

Main Idea: We learn about two important matters as we consider the angel Gabriel’s response to Daniel in Daniel 9:20-27.

- I. God works through prayer (20-23).
- II. God works through prophecy (24-27).
 - A. God revealed His plan (24).
 - B. God revealed the particulars of His plan (25-27).
 1. There will be 69 'sevens' from the decree to the Messiah (25).
 2. After 62 'sevens', tragedy will occur (26).
 - The Messiah will be cut off.
 - The temple will be destroyed.
 3. In the seventieth 'seven,' a Rival will come.
 - He will confirm a covenant with many.
 - He will violate the covenant.
 - He will be dealt with according to God's decree.

Implications: What difference should God’s future plan have on us?

1. We should find strength in it.
2. We should pray in light of it.
3. We should live in ways that show we believe it.
4. We should talk about it.

When you look at a diamond, each time you turn it you see something different, something breathtaking, something that demands yet another look. That’s how this text of the morning has been affecting us. We looked at it on June 27, then again on July 3. But there’s more to see, so we once again we’re going to gaze at this diamond.

I’d like to read it, then take us into it once again, that we might know the Lord who has decreed a plan for His world.

Scripture Reading: Daniel 9:20-27

Elie Wiesel died on July 2. He was born in Romania in 1928, and later came to America and became a well known writer, professor, political activist, and Nobel Laureate.

Elie was also a Holocaust survivor who wrote the book *Night*, a work based on his experiences as a prisoner in the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps.² He was taken there when he was fifteen, and lost his mother and father and a sister there.

Listen to his own words:

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.³

I was fascinated by a couple of things shared in conjunction with Wiesel’s memorial service, as reported by Greg Tippo, *USA Today*, July 4, 2016.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For an earlier development of this passage, see the Daniel series at WBC in 1996.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elie_Wiesel

³ Elie Wiesel, excerpt from *Night*.

One was by Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, who remembered visiting Auschwitz with Wiesel in the 1980s. “He said to me what I think was one of the most important statements: 'The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference, it was indifference that brought anti-Semitism to Germany and it was indifference that brought the Holocaust.’”

The other came from Abraham Foxman, the former national director of the Anti-Defamation League. Foxman said that in recent months he and Wiesel would reminisce, in Yiddish, and talk philosophy. "We talked about forgiveness, we talked about God. He was struggling with it," Foxman said. "Well now he's a little closer. Now he can challenge the Almighty much closer and maybe he'll get some answers, which he asked, but never got the answers to."⁴

Elie Wiessel, of course, was a Jew. In a striking way, his story prepares us well to consider Daniel 9. Daniel, too, lost his family to a holocaust when just a young man, as the invading Babylonians ripped him from his homeland and deported him to a far off land. Daniel too eventually became a man of great international influence who lived out his long life far from the land of his birth.

And Daniel too had questions, like, is the Lord done with the Jews? Is that what we are to conclude from this nightmare?

But Daniel found something that apparently Wiesel did not. He turned to The Book at the beginning of Daniel 9, that is, to God’s written revelation, put his trust in a promise God had given through Jeremiah the prophet, and prayed fervently.

And God answered his prayer. In the sixth century BC, He sent the angel Gabriel to him (at the end of Daniel 9) with a message revealing His future plan for Israel.

You may not be a holocaust survivor, but you can relate to these men. If you live long enough, you’ll have questions, about what God is doing, and isn’t doing in your life. But not just personal questions, big picture questions too. Like, what’s happening in the world? Why is there such rage amongst the nations? Why is the nation of Israel so hated? And why doesn’t the Lord seem to be doing anything about it?

Yes, we can relate. Which means we greatly need what Daniel 9 has to say to us.

This is part three of a message I’ve entitled, “*Prayer and Prophecy and the Plan of God.*” We’ve been learning about two important matters as we’ve considered the angel Gabriel’s response to Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:20-27. We learned that God the God who has a plan for this world and works through prayer and prophecy to accomplish it.

I. God works through prayer (20-23).

That’s the first nineteen verses of Daniel 9. Daniel learned by reading The Book that God predicted He would restore His people to their homeland after seventy years. The time was nearly up, so Daniel hit his knees.

A. He prayed a specific prayer (20). A prayer marked by confession, “We have sinned,” and supplication, “for His holy hill” (20).

B. He received a specific answer (21-23). In verse 21, Daniel says that his prayer was interrupted, “While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.”

II. God works through prophecy (24-27).

⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2016/07/03/elie-wiesel-remembered-private-service/86655480/>

When God sent His answer through Gabriel, God revealed two things to Daniel.

A. God revealed His plan (24). That's verse 24, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."

Notice again a couple of parameters given by the Lord. First, he says that this is what is decreed *for your people and your holy city*. So God is sharing with Daniel what He has in store for Daniel's people. Daniel is a Jew. His people are the Jews, the nation of Israel.

Remember Daniel's struggle. Is the Lord done with us, after all we've done? *I'm not done your people*, says the Lord.

Could Daniel's people refer to something broader than the Jews? It does in the New Testament. We looked previously at Ephesians 2 and Romans 11 to see how in Christ God has incorporated believing Gentiles into the people of God.

So when we read passages like this in the New Testament, we learn that because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, *your people* could refer to something broader than the Jews, and it does, Gentiles in Christ are God's people too.

But it's not less than the Jews.

Replacement theology says, in essence, that the church has replaced Israel. In my estimation, that doesn't do justice to several things, like the many prophecies God made to Israel in the Old Testament, nor to the way the New Testament describes what God is doing with the Jews, as in Romans 11, nor to what He said right here in Daniel 9.

God has a plan for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Part of that plan included providing salvation through His Son for Jews and Gentiles, which He mentions in Daniel's prophecy and which He has accomplished. But that's not all He said He would do for and through the Jews.

He specifically says in verse 24 that "seventy sevens" are decreed for your people and your holy city. Those words lead us to a couple of conclusions about God.

1. *He operates with a time-frame in mind.* Verse 24 says, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed." The implied subject is *God*. God did this. God told Daniel that His plan for Israel would involve seventy "sevens" or "weeks" of future events.

"Weeks" is simply a unit of measure which refers to seven things. The context of verse 2 mentions seventy *years*. So Daniel already has *years* in mind when Gabriel comes to him. That would indicate that the *seventy sevens* have to do with a timeframe of years.

God's plan for Israel involves "seventy sevens" of years, or 490 years (divided as we'll see in a moment into three sections). He indicates to Daniel that there is going to be 490 years of future activity for His people.

And there is no mention that these are 490 consecutive years, and the following verses seem to indicate these are *not* consecutive years. Verse 25 says there will be "seven sevens" and "sixty-two sevens" followed by a subsequent "seven" mentioned in verse 27.

So God operates with a time-frame. He's going to do something for and through Israel during a 490 year period.

But what does He have in mind for these 490 years? He tells us in verse 24.

2. *He operates with a goal in mind.* To be specific, He has six goals which can be grouped into two categories. You see, God had a bigger goal for the Jews than merely to get them back to the Promised Land.

•His aim is to remove sin. Look carefully at the first three things that Gabriel predicted God would accomplish in the 490 years, in verse 24.

To finish transgression – This of course is what so gripped Daniel in his prayer. Transgression. We have transgressed Your Law, Oh God! We have done wrong, and that’s why we’re in captivity. Indeed, for over 800 years, since You brought our people to the promised land, we haven’t been able to get rid of this fundamental problem.

We are transgressors. We keep turning away from You and can’t stop!

But in His mercy God now says, “I will do it for you. I have a plan to finish transgression.” What’s more...

... *to put an end to sin* – There it is again. Sin. Mankind’s biggest problem, ever since the garden. “We have sinned!” says Daniel, as could each of us. We can’t stop sinning, which means we remain cut off from God, for He is holy and pure and cannot look upon sin.

But He is also full of grace, and here announces. I will do what you cannot do. I will put an end to sin. I have a plan to accomplish that. And this...

... *to atone for wickedness* – And now we see how the Lord intends to take care of the sin problem. He is going to provide an atonement, a blood sacrifice that covers sin and removes it from His sight.

That’s what I am going to do Daniel, for your people, and through them for the world. During this coming 490 year period, I am going to remove sin.

But that’s only half of the plan, for that’s only half of the problem. Yes, sin must be removed, and the Lord says He’s going to do that, but also this.

•His aim is to restore righteousness.

Notice the rest of verse 24, three more purpose clauses.

To bring in everlasting righteousness—When Daniel prayed, righteousness was something he attributed to God alone. Verse 7, “Lord, you are righteous.” Also in verses 14 and 16.

But not us. We are *not* righteous. We are sinners.

Keep in mind the person saying this is the man who so loved God that he went to the lions’ den rather than compromise. In human terms, he’s the model of righteousness.

But he knows better, particularly when he’s on his knees before God. You are righteous. *We* are sinners.

Yes, Daniel, says the Lord through Gabriel. But that’s going to change. I’m going to do something to *bring in righteousness*, and not just temporarily, but *everlasting* righteousness.

And I don’t think this is referring merely to personal righteousness, but to cosmic righteousness. In other words, not just bringing righteousness to people, but to the *cosmos*. I’m going to get rid of cancer, and earthquakes, and broken families, and all the other consequences that entered the world when the first man and woman sinned. And I’m going to make things right, *righteous*, in My world.

This points not just to Christ’s first coming, but to what He will do at His second coming, when He establishes His millennial kingdom (Rev 20:1-3), and ultimately when He creates a new heavens and earth (Rev 21-22), which Peter refers to as “the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:15).

I’m also going to...

... *to seal up vision and prophecy*—that is, *seal* as in authenticating something with one’s seal or signature. I’m going to accomplish everything I have revealed through

vision and prophecy through Jeremiah and the rest of My prophets. I will keep My promises to your people. I give you My word. This is what I have decreed for the seventy sevens that are coming. As well as this...

... *and to anoint the most holy*—The object is not specified, but think what Daniel is thinking. What burdens him? Verse 21 says he was praying “at the time of the evening sacrifice.”

But there hasn't been a sacrifice for nearly seven decades, for there hasn't been a temple for nearly seven decades, which means there hasn't been a sacrifice for sin in nearly seven decades.

I'm going to take care of that too, says the Lord. The New Testament uses this language and says it points to Jesus. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 12:6, “I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.”

So this is what the Lord said He would do for Daniel's people. And when we come to the New Testament, we learn that what brought benefit to Daniel's people also brought benefit to the *ethnos* of the world.

Ephesians 2:11-14 “Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”

This is why Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea *and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).” Yes, start with the Jews but don't stop there. Tell the nations about Me. Go and make disciples of all people groups (Matt 28:19).

So this is for us, too. These are our biggest needs, too. And God in His grace has set in motion a plan to meet these needs.

To remove sin, and restore righteousness.

But there's more. God not only told Daniel *what* He would do (these six goals), but *how* He would do it. In verses 25-27 Gabriel unfolds the particulars of the divine plan.

B. God revealed the particulars of His plan (25-27).

Notice verse 25, “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree 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.”⁵

There are three particulars, and here's the first.

1. There will be 69 'sevens' from the decree to the Messiah (25).

From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. That's what has been on Daniel's mind as he prays.

When that happens, says the Lord through Gabriel, the clock will start ticking until the Anointed One comes. Who's that? Actually it says “an anointed one.” The Hebrew is *masiah*. Throughout the OT Israel's kings were anointed, and sometimes so were there

⁵ AV, “Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

priests, and prophets). And there's coming one who will be king, priest, and prophet. The Anointed One, the Messiah.

In the text before us the Lord is telling Daniel when the Messiah would arrive on earth. There will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens,' that is, 49 years plus 434 years.

So the Messiah will come in 483 years, yes, but 483 years from when? Gabriel said, "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (AV)."

So when did that occur? There were at least three decrees given which had to do with the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. The first was by king Cyrus in 538 B.C., but it had to do primarily with rebuilding the temple, not the city itself. A second was made by Darius in 517 B.C., but again had to do primarily with the Temple renovation. The third decree was issued by Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. It was at that time, under the leadership of Nehemiah, that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.

There are pros and cons with each date, but since Gabriel refers specifically to the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, and that's what Nehemiah did, I think the 445 BC date seems most likely.

So let's start the clock in 445 BC. Gabriel said there would be "seven sevens." That's 49 years. Walvoord points out that after the decree in 445, it took a whole generation (49 years) to clear out the debris and restore a thriving city in Jerusalem.

Then comes the *sixty-two sevens*. That 434 years, and that's when the Anointed One will arrive.

So if you calculate using 360 days to the year (based on a Jewish calendar), and add extra days for leap years, the 483 year clock stops (check out John MacArthur's message online if you want the specifics) on April 6, 32 AD, the very day Jesus Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and offered Himself as Israel's king.⁶

Until the Ruler comes, says Gabriel, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens.

But there's more. Gabriel reveals a second detail in God's prophetic plan.

2. *After 62 'sevens', tragedy will occur (26).* He describes it in verse 26, "After the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed."

God told Daniel that after the 483 years, a twofold tragedy would occur.

•First, the Messiah will be cut off. This verb is used of "cutting a covenant," and this ritual involved the death of a sacrificial victim (Gen 15:10, 18).⁷

Which is precisely what happened, just as predicted. And it happened *after* the 483 years, which concluded on Palm Sunday. For five days after the King presented Himself to Israel, He "was cut off," to use Gabriel's language.

Isaiah 53:8 uses the same verb, "He was cut off from the land of the living." This is an announcement that Israel's Anointed King will be killed.

And He most certainly was. Killed by the very ones He came to save.

The NIV says, "And will have nothing."⁸ The AV says, "But not for himself." His tragic death wasn't for Himself, for He died having nothing, for the benefit of others. And that includes those responsible for His death. And that includes us.

Gabriel indicates another tragedy will follow, namely...

⁶ [http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/1293/the-arrival-of-the-king?term=daniel 9:25](http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/1293/the-arrival-of-the-king?term=daniel%209:25)

⁷ Baldwin, p. 171.

⁸ ESV is similar, "And shall have nothing."

•The temple will be destroyed. Notice the rest of verse 26, “The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.”

Again, the word “after” that begins verse 26 is important. These two tragedies we’re considering (the cutting off of the Messiah and the destruction of the temple) will happen *after* the sixty-two sevens ends (that is, after the 434 year period between the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the arrival of the Messiah).

But Gabriel didn't specify how soon after. Nor did he specify that there would be a gap between these two tragedies. But history tells us there was, for a little less than forty years after the Messiah was cut off, in the year AD 70, the Romans under Titus completely obliterated Jerusalem. The temple was eliminated.

Just like Gabriel said, “The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.”

The historian Josephus says that 1.1 million people were killed in the siege of Jerusalem, and 97,000 Jews were captured and enslaved. While modern scholarship says the figures are too high, no one can question that this massive destruction was the turning point for Israel, for the Jewish nation, for all purposes, ceased to exist for the next almost nineteen centuries, until 1948.

Then notice the end of verse 26, keeping in mind that this is going to happen *after* the previous two tragedies. “The end will come like a flood. War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.”

And so it happened. A flood came pouring into Jerusalem in AD 70. Not a flood of water, but a flood of tens of thousands of Roman soldiers.

So God told Daniel that He was going to use seventy-sevens, 490 years, to accomplish His purpose with Israel. And He didn't say the years would necessarily be consecutive years.

It appears that the prophecy of "seventy sevens" is like a telescope that contains some gaps. One gap was the four decades between the cutting off of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem. There's yet to come another gap, the final seven, the *seventieth* seven, which Gabriel mentions in verse 27, and adds this element.

3. *In the seventieth 'seven,' a Rival will come.* Verse 27, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven.”

Stop there. Who is this “he”? It goes back to the antecedent in verse 26. Some say it's referring to the Anointed One, the Messiah, who will put an end to the sacrificial system. Others say it refers to Titus in AD 70. Still others, and I agree, that this “he” refers to “the ruler who will come,” this prince [that's the term in the AV] who is the enemy of the Jews, the rival of the Anointed One, if you will.

The people of the ruler are the ones who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. They were Romans, and that might indicate that the coming ruler will be a Roman.

And what is this ruler, this rival, going to do? Verse 27 says, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Back in January of this year 2016 *Lifeway Research* did a phone survey of a thousand Protestant pastors to see what they believed regarding *end times*.⁹

⁹ <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Pastor-Views-on-the-End-Times-January-2016.pdf>

-49% believe the Antichrist is a figure who will arise sometime in the future; Baptists (75%) and Pentecostals (83%) are more likely to select “He is a figure who will arise sometime in the future” than Lutherans (7%), Methodists (29%), and Presbyterian/Reformed (22%)¹⁰

-48% espouse Premillennialism, 31% Amillennialism, 11% Postmillennialism

-36% of pastors believe in a Pretribulation rapture, 18% Posttribulation, 4% Prewrath, and 25% say the concept of rapture is not to be taken literally

I believe verse 27 is talking about the final seven year period in God’s plan for Daniel’s people, *the tribulation*. The first 69 sevens have already happened. One final rival is yet to come. That would indicate that we are now living in a parenthesis between the sixty-ninth seven and the seventieth seven.

Remember again, God told Daniel that this “seventy sevens” plan pertained to His future dealings with Israel. But Israel has basically been on the sidelines for the past 1900 years.

Notice carefully what Jesus Himself said about this in Luke 21:24. He refers to “the times of the Gentiles.” “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles [that’s what happened beginning in AD 70; and for how long?] until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

In God’s plan, these are the times of the Gentiles. The Gentiles conquered Jerusalem in AD 70 and scattered the Jews to the nations. The Lord Jesus actually sent Paul to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), and Paul calls himself “the apostle to the Gentiles” in Romans 11:13.

Today the church is predominantly Gentile, as the Lord of the harvest is bringing sinners to Himself from all the nations of the world. This is even reflected in the new song of heaven, as John records it in Revelation 5:9, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

Paul said this gap or parenthesis was a “mystery” (Col 1) not clearly spelled out in the Old Testament. He refers to his message as “the mystery” in Colossians 1:26-27, “The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.”²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

This is the age of the church, and Gentiles who believe in Christ are being grafted into the vine of God’s redemptive plan, to use the language of Romans 11. But, in my estimation, God is not finished with the Jews. There’s still this final *seven* to come.

Look closely at verse 27. God says through Gabriel that there is going to be a final seven year period during which He will allow a rival to come. The Bible elsewhere calls this rival *the anti-Christ*, and this period of time *the tribulation*.

Daniel here learns that the rival is going to do three things during the tribulation.

¹⁰ Of those surveyed on the question of the Anti-Christ...

- Evangelicals (60%) are more likely to select “He is a figure who will arise sometime in the future” than Mainlines (38%)
- Mainlines (15%) are more likely to select “There is no individual Antichrist” than Evangelicals (8%)
- Mainlines (19%) are more likely to select “He is just a personification of evil” than Evangelicals (10%)
- Mainlines (9%) are more likely to select “He is not a person but an institution” than Evangelicals (6%)
- Those in the South (51%) and West (53%) are more likely to select “He is a figure who will arise sometime in the future” than those in the Midwest (43%)

•First, he will confirm a covenant with many. I take that, again, to mean many of Daniel's people, *the Jews*, since that's who Gabriel's been talking about. And this covenant with the Jews will last *for one week*, says the AV and ESV, *for one seven*, says the NIV.

•Then he will violate the covenant. As verse 27 predicts, "In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation."

That's interesting. The rival is going to put an end to sacrifice and set up an abomination in the temple. But there haven't been any sacrifices nor a temple since AD 70. But apparently, according to what Gabriel told Daniel, there will be, for the events that happened after the sixty-ninth week will be followed by these in the seventieth.

A coming powerful dictator will enter into a partnership with the Jews, allowing them to construct a temple and reestablish their sacrificial system. But then, just three and a half years later, he's going to break his promise to the nation of Israel, and turn on the Jews.

You say, "Maybe we're misreading this. Does the Bible talk about this anywhere else?"

Actually, Jesus Himself did. Let's consider what He said in Matthew 24, starting in verses 15-16, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' **spoken of through the prophet Daniel**—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

And verse 21, "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again."

And verses 22-25, "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.²³ At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it.²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time."

And verse 27, "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

I take it then, from Jesus' words, that this "desolation" "spoken of by Daniel" has not yet come. For when it comes there will be "great distress, unequalled from the beginning of time," and it will be just prior to "the coming of the Son of Man."

So the rival is coming, and he will make promises to the Jews, then break them.

Fear not, however, for God will have the final word with this coming rival.

•He will be dealt with according to God's decree. As Daniel wrote in verse 27, "Until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

And who will pour out this decreed end upon this rival? The Lord Himself, when He returns to earth as the conquering King of kings.

The book of the Revelation elaborates for us in Revelation 19:11-16. "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of

God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.”

And who will fall before the King? Notice verse 19. “Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.”

Who is this beast? I believe this is the rival predicted in Daniel 9:27, the anti-Christ, whom John met back in Revelation 13:1, a beast “with ten horns and seven heads,” as well as in 17:8-11. This imagery comes right out of Daniel’s earlier vision in Daniel 7:2-7.

And what will happen to the beast? Verses 20-21, “But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹ The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”

God will prevail. God’s plan will be accomplished. There’s no doubt about it. The first 69 sevens that God predicted have happened just like He said. We can be sure that the seventieth seven will happen too, as well as everything else He has placed before us in His Word. Maybe soon.

Implications: What difference should God’s future plan have on us?

Let’s talk about four implications.

1. We should find strength in it.

God didn’t reveal this so we could debate it, or mock it, or ignore it. He wants to read it, take it to heart, and find strength in it.

2. We should pray in light of it.

What did Jesus teach us to pray? “May your kingdom come.” So let’s pray! Let’s pray for the King to advance His kingdom by rescuing sinners. And let’s also pray for the King to bring righteousness to His world by establishing His cosmic kingdom.

3. We should live in ways that show we believe it.

If we really believe what we’ve seen today, it will show. In the way we plan our lives, and spend our money, and raise our kids. We are living for something that is coming. And by His grace, it will show.

4. We should talk about it.

First, to each other, to *encourage one another as you see the day approaching* (1 Thes 4:18). But also to those who don’t yet know our Savior. They need Him. He is now at work in this world, through us His people, rescuing sinners from the coming wrath. On the basis of the atoning sacrifice He provided on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead, He now offers eternal life to all who will repent and put their total trust in Him.

“But how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them (Romans 10:14)?”

Brothers and sisters, let’s find strength in it, and pray in light of it, and live in ways that show we believe it, and by all means, let’s talk about it and rescue the perishing.