

The Prophetic Message of Daniel:

Unveiling the Future and Strengthening Faith

In Daniel chapter nine, we analyzed Daniel's prayer when he realized that the time of the Babylonian captivity was coming to a close. He began to seek the Lord in prayer. We've been looking at Daniel's prayer to God. I had planned to conclude the study on his prayer and move along, but then I thought, we've spent all these weeks talking about his prayer, but what about God's answer?

So, I want to spend a few moments talking about God's answer to Daniel's prayer. I'll read just one verse, Daniel 9:24.

*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.*

The angel came to inform Daniel that when he started praying, the answer was on the way, a marvelous thing to know, even though he didn't realize it. Sometimes, we wonder if God hears when we pray, but He always does. God's answer to Daniel's prayer will be a word of prophecy, and God will clearly lay it out for Daniel.

Why Should We Study Prophecy?

Why study prophecy? There are several good reasons, but I'll mention three.

First, God must have considered prophecy important because He included so much of it in the Bible. If we remove all the prophecy from the scriptures, we lose about one-third of the entire Bible.

Second, the study of prophecy gives us an exalted view of Christ. The first time Jesus came to earth, He came as a babe in a manger, but His second coming is

entirely different; He will come in great power and glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to rule and reign.

Third, the study of prophecy helps us live a godly life. 1 John 3:3 says that everyone who has hope in Christ purifies themselves as He is pure. Prophecy also offers hope in a seemingly hopeless age.

Three Aspects of God's Answer for Daniel

We've studied Daniel's prayer, and now let's delve into God's answer, which came to him in a prophetic vision.

The opening verse of the prophecy signifies the angel's role in educating Daniel about God's plans. It presents a decree regarding Jewish history. Three critical aspects of this decree deserve our attention today: the length of time, the people involved, and the program of God.

I can't think of a more relevant passage of Scripture for our lives today than Daniel chapter nine, as I wholeheartedly believe that we are on the verge of the Lord's return. The stage is set, all the indicators are there, and the signs are unmistakable. Jesus is ready to come back and gather His church.

Let's begin with the length of time, which involves some math. The text says, "70 weeks are determined." The Hebrew word for "seven" designates a unit of time divided into seven segments like hours, days, weeks, months, or years. Most commentators agree that in this context, these units refer to years. With that in mind, the text refers to 490 years or 70 sets of seven years. So, stay with me as we work through this.

Next, looking at the people involved, the text states that the decree pertained to "your people" and "your holy city." Here, "your people" are the Jews, and the "holy city" is Jerusalem. This change is a significant shift in the focus of Daniel's prophecies, which were previously centered on Gentile nations. But now, the spotlight is firmly on Israel and Jerusalem.

Lastly, the term "decree" implies a divine decision or determination. God has set this specific period of 490 years in human history to fulfill His unique purpose for Israel and Jerusalem. God decreed a 490-year plan for Daniel's people. He would bring them out of Babylon after 70 years of captivity, but there's another 70 years in the future that will have a profound impact, even in Duncannon, PA.

God has set a specific timeframe to fulfill His purpose and program for His chosen people.

What Will Happen in the 70th Week?

The focus now shifts towards the Jewish people. What God is about to reveal to Daniel pertains specifically to them and revolves around Jerusalem. Currently, all eyes are on Jerusalem and Palestine – the Holy Land. People are wondering what will happen next. It's important to understand God's program during this 490-year span. As we'll see, 69 of those 70 weeks have already passed, leaving only one week yet to be fulfilled. Let's delve into the six things God will accomplish, starting with verse 24.

1. To finish the transgression: This refers to the transgressions of Israel. The cross redeemed the nation's sins, but they rejected Him. However, in that final week, as the book of Zechariah tells us, a divine cleansing will occur – a fountain will be opened to cleanse the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from sin and uncleanness.
2. To make an end of sin: The national sins of Israel will come to an end at the second coming of Christ. God will remove their blinders, and they will accept Jesus as their Messiah.
3. To make a reconciliation: God provided redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus during these 70 weeks. He desires that none should perish, and His sacrifice applies to both Jews and Gentiles.
4. To bring everlasting righteousness: This signifies the return of Jesus at the end of the 490 years to establish His earthly kingdom. He will deal with His enemies and establish His kingdom on earth, aligning it with the heavenly Kingdom.
5. To seal up visions and prophecies: Every word spoken by God, including all prophecies, will come to pass and be fulfilled, vindicating this prophecy and every other in the Bible. God's word is true, and He fulfills what He has spoken.
6. To anoint the Most Holy: This references the anointing of the Holy of Holies in the Millennium Temple, as described in Ezekiel 41 to 46. The temple will be restored, and a new Jerusalem will descend from heaven.

Why do we need a new one? Simply put, because the old one has been severely damaged. If you check the news, you'll see that the old Jerusalem has taken quite a beating. By the time Jesus arrives, it will have suffered devastating destruction. Yet, God is in control.

Three Segments of Jewish History

Now, let's examine the divisions of Jewish history, as outlined in verses 25 to 27. These verses break down the seven 70s, or the 490 years, into three separate periods.

In verse 25, we read about seven weeks, which equals 49 years. Then, there are 62 weeks, amounting to 434 years. Now, jump to verse 27, which mentions one week equaling seven years. So, if you add up 49, 434, and 7, you get 490.

The starting point for this 490-year period is crucial for interpreting the prophecy. Verse 25 says, "from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince." This time is often associated with the restoration of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah after the Babylonian captivity.

The second period of 434 years takes us to Christ, who was crucified but not for Himself. He died for both Jews and Gentiles. After 69 weeks (483 years), there's a pause, a time-out, a break in the timeline.

During this break, we see the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, led by Titus in 70 AD. After Israel rejected Christ, the Jewish state ceased to exist, and the Jewish people were scattered worldwide. This time gap between the 69th and the 70th week also marks the age of grace.

The Timing of Jesus' Return

Why isn't Jesus returning right now? The answer lies in God's plan, for He has a specific timing for everything. While Jesus first came into Jerusalem on a donkey, He will return on a white horse as prophesied in the Jewish tradition. However, since we're in an age of grace, Jesus has yet to return because He's giving humanity time to repent and turn to Him. This mystery of the gospel, as discussed in the Book of Ephesians, centers on the concept of the church. Understand that the idea of the church was entirely unknown to the Old

Testament prophets. They couldn't comprehend what God had in store for the Gentiles or how His grace would extend to people they considered insignificant.

Today, we find ourselves in these pews as part of this age of grace. The final week, the 70th week, is a seven-year period projected into the future that is yet to occur. The activities of the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, an imitation of the Prince of Peace, characterize this last week. The devil often imitates what God does, and this charismatic figure will come in history, peddling peace, claiming to resolve conflicts and bring world peace. The Antichrist is a skilled salesman and corresponds to the little horn in Daniel chapter seven and the beast in Revelation chapter 13.

As for me, I'm not actively searching for the Antichrist. I'm looking for Christ, not the fake one. The church age concludes with the church being lifted from the earth. Some may speculate about the church's involvement in the tribulation – pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib – but I'm not concerned about that. I believe we'll be on the first bus out of here. The tribulation isn't about the church; it's a different matter altogether.

Some say God will allow the church to go through the tribulation to purify it. That's not a theology I embrace. God is our righteousness, and our hope in Him purifies us. When the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ will rise, and we'll be caught up in the rapture. It's an exciting prospect. God seems to be taking us one at a time now, but one day, He'll gather us all together and take us home.

After Jesus raptures His church and takes His people home, the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel. We can see this in Daniel when it says, "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week." However, he will break the covenant in the middle of that week. The Antichrist will bring about significant changes, allowing the construction of a temple and the resumption of sacrifices and offerings.

After the Rapture

The people of Israel will initially be excited, thinking everything is perfect, but it won't be. The Antichrist will end sacrifices and offerings, establish an image in the temple, and demand worship. This event is referred to as the "abomination of desolation." The devil has always desired to be worshiped and has wanted the

glory and worship that God alone deserves. He will erect an image in the restored temple and demand allegiance from everyone on the planet.

What Israel initially thinks will be the millennium will turn out to be the Great Tribulation, also known as the time of Jacob's trouble. It's called that because it primarily concerns Israel. In the Book of Revelation, the church is not mentioned after chapter four, as it doesn't pertain to the church but to God's promise to Abraham to gather his people.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, recognizing that their rejection of Him would bring on Jacob's trouble, a season of great suffering. Only the second coming of Jesus Christ will end this horrific period in human history.

Where Are We in God's Timeline?

So, where are we on the timeline of biblical prophecy? I keep it simple. We are approaching the final week. The stage is already set, and things are in place. The world is waiting for someone to step out of the shadows and claim they can resolve the world's problems. Our world is in turmoil, from domestic violence to moral decline. Many have lost their sense of purpose and a healthy view of God. But the stage is indeed set for the emergence of the Antichrist.

God has a plan for His church, and given where we are on the prophetic timeline, it's crucial to delve into the Book of Revelation to understand the Antichrist better. This study will provide us with insights into the direction the world is heading. Praying for the peace of Israel is essentially praying for the imminent return of Christ because real peace for Israel can only come through His return. Israel will not be destroyed, and the world will not end in nuclear disaster because God is in control and working according to His plan.

While the devil may make moves, God will counter every one of them. The devil has already been defeated, as Jesus declared on the cross, "It is finished." We'll spend the next few weeks looking at the world's current state and the rising hostilities against Israel, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The world's hatred for Israel is growing, while the love for God is diminishing. It's like a powder keg with a lit fuse, but remember that God is in control and keeps His promises.

So, let's pray for the peace of Jerusalem and be grateful that we know Jesus as our personal Savior. When that trumpet sounds, we'll be caught up in the clouds,

and the Bible assures us that we will be forever with the Lord. We enter into heaven with Jesus leading the way, and it's not about being good enough but about God's grace, mercy, and the righteousness of Christ. He keeps His promises, including those to Israel, and will provide, care for, protect, deliver, and shelter us.

Israel may have its Iron Dome to intercept missiles, but they have an even greater protector – God who loves and chose them. Israel isn't perfect, but neither are we. So, as you watch the news everywhere, remember the prophetic timeline and the imminent return of the Lord. How close are we to His return? We may not be here next Sunday, but we should encourage one another with the hope that He returns. Maranatha! He is coming.