

Daniel 9:20-27 “Prayer and Prophecy and the Plan of God”^{**1}

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).
 - A. He prayed a specific prayer (20).
 1. It was a prayer of confession.
 2. It was a prayer of supplication.
 - B. He received a specific answer (21-23).
 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).
 - 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.

For the past two weeks we’ve looked carefully at the record of Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9. Let’s read again that prayer and then see what happened as a result.

Scripture Reading: Daniel 9:4-19

What would you do if a man walked into the room, grabbed your daughter's arm right in front of you, and started bending her fingers against the joints? What would you do if the man continued to aggravate your daughter's hand to the point that she winced in pain? Would you rush to your child's aid, and rescue her from the man's grasp?

I had that very experience about twenty years ago. And I must confess to you that while the man was bending my daughter's fingers, and while my daughter was grimacing in pain, I didn't try to stop him.

I just watched. And that’s because the man was an orthopedic specialist, and the girl was my daughter, Julie, who broke her arm eight weeks previsouly. The room was the physician's office in Columbus, and the reason for the pain-causing, finger-bending was my daughter's recovery.

In the midst of the examination, Dr. Torch (who shared that his patients often refer to him as Dr. *Torture*) said something to the effect, "I regret the pain, Julie, but pain is part of the healing process. As has been said, 'No pain, no gain.'"

^{**}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.

I would never allow some guy off the street to inflict pain on my daughter, nor would you, but I would accept it from the wise hands of a physician. What makes the difference? Two things. One, Dr. Torch was a specialist who had helped thousands of people in the past. And two, he had a plan, and though his plan involved pain, his desired end was the good of his patient.

That's what Daniel learned about God and His people and pain in Daniel 9.

Pain was no abstract concept for Daniel. When he was a young boy, he watched his home be ransacked by cruel soldiers. Then, along with several of his Jewish peers, he was separated from his parents and hauled off to exile in Babylon, hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem. Then for the next six decades plus, he felt the pain of being removed from his beloved homeland.

Why would God allow godly people like Daniel to experience such pain? It's because, as Daniel learned and shared in chapter 9, God has a plan for His people. God, who is like a wise physician-specialist, has a plan to restore broken, sinful people to Himself and to wholeness and holiness.

And His plan involves pain, but it's pain with a purpose.

Why did God chastise the Israelites in the sixth century BC.? Yes, because they had disobeyed Him, but what was the purpose of the pain? God actually had the good of His people in mind, plus the good of a lost world in mind that would benefit from what He was doing with His people, and ultimately the glory of His name.

With that in mind, let's now turn our attention to the end of Daniel 9. I've entitled this message, "*Prayer and Prophecy and the Plan of God.*" We're going to learn about two important matters as we consider the angel Gabriel's response to Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:20-27. But more importantly, we're going to learn about God as we consider these two matters. He 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).

Again, more specifically, we learn that the true God is the God of prayer. He designed prayer. He made a way for sinners like us to pray. He works through prayer. He receives glory through prayer.

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.

Let's observe two things about Daniel's prayer in verses 20-23.

A. He prayed a specific prayer (20). The actual prayer ends in verse 19, and is followed by this explanation by Daniel in verse 20, "While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill."²

² AV, "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people, Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD, for the holy mountain of my God."

Prayer was not a rote ritual for Daniel. When he spoke with God, far from being a mechanical recitation, it was a heart-felt conversation, person to person. Just notice the words Daniel uses here to describe what took place in his prayer closet.

He says he was "speaking," "praying," "confessing," and "making my request to the LORD." Rather than engaging in vague small-talk with God, Daniel prayed a specific prayer marked by two ingredients.

1. *It was a prayer of confession.* "While I was speaking and praying, *confessing* my sin and the sin of my people Israel."

What is confession? The truth is we all sin, and we don't have the ability to rewind the video and undo our shameful past. Is there hope? Yes, God forgives sin if we will do what Daniel did.

Confess our sin. The root of the Hebrew verb Daniel uses (*yada*) means "to throw," or "to cast." To confess means to acknowledge something, whether good or bad. To confess is to admit the truth about something, in this case, what we've done and therefore what we deserve.

That's exactly what Daniel did in this prayer. Four times he admitted something to the Lord (5, 8, 11, 15). "We have sinned."

2. *It was a prayer of supplication.* Daniel asked God for something. And it wasn't a request for himself, but for something five hundred miles away. You'll notice the focus of his petition at the end of verse 20, in the AV, "For the holy mountain of God." In the NIV, "for his holy hill."

The truth is, Daniel was pleading with God for Jerusalem. Jerusalem was in shambles. The city was an embarrassment to God's reputation. It wasn't personal comfort that prompted Daniel's prayer, as is often the case for us. For Daniel, it was something that was affecting God's reputation, namely God's holy hill in Jerusalem. That's what moved this man of God to pray this specific prayer.

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."

Notice that. "While I was still in prayer." Daniel wasn't even finished with his prayer when a guest touched him.

This guest was the angel Gabriel. Daniel refers to him as "the man," not to deny that he was an angel but so as to identify his guest as the person he met in his earlier vision recorded in chapter 8 (8:15-16).

He came in swift flight, says Daniel. The seraphim in Isaiah 6:2 were flying. The angelic beings Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 1:6 had wings and apparently were flying. The angel John saw in Revelation 14:6 was flying, carrying the eternal gospel to all who live on the earth.

So Gabriel came to Daniel in swift flight. But surprisingly, he did not arrive until the end of Daniel's prayer. More about that in a moment.

Don't miss the time-indicator in verse 21. What time of day was Daniel praying? He says the angel arrived "about the time of the evening [AV, 'oblation'] sacrifice."

But wait a minute. Where is Daniel? Apparently he's in Susa (8:2) or Babylon. And where had the evening sacrifice occurred? In Jerusalem, at least five hundred miles away

(as the crow flies). And I say *had* because there hadn't been a sacrifice in Jerusalem for decades since the Babylonians destroyed the temple.

Yet out of sight does not mean out of mind for Daniel.

When he was a boy, Daniel had seen the smoke rise from the temple into the afternoon sky, a sight which reminded him that God accepts sinful people on the basis of a sacrifice offered in their behalf. The evening sacrifice usually began around 3 pm³, and that was the time when Daniel says he prayed, in dependence upon the mercy of God and the sacrifices that had once been offered to Him.

And God answered. He always does when sinners confess their sins to Him in dependence upon the blood sacrifice He ordains. "If we confess our sins," says 1 John 1:9, "he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

So here's what Gabriel told praying Daniel. Verses 22-23, "He instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision.'"

This is so encouraging. We learn three lessons about prayer from these words.

1. *God hears us when we pray.* I'm fascinated by what the angel told Daniel. When did God give Daniel an answer to his prayer? As soon as he *began* to pray. That's significant. Some people think they have to agonize for hours in prayer in order to convince God to grant them mercy. And while we may agonize for hours in prayer, as did our Lord, it's not to convince, and certainly not to coerce God to do anything.

He who is sovereign hears and knows our prayers *before* we even finish.

2. *God responds to us when we seek His honor.* So why did the angel say that God answered Daniel's request? The AV says in verse 23, "For thou art greatly beloved." The NIV puts it this way, "For you are highly esteemed."

The truth is, God doesn't respond to everyone's prayer the way he did to Daniel's. For instance, on another occasion God turned a deaf ear to Jewish prayers, and Isaiah reveals why in Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear."

That's why confession is so important. If we rush into God's presence as though everything is fine, when it's not, our sins hide His face from us and short-circuit our prayer.

But Daniel made open confession, fully trusting in God's mercy to forgive. And God did forgive him, and accept him, and announce through Gabriel, "You are highly esteemed."

"This is the one I esteem," says the Lord in Isaiah 66:2. "He who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

The Lord esteemed Daniel and his prayer because this is exactly what Daniel did. He humbled himself and trembled at God's Word. He *prayed by the Book* and sought the honor of God.

3. *God desires persistence in prayer.* I've been pondering a question. So if God sent Gabriel to give Daniel an answer as soon as he began to pray, and apparently Gabriel

³ Walvoord, 215

flew swiftly but didn't arrive until the end of his prayer, what took so long? Why the delay?

We're not told here, but Daniel's experience in chapter 10 may give us a clue. Daniel had another vision, and an angel came to him and said this.

10:11 "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you."

And here's what the angel told him.

10:12 "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them."

Again, notice that from *the first day* Daniel's prayer was heard. And the angel was dispatched to bring this message to Daniel.

But the angel was delayed. Why?

10:13-14 "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

Apparently the delay was due to a spiritual battle. The angel says that the Lord heard Daniel on day one and sent the angel, but the angel faced some sort of demonic resistance for twenty-one days. Then another angel named Michael came to help, and the first angel (Gabriel?) broke overcame and brought the message to Daniel.

So there's much we don't know about prayer, particularly in the world our eyes can't see. But this we do know. We must be persistent in prayer. Just because we don't see anything happening when we're on our knees certainly doesn't mean something isn't happening.

Prior to Jesus' parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18, Luke recorded this preface in verse 1 (AV), "And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

God desires persistence. He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). Too often, however, we lack persistence.

Andrew Murray once wrote, "Our great danger, in this school of the answers delayed, is the temptation to think that, after all, it may not be God's will to give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's Word, and under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time."

Are you praying for an unsaved spouse or child or parent? Don't stop. God is working and will answer in the way that will maximize His glory and your joy.

Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord said this in Isaiah 65:24, "Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear."

Tim Keller makes an observation in his book on prayer that I find so encouraging. "God will either give us what we ask, or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything He knows."⁴

So we learn about prayer from Daniel, specifically, that God is the God of prayer.

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

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

⁴ Tim Keller, *Prayer*, p. 228.

Have you ever leaned over a drinking fountain with great anticipation for a cool drink, pressed the button, and got drenched by the unexpected spray? You got more than you bargained for! Daniel must have felt that way after what happened to him in Daniel 9.

When Daniel prayed that day, he was perplexed by a specific issue. How long would it be until God would restore the exiled Jews to their homeland? When God sent His answer through Gabriel, He gave Daniel the answer to that question, and a whole lot more! In fact, 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.”

Matthew Henry said, “We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel’s prayer, and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel-grace that is extant in all the *Old Testament*.”⁵

Walvoord and others suggest that the final four verses in Daniel 9 contain one of the most important prophecies in the Old Testament. But there’s a problem in that there are at least *five* different interpretations of what the prophecy means.

So whenever God’s people differ on an interpretation of a passage, it means two things for us. One, we need to interpret cautiously, recognizing we could be missing something. And two, we therefore need to look carefully at the text and not read something into it that’s not there. What is it actually saying?

So at the outset, notice some parameters that God Himself gives through Gabriel as recorded in the text. First, he says that this is what is decreed *for your people and your holy city*. So God is sharing with Daniel His prophetic schedule 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. I say that based on what we read in the New Testament, for when Jesus came and established the new covenant He brought Jews and Gentiles together and made them one.

Ephesians 2:13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away [referring to Gentiles] have been brought near [near to God, a position Israel alone enjoyed according to the previous verse] through the blood of Christ.”

And Ephesians 2:14 elaborates, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one [Jew and Gentile] and has destroyed the barrier...”

So, based on what the New Testament says Jesus accomplished on the cross, *your people* could refer to something broader than the Jews, but not less than. In other words, *replacement theology* says, in essence, that the church has replaced Israel. But, 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 the Jews.

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.

⁵ Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (p. 1452). Peabody: Hendrickson.

He specifically says in verse 24 that “seventy sevens” are decreed for your people and your holy city. Warren Wiersbe explains:

“The number seven has been stamped on Israel from the beginning. They had a Sabbath of days (Ex. 23:12), setting apart the seventh day for honoring God. They also had a sabbath of years (Lev. 25:1–7); they were to let the land lie fallow on the seventh year and give it rest. Because they broke this law, the Israelites went into captivity, one year for each sabbatical year they failed to obey God (2 Chron. 36:21; Lev. 26:33–34). They also had a “sabbath of sabbaths,” with every fiftieth year set apart as the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8–17). But now Daniel was to be introduced to a new series of Sabbaths—seventy “weeks” (seven-year periods), making a total of 490 years of prophetic time for the Jews. (The word “weeks” in v. 24 is actually “sevens”—seventy sevens are determined, making 490 years.) Please note that this 490-year period of time has to do with Jerusalem and the Jews: “your people ... your holy city ...” (v. 24, nkjv). And God has specific purposes to fulfill in this period: the removing of sin and the bringing in of righteousness. The result will be the anointing of the most holy place in the temple, that is, the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to reign in glory from His temple in Jerusalem.”⁶

Is Wiersbe correct? 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 “weeks” of future events.

Actually, the term “weeks” is simply a unit of measure which refers to seven things. We use the word “dozen” in the same way to designate a collection of twelve things. The term doesn’t stand alone. If you went to the store and told the cashier, “Give me a dozen,” he would reply, “A dozen of what?”

So it is in verse 24.⁷ When Gabriel told Daniel, “Seventy sevens are determined,” the natural question is, “Seventy sevens of what?” Clearly the prophecy is dealing with time, but how much time? Seventy seconds, days, months, or years?

The context helps. Verse 2 indicates that Daniel had just finished reading Jeremiah’s prophecy which 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). Lehman Strauss puts it this way, “Daniel had been reading in Jeremiah of the seventy years’ captivity in Babylon. Then it is as though God said, ‘Yes, Daniel, you have discovered rightly that the seventy years captivity recorded by Jeremiah are coming to their end. But now I want to show you another *seventy*, a time period within which I shall accomplish all My plans for My people and My holy city.”⁸

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Da 9:20–27). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ Strauss, 268

⁸ Strauss, 270.

So in His plan, God operates with a time-frame in mind. He says there are 490 years of future activity for Israel. 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.”⁹

There are God’s first three goals for and through Israel. *To finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness.* 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 getting rid of sin is only half the battle. 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.”

So there’s the Lord’s second goal. First, to remove sin. Secondly...

•His aim is to restore righteousness.

To bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. That’s what He 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 rest of the world.

So we could say, my friends, these are our biggest needs, ever since Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden. And God in His grace has set in motion a plan to meet those needs. *To remove sin, and restore righteousness.*

It would be good for us to stop and ponder a question at this point. *Do our goals line up with God’s goals?* God’s goal is to get rid of sin and restore righteousness. Is that our goal? Is it your goal to remove sin and see it replaced with righteousness in *your* life? Is that your goal for *your* family? Is that what you’re praying for your spouse, and kids?

Is it really? Jesus said if your hand is causing you to sin, cut it off. In other words, take whatever drastic action is necessary to get rid of sin and replace it with righteousness.

Do you have any sins in your life that need to go? God told Daniel He was providing a way for that to happen, and He has through His Son. But change starts right here, by saying, “Lord, I want what You want.”

I remember talking with a man who was involved with a woman who was not his wife. As I tried to share Christ with him, he felt very uncomfortable because he knew he needed to leave his life of sin. And he didn’t want to.

⁹ In the AV, “To finish transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for wickedness.”

You say, "I want to change, but how can I?" The answer is, you can't. But here's the good news. Daniel 9 reveals that getting rid of sin and restoring righteousness is what God said *He* would do.

And how would He do it? He told Daniel, and us, right here in verses 25-27, as 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."¹⁰

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, of course, is what Daniel was praying about at the beginning of this chapter, the restoration of the Jews back to the promised land.

When that happens, says the Lord through Gabriel, the clock will start ticking until the Anointed One comes. Who's that? The Messiah. This is a prophecy in which the Lord is telling Daniel when Messiah would arrive on earth.

And when would He arrive? Here's the *Living Bible* paraphrase, "Now listen! It will be 49 years plus 434 years from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem, until the Anointed One comes!"

So the question is, "When would the stop-watch start ticking?" 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)." 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.

Which is the right one? There are pros and cons with each, 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 assume that the clock started ticking in 445 BC. Gabriel said there would be "seven sevens" (that's 49 years) and "sixty-two sevens" (that's 434 years). Why the two-fold breakdown? Walvoord suggests because after the decree in 445, it took a whole generation (49 years) to clear out the debris and restore a thriving city in Jerusalem. The clock would stop ticking 434 years later when the Messiah arrived.

Here's where the scholars debate the fine print. Did Gabriel have in mind solar years or lunar years? Did he account for leap years or not?

Let's not miss the obvious while debating the not so obvious. 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 around the year AD 30. In fact, John MacArthur shows that the

¹⁰ 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."

calculations stop on April 6, 32 AD, the very day Jesus Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and offered Himself as Israel's king.¹¹

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

No wonder the Savior prayed in John 17:1, just hours before they nailed Him to the tree, "Father, the time has come."

And this brings us to something else. Gabriel reveals a second detail in God's prophetic plan, namely, that...

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. And indeed He was, just as predicted. It happened *after* the 483 years, which concluded on Palm Sunday. 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 indeed He was. Killed by the very ones He came to save.

The NIV says, "And will have nothing."¹² 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 that 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."

¹¹ [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)

¹² 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 490 years to accomplish His purpose with Israel. He didn't say the years would necessarily be consecutive years. In fact, 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. Here's another gap.

The final seven, the *seventieth* seven. Gabriel mentions it in verse 27, and says this.

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, 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. Since they were Romans, that would indicate that this coming ruler is 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."

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 during what Jesus called "the times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:24.

Here's what Jesus said, "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 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 listen to Jesus who said this 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, and 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."

My friend, Israel is back in the land today. The first 69 sevens that God predicted have happened just like God 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.