

XVI. Daniel in Biblical Perspective  
Daniel's Seventy Weeks  
Daniel 9:20-29  
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May 23, 2010 – Evening Sermon

Our text for this study is Daniel 9:20-29. We will take a look at this challenging text. The great divine J.A. Alexander called this text a swamp that he could not find his way out of but it is a very powerful and wonderful text that God has given to us that we want to handle simply tonight as within its own pages. Before we do I want to mention something pastorally. As one of our dear saints has gone to be with the Lord, in the first three years of my pastorate here I tried to convince Dee Sarter that her name was Sartor and for the last seven years I've given up and she is Dee Sarter but now she has her new name in glory. She would sit here down front to my left every Lord's Day morning and evening and I would have the marvelous opportunity to talk with her. I was able to share with those who gathered for the celebration of her home going and God's grace in her life today her last words. One Sunday night not long ago she would always walk out by me on Sunday nights and she would usually have something to say to me that was just wonderful of course. A couple of months ago she knew the Lord was calling her home and she was in her terminal illness and I mentioned I like to jot down last words of men and women of God in my journal. She came out and said, "You may not be there when I give mine so can I go ahead and give it to you now." I said, "Sure." She said, "Here is what I want you to tell everybody, 'Ya'll come.'" She is with her Lord. Pray for her son Warner and his grief of the loss of his dear mother.

The second thing I want to share is many have asked me about the historical dynamics of the book of Daniel particularly as we walk through the visions of Daniel in which God prophetically wrote out history before it occurred. So we have not only the Babylonian Empire that had brought Daniel and the people of God into captivity and made desolate Jerusalem but then the prophecies of the Medo-Persian Empire and the Grecian Empire or as it is also called the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great where it broke down into four empires. There were the visions that made the point that would then usher in the Roman Empire and then there would be empire after empire until the end of time in which a political, economic and religious movement against the Lord would culminate and then the Lord would come with the final breath of glory having brought to consummation what He had accomplished at His first advent. So I have suggested books to people or given books to people who have asked me about this. There is a website that takes you through about 2,000 years of history that my sister showed me. It will take you about three or four minutes to go through where it will unfold the kingdoms for you. The dates go across the bottom and the kingdoms move across the top. By the way, I believe you will see that there are five and actually there are six Islamic empire extensions and expansions and you are now living in the era of a seventh attempt to expand an Islamic empire in your day but you will see some of them on this site: <http://www.mapsofwar.com/images/EMPIRE17.swf>. That is something for you to look at in more detail.

Now let's take a look at our text for this study. We are in the Medo-Persian Empire. We are under Darius. In his first year Daniel is now praying because of the two

visions he has been given. One vision has informed him of these empires expanding and moving all the way to the consummation of the age with a little horn representing one who will stand against the Lord. Then after the response to his troubled spirit the Lord gave him another vision that informed him of not simply when the end of the indignations would occur which is the period of time in which Israel would be disciplined until the coming of a Messiah all the way up to an Antiochus Epiphanes, but then He gave him the vision that gave him trouble in his heart. It so troubled him that it caused him to search out the Word of God. He went to the book of Jeremiah 28 and found out that the time of indignation will continue for hundreds of years, from a Babylonian Empire all the way to a Roman Empire, then there will be this time in which Israel's judgment and discipline of the Lord will end at the conclusion of the Macedonian Empire but still troubled times under the Roman empire. Now what about Jerusalem? Daniel has been informed by the Lord that the desolation of Jerusalem will only be 70 years and they are almost at the time where they will return. They had been in captivity from 605 B.C. and now they are approaching the decree of Cyrus that would send them back in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy where in the end of 70 years this ruler will send them back and they will return in order to rebuild Jerusalem so that it would no longer be desolate.

Then there was the prayer of Daniel after he had been given that vision and in that prayer Daniel has done a couple of things. So I'll give you a couple of things of introduction before we read this. The first thing is what you are about to hear, this answer to prayer, comes upon Daniel praying a prayer of confession. He has confessed his sin and the sins of his people and that they are rightly under the hand of God's chastisement for these hundreds of years as a people and for these 70 years as Jerusalem but then his request. We confess our sins and then the continual plea throughout the prayer we studied in the last study in Daniel 9:1-19. It was O God show mercy, we don't deserve it but be gracious to give us what we don't deserve and be merciful and withhold from us what we do deserve. Prayer has led him to the Word and the Word has led him back to prayer and in the midst of that prayer and the Word of God where Daniel has Jeremiah 28 in his hands, what happens? That is where we pick up.

Daniel 9:20, 21 says **20** *While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God (meaning Mt. Zion, meaning Jerusalem),* **21** *while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.* Gabriel has come and his appearance is as a man but clearly he is angelic as you see in his ubiquity when he swiftly arrives in the presence of Daniel.

He goes on to say in Daniel 9:22, 23; **22** *He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.* **23** *At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.* Before I get to the vision I'd like to look at the answer to Daniel's prayer. This is what you might consider as the interrupted prayer. In other words, while Daniel is speaking and praying the answer comes while he is praying. It's not after he's praying. While he is confessing his sin and asking God for mercy, the Lord comes to answer the prayer

through the angelic ministry of Gabriel which is the second time Gabriel has arrived. Gabriel arrived at a very specific time which was the evening sacrifice.

Here are a couple of things about that time. The evening sacrifice was approximately 3 to 4pm in the afternoon. The second thing is how could they do the evening sacrifice because the sacrifice had to be given at the temple? The temple is back in Jerusalem and it's destroyed. So how are they going to give the evening sacrifice? I think the answer is very clear that Daniel wasn't engaged in an actual evening sacrifice but the habit of gathering in worship and praise to God and all that entails in his life had been so strong that even throughout all of this time he still regularly came aside to worship the Lord at that hour. So at the hour of the evening sacrifice even though the temple is not there and the priest is not there to give him a sacrifice, while he is confessing and repenting, in the midst of that the Lord God comes to answer his prayer.

The interpretations of the answer that we're about to look at in Daniel 9:24-27 are multiple to say the least. When I have the chance to take people to the land of the Bible we go to the Church of the Nativity and the cave which is right next to the traditional cave of commemorating the birth of Christ under the Church of the Nativity. We go into where Jerome died and was buried. This is the man of God who translated the Bible from Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew into Latin and then became known as the Vulgate translation. He was also a highly productive commentator. On this text he wrote out nine possible interpretations. That's the bad news. The good news is I'm not going to give you all nine. I'm just going to give you one in this study. To get you started on looking at some of the rest you can get your ESV study Bible and they will give you four of them. We'll call those the top four and not the bottom five. In order for us to be able to finish this I'm only going to focus on where the Lord would properly lead us in the interpretation of this.

So there is confession and petition. Right in the midst of all of it there is answered prayer before it is finished and while there are multiple interpretations I can't get away from two things. Number one the Bible says that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable. Would that include this text? Yes, that includes this text. You can't dodge it. You shouldn't dodge it because it's profitable. The second thing is four times in the text Gabriel says, "I have been sent. I have come out to answer your prayer about the time of indignation throughout these kingdoms (hundreds of years), about the desolation of Jerusalem (about 70 years) and sent to give you understand." He says that four times in just those verses I read. He says, "I've come to give you understanding." Three times he uses the word understanding and one time he uses the word insight. I have come to give you discernment or insight and I have come to give you understanding. If he has come to give understanding then what does that tell us? It tells us this isn't hard. It is understandable. Could it be that the only reason it is not understandable is because we have fashioned systems that we try to make it say rather than just let it say only what it says and not more than what it says and simply what it says and that's all that I would purport to you on this.

So what do we know in the prayer of mercy and confession? Daniel knows there is going to be 70 years which are almost up in the reign of Darius and now God has loved him. Because God has loved Daniel and God's love is upon him so therefore He is not only giving him His Word, He is going to come and give him understanding. God

answers Daniel's prayers and comes to minister with enlightenment to those who call upon Him and to those whom He has loved. What does that mean for us?

The second thing is trying to understand this vision. Here is what Gabriel tells him in Daniel 9:24-27; **24** *“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city (i.e. Israel and Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. 25 Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”*

Harry, what do you think this is telling us? The first thing it is telling us is there are going to be 70 weeks (70 sevens have been literally decreed) and will they be symbolic or are they actual? For those who would argue that they cannot be symbolic I want to ask you, how many times did Jesus say you have to be ready to forgive someone? He gave them the same formula of seventy times seven which means 490. So that means I have to forgive someone up to 490 times but if they go to the 491<sup>st</sup> time I don't have to forgive them then, right? No, obviously He's not giving a formula that gives you the limits of your forgiveness but He is giving you a statement of seventy times seven clearly using the number seven of perfection and He is giving us that symbolically. Having said that I actually don't think this is symbolic but I do know believe that those who do are necessarily outside the bounds of Biblical orthodoxy. Are they right and are you right too? No, one of us will be wrong or both of us can be wrong but I do understand why someone can look at a prophetic use of numbers in a symbolic way where you don't need to go through and figure out the years yet in actuality it's just a symbolic statement that's just pointing to the finished work of Jesus Christ. That's the first thing but I believe it's actually literal so I wanted to go ahead and get that out of the way.

The second thing I want you to see from Daniel 9:24-27 is that the 70 weeks are divided into three parts. There is the seven of sevens that is you have a week of sevens. Then you have 62 weeks of seven and then without reference but indication there is a 70<sup>th</sup> seven or a final week of sevens. This final week is not defined or developed but it is clearly included because there is one, then there is 62 and then there is a final seven as you have moved to 63 so now we have one more seven of sevens that would actually be left of 49 years. So we have the 7 of sevens, the 49. We have the 62 and then we have a final seven of sevens at the end. Now with those three there, there is one more thing you have to see. We are going to keep building. Not looking at just any one of those three but in all seventy of the sevens, all 490 of the years, it is stated that the seventy sevens are there to accomplish six things in the text. Six things will be accomplished by the seventy of the sevens.

What would those six things be? There are three that are negative and three that are positive. We will look at the first three that are negative. In Daniel 9:24 it starts off

by saying, *Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city* (i.e. Israel and Jerusalem)... So for Israel and Jerusalem seventy weeks have now been decreed which is 490 years. What are those 490 years devoted to? They are there to accomplish six things. The first three are negative. One is to finish the transgression. Two is to put an end to sin. Three is to atone for iniquity. There is the redemptive work that these 490 years usher in and accomplish. Then there are three positive. The fourth one is to bring in everlasting righteousness. Five is to seal both vision, notice the language, not vision and prophesy, but vision and prophet that is the Word and the office to give the Word, both the revelation and those who are used to give revelation. Sixth and last is to anoint a holy of holies. Tuck that away because that's what the 70 weeks are to accomplish.

Now let's go to the first 7 sevens which is in Daniel 9:25a; Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. What does "going out of the word" mean? That is language meaning a decree. Let's look at the book of Ezra. Ezra 1:1-4 says, *1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: 2 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."* Then they rose up and went.

By the way do you know how many rose up and went from all of those who were in captivity for those 70 years? It was about 20,000 and that was it. The others had gotten "easy" in Babylon and now Medo-Persia. Now, comes the decree of Cyrus. Will this be the only decree? Artaxerxes is going to give the decree again in Ezra 7. Then Artaxerxes three years later is going to give another decree and then finally Nehemiah is going to come and bring in a lot more of the people and it will get done but that's another study for another time. But here is the decree.

We have 70 years. The Babylonian captivity began in 605 B.C. now in the first year of Cyrus which is about 538 B.C. around 70 years later, there is a decree for the people to prepare to go back. Now the 70 years are fulfilled that Jeremiah prophesied and now they are headed back. Gabriel says "Now the 70 years is fulfilled." The decree is given and from that decree all the way to these six things will be 70 sevens, 490 years and the first seven of the sevens will accomplish something. It starts with the decree and let's look back at Daniel 9:25a; *Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem (Ezra 1) to the coming of an anointed one, a prince (a royal priest), there shall be seven weeks.* The royal priest will be a king priest, an anointed one, a royal prince. This will start and over a period of 49 years there will come this return. They will start the process of rebuilding Jerusalem and it will put in motion that which will lead to the coming of an anointed one, a royal priest in the hands of God that God has anointed to send. So what is the first thing we learned? We learned the first sevens will have a decree from Cyrus. The people will return to Jerusalem and

begin to restore and build Jerusalem and ultimately the temple. Also a process to imitate the coming of a royal king will happen at that time.

Now we go to the next 62 sevens and now a series of things are related to these. Daniel 9:25b says, "...*Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.*" This is telling you two things. One, the time of the finishing during this 62 sevens and the continual rebuilding of Jerusalem there will be a troubled time. Here comes the Macedonian Empire and the coming of a Roman Empire. We have a Medo-Persian Empire with troubled times. Read the book of Nehemiah. There is a troubled time. You will have the Macedonian Empire. You will have the rising of the Roman Empire. There will be this troubled time but after the 62 weeks at the end of the 63<sup>rd</sup>, the anointed one will not only have come but that anointed one will be cut off and shall have nothing.

Daniel 9:26, 27 says, **26** *And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. 27* *And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.* What do we have here? We have this movement back, the continued rebuilding and the restoration in the troubled times of all of these empires rising and falling and all these attacks going back and forth during that time as different empires took over. Then the royal prince that has been prophesied will have risen up and at the 62 weeks this one will have been cut off.

Who is that royal priest? I am a very simple man. I think its Jesus; He's the Christ, the Anointed One. That's who that is talking about. Who is it that will put an end to the transgression? Who is it that will put an end to sin? Who is it that will bring everlasting righteousness? It's not my righteousness. What kind of righteousness is that? My righteousness is the filthy rags righteousness. This is a Divine righteousness. This is the righteousness of God. So who will bring an everlasting righteousness? Who is it that will be the one who gives us the Word in its final statement? Have you read the book of Hebrews? God has finally spoken in His Son. The vision is sealed up. Who is the final prophet? It is Christ Himself.

What about the anointing of the holy of holies? Have you read John 1:14? John 1:14 says, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" What is in the Holy of Holies back in the temple? It was the shekinah glory of God. When Jesus comes, the Word became flesh and tabernacled (dwelt) among us and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. That is fulfilled in Jesus. Harry, where would that moment be? Go right to the baptism of Jesus. The Spirit of God pours out and the Father says about His Son, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased." So what is a half a week later? It would be three and a half years and He is cut off. That is the legal language of the book of Leviticus of what was done to a criminal. He is cut off. So where do we go from His baptism to three and a half years later? We end up at the cross where He is cut off from us and where He now brings an end to sacrifice. Again, ever read the book of Hebrews? God's final sacrifice has been given, His Son.

Then there will rise up these decrees, these wars, desolations and that's why Jesus takes the time in Matthew 24 to unfold for us the declaration, "Before this generation passes away..." Remember that last week of 49 years? "Before this generation passes away the desolation, the temple destroyed and all torn down" so not only did He bring an end to sacrifice with His sacrifice, He'll bring an end to sacrifice in that last seven by the temple being torn down and a desolator, General Titus himself of Rome will come in to fulfill the prophecy of the Lord. Every stone upon them will be thrown down and sacrifices will not only be ended by the decree of the Lord and the fulfillment of His Son but now it ended by the decree of God by bringing the war like a flood that then flows upon Jerusalem and the desolator brings it all to an end. Who is behind the desolator? It is the desolator, Satan and in the end he, the desolator will be cast into the lake of fire.

I have some brethren who say they are with me all the way up to the 62 weeks and the other week but then they say "Harry, there's this gigantic parenthesis and then comes the last week at the end." Friends, that doesn't fit the text. The text tells us it's pointing to the finished work of Christ on the cross. Did He bring an end to sin? He hasn't removed its presence but He has won the victory over it so that now if you're in Christ there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is no sacrifice of atonement that is necessary. He has fulfilled all of those six things in those 70 weeks that is required, all the way down to the desolation of the Holy City.

I wish I had more time but I don't so let's just look back at Daniel 9:26; **26** *And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.* Who are the people of the prince? The prince to come is the prince that was prophesied and that was Jesus. Who were His people? His people were Israel so when He came and they said 'no' what did Paul tell us? Paul said, "The tree was cut off." I don't think God is through yet because I think the Bible promises us in the book of Romans and in other places that God is going to bring the Gospel back to them through whom the Gospel came to us, the Jewish people, but I think the people of the prince to come is referring "He came to His own who rejected Him" and said, "Crucify Him." They rejected Him and took a formal vote and said, "No He's not the Messiah. He's not the Prince. He's not our Prince. He is not our King" and therefore Jesus says within these 49 years, within this generation, shall come desolation. Therefore the desolation comes upon them.

So Harry, when do you think that 70<sup>th</sup> week finished? I think it finished in 70 A.D. The temple is destroyed. The city is in ruins and conquered. Our Lord has won the victory and sent the Gospel around the world to the children of Abraham who are circumcised in the heart and then God calls us to take the Gospel back to those through whom it came to us that we preach the Gospel to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

I only have time to highlight just a couple of takeaways and here they are. The first takeaway is God answers the prayers of His confessing and repentant people. Jesus loved Daniel. He heard his prayers, his confession and his repentance and He came. My dear friends, Jesus loves His people. He loved Daniel and He sent the answer. He loves you. Now call upon Him in prayer and repentance. He delights in coming to minister to you even giving His angels such ministries to us that we don't even know of it at times.

The second takeaway from the text is Christ was, is, and always must be the focus of the Scriptures. This focuses us upon Christ and His victorious work over sin, His bringing of righteousness that's everlasting and the Gospel. We're forgiven of our sins.

We are given a full righteousness. The glorious Truth sacrifice is finished. One Sacrifice has been given once and for all and now we not only have a King who has come, a Priest who has given us the sacrifice but we have a Prophet who has given us the final Word and it is all fulfilled in Him who is anointed in the Holy Place. He is the Holy Place. That place in Jerusalem in the temple was only a mere reflection of Him, the Lord of glory.

The third takeaway is that God is sovereign over all of history and in the midst of what seems to be an irrepressible onslaught of evil, God's ways and God's triumphs are even then being secured. Daniel is troubled. Daniel sees all of this indignation, all of these troubled times and his heart is burdened. The Lord says here, "I want to give you understanding not that I'm removing what seems to be an unstoppable wave of evil for hundreds of years but what I'm doing as the Lord of history is giving the greatest triumph of all in the midst of it."

I'll be doing a funeral tomorrow and I've been thinking about this. It is a very difficult ending of a young man's life and I've been thinking about this in this way also. In the midst of what seems to be sorrow upon sorrow, the triumph of despair and evil, the Lord may be doing His greatest work in the lives of people. Sampson died and more of God's enemies were slain in his death than in his life. Adam sinned and O what a terrible thing. It opened the gate of God's grace that would send another Adam, Jesus. Can you imagine the fiendish laughter of hell when this Prince, the Anointed One, was cut off at the cross? Yet right there was the greatest triumph of all for us because it was the end of transgression, the bringing of righteousness. The Holy of Holies had come. The Word had come and we are free in Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this wonderful text of Scripture. Thank You for the privilege to walk through it simply. Father, would You allow us to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture? Father, would You guide our ways and our thoughts that they might be Your thoughts. Thank You for Jesus the Anointed One, the Prophet, Priest and King; as Prophet He has given us the Word and we look for no more prophets to bring Your Word only those who will preach and teach it. It's been given. We don't look for another Holy Place because we have Jesus and He has us. Lord, thank You He has set us free from sin and He has clothed us with His righteousness. Now, Father, help us to send that message throughout all the world and to those who in that day saw Him and heard Him, a people. May we take the Gospel back to them also for I am not ashamed of the Gospel, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. In Jesus' Name, Amen.