

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

- I. We learn about prayer (20-23).
- II. We learn about prophecy (24-27).
 - A. God revealed His plan (24).
 1. He operates with a time-frame in mind.
 2. He operates with a goal in mind.
 - His aim is to remove sin.
 - His aim is to restore righteousness.
 - 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.

Make It Personal: Since we know the plan of God...

1. We have reason to be encouraged.
2. We have reason to make Christ known.
3. We have reason to pray.

Last week we began to search a goldmine and ran out of time before we finished. So we return again to it this morning, first to read it, then to explore its riches, then to the come to the Table that reminds us of the One it predicts.

Scripture Reading: Daniel 9:20-27

This past year in 2015 the United Nations issued 23 sanctions, 20 of which were directed against one country.² Of the three that were not, one was issued to Syria, whose president, Bashar Assad, is responsible for the deaths of more than 200,000 of his own people. A second sanction was issued to North Korea for its illegal missile tests, not to mention the starvation of its own people. The final resolution was for Iran, the leading state sponsor of worldwide terrorism.

And by the way, not one sanction has been issued to countries like China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, or Yemen, while there’s ample documentation of human-rights abuses in these countries.

But the UN is silent, except for one country. Which country am I describing, that received *twenty* of the twenty-three sanctions issued last year.

Israel.

And these sanctions are not by an isolated few at the UN. Here’s a partial extract from one of the sanctions, which has to do with Jerusalem.³ It’s A/RES/70/16.

**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 This information was taken from a letter I received from *The Friends of Israel*, June 2016. I researched and found similar documentation on UNWatch, <http://www.unwatch.org/un-to-adopt-20-resolutions-against-israel-3-on-rest-of-the-world/>, as well as in a Fox News report.

³ <http://www.unwatch.org/un-to-adopt-20-resolutions-against-israel-3-on-rest-of-the-world/>

Extract: “Reiterates its determination that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever, and calls upon Israel to immediately cease all such illegal and unilateral measures.”

Here’s the breakdown of the vote:

- 153 Yes (France, Germany, UK, rest of EU)
- 7 No (Canada, Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, US)
- 8 Abstain (Australia, Cameroon, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Toga, Tonga)

Why are so many in the world so preoccupied with this particular country?

Unfortunately the church may share a tragic part in this problem, as explained by a letter I received a couple of weeks ago from Jim Showers, executive director of *The Friends of Israel*.

“Regrettably, centuries of church history and unbiblical theology are largely to blame for this predicament. Many early church leaders proclaimed from their pulpits that God was ‘through with the Jews.’ Replacement Theology began to permeate Christianity, teaching that the church was now the instrument of God’s blessing to the world and that Israel was no longer the apple of God’s eye.

“Martin Luther, a monumental figure who helped rescue biblical Christianity, expressed kindness and sympathy toward the Jewish people when he was young. But in his later years, he became a staunch anti-Semite. His infamously vicious pamphlet, *The Jews and Their Lies*, became fodder for Adolf Hitler some 500 years later. Hitler used some of Hitler’s very words to incite hatred of Jewish people throughout Europe, which ultimately gave rise to his ‘final solution to the Jewish problem.’”⁴

We need to give careful attention to what God says in His Word regarding this subject. That’s what makes this particular message so important, for we are coming to a text in which God Himself addresses His plans for Israel.

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

I. We learn about prayer (20-23).

The first nineteen verses of Daniel 9 record Daniel’s prayer. Daniel was perplexed by a problem that moved him to pray. His people had been in captivity nearly seventy years. While reading the book recorded by Jeremiah the prophet, Daniel learned that God predicted He would restore His people to their homeland after seventy years. The time was nearly up, so Daniel hit his knees.

We observed two things about Daniel’s prayer in verses 20-23.

A. He prayed a specific prayer (20). It was marked by two ingredients.

1. *It was a prayer of confession.*
2. *It was a prayer of supplication.* Daniel asked God for something. Not for himself, but for something five hundred miles away. Notice the end of verse 20, in the AV, “For the holy mountain of God.” In the NIV, “for his holy hill.”

⁴ Jim Showers, *The Friends of Israel* letter, June 2016.

And what happened?

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.” The AV says that Gabriel, “being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.”

We learned three lessons about prayer from these words.

1. *God hears us when we pray.*
2. *God responds to us when we seek His honor.*
3. *God desires persistence in prayer.*

II. We learn about prophecy (24-27).

Again, specifically, we learn that God is the God of prophecy.

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

A. God revealed His plan (24). Notice 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.”

To say there are various interpretations of those words would be an understatement. I read a couple of commentaries this week by those who take a different interpretation just to gain a fuller understanding of what others see in this text.

Baldwin says, “The last four verses present the most difficult text in the book.”⁵ This commentary also presents a helpful summary of how Bible scholars approach this text in different ways, presenting five categories:

1. *The historical interpretation*—sees this text fulfilled in the second century BC
2. *The interpretation at Qumran* (that is, Jews in the century or so prior to Jesus’ day)—they “saw the numbers schematically and not arithmetically” and “believed the seventy sevens applied to their own time and that the end was near.”⁶
3. *The interpretation in the New Testament*—By looking specifically at what Jesus said in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, it’s clear that to Jesus the phrase “the abomination of desolation”, was not ultimately fulfilled by Antiochus in the second century BC, but looks ahead, at least to the destruction of Jerusalem that was coming in AD 70. And likely beyond, based on what we read in the book of the Revelation. Revelation, dated around AD 90, was written *after* the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the apostle John uses the final “seven” reference in Daniel 9:27 to refer to what is going to happen at the end of time. The New Testament positively encourages the view that, while there are interim events which bear out the truth of the imagery [in Daniel 9], it points forward to a culmination at the end of history,” says Baldwin.⁷
4. *The Jewish and early Christian interpretation*—The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, said this passage had a double fulfillment, first by Antiochus in the second century BC, then by the Romans in the first century AD. So Josephus said, and this represented standard Jewish interpretation, that the seventy sevens in Daniel were fulfilled by the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Until the end of the second century AD, says

⁵ Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel*, from the Tyndale OT series, p. 163.

⁶ Baldwin, p. 174.

⁷ Baldwin, p. 175.

Baldwin, Christian scholars basically took the same interpretation, but then began “to compute the seventy sevens so as to make them terminate in the coming of Christ.”⁸

5. *Present day interpretations* – which include some combinations of the above, plus others, including those who see a “prophetic gap” or a “parenthesis” between the first and second comings of Christ.

So with that as the lay of the land, let’s look carefully at the text itself. The first thing to consider are some parameters that God Himself gives through Gabriel.

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. Who are Daniel’s people? He 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? Possibly. We looked at Ephesians 2 last time. Let’s look at Romans 11 today.⁹

Romans 11:1-2 “I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.”

Verse 5, “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.”

Verse 7, “What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened.”

Verses 11-12, “Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹² But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!”

Verses 23-24, “And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!”

Verses 25-26, “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved.”

Verses 28-29, “As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹ for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”

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 not less than*.

This is at the heart of why I disagree with *replacement theology*, which says, in essence, that the church has replaced Israel. In my estimation, that doesn’t do justice to the 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.

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

⁸ Baldwin, p. 175.

⁹ Quotes from NIV 2010 version.

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. Let's look carefully at the text, which I believe enables us to draw two conclusions about the Lord and His plan.

1. *He operates with a time-frame in mind.* Verse 24 says, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed." In the AV, "Seventy weeks are determined." The verb is passive. Who determined the seventy weeks? The implied subject is *God*. God did. 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. Clearly the prophecy is dealing with time, but how much time? Seventy seconds, days, months, or years? The context of verse 2 mentions seventy *years*. So Daniel already has *years* in mind when Gabriel comes to him. That would seem to indicate that the *seventy sevens* have to do with a timeframe of years.

God's time-frame for Israel would involve "seventy sevens" of years, or 490 years (divided as we'll see in a moment into three sections). He says there are 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's plan involves a time-frame. He's going to do something for and through Israel during a 490 year period.

But what? What does God 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. He tells us His two aims here.

•His aim is to remove sin. Notice the first three things that Gabriel predicted God would accomplish in the 490 years. Verse 24 again, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness."¹⁰

There are God's first three goals for and through Israel.

To finish transgression – This is the very thing that bothered Daniel as he prayed back in verse 5. Transgression. Sin. We have sinned and done wrong. That's why we're in captivity. For over 800 years now, since we came to the promised land, we haven't been able to get rid of our fundamental problem. We are transgressors. We keep yielding to transgression and can't stop!

But God says, "I will do it for you. I have a plan to finish transgression." Also...

... *to put an end to sin* – There it is again. Sin. Mankind's biggest problem, ever since the garden. But God says He will put an end to it. As well as...

... *to atone for wickedness* – "If God is regarded as the subject," says Baldwin, "it is announcing that God has found a way of forgiving sin without being untrue to His own righteousness."¹¹

¹⁰ In the AV, "To finish transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for wickedness."

¹¹ Baldwin, p. 169.

So during this coming 490 year period, God says He aims to remove sin. How this must have thrilled Daniel, as it should us! Sin was Israel's relentless foe for centuries, but God said He was going to finish this foe.

But that's only half the battle. As well as removing sin...

•His aim is to restore righteousness.

Notice the rest of verse 24, three more purpose clauses, "to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."

To bring in everlasting righteousness—In Daniel's prayer righteousness is something attributed to God alone. Verse 7, "Lord, you are righteous." Verse 14, "The LORD our God is righteous." And in verse 16, "O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts."

This is what You are Lord. But not us. We are sinners.

But that's going to change, says the Lord. I'm going to do something to *bring in righteousness*, and not just temporarily, but *everlasting* righteousness. I'm also going to...

... *to seal up vision and prophecy*—that is, 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.

"To seal a document may involve closing it," explains Baldwin, "but in law the meaning is rather to authenticate it with one's seal and signature. This is the meaning here."¹² God is putting His "John Hancock" to this promise. I'm going to do this. This is what I have decreed for the seventy sevens that are coming.

And this.

... *and to anoint the most holy* – literally "a most holy." The object is not specified. A most holy what? Think what Daniel is thinking. What burdens him? There is presently no holy temple where sinners can bring sacrifices for atonement.

But the New Testament uses this language and 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 as the New Testament indicates, what brought benefit to Daniel's people would also benefit the *ethnos* of the world. So much so that Jesus could say, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea [start with the Jews but don't stop there] and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)."

These are your biggest needs, and mind. And God in His grace has set in motion a plan to meet those needs. *To remove sin, and restore righteousness.*

If we have experienced this divine work, we have reason to celebrate! Sadly, however, we struggle with this. We still see ourselves as we used to be.

We're like Joshua. Not the Joshua we're familiar with, Moses' successor. The Joshua in Zechariah 3. Zechariah was a young man when Daniel received this message in Daniel 9. I don't know if Zechariah ever heard it, but he was born in Babylonia and returned from exile to Judah in 538 BC under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.

So an angel appeared to Zechariah and showed him the following, in Zechariah 3:1-4, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ² The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood

¹² Baldwin, p. 169.

before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you."

I love that, for that's what the Lord did for us, if we've put our total trust in Christ. *I have taken away your sin, and I have put fine garments of righteousness on you.*

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."¹³

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 priests. And there's coming one who will be both king and priest. 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

¹³ 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."

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.¹⁴

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).¹⁵

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."¹⁶ 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...

•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."

¹⁴ [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)

¹⁵ Baldwin, p. 171.

¹⁶ ESV is similar, "And shall have nothing."

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."

I believe this is talking about the final seven year period in God's plan for Daniel's people. 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 God is not finished with the Jews. There's still this final *seven* to come.

Look again 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.

- 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 Israeli nation, and turn on the Jews.

You say, "Can we be sure of this? After all, maybe we're misreading what Daniel heard."

Okay, let's test this by listening to Jesus in Matthew 24. 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."

God will prevail. 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. Maybe soon.

Make It Personal: Since we know the plan of God...

1. We have reason to be encouraged.

The Lord told Daniel this to encourage him, to put courage into his heart. We too have reason to be encouraged if we have come to know the Anointed One as our Savior.

That's why He came the first time. Jesus the Messiah gave His life on a Roman cross to pay sin's penalty in our place. Then He conquered death, and God now gives eternal life to all who will repent of their sins and put their total trust in His Son.

If you know Christ, you have reason to be encouraged. If you don't, this is your greatest need. Not more money, better health, a more peaceful family. You need Christ to become your Savior and Lord.

2. We have reason to make Christ known.

There are millions on this planet that don't know what we know, about God's plan for the world, about what Christ did, about what's going to happen to the world, and what Christ is going to do. How will they know? We must tell them. Some live right next to us, or even with us. Some are far away. We have reason to make Christ known.

3. We have reason to pray.

It was Daniel's prayer that brought about this prophetic text. Daniel prayed by the Book, and God was pleased, and Gabriel called him "highly esteemed." Let's learn from him. Let's be a people who pray by the Book as he did.

Let me say it again. We have been thinking about the plan of God this morning. In His plan, God's goal is to get rid of sin and produce a righteous people. The reason God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, was to accomplish this goal. All who will repent of their sins and trust in Him will be declared righteous by God. Let's bow our heads and consider some a couple of things.

One, God's goal is to remove sin. Do you desire to see that happen in your life? Is there some pet sin in your life that God wants to remove? Perhaps an ungodly habit, or an unforgiving spirit towards someone. Maybe a critical tongue or fascination with pornography. Confess it to God right now. Repent of it, and choose to forsake it.

Two, God's goal is to restore righteousness. He intends to change us to be like His righteous Son. Is that what you want? If it is, tell Him. Are there some steps you need to take today to become Christ-like?

Have you ever received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? Have you ever testified to that publicly by being baptized? Are you filling your life with the tools the Holy Spirit wants to use to make you righteous in character as you are in position? Tools like daily Bible study, prayer, faithful church attendance, choosing godly friends. Today is the day to choose to line up your life with God's plan.

Communion to follow