

Freedom from the Darkness (Part 2) Daniel 9:20-27

Introduction

One theologian said of Daniel 9:24-27, “The prophetic message Gabriel brought from the throne of God to Daniel is perhaps the most important not only in the Book of Daniel, but in the whole Bible.”¹ Commentators have said that Daniel 9:24-27 is “...the ‘key’ to prophetic interpretation. Others have called it the ‘backbone’ of prophecy.”² Yet, Daniel 9:24-27 is, in my opinion, one of the most difficult passages to deal with in the Bible. The early church father Jerome, wrote of the meaning of Daniel 9:24-27, “Because it is unsafe to pass judgment on the opinions of the great teachers of the church and to set one above the another, I shall simply repeat the view of each and leave it to the reader’s judgment as to whose explanation ought to be followed.”³ Jerome listed 9 different views, I am only going to share with you the main 4 that exist today.

The Four Major Views of Daniel 9:24-27

Daniel Akin, in his commentary on Daniel, offers the best summary of each of the four views I have seen:

View 1. The seventy weeks are literal years that run from either 605 or 586 BC to the reign of Antiochus (Epiphanes) in 167-164 BC.... This is a view usually advocated by more liberal scholars. This is called the *Critical Scholarship View*.

View 2. The seventy weeks are symbolic periods of time that begins with the reign of the Persian King, Cyrus, to Jesus as the King of kings. At the end of the 69 weeks, Jesus was born then cut off when he was crucified. The destruction of the of the city and Temple happened in 70 AD, which mark the end of the seventieth week. This is called the *Historical Messianic View*.

View 3. Like the *Historical Messianic View*, this view understands the seventy weeks to start with Cyrus and culminate to the life of Jesus, but the only difference is that the seventieth weeks also includes the second coming of Christ and the defeat of both the Antichrist and Satan. This is called the *Symbolic View*.

View 4. The last major view, which is one I used to hold to, understand the 490 years to be literal years with a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. That gap represents the age of Christ’s Church and the final week in Daniel’s prophesy is still yet in the future and will last seven years that will involve the antichrist and his destruction with the second coming of Christ. This is called the *Dispensational or Future Fulfilment View*.

¹ J. M. Boice (2003). [Daniel: an expositional commentary](#) (p. 96). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

² *Ibid.*

³ Iain M. Duguid. *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing; 2008), p. 162.

The *Future Fulfilment View* interprets the seventieth week as not only future, but the prince is not the Messiah, but the antichrist who will not only destroy the “city and sanctuary” but will make a covenant with Israel that he will break three and a half years later. According to those who hold to the *Future fulfilment View*, the prince will cut off the priestly system in Israel, he will have an idol set up in the temple, and then the end will come.

What I Believe Daniel 9:24-27 is Saying...

Now I would like to share why I no longer hold to the *Futurist View*. The purpose of the seventy-sevens is to move all of history to the culmination of God’s Kingdom when, “...**the saints of the Most High shall receive and possess forever, forever, and ever**” (Dan. 7:18). The way that God will do this is by first finishing the transgression. What transgression? The transgression of Israel’s violation and breaking of God’s covenant (Exodus 19-24) that eventually ended in their exile under God’s judgment (Deut. 28:63-68), however, exile was never God’s permanent plan for Israel (see Deut. 30:1-10). The plan was always for a deliver to be born from out of Israel who would come from the tribe of Judah. This is what Daniel wanted and what he prayed for in Daniel 9:3-19. However, there was so much more that God had in store for his people.

The end of the exile (the transgression) was just the tip of God’s redemptive Iceberg. The exile had to come to an end so that God’s promises of a deliver could come into the world as the Prince of peace (Isa. 9:6-7), born out from the tribe of Judah in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), for the purpose of identifying with us and dying for our sins (Isa. 53). Through the promised deliverer, he would put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Israel’s sin was much deeper than her idolatry and immorality that led to the exile in Babylon, therefore God promised in verse 24 to address their transgression by putting an end to sin and atoning for iniquity so that the nations could experience the blessing promised through Abraham (see Gen. 12:1-3) and live their lives in obedience to God (Exod. 19:5-6). This will bring in everlasting righteousness, his words through his prophets would be proven true, and that the presence of God would once again dwell with his people.

I believe that the beginning of verse 25 is a summary statement of the 70 weeks, which states, “**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...**”. I think the way the ESV translates verse 25 from the original language is awkward; ironically, the NIV and the KJV not only agree in their translation of this verse, but I think they are right in the way they translated verse 25. Listen to the way the NIV translates verse 25, “**Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble**” (Daniel 9:25, NIV). In other words, the seventy weeks will begin with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and end with the coming of an *anointed one*.

What happened During the 70 Weeks of Daniel 9:25?

As I stated last week, in the first seven weeks, Jerusalem would be rebuilt Jerusalem and the people will be free to physically return from exile. The sixty-two weeks that follow, we know that the known world was Hellenized under the Empire of Greece, and Rome developed its

system of roads that made world travel possible. All of this happened while Israel as a nation experienced the oppression of empires to prepare the world for the arrival of Jesus as the anointed prince the scriptures promised would come.

The final week is the most climatic of the 70 weeks and began in 27 AD. I do not think that there is a long break between the 62nd week and the 70th week, nor do I think that the seventh week began with the birth of Jesus. I believe that the seventh week started with the baptism of Jesus or his public announcement that he was the Messiah, both of which most likely happened around 27 AD. Although Jesus was always the Son of God born to redeem mankind, he was not publicly anointed as the Messiah until he was baptized by John the Baptist (see Luke 3:21-22). It is worth pointing out that just after Jesus was baptized, we are told in Luke 3:22 that, **“Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age...”** (v. 22).

After effectively proving that he was the perfect Israelite by successfully resisting temptation in the wilderness for forty days, Jesus walked into his hometown of Nazareth, found the local synagogue and read from Isaiah 61:1-2 and claimed that he was the one who would bring good news to the poor, give sight to the blind, liberate the captives and oppressed, and usher in the **“Year of the Lord’s favor”** (see Luke 4:16-30). I said in my sermon last week that I believe that when Jesus announced his ministry in this way, that the 70th week of Daniel began.

According to Isaiah 53 and all four Gospel accounts of his life, Jesus would need to die to atone for the sins of mankind so that sinners could experience the kind of liberty for which we were made, by being reconciled to a God we have sinned against. This is why we are told in Daniel 9:26, **“...an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.”** Jesus was cut off by crucifixion to put an end to sin and to atone for iniquity.

I once believed that Daniel 9:27 was a description of a future antichrist, I now believe that Daniel 9:27 is not a description of the anti-Christ and a future event, but a description of Jesus and what his death accomplished. Remember what I said last week. I said that I am convinced that verse 24 is the theological linchpin to understanding verses 25-27. Daniel was told that the way God would answer his prayer for mercy and redemption would be in the following way: **“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”** (Daniel 9:24).

Look carefully at what verse 27 states: **“And he shall make a strong covenant with man for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering.”** Here are two questions that need to be answered right at the start: “Who is the “he” and what is the strong covenant he will make?” I believe the “he” is the “anointed one” who is a prince (king) mentioned in verse 25, and it is the New Covenant spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31-34 that is the “strong covenant” he will make with man; this is a passage Daniel would have been very aware of, especially since it was the reading of Jeremiah 25 that resulted in his prayer in verses 2-19. Listen to Jeremiah’s description of the New Covenant:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the

land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

Before Jesus was crucified, he celebrated Passover with his disciples. We are told that during the Passover meal he took a cup and said, **“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood”** (see Luke 22:14-23). The New Covenant Jesus was referring to was the one Jeremiah 31 described was coming. Listen to another Old Testament promise of the New Covenant in Ezekiel 36:26-29; listen to the similar language Daniel uses:

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses... (Ezekiel 36:26–29)

This is why I now believe the New Covenant that Jesus made possible through his death is the strong covenant that will put an end to sacrifice and offering, not because it will be forcefully taken away from the Hebrew people, but because there would no longer be any need for it. This is what is meant by Hebrews 8:6, **“But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.”** Then immediately following Hebrews 8:6, the author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 and points to Jesus as the one who mediates that covenant (see Hebrews 8:8-13). This is why the Temple curtain was torn in half upon Jesus dying on the cross to signify that gone are days when temporary atonement would need to be made for the sins of the people through animal sacrifices (see Matthew 27:50-51). Again, listen to what the book of Hebrews says concerning what it was that Jesus accomplished:

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.” (Hebrews 10:11–18)

I believe that if Daniel 9:24-27 is God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer for forgiveness and redemption. The point of these verses is this: God will bring an eventual end to sin, and that all who belong to the “anointed prince” (Jesus) who was cut off for our sins will experience God’s

redemptive promise which he will enable his people to live righteous lives, he will seal his word on their hearts, and he will make his dwelling with his people forever, forever, and ever!

Conclusion

Although I still have a few questions and am still sorting out how to make sense of Daniel 24-27, here are three truths I am sure God's answer to Daniel's prayer means for us today:

1. Our sin is great and deserving of God's full and unrestrained wrath, and that the only way for the mercy Daniel longed and prayed for to become a reality was that the messiah-king would need to be cut off in order for the sins of mankind to be forgiven. This would be the only way God would be able to put an end to sin and atone for iniquity. God did that by sending his Son to live the life we could not live and to die the death that we deserved. Therefore, the Bible states of Jesus: "**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...'**" (Gal. 3:13).
2. God's mercy and grace is equal to his awesomeness and greatness in that there is no sin too great and no sinner too far that God's grace cannot overcome, and his mercy cannot extend. The greatest evil to happen on planet earth is not a former antichrist or a coming antichrist; the greatest evil to happen on planet earth happened on a hill called Golgotha when the Son of Man was crucified. The murder of Jesus was an abomination, an atrocity, a disgrace, a horror, an obscenity, an outrage, and a crime. The apostle Peter described the crucifixion of Jesus as something that happened by the "**definite plan and foreknowledge of God...**" (see Acts 2:22-23), but the intent of those who crucified him was evil:

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses." (Acts 3:13-15)

In other words, although the crucifixion of Jesus was what man intended for evil, God determined from the beginning that it would serve for his glory and our good.

3. Finally, God is moving all of history to a redemptive climax that will include all nations when the anointed king will reign and rule over the nations. The anointed holy place promised to Daniel is more than a city or a plot of ground promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The most holy place will be a new heaven and new earth in one place where: "**the dwelling place of God will be with man**" (Rev. 21:1-5).

An Appendix to My Sermon...

I am still working through some of my thoughts on Daniel 9:26-27. Below are three of my biggest questions:

1. Is the destruction of the city and the sanctuary in Daniel 9:26 a reference to what Jesus warned would happen in Matthew 24, when he said of Jerusalem and the Temple: **“You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”** (vv. 1-2.)? In 70 AD, Titus besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple, which fulfilled what Jesus predicted.

I think that it is possible that as a result of Israel killing Jesus, who identified himself as the true Temple, the physical temple would eventually be destroyed (see John 2:12-22).

2. The last part of verse 27 states, **“And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”** I think the ESV is very awkward in its translation of this verse. Literally this verse can be translated: **“on account of the wing of abominations that cause desolation, until the end that has been decreed it will be poured out unto desolation.”**⁴

In light of the context of Daniel praying for mercy in light of Israel’s ongoing sin problem, that the ultimate abomination (atrocious, disgrace, horror, obscenity, outrage, crime) is that those who the Messiah-King came to liberate, ultimately sentenced him to die on a tree even though he was completely and perfectly guilt free. After all Moses did say in Deuteronomy 21:22-23, **“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.”**

3. The first seven weeks, and the sixty-two weeks that follow seem to be 483 literal years. The dispensational / futurist view seemingly has an easier time placing the seventh week in the future as a literal seven-year period they identify as the Tribulation. The problem with this view is the contrast made between the first 69 weeks that are about the Messiah-King (anointed prince) and the antichrist they believe the seventh week is describing.

The question that begs to be answered for the view I propose in this sermon is how the seventieth week works as a period of seven years that begins with Jesus’ baptism, temptation, and ministry announcement in Luke 3:21 – 4:30? If Jesus’ death midway through the seven years is how he inaugurated the New Covenant (i.e. the strong covenant of verse 27), then when did the seventieth week officially end? A possible solution to this potential problem is that the end of the seventieth week could have come with the first Christian martyr with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), or when Saul received the gospel and set apart as chosen instrument to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Another possible end to the seventieth week of Daniel is when the gospel was officially offered to the Gentiles when Peter brought the gospel to Cornelius and his entire gentile household was converted.

⁴ See the ESV Study Bible notes on Daniel 9:27.