubled time” –
then comes the last week – which itself is divided in half.

The purpose of the 70 sevens is not to create a puzzle for you to solve –
but to show you a picture that you can consider and understand!

c. Seven Weeks – From the Decree to Build to the Coming of the Prince (v25a)

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.*

The first period (verse 25a) consists of seven weeks –
from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem
until the coming of an anointed one – a prince.

What is the “going out of the word”?

Most take this as the decree of Cyrus –

but then you cannot find an anointed one 50 years later.

Others prefer using the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7 to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem –
but you also have the same problem – there is no prince 50 years later!

So perhaps we should look more carefully in *our text* – Daniel chapter 9 – for this word!

After all, Gabriel has already spoken of a word that went out (v22).

This appears to be Gabriel’s way of talking about a word from the LORD!

What prompted Daniel’s prayer?

The word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet regarding the desolations of Jerusalem.

And in this case, there *is* an anointed one who comes around 50 years later!

After all, Daniel is praying about *55 to 58 years* after Jeremiah’s letter.

We are in the 1st year of Cyrus/Darius – 538 B.C.

Later this year, Cyrus will issue the decree to rebuild the temple.

And if anyone objects to calling Cyrus “an anointed one” –

well, in Isaiah 45, the LORD calls Cyrus “my anointed one.”

So the first *seven weeks* takes us from the Word of the LORD to Jeremiah
to the Lord’s anointed, Cyrus.

It’s not exactly 49 years – but it’s the right ballpark!

In other words, Daniel, the time has come for your people to return!

*But, Gabriel says, don't think for a moment
that this prince is the one who brings everlasting righteousness!*

Yes, it will be wonderful to have a restored city and temple!
But you will also have suffering and trial.

After all, the 62 weeks – the lengthy period of time –
portrays a Jerusalem that is rebuilt:

d. Sixty-Two Weeks – the “Troubled Time” of Jerusalem (v25b)

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

Sixty-two times 7 is 434.
434 years after Cyrus brings you to 104 B.C.

And nothing happened in 104 B.C.!

Everyone has trouble with the 62 weeks.
Oh, sure, you can do some interpretive gerrymandering
using lunar and solar calendars to make creative leaps!

But just as we saw with the seven weeks,
the point is not precise dating –
the point is that there will be a *long time* where Jerusalem will be rebuilt –
but in a troubled time.
There will be a temple – there will be a wall –
there will be squares and a moat
(the word translated “moat” refers to “water channels” –
which, in the case of Jerusalem,
refers to the water tunnels of Hezekiah –
which brought water into the city).

But in a troubled time.
From the time of Cyrus until the time of Alexander the Great,
Judah was under Persian rule for 200 years.
Then after the Macedonian empire divided,
Judah was under Ptolemaic rule from Egypt for over a century.
Then the Seleucids took over for another couple generations –
before the Maccabees were able to gain a precarious independence
for a little while –
until the Romans conquered them.

In other words, there will be a long time – hundreds of years –
until the coming of the end.
And this will be known as a “troubled time” –
a time of troubles.

But then comes the final week!
And that will be even worse!

e. The Last Week – It’ll Be Ugly, But God Wins!! (v26-27)

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^[f] 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,^[g] 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.”

The final week is the climactic period of God’s dealings with his people.
An anointed one (a Messiah) shall be cut off and shall have nothing.
Then the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Those who want to focus the book of Daniel on the Maccabean period
have trouble identifying the “anointed one” of verse 26.
And for that matter, Antiochus Epiphanes did *not* destroy the city *or* the sanctuary!

Instead, we ought to see the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus as the cutting off of the anointed one.
And “the people of the prince who is to come”
refers to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Because in chapter 8, we only heard about the Persians and the Macedonians.
We did not hear about the fourth kingdom – “the people of the prince who is to come.”

After all, remember what we saw in chapters 2 and 7?
In chapter 2 we saw that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was of a *single image* –
that all that kingdoms of the earth participate in a single dominion.
In chapter 7 we saw that the fourth beast – the fourth kingdom –
“shall be different from all the kingdoms.”

What Gabriel is showing us
is that the kingdoms of this age all participate in the kingdom of the 4th beast.
And with the coming of the Anointed One – with the coming of our Lord Jesus –
we see the climactic coming of the Kingdom of God!

And therefore, there shall be war.

*Its^[f] 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,^[g] 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.”*

The “he” of verse 27 appears to be the “prince who is to come” –
the one who opposes the Messiah.

After all, when it says that he shall “make a strong covenant”
the imagery is of someone *imposing* a covenant –
like when a powerful nation *imposes* a treaty on a weaker nation.

And what is more, for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering.
He will seek to obliterate the true worship of God –
and instead “on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate.”

“Abominations” is a term used for idolatrous worship.

“A final ruler then exalts himself, imposes his authority,
forbids true worship, instigates idolatrous worship –
and runs into the meat-grinder of God’s decree.
Predetermined. On target. Certain.” (Davis, 138)

You can take heart – because Jesus has overcome the world!

Remember what Gabriel said was the purpose of the 70 weeks:

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.

All of this has been accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ!

The transgression is finished –
as Paul says, the Law (of Moses) was added because of transgressions,
until the offspring should come to whom the promises were made –
namely the coming of Christ (Gal 3).

And Jesus has now put an end to sin and atoned for iniquity,
thus bringing in everlasting righteousness!

His sacrifice has dealt once for all with sin –
“and by that will we have been sanctified
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10)

And he has anointed a most holy place –
as Hebrews 9 says, he has consecrated a new holy of holies – a heavenly holy of holies –
through his once for all sacrifice.

Therefore, he is able to save to the uttermost those who trust in him!