



*The Most High
God rules over
the kingdoms of
the world and
appoints anyone
he desires to
rule over them.*

(Dan 5:21b NLT)

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The Coming of the Angel Gabriel (9:20-23)

9:20 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--²¹ 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.²² He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding.²³ 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:

9:20 *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... (ESV)*

- Before Daniel finished his prayer, God sent an answer.
- God is concerned for his children, and he hears and answers their prayer.
- Sinlessness is not a condition for answered prayer.
- Daniel was confessing not only the sin of his people but his own sin.
- Here is one of the greatest saints who ever lived, and yet he still had not reached the point where he could say, *“I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”* (Prov 20:9).
- This shows that even after the believer has been saved, there will be need for confession of sin.

^{9:21} 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*. (ESV)

- Gabriel is called a “*man*” because he appeared in human form.
- Daniel pointed out that this was the same angel who had visited him in “*the vision at the first*” (cf. 8:15–16).
- Apparently, Gabriel was the chief angel for divine communication.
- He seems also to have appeared in bodily form to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19), and to Mary (Luke 1:26–27).
- The Hebrew words translated “*in swift flight*”, would be more accurately translated “*in my extreme weariness*” as it is translated by the NASB, Keil, Leupold, and Goldingay.
- Gabriel arrived at the time when the “*evening sacrifice*” would have been offered, that is, between about 3:00 and 4:00 p.m.
- Obviously, no literal sacrifice was made at this time in Babylon, but this was a time of day commonly used by devout Israelites for prayer (cf. Ezra 9:5; Ps 141:2).

9:22 *He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.”* (ESV)

- Whatever rare gifts Daniel may have received from on high, gifts that were far superior to those of the learned men of his time, he, nevertheless, knew himself to be a man who knew ***nothing unless*** God ***enlightened*** him.
- So, he tells us the angel “*made me understand,*” not by some enlightenment that is imparted internally as was apparently the case in 2:19, in chapter 4, and in 5:17ff, but through ***external verbal*** communication, because he says: “*speaking with me and saying.*”
- Gabriel tells Daniel the purpose of his coming. It was to “*give you [Daniel] insight and understanding.*”

^{9:23} *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. (ESV)*

- “*At the beginning*” of Daniel’s “*pleas for mercy a word went out*” from the Lord, which Gabriel had come to deliver.
- Daniel’s fervent prayer, humble spirit, and commitment (fasting, v. 3) touched the heart of God.
- The pronoun “*I*” is emphatic in the Hebrew, stressing the fact that God sent one of his most important angels, Gabriel, to relay the message to Daniel.
- It also seems to indicate that Gabriel came in person, not in vision.
- Daniel had been heard by God, and one of God’s mightiest angels, Gabriel (whose name means “mighty one of God”), had come with an answer because Daniel was “*greatly loved*” (cf. Luke 1:28).
- Since Gabriel had come from God’s presence with an answer to Daniel’s prayer, the prophet was admonished to give careful attention to the revelation he was about to be given (“*consider the word and understand the vision*”).

The Vision of the Seventy Sevens (9:24-27)

- The vision of seventy weeks (or “sevens”) in Daniel 9:24-27 is a well-known Old Testament passage for evangelical students of prophecy.
- In particular, Daniel’s famous prophecy is very popular with dispensationalists, and, as almost all dispensationalists readily admit, it is one of the **key passages** they use (or, in my opinion, **misuse**) to build many of the central teachings of their eschatological system.
- For example, Walvoord, a prominent dispensationalist himself, comments that the *“interpretation of Daniel 9: 24-27 is of major importance to premillennialism as well as pretribulationism.”* Being such, he says it is the “key” to prophecy and, consequently, *“one of the most important prophecies of the Bible.”*

The Vision of the Seventy Sevens (9:24-27)

- Dispensationalists claim to find in Daniel 9 several of their more distinctive doctrinal and prophetic ideas, among which are:
 - Distinctive divine programs for Israel and the Church based on the idea of a prophetic and historical gap, during which time God's purpose for Israel is temporarily suspended.
 - Belief in a future period of intense tribulation, precisely seven years in length, during which the divine program for Israel is resumed.
 - The rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem at the inception of this seven-year period and its subsequent destruction.
 - The emergence of a personal antichrist who will establish a seven-year covenant with Israel, and reinstitute the Levitical sacrificial system.

The Vision of the Seventy Sevens (9:24-27)

- This dispensational dependence upon Daniel 9, however, is unfortunate because historically, ***great difficulties*** are associated with the interpretation of this passage:
 - J. A. Montgomery calls the prophecy “the Dismal Swamp of Old Testament criticism.”
 - Young comments that “this passage . . . is one of the most difficult in all the OT, and the interpretations which have been offered are almost legion.”
 - Baldwin warns that “the last four verses [of Daniel 9] present the most difficult text in the book, as commentators agree.”
- Even dispensationalists recognize this problem:
 - Kenneth L. Barker writes: “It is admitted that these verses are among the most difficult to interpret in Daniel.”
 - Gleason L. Archer, Jr. mentions the long-standing nature of the problem: “It is not to be wondered at that Bible scholars down through the centuries had difficulty dealing with the chronological factors involved in the prophecy of the seventy weeks.”
 - L. S. Chafer agrees: “scholars have differed greatly in their interpretation of this passage.”
- Therefore, recognizing the difficulties in handling this passage, we now proceed with great caution as we seek to discover its meaning.

The Vision of Seventy Sevens (9:24-27)

9:24 "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. 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.

The Vision of Seventy Sevens (9:24-27)

9:26 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. 27 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." (NIV)

9:24 *“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, 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. (ESV)*

- Daniel begins by telling us that “Seventy *weeks* are decreed about your people and your holy city...”
- I believe the NIV has done a better job translating this opening phrase when it says “Seventy ‘*sevens*’ are decreed...”.
- “Seventy *weeks*” is misleading. In Hebrew the word actually is the word “seven,” or perhaps more accurately “a group of seven” something.
- It ***could*** mean a week because a week is a group of seven days, but it does not ***necessarily*** mean a week.
- And in this case, as nearly all writers recognize, it is referring to groups of seven ***years***.
- If literal ***weeks*** are involved, the prophecy would be meaningless, since the events described could not have occurred within that time framework (seventy weeks = about a year and a half).
- If weeks of ***years*** are involved, then the time period could reasonably describe the number of years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time of Christ.

9:24 *"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, 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. (ESV)*

- Starting in the next verse, Gabriel will divide these “*Seventy ‘sevens’*” of years (i.e., **490 years**) into **three subperiods**:
 - “*Seven ‘sevens’*” of years (mentioned in vs. 25) = **49 years**
 - “*Sixty-two ‘sevens’*” of years (mentioned in vss. 25 and 26) = **434 years**
 - A final period of “*one ‘seven’*” of years (mentioned in vs. 27) = **7 years**
- Here we’re told that it will take this period of **490 years** (divided into **three** subperiods) to accomplish the following **six** things:
 1. *“to finish the transgression”*
 2. *“to put an end to sin”*
 3. *“to atone for iniquity”*
 4. *“to bring in everlasting righteousness”*
 5. *“to seal both vision and prophet”*
 6. *“to anoint a most holy place”*
- These phrases are difficult to interpret since there is so little context to explain what each of them means. Consequently, commentaries can vary **significantly** in how they understand each of these six things.

9:24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, *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.* (ESV)

- “*to finish the transgression*” – refers to Israel’s completing her transgression against God. This occurs when Israel culminates her resistance to God by rejecting his Son and having Him crucified ¹
- “*to put an end to sin*” – He made a perfect atonement for sins, as written in Hebrews 1:3, “*After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...*” ²
- “*to atone for iniquity*” – clearly speaks of Christ’s atoning death, which is the ultimate atonement to which all Temple rituals point (Heb. 9: 26).

¹ Gentry Jr, Kenneth L. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (pp. 28-30).

² https://web.archive.org/web/20170422130821/http://preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1921_mauro_seventyweeks.pdf

9:24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, 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. (ESV)

- “*to bring in everlasting righteousness*” – speaks of the objective accomplishment of righteousness, Christ secures this within the seventy-week period, while in his redemptive activity on earth. Speaking of Christ’s work, Paul writes: “*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*” (Rom 3:21-22).¹
- “*to seal both vision and prophet*” – “*vision*” was a technical name for revelation given to the OT prophets. The “*prophet*” was the one through whom this vision was revealed to the people. The two words, vision and prophet, therefore, serve to designate the prophetic revelation of the OT period. This revelation was of a temporary, preparatory, typical nature. It pointed forward to the coming of Him who was the great Prophet (Deut. 18:15). When Christ came, there was no further need of prophetic revelation in the OT sense.²

¹ Gentry Jr, Kenneth L. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (pp. 28-30).

² Young, Edward J.; *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*; (p.15)

9:24 *"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, 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**. (ESV)*

- ***"to anoint a most holy place"*** – I believe the phrase *"a most holy place"* would be better translated as it is in the NIV: *"the most holy [one]"*.
- It speaks of the Messiah who *"will be called holy"* (Luke 1: 35).
- Isaiah prophesies of Christ in the ultimate redemptive Jubilee: *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has **anointed** me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;"* (Isaiah 61:1).
- Christ is preeminently the Anointed Holy One.

¹ Gentry Jr, Kenneth L. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (pp. 31-32).

9:25 *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 and sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again] with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. (ESV)*

- Here we have a description of the **first two subperiods** (seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’) which, together, last for **483 years**, (*seven* times seven plus *sixty-two* times seven).
- Furthermore, we are told that these 483 years encompasses the time:
 - “*from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem*”
 - “*to the coming of an anointed one* (that is, the Messiah)”
- Here’s where it begins to get a little challenging. When was it that “*the word*” went out “*to restore and build Jerusalem*”?
- As it turns out, there were a **number** of decrees having to do with the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- We are being told here that between **one** of those decrees (whichever decree **Gabriel** has in mind) and “*the coming of an anointed one*” there will be a period of 483 years.
- So, the question becomes, which of the decrees having to do with the rebuilding of Jerusalem precedes “*the coming of an anointed one*” by 483 years?

^{9:25} 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 and sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again] with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. (ESV)

- In the history of interpretation, three possible dates for the beginning of the period of seventy weeks have been proposed:
 - **537 BC** = Cyrus's Word allowing the Return from Exile (2 Chron 36:23, Ezra 1:1-4)
 - **457 BC** = Artaxerxes's Commission to Ezra (Ezra 7:11-26)
 - **444 BC** = Artaxerxes's Commission to Nehemiah (Neh 2:1-6)
- The ***first*** proposal (the decree issued by Cyrus) is a number of years too early: 537 BC minus 483 years would have the "*anointed one*" coming in 54 BC.
- In addition to that, both biblical versions of the decree by Cyrus mention only the reconstruction of the "*Jerusalem*" ***temple***.
- They say nothing about rebuilding the city ***itself***.

^{9:25} *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** and **sixty-two weeks**. It shall be **built again**] with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.* (ESV)

- The second proposed date is the commissioning of Ezra (recorded in Ezra 7:12–26) by the fifth king of the Persian empire, Artaxerxes I (who ruled from 464-424 B.C.). This took place in 457 B.C.
- If we move forward seven “*seven ‘sevens’*” (**49 years**) from that point, we come to 408 B.C. by which time the city has been “*built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time*” just like it talks about at the end of verse 25.
- Then moving forward “*sixty-two ‘sevens’*” (**434 more years**) we come to A.D. 27. (The numbers bring us to A.D. 26, but it is necessary to add one year to account for the “zero” year when we pass from 1 B.C. to A.D. 1.)
- This seems a bit early at first. But it is probably just right if we are to understand Gabriel’s wording as referring to the start of Christ’s ministry.
- The ministry was three years long. So this would give us a date for Jesus’ death of A.D. 30, which (in my judgment) is exactly right by other calculations.

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- One objection to the second proposal is that this “*first decree of Artaxerxes in 458/457 [recorded in Ezra 7:12-26 doesn’t say] anything at all about rebuilding [of the **city** of] Jerusalem.*”¹
- While this is true, if we look at Ezra’s prayer given on behalf of Israel just two chapters later we see where he says: “*our God has... shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem*” (Ezra 9:9)
- This seems to imply that in **Ezra’s** mind, the commission he received from Artaxerxes **included** permission to rebuild the **wall** of Jerusalem as well as the temple.

¹ Howe, Thomas A.; *Daniel in the Preterists’ Den: A Critical Look at Preterist Interpretations of Daniel*; (p. 362)

² Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*; (p.114)

9:25 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 and sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again] with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. (ESV)

- The third proposed date is the Artaxerxes's Commission to Nehemiah in 444 BC.¹
- But when we do the math, this proposal ends up being a number of years too **late**: 444 BC minus 483 years would have the "*anointed one*" coming in A.D. 39 or 40 – about 9 years after Christ was crucified.¹
- To fix this problem, advocates of this view tried to "fix" the calculation by claiming that the years of this prophecy are based on a so-called "prophetic year" of 360 days, rather than an actual solar year.²
- But even with this "correction" (which I find questionable) they still end up with a date of A.D. 32 for Christ's crucifixion – two years later than it actually occurred.²

¹ Boice, James Montgomery; Daniel: An Expositional Commentary ; (pp. 100-101)

² Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary; (p.114)

9:26 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.* (ESV)

- Here we are told that “*after the sixty-two weeks*”:
 - “*an anointed one shall be cut off*”
 - “*and shall have nothing*”
- The Hebrew word translated “*cut off*” is a word which is used of the death penalty, Lev. 7:20; and refers to a violent death. Thus, it refers to the death of Christ on the cross.¹
- The Hebrew phrase “*and shall have nothing*” is better translated “but not for himself.”
- The point is that the “*prince who is to come*” dies ***vicariously*** for his people.²

¹ Gentry Jr, Kenneth L. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (p. 32).

² https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2010/05/sbjt_v14_n1_gentry.pdf

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- At the same time that the Messiah comes and effects a final solution for sin, we are told that “*the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*”
- The coming “*prince*” is the “*anointed one, a prince*” talked about in the previous verse (i.e., coming the Messiah). Therefore “*the people of the prince who is to come*” are the Jewish people.
- The statement is telling us that it is the **Jewish people** who will ruin / spoil the restored city and temple at the arrival of their coming King.
- Although the Roman army actually put the torch to Jerusalem, the destruction of the city was blamed squarely on the Jewish people themselves.
- When the Jewish people rejected Jesus as Messiah, the true Temple, the Herodian temple supported by the Jewish people had to fall and the city had to be destroyed.

9:26 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. (ESV)

- According to this verse, this destruction is something that would happen “*after sixty-two weeks*”.¹
- In v. 27b, there is nothing stated that actually requires the desolation of Jerusalem to happen precisely in the seventieth week, although this event is associated with the events happening at that time.¹
- Thus, the fall of Jerusalem some time later the final working out of the Jewish response to Jesus in the seventieth week.¹
- Israel’s climactic sin is completing her transgression (v. 24) in “cutting off” Messiah (v. 26a).²
- In response to this, God will judge Israel’s sin — after the seventy weeks expire.²
- This explains the phrase “*to the end there shall be war*”: the “*end*” will not occur in the seventy weeks.²
- We today know the end occurs in A.D. 70.²

¹ https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2010/05/sbjt_v14_n1_gentry.pdf

² Gentry Jr, Kenneth L. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (p. 32).

9:27 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." (ESV)

- If we put what we see at the beginning of this verse together with what we just read at the beginning of the previous verse "*after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off [i.e. put to death]*", we see that the vicarious death of the coming king establishes a **covenant** with the "*many*."¹
- I would understand "*the many*" here as the same group described in Isaiah 53:12b where we read: "*he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*"¹
- If that is the case, then the "*covenant*" referred to here would then most likely be the "*new covenant in [his] blood.*" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25)¹
- The word "*for*" is not in the Hebrew. I would understand this verse to read as it does in the Septuagint: "*And [in] one week shall establish the [new] covenant with many*".²

¹ https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2010/05/sbjt_v14_n1_gentry.pdf

² https://web.archive.org/web/20170422130821/http://preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1921_mauro_seventyweeks.pdf

9:27 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." (ESV)

- I believe the phrase translated "*for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering*" would be better translated as it is in the NIV and almost every other translation: "*in the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering*"
- In other words, Messiah's death, which occurs in the "*middle*" of (i.e. 3 ½ years into) the seventieth seven-year period, brings an end to the sacrificial system because it is a final solution to the problem of sin.¹
- This matches what we know historically: that from the time of Jesus' baptism (at the beginning of the seventieth seven-year period) until his death is about 3 ½ years.

¹ https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2010/05/sbjt_v14_n1_gentry.pdf

9:27 *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."* (ESV)

- The last part of this verse returns to the topic of the ruin of the restored Jerusalem and elaborates, providing further details and information.¹
- Josephus applies the last part of this verse to the A.D. 70 events: *"In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them"* (Ant. 10:11:7).²
- The *"abominations"* refer to the sacrilege which resulted from the struggle between the rebellious Jews in A.D. 70 (*"the people of the prince who is to come"*) for control of Jerusalem, and the *"war"* (in the previous verse) refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and Temple by Vespasian / Titus (the *"one who makes desolate"*).
- The *"one who makes desolate"* (Titus) comes *"on the wing of,"* i.e., in connection with, those causing *"abominations"* (Jews), *"until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator [i.e., the one bringing about the desolation by their rebellion]"*.
- Jesus' mention of the *"abomination of desolation"* in the Olivet Discourse supports this understanding since he is probably speaking of the sacrilege of the rebellious Jews in A.D. 70 as the *"abominations"* which forewarns of the impending *"desolation"* of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans.

¹ https://cf.sbts.edu/equip/uploads/2010/05/sbjt_v14_n1_gentry.pdf

² Gentry Jr, Kenneth L. *Perilous Times: A Study in Eschatological Evil* (p. 32).

Class Discussion Time

- How many of you had already heard about the “seventy weeks of Daniel” before coming to class today? (show of hands)
- After hearing today’s class, how many of you would you say that this passage ***pretty much*** makes sense to you, though you may have a few questions concerning some of the details? (show of hands)
- How many of you would say you are feeling overwhelmed by all the information that was presented? (show of hands)
- Are there any specific questions I can answer concerning this text that you’re feeling unclear about?
- Was there anything you learned today that you found to be surprising or perhaps especially helpful?