

The seventy weeks

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- [0 : 00] Will you turn with me please to the passage we read earlier from Daniel chapter 9. I'd like tonight to consider with you from verse 20, the passage that we have from verse 20 and through to the end of the chapter.
- Daniel chapter 9 from verse 20. Perhaps we might read verse 23 as focusing on what is happening in this part of the chapter.
- At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth. This is Gabriel speaking, the angel Gabriel or the man Gabriel as is described in the passage. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth that I am come to show thee for thou art greatly beloved.
- Therefore understand the matter and consider the vision. And thereafter Gabriel recites this vision of the 70 weeks which we have from verse 24 down to verse 27.
- Now as we began this chapter or as we begin this chapter 9 we find Daniel is in the first year of the kingship of Darius the Mede.
- [1 : 19] The beginning of the Medo-Persian rule over the Chaldeans, over the Babylonians. And you might remember when we were looking at this last week, Daniel was concerned.
- He was concerned. He was concerned. He was concerned about the future of his people there in exile. And as an expression of his concern he was considering the scriptures.
- He was reading in the prophet Jeremiah to find if there was any light there about the future of their captivity. I reminded you that Jeremiah was a contemporary nonetheless.
- His writings, his prophecy was considered as holy scripture. He was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- And there Daniel was reading to find if there were prospects of restoration from captivity from the land of the Chaldeans back to Jerusalem.
- [2 : 17] Now Jeremiah does refer, as we read at the beginning of this chapter, to 70 years in his prophecy. In chapter 25 and also in chapter 29 of the prophecy of Jeremiah there is reference to a 70 year period which would be the period of captivity.
- And the Lord through Jeremiah said, look the captivity is going to be limited. It will be 70 years. And we have to say that that prophecy was fulfilled and fulfilled precisely.
- Because between the first deportations of Jews from Israel to exile under Nebuchadnezzar to the restoration of the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC there was about 70 years.
- There was restoration from the captivity. However, although Jeremiah's prophecy refers to the figure 70, it had become clear that what is revealed here in verses 24 to 27 by Gabriel to Daniel concerns periods subsequent to the decree to return to Jerusalem.
- This vision refers to 70, but notice it's 70 weeks or literally in the Hebrew it's 77. 77, which is generally taken as 70 weeks.
- [3 : 47] 70 weeks. 7 days, 70 weeks. 70 days, 70 weeks. 77, 70 weeks. Now in this passage, verses 24 to 27, we come to a mysterious vision.

And unlike the previous visions and dreams and so on that we've had in Daniel, there is no formal interpretation of it. Although the angel Gabriel, as we read in verse 23 there, is concerned and keen that Daniel consider the matter and understand the vision.

So there is a concern on the part of God through this angel revealing this word to Daniel that Daniel considers it and that he understands what is being said.

But before we look at these verses tonight and the vision proper in verses 24 to 27, I'd like us to consider for a moment the context of this vision.

And the context, I think, is instructive and also challenging for us. Now, Daniel has been praying and most of this chapter is taken up with his prayer. He has been praying.

[4 : 58] He's been confessing sin to the Lord and so on. And he receives an answer. It seems that he receives an answer before he's quite finished. Because between verses 19 and 20, it seems that Daniel is almost interrupted.

This Gabriel is asked at the commencement of the prayer to go and to say something to Daniel. And it seems before his prayer is formally finished, he gets an answer.

I think we're reminded, aren't we, that our God is a prayer-hearing God. As soon as the prayer begins, the Lord is responsive.

He sends Gabriel. God is a prayer-hearing God. And he is a prayer-answering God. Be assured of this, my dear friend. He always hears the prayer of faith.

Never fear. He always hears the prayer of faith. He doesn't always answer immediately, although he does answer immediately here in that he gives Daniel a vision.

[6 : 08] But he doesn't always answer immediately. Or in ways that we might want. But he always answers. I'd just like to make one comment here on this whole question of prayer as it arises here.

Because Gabriel is sent to give Daniel something from the Lord. Daniel is calling out to God. He is exorcised. He is concerned about his sin and the sins which have caused the displeasure of God.

And God immediately sends Gabriel to give him something. And you notice in verse 23, there's a wonderful phrase there. Partway through.

Gabriel says, At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth. I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved. And I don't want to go any further before I make a comment on these words.

For you are greatly beloved. That is to say, this thing that Gabriel is going to show, this word from the Lord, is because Daniel is greatly beloved of the Lord.

[7 : 28] Now, I don't know if you've ever been asked this question. But let me ask you. Are you loved of the Lord?

Beloved of the Lord? You see, if you're a Christian tonight, that is something that can be said of you. Beloved of the Lord. You are loved by the Lord.

Beloved of the Lord. Now, how is a person beloved of the Lord? It sure isn't because of what the Lord sees in us. So how is a person beloved of the Lord?

Now, well, we might not have such a direct angelic visitation. But we can be assured, nonetheless, of this. That the praying, worshipping, devout soul is beloved of the Lord.

When the Lord sees this person and that person exercise before him in prayer, even as they are pouring out their heart in confession and repentance and feeling themselves to be awful, they are beloved of the Lord.

[8 : 40] The man and woman of prayer is greatly beloved to the Lord. And when you or I are consistently and conscientiously alive unto God and concerned for his will, you are beloved of the Lord.

When you are dominated by the thought of God and of his purposes, you will be and are beloved of the Lord. Now, isn't that quite an amazing thing?

And in itself, that word from Gabriel must have been an encouragement to Daniel, especially given what he was praying. So much of his prayer is taken up with, I mentioned, I think, last week, groveling before the Lord.

And Gabriel said, Here I have something for you from the Lord, because you're greatly beloved. Greatly beloved. And this is response, of course, from the beginning of his supplications.

The commandment came to go to Daniel. What an amazing thing. When we are taken up, you and I, poor, sinful people that we are, when we are taken up with the worship of God, as Daniel was, you will be beloved of the Lord.

[10 : 05] You are beloved of the Lord. When that is true of you, when you have a heart for God. And this is perfectly scriptural. Because remember of what Isaiah, the Lord says through Isaiah, in Isaiah 57, I dwell in the high and holy place.

And you might think, if the Lord dwells in the high and holy place, what place can he have for me? Well, I dwell in the high and holy place with him who has a contrite and a humble spirit.

Or hear what Jesus said. Writing, speaking in his final discourse, John 14. He says there, he who has my commandments and keeps them is he who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father. Beloved of the Lord. And I will love him and manifest myself to him.

And it goes on, as Jesus answered and said to him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him. And we will come to him and make our whole with him.

[11 : 26] This is why I don't want us to miss these few words that are mentioned there in verse 23. This is part of the context of the prayer. This vision arises. This is a word from God for Daniel.

It arises from his prayer. It is an answer to prayer. And it is designed for Daniel's encouragement and for ours. And my dear friend, there is always encouragement in prayer.

And there will be more and more encouragement in prayer. The nearer we draw to God, the more we will realize that well, for all our awful sinfulness, we are beloved of the Lord.

Well, having said that, let us turn now to these verses, which are the occasion of Gabriel's coming to Daniel. And first of all, our thoughts are directed towards this.

What will happen by the end of the 70 weeks? This is what we have in verse 24. We have a prophecy here of 70 weeks, 77, 70 weeks.

[12 : 36] And the first thing we're told, verse 24, is something that will cover the whole period, things that will happen by the end of the 70 weeks. There are six things.

And first of all, there is the finish of transgression. And then there is the end of sins, all there in verse 24. And then there is, thirdly, the reconciliation for iniquity.

There is the establishment of everlasting righteousness. There is vision and prophecy sealed. And then sixthly, there is the anointing of the most holy.

These six things are mentioned in verse 24. These will occur by the end of the 70 weeks. Now, immediately, I don't know about you, but immediately, immediately as we think of these things that are mentioned there, our minds surely turn to that period in history of which all this can be said to have been fulfilled.

Surely it is this. The period of the fulfillment of all this was the period of the coming and of the ministry and of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13 : 58] Why did Christ come into the world? He came to fulfill all righteousness. He came to put an end to the reign of sin.

He came to die for sin and for sinners. He came to deal a death blow by his cross and by his resurrection to the grave and to hell itself.

Christ has done this by his perfect life and by his death and resurrection. No one else. Nothing less.

As we read in the New Testament, he has reconciled his people to God. He has established an everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

You remember when we spoke about the little stone in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2, how that little stone was hewn without hands from the mountain and destroyed the image with the feet of clay and iron.

[14 : 56] And how we said that that little stone and how we're told that that little stone would grow into a great kingdom and how we identified it as being the coming of Christ and the work of Christ and what subsequently followed.

did he not seal up vision and prophecy in the sense that he was the fulfillment as he himself explained.

Remember, on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection, Jesus was walking with disciples on that road and they were downcast and he says, ought not Christ to have suffered? And he speaks to them about how Christ is the fulfillment of all the scriptures.

He speaks of how the law and the prophets and the Psalms speak of this. It is all going towards the fulfillment. And finally, he reveals himself.

Didn't our hearts burn within us as he spoke with us by the way? As he explained that the holy scriptures were being fulfilled. It was the written Word. He was the promise of the ages.

[16 : 03] And the Christian recognizes in verse 24, what is true of Jesus Christ in what he accomplished in his life and in his death and in his resurrection and as he's accomplishing in his ascension.

But what of the anointing of the most holy? What does that mean? This is the last thing that's mentioned in verse 24 and to anoint the most holy.

Perhaps that's less easy to fit in to what Jesus did than the others. Well, this refers to the holy of holies. Now, you remember in the tabernacle and the temple, the holy of holies was right at the heart.

It was right at the heart where the Shekinah glory was, where God dwelt in his presence. And the approach to that was extremely limited.

That is where the glory of God was found. But you remember when John speaks at the beginning of his gospel, he says, the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[17 : 20] The word, he says, Jesus tabernacled among us and we beheld his glory. The glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

For the Christian, well, the most holy place is no more because Jesus, even that is fulfilled in Jesus. He is for his people the glory.

He is the Shekinah glory. He fulfilled that. He is the most holy for his own people. Jesus is for his people the most holy, the fulfillment.

fulfillment even of that part of the Old Testament architecture and the Old Testament worship.

And all this, we are told there in verse 24, is determined in this period of 70 weeks. And so this first verse, verse 24, it covers this whole period and these things will be accomplished within it.

[18 : 28] But then, in the second place, what do the 70 weeks represent? Well, as we go on in the vision and as we look at verse 25, we are told at what point it starts.

The 70 week period begins from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah, the prince. There shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks.

These score are two. So the beginning of this period of 70 weeks until Messiah comes, there will be 69 weeks.

Seven plus 62. So there are these 69 weeks from the command to restore Jerusalem until Messiah, the prince, until he comes.

And there are two periods mentioned there in verse 25. The first is seven weeks and the second is 62 weeks. Now, this reference to the command to restore Jerusalem must refer to what is called the decree of Cyrus.

[19 : 43] I mentioned this a little earlier, 538 BC. The decree of Cyrus was given by which exiles were given permission and authority to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and to rebuild the walls.

And the seven weeks then refers to that short period this first period mentioned in verse 25 the seven weeks refers to the short period between the decree to allow the people to go back to Jerusalem and the completion of these things.

And as we know, reading in the book of Nehemiah where the walls were completed after the temple had been completed, this was about 444 BC.

And so that period from that decree to the completion of the walls under Nehemiah is the seven week period, the first one. And then the following 62 weeks up until the time Messiah comes, it refers to the period from the completion of the walls of Jerusalem, the completion of the restoration of the Jews to their own land, until the coming of the Prince Jesus.

And what a beautiful precision that we have here. I believe that the Lord is giving this to Daniel and in that verse 25 is distinguishing the seven year period from the 62 year period to encourage him because there is a word of encouragement for Daniel.

[21 : 30] He's saying to Daniel, you see, by referring to this short period that look, there is going to be a restoration of Jerusalem. There is going to be a decree allowing you to go back.

And then there is going to be the rebuilding of the temple and the rebuilding of the walls and the restoration of worship and all these things. And it's not going to be far, far, far away in the future.

There's going to be seven years and seven years compared to 62 is a short period. He's asking Daniel also, of course, to look beyond that. He's saying there will be 62 weeks, and that is 69 weeks, as it were, from the giving of the decree to return.

And that is something which Daniel is being encouraged to look forward to, which is further beyond several hundred years. But there is encouragement for him there in knowing that very soon there would be a return.

This is what he'd been searching for. And so even in this, there is encouragement directly for Daniel because the decree to return would be in Daniel's own lifetime.

[22 : 39] And how that would have encouraged Daniel's heart as he realized that the Lord's will and word were being fulfilled.

will. But now we ask, what is going to happen after that, after this 62 week period, the 62 week period following the rebuilding of the walls?

Because right at the end of verse 25 of course we read about the street being built again and the wall even in troublous times, perfectly consistent with what we read in Nehemiah.

But what is going to happen after that? Verses 26 and 27 tell us after the 62 weeks after that period, Messiah shall be cut off.

At the end of the 62 week period Messiah will come, but after that Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself. Now verse 26 describes the work of the 70th week.

[23 : 46] first of all, we read that in this period, this 70th week, this last week as it were, there will be a penal death.

The Messiah will come after the 69 weeks, but in the period of the last week, the Messiah will suffer death, but not for himself. And we can't help but see in this the picture of the suffering saviour, the suffering servant of Jehovah that we read off in Isaiah 50, 53.

And this would unfold and has unfolded for us in the Gospels. But during the same 70th week, not only will the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself, there is something else is going to happen.

The temple is going to be destroyed. And we know from history that this happened. Jerusalem, the temple was destroyed 70 AD under the Roman occupation.

Now this 26th verse looks at that 70th week from a broad picture. But verse 27 goes into a little more detail by dividing this last week into two halves.

[25 : 02] The whole week extends from the coming of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem. He shall confer the covenant with many for one week. in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Two elements to this last week and it is divided as it were in the middle, halfway through. And what is the event then that divides it? it is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

And that is what happened between the coming of Jesus and the destruction of the temple, the crucifixion. More or less halfway through.

Because what did the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ entail? It entailed of course the Messiah being cut off, not for himself. He didn't die for his own sins.

He was cut off not for himself, he was cut off for the sins of his people. He was put to death for that reason, to make an atonement for sin.

[26 : 20] But in the sacrifice of Jesus there was an end to sacrifices. There were no more sacrifices for sin. Sacrifices were finished.

There was no more necessity for them. His was the final and once for all sacrifice for sin. And so in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease.

There was no more necessity for these sacrifices. The Old Testament sacrificial system was brought to an end as the letter to the Hebrews makes clear, especially in chapters 8 to 10.

It entails the coming of this new covenant of his blood. You know how in connection with the Lord's Supper we speak of the new covenant in his blood. And in a fortnight's time, God willing, we shall observe this in the congregation.

And this is referred to, you see, in this verse 27 also, the new covenant being established in his blood. See how all this is alluded to in verse 27.

[27 : 33] But then the second part of the verse, the second half of the 70th week, refers to what ensued and the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, which we know was 70 AD.

In other words, these verses specify in great and unmistakable detail the events of the gospel. The sacrifice of the Messiah, the coming of the Messiah after the 69 weeks.

The sacrifice of the Messiah halfway through the last and final week, the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple to finish the end of sacrifices.

There it is, revealed by Gabriel to Daniel, hundreds of years, 540 years before ever the Messiah came.

well that is the prophecy of the 70 weeks. I suggest that to you as the interpretation, a sound interpretation of these verses.

[28 : 36] But what can we learn from this passage from verse 20 through to verse 27? What can we learn for ourselves? Well let's not forget that we started off by saying that Daniel was exercised before God.

This was the occasion of this revelation to him. He is an example for us of being exercised before God for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And whatever else we may do, we mustn't fall short of this. We mustn't fall short in, well, see how this is put in comprehensively in these verses in Daniel chapter 9 here and verse 20 he says, whilst I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sins of my people and presenting my supplications before the Lord for the holy mountain of my God, for the worship of God, then this happened to me.

people, and these are things in which we should be exercised, speaking, praying, confessing our sins, confessing the sins of our people, presenting our supplications, that is, confessing corporate sin, and presenting our supplications to the Lord.

We have to be people, first of all, serious about worship, about devotion, about prayer. If Daniel was in his day, and David too, but if Daniel was in his day, we should be no less today, no less.

[30 : 23] But notice, the immediate encouragement. The prophet is told that the Lord has heard, and the Lord is giving him an answer, and as I mentioned earlier, we'll always be encouraged in prayer.

Prayer, the earnest, sincere, and godly prayer, is something that keeps us from despair. And it's something that enables us to draw near to God.

It keeps us from anxiety, and it keeps us from failure also. For Daniel, there was the encouragement of that first seven weeks period, I mentioned that.

It told him that captivity was coming to an end. The holy city and its sanctuary would be rebuilt. There is always something for us in the Lord's purposes to encourage our hearts, notwithstanding the necessity of our humbling ourselves before the Lord, just as Daniel did.

But of course Daniel was invited to look beyond the restoration to the accomplishment of, to the accomplishment, to an accomplishment of a far greater dimension.

[31 : 33] of a God. He was asked to look beyond the immediate restoration of Jerusalem and its worship. He was asked to look beyond that to the Messiah, and to the time of the Messiah, and to the end of sacrifices, and to the accomplishment of redemption, of atonement, of a suffering saviour who was going to die for sins who would be cut off but not for himself, of the one who would reconcile sinners to himself, to God, and establish a kingdom, an eternal kingdom of righteousness.

By his sacrifice there will be the forgiveness of sins, full and free, and Daniel was given to see it far off.

We live in an age which basks in the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. We can look back to what Daniel was looking forward to.

And this means, of course, among other things, that we have greater light, and therefore are all the more inexcusable for maintaining anything but the pure gospel of sovereign grace through which the sacrifice of Christ once offered to save people from their sins is presented and set forth as sufficient for sinners.

And yet, we too may look beyond to yet another fulfillment.

[33 : 18] Because the Christian has the promise of a second coming. And in this sense we have a feeling a bit like Daniel's. What do I mean? I mean, well, he was there praying to the Lord and he was thinking of immediate deliverance and restoration.

And he was pointed to a greater one which was further away. Now we know the greater deliverance. And yet, how do we feel as Christians?

Those of you who are Christians tonight, as Christians, how do we feel? We're looking for deliverances right now, aren't we? We're looking for revival. We're looking for success in gospel work.

We're looking for a return and we cry out to the Lord, Lord, how long will it be before there's a return and there's a turning? We're looking for that. In the same sort of way as Daniel was, perhaps, looking for restoration from captivity.

And we can look forward to the final consummation of all things when Jesus comes again. We don't know when that will be, but we can take encouragement amidst our difficulties of this age.

[34 : 30] We can take encouragement from the certainty of it. Just as when we think of it, we have to apply ourselves and our hearts to holiness and the fear of God.

As Peter says in his second letter, if this judgment is going to be when Jesus comes again, what sort of people ought we to be? In holy conversation, conduct and godliness.

But listen, as we read through these prophecies that Daniel has given, one of the things that strikes me forcibly as I think upon them and meditate upon them is this.

Our God is in control. Our God, as it were, is marching on. Right through history to the consummation. We can lose grip on this.

We can think, well, there is nothing happening now. But our God is marching on amidst all the disturbances and insecurities and uncertainties with which we may be faced.

[35 : 35] And you know how we learn that for the believer there need not be fear. Even though the earth be removed and the mountains are cast into the midst of the sea, we will not fear.

And that is the sort of thing, isn't it not, that is inspired by these prophecies. Such prophecies as these that Daniel received. God is marching on.

He is accomplishing his purposes. And so let us pray, Lord, I want to be in on this great fulfillment.

I desire, Lord, to be in line with it and not at cross purposes with it. blessed are those who know the Lord, who know the Lord, the God of Daniel.

And we have to ask ourselves, where do we stand? Where is our life going? Shall we not take encouragement from this? Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer him.

[36 : 46] Be jubilant, my feet. Our God is marching on. Do you believe it, friend? It's true.

And where we should be and must be is on his side. What a great future we have. And the Christian can look back to a great accomplishment on the cross as Jesus died for the sins of all his people in every age.

And we can look forward in the future to his coming again when he will come in glory and inaugurate once and for all his eternal kingdom of righteousness forever and ever.

And may the Lord bless these thoughts upon his word. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, wilt thou bless us tonight from thy word? Wilt thou grant, O Lord, that we may be succored and upheld and blessed and encouraged in our hearts even in what seems a small and a dark age.

Give us grace, O Lord, to go with thee and to know thy presence and blessing and power in our lives. Hear us, Lord, we pray, and take us from this place with thy spirit in our hearts and thy love and joy resounding there as we go into a new week in thy providence and mercy.

[38 : 13] Forgive us all our sins, Lord, and receive us for Jesus' sake. Amen.