

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker
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18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
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Daniel 9:20-26 “God’s Saving Plan for Israel and for Us”

Intro. In our message last Sunday, we read about Daniel and his discovery from Jeremiah’s prophecy that Israel would return from their captivity after 70 years. In response to God’s Word, Daniel prayed that the sins of his people would not delay the fulfillment of this prophecy (v.19). He longed for the day when His people could return and rebuild their homeland, and he prayed accordingly.

And vv.20ff indicate that as Daniel was praying and confessing sin, God responded to his prayers by sending the Angel Gabriel to deliver to Daniel the message that I have just read to you. God’s response came even before the prophet finished the prayer!¹ Wouldn’t we like it if God answered all our prayers that quickly!

Even though Daniel calls Gabriel a “man” (*Ish*), he does so because both here and in chapter 8 he appears in human form. Gabriel is one of the mighty angels of God. In fact, the word “angel” means “messenger.” Here, Gabriel fulfills his usual function of serving as a messenger for God (Luke 1:19, 26). He is the chief angel of divine communication. He gives Daniel the message found in vv.24-27.

Tonight, we are going to study one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible. In fact Bible commentator Harry Ironside called “this the greatest of all time-prophecies” (Ironside, p.155). You will see how amazing it is because of how accurately most of it has been fulfilled. In fact, you will see how this prophecy gives strong proof that Jesus *is* the Messiah, the Savior God had promised. It also gives more proof that the Bible is the Word of God. Most of the prophecy has been fulfilled. Only v.27 has not yet been fulfilled, but it could be fulfilled in the lifetime of our generation.

So let’s look into this prophecy and see that it shows:

I. GOD’S PLAN REVEALED

Those who believe in atheistic evolution have to believe that there is no purpose or plan to the universe. They say we were just a product of time and chance. But here we see another example of the fact that God is not only the Creator, but also the Sovereign Ruler of our world. He is working to accomplish His purposes in the world. This gives our life meaning and purpose.

It may seem that this prophecy does not directly relate to Daniel’s concern for Israel’s return to their homeland. But the prophecy does relate, because many were wondering as the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins, “Is God through with His people Israel? Does He still have a plan for them?” Well, according to this prophecy, He surely did. Notice what God is going to accomplish through Israel in the years following the time of Daniel. He says in v.24, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.” Six purposes are defined. The first 3 are negative in

¹ It is a mistranslation to say that Gabriel flew to Daniel (v.21). The HCSB says Gabriel “came to me in my extreme weariness.”

force, speaking of undesirable matters to be removed; and the last 3 are positive, giving desirable factors to be accomplished. All 6 also relate to us as Christians. First of all, God has a plan:

A. To Deal with the Sin Problem – Do you realize that mankind has a sin problem? Of course we do. Just take a look at yourself! The Bible says that “All have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). Israel certainly had a problem with sin. In fact, they had been severely judged because of their sinful rebellion against God. Their nation had been conquered, the capital city and temple destroyed, and they had been carried off into captivity. Furthermore, three different words for sin are used in v.24 to describe different aspect of sin.

Well God promises here to deal with our sin problem. Whereas Daniel had been concerned regarding a timely return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, God was more interested in their deliverance from a far more serious bondage, to sin. Jesus said in John 8, “He who sins is a slave of sin.” And since sin was the root cause of their captivity, there could be no lasting solution without dealing with the problem of sin.

By the way, have you noticed that politicians try to offer solutions to problems without dealing with the underlying sin problem? They say murder is a gun problem, but God says murder is rooted in hatred in the heart. That is why government solutions will not work.

So notice what God promised to do concerning sin:

1. To Finish the Transgression - The word for “finish” literally means “to restrain.” It is in the intensive form (Piel), “To restrain firmly.” “Transgression” is used with the article, probably referring to sin in an all-inclusive sense. God would work to restrain sin in the lives of the people of Israel. Indwelling sin, if not restrained, will do its ugly work in us. God did accomplish this purpose, for Israel did become more obedient to God’s Law after the captivity. They finally forsook their idols for the most part.

2. To Make an End of Sins - “Sins” is the word for “to miss the mark” and refers to actual sins of daily life. This speaks of the extent and degree of God’s dealings with the sin problem. Some day He will put an end to sin. It can even be translated that God will destroy sin. I look forward to the day when God makes a complete end of sin in my own life.

3. To Make Reconciliation for Iniquity - The word “reconciliation” is the same word elsewhere translated “atonement.” Here we see *how* God will deal with the sin problem, by providing atonement for sin. In one sense He had provided atonement for sin through the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Yet Hebrews 10:4 rightly says that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Isa. 53:6 gives the true way God would atone for sin, “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” That’s a prophecy about Jesus bearing our sin on our behalf. That’s why the previous verse says, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

Have you allowed God to accomplish these purposes in your life? Have you been saved from your sin? Have you put your faith in Jesus, who died for your sins on the cross?

Not only does God promise to deal with the sin problem, but He also promises:

B. To Bring in Everlasting Righteousness² - When Christ died, He provided not only for sin to be removed, but also for righteousness to be granted. And in this context, “everlasting” is significant. Israel had turned to God numerous times during pre-exilic history, and God had always brought blessing; but the turning had been followed regularly by renewed sinning. Isn’t it great that

² A more literal rendition would be “to bring in righteousness of ages.”

God's salvation makes it possible for us to have *lasting* victory over sin, so that we are not constantly falling back into a life of sin?

If I were to challenge you to live right for 5 minutes, you could probably do that, especially in terms of sinful *actions*. But if I were to challenge you to live right for a whole day, that may be impossible for most, especially sins of thoughts and words. Yet now, because of what Christ has done, and because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the guidance of God's Word, we can experience a certain degree of this victory over sin in this life, and then in heaven or the coming Kingdom, this victory over sin will be complete. Won't that be great?

Have you experienced the life-changing transformation of God's work in your soul? Are you living a more righteous life than you used to? Even though I'm not all that I should be, I'm a whole lot more righteous in my lifestyle that I used to be. You can have lasting righteousness as you repent of your sin, put your faith in Jesus, are born again, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He also gives you His Word to guide you, and cleanse you from sin. He has given you a church family to support your life of righteousness and hold you accountable. You have all that you need to maintain a righteous life.³

C. To Seal Up the Vision and the Prophets – This can mean 1 of 2 things: Once Jesus comes again and sets up the eternal Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness, there will be no need for us to receive special revelations, because everything will be disclosed to us.⁴ So the previous visions and revelations will be sealed up, having accomplished their purpose.⁵ Or, since the Hebrew word translated “seal” can mean ratify or accomplish (see Neh. 9:38; Ezra 3:12; 8:8, 10; Jer. 32:11), this can mean simply that God is going to work to fulfill the prophecies that remain. God will see to it that His Word is kept, His promises fulfilled, and His covenants fully ratified. This seems most likely.

D. To Anoint the Most Holy [Place] – At the time of this prophecy, the holy of holies in Jerusalem had been destroyed. So this evidently refers to a rebuilt holy of holies in a future temple, since it is called the “most holy” place by the double use of the word for holy. However, since the word is used without the article, it could refer to the entire holy temple.

So is this a prophecy of the anointing of the most holy place in the temple a few years later, or after the temple was cleansed under the Maccabees?⁶ Well in light of the contextual description of the conditions in the coming Kingdom, this is the same temple that Ezekiel wrote about for worship in the Kingdom that Christ will set up (cf. Rev. 3:12; 7:15). This will be a temple that will endure during the entire Millennium.⁷ So this prophecy tells us about God's purposes all the way up to the coming Kingdom of righteousness of peace.

³ Peter said in 2 Peter 1:3-4, “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

⁴ Paul said in 1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.... For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”

⁵ Isa. 8:16 says, “Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples.”

⁶ Mentioned as a viewpoint in Tremper Longman III, *The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), p.227.

⁷ Yet in the eternal Kingdom, there will be no temple (Rev. 21:22).

If worship is one major activity that will continue into the coming Kingdom, we should certainly engage in worship now.

II. GOD'S TIMETABLE IS REVEALED

God says here that He is going to accomplish these purposes during a clearly defined timetable. So Daniel is told how God is going to bring all this to pass.

A. The Course of this Time – All of these purposes will be accomplished within the time frame of “seventy weeks” in God’s prophetic calendar. He says in v.24, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city....” The word translated “determined” has a root meaning of “to cut off” or “divide.” The thought is that God had cut off and separated this time period from the rest of history to accomplish the deliverances for Israel that we have just mentioned.

B. The Clarification of this Time - The Hebrew word for “weeks” (*heptad*) simply means a unit of “seven.” Since a week is a unit of seven days, the word usually means “weeks.” But the word could refer to periods of 7 years each (see Ezek. 45:21). The context must determine whether the “sevens” refer to weeks or years. There were certainly times when the Jews understood the term as referring to years, for God had ordained the 7-year cycle: 6 years to work the land, and 1 year to allow the land to rest. In fact, according to 2 Chron. 36:21, one reason the people were sent into captivity for 70 years was to make up for the number of years that they failed to give the land rest every 7th year. Also, after seven sevens of years (forty-nine years), came a time known as “the year of Jubilee.” At that time, the land was to rest, all estates were to be returned to their original owners, all debts were forgiven, and all slaves were to be freed. God worked on cycles of seven. So based on the context and historical fulfillment, we can safely conclude that God is referring to 70, 7-year periods, which equals 490 years.

Something else to keep in mind is the duration of the Jewish year. The Jewish *prophetic* year is based on 360 days, not 365. This is confirmed in the book of Revelation, where 42 months is equated with 1260 days.⁸

So God says He is going to accomplish the purposes outlined in v.24 in a time period of 490 years. That’s a long time period for us, but for the Ancient of Days (7:9), that is nothing (2 Pet. 3:8). So when does this prophetic time period begin? Well consider next:

C. The Commencement of this Time – He says in v.25, “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks....” There were 4 different edicts pertaining to the return of the Judeans and the restoration of Jerusalem by Persian monarchs. The most likely date referred to here would be the decree by Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26) given in 445 B.C.⁹ We have no firm evidence of any decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem before that date. Jerusalem would not truly be rebuilt without rebuilding the walls. In fact, v.25 specifically indicates that the wall would be built again, “even in troublesome times.” Indeed, if you study the book of Nehemiah, you’ll find that the Jews had a great deal of trouble rebuilding the city. A 49-year period from 445 B.C. would

⁸ The Jewish calendar is made up of months of 29 or 30 days. None have 31 days. So the Jewish year has about 355 days.

⁹ Another command to rebuild is given in Neh. 2.

end in 396 B.C.¹⁰ In that year, Jerusalem was completed, as well as the Old Testament canon with the prophecy of Malachi. It's as if God purposed to complete the physical foundations of His city and Temple in the same year that He completed the spiritual foundations of His Word. Israel would not hear another prophet until the coming of John the Baptist.

We must acknowledge that the command to rebuild Jerusalem and restore Israel to their land was only the beginning to God accomplishing His saving purposes. What else needed to take place? Well that leads to the next main point of this prophecy:

III. GOD'S MESSIAH REVEALED

A. The Culmination of this Time in the Messiah – Notice in v.25 that the first 69 7-year time periods would culminate in “Messiah the Prince.” Thus, we actually have a prediction of the actual time the Messiah would come! Looking back, we see that it was not a prediction of the time of the *birth* of the Messiah, but His presentation as both Messiah and Prince of Israel. The triumphal entry best fits with what we would expect to be the presentation of the Messiah. Now with that in mind, could it be that this prophecy predicted when Jesus would be presented to Israel and hailed as the Messiah? Well consider this: If we accept the 445 B.C. date, then we arrive at something remarkable. Sir Robert Anderson discovered that if you add 483 years of 360 days each, you can calculate 173,880 days. He figured that the 69 “weeks” would culminate on April 6, 32 A.D. Some scholars believe that could have been the actual date of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Isn't that amazing? Jesus didn't enter Jerusalem as Israel's King on a whim that day. Every time He said, “...My hour has not yet come” (Jn. 2:4), He knew what hour He was talking about. God told Daniel the very day that Jesus would enter the city of Jerusalem and be acknowledged as the Messiah. So the Jews could have predicted from this prophecy when their Messiah would come. So whoever the Messiah is, he came to Israel in about 32 A.D. and as we shall see next, he died the death of a criminal. Jesus of Nazareth is the only one who fits this prophecy! Now tell me: Is Jesus the Messiah, or not?

This is strong prophetic evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah, the Savior God sent to save us from our sin. Have you believed in Him?

Now let's see how God was going to accomplish our salvation as we consider what this prophecy says about:

B. The Completion of Atonement for Sin – We read in v.26, “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself....” This event will occur “after” the close of the first 69 “weeks”, but nothing is said as to how long after. The word “cut off” is used sometimes to express the thought of the execution of a person with the death penalty (Gen. 9:11; Dt. 20:20; Jer. 11:19). God said that those who broke certain laws were to be “cut off from the people.” Daniel, the esteemed Hebrew prophet, stated that the Messiah had to die. Not only would the Messiah die, but He would even die as a criminal. So not only did God say that He would provide atonement for sin in v.24, but He tells us *how* He would do it in v.26! How could anyone miss the fact that after 69 weeks—to the very day—Jesus rode into Jerusalem as Messiah the Prince, but after that was executed as a common criminal? It happened exactly as Daniel said it would. When you add to this prophecy the prophecies of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, it is clear that the Old

¹⁰ Earlier based on 360-day year.

Testament stated clearly enough that the Messiah would die. And in the context of v.24, it is only by the death of the Messiah that our sins could be atoned for.

Notice also one comment concerning his death, that it will be “not for himself.” It should be translated “with nothing for Himself.” What He should have received was not given to Him. The Messiah didn’t get any of the things He deserved. Instead, He got everything He didn’t deserve— all the sins of the entire world with suffering and death as a consequence. He was rejected by men, treated as a criminal, and even forsaken by God the Father.

So we not only have a prophecy of the timing of the presentation of the Messiah to Israel, but also a prophecy of His execution. This is all the more reason why we should believe in Jesus. Yet as Paul says in 1 Cor. 1, the message of the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews. They had a hard time accepting a crucified Messiah. But they had no excuse for their rejection of a crucified Messiah. You do not have any excuse either.

Now because Israel rejected and crucified their Messiah, we also read in this prophecy of:

C. The Catastrophe of Israel – In the middle of v.26 we read, “And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Here we go again! The city and nation had been destroyed in Daniel’s lifetime, and here is a prophecy that they will be destroyed yet again, especially for their rejection of God’s Messiah. Notice that the subject of the verb “shall destroy” is “the people” and not “the prince that shall come.” The “prince that shall come” is not the “Prince” of v.25, for v.26 is after the time of v.25. This prince is the antichrist who is to come. We have previously learned from Daniel that the antichrist shall arise out of the revived Roman Empire, so based on historical fulfillment, we know this verse is referring to the fact that the Roman army came in and destroyed Israel in 70 A.D. So according to this prophecy, Jerusalem would be rebuilt, but some time after the 483 years it would be destroyed again. Jesus also predicted the destruction of Jerusalem in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. He said in v.2 of that prophecy, “not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

This time the destruction would be even worse than the destruction by Babylon. The last of v.26 says, “The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.” “Flood” or “overflowing” can refer only to the degree of destruction, like a flood.

Have you ever seen the destruction that a flood can cause? Some of you remember the destruction of the floods from the melting snow when Mt. Saint Helen erupted. Or think of the devastation of hurricane Katrina and other hurricanes. In such cases flood waters do more damage than the wind. Indeed, history records that the destruction of Jerusalem was very extensive (describe briefly). The reference to “war” is probably a reference to the Jewish struggle against Rome, and the “desolations” are the conditions that resulted from this struggle. Jesus also clearly warned of this desolation that was to come. This is amazing. There is little doubt but that this was a judgment from God for their rejection of Christ as their Messiah.

Here we see that Israel would mess up yet again and suffer another devastating loss of their country and temple. So do you think that God is finished with Israel? Paul said in Romans 11:1 “Certainly not!” There is still one more 7-year time period left in God’s dealings with Israel. It is a miracle of history that the Jewish people have survived the melting pot of the ages. Even to this day they have existed as a separate entity that is currently being gathered once again into their own land. They have reclaimed control of Jerusalem and much of their land. God isn’t finished with them yet. So far there has been a gap in God’s prophetic calendar of over 1900 years. Come back Wednesday night, and you will hear about the prophetic time period described in v.27.

Conclusion: Do you realize the privilege you have experienced today? Most people do not know what you now know. The only ones that will be ready for the end times that are soon approaching are those who have believed in Jesus. All others are heading to destruction.

Sources: Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2021; H.A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers 1920); John MacArthur, Jr., *An Uncompromising Life* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); John F. Walvoord (vv.25-27 only), *Daniel The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1971); Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Nothing available from Maclaren.

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