

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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The Kingdom To End All Kingdoms
Daniel 9:20-27

This morning, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study of the book of Daniel. And I'll tell you upfront that our text for today is one of the most difficult passages to clearly and concisely interpret, not only in the book of Daniel but in the entire Bible. For that reason, scholars and Bible teachers have a wide variety of interpretations of this passage.

And, as I've wrestled with the best way to teach you the truths from this text, I've decided it would be best to just skip ahead to chapter 10...just kidding. We don't ever want to avoid hard passages of Scripture. The whole Bible is the Word of God and is profitable for every part of our lives.

So, with that in mind, let's jump in by picking up where we left off last week.

Daniel 9:20-21

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.

There are a few things you need to remember as you think about these verses. Daniel lived at a time when the Jewish people were experiencing God's punishment for their sin. God allowed the Babylonian Empire to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and to take groups of Jews captive to live in Babylon. Daniel was part of that group of captives.

While Daniel is in exile, he reads the word of God from the prophet Jeremiah. The first few verses of this chapter tell us that he read God's promise to restore the captive Jews after they had been in exile for 70 years. Attached to that promise, God made a point of clarity: the promise would be fulfilled as God's people prayed.

So, Daniel prays. In verses 4-19, Daniel acknowledges his sin and the sin of his nation. And he asks God to do three things: to show mercy in dealing with sin, to bring glory to Himself, and to work in a way that only He could. And while he is praying THAT prayer, God sends the angel Gabriel flying from heaven to earth in the form of a man with an answer to Daniel's prayer. Let's keep reading.

Daniel 9:22-23

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.

So, Gabriel comes to Daniel with an answer to his prayer. I love what we see here. God sent the answer as soon as Daniel looked to God and opened his mouth in prayer. And verse 23 says God responded that way because He greatly loved Daniel.

And let's not skip over this...if you are trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are living in a relationship of love with God. That's not to say God doesn't love the whole world, but Romans 8 says there is a special way in which the people who are trusting Jesus will never be separated from

the great love of God. Christian, you are greatly loved by God. And the way God is responding to your prayers is with that heart. You might feel like He is delaying or that you don't see what He is doing. But, rest assured, if you are in Christ, every time you look to your Father and open your mouth in prayer, He is immediately responding out of love.

As a matter of fact, in Ephesians 3:19-21, Paul prayed that the Christians in Ephesus would have the help of the Spirit of God so they could... *19 ...know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

By His great love for us in Jesus, not only is God responding to our prayers, He is doing far more abundantly than all we ask or think to ask. He's answering prayers you haven't thought to pray. He has plans that are so much better than yours that you can't even make up prayer requests that match His glorious plans for your life.

What would it look like if you believed that about what is going on in your life? If you believed God is at work in response to your prayers and what He is doing is flowing out of His great love for you? I bring that up because it's not just a dynamic that is true for you and me and the Ephesian Christians, it was true for Daniel.

When Daniel prayed, he asked God for something specific. And God gave Daniel an answer that promised exceedingly and abundantly more than what Daniel was asking God to do. That's the context for this controversial passage.

Daniel 9:24-27

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."

I think those verses are pretty self-explanatory, so let's just be dismissed...enjoy your week! Clearly, there's a lot going on here. But, let me just show you how this answer to prayer is more than what Daniel asked God to do and then we can dig into the details a little bit.

First, you see Gabriel is telling Daniel when God is going to work. Verse 24 says 70 weeks have been decreed. That word "weeks" is an interesting word. It literally means "sevens." And, in the Bible, it can be seven of pretty much any unit of time. In a minute, I'll tell you why I think it means 70 groups of 7 years...or 490 total years. But for right now, let's not blow by this. Daniel is asking God to fulfill His promise about a work He was going to do in a 70-year period of time. And God responds to Daniel by saying, "I've got an even bigger work that I'm going to do. Not in 70. But in 70 times 7. And, you might know that the number "7" represents perfection and completion. So, God is clearly saying He is going to work in His perfect and complete timing.

Next, you see Gabriel telling Daniel what God is going to do. Verse 24 lists 6 things He will accomplish in His perfect timing:

- *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.*

Remember, Daniel is asking God to show mercy by the way He deals with the sin of the Jewish people. Daniel is wanting God to bring an end to the exile so that Jerusalem can be restored. And God answers by saying He will do more than bring an end to the exile that was caused by sin, He is going to bring an end to sin itself. He will do more than bring in a stable life for the Jews in Jerusalem, He is going to bring in everlasting righteousness. What God is doing will bring an end to sin and will establish righteousness that will last forever.

The third thing you see Gabriel telling Daniel is how God will fulfill His word. Look at verse 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.***

This prophecy centers around the coming of an anointed one, a prince. The word “prince” can also be translated “ruler.” The phrase “anointed one” is very special in the Bible. It’s the word for Messiah. There’s a word in the New Testament that is equivalent to it. You know what it is? Christ. The word “Christ” means anointed one. This is talking about Jesus. When God tells Daniel how He will do what He is going to do, He points it all to Jesus. Jesus came to this earth the first time to be the atoning sacrifice for sin. He came as the King, the Ruler, to bring the beginning of God’s Kingdom to the world. And, one day, Jesus will come and bring an end to sin forever and establish the fullness of God’s kingdom in which only righteousness will dwell. It will be a world where only what is right and good and glorifying to God can exist. In other words, Jesus is bringing heaven to earth, a Kingdom where sin will end and righteousness will reign forever because of Jesus. That’s exceeding and abundantly more than what Daniel asked God to do.

And when you put all of that together, you get the Big Idea for today...

Big Idea: In God’s perfect timing, He will bring an eternal kingdom where sin will end and righteousness will reign forever through the work of Jesus Christ.

Around here, we call that Good News! And it never gets old. At the exact right time, God will usher in a kingdom that will bring an end to all the messed up earthly kingdoms of this world. We’ve seen that over and over again in the Book of Daniel. Whether it was Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2 or Daniel’s visions in chapters 7 and 8, that’s something God is hammering home in this book. Jesus is the eternal King who is going to bring an eternal Kingdom to this world. And that eternal Kingdom will bring an end to every sinful, broken dynamic of this world. All the corruption and pain and sadness of sin will be replaced with a joy and pleasure and righteousness that will never end. That’s good news.

And I find it a shame that this passage of Scripture that is clearly pointing to those beautiful truths is something that Christians fight and argue about in a way that isn’t fitting for people who say they are looking forward to spending an eternity in righteous fellowship with Jesus and each other. As a matter of fact, I’ve encountered Christians who are so aggressive with their views of this passage of

Scripture that they accuse other Christians of being unfaithful and ungodly simply because they don't agree with their interpretation.

So, while I don't want to avoid digging into the details, I'm not ashamed to say our pastors don't want to fight about them. So, here's what I'm going to do. I'll try my best to help you see what I believe the details in this prophecy are referring to. And if you disagree with me, it's okay. God greatly loves you and so do I. As a matter of fact, if you come to me with your doctoral thesis on why I'm wrong, I just might respond with "Cool. God greatly loves you and so do I."

So, with the time remaining, let's dig into some of the details. Then, we will end by spending a few minutes meditating on the truth of the Big Idea.

Daniel says this message is pertaining to 70 weeks, or 70 sevens. Some people take that to be figurative language as though God is simply saying He will work in His perfect timing. I take this to be a prophecy about a literal timeframe as though God is saying His perfect timing will happen within a group of 70 sevens.

There are at least two reasons I interpret it that way. First, the context of this chapter is Daniel's prayer about a prophecy connected to a literal timeframe of 70 years. If that prophecy was literal, then I take this expansion of it to be literal, as well. Also, these 70 groups of sevens are broken down very specifically. Verse 25 says we will be 7 sevens and then 62 sevens. Then, in verse 27, there is one final group of sevens. Those are very specific breakdowns and it doesn't make sense that they would be broken down so specifically if they are just figurative.

So, if they are literal periods of time what periods of time are they? Most scholars and Bible teachers take it to be years. So, 70 groups of 7 years would be 490 years in total. That makes the most sense based on what God is saying He will do. God is sending Jesus into this world as the Messiah and Ruler of His people.

And notice how precisely God is talking about these periods of time. He connects His work to coincide with the different grouping of years.

In the original language of the Bible, there aren't periods or punctuation marks like we have in English. That means the translators of our English versions have to choose where to put the punctuation. For multiple reasons, most translations read more like the NIV than the English Standard Version that I teach from. In this instance, I think the NIV gets the punctuation correct.

Daniel 9:25 (NIV)

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.

So, notice how the 70 groups of 7 years are being broken down.

- First comes a group of 7 sevens...that's another way of saying 49 years.
- Next comes a group of 62 sevens...that's another way of saying 434 years.

So, what was supposed to happen in the first 49 years? There was supposed to be a decree that went out to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. And, the city was to be rebuilt within 49 years from that decree. Did that happen? Yes. In Nehemiah 2, King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah the authority to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. And even though that work was filled with trouble, Ezra shows us that Jerusalem was rebuilt within 49 years.

That brings in the second group of years. After another 434 years (or 483 years after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem), this prophecy says the Messiah and Ruler will come. And notice how specific this prophecy is worded. Verse 24 says that it's about Daniel's city, the city of Jerusalem. So, the Messiah will come into the city of Jerusalem as Ruler 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Did that happen?

Yes. When you look at the prophecies in Revelation 11 and 12 (cf. Rev. 11:2-3, 12:6-14) the years being referred to are 360 days long. And, when you do the math, it works out that something pretty amazing happened 483 years after Artaxerxes' decree.

You read about it in John 12:

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem and was recognized as the Messiah and Ruler of Israel. We call that God's perfect timing. But let's keep looking at the details of this prophecy. Remember what it says in verse 26: ***And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.***

The Messiah won't just come to Jerusalem. He will be cut off. And in that moment, He will have nothing. Did that happen? Absolutely. By the end of the week that He entered Jerusalem, Jesus would be hanging on the cross. And it would seem that He had nothing. No kingdom. No power. Not even life. He was cut off from this world by being crucified at the cross. All of it happened in God's perfect timing.

But, if you are keeping up with the math, we have only covered 69 of the 70 sevens...that leaves one more 7-year period of time remaining. What about that last set of seven years?

Let's keep reading...

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."

After Jesus was cut off, the people of the prince who is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And this is where we need to remember the rest of the prophecies in the book of Daniel. Remember, in chapter 7, God told Daniel that another king would come onto the world's stage. So, there are two princes, or two rulers here. An anointed ruler who is Jesus...and another ruler who isn't Jesus. And chapter 7 says the ruler who opposes Jesus will come from a resurrected Roman Empire. That ruler is known in the Bible as the antichrist. He will come from a resurrected Roman Empire.

And verse 26 says that it's not the prince himself, but the people of the prince who is yet to come who will destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. Did that happen? Yes. Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Roman Empire was the people of the Antichrist.

And you need to notice something here. The destruction of Jerusalem happens AFTER the 69 sevens. But it doesn't happen inside the last group of 7, either. In essence, the final 7 years are a

period of time that will begin with a significant event. What is that? Verse 27 says the Antichrist will come and make a covenant with many, that likely us pointing to Israel, it could refer to all the nations of the world... for 7 final years. But he will break that covenant halfway through, or 3 and a half years, and put an end to sacrifice and offering. And, during that time, verse 27 says he will bring desolation and destruction until he meets his final end.

That's exactly what we saw in Daniel 7:25-27:

25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. (a time is one, times is two, half a time is...half a time...3 and a half year) 26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

Jesus will come again at the end of the Great Tribulation. He will put an end to the Antichrist and establish His perfect kingdom on this earth. Just like the prophecy says.

And that's when the fullness of the six-fold work of Christ will be realized on this earth. He began that work at the cross when He atoned for our sin and He will return to put an end to sin forever. He will establish a kingdom where only righteousness will dwell.

And that brings us back to our big idea...

Big Idea: In God's perfect timing, He will bring an eternal kingdom where sin will end and righteousness will reign forever through the work of Jesus Christ.

Listen, church, Jesus is coming again. And, when He comes, He will put an end to sin forever. He will usher in the fullness of God's kingdom on this earth. He will give His people a place to live where only what is good and right and glorifying to God will dwell. The mess this world is in won't last forever because Jesus is coming again!

So, if you are weary with sin, if you are tired of the brokenness and pain caused by sin, if you are yearning for a world the way it's supposed to be, rejoice! Jesus is coming again. And do you know when He is coming? In God's perfect time. Not a moment too soon. Not a second too late. Jesus is coming again.

He came the first time as an atoning sacrifice for our sin so that we could be made right with God. And He is coming the second time as our glorious King to put an end to sin forever and set this whole world free to live in His righteousness.

There's no question about it...Jesus is coming again. The only question is...are you ready? Are you ready for Christ's return?

Are you ready for the day when Jesus is coming to judge sin and to cast out of this world anyone who did not trust in Him before His return. Have you placed your faith and trust in Him as your Lord and Savior?

The day for decision is today. Now is the time to turn to Christ...are you ready?