

“Daniel’s Seventy Weeks”
Daniel 9
(Preached at Trinity, September 21, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 9** begins with prayer. Daniel was not only a man of prayer, he was also a student of God’s Word and he was familiar with the Word of the Lord spoken to Jeremiah the prophet. In Jeremiah 25 we find Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding the duration of God’s judgment upon Israel.
Jeremiah 25:11-12 NAU - "This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² 'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation."
2. Babylon’s assault upon Jerusalem took place in three phases which involved three deportations. The first occurred in 606 B.C. Daniel was carried away during this first deportation. The second deportation took place in 597 which included Ezekiel. The final fall of Jerusalem took place in 586 B.C.
 - A. This means if you date the first year of Darius from the fall of Jerusalem it would have been only 48 years.
 - B. But if you date it from the first deportation when Daniel was carried off into Babylon it has been 67 years. This means from this point there was only three years to go.
3. Knowing God’s promises Daniel commits himself to prayer.
 - A. The beautiful thing about the life of Daniel was his single-minded commitment to God. His entire life had been focused upon God. We shouldn’t miss the significance of **Verse 21**. Daniel marked his day according to the rituals offered in the temple - " 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."
 - B. The reality was there hadn’t been an offering in the temple for almost 70 years and yet Daniel’s mind was still drawn to it. He had a spiritual mind focused upon the things of God. We must not miss the importance of this in our own lives.
4. God hears his prayer and sends Gabriel with the answer – **Verses 20-23**
 - A. The wonderful thing is Daniel’s continued teaching on the nature of prayer. God assures Daniel that He hears and answers prayer.
Daniel 9:21 NAU - " 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."
Daniel 9:23 NAU - "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come"

- B. There is a play on words in **Verse 21** – the word translated “extreme weariness” can also be translated “swift in flight” which is how the ESV, KJV, NIV translate it. Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly to Daniel while Daniel was in his weariness in prayer.
- C. The point is our prayers are heard by God immediately even when the answer seems delayed. It shines forth God’s promise in Isaiah 65.
Isaiah 65:24 NAS - "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."
- D. One other point is the way Daniel appeared to God – expressed differently by the different translations.
Daniel 9:23 NAU - "for you are highly esteemed"
Daniel 9:23 ESV - "for you are greatly loved"
Daniel 9:23 CSB - "you are treasured by God"
- E. Daniel had an unwavering heart for God and God loved Daniel
John 14:21 NAU - "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."
John 14:23 NAU - "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."
5. The words that Daniel received have been disputed for hundreds of years but mostly for the last 200 years with the advent of Dispensationalism. For the Dispensationalist Daniel 9 is a major point of reference for the seven year tribulation.
6. It is a difficult passage, to say the least. We have no explanation or reference of it in the New Testament. For this reason, we must be careful with our interpretation or the weight given to it. If our understanding of this passage was of great importance we would be given clearer exposition of it in the apostolic writings.
 I believe many today have placed too much weight upon this passage. For example, James Montgomery Boice wrote: “The revelation God gave Daniel is what I refer to as a “backbone” prophecy, that is, a prophecy that provides a time framework to which most other prophecies can be attached.”
7. Daniel is told of 70 weeks - "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city"
8. These 70 weeks are actually referring to 70 weeks of years or 490 years. The word for “week” is the word for “seven.” It is seventy sevens.
 The 70 weeks are further divided into 3 subgroups:
 - Seven groups of years or 49 years
 - 62 groups of years or 433 years
 - A final week or seven years
9. Daniels focus had been on the 70 years God promised for the punishment of Israel. At the end of the 70 years Israel was to be released from their captivity.
 In **Verse 2** we find this is what drove him to bow his knees in prayer to God. In answer God sends Gabriel to inform Daniel that instead of looking to the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah God gives him the fullness – seventy times seven. The events of these 70 years would culminate in a much greater release from a much greater captivity.

10. **Verse 24** tells us six things will be accomplished by the end of this period of time
 1. Transgression will be finished
 2. Sin will be brought to an end
 3. Atonement will be accomplished for iniquity
 4. Everlasting righteousness will be established
 5. Vision and prophecy will be sealed up
 6. The Most Holy will be anointed
11. We can easily see these things accomplished through the work of Christ. But first, how are we to understand the meaning of the 49 years, the 433 years, and the final week.

I. Numbering the weeks

- A. The first thing we need to remember once again is this is apocalyptic language
 1. Apocalyptic language is highly symbolic and is meant to be read with an eye to the symbolism. The Hebrew here literally refers to 70 sevens. Seven is a number that refers to fullness or completion.
 2. I don't think these numbers are meant to be added up on a calculator. I think the whole point is to look at the fullness of time.
 - a. As Daniel is waiting and praying for the end of the 70 year captivity of Israel Gabriel comes forth to tell him of the fullness of time and the end of a much greater captivity.
 - b. We've seen this 70 times 7 symbol used before. We are to forgive our brother to the fullness
Matthew 18:21-22 NAU - " Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."
 3. Here we have the fullness of the 70 divided into three portions.
 - a. The focus on the 69 weeks is upon two periods of time – a shorter period and a longer period.
 - b. This is followed by final week – the 70th week, another shorter period.
- B. **Verse 25** – Gabriel explains the first 69 weeks (7 weeks and 62 weeks)
 1. Gabriel marks these 69 weeks as the period between the issuing of the decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah
Daniel 9:25 NAU - "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince"
 2. There have been almost endless efforts to make the 69 weeks of years or 483 years fit literally. You can't make the decree of Cyrus work and the decrees of Artaxerxes also demand a stretch to work well.
 3. Again, we miss the point if we become bogged down in crunching numbers. This decree is presumably pointing to the decree of Cyrus.
 - a. During the shorter period of seven weeks or 49 years Daniel is encouraged that Jerusalem will be rebuilt even if through great trial.
Daniel 9:25 NAU - " it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

- b. The Book of Nehemiah bears this out.
Nehemiah 4:17-18 NAU - " Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took *their* load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. ¹⁸ As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built"
4. This shorter period will be followed by a longer period that will usher in the Messiah.
Galatians 4:4 NAU - "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law"
- C. Daniel is told of 69 weeks but there is a final week – the 70th week
1. Again, many opinions are given for the identification of this week
 2. Dispensationalists suspend the counting of the years and move this final week to the end of the age after the church has been removed and the Jewish nation experiences the seven year period of persecution known as the Great Tribulation.
 This is an arbitrary assumption. There is no gap between the first group of sevens and the second. It seems unusual to have a great lengthy gap between the second and the third.
 3. I think there is a more reasonable interpretation as we understand the meaning of Gabriel's message to Daniel.
 - a. Daniel is told of a brief period, the period between the decree of Cyrus and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The actual length of the period between the decree and the completion of the Temple was 21 years.
 - b. Then Daniel is told of a longer period until the Messiah would come. From the rebuilding of the Temple until the birth of Christ was 516 years.
 4. And then we have the final week—another shorter period.
 I think this is the 70 year period between the birth of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - a. Daniel is told of the violent death of the Messiah during this period.
Daniel 9:26 NAU - "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing"
 This language is used by Isaiah:
Isaiah 53:8 NAU - "By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?"
 - b. Then Daniel is told of the destruction of Jerusalem at the end of the period.
Daniel 9:26 NAU - "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."
 - c. **Verse 27** is also speaking of this final week

5. In **Verses 24-27** Daniel is told of a progressive unfolding of the future
Verse 24 covers the entire period of 70 weeks of years.
Verse 25 divides the first 69 weeks
Verse 26 describes the final week in general terms
Verse 27 describes the final week in greater detail
 - a. The first half of **Verse 27** refers to Christ. In the middle of the week Christ died for His people and He brought all sacrifice to an end. The Old Covenant prevails until He dies and then it ends.
 - b. The second half of **Verse 27** refers to the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Titus. Jerusalem would become desolate.
Matthew 23:37-38 NAU - "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"
6. Too much attention has been given to marking the weeks and years and they miss the glory of the Messiah.

II. Jesus Christ has come to fulfill this prophecy – **Verse 24**

1. Transgression will be finished
2. Sin will be brought to an end
3. Atonement will be accomplished for iniquity
4. Everlasting righteousness will be established
5. Vision and prophecy will be sealed up
6. The Most Holy will be anointed
- A. Jesus came to put an end to sin
 1. Jesus has brought an end to our condemnation through His atoning sacrifice.
 2. Through Christ we have died to sin and raised unto righteousness
Romans 6:5-7 NAU - " For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin."
- B. Jesus also came to "seal up the vision and prophecy."
 1. Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the Old Covenant promises. The shadow has now shined forth in brilliance.
 2. Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation to man
Hebrews 1:1-2 NAU - "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

- C. In Christ the Most Holy place has been anointed
1. The Most Holy Place refers to the holy of holies. Jesus is the ultimate expression of the Holy Place. The Holy Place in the Old Covenant was the dwelling place of God. It was the place the high priest entered once a year to offering up an atoning sacrifice.
 2. When Jesus died the veil barring entrance to the Holy Place was torn. Jesus offered up Himself fulfilling all that the holy of holies represented.
 3. Jesus Christ is the Anointed One, exalted and holy.
John 17:19 NAU - "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."

Conclusion:

1. Gabriel is telling Daniel that the captivity of Israel could not ultimately come to an end by the decree of an earthly king. The sin of Israel could only be removed through the coming Savior who would be cut off, but by this He would put to an end all sacrifice.
2. The ritual of Judaism has forever ended.
 Daniel longed to see the temple restored. He desired it more than anything else. Gabriel is telling him that God's ultimate purpose would come through a temple not made with hands. The city of Jerusalem and the temple would come to an end but God has raised up a greater temple.
John 2:19 NAU - "Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
3. I believe Daniel was now able to look upon his previous vision with even greater appreciation.
Daniel 7:13-14 NAU - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed."
4. And now Daniel could appreciate even more God's particular care of him.
Daniel 9:23 NAU - "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell *you, for you are highly esteemed*"
5. God loved us enough to send forth His anointed that sin would be forever destroyed. The focus of the entirety of these 70 sevens must be fixed upon Christ.
 E.J. Young – "The passage is Messianic through and through. Well will it be for us, if we too, in our study of this supremely important prophecy, place our emphasis, not upon dates and mathematical calculations, but upon that central Figure who was both anointed and a prince, who being cut off has made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in the only righteousness that is acceptable with God, even His eternal righteousness."